

# *West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition*

P.O. Box 84, Naperville, IL 60566-0084 Phone: 630-637-9236 Fx:630-717-0785



## **Newsletter January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

### **Notes and Updates from the Vice President**

The head of Intel once said to their company: "Only the paranoid survive". Often, in fulfilling our mission, we need to practice a milder version of this in the form of vigilance when we see statements of initiatives without details, where the unspoken details could easily involve high intensity development on the properties which we seek to preserve.

The third paragraph of George Bennet's message describes one such initiative that we need to be vigilant on. As a more recent update, the Park District has announced a meeting on this (NPD-wide) "master plan" on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Due to the late notice, all of us that were at our WSGSC meeting yesterday have unbreakable commitments elsewhere on that date. If you are able to attend, please go. It's at the Alfred Rubin Community Center, 305 W. Jackson, lower level room 106, 7:30 Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>. They also gave Brad Wilson, 630-848-3532 as the contact person on this meeting. Feel encouraged to say that you are there as an observer from our coalition. Notes on anything noteworthy would be appreciated, either fax or mail them (see letterhead) or email them to me at [tureks@ameritech.net](mailto:tureks@ameritech.net), and I'll get them distributed.

The last paragraph in George's message mentions the importance of your continuing membership. And while a certain amount of money is important, it's not about the money. That's why single year renewals are "\$10, or a different amount of your choice, higher or lower". So you can do a one-year renewal for one penny. (The "or a different amount" doesn't apply to multi-year renewals, so you can't renew for 100 years for 100 pennies!)

Membership runs on a May 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup> year, so, please renew sometime within the next 3 ½ months. (How 'bout right now!?) To renew, please send your dues (per the above) to our PO box (see letterhead), along with any changes in your contact information (email, address, phone etc.)

Have a great New Year.

Fred Turek

### **New Years Message from the President**

As we begin our 7<sup>th</sup> year as a defined group, I would like to take the time to thank all of you for your membership.

I also hope that the New Year brings each and every one of you peace, happiness, and prosperity.

At our inception it would have been easy to describe our relationship with the Park District as rocky at best. With a number of our activities, including the very successful "Plant a Row for the Hungry" booth, our relationship with the district has improved. However, we have always been in effect a watchdog group, attempting to be ever vigilant and prepared for events before they occur. As most of you likely know from the local papers, the Naperville Park District is promising a significant increase in events over the next 3-8 years. It is our goal that the West St. properties are not adversely affected as the District seeks to better serve the needs of a wealthy community still scheduled to grow in population by 10% before build out is complete.

2006 will mark the unveiling of the district's new Recreation Master Plan, a process that began a couple of years ago with a comprehensive community interest survey and now is in the form of an 80 page document complete with recommendations gained from a \$70,000 study conducted by PROS Consulting. Backed by a budget that now surpasses \$35 million annually (it was \$20 million in fiscal 1999 when the referendum failed), the district plans to aggressively expand programming in a number of areas with a special emphasis on indoor programming. Indoor programming is widely considered deficient, and falls far short of what other leading Park District's can offer their residents. The new Master Plan is of course as much as a wish list as it is set in stone, but the wish list is so numerous and comprehensive that some of the goals will certainly be realized. Modesty is not part of these goals as the report recommends an increase of 800% in indoor programming space in the form of two (2) regional recreation and aquatic centers. Also included among many objectives would be two new outdoor pools, an additional skate park, a third golf course, and fields for a large number of youth and adult sporting activities. As well, the Rubin Senior Center may be either expanded or replaced, a nature center may be built, and the area's trail system would double in length. Many of these projects would likely be welcomed as community enhancements if properly located and funded. As stated in the October newsletter, I am not currently aware that these projects are being contemplated as a replacement for the garden plots or other West St. properties, but past experience and the current large premium on land would suggest troubled waters ahead. If you become aware of any news, whether gained by attending meetings or in the press,

please do forward those to me or any board member so that we can consider what course of action to take.

The WSGSPC is one of the more unique organizations that I am aware of. I say this not simply because I have been involved from the beginning, but rather because we have maintained our membership base simply because of what we stand for, and perhaps because of what we have accomplished. Our mission has been extremely focused since our foundation. I feel confident that all of you have a pretty good idea of what our group stands for and why you belong. We have been self-funded since the beginning, and since the 2001 election we have been able to cover expenses thanks to a combination of membership dues and special donations which are always welcome and will be acknowledged when appropriate. We will finish our membership year this April with a small positive balance managed by our Treasurer, Wendy Mouche. However, in order to carry out our activities during 2006 we will once again need your renewals. This is not simply a funding issue, but it is actually far more important in the process of building our political strength. Sustaining your membership is important in so many ways, which is why we have always given you the option of paying \$10 or any other amount (lower or higher). Of course the underlying advantage we have in any debate is the genuine nature of our message and the inherent value of the West St. properties as they currently exist. But to keep our message dynamic and vital we need you, and will need you even more if adverse developments take place. This April I will once again ask that you continue as a member of the West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition, and don't forget to tell a friend!

Thank you and best New Year's wishes,

George Bennett

## **Gardening with Honor**

Original Content by Clare Kron

*(The following was first printed in the WSGSPC newsletter in Dec. of 2003. If you missed it the first time here is your second chance. Clare's husband Carl became one of two new Board Members in April of '05.)*

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 comes 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 life way 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 (2002-03) 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.

### ***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

We have a temporary /partial basic website at <http://fyrfoc.com/wsgsc.html>,

### **Board of Directors**

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

**President:** George Bennett

**Vice President:** Fred Turek [tureks@ameritech.net](mailto:tureks@ameritech.net)

**Treasurer:** Wendy Mouche

**Secretary:** Dan Bennett

**Newsletter Content:** George Bennett. Also 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.*