



Newsletter – June 7th, 2003

New Coalition Address

Your Coalition now has a new permanent mailing address. Please send renewals, letters, and all future correspondence to

West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition
PO Box 84
Naperville, IL 60566-0084

Next Meeting June 11

The regularly scheduled meeting of the WSGSPC will take place Wednesday June 11th beginning at 7:30 P.M. The meeting will take place at the Naperville Township Building, 139 Water St., on Naperville's beautiful Riverwalk. All members and the general public are welcome. Vacancies exist on the board and those curious about becoming new board members are encouraged to attend. Come and get involved!

Message from George Bennett- Coalition President

Greetings to all! I am both pleased and honored to have inspired the confidence you have placed in me by electing me to be the new President. Our April organizational meeting gave the Board ample opportunity to reflect on the success of our group over the last three years. We owe a great debt to our outgoing President Fred Turek, without whom the nuts and bolts of running a volunteer organization would be impossible. Fred has accepted the position of Vice-President, and has agreed to continue to edit this newsletter and maintain all of our membership data. Our coalition exists primarily to prevent development of the garden plots and Sportsman's woods by bringing together a group of people who agree on the importance of greenspace in central Naperville. Without the support of those of you reading this, our members, we would not be taken seriously in the debate over policies affecting the West St. properties. Fred's important contribution to this end continues to merit the admiration of all of us. We also are truly fortunate to have many other dedicated Board members who have once again agreed to serve for the next two years. Every Board member deserves high praise for their volunteer efforts, but it is especially

important to identify the officers who run our group. It is not possible for a volunteer group to exist without discipline and order, and our Treasurer Wendy Mouche has brought vital financial stability to the table. Always aware that membership dues must fund our activities for the following 12 months, Wendy has also brought extensive knowledge of West Street's environmental biodiversity and hydrology to our coalition. Equally important to our Coalition is Dan Bennett. Dan is a founding member who handles most of our public relations activities, contacts members of the press, and acts as our recording secretary. A dedicated gardener, Dan and his son Teddy have been part of the WSGSPC since the beginning,

Other founding members who will continue on the Board have each brought their unique individual contributions to the Coalition. These members include Chris Wilkinson, Elaine Fisher, Jim Cavanaugh, and Nan Kroll. Warren Gill, although not a founding member, will also continue to serve as he provides vital political information to our group. Thomas O'Hale, has stepped down from his Board position, but remains a member and deserves a good deal of praise for his service over the last year and a half. Teresa Ryan will continue as our special Consultant.

Having been elected President it is important that everyone is aware that I plan to make minimal changes to our group. I have been involved from the beginning and written much of the newsletter's content, so if you are reading this, my views are already well known to you. I remain convinced of the IMPORTANT Mission the Coalition endeavors to accomplish. We are the only politically involved group trying to prevent development of the garden plots.

We have gone to battle defending the garden plots from development in 1999 and early 2000, at a time before we even had a name when a concrete skate park seemed ready to change the garden plots forever. The following spring of 2001 we prevented a line of trees from being cut down along the Sportsman's access road. At the same time two articles in the "Daily Herald", one on the front page, encouraged the Park District to clean up illegal dumping in the garden plot wetlands. Then a year ago in February and March of 2002 we convincingly pinched an obnoxious redevelopment plan from even being officially introduced. This plan involved roads, buildings, a fifty- percent reduction in the number of garden plots, and the elimination of the Sportsman's

Club and surrounding woods. It deserved to die and we killed it by petitioning the City Council. During those meetings at City Hall we also introduced, thanks to Councilman Douglas Krause, a land use ordinance which would have given the West St. properties permanent protection. Unfortunately we were not able to find a second city Councilman to sponsor our restrictive land use ordinance, but the land which we formed to protect is very little changed in the last 3 years. So far we have enjoyed a considerable level of success. Let's keep it going.

Much still needs to be done. The land occupied by the Garden Plots and Sportsman's woods remains in the eyes of many would be developers. The Park District's Attitude and Interest Survey from 2002 did not reflect positively on the users of the Garden Plots, and recently published statistics indicate that 30% of the plots are not being used this season. Our coalition prefers to stress that there are 450 families or individuals (450 plots have been rented for 2003) that are benefiting from their gardening experiences at Naperville's unique community gardens. With your continued support and involvement we plan to work hard so that future generations of Napervilleans will have the same recreational opportunities on West St. that we have today. A sincere thanks to all of you for being on board as we move ahead.

New permanent address

As stated at the beginning of this piece, the WSGSPC now has a new, exclusive, and permanent mailing address. This is the result of the need to add stability to the coalition over the long haul. The previous address had been made available to the Coalition for the last three years thanks to the generosity of one of our most actively involved members. Then, as some members discovered first hand, a number of renewals were unexpectedly returned to sender at the beginning of our annual renewal campaign. The problem was first discovered in mid-April when Coalition member Steve Grobl placed his "returned to sender" renewal in George Bennett's mailbox. Board members Christine Wilkinson and Fred Turek responded swiftly by assembling an emergency mailing received by all members. Thanks to this postage paid renewal mailing, donated by **Christine Wilkinson**, a large majority of members have already responded. We are humbled by your continued confidence in us and assure you that you can now correspond with the coalition at: P.O. Box 84, Naperville, IL 60566. You may also call 630-637-9283 or 630-357-0289, and as always we invite you to contact any board member with any comment or suggestion.

Time to Renew for 2003-04 if you haven't already!

The membership year runs from May 1st to April 30th. If you have not renewed already, please do so now! Your membership in the coalition helps in MANY ways.

Those who have not renewed may receive one more newsletter, but so many of you have renewed that we in no way wish to inconvenience you. Nonetheless, we do value the support of ALL of our members, past and present. We are not here for the your money, but the reality is we could not stay here doing this without it. **So please, if you have been putting it off there is no time better than the present to place your dues in the mail** (or get them to any board member) Dues are \$10 or a different amount of your choice, lower or higher. Your help allows the board to continue our current activities and remain prepared in the event of adverse developments. As always we point out that views expressed by the WSGSPC may not be those of individual coalition members, and as always we welcome all members at our bi-monthly meetings, special events, and as guest columnists for the newsletter. Special financial contributions are also welcome and very much needed, and will be acknowledged in the newsletters if the contributor would like.

Signs Unveiled at Garden Plot Booth

In the last newsletter an appeal went out asking for assistance in the rehabilitation of the Coalition's "Plant a Row for the Hungry" Booth. Although the condition of the actual structure is still decent, the signs had become unusable due to vandalism and weather. Because of the substantial costs involved with creating new signs, the Coalition is very happy to announce that a most generous donation has been received from board member **Christine Wilkinson** with additional support provided by board member **Warren Gill**. The new signs were posted on Thursday June 5th, and they inaugurate the upcoming harvest at the Garden Plots. Now more than at any time in the last decade, the need for programs such as Plant a Row for the Hungry has become apparent. The large number of jobs lost in Naperville has resulted in a 40% increase in those being served by the local Loaves and Fishes food pantry, according to the pantry's Executive Director Joanne Mitrenga. The West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition is proud to partner with the Naperville Park District and Naperville Community Gardeners (formally the Naperville Gardeners Club) in the valuable effort to get high quality fresh food to those in need when it otherwise would have simply spoiled on the vine. Please feel free to drop off items at the booth as the 3rd annual summer long food drive gets underway at the garden plots. The next time your travels take you down West St. take a moment to stop and look at your coalition's booth first hand. Your membership helped make it possible.

Volunteer needed for gardening

The WSGSPC rents two garden plots which produce food that is donated in large part to the Plant a Row for the Hungry Program. The plots require constant attention (weeding and watering) and there is still room available for new planting. So bring your gloves and tomato plants to the Coalitions Plot and be a part of

gardening at the Community Garden Plots. Interested members should please call George Bennett at 630-357-0289 ASAP.

Earth Day becomes Arbor Day

Well Earth Day didn't exactly become Arbor Day, Arbor Day just became the Day of our 4th Annual Spring Event. The change was necessary since Easter fell the same weekend as Earth Day, making necessary a week long delay in our event. Luckily the weather cooperated and for those who came out Wendy Mouche's hot, freshly baked corn bread was a real treat! After initial conversation we were ready to begin our Adopt-a-Highway cleanup effort which was followed by a wetland tour identifying several non-native plant species, such as teasel, which may one day be removed.

The Adopt-a Highway program is now in its third year, and the genesis of our effort originated thanks to member Jay Spitz. Our semi-annual events continue to generate significant positive publicity for us and for the cause of protecting the West St. properties.

The following article about our event appeared on page 3 of the Sunday, April 27th "Daily Herald". It was written by reporter Sarah Fowler. Thanks are due to **Dan Bennett** for doing his part in contacting the press. The following is definitely worth reading!

"Whether it was the invasive garlic mustard plant or simply discarded biology homework, Naperville residents were ready to tackle almost anything Saturday to spruce up the city. Sunny skies and mild temperatures created an ideal day for several volunteer cleanup projects, including one at the Riverwalk and another along West St. by the community garden plots.

Volunteers gathered early Saturday at the [Riverwalk's] Grand Pavilion to clear the banks of garlic mustard plants. Garlic mustard is a green leafy invader with seed clusters that blossom and reproduce rapidly. "You want to get the seeds out before they spread into more seeds," said Francie Chirico, tugging a handful of plants from the soil. "Our sole purpose today is pulling these mustard plants because they are so invasive". Francie Chirico said contributing to the community is something she and her husband Steve, a board member with NCO Youth and Family Services, try to stress to their children through volunteering. "We involve the kids in everything we do," she said. "All of the generations before us have had this big vision of what Naperville could be and we want to continue that on to the next generation".

For members of the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition, picking up trash along a nearly mile-long stretch of road by Naperville Central High School was a slightly voyeuristic experience. "We get an interesting look into the lives of Napervillians," said **Wendy Mouche**, one of the volunteers clad in orange vests and carrying trash bags. Mouche said the volunteers found everything from students' papers to a man's tie, to a

page from Ray Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451". Two years ago the group even found a pair of fisherman's waders they assumed drifted in during a heavy rain.

Coalition President **George Bennett** said the event is part of an ongoing effort to preserve the street's greenspace and protect the community garden plots, which are managed by the Park District and rented by individuals or groups during the spring and summer. "We formed to preserve the natural environment here and the garden plots, he said. **"One of the reasons we're doing things like this is to make sure people know we're here for the long run, and we like it the way it is."**

Bennett said his group formed three years ago in an effort to preserve the natural environment surrounding the garden plots. The group organizes three cleanup projects a year as part of the Adopt-a -Street program through Naperville's public works department. The timing of the April event typically coincides with the week of Earth Day.

Volunteer **Katy Gill** said she got involved because she thinks greenspace is part of what makes Naperville unique. "A lot of suburbs don't have as many parks and green spaces as Naperville, so it's important to keep this," she said. Her husband **Warren Gill** said he sees the nearness of the garden plots to the downtown area as a real asset. **"We're a city of 140,000 people," he said. "To be able to go one mile from downtown and show this off...says a lot."** ----Sarah Fowler, "Daily Herald"

Centennial Beach readies for new season and Skate Park?

During the two and a half years that Executive Director Ken Brissa has been leading the park district he has made the rehabilitation of Centennial Beach a top priority. Attendance has fallen at the 72-year-old facility even though Naperville's population continues to increase. The district even went so far as to organize the Centennial Beach Committee, which is now disbanded, having given their final report more than a year ago. One of the recommendations NOT included among the committee's recommendation was a skate park for Centennial Park. This was true in large part because the committee only considered improvements inside the fenced beach area. However, development on the southwest perimeter of the beach may indeed affect the users of the swimming facility. As we all should recall, in February of 2000 the City Council would not let a Skate Park be built on approximately 20% of the garden plots as a majority was convinced the remaining 80% would be negatively affected. The issue is and was a great deal more complex than this, but the parallel is only somewhat misleading. A few more words deserve to be said about the Centennial Beach skate park facility in this newsletter. Please read on.

The WSGSPC has **no opinion** regarding skateboarding, skateboard park site selection, or policies governing the operation of these parks. Our only position is that the

1999 attempt to build on the garden plots was wrong. We oppose any additional non-passive development along and west of West St. To this end it is tempting to applaud the Park District for finally moving forward on a location which may forever prevent a similar facility from appearing on the garden plots. However, skate boarding is only one of the many needs the district has identified in its 2002 Attitude and Interest survey. Drawing from this survey, coupled with budgetary considerations, the district is now assembling a 5 year capitol plan which will identify and prioritize viable and desirable projects (a workshop is scheduled June 16th on the capitol plan). The skate park at Centennial Beach will cost about \$400,000 to build and become the districts 2nd such facility. The facility at 95th St. at Frontier Park is beginning its third year of operation.

It is extremely likely that the Park Board of Directors will approve the Centennial Beach project at their June 12th regular meeting. In May, at a meeting where the Park Board could have given its final approval to the site, only 3 people voiced their opposition to the location. This is a far cry from the more than 50 people who were at a June 1999 meeting opposing the construction on the garden plots. Despite legal threats from one resident, the probability is that the project has reached the point of no return. A larger crowd was expected to object at a special meeting June 4th. Results of that evening were not available as this newsletter went to press, but whatever may have occurred it is unlikely to have any impact on the final decision which may have been made months ago.

The Skate Park at Centennial Beach buys time and some protection for the garden plots, but is it a solid policy decision? WSGSPC President George Bennett served on the Park District's Skate Board Park Committee in 1999-2000, and he was convinced at that time that the park district would be best served by two skate parks, but not at Centennial Beach. One of the parks was already slated for Frontier Park on the south side, while the other could have been constructed without opposition at Nike Park's north side location. Bennett, as well as local homeowners associations, thought construction at Centennial Beach would generate more skating on the Riverwalk, increasing accidents with walkers and elevating vandalism, which had already become a problem. This is a view shared by outgoing Riverwalk Commission President Cliff Preston who has frequently voiced concern over the Centennial Beach site. Additionally, WSGSPC board member Warren Gill did not advocate a park at Centennial Beach during his recent election bid.

The Park District will need to aggressively accept the challenge of operating the new centrally located Skate Park. Not only will there be intense scrutiny from those living near the facility, but the location means that there will inevitably be interaction between skating youngsters and the diverse cross section of the Chicago area which uses the Riverwalk on a daily basis. Park District Police need to be prepared, but should never be too zealous and overreact. All Napervilleans must encourage their

children to respect both private and public property while conducting themselves with civility. If this happens Centennial Beach will no longer be just for the swimmer, but also for the skater, and a large number of young people will experience the thrill of using a new, state of the art arena for their growing "extreme" sport.

DuPage Clean and Beautiful renamed "Keep DuPage Beautiful"

DuPage Clean and Beautiful, a group dedicated to encourage Adopt-a Highway efforts similar to what the WSGSPC conducts, has been renamed Keep DuPage Beautiful. This anti-litter group, founded in 1982, is now affiliated with "Keep America Beautiful" which originated in the 1950's and is best known for its "Crying Indian" public service campaign in the 1970's. In addition to its Adopt-a Highway initiative, the group has sponsored litter free events at local festivals, partnered with breast cancer advocacy groups to plant pink tulips around the county, and given presentations to school groups about replacing one time use products with reusable food containers. Most importantly, Keep DuPage Beautiful wants to bring attention and respect to the many volunteers whose work sometimes seems ignored. "Sometimes things peter out if volunteers think nobody notices or nobody cares," said Executive Director Chris Maxwell. "But we know we have a useful function and we know a lot of people support us". To contact Keep DuPage Beautiful please call 630-655-0808. -----Credit for the above to Diana Wallace of the "Daily Herald".

Spring means new life for wildlife

Mary Wolff of Hawthorne Woods had a very atypical Memorial Day weekend. After spotting an abandoned newborn fawn in a neighbor's yard she took it in to feed it and protect it from coyotes. Feeding and taking wild animals into your home is not normally recommended, as most wildlife babies who become separated from their mothers typically find them again. However, in the case of Mary Wolff and the fawn known as Missy, Missy's mother never came back and Missy adopted Mary's garage as her temporary spring home. After a week Missy was turned over to a trained animal handler who will care for the deer until she is mature enough to be released into the woods.

During the spring and early summer the chances of coming upon a seemingly abandoned wildlife baby are actually quite high. Young wild animals are not always constantly watched by their parents, and in the course of spending time alone or with their siblings they may become separated and temporarily helpless. In the vast majority of cases this separation is only temporary, and the animals should be left alone despite a nearly irresistible temptation to come to their "rescue". This is because wild animals typically do not thrive in human care. However it should not be forgotten that the outdoor environment into which animals are born is severe and inhospitable. Most young animals never make it to

adulthood, and if they did overcrowding and starvation could result. The reality of life is sobering.

One of the most common over-populated species in Naperville is the giant Canadian goose. This time of year "clutches" of newborn goslings can be seen waddling between their parents. Since geese now are not migrating as they used to, it is common for well-intentioned folks to feed them, especially in the spring when the goslings make the family appear both cute and cuddly. Brook McDonald, Executive Director of the Naperville based Conservation Foundation, encourages limited contact with geese and their goslings. "Frankly, when people feed the geese, their hearts are in the right place, but people would be better off letting the geese fend for themselves with their traditional diet, which includes plants, snails, and insects."

There are a few cases when wildlife babies could use your help, and the help does not need to be as dramatic as what Mary did for Missy the fawn. Featherless, downy, or incompletely feathered birds can fall from their nests where they would soon become a meal for a predator such as a cat or a coyote. Most birds, contrary to popular belief, do not have an appreciable sense of smell and will not abandon their young if they perceive human scent. This means that if you find a helpless young bird, put on gloves, search for the nest which will likely be near by, and attempt to replace the bird in its nest. If you hear squawking do not worry; it is certainly the concerned parent who will soon be overjoyed to have a full nest once again!

If you come upon what you believe is an abandoned baby opossum, fox, squirrel, or raccoon wait overnight to see if their parents return. If it is obvious that they are orphaned or injured, DuPage County has an excellent resource for caring animal lovers. The Willowbrook Wildlife Center in Glen Ellyn can offer advice over the phone and may be able to except and care for the animal until it can again be released into the wild. Willowbrook is open daily 9-5 and can be reached at 942-6200. ----Credits: Russell Lissau of the "Daily Herald", Matt Baron of the "Chicago Tribune", and George Bennett.

Morton Arboretum opens new Prairie Center

Already in the midst of constructing a new main visitor center, the Morton Arboretum inaugurated a new Schulenberg Prairie visitor station on Saturday May 31st. The Schulenberg Prairie station may serve as a model for the type of interpretive center which one day may stand on the garden plot wetland-prairie, and until then the Morton Arboretum will serve as an extremely valuable resource for the WSGSPC's drive towards prairie restoration. Those who gathered for inauguration festivities at the Schulenberg enjoyed guided walks, crafts, and folk music performances by "Canaries of the Prairie". Children who assembled with their parents were allowed to gather armfuls of woodland phlox, columbine,

and other native plants which [were grown in a different location].

First planted by Ray Schulenberg in 1962, the arboretum designed the new visitor station to make the area more accessible to the public. "This brings the prairie to a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise see it," said Karl Knecht who along with his wife has been involved in various efforts to save undeveloped areas. The Schulenberg prairie is one of the most complete examples of a genuine native landscape found in Illinois. The Arboretum will host a number of educational events throughout the summer as well as a "Summer Solstice Celebration" on June 21st. For information call the Lisle museum of trees at 630-719-2468. ----Credit to Susan Stevens of the "Daily Herald".

Changes abound at Springbrook Prairie

By far the largest self-contained wildlife preserve close to the garden plots is the Springbrook Prairie. The massive expanse runs between 75th and 87th, and Arrow Estates to Modaff. Managed by the DuPage County Forest Preserve District it is from this location that the deer found in Hobson West has probably spent the previous evening. A decade ago there were plans to turn the preserve into Dragon Lake, which would have been a significant artificial body of water and forever altered the area. Now, as new gravel trails encircle Springbrook, and a new visitor center is built along 83rd St. west of Book Rd., plans have returned for the creation of an artificial wetland. Many experts suggest that this will simply restore the area to a condition equivalent to the environment found before pioneer farmers laid ceramic tiles, which drained the area. This new wetland would be located north and west of the intersection of 83rd and Book Rd., and although it may be large and controversial, it is far smaller than Dragon Lake would have been. The WSGSPC will monitor developments at Springbrook Prairie, and an expanded column will appear in these pages when the August addition is written.

Greenspace Coalition Information

Mission Statement *The West Street Green Space Preservation Coalition resolves to defend the existing green space west of and adjoining West Street against incompatible development and encourage and promote programs and amenities that foster conservation, honor historical tradition and preserve the area for passive use.*

More on Our Mission Our focus is to not lose any greenspace ground on the 4 properties on west side of West Street. (Garden Plots, Sportsman's Park, Von-Oven Scout Camp, Soccer Fields/Forest on Oswego. Support current uses that keep it green, and no more construction, lights, pavement or new high intensity

uses. No reduction in trees, and additional uses should utilize the green or natural values of the properties.

Contact Information

See info in letterhead
Our web site is: www.greenspace.koolhost.com

Board of Directors

Dan Bennett	George Bennett 357-0289
Jim Cavanaugh	Elaine Fisher
Nan Kroll	Chris Wilkinson
Wendy Mouche	Warren Gill
Fred Turek	Thomas O'Hale

President: George Bennett

Vice President: Fred Turek

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Secretary: Dan Bennett

Newsletter Content: George Bennett, Fred Turek, Wendy Mouche & Others

Newsletter Editor: Fred Turek

Public Relations: Dan Bennett

Special Consultant: Teresa Ryan

Webmaster: Elaine Fisher

Membership

Membership is open to all individuals, families and organizations who would like to support our mission (see mission statement). Dues are \$10 or your choice of a different amount (lower or higher) A membership application is available to facilitate joining. *The WSGSC is always careful to note that its viewpoints on individual topics do not necessarily reflect those of individual members and member organizations.*