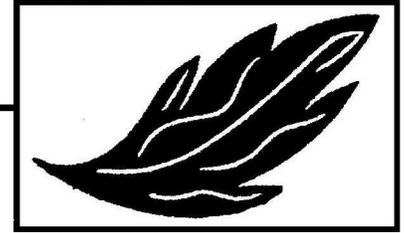


# *West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition*

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## **Newsletter – December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

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### **Coalition meeting Wednesday Dec.10, 7:30 P.M.**

The December regular meeting of the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition will come to order at 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>. The location is the boardroom of the Naperville Township Building, 135 water St., just east of City Hall on Naperville's beautiful Riverwalk. Meetings are scheduled as Board Member events, but are open to all members, and have been open to the public in the past. If you have suggestions or comments on how we can best accomplish our mission, plan to attend the meeting or get in touch with any member of the board. Any proposed action items from non-board members will be advanced to the beginning of the agenda, directly after the report from our Treasurer.

### **Message from the President**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Fall Fling took place on Saturday October 18<sup>th</sup>. The weather was good, Knoch Park was at near capacity with young football players and their parents, and the coalition's member participation was sufficient to once again satisfy our Adopt-A-Highway requirements for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight year. As mentioned in October's newsletter, the Fall Fling and Earth Day have become two permanent semi-annual events in the Coalition's calendar. They do some good, for our mission and Naperville generally. Although we always have a revolving (but reliable) level of attendance from Board Members, special thanks are in order to the James and Mary Jo Braun family, who attended the Fall Fling for the first time! I always mention that the day is not completely about Adopt-A Highway. I do so because there are many opportunities for a family to enjoy a morning together, with other like-minded individuals trying to protect open space on West St.

Our events are a chance to socialize, have some coffee, apples, pastry, and juice, and just relax at the Garden Plots, truly one of Naperville's most beautiful locations! As well, we have yet to have an event rained out, which means members can take advantage of our good fortune and plan to attend with confidence, as I'm certain our luck will continue.

Just before the end of the gardening season, a call came in on the Coalition's phone line. It was from Clare Kron, a gardener, who along with her husband Carl had grown an enormous surplus of produce to donate for "Plant a Row for the Hungry". At about noon on the morning of

our Fall Fling, Wendy Mouche and I were taking it easy around the booth when Carl Kron appeared with a wheelbarrow full of vegetables. And he had more, lots more! So much that I doubt it was accurately weighed. The following Monday the harvest was donated to the very grateful volunteers at Loaves and Fishes Pantry. Thank you Kron family!

I am very pleased to be able to present to you this month, a well-written guest essay by one of the gardeners responsible for this bounty, Clare Kron. Clare presents a fresh and interesting perspective for those of you who have become accustomed to my prose over the last three or four years. Additionally, Clare Kron's piece is interesting to read, so put aside a few minutes and enjoy!

Winter typically is a slow period for the WSGSPC, if for no other reason than activity at the Garden Plots has come to an end. I typically confine my WSGSPC work to attending local meetings of the Park District and City Council, but a year ago we decided to hold a special event called the Winter Warm-Up. We scheduled the event for a Saturday afternoon at the end of January, and with help from the local papers we invited the community to attend. Somehow, after two weeks when the mercury didn't reach the freezing mark, January 25<sup>th</sup> proved a cloudless day with little wind! We barbecued at Sportsman's Clubhouse and did our best to convey our mission to those who attended. Although I can't speak for all present that impressive January day, I'm confident a good time was had by all.

What will we plan this winter? If you have any ideas please attend the December meeting on the December 10<sup>th</sup>, or talk to a board member. Since our activities are driven by the volunteerism of members, we will do only what members favor.

So please enjoy the features of this newsletter, ask a neighbor to join our group, and most of all, enjoy a happy and healthy Christmas Holiday Season.

Sincerely,

George Bennett

**Group which inspired Adopt-a-Highway  
closes its doors**

It was member Jay Spitz who first proposed the WSGSPC's Adopt-A Highway program, but for the last 20 year it has been Keep DuPage Beautiful (formerly DuPage Clean and Beautiful) that has recruited and coordinated beautification programs throughout DuPage County. In our newsletter of June 7, 2003 we reported on the group's efforts to re-organize. It is now with regret that we report on the group's final days. The anti-litter group, founded in 1982 with ties to "Keep America Beautiful" that originated in the 1950's, closed its doors Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>.

"It was strictly a financial decision" said Marti Sladek, vice-chairwoman of Keep DuPage beautiful. "Membership organizations such as this one are struggling for individual and family support, but these donations are, unfortunately, simply not enough to meet overhead and sustain programs," continued Sladek.

Keep DuPage Beautiful not only produced publicity for the WSGSPC's first Adopt-a-Highway effort, it also coordinated such efforts throughout DuPage, regularly participated in the DuPage River Sweep and the Great American Cleanup with the Conservation Foundation, and pioneered environmental education programs in the public school system. In the 1980's, Keep DuPage Beautiful worked with environmental organizations and waste disposal companies to make recycling programs universally available. Most recently, in the summer of 2003, it led "Plant It Pink-Gardens of Hope", a tulip-planting project to promote breast cancer awareness. The tulips will emerge next spring.

Despite closing its doors Sladek indicated there are still a number of groups left capable of filling Keep DuPage Beautiful's shoes. "I think the thing to keep in mind is that there are still places for people to go in DuPage County if they're interested in our kinds of programs". Hopefully, on a limited scale true to its mission, the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition will be one of those groups.

Credit- Tim Waldorf of "The Naperville Sun", adopted by George Bennett.

### **Forest Preserve District purchases 26-acres**

The black-crowned night herons and great egrets living in western DuPage County just increased their habitat by 26 acres. DuPage County Forest Preserve Commissioners approved a 5.7 million deal Tuesday to buy farmland on the east corner of Eola Rd. and Liberty St. in Aurora. The property is adjacent to the 82-acre Aurora/Liberty forest preserve. The preserve is maintained as a natural area that provides upland grassland and wetland habitat for more than 200 native plant and animal species, including nesting sites for great blue herons and great egrets. The black-crowned night heron, an endangered species in Illinois, also has been observed on the site, district officials said.

"The real benefit of this property is the wildlife, " said Forest Preserve Commissioner Carl Schultz. "Adding

another 26acres does improve our ability to foster a quality habitat."

(Shultz recently announced he would seek re-election to the forest preserve commission, representing geographically the 5<sup>th</sup> district including the West St. properties.)

Written by Susan Stevens, "Daily Herald".

### **Gardening with Honor**

Special Guest Article by Clare Kron

Gardening is a celebration and an honoring of life itself. To recognize the direct relationship between our animated fleshly existence and the slow motion activity of plant growth is far more than the simple knowledge of dependencies. Yes, I cannot exist in my earthly form without the photosynthesized energy from chlorophyll-ed life forms, directly or indirectly. This is evolution's grand production with no input required from human intellect. Therefore, a conscious interaction becomes a living art form: the creation of life from the paired media of soil, seeds and human hands.

How can we honor all these elements, not merely use them as a means to an end? The form of gardening that my husband, Carl, and I have adopted seeks to answer this question to the fullest extent. The natural dance of healthy life feeding on life must respect the living beings on every level. The soil potentially teems with microorganisms that assist the intake of nutrients into the plants. In traditional Native American understanding—a way of thinking adopted by my husband and I in conjunction with many years of non-profit involvement in Native issues—nothing is inanimate and all elements of creation have a right to exist, including the balance of prey and predator. Enriching the soil, therefore, would need to introduce more of or additional microbes or nutrients without destroying the basic fabric of soil health. The most reliable approach to supporting this balance is to use organic amendments only, thus we freely add horse manure, compost, peat moss and straw mulch. Surrounded by plots that may contain inorganic fertilizers and pesticides prevent us from achieving a truly organic garden, and we are avid supporters of developing a separate organic garden space.

Inherent in the Native world view is the concept of giving something back for everything received with the core understanding that life involves a cyclical give and take. A typical on-the-spot method is to leave a pinch of tobacco—a sacred herb—whenever a plant is picked, the visible sign of gratitude to Mother Earth that sustains us and that we are responsible for preserving the balance of give and take. The sister concept to this practice is the give-away. Among the traditional Lakota (Sioux) peoples, major events would be marked by a giving away of one's finest possessions, especially to elders, widows, orphans and the disabled who had no source for acquiring necessities. The system ensured that the able-bodied provided for the less fortunate which

upheld the cohesiveness of the entire nation. Contributions to *Plant A Row for the Hungry* are a modern expression of this practice, with the careful selection of the best produce in the garden, not merely leftovers. My husband, Carl, rented two additional plots for this purpose, and the crops were sorted so that the malformed and poorly developed fruits were removed and used as our personal harvest. The attitude nurtured through this practice supports optimal production on all levels—size, appearance and nutritional quality—so that everyone from grower to recipient can enjoy the best food possible. The main goal is health on all levels and our threefold objective is completed upon sharing: respect for the earth, caregivers of our bodies, and the extension of care to others as an acknowledgment that all people are interconnected or, as the Lakota say, we are all related.

Our biggest limitation to fulfilling our goal has been the practice of exploding fireworks over the garden space every July 4<sup>th</sup>. Our first plots (1999) were located on the north end that received the heaviest fallout of fractured plastic housings, aluminum foil wrappings, and charred cardboard. Plastic debris varied in size from 5 square inch chunks to sharp slivers that lay surreptitiously beneath the foliage until an unsuspecting hand—of adult or child—reached below to weed or harvest. In addition, thick smog settled over the site, still visible by dawn the next day, indicating that extensive pollution had been spewed across the landscape. We promptly collected a bucketful of shards from our 2 plots alone and presented the trash and our complaints at a meeting with the Mayor and a Councilman. However, despite their onsite expressions of concern, we subsequently received a letter stating that the garden plots were the only large enough open space available for this traditional event that was adjacent to the Rib Fest grounds. Though we acquired a 32-page MSDS Pyrotechnic and Fireworks Chemicals list that posted the warning for various chemical components: *Keep Away From Food*, we were constrained by time from pursuing this matter. Instead, we requested plots as far south of the launching site as possible, though we're painfully aware that our "organic" produce is unavoidably contaminated and we do not know how persistent the residue is in the soil. This dilemma prompted the decision to add yet another gardening space to the Kron plan: our backyard. Most of the 2000 sq. footage has been converted to vegetable garden surrounding natural habitat.

We plant all non-vining produce according to the square foot method—slightly raised beds of 4' X 4' squares separated by 18" walkways. Incorporating the intensive gardening method, seedlings are spaced closely so that the full-grown plants completely fill the squares, to increase productivity and eliminate weeds. We apply a 4-6 inch layer of straw around each plant which so efficiently helps to retain cool ground temperatures and to conserve moisture that we do not need to water the beds except during widely-spaced rainfall. Our vining crops, such as squash and cucumbers, are planted in raised hills in their own spacious area.

Our choice of vegetables includes a large selection of heirloom varieties—Moskvich tomatoes, Purple Dragon carrots and Amish peas. We also love to express our adventurous side by experimenting with a host of new varieties as well. The total for all kinds of crops has reached forty-two, with a dozen varieties of some of the kinds, such as peas, carrots, green beans and squash. Harvest time brings us never-ending excitement as we pull up pearly white Kuttiger carrots and Colossal Red Mangal beets we'd never seen before, or watch the rainbow of colors emerge from the Easter Egg radishes and Carnival acorn squash.

One of our fondest treats that come as part of the gardening experience is our annual entry into the Garfield Park Conservatory's County Fair. Included in this event sponsored by the Chicago Park District and the U of I Extension, which features an art exhibit incorporated into the fabulous indoor and outdoor conservatory setting as well as art vendors and performers, is the most non-competitive "Harvest Contest" one can imagine. All entrants compete with no one but themselves, as each item is judged on its own merits, accumulating points in the five areas of size, color, weight, surface and appearance. Every entry is capable of receiving first, second or third place ribbons, without displacing any other entrant's opportunity to do the same. This all-embracing respect for the achievement of each gardener within her or his own realm of expertise fits beautifully into our lifeway of respect for all beings, and we'd like to see the same set-up in Naperville.

Fall's seasonal question is storage: how to extend the season with fresh as well as preserved crops. The answer for fresh produce is to grow the long-season types—those that either have a long development period or can tolerate frost—in our backyard. As of late mid-November, we are still picking lettuce, endive, kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, spinach, radishes and leeks. Two cold frames protect our greens even longer, with harvests that have lasted until the end of December. For crops that must come in due to the October close date of the common garden plots, we selected four methods: freezing for peas, green peppers and tomatoes; drying for lima beans, hot peppers, dill, thyme and oregano; pickling for the cucumbers; and storage in the garage for the squash and root crops. Since we have no root cellar, the garage connected to the house became the best "cold storage" location we could devise. Shelving along the wall adjacent to the house is lined with winter squash, and covered plastic bins store the beets and carrots that lie side by side sandwiched between layers of sand. Onions stored in the legs of old pantyhose hang from hooks in a metal locker. Since the garage is nestled below the second floor of the house, we have found that unless the temperature plummets below zero for over several days, the area against the house does not dip below freezing. The squash has lasted until March under these conditions and the carrots, beets and onions through April. The warming trends of the past two years threaten to thwart these plans, however, as the garage keeps reaching 50+ degrees. This year, the

onions have already begun to sprout, producing long blanched veins running along the perimeter of their "legs"! Our frozen stock sees us through until the first spinach and onions reemerge from the frozen ground and the wondrous cycle starts again.

Intensely aware of how vital open space is for both food and the human spirit, Carl and I use the rest of our spare time to support another preservation effort: the restoration of Midewin Tallgrass Prairie at the site of the former Joliet Arsenal. We are honored to add our physical and administrative skills to this decades-long project that will restore 20,000 acres to former prairie forbs and grasses for the benefit of many generations in the future. And so we come full circle to our basic intention: to honor the earth and all her inhabitants. We settle into the winter months tired—and satisfied.

### **Naperville Farm Families-Harvest and Christmas**

Wilbert Hagerman remembers November as a time of harvest when he was growing up in the 1930's and 40's. "I was the youngest of five sons, and when I was little my mother used to tie me to the farm wagon so I couldn't wander far. Then she would husk the corn. We had to pick it and then husk it all by hand right there in the field."

Most of Naperville's farmers had dairy cows so that they would have a steady monthly income. Naperville's two dairies, the Otterpohl and Towsley, bottled and distributed the milk. Farmers with chickens would bring the eggs into town.

Another fall highlight was the Wheatland Plowing Match which started in 1876 and lasted until the 1970's. Men would compete over who could plow the straightest line. Women would hold competitions for baked and sewn items. There was also fun for children who would win prizes if they could catch a greased pig!

After harvest activities ended, winter was soon to set in and the celebration of Christmas was just around the corner. The son of Scottish immigrants, George Martin built a mansion, in England's Victorian style, just west of the center of town. In 1893 this was one of Naperville's most elite homes. The amenities found on the property, such as electricity, indoor plumbing, and advanced heating implements, were state of the art. The Martin-Mitchell Mansion, donated to the city in 1936 by George Martin's widow Caroline Mitchell, has now been authentically restored by the Naperville Heritage Society at Naperville Settlement. The restoration has taken 4 years, and the results are said to be dazzling.

The Mitchell estate also donated the land where Naperville Central High School, Knoch Park, Edwards Hospital, the Garden Plots, and Sportman's Park are now located. An insight into the life of Naperville's early settlers can be found by taking a tour of the Mitchell mansion during Naperville Settlement's "Christmas Memories", from 4-9 PM Dec. 19-21. Call 630-420-6010 for more information on this perfect for the family event. Festive Decorations, scrumptious food, old-fashioned

crafts, and the satisfaction in knowing that as a member of the WSGSPC you help preserve the legacy of George Martin and Caroline Martin-Mitchell make a visit to Naperville Settlement at Christmas worthwhile.

Credit- Judy Buchenot, "Everything Naperville", Sarah McCammon of the "Daily Herald", and Stephanie Penick of "Positively Naperville". Adopted by George Bennett.

## **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 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 advocate 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](http://www.greenspace.koolhost.com)

### **Board of Directors**

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## **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.*