

# OHI Journal

Observatory Hill, Incorporated



The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

February 2014

## HOUSE TOUR SHOWCASES NEIGHBORHOOD ON SUNDAY, JUNE 1

by JoAnn Pomietto

The OHI House Tour Committee has been hard at work planning our 2014 OHI House Tour. Some of you may have already received letters, phone calls or a knock on your door asking you to consider placing your home on the tour. It is a fun way to meet your OHI neighbors! Last year an OHI neighbor (husband and wife) weren't sure if they wanted to put their house on the tour. Their house was on the tour over 5 years ago. They talked between themselves and decided yes! The house tour 5 years ago gave them motivation to get the things done that they talked about. It was worth doing again, because the tour would motivate them to add a few more finishing touches to their home. In fact, the house tour calls visitors to experience our streets and people who live there.

We not only need houses, we need volunteers to help at registration, publicity and docents. I volunteered to be a "docent" a few years ago and didn't know what it was! I found it was fun to be someone who guides visitors thru our neighbor's homes. It was a way for me to help our community show how much we love living here in our Observatory Hill corner of Northside.

If you are interested in sharing your Observatory Hill home, let us know! If you would like to be part of the house tour committee, either as a volunteer or home-owner host you can contact me, JoAnn Pomietto at 412.931.7729 or via email at [jopomietto@comcast.net](mailto:jopomietto@comcast.net) and please put in the subject line "house tour interest." I'll be waiting to hear from you!

## FIREHOUSE RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS HISTORY by Kerry Connell

The City of Allegheny began organizing its many neighborhood volunteer fire companies into one professional department in 1869, but it wasn't until 1886 that Observatory Hill was granted its own hose company. As organizations will do, the Allegheny Fire Department underwent a series of leadership changes in the early 1890s, and the new leaders determined that many of the city's firehouses were dilapidated. In 1894, the city launched a program of repairs—and, in this same year, our Observatory Hill firehouse was built.

Originally called Allegheny City Engine House 14, the historic building at Bonvue and Perrysville has served our neighborhood well. Now, after more than a century, it is beginning to show its age. The Pittsburgh Department of Public Works has stepped in with an extensive plan to renovate, modernize, and repair our beautiful neighborhood firehouse.

Project manager Cas Pellegrini and project architect Federico Siegert, both of the city's Department of Public Works, are working with Moshier Studio Architecture and G&W Roofing and Construction to restore and preserve the structure. The renovations are expected to cost \$300,000.

Some of the biggest repairs have been to the roof and the gutters. Over the years, the original roof developed several leaks, which led to rotting wood on the inside of the building. Water, weather, and time have also caused damage to the outside walls; here and there, bricks have been falling off. The renovations include restoration of the entire exterior. The new roof and gutters will protect the renovated structure. The floors are due for repair as well. Because fire wagons were originally horse-powered, the original floors are not strong enough to support modern fire engines. The renovation team will repair cracks and other problems this coming spring.

The construction company is trying to use as many of the same materials as were used in the original building, so our firehouse will not change too much—but, because today's materials are more durable, the repairs should last a long time.

One aspect of the firehouse that will change quite a bit is the way it sounds. Long ago, our firehouse sported a bell tower—and soon, it will do so again. The renovation team is using the few image resources they have found to attempt to bring the firehouse back to its original appearance, and little details like restoring the bell tower will make a big difference. Sometime this summer, we may hear the bells of Engine House 14, just as they did in 1894.



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### New Year, new projects for Observatory Hill

The New Year will bring many changes to Observatory Hill as we take on new projects and initiatives and wrap up old ones. The

Riverview Soccer field was completed late last year, and it will serve as a great asset to the entire

Northside. I look forward to attending soccer games when the weather warms up. We've seen many improvements to the Observatory Hill business district with new, energy-efficient street lighting installed, and major repairs made to the retaining wall on Maridale. Also, work on the Portman St. retaining wall will continue this year.

My office is working to increase code enforcement in an effort to prevent blight caused by landlords who neglect their property. Please report any properties with unsightly weeds or any vacant houses that are in bad shape to our office, and we can make sure that the Bureau of Building Inspection addresses the problem. We will continue to stay in touch with OHI regarding Observatory Hill properties in Housing Court and we'll do what we can to advocate on behalf of the community.

'Paving Season' begins in the spring and we'd like to know which streets need to be repaved in your neighborhood. Please bring them to our attention, or to the OHI board, and we'll do our best to get them patched or repaved.

We have seen lots of winter weather already this year and I'd like to remind everyone to clear their sidewalks, and to lend a helping hand to elderly neighbors. The Snow Angels program, which matches volunteers with residents who need assistance shoveling snow, is now run by United Way of Allegheny County. Call **412-661-1670 x619** for details. If your street doesn't get treated after snowfall, please contact my office and we'll request that Public Works send a salt truck or plow your way. Also, please don't shovel snow back into the street! As always, I can be reached at **412-255-2135** or through District 1 Feedback Forms at: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/district1/feedback>

Darlene M. Harris  
City Council President

### **NORTHSIDE CONFERENCE DINNER JUNE 5; SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 28**

Each year at the spring dinner, the Conference recognizes deserving high school seniors who volunteer their time to improve the Northside community with a \$1,000 post graduate scholarship. ANY Northside resident in 12th grade, who performs volunteer service in their community and plans to attend a college or a training program after high school may apply. The individuals must reside on the Northside, but they need not attend a Northside High School. More info at: [www.pittsburghnorthside.com](http://www.pittsburghnorthside.com)

## GTECH Project Brightens Community Starting at Commercial District

by Dorrie Smith

One of the purposes behind GTECH Strategies is to "identify key, emerging leaders, providing them the skills and knowledge to educate their neighbors" about creating neighborhood improvements from there they chose 10 "ambassadors"(including myself) to be part of ReClaim Northside Program. Each of us was contracted to complete a green project on a vacant lot in their neighborhoods.

As Ambassadors we were taught ways to gain legal access to vacant properties, gather the right materials to fix them up, seek funding, organize volunteer help and acquire other necessary skills. Our ultimate goal was to serving community needs and devise an appropriate use for each site.

The Instructors included not only the GTECH staff but representatives from City of Pittsburgh Planning Offices, Urban Redevelopment Authority, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

Each ambassador was given a stipend of \$1,000 plus \$4,000 to spend on implementing his or her idea, as well as a \$100 continuing education fund to pay for a class on such applicable skills as tree tending or public speaking.

My original project was on the lot located 3118 Perrysville Ave, the goal was to implement "Creative Gardens and Exploration" for children and their parents. Everyone loved the idea. Unfortunately it hit a brick wall in the city offices as they didn't want to release the land. I needed to find another project before October 2013.

OHI had just applied for the Business "Love Your Block" grant. OHI had voted to install planters along the business, but their funding was limited and I had found my new project. Today Observatory Hill has four beautiful planters along our business district in hopes to adding more in the near future.

I've now begun my planning stages bringing "Creative Gardens and Exploration" to life, with various funders interested in this project and taking it to other areas of the Northside.

GTECH has been working for six years on vacant land trying to harness and even fuel some of the community energy around how to use vacant land. I'm happy to say it's an honor to continue to be a part of the GTECH organization and your Reclaim Northside Ambassador. If you can help with planting and with other beautification efforts, please contact Dorrie at **412-877-4928** or Melinda **412-639-2427**.



## At Emmaus Deliverance Ministries: Pastor James A. Newton & Elder Lois Newton

Emmaus Deliverance Ministries, at 4101 Perrysville Avenue is a non-denominational, multicultural congregation that aims to help people form good habits and break free from various forms of bondage through the Word Of God. The congregation meets for Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and Sunday Services at 11:30 a.m., with an adult meeting on Friday at 7:00 p.m. Rev. James Newton grew up in Northside, attending Northview Heights Elementary School and Perry High School. He earned a degree in Social Work from CCAC and attended Dean Technical Institute studying electric technologies. With his partner he founded NL Electric with projects in Sharon and Pittsburgh.

Pastor Newton and his wife Elder Lois Newton have plans to continue their outreach and youth enrichment programs at this new location. Among the programs that are in the planning stages are: mentoring, after school tutoring, basketball, volleyball and other programs that would benefit the community. Teachers at Emmaus plan to teach students in bass, guitar and other strings, keyboard and drums. Enrollment in the music program is now open. The after school program, known as Josiah Place, will begin in April.

Emmaus also plans to serve after school meals from 5-8 and lunches during the spring. His plans include working with children and families on a summer lunch program, day camp and occasional field trips. For information about Emmaus Deliverance Ministries, please contact Pastor Newton at 412-322-8907 or [newton36@verizon.net](mailto:newton36@verizon.net).



## At Riverview United Presbyterian Church: Reverend Steven Werthe

Rev. Steven Werth took up his new position at the Riverview United Presbyterian Church in January. He lives with his wife, Rev. Caitlin Werth, who is also a Presbyterian Minister and is the Director of the HOPE Pre-Release Program at the Allegheny County Jail, and his two kids.



Rev. Werth specializes in urban ministries and looks forward to growing with Riverview in the service and community involvement for which they are so well known. He comes to Riverview after nearly four years as the pastor of two churches in Ford City, PA. Rev. Werth is active in criminal justice ministries both locally and nationally. He teaches Spiritual Development at the Allegheny County Jail, and serves as the network coordinator for the Presbyterian Criminal Justice Network. He also serves on the board of the Pittsburgh Project.

Pastor Steve believes that the Church needs to be rooted in grace, love, compassion, joy and hope. "Riverview is an awesome and exuberant church. I'm excited to get to know the congregation and community." He wants to continue Riverview U.P. Church's role in the community: one of worship, caring, connection and participation here in Observatory Hill and in the Northside. He would also like to help Riverview build strong relationships with the other churches, ministries, institutions, and all the vibrant, diverse people that make this neighborhood great.

"We are very excited to have Pastor Werth as our leader," one member commented. She said that the entire congregation is pleased to have a pastor who will continue to serve the community in a pro-active and inclusive way.

Riverview United Presbyterian Church is dedicated to "focusing their hearts, joining their hands, stepping beyond their walls to touch the world with God's good news." Community services for the World Day of Prayer, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunrise are in the planning stages. For information about these events, Wednesday night Lenten dinners, the Community Food Bank, Riverview Thrift Store, or Riverview's other ministries and services please call church at 412-321-7300, visit the church's site [www.riverviewupchurch.com](http://www.riverviewupchurch.com), or find the church on facebook.

*"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes." ~ Fred Rogers*

## SAVE THE DATE: HERITAGE DAY WEEKEND SLATED FOR JUNE 6 & 7

On June 7th Riverview Park will be alive again with families celebrating the start of a new summer season during Riverview Park Heritage Day. The annual event features activities for children of all ages, including the Venture Outdoors climbing wall, special guests from the Aviary, craft and storytelling booths and information about many summer events in the park and across the Northside.

Each year Heritage Day kicks off the summer with a 5K race on Friday evening and the Saturday community festival for nature lovers and children from across the Northside and city as a whole. The Citiparks Art Cart will join us again to help the young and young at heart create a keep sake art piece. Friends from Allegheny General Hospital will provide health screenings.

Along with Citiparks staff and many community volunteers, the local planning committee is busy contacting guest to host interactive displays and planning for childrens' activities at the Chapel Shelter and Activities Building. Historical displays, observatory visits and senior events are part of the program as well. If you have friends in local groups that can bring a special interactive exhibit or pets to the program, we would like to hear from you. Please contact Dorrie at 412-877-4828 or Leslee at 412-231-1650.

## ***We're On the Move: Focused on Nutrition and Fitness*** by Jane Sestric

Throughout the year neighbors find ways to take care of their health and stay young through good nutrition, exercise and mutual support. Whether it's through walking through Riverview Park, biking neighborhood streets, or walking the dog to the park dog run, we have a variety of choices as we keep ourselves healthy and fit.

Taking Off Pounds Sensibly or TOPS is a national organization that focuses on healthy eating and lifestyle choices. Taking Off Pounds Sensibly acts as a support group promoting good nutrition and gradual weight loss. TOPS can help you reach your weight-loss goals by providing you with the tools, information, support, and accountability you need. Weekly meetings can help you take an honest look at the changes you need to make, show you that true health isn't a certain pants size, or number on a scale, and help you appreciate who you are now. For more information on the program, check their site: [www.tops.org](http://www.tops.org)

TOPS has been active in the neighborhood for more than twenty years, with Incarnation serving as home base for the past 6 years. In our neighborhood TOPS members meet each Monday at 6 p.m. at Incarnation Church on Franklin Avenue in Meeting Room B. Meetings include peer coaching, occasional recipe exchanges and dedicated time for team support and encouragement. For added information, call Darren at 412-877-7761.

Fit Club is a group that meets each Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Community Room of Riverview United Presbyterian Church at 3505 Perrysville Avenue. The meetings include video led fitness and nutrition sessions aimed at keeping families and individuals moving. There is no membership fee, and all ages are welcome.

The national program is customizable with members who participate at all ability levels, beginner to advanced. Fit Club is open to anyone in the neighborhood or surrounding areas. Meetings feature moves geared to the ability and experience of each member, with substitutable moves that are easily adapted.

Designed to be an enjoyable way for individuals to get exercise and workout practice, Fit Club aims to help each member "push yourself as hard as you can." Children are welcome and can join in the craft and play activities in the play room while their parents stay fit. For added information please contact Jaymes Judd at 412 979 0501 or email: [fitclub@ThePittsburghCoach.com](mailto:fitclub@ThePittsburghCoach.com)

At Allen Place you can find line dancing, nutrition classes and many enriching activities to keep your body and mind engaged and healthy. You've probably seen the commercials about Allen Place with Highmark; search Highmark Fall TV Jerry Allen – on Nov 25.

Among the programs offered at Allen Place on Bonvue Street are: Soul Line Dancing, Exercise, Wii Sports and Health Education for Seniors, Ballroom Dancing, Thursday evening quilting class and gardening workshops on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. In addition young people can sign up for computer class and after school programs.

This spring Allen Place is participating in Highmark's Walk for a Healthy Community on May 17. You are invited to take part and walk and help the Allen Place Stroke Support Survivors and Stroke Caregivers Program. Allen Place helps stroke survivors and their families through year round services. For information call the Center at 412-231-1531.

## ***Thanks for the Good Times: Remembering Peg Perlik***

Longtime OHI Board Member Peg Perlik was an original in every way. She grew up in Manchester where her mother owned a restaurant and her father worked as a postal worker.



Peg's home on Watson Blvd. was the center of activity when her three children were young and her Mom and Dad lived right next door. Life on Watson was busy, filled with outdoor play and front stoop conversations. At one time there were 17 children who lived in the set of row houses near Peg's. Her girls married boys who lived on the street. With Peg and Pam's husband's families – seven families included - there were always adventures and fun times. While Peg never left Watson, her husband Bill did leave, as he died when the children were very young. At the request of a Principal who knew her, Peg started teaching intermediate and middle school grades and she didn't quit till she was in her 60's.

Peg organized the original Watson Blvd. Block Watch. She served as an active volunteer and Board Member of OHI for decades, at Spaghetti Dinners, Riverview Park Heritage Days, House Tours and neighborhood parties. She organized membership drives for OHI and with her friend Lorraine Schwartz, mailed out membership letters and delivered welcome bags to new neighbors. Peg had friends across Northside and beyond. She was active with the Incarnation Women's Guild, AARP, and local clubs.

Peg was the 'life of the party' and her children say she would not miss any family event: holiday dinners, baptisms, confirmations, graduations, or weddings. She was the 'Rock' that supported the clan long after her own mom passed on. Peg Perlik passed away on September 24, 2013. We will miss you, Peg. Thanks for sharing the stories, hearty opinions and laughter.



*Allegheny General Hospital Northside Partnership Celebrates 25 Years on January 30th: OHI President Glenn Miller accepts a City Council proclamation recognizing the 25th Anniversary of the partnership from City Councilwoman, Darlene Harris. Organized by the Northside Leadership Conference, the partnership includes programs with unique educational, employment and home ownership opportunities. Visit [www.pittsburghnorthside.com](http://www.pittsburghnorthside.com) for more information about these programs.*

## Making Progress Together in Observatory Hill

Some projects OHI and friends accomplished in 2013 are concrete, some are events to bring the community together for conversation and exchange, some are ongoing programs or communications projects. We collaborated with recent Council Woman Darlene Harris, former Mayor Luke Ravensthal, recent Director of Operations Duayne Ashley, Northside Leadership Conference and City Services.

One key ingredient is YOU – since your ideas/requests, time and talents make this community cook. Here is a summary of the most important projects of 2013:

- 2013 Heritage Day at Riverview Park co-sponsored by Citiparks
- 2013 House Tour featuring the 'Park in Our Backyard' Riverview Park
- Fall Spaghetti Dinner at the Park Activities Building
- Spring ServePGH Love Your Block Grant \$1,000 Recipient clearing Baytree and starting the plantings there
- Fall ServePGH Love Your Block Grant \$1,000 Recipient cleaning commercial strip
- Worked with Reclaim Ambassador Dorrie Smith of GTECH on successful business district clean up, planting, with future planting plans
- Held several community clean ups during spring, summer and fall
- Handed out four winter kits to Observatory Hill businesses
- Riverview Soccer Field completed, a multi-million dollar project
- Business District Lighting Project cobra heads installed (Part One of Two)
- Security Cameras installed in Business District
- Worked with First Niagara to regrade parking lot and put up the fence
- Neighborhood Security Meeting held in conjunction with Pittsburgh Zone One Police Department to continue effective communications and service
- Creation of committee to combat nuisance properties here
- Hired part-time staff member to enhance OHI's planning & success
- Dedication of Moses Carper Trail for long-time member, leader, teacher at the Visitor's Education Center and life long advocate for Riverview Park
- Dog Park at Riverview with added improvements from neighbors
- Portman boardwalk and sinkhole repairs to prevent slippage above
- Maridale side of Perrysville Avenue commercial parking lot repaired
- Several stop signs repaired on Franklin and Waldorf Streets
- Collaboration with Northside Leadership Conference to improve communications, quality options, networking with Public Schools
- Recognizing a 'Neighbor of the Year' at the NSLC Dinner in June.

OHI responds to requests of from residents and will continue working together on key community projects We invite you to join us the third Wednesday of each month at the Byzantine Seminary at 7 p.m. to build a strong, vibrant neighborhood. See more information at our web page: [www.observatoryhill.net](http://www.observatoryhill.net)

## SEEKING 'NEIGHBOR OF THE YEAR' NOMINATIONS

If you know of an Unsung Hero from your street, from your church community or organization we would be glad to consider them for an award from the community, Please send a letter of recommendation describing the community projects the person is known for in 3-5 paragraphs to [ohipgh@gmail.com](mailto:ohipgh@gmail.com) or call 412-736-2489 by April 11.

### Neighborhood DIY:

## Bathroom Remodeling Project – Team Effort Yields Great Results

by Roxanne Tuinstra

Astrid Kersten's elegant 1904 house (57 Riverview Avenue) was on Observatory Hill's 'Park In Our Backyard' House Tour last year. It is one of the many grand residences along Riverview Avenue that we all swoon over approaching the park. Ms. Kersten's garden also was the runner-up in the Small garden category of the 2010 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Garden Contest, and featured in the 2011 Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens Tour.

This year, Ms. Kersten flew her brother Rene all the way in from Europe to remodel her bathroom for a three week timeframe. Although there are four bathrooms in her home, she decided now is the time to redo this one because none of them are easily accessible to older people like her mother, who has a hard time stepping in and out of the bathtub. She also wanted it to match the wainscoting that is used throughout the rest of the house. Ms. Kersten took her inspiration from magazines like an old home journal, old home interiors, and Elle décor. Unlike other projects in the house, this one did not use materials from Construction Junction.

### Supplies included:

*Tiles:* \$1500 Overstock.com

*Faucets:* \$500 Ebay.com

*Building supplies:* \$1500 Build.com

*Miscellaneous materials:* \$2000 Home Depot, Lowes, Reynold's Glass, Thrift Shop (grout, paint, piping, window, etc.)

*Time Frame:* 12/17–1/23

The deconstruction phase of her project did not take long. They took out the old layers of tile, cement board, the old sink, cast iron tub, old toilet, and lots of old heavy pipe. Next came the rebuilding phase. They put in a new euro toilet, sink, walk-in shower, faucets, and hardware. Next came the finishing touches. Tiles, molding, a new window, lighting, final plumbing, and accessories were added.

Ms. Kersten admits there were many challenges with the remodeling that is almost finished. So much debris was collected during the renovation that she used a service called Junk King to come and pick up their garbage, which they disposed of properly. Additionally, when her walls were opened up, it let a lot of old coal dust out, which coated some of her other rooms. The lack of access in the very tiny bathroom space when her brother did the plumbing was difficult. She thought the project was going to take a week when realistically it will take five weeks—she blames television remodeling shows. Finally, costs are always more than anticipated, so she budgeted extra.

This project, Ms. Kersten admits, was truly a family effort! Everyone contributed in one way or another. Although Rene did the bulk of the demolition and reconstruction, her son and husband contributed by hauling out the debris and tiling and grouting. They also shopped and cooked for the family. Even her mother contributed by making the shower curtain! See the final results on our website at [www.observatoryhill.net](http://www.observatoryhill.net)



## SAVE THE DATES:

### Perry High School PSCC Meeting on March 4 at 1 p.m.

Parent School Community Council meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of the month

### Observatory Hill, Inc. Monthly Board Meeting on

**March 19 at 7 p.m.**

Byzantine Seminary, Rear Entrance, 3605 Perrysville Avenue

### Perry High School Spring Musical, "Seussical" Opens

**March 27 at 7 p.m.**

Show runs March 27 through March 30

### Neighbor of the Year Nominations due April 11

Letter of recommendation should be emailed to [ohipgh@gmail.com](mailto:ohipgh@gmail.com)

### Observatory Hill, Inc. Monthly Board Meeting on April 16 at 7 p.m.

Byzantine Seminary, Rear Entrance, 3605 Perrysville Avenue

### Observatory Hill, Inc. Monthly Board Meeting on May 21 at 7 p.m.

Byzantine Seminary, Rear Entrance, 3605 Perrysville Avenue

### 2014 Observatory Hill House Tour on June 1

Annual Tour Benefits and Showcases our Unique Neighborhood

### Northside Leadership Conference Annual Dinner on June 5

NSLC awards scholarships to deserving Northside high school students

### Heritage Day Weekend at Riverview Park Slated for June 6 & 7

5K Fun Run on Friday, Park festival Activities for all ages on Saturday

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# OHIO Journal

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## Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill Inc.

Mail to: Observatory Hill Incorporated.  
P.O. Box 100247, Pittsburgh, PA 15233  
412-736-2489

Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date Paid \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Contribution: (check one)

☐ \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$15 ☐ Other ☐ \$50 (Business Member)

☐ Please include me on the email list that provides information on local activities and important community notices.

☐ Do not include me on any email notifications

Make Checks Payable to: Observatory Hill Inc.

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