



The Neighborhood Newsletter

Volume 11 Number 1

The Budget Cutting Issue, October, 2003

OUR THANKS TO YOU....



We want to thank all of you who responded to our fund-raising notice in the last Newsletter. With your support, we raised slightly over \$1000, which will keep us in the black for about two full issues. We greatly appreciate each one of your contributions; when we say “We couldn’t do it without you,” we mean it!

Your financial support of the **Neighborhood Newsletter** is always more than welcome. So if you didn’t get a chance to contribute over the summer, or if you haven’t contributed before, please consider a donation this time around. (Checks should be made payable to the Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association, and mailed to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace.) Thank you again!

But we got more valuable feedback from you than just money, as you also sent us many story ideas and helpful neighborhood suggestions. To learn about them, and how you can help bring them to fruition, please see the story below.

...AND YOUR FEEDBACK TO US

In our last issue, we asked for feedback on story ideas and suggestions for the **Neighborhood Newsletter**, to make it more responsive to what you want to read – which, of course, is the main reason we’re here.

And you replied, with a wide variety of ideas. We’re grateful to get them. So we thought we’d list them below, both to give you a sense of what other neighbors are thinking and perhaps to stimulate more ideas of your own. The comments here – minus reader names – are almost entirely verbatim; a few brief editorial responses follow in brackets.

There’s also one next question, taken up at the end: How can we best deal with these ideas and suggestions, to bring them closer to reality?

But first, some story ideas for the **Newsletter**:

“Spotlight children as well.” [*Excellent idea. Any reader suggestions on specific kids’ stories, or young people who’d like to write?*]

“Articles about churches in the neighborhood.” [*We have at least four*

– the Congregational, Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, and Unitarian churches – within a few hundred yards of each other.]

“Interviews with our oldest neighbors about their early life in Arlington.”

“What is that gas leak/oil smell on lower Brantwood when the weather is damp? I hear there was once a gas station there. Is this true?”

“Try to shorten the name ‘Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association’ so that we can fit it on checks.” [*Thanks!; but for the moment, please write small.*]

“Include more news from the other side of the ‘Rocks’; i.e., High Haith, Iroquois, Shawnee, Bonad Road, Menotomy Rocks Drive.” [*Fine with us, to be sure. Correspondents, anyone?*]

“Timeliness. I.e., it makes no sense to talk about an event in the future when the event will have passed at the time of publication.” [*We agree, and we’ll keep working on this.*]

“Show a map that describes the rough boundaries of the neighborhood or your distribution area. Also what elementary schools cover this area? Bishop

and Brackett?” [*We distribute from Mass. Ave. to Route 2, and from Spy Pond about as far up as Highland Ave. Bishop and Brackett are indeed the two elementary schools that serve our neighborhood.*]

“Profile the Town Meeting Members.”

“More diverse articles by more authors.” [*We’re definitely behind that.*]

“An article about book clubs in the area: What they are reading and recommending, who needs members, etc.”

“Write about the new fencing on Spy Pond to keep ducks and geese off the land to nest. Is it working? Reactions?”

“Perhaps it’s time again for an interest survey on book groups, tool swaps, babysitting coop, event ideas, etc.”

And next, some more general neighborhood suggestions:

“How about attempting to organize smaller neighborhood block parties? Other ideas would be family events and ways to meet other neighbors with similar interests.”

“Please remind neighbors to cut back shrubs that interfere with sidewalk passage,

and also any low hanging branches or plants over the sidewalk. These are a hazard to the blind.”

“Teach the young baseball players to drive more slowly around Lombard Road and Terrace.”

“Sidewalk responsibility: Help each other keep walks clear and sanded in winter. Trim overhanging branches. Do not block with parked cars, etc. Pedestrians – kids and adult walkers – need our help!” [*This seems to be a neighborhood theme.*]

“I wish there was some way we could encourage some neighbors to take better care of their homes and yards – it only takes one bad apple.”

“Real speed bumps on Wellington Street, before and after the Boys & Girls Club.”

“Pleasant Street traffic changes – in progress.”

“Inconsiderate people who walk their dogs and tell them to ‘use’ other people’s lawns. As I always admonished my children, ‘One does not encroach upon another’s property.’”

“A collective yard sale at the Park? Spring or fall?”

“How about a house and garden tour in the neighborhood, with a nominal fee to raise money for the Newsletter?” [*A nice idea, and not just for us; any volunteers here?*]

“Using Menotomy Rocks Park for classes, or anything in the great outdoors.”

Thanks again for all your feedback. Having read these suggestions and story ideas, what’s the next step? Are we ready to convert some of these ideas into action?

Here’s where you come in, for the **Neighborhood Newsletter** and the neighborhood itself are shared enterprises.

Specifically, as for the stories, maybe you’d like to write a short article on one of these ideas, to give us a little more detail and to generate more reader interest. Or maybe you might insert a notice

in the next Newsletter, asking others to join you.

Or maybe you could do something else to move your ideas forward.

Please give yourself lots of writing room to roam, for these pages are your pages. Just let us know what neighborhood-related articles you’d like to see in print, and, within our limits, we’ll try to help make them happen. In the meantime, keep your neighborhood ideas, and especially your stories, coming in! – *BB*



NEWSLETTER NOSTALGIA: OUR FIRST BABY IS GROWING UP

by *Mary Cummings (Jason Street)*

The **Neighborhood Newsletter** has been chronicling the history of Jason Heights and the surrounding neighborhood for 11 years now. Looking back through the past 10 volumes, I was reminded of the various things we used to do and the people who have written for or been written about in the Newsletter. I had so much fun that I decided to add a “Newsletter Nostalgia” column to reminisce about the past and to discover episodes that have been added to the stories neighbors have shared with us over the years.

I started with Volume 3, Number 3, the “Pumpkin Issue” from 1994. In that issue, Nils Fonstad, our first Editor after the Newsletter was revived in 1992, said “Hasta la Vista!” as he went off to graduate school at MIT. Hill’s Pond was being dredged, and Paula Spencer and associates were having the Maple Street gate refurbished. Karsten Hartel reported on birds, and Nancy Flynn wrote “Spy Pond (1): A Look Back.” We also started welcoming families and babies in that issue. For this column, I followed

up on one of those babies.

Born on August 4, 1994, Aidan Wilcox was the first baby to be welcomed in The **Neighborhood Newsletter**. Now he has just turned nine, and his parents Charlotte Pierce and David Wilcox (*Brantwood Rd.*) are just as proud of him. Aidan loves to read, and finished the 850-page *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* in five days. He enjoys traveling, and has visited family in Washington State and Texas, toured Ireland at age three, and Wales, London, and Paris at age eight. Aidan loves science, sleepovers, Bionicles, and Legos; does both children’s theater and karate; and plays both soccer and the violin. His summer moneymaking project this year was “Aidan’s Fabulous \$5.00 Fruit Fly Traps,” with 20% of sales benefiting the Arlington Schools Foundation (order one from fruitflytraps@piercepress.com). Aidan’s sister, Lillian, was welcomed to the neighborhood three years ago.

We will continue reminiscing in following issues. Do you have a favorite article, topic, or issue of the **Neighborhood Newsletter** that you would like to reminisce about? Can you give us updates on stories of the past? Please contact us and share your Newsletter Nostalgia.



HOW WE GET TO YOUR DOOR

by *Gene Benson (Hillsdale Road)*

The telephone calls come four times a year, usually from my contact in the organization. I call her Dolores. Sometimes they come from higher up in the organization, when Dolores is on assignment elsewhere. They always ask the same question. “Gene, it’s that time. Can you deliver the **Neighborhood Newsletter**?”

I say yes. Sixty copies of the **Neighborhood Newsletter** soon appear at the

front door of my house, wrapped in plain paper, courtesy of Dolores. Has the organization instructed me to deliver them soon because they contain time sensitive information or can they ripen on a shelf for a few days? When will I have time to deliver them? Do I read one first?

Delivery time comes. I fold each newsletter in half lengthwise, as I was instructed by the organization long ago, so they better fit between doors and in mail slots. I take half with me and deliver them to Hillsdale and Stony Brook. I go back home. I get the remainder and deliver them to the upper part of Jason. I hope some of my neighbors are out and about so we can chat. I look at what has changed on the houses. I think about the exercise I get walking up and down those steps. And up and down again and again.

It takes about an hour. I feel good about it. I will do it again next time.

Many wonderful volunteers deliver the **Neighborhood Newsletter**. If you see a neighbor delivering the Newsletter on your street, please take a moment to say hello. It could be someone you would like to know or the start of a beautiful friendship. If he or she is in a hurry and can't stop to talk, just nod knowingly and perhaps say thanks—because they deliver the goods.

Thanks to all our friendly and reliable neighbors who organize and distribute the **Neighborhood Newsletter**! Dolores Schueler (Brunswick Rd.) has organized the distribution of all eleven volumes. Ann Tulimieri (Hillsdale Rd.) has taken on half the job for the past several volumes.

And many thanks to our intrepid distributors:

Jim Bailey (Oak Knoll)
Mimi Barbera (Lakeview St.)
Gene Benson (Hillsdale St.)
Bill Berkowitz (Pelham Terr.)
Nan Bers (Brantwood Rd.)
Dorothy Burt (Woodland St.)
Madeleine Drucker (Bartlett Ave.)
MaryAnna Foskett (Brantwood Rd.)
Peggy Gardiner (Menotomy Rocks Dr.)
Jo Hartel (Brunswick Rd.)
Jane and Peter Howard (Woodland St.)

Margaret (Potter) Kim (Irving St.)
Jessie Kuhn (Jason St.)
Leola Moss (Windermere Ave.)
Amelia Mueller (Lombard Terr.)
Jan Pagliasotti (Temple St.)
Doris Powell (Pleasant St.)
Shelley Schussheim (High Haith Rd.)
Lois Scribner (Pleasant St.)
Luanne Smith (Gray St.)



HOW DO WE SPEND THE MONEY?

Six years ago, our long-time neighbors Gerard and Antoinette Gagnon began a new retirement life in Florida. But they have stayed in contact ever since—see their note below—and recently Gerard has been in touch with an opportunity that may interest many of you.

Gerard was active in the neighborhood and town during his many years here, and one of his activities was to found and lead the Parmenter School Neighborhood Association in the 1990's. This group of neighbors near the former Parmenter School originally came together around local parking, traffic, and playground concerns, but soon began to consider other neighborhood issues in the vicinity. For a while, the Association collected member dues, which have remained in a bank up to this time.

But now Gerard would like to transfer the money back to the immediate Parmenter neighborhood; his and our question for you is "How should it be used?"

It's not a huge amount (about \$155), but it could serve as seed money for some more enduring neighborhood activities—Gerard mentions an annual neighborhood party at the playground, an event for local Town Meeting candidates, a small scholarship, tree or flower plantings, or a history of the Parmenter School itself as some starting possibilities.

But you may have other ideas, and Gerard tells us he will be interested in knowing what neighbors think. So, and especially if you live in the Irving/Academy/Ravine Street area, what do you think might be the most effective use of these funds? Let us know by phone to Bill (646-6319) or Mary (641-0954), or by e-mail to Bill (Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu); we'll try to decide on the most popular and feasible solution and let you know what we come up with.

Meanwhile, here is Gerard's note to us:

Gerard and Antoinette Gagnon moved from their longtime Irving Street home at the end of February, 1997, moving to an active retirement community in Central Florida. While in Arlington, Gerard was a Town Meeting Member for many years and served on various public and private committees. He was an original member of the Arlington Historic Commission and was a member of the Board of Registrars when he moved to the Sunshine State. In Florida, he has served on a number of committees in his 938-home retirement community, including five years on its Finance Committee, two as chairman.

It's warm and humid in the summer, but seldom as terribly hot as it gets in some places up North, he says. "Homes, cars, and restaurants are all air-conditioned, so it's not as bad as some Northerners think." He says he misses shoveling snow. "Great exercise."

Gerard says he has gained "quite a few pounds" since moving South, but he and Antoinette are healthy and happy. "I don't like getting older, but it sure beats the alternative."

Thanks for thinking of us, Gerard. And now that we think of it ourselves, it would be excellent to hear from other former neighbors and to learn how they are doing. If you know any, please encourage them to contact us, and we'll try to print their stories. Maybe someday we could also have a reunion of neighborhood alumni!

The Neighborhood Newsletter is produced through contributions from neighbors and the support of Print Aspects.



NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE REFERRAL LIST UPDATE

We have updated our Service Referral List over the summer. Several phone numbers were incorrect. A couple of services were added to the list. A few were removed from the list as a result of reports of poor service by neighbors. Failure to respond to phone calls at all was the most frequent complaint.

We are always looking for new referrals to add to the list so please contact us if you can recommend a service provider. We will try to keep the list up to date on our web page www.neighborhoodnewsletter.org. Thanks to Ken Lubar (*Gray Street*) for maintaining the page.

Arborists

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Arbor Care | 648-1100 |
| Boston Tree Preservation | 729-0095 |
| Matthew Foti | 861-0505 |
| MacDonald Tree Service | 641-2600 |
| Chuck Walton | 861-2942 |

Cabinetry

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| House of Cabinets Deborah Bishop | 275-8600 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|

Carpenters

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| John Sawyer | 643-3536 |
| Denis Wogan | (617) 547-9229 |

Computer Consultant *

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Greg Ruccio | 648 0716 |
|-------------|----------|

Contractors

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Greg Blass | 646-0292 |
| Bob Cargnel | (508) 667-2900 |
| Rick Chadwick | 646-9525 |
| DJK General Contractors | 643-9498 |
| Feinmann Remodeling Inc. | 643-6269 |
| Measure Twice Renewals | 646-6443 |
| Out of the Woods Cabinetry and Carpentry | 641-3332 |
| Welch Design | (617) 350-5677 |

Decorator

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| AR Decorating | 729-6639 |
|---------------|----------|

Electricians / Electrical Contractors

| | |
|--------------|----------------|
| Keith Bryant | (617) 497-5531 |
|--------------|----------------|

Entertainment / Catering

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Page Carter Catering | 646-5408 |
|----------------------|----------|

Flooring & Floor Refinishing

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Patrick Hunt | 862-3559 |
|--------------|----------|

Gardeners *

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| Ferris Donham | 648 7973 |
|---------------|----------|

Gutter Cleaners *

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| American Gutters | (800) 322-1920 |
|------------------|----------------|

Heating and Air Conditioning

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Burns Mechanical | 899-2366 |
|------------------|----------|

House Cleaners

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Dilson and Grace Santos | (617) 782-8856 |
| Tom's Hardwood Floors | (617) 472-1291 |
| Tony Vaccaro | 321-1322 |

Lawn Service / Landscaping

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Keith Brennan | 643-5571 |
| Mike Busa | (508) 875-3604 |
| Jerry's Landscaping | 643-6490 |

Lifting and Light Moving *

| | |
|------------|----------|
| Greg Pavao | 646 9000 |
|------------|----------|

Masons

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Ray Dalton | (508) 871-1535 |
|------------|----------------|

Painters

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Joe Beninati | 438-8807 |
| Robert Ladanyi | (978) 525-3532 |
| Jimmy Lazos | 641-0867 |
| Gus Moisakis | 646-6045 |
| Tibetan Painters | 608-4269 |

Plumbers

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Button Plumbing | 648-3064 |
| Fran DeChristoforo | 438-9339 |
| Hank English | 933-9702 |
| Frank Formica | 641-2022 |
| E. Puopolo & Son Inc. | 648-5239 |
| Patrick Young and Son (number change) | (617) 489-4935 |

Roofers

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Chris Nolan | (617) 923-9060 |
|-------------|----------------|

Wallpaper Hangers

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Greg Booth | (617) 473-0204 |
|------------|----------------|

Window Installers and Repairers

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| J.B. Sash & Door Co. | (617) 884-8940 |
|----------------------|----------------|

* Addition to List

LINKS TO STUDENT HELP

If you need snow shoveling, raking or other small jobs that are suitable for our middle or high school students to do, call the LINKS program which is run through Arlington High School (316-3404).





NEIGHBORS SPEAK ON BUDGET CUTS

by Mary Cummings (Jason Street)

Arlington's budget deficits are forcing us to live with fewer public services and/or devising alternative means of funding them. Several of our neighbors have been actively involved in fund raising programs such as Arlington Partners in Education, or "Friends" groups for the libraries, social services, and parks. Others have donated money to these organizations. Some

neighbors, however, are strongly opposed to the idea of a few private citizens alleviating the financial burden that they feel rightfully belongs to all citizens.

Our first on-line survey asked for neighbors' thoughts and opinions about Arlington's budget deficits and the various efforts that have been made to compensate for the loss of some services. The survey was e-mailed to about 40 neighbors and received about 13 responses. Thirteen is certainly not a representative number, but it does give us a sense of how people who cared enough to respond feel about the issues. The following is a representative sample of those we received. Several responses have been abridged to save space.

1) *We have seen some town services being cut back this summer and there may be more cuts to come. What consequences, if any, do you expect these cuts will have on our neighborhood?*

- We feel very lucky that our kids went through the public schools and had small elementary school classes, the gifted and talented program, lots of AP classes, and more. I would hate to see families leave Arlington because the schools decline. Real estate values would go down and the neighborhood could become a more transient place.
- We will feel the reduced support for schools (fewer teachers, fewer courses offered, larger class sizes, fewer extra-curricular activities); reduced fire department and police department support; the library, Public Health Department, Council on Aging, etc.; and maintenance of roads and public facilities.
- I see less-connected neighbors; I fear that people will interpret reductions in library, school, and other town services as a "sign" to focus on their individual needs more, and the community less.
- Some people will leave Arlington, or not move to Arlington, because of the message delivered by the failed override.
- We'll have to be more pro-active to ensure street and park policing and maintenance. I'm most concerned about cuts that will affect school programs. Education is the vital fuel of our society and creative programs are part of that vitality.

2) *What service reductions, if any, are most likely to impact you and your family?*

- The big impact I see so far is the public works department cut-backs. I miss seeing the street islands planted, the hanging baskets of flowers, the streets swept more frequently, the parks well trimmed and weeded, and more yard waste pickups. We may also feel the impact of the school cuts because the value of our real estate is driven in great part by the reputation of the schools.
- We will be affected by larger classes and fewer activities for our three kids as well as decreased library access.
- SCHOOLS
- Our family is very small – two older adults – and produces little in the way of garbage and nothing in the way of school budget impact. We need the streets and parks maintained.

3) *To what extent should town services be provided through private fund-raising organizations such as "Friends" groups, as opposed to being provided through public tax dollars? Why?*

- I think there is a place for private fund raising, but our taxes should cover the basics, like reading specialists. I am astounded that the schools would cut reading specialists but still provide sports uniforms. In a town where people are excited about sports, I'll bet it wouldn't be hard to raise money for uniforms, coaches, etc. It might also be easier to get an override passed if funding for the hockey team was on the chopping block!
- I prefer basic services to be provided through tax dollars. Some folks won't give to a friends group, placing the burden on those who give, and priorities tend to be skewed by the private giving.
- Services to the residents of the town should be provided by revenues raised by the town. We live in the richest country in the history of mankind, and basic services should be available and paid for by taxes.
- I am not willing to short-change my children just to make the point of how harmful the cuts are. A minority of households in Arlington have children in the school system, so we will not reach the "no" voters by depriving our children.
- Proposition 2 1/2 is irrational and harmful to the community. We should not need to have private organizations raise money for public services. Furthermore, a private group should not have the ability to determine how public money is spent. For example, the group raising money for the schools has a priority list which was not determined or approved by my elected representatives. Also one should not have the choice of supporting some programs and not others.
- ZERO!!!!!!
- Private and concerned parties will have to step up when necessary.
- I think that it is important that the types of services that towns and counties provide are indeed provided by towns and counties. If services are privatized or dependent on contributions and volunteers, then they can become restricted or controlled by those who have the money or time to invest in them, leaving lots of folks without services or with reduced input or representation.
- Right now, I see "Friends" as a temporary and necessary alternative. In the future we need to fund these programs via taxpayers, because public education benefits all. A well-educated society contributes to our overall well-being, freedom, and productivity.



• We will vote for overrides and support any effort to get rid of Proposition 2 ½. We donated this year but do not plan to make similar donations in the future. Pitching in in a pinch is reasonable. Depending on a few people to pay for the maintenance of town services for an extended period of time is unreasonable.

4) *Should schools and libraries enlist volunteers to do the jobs no longer funded by the town? Why or why not?*

- Volunteers are great, but it is very difficult for a small staff to coordinate dozens of volunteers who can only give a couple of hours a week or less. It can be fun working with a group of neighbors to take care of things.
- It depends on whether or not the town will have the time to train and supervise the volunteers. Yes, but ONLY on temporary basis; a civilized society provides these services in a country as affluent as ours.
- A strong volunteer effort can only speak well of the community and build community.
- Yes. And, send out a broad plea; try not to rely on the usual suspects (who probably voted for the override).
- Yes, they should, but the town and libraries have to make sure that in areas where professional standards are required there are professionals to do the job.
- I absolutely think that schools and libraries should ask for volunteers, and that "Friends Of" groups should step up to fill needs not met by the town. I don't think this should be the norm for most services. People should definitely have the opportunity to step up and help.
- Sure, if volunteers will pull these institutions through during tough times, then let's rally. But we also need to keep professionals involved. A balance can see us through tough times and seed the future.
- Volunteers can certainly enhance services, but I do not want to live in a town that depends on volunteers to provide basic services.

5) *Do you have any other thoughts, questions, or ideas about this issue?*

- The town needs to make some hard decisions that should have been made years ago. We should have closed an elementary school (Pierce would have been the logical one). Did anyone notice that we have no problem housing all the students from whatever school is being renovated without bringing in trailers or renting odd space for the duration? That's because we have plenty of space in the schools that exist. We paid consultants who said we don't need the Park Ave. fire station. Let's close it. While a few people get emotional about the Fox Library, it makes no sense to keep it open. There are rarely many people in there and keeping it open a few hours a week means cutting hours and staff at Robbins. Having one state of the art facility open the maximum number of hours would benefit the whole town. The Fox could be rented or sold to bring in income for the town.

- We need a new governor, someone with some moxie. I think the town has not done a good job of explaining to us the reductions in services that we should expect as a result of the budget cuts. The Selectmen have been pretty silent about the entire issue since the override vote.
- Because of Charlie Lyons' opposition to the override, I would support an opposing candidate in the future. Since the override failure was so close, his support may have made the difference because of his influence in the town.
- The silver lining is watching how people will rally and become innovative and productive for what they believe...thus, building a stronger community.

Where do you stand? Now that summer is over and schools are open, what impact, if any, have the budget cuts had on you and your family? Do you have or have you heard about any plausible or interesting solutions or means of alleviating the situation?

And also, do you have ideas for future **Neighborhood Newsletter** survey topics? Please mail your thoughts to 135 Jason Street, or e-mail us at JhitesNews@Comcast.net. Thanks!



SIGHTS, BITES, AND DELIGHTS IN ARLINGTON CENTER

By Colin Campbell (Morton Road)

(Editor's note: Colin, who is a student at the Ottoson Middle School, recently moved to our neighborhood from Arlington Heights. He has been the Student Assistant Editor of the Ottoson Chronicle and will now be joining our staff. We're glad to include his debut article here.)

Have you been to Arlington Center recently to eat, shop or have a good time? There is a lot more to this local melting pot than meets the eye.

Aside from the good stand-bys at Au Bon Pain and Starbucks (which both offer quality coffee and breakfast items), the new restaurant Elements serves Sunday brunch, lunch, and dinner with a European theme (although I have not personally dined there, I have heard many people recommend it). For dinner, also be sure to try Italian food at La Buona Vita. In addition, a great "hidden jewel" for breakfast is the Town Hall Restaurant. The center also has four sit-down pizza shops: Papa Gino's, Arlington House of Pizza, Steve's House of Pizza, and the new Gemelli on Broadway.

Furthermore, the Center is also a superb shopping district, with beautiful South American crafts at Crossroads Trade, and

quality used books at The Book Rack. Teenagers should be sure to pay a visit to The Magic Dragon comic book store on Broadway (in the shopping plaza behind the fire station). My mother's favorite store to purchase gifts is Divinity's Splendour-Glow, also on Broadway.

Finally, Arlington Center has enjoyable ways to spend a leisurely Saturday afternoon or a fall evening (shops typically close early, at around 6 or 7; restaurants are sometimes open until 10 or 11). You can see a show at The Regent Theater, (check the Advocate or www.regenttheatre.com for show times) or buy ice cream at the new J. P. Licks. Eat it in the Town Hall Park (Robbins Garden) with the newly renovated fountain, or bring a picnic to enjoy on one of the benches. The Robbins Library also has a wonderful collection, with many classics not available at places like Barnes and Noble or Borders.



GRAND NEIGHBORS

by Mary Cummings (Jason Street)

"I get little phone calls, 'Granny, can I come over?'," reported grandmother of five, Jean Potter (*Pleasant View Rd.*). Never have I met more gloriously happy people than the five grandparents in the neighborhood I talked to for this article. They beam with pride and love and thoroughly enjoy watching their children as parents take on the responsibilities of child rearing, while Grandma and Grandpa can relax and play with the kids. All my interviews were with neighborhood grandmothers.

The first happy story came from Myriell Eykamp (*Pleasant St.*). Myriell and her husband Bill had a special treat this sum-

mer. Their two grandsons, Thomas (3 years) and Ian (1½ years), together with daughter-in-law Jennifer, came to visit for three weeks while an addition was being made to their home in Portland, Oregon. Christopher Eykamp is the proud father of Thomas and Ian. Their bachelor uncle, Colin, lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Myriell and Bill usually get to visit with their sons and grandsons only two or three times each year, which made this extended visit extra special. After our chat, Myriell e-mailed me the following news: "The grandchildren had a wonderful time playing in the sandbox at Menotomy Rocks Park, and at Daddy's school, the Parmenter playground. I was delighted to meet Diego Fonstad at the park with his parents and two children. We also went swimming in Spy Pond just about every afternoon. Both boys enjoyed jumping off the dock and boating on the pond. Our favorite expression became 'naughty beaver,' which Thomas understood to refer to what we call a jet ski."

"While approaches to parenting seem to change a bit each generation, I think that kids are pretty much the same as they ever were. And grandparents don't have to worry as much as the parents – we can sit back, count our blessings, and keep a keen eye out for naughty beavers."

Talk about enthusiastic! My next chat was with Louise Tsoi (*Devereaux St.*), who proclaimed, "This is the best time of my life." She and her husband, Ed, have Makayla Doherty, the most wonderful granddaughter imaginable. The Tsois have two daughters, Laura Doherty and Alison. Laura is the proud mother of Makayla (6 months), who is "just delicious" according to Grandma. Makayla and her parents live right in the neighborhood, on Churchill Avenue, so the Tsois are getting to witness many of the remarkable things she does.

Louise will be taking care of Makayla two half-days each week while Laura teaches the morning shift of a job-sharing position at the Hardy School. Makayla will be staying at the new daycare facility at the Hardy three mornings each week.

Louise "adored being a mother" and watching her daughter raise Makayla brings back "so many feelings from my girls." Grandparenting is easier than parenting

according to Louise, because her only job is to keep the angel happy. "I get to do the good stuff." "Laura is a wonderful mom," and it's cute to watch her carefully letting grandma know what to do when caring for Makayla.

One of Louise's favorite things to do with Makayla is to sing to her. Louise loves to sing and Makayla responds very well to her songs. This devoted grandparent is even learning new lullabies from a tape in her car. Makayla spent a day at the beach with her grandparents one recent weekend and Louise said, "She loves the water. She was studying the waves." Of course we know where Louise's attention was focused. Another great pleasure for the Tsois is taking and showing pictures of Makayla. They each have their own "brag book" which they share at every opportunity.

Jean Potter (*Pleasant View Rd.*) loves every minute of grandmothering. Anna and her husband, Larry Dooley, are the parents of Jean's oldest granddaughter, Marguerite (8 years). Owen (13 months) is the son of Andrew Potter and his wife, Annie; they live in Brooklyn, NY, and therefore don't get to see Granny very often. But Margaret Potter and her husband Wilbur Kim live right in the neighborhood, on Irving Street, with their three sons, Alexander (8 years), Daniel (4 years), and William (17 months).

Alex Kim is the one who makes most of the little phone calls. He and Daniel like to sleep over with grandma, but rather than use the guest room, one sleeps on a cot and the other on the floor in Jean's room. Alex will sometimes help Jean with chores such as putting out bags of recycling papers. Daniel is enrolled in Jean's preschool, Arlington Heights Nursery School, where Margaret is now the Assistant Director.

Like the other grandmothers I talked to, Jean says it is "delightful" to watch her children having children. The best part of grandparenting, though, is the grandchildren themselves. Jean declared, "They are so dear to me that it's hard when I don't see them for a day or two."

"I'm constantly with them," stated grandmother of eight, Mimi Barbera (*Lakeview Street*). Her grandchildren all

live relatively nearby and visit frequently. Mimi and Kevin have three children and eight grandchildren. Their daughter Kevyn Fusco and her husband, Scott, live in Winchester with their three daughters: Bradley (6 ½ years), Nell (4 ½), and Mia (3). Sean and his wife, Sharon, are in Williamstown in the Berkshires with their three sons, James (6 years), Ryan (2 ½), and Thomas (7 months). Colin and his wife, Sara, live in Sharon, with their two daughters, Maeve (2 years) and Cass (8 months).

Mimi enjoys seeing her children as parents. “Colin is a stay-at-home-dad and is super at it!” One parent in each of her children’s families stays home with the children. Mimi also enjoys seeing her husband as a grandfather. “Kevin is a fantastic grandfather. He’ll do anything with them at anytime.”

The whole family gets together half-a-dozen times a year, and it’s lots of fun to see all the cousins together, especially the five girls. “They go to Fitness First with me”; every week one or two of them go to the children’s program there while grandma exercises.

There are no bad parts to being grandparents, according to Mimi. “One positive [thing about grandparenting] is when they all go home and I can say ‘Aren’t they wonderful?’” Her own children ask Mimi about child-rearing but “I don’t remember much.” “Usually I say ‘Use your intuition.’” As one last word about her grandchildren, Mimi said, “They’re a laugh a minute. I’m so thrilled that my grandchildren have great senses of humor.”

My last chat was with Claire Bryant. Claire and Bob (*Kensington Park*) have 6 children and 15(!) grandchildren that they adore. Their daughter Jennifer Duffy and her husband Michael live in San Diego with their two sons: Brian (13 years) and Chris (11 years). The boys come to visit their grandparents on the Cape for three weeks every summer.

Bob Bryant and his wife, Annette, live in Hollis NH with their two sons. Bobby (16 years) is their oldest grandchild; he made national Sophomore Hockey. Tim (12 years) also plays hockey as well as golf.

Peter Bryant and his wife, Lina, live in Manhattan near the UN with their three children. Luke (3 1/2 years) was on Good

Morning America with the author of *Arthur*. Bella (2 years) is already hailing taxis. Rocco (6 weeks) is the Bryant’s youngest grandchild.

Tommy Bryant and his wife Lisa live in Lexington with their four children: Cullen (6 years), Olivia (5 years), Ronan (3 years), and Madeline (1 1/2 years).

Matthew met his wife, Pim, at Dartmouth and they still live nearby in Hopkinton, NY with their two girls: Somer (3 years) and Piya (10 months).

Judy (Bryant) and Dave Duffy live in Belmont with their two children: Emily (3 years) and Nolan (5 months).

The entire family gets together at Claire and Bob’s place on the Cape. In fact, they do lots of things together; the happy grandparents see lots of their grandchildren. “I like best when I play, but help when needed,” said Claire. The most exciting part of grandparenting for her is traveling with them, “especially when I’m just with the children. Exposing them to things their parents don’t have time for, like museums, shows, and libraries.” Claire clearly likes educating them.

Claire reports that “Seeing all our kids as parents is rewarding. The joy they get from their children is another measure of the joy we receive.”

Five grandmothers, 31 grandchildren, and lots of loving; that’s what it’s all about. We wish continued joy to all our neighborhood grandparents and their families.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY BEING PLANNED: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW?

By Bill Berkowitz (*Pelham Terrace*)

This fall I’m planning to begin a project to help us learn more about life in our neighborhood. As this work develops, I’ll be interested in learning your thoughts about neighborhood life, but also your ideas about the best questions to ask and the form of the project itself. What would you like to know?

There are two main goals to this work. One is to find out more about neighborhood life in general — a topic where surprisingly little is known, especially in metropolitan suburban neighborhoods such as

ours. A second goal is more practical and immediate; for perhaps we can learn things that will help make our neighborhood an even better place to live.

To help accomplish these goals, I hope to learn more from you, through both interviews and questionnaires with a representative sample of neighbors over a period of time. If it’s done thoughtfully and respectfully, and that’s the intent, I think this could be both productive and enjoyable for all of us. Of course the results would be shared with you when the work is done, even though that may take a while.

But I also want to make sure that we are asking the right questions, and asking them in the right way. What would you like to learn? What information will be most useful to us? That will help us get the most neighborhood value from the work. So I’ll be very grateful for any suggestions you may have about good questions to ask, or methods to use, or about the project overall. I’ll try to incorporate them as best I can, so that we can learn together.

If you have any ideas, questions, or suggestions of any kind, please be in touch.

I can be reached by postal mail at 12 Pelham Terrace, by phone at 646-6319, or by e-mail at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu. Thanks very much. I’m looking forward to doing some work together that may be interesting and valuable for everyone in the neighborhood.

CONTACT THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

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To make a contribution to The Neighborhood Newsletter: Make checks payable to “Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association” and send to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace Thank you for your support.