

THE NEWS of BELLA VISTA

Fall 2016

SPONSORED BY BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION INC., A REGISTERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

The Bella Vista Neighbors Association is an organization that serves residents of Bella Vista, which is bounded by 6th and 11th Streets and South Street and Washington Avenue. BVNA encourages civic involvement, provides a neutral and public discussion forum, preserves and augments our institutions and character, supports the delivery of government services, and promotes dialogue with elected officials. We are an independent and nonprofit organization.

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P.O. Box 63955
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www.bellavistaneighbors.org

Civic Association Update

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve you as President. I truly appreciate your trust and confidence in me.

It is indeed an honor to receive the baton from Claudia Archer, our immediate past president, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of our civic, and continues to do so. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions made by our outgoing board members, some who have moved away, and some who have moved on to other endeavors. I have already met many wonderful neighbors and was amazed by the dedication and volunteer effort I've encountered.

As we welcome in the holiday season, we also reflect back on all that we had accomplished these past few months. What a whirlwind summer it has been. ART-Spiration; BVNA retro night out at the Phillies; National Night Out on the heels of the DNC; BVNA general meetings at increasingly new locations such as the Magic Gardens and Da Vinci Art Alliance; BVNA happy hours, bowling, cookie swaps, and other social events; a record topping Bella Vista House Tour following Open Streets; and the always-popular June Concert Series and Kids Fest produced

From the BVNA President

Cianfranni and Bardascino parks' Friends groups – I hope you were able to join fellow neighbors at some of these community events.

We have witnessed much improvement and renovation to our parks, safer crossings at our area schools, and the construction of several new rowhomes, to which we will soon welcome new neighbors, who perhaps heard that we were just voted best Philadelphia neighborhood to live by Niche.com.

But we look ahead to making even greater strides in improving the quality of life for all residents of Bella Vista, and planning even more exciting programs and events. And we need your help to do it. As an all-volunteer, non-profit organization – we continue to count on the support and enthusiasm of our neighbors and businesses. Whatever your passion, your skills, or your availability – please reach out to me or a fellow board member, to find out how you can get more involved and make a difference! And while we do not impose dues, I hope you would consider BVNA in your year-end giving, to help support our ongoing efforts.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at one of our many upcoming events! ■

Italian Market's Bid for a BID Rejected

By Brandy Bones

The proposal for a South 9th Street Business Improvement District (BID) was rejected during the 45 day objection period following a September public hearing on the plan in front of City Council's Rules Committee. Almost 34% of the business owners in the proposed BID filed formal objection letters with Council's Chief Clerk. That percentage exceeded the one third threshold required to squash the proposal. As a result, legislation to officially establish the BID was not brought before City Council.

The BID would have encompassed a rectangular area along South 8th, 9th, and 10th Streets from Federal to Fitzwater Streets. The BID, a legally designated area where property owners jointly plan, fund, and manage commercial district enhancement services, would have funded street- and sidewalk-cleaning crews, parking directional signage, a parking validation pilot program, marketing, and additional lighting and security cameras.

Italian Market area business owners
See DISTRICT, Page 3



Crowds flock to the Italian Market in search of great food.

PHOTO BY JON SNYDER

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BVNA monthly meetings

(Please check our social media or e-newsletter for any schedule changes.)

ZONING

First Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Palumbo Rec Center, 10th & Fitzwater. Open meetings for community input on building and renovation projects requiring variances to the zoning code.

PSA1

First Wednesday, 6:30 pm, Santore Library, 7th & Carpenter. Meeting between police leadership and stakeholders in Police Service Area 1 of the 3rd District. Review of monthly crime statistics.

BEAUTIFICATION

Second Tuesday, 6:30 pm, Palumbo Rec Center. Volunteers working together to support cleaning and greening initiatives.

BVNA BOARD

First Monday, 7:30 pm, Palumbo Rec Center. Board of directors' monthly business meeting.

All meetings open to the public. Check our website and social media for schedule changes.

BVNA's July General Meeting

Many thanks to Emily Smith and the staff of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens for their hospitality in hosting our General Meeting in July.

BVNA's November General Meeting

Many thanks to Linda Garfield and the staff of the Da Vinci Art Alliance for their hospitality in hosting our General Meeting in November.

A near capacity crowd visited these wonderful art institutions to learn what was on tap in our community.

Please look for postings about future General Meetings and make plans to attend!

BVNA Cookie Swap

December 7 6-7:30 pm, Santore Library
www.bellavistaneighbors.org/events

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The Magic in Bella Vista

By Laura Burtner

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, a visionary art environment and gallery, is the work of renowned mosaic muralist Isaiah Zagar. It serves the community as a center for art exploration. Filling half a city block, this colorful, quirky landmark is as integral to South Street as the artist is to the history of the neighborhood.

Isaiah Zagar began creating this installation in 1994 as an outgrowth from his studio. Adjacent to his property were two abandoned lots owned by a Boston investor. Zagar fought the blight in his way, expanding his art and planting tomatoes. In 2002, the Boston investor took legal action to remove the artwork. Well . . . South Philly wasn't having that! The community raised \$300k to save it from demolition, and established a non-profit to protect the work.

This brand of audacious community activism was honed by Isaiah and his wife, Julia decades earlier. In the late 1960s they

joined other artists and grassroots entrepreneurs in restoring South Street storefronts to reinvigorate the downtrodden business district. Isaiah's mosaics began appearing on storefronts, including Julia's Eye's Gallery at 4th & South. Contemporary with this urban counter-culture DIY movement was the era of government urban renewal and expansion of the federal highway system.

Imagine for a moment: Interstate 676 cutting through this neighborhood from Route 76 to New Jersey; interchanges funneling traffic into the city grid of narrow one-way streets; South Street gone - no shops, groceries, restaurants, or entertainment a short walk away.

The Zagars led the fight to defeat a proposal to use the alignment of South Street for the highway, preventing destruction of the historic shopping district.

With South Street saved, Isaiah continued to create mosaics in the neighborhood - and beyond. He has been commissioned across the nation and internationally.



Magic Gardens creator and founder Isaiah Zagar poses in front of one of his many murals at the Magic Gardens.

His work continues to this day.

PMG isn't the only visionary art environment, though it is uniquely located in an urban setting; most are in rural areas. Furthermore, proliferation of the artist's work throughout the surrounding community makes it a

standout, and reflects a character-defining chapter in the neighborhood's history. PMG staff and volunteers are documenting these mosaics. If you have one on your property, you are urged contact them. Also, if you want to know

See **GARDEN** Next Page



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GARDEN *Continued from Previous Page*

how to maintain your mosaic, PMG can guide you.

As Bella Vistans, we are invited to make Philadelphia's Magic Gardens a part of our lives. Membership provides line-skipping privileges and early notice of popular events. Insiders are advised to avoid visiting during the busy period, Saturdays from 1-4 pm. Inclement weather affects opening the outdoor areas, so it is wise to call ahead. ■

Bella Vistan and PMG member Laura Burtner thanks Emily Smith, Executive Director of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, for her in-depth input into this story.

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens
1020 South Street
(10th & South St.)
phillymagicgardens.org
(215) 733-0390.



Crowds line up on a busy Saturday at the Magic Gardens and the lucky ones who got in find a variety of photo opportunities among the reflective murals.

PHOTOS BY JON SNYDER



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Welcome Back, Eddie Lang!

By Brandy Bones

Eddie Lang, the father of jazz guitar, has been honored with a 50 foot mural in Bella Vista at 7th and Fitzwater. Born Salvatore Massaro, Eddie Lang grew up at 7th and St. Albans and was a guitar virtuoso during the 1920s Jazz Age. Before his life was tragically cut short at 31, he was a prolific session guitarist cutting hundreds of recordings with jazz greats including Bessie Smith and Bing Crosby. He also grew up playing with Joe Venuti, another South Philadelphia native and the father of jazz violin.

Richard Barnes led the effort to make the mural a reality. Barnes, a longtime Lang admirer, has been playing his music for 24 years. In 2010, he founded the first Eddie Lang Day, which is celebrated every October around Eddie Lang's birthday. Barnes approached Jane Golden, the Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia, over a year ago to discuss creating a mural in Lang's honor. Barnes has

spent the past year identifying a site for the mural and getting support from the community.

Mural Arts Philadelphia selected Jared Bader to create the mural, which is a thoughtful tribute to Lang's professional legacy and Italian heritage. The mural includes some of the many artists Lang collaborated with throughout his short career. A sign reading "Okeh Records", where Lang produced most of his music, is featured in the upper center of the mural. The James Campbell School - which stood on the grounds of Cianfrani Park - is also represented. Inspired by the Italian Renaissance painter Caravaggio, Bader utilizes chiaroscuro with light streaming in from the upper right window of the painting to create dramatic contrasts among the musicians with Lang highlighted prominently in the foreground.

On October 23, the mural was officially unveiled as part of the Eddie Lang Day celebration. The event included music from



The unveiling of the Eddie Lang mural at 7th and Fitzwater streets.

PHOTO BY RICHARD BARNES

the Blackbird Society Orchestra, which Barnes leads, and speeches from Councilman Mark Squilla, City Representative Sheila Hess, Consul General of Italy in Philadelphia Andrea Canepari, Barnes, and Lang's nephew Ed Massaro.

Barnes said, "The mural immortalizes Lang's legacy and ensures that future generations will know and appreciate his legacy... and perhaps even inspire people, especially children, to learn an instrument." ■

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How to Kill Your Street Tree

By Robert Bershad

Does your street tree's shade and beauty bother you? If so, do what some people do – kill it! Here's how:

Don't water it. Especially in its first 4 years. It's like denying water to a puppy. New trees require 20 gallons a week (40 if it's really hot). So make 'hold off the hose' your motto! Don't worry about the occasional heavy rain – it doesn't help much, and anyhow, there are ways to limit its impact, as we'll see.

Let weeds grow. Weeds are notorious water hogs. When it rains, they siphon off rainwater as it filters down through the soil. The more weeds you have, the less water reaches the tree's roots. So let weeds grow!

Stay trashy. Trash and weeds go together like peanut butter and jelly. Letting trash gather in the weeds gives your street tree that "finished" look. Plus, it lets neighbors and passersby know you want your tree dead. They just may oblige you by watering your tree with their dogs. That stuff eats away at the bark like acid.

Pile on trash bags. Feed your tree liquid detergents, bleaches, and other household chemicals. To do that, place your weekly trash bag against the tree's trunk. Liquid inside the bag can then leach into the tree's soil and trickle down to the roots. The tree expects water but gets chemicals instead. LOL – joke's on the tree!

Don't loosen the tree soil. Foot traffic, car tires, loaded trash bags, and anything else that pushes down on the tree soil – helped along by relentless gravity – makes the soil hard and crusty – or "compacted." Compacted soil acts like a dam, blocking rainwater from reaching the tree's roots. Rainwater instead runs off the compacted soil and into the street, then to the sewer. So don't loosen the soil with a garden claw or other tool. Bonus: Water runoff causes sewers to overflow and send human waste into the rivers.

Leave the Gatorbag on 24/7/365. Those green bags you see on tree trunks – Gatorbags – are good for providing trees the 20 gallons of water they need each



Gatorbags water trees but, left unattended, can help kill trees.

PHOTO BY JON SNYDER

week. But you can also use a Gatorbag to kill your tree. Leaving the Gatorbag on 24/7/365 will create a micro-environment between the bag and the bark where tree-damaging insects can thrive. An empty Gatorbag also acts like an umbrella that deflects rainwater from reaching the tree's soil.

Build a mulch volcano. Get creative and build a mulch volcano around the tree's trunk. You've probably seen mulch volcanoes on heavily manicured properties. They damage trees in two ways. First, a mulch volcano prompts

the tree to send roots into the mulch, impeding the growth of the all-important roots below the base of the trunk. Second, burying the trunk in mulch is like burying your foot in mulch: it will rot. Bonus tip: Use red mulch – it's filled with chemicals!

Not everyone wants their tree dead. To learn how to care for your street tree properly, search online for "PHS Presents Tree Care Basics: Weed, Clean, and Protect" or contact the Bella Vista Tree Tenders (formerly the Bel Arbor Tree Tenders) at cmpuppin@aol.com. A word of thanks to Carla Puppini, co-founder and leader of the Bella Vista Tree Tenders – Carla helped infuse this article with good information and a healthy dose of sarcasm. ■

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