



The Neighborhood Newsletter

Volume 17 Number 2

The Blooming Gardens Issue, Summer 2010

IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER MEETING

On **Sunday, June 13**, there will be an important open meeting to discuss the next step for *The Neighborhood Newsletter*. The meeting will begin at 4:00 p.m. in the Drop-In Room at the Senior Center on 27 Maple Street. It's critical that readers who value the publication show up for this get-together, so we hope to see you then!

THE TIE SAYS IT

Helena Halperin (*Gray Street*)

(An interview with Steven Carme, retiring principal of Bishop School)

When you walk into Steve Carme's office at Bishop School, you know something about the man before the first words. It's a colorful office, full of things a kid would love to look at. He's a collector, a sports lover, and a man with kid-friendly tastes. It shows on every surface. Then you look at him. He's impeccably neat, wears a colored shirt, perfectly pressed. But the tie is wild, many colors, and kids of every color. Nothing could show better that this man likes children.

If you're over 50, your elementary school principal wore a quiet suit, white shirt, somber tie, and had only a picture of his family on his desk. Principals have changed, but Steve Carme embodies those changes more than most, and understands his job very differently than your remote Mr. Grimsby did. Although he has 371 children at Bishop School, he tries to make a personal connection with every kid. And the guy must have a lot of "street cred." If he hadn't learned early in life that his true vocation lay in teaching elementary school, he would have been a major league baseball player. He was that good.

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AND THE WINNERS ARE....

If we ever doubted it, the flurry of poems for our spring contest convinced us that we live in a literary hotspot. Our committee (which included teacher and student representatives, male and female, old and young) wished we had more prizes to award. However, we promise to include more student work in the fall. Meanwhile, we're proud to introduce three of the finest young writers in our neighborhood, whose poems follow.

A Drawing

My sister's hair hung over her shoulder
like the night sky. Her brown eyes
focused intently on the swirling colors
making room for themselves
on the pale white page.

A familiar song flowed throughout
the room and the beautiful
singing seemed to come magically
into the paper, turning into shapes
and colors. Her thoughts
danced around on the paper.

My sister's dark hair hung
in its usual spot, over her shoulder.
Her brown eyes glowed with pride.
Those swirling colors had turned
into something magnificent. A drawing.

Aya Burton (*age 10, 4th grade, Newman Way*)

Wild Horses Mountain

In the late setting sun
a mare goes out to foal.
She has twins, a bay and dun,
in the shadows black as coal.

In the early morning breeze
the mare rejoins her band.
Her colts are dancing in the leaves
while all the others stand.

The colts have finally come of age;
they wander now alone.
The bay finds a black mare;
the dun finds a roan.

In the blinding summer blaze
the yearlings have a fight.
They disappear into the haze
returning battle-scarred at night.

On the stormy mountaintop
herds gather, tensions high;
it seems their fight will never stop.
For their mothers fillies cry.

Thunder booms, while overhead
water pours as if from fountains.
Hooves fly, horses die
on Wild Horses Mountain.

Annie Keller (*age 12, 6th grade, Maple Street*)



My Cat, Emma

Softy blackness runs through the grass
hunting for bugs
whiskers twitching against her white cheeks
as she leaps to capture.

Annika Benn (*age 7, 1st grade, Academy Street*)

STILL CARING — WITH CANS

Marianne Curren (*Hillsdale Road*)

Some time ago there was a story here about Madge and Cricket, and how Cricket's can collections on Jason Street were helping Madge to fight cancer and forge a friendship. It's time for an update, and an appeal for help with the project.

Madge continues to get wonderful care at Boston Medical Center, where she will speak on wellness to healthcare professionals and their patients because of her unusually positive attitude. Madge's lung cancer is in remission, although now there is a small tumor in Madge's brain which requires treatment. Madge is still working as a home healthcare worker in Arlington, and says her "work is not through." The funds collected from Cricket's cans help Madge as she gets treatments and remains dedicated to the family she helps.

Cricket wants to thank the neighborhood, and then to remind can donors to check labels, as only the redeemables are useful. Anything that required a 5-cent deposit at purchase can be tossed into the container. As always, people have been generous. The mailman in the truck who left a dozen cans, the Willow School kids who collected from their families under their teacher's guidance and then sent Madge a card, and countless others put about 30,000 cans a year on Cricket's lawn. That's a lot of trips to the Fernald School property, where the recycling center is located.

If any individual or group would like to give Cricket a little help, she would very much appreciate it. The trips to Fernald are only every couple of weeks, but Cricket has been doing the sorting and redeeming work alone for quite some time. And while it's a work of love, it's work that would be quicker and lighter with additional hands. If you are interested, contact Cricket at: cricketblewis@mac.com and she will get back to you.

STAY TUNED...

THE WALL: A WORLD DIVIDED, a film by Eric Stange, will be broadcast on PBS on June 28 (exact time TBD, we don't know yet).



ARE WE SMARTER THAN A SQUIRREL?

Patti LaPlante (*Jason Street*)

For years my husband has nurtured an image of himself enjoying a morning cup of coffee while admiring a variety of birds nibbling seed from a feeder in the back yard. He has attempted many times to make this picture a reality. His efforts have led to the purchase of numerous bird feeders featuring different methods of food delivery and construction materials. We have had plastic cylinders, wooden houses, metal dishes, and just about every other type of contraption you can imagine. All attracted lovely birds and provided a level of contentment to the enthusiastic watcher in our home.

Alas, the joy was short-lived; the feeder soon morphed into a squirrel café. Extraordinary measures were undertaken to place the feeder of the hour in a spot that was unreachable by the bushy-tailed critters. We quickly learned that they were capable of gymnastic maneuvers that would make an Olympic medallist weep in envy. Squirrels can do cartwheels, walk tightropes, and leap like pole-vaulters. They also have the strength of Paul Bunyan (relatively speaking!). One enterprising little guy managed to lift the heavy roof of our “squirrel-proof” birdhouse, climb inside, and hand food out to a toothy accomplice. We would swear that squirrels lined up in the yard, giggled, and pointed at us as we stared in horror from the window. Needless to say, the poor birds spread the word and stayed away from our property. As a result, my husband abandoned his bird dreams.

This past Christmas I became determined to send my husband down the backyard bird watching path again. After extensive research, I found Droll Yankee squirrel-proof feeders with the silly, but descriptive, names of the Flipper, the Tripper, the Whipper, and the Dipper. Each performed an anti-squirrel function that corresponded to its name. I settled on the Dipper, which features four little spring-loaded perches that will support the weight of many lovely birds. However, the chubby squirrels are

“dipped” and dropped if they try to sit on the bars. Happy day! After the feeder was successfully mounted on a branch and filled with seed, we watched in cheerful anticipation. Soon there were cardinals, jays and sparrows lunging merrily. Success!

Not so fast! One small twig near the feeder provided a trapeze-like mechanism for a squirrel to hook his little feet on while he leaned over, grabbed the feeder and stuck his face in the food. A surgical procedure on the twig shut down that acrobatic feat. It looks like we may have a winner. Now the squirrels can only manage to shake a small amount of food onto the ground by shaking the branch while the birds can perch and eat in peace. That is the solution we were seeking all along. The squirrels need to be good neighbors and learn to share instead of hogging.

As annoying as the squirrels are, we truly marvel at their agility, tenacity, and ingenuity. When we are not cursing them, we are laughing at them. Can we definitively say that we are smarter than squirrels? Not yet--we actually fear that a group of them may be consulting with Bela Karoli at this very moment for some tips on new gymnastic tricks!

A TIME OF RENEWAL

It's very late spring, a time of re-growth. And in that spirit, your copy of *The Neighborhood Newsletter* contains a contribution envelope. For this publication to continue, we need your support now; at this point, there is not enough funding for the next issue.

Over the many years of this newsletter's life, readers have always come through with donations of all sizes. Sometimes we asked, but often the dollars were unexpected and unsolicited. Each was appreciated and made a difference. Readers have indicated they still enjoy a free, tangible, printed copy (although there is an ongoing discussion about alternatives). For us to continue to meet the neighborhood's current preference for this grassroots service, we need your help--always in all ways, and now especially, financially. Let's keep *The Neighborhood Newsletter* going strong!

We hope that you can contribute in an amount that's comfortable for you; just put your check in the enclosed envelope and send it back to us. We look forward to hearing from you!

THE FUTURE OF THE PARMENTER SCHOOL

Bill Berkowitz (*Pelham Terrace*)



The status of the Parmenter School has recently changed, and its future is not entirely certain. Here's an update:

After Parmenter closed in the early 1980's, the School Committee maintained ownership of it, though operating authority was transferred to the Arlington Redevelopment Board. For most of the time since, that Board has leased the space to the Arlington Children's Center and the former Ecole Bilingue (now International School of Boston).

In April, however, the School Committee voted to transfer jurisdiction of the Parmenter School to the Town of Arlington, deciding that it no longer had need of Parmenter as a school building. Details of the School Committee's rationale and recommendation are given in a letter from Superintendent Kathleen Bodie to the Committee, found in the Arlington School Department's 2010 Report to the Town.

In parallel with this action, the School Committee placed a warrant article before Town Meeting, specifically recommending transfer of authority to the Board of Selectmen. In May, both the Selectmen and the Town Meeting voted to approve this change. Both Arlington Children's Center and the International School want to stay in their current location, and were supportive of this vote. As a result, the Selectmen now have control of the Parmenter School (and Crosby School in East Arlington as well).

A key question is what happens now. There are a number of possible options, including continuation of the current lease arrangements (seemingly favored by most of those who spoke at Town Meeting), sale to private developers (most likely for market-rate housing), or sale to the current tenants. Some details of the options are given in a report to the Town, by the consulting firm RKG Associates at www.arlingtonma.gov/planning, RKG having been hired to investigate and report on future possibilities for the building. The RKG report was also the focus of a well-attended public meeting held in March at the Senior Center, where opinions on best use varied widely.

The Selectmen's stated intent at this time is to study the situation further before arriving at a deci-

sion. It's apparent that they are sympathetic to the current tenants, though they also want to consider the best long-term financial interest of the Town. They have also stated that they consider the current tenants to be "excellent neighbors with valuable programs that contribute to the strength of the community," although this by itself does not ensure continuation of the present arrangements. For the moment, they plan to extend the existing tenant leases (now scheduled to expire in June, 2011), through June, 2012. What happens after that is not yet known.

So, no final decisions have been made on what will happen to the school, or on the tenants' eventual future. In coming months, public hearings are likely to be held.

Neighbors with viewpoints or suggestions may wish to attend the hearings, to stay in touch with the Board of Selectmen's deliberations on this issue, or to advise them of their own thoughts and opinions.

THE TIE SAYS IT

continued from p.1

He's still a proud citizen of Red Sox nation, but his current participatory sport is golf.

Steve Carme lost his mother when he was fifteen. He went to live with an older sister who had six small children and a teacher husband. Steve came to see teaching as a labor of great love, and learned the rewards of helping young children in his time with those nieces and nephews.

So, it was natural that after his military service he would study to become an elementary school teacher. He has taught in the Arlington schools for 35 years, most of them at Bishop. He has been principal since 1992.

One change we talked about is how daily exposure to video games and other "instant gratification" media has changed kids. He sees less patience, less sustained focus, less willingness to persevere when the problem doesn't yield a quick answer. He was happy to talk about the necessity for teachers to help students learn those habits of mind.

When I asked him about differences he has seen in all those years, he immediately switched to what has not changed. He praised Arlington's willingness to support education, and talked about how important Bridging the Gap funding will be for the future of Arlington's children.

SPRING SPRINGS AN UNWELCOME SURPRISE ON SPRING STREET

David Rosenbaum (*Venner Road*)

“So what are you going to do?” I asked the guy in the yellow DPW slicker as we both watched sewage gush out of the ground from the southeast corner of my backyard and race down Spring Street.

“Well, I’m going home,” the guy said, cheerfully.

Wait. I’m getting ahead of myself. It’s always difficult to know where to begin a story, especially when the story concerns the endless rains that fell last March.

“Endless” is the word I choose and I choose it because that’s what it was. March was the wettest March in the history of Massachusetts Marches with nearly 15 inches of rain (14.87 inches at Logan Airport to be exact). The rain was particularly bad on March 15 when the sewage bubbled up in my backyard and quickly flooded my neighbor’s driveway and garage.

Eventually, the DPW came back, this time in force, and they started digging in my backyard. They uncovered a manhole cover that they said the rain-swollen sewer lines had popped open. They resealed the manhole, reburied it, and all was well.

All was well, that is, until it started raining again.

Two weeks later, on Tuesday, March 30, as the rain came down like cats, dogs, and other small mammals, water began boiling up from the southwest corner of my backyard. It also started gushing from a drain at the intersection of Hillsdale and Spring Streets, turning Spring Street into an angry rapid, again flooding my poor neighbor’s driveway and garage.

Again, I put on my galoshes, grabbed my bumbershoot, and went down to talk to the DPW guys gathered glumly around the gusher.

“So what are you going to do?” I asked a man with a clipboard, hoping that he wouldn’t say he was going home.

He didn’t. Instead he said, “We’re gonna dig until we find what’s wrong.”

“What do you think is wrong?” I asked, innocently.

“I’ll tell you what’s wrong,” he said, acidly. “When this system was built, there were maybe 80 families

living around here. Now there are about 800. The system can’t handle it, that’s what’s wrong.”

The next morning, Wednesday, March 31, the backhoes, bobcats, bull dozers, and trucks appeared, and the DPW started to dig. And as they maneuvered their heavy equipment around Spring Street, the road began to buckle. A giant sinkhole swallowed the rear wheel of a backhoe. Cracks appeared up, down, and across Spring Street.

I put on my mackintosh and went out into the storm to converse with the DPW guys.

“So what are you going to do?” I asked clipboard man.

“We’re gonna dig up the whole street, that’s what,” he said.

And they did.

It turned out that a water main had burst and the rushing water had washed away the supporting earth and gravel beneath Spring Street’s blacktop, causing it to snap, crackle and pop. The DPW fixed the water main and, beginning from the Hillsdale-Spring Street intersection, jack-hammered the curbs, peeled off the blacktop, trucked in new earth and gravel, spread it around, tamped it down, and laid new blacktop. In about five days, Spring Street was good as new.

Some time in April, it stopped raining. According to the *Boston Globe*, repairing the damage caused by the March rains will cost the Commonwealth about \$8.2 million. In Arlington, the DPW estimates that the flood repairs will set the town back about \$180,000.

Me, I fled the country toward the end of April, heading for someplace sunny to dry out. When I returned, I was greeted by the news that the main pipe from the Quabbin Reservoir had burst, contaminating the water supply. By the time I got to the supermarket in search of potable water, the shelves were empty.

I couldn’t find water anywhere.



EARTH DAY CELEBRATION AT MENOTOMY ROCKS PARK

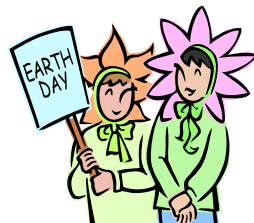
Ellen Reed, with help from Reilly, Cotton, Shuck, and Xoco Reed (*Woodland Road*)

The Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park hosted a day of fun in the park on May 1st. This beautiful spring day started off with a bird walk led by Karsten Hartel. Suzi Lubar organized a bike swap, held on Brantwood Ave., which was hugely popular and something we hope to be able to repeat.

John Pickle oversaw ponding activities in Hills Pond and noted a number of budding park stewards in the midst of the enthusiastic explorers. On the other side of the pond, Carol Band explained the mysteries and importance of the wetland. Judy Weinberg kept us on time with the creation of a giant sun dial in the field. Ellen Reed, with help from Kathy Kiley, helped visitors make plantable paper cards to use as gift cards for Mother's Day while Eileen Eisele and Suzi Lubar helped make pine cone bird feeders. The town supplied composters that Mary Cummings demonstrated along side Lolly Bennett and Jan Ford of Habitat, who helped young biologists discover the composting process in a log. And our own retired rocket scientist, Peter Howard, shot off baking soda rockets with the help of would-be engineers of all ages!

In case anyone got hungry from all of this fun, there were loads of cookies and brownies brought to us by friends and neighbors, and happily sold by Jo Hartel, Judy Belliveau, and MaryAnna Foskett. Richard Goldberg and Clarissa Rowe each graciously helped us all get this off the ground by arranging for tables, and helping us set up and take down and move on!

The event was a chance to spend time in the park doing something different and with new people. For me it was a chance to share something that I hold as very important to our community. We hope to be able to create more opportunities for stewardship of this kind in the park. If you would be interested in participating, please let us know at www.friendsofmenotomy.org.



GOING ELECTRONIC: A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD EXAMPLE

Tabitha Nash (*Bailey Road*)

Editor's Note: We're grateful for Tabitha's article; here's a little more background. In last July's issue, we wrote about the pros and cons of printed vs. electronic newsletters. We'd taken a reader survey, and the responses we received were split closely down the middle. Because many readers do prefer print, because we don't have e-mail addresses for everyone, and especially because we want to reach everyone in our neighborhood, we are continuing with print copies, at least for the moment. That's why we're raising money to do it, as we hope you'll see in this issue, along with a contribution envelope!

But this is an evolving discussion. Tabitha's article describes an online neighborhood option that's certainly worth our attention, as is her point of view.

What do you think? We'll value your comments and suggestions as we move forward. Please send them to jhitesnews@comcast.net.

As an avid reader of The Neighborhood Newsletter, I chuckled a little when I read that they were soliciting funds to run the printing press – a quaint old idea, paper and ink. Like every other newspaper in the country nowadays, I said to myself, they need to go digital. Shortly after that thought, I picked up my new edition of the paper-and-ink Yankee Magazine (March/April 2010) and stumbled upon an article by Bill McKibben, "Making Good Neighbors," about a fellow in Burlington, Vermont, Michael Wood-Lewis, who had started an electronic version of a neighborhood newsletter.

When he was new to his neighborhood and found a sense of community lacking, he solved that problem by creating the Five Sisters Neighborhood Forum, a daily bulletin combining neighborhood news, notices, comments, and classifieds, all rolled into one. The idea caught on quickly, and within a few years 90% of the neighborhood had signed up--to share news, borrow canoes, find dog walkers, start book groups, welcome new folks to the neighborhood, and get important information out, almost instantly. The idea then expanded into a county-wide entity called the Front Porch Forum (www.FrontPorchForum.com), serving 100 neighborhood networks and 15,000 Vermont households.

I found myself envying that Burlington neighborhood. Their forum had vastly improved the sense of community and connection in the neighborhood, while our own newsletter was looking for funds to keep the printing press rolling. Thinking it was time for a great leap forward, I passed the idea on to our newsletter, which thought it would be good to keep discussion going about setting up something similar in our own neighborhood. So please let us know what you think; contact jhitesnews@comcast.net.

You can find Bill McKibben's *Yankee* magazine article online at

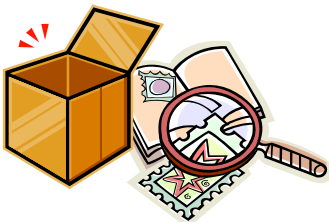
<http://www.yankeemagazine.com/issues/2010-03/features/local-networking-vt>.

LETTERBOXING

MaryAnna Foskett (*Brantwood Road*)

This year, two of Menotomy Rocks Park's older stately trees were felled by a combination of weather and age--"Old Man Willow" fell onto the ice of Hills Pond (look for its large stump on the pond periphery). An old red oak fell across the Pond path early this spring. That red oak tree also happened to be a letterboxing site--it had a large cavity near its base which hid the letterbox, put there by "The Brothers Korn."

Letterboxing is an outdoor pursuit with similarities to orienteering. A small box containing a stamp and visitors' book is hidden, and a clue is written to lead others to its position. Clues may be as simple as a map reference, terrain cues, or may be more cryptic. When a letterbox is found, the letterboxer takes a copy of the stamp, as well as leaving their own personal print in the visitors' book. Letterboxing began on Dartmoor in the U.K. but is now popular all over the world. There are other letterboxes in the Park; to find directions to them, check the web at www.letterboxing.org.



THEATER NOTES FROM ARLINGTON FRIENDS OF THE DRAMA

Judy Weinberg (*Venner Road*)

Membership Secretary for AFD

The Arlington Friends of the Drama has just one show left in this 2009-2010 season, the theater's 87th! Running for two weekends this June is *The Odd Couple*. We're probably all familiar with the long-running sitcom, but the Tony Award winning play, originally mounted in 1965, carries the comedy and wit of Neil Simon, one of America's most prolific and successful playwrights.

The play centers around Felix Ungar, a neurotic neat freak, who is thrown out by his wife and moves in with his friend Oscar Madison, a messy sports-writer. Other characters in this 8 person show are Murray the cop, several poker buddies, and the Pigeon sisters who live upstairs.

The show runs the weekends of June 11-13 and 18-20, Friday and Saturday at 8PM and Sunday at 4PM. Tickets are only \$18.

Next season at AFD begins this fall, and the four-show slate is:

October: *A Class Act*. This musical about musicals champions the life of Edward Kleban, the lyricist of *A Chorus Line*.

January: *The Sweetest Swing in Baseball*. Artist Dana Fielding decides life in the mental ward isn't so bad, so devises a scheme to ensure her health insurance continues to cover her stay.

March: *Curtains*. A musical comedy whodunit set in Boston, this story follows the fallout when a very untalented leading lady is murdered during her opening night curtain call.

May: *Table Manners*. The great British playwright Alan Ayckbourn delivers pure hilarity in this play, a part of his famous "Norman Conquests" trilogy.

A subscription for all four shows next season is \$60, an average of just \$15 per ticket. Please visit www.afdtheatre.org if you'd like more information, or certainly feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

This gem of a theater is right in our Neighborhood! If you've never been you're in for a treat.

REAL ESTATE

Judy Weinberg (*Venner Road and RE/MAX*)

Aah, spring. Truly a glorious time of year. And, for many people, a time to pick up and move.

March through June is by far the busiest season for home sales, for several reasons. Properties look great and are most appealing when the flowers and trees are in bloom. Also, families don't want to uproot their kids during the school year, so often start looking in the spring in order to be settled in their new home by September. This spring is no different--it's been a very robust season for sales in Arlington, and in our Neighborhood.

I love the facts and figures of sales activity, so here are a few:

In all of Arlington, there are only 43 single family homes for sale. There are 78 homes that have accepted offers, and 42 that have sold in just the past 2 months. The average days on market for those under contract and recently sold are less than 60 days. This low inventory and high activity indicates a true seller's market.

Nationally and locally, 2005 represented the peak of real estate prices. Luckily, our drop from then hasn't been precipitous. From '05 to '07, single family homes sales for each of those two years had about a 2% drop in average sale price, and the numbers have held steady since then. Condo and two-family homes didn't fare quite as well, but the price drops weren't dire. We're very lucky indeed.

This issue of *The Neighborhood Newsletter* was produced by Dolores Schueler and Marianne Curren. Producers of the next issue will be determined at the *Neighborhood Newsletter* meeting on June 13.

**Your suggestions and or comments
are always welcome. E-mail:
Jhitesnews@comcast.net**

Financial contributions may be made by check payable to "Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association." Please send to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace. Thank you for your support!

HOME SALES

Address

Sale Price

Single Family Homes

13 Addison Street	\$1,182,000
38 Bellevue Road	\$867,500
89 Churchill Avenue	\$749,500
123 Gloucester Street	\$420,000
17 Gray Street	\$630,000
90 Gray Street	\$949,000
34 High Haith Road	\$662,000
123 High Haith Road	\$490,000
36 Hillsdale Road	\$703,000
20 Jason Street	\$862,500
184 Jason Street	\$699,000
5 Morton Road	\$435,000
17 Ottawa Road	\$488,000
93 Pleasant Street	\$625,000
188 Pleasant Street	\$600,000

Condominiums

18 Hopkins Road	\$556,100
60 Pleasant Street, #101	\$212,500
100 Pleasant St, #31	\$380,000
125 Pleasant Street, #206	\$275,000
135 Pleasant Street, #15	\$375,000
144 Pleasant Street, #1	\$595,000

SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK

Judy Weinberg (*Venner Road*)

Mark your calendars for a favorite summertime tradition! The heralded teen troupe, Rebel Shakespeare Company, will perform a family-friendly abridged version of *Othello* in Menotomy Rocks Park on Sunday, August 1st at 5:00 pm. We hope you can join us for this 10th annual gathering--bring a picnic!