

THE NEWS of BELLA VISTA

Spring 2015

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BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

The Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) improves Bella Vista's quality of life and strengthens community bonds. 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 non-profit organization.

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Civic Association Update

I've served as president almost a year now. It's been educational, rewarding, and frustrating. I've learned just how much grassroots efforts to influence zoning outcomes, improve neighborhood schools, increase safety on our streets and green our landscape can accomplish. I've met a lot of great people and am constantly impressed by the level of civic engagement of so many volunteers in BV and throughout the city. I'm frustrated by the scarcity of funds for basic city services like street cleaning and maintaining our parks and playgrounds.

In the past year, BVNA has met with the Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities to bring bike share to BV. We've hosted meetings with the Planning Commission on re-mapping of the South District. We've had a seat at the table during the ongoing discussion of Washington Avenue re-striping plans. We supported local law enforcement through monthly public meetings and fundraising. We benefitted from donated sidewalk cleaning services from Ready, Willing & Able. We partnered with Fleisher Art Memorial

From the BVNA President

on art activities for kids. We gave out over 100 recycling bins and cleaning supplies to neighbors and block captains. As a member of the Crosstown Coalition, we have a voice in city-wide issues. We co-hosted forums for mayoral and City Council candidates. BVNA facilitated a \$10,000 grant for improvements at Palumbo Rec Center. We have some other grant applications in the pipeline. We've held monthly Zoning and Beautification committee meetings. We emailed many weekly newsletters, shared info on Facebook and our website, and joined Twitter. AND we hosted two happy hours at local businesses where neighbors got a chance to meet and have fun.

I hope you will consider bringing your passion to BVNA and getting involved. We welcome you to attend meetings, speak your mind, come to our social events, or bring your ideas for projects for BVNA to facilitate. Put your talent to work on a neighborhood level — you are needed and will be appreciated!

— Claudia Archer

What's Up with That Triangle, You Ask?

By Martha Freeman

The lot bounded by East Passyunk, Christian, and Sixth streets is currently a litter-strewn weed patch, but for several years it flourished as a park maintained by volunteers.

Bella Vista resident Joel Palmer was among those who led the effort to develop and maintain Triangle Park, which is privately owned. Dozens of volunteers lent assistance as did local government. Trees were donated by the mayor and State Senator Larry Farnese. Schoolchildren did science projects there.

Then, in spring 2012, the owner decided that



Intersection of Christian St. and Passyunk Ave., looking north.

See TRIANGLE
Continued on Page 3

Give your block some green space!

By Richard Scott

As spring awakens the parks and streets of Bella Vista, you can capture a piece of nature's annual bloom-fest for yourself by planting a tree in front of your home.

Residents have three ways to land a sapling on their sidewalk, says Carla Puppini, head of Bel Arbor Tree Tenders, a volunteer group that's been planting trees in Bella Vista since 2000.

If you have your heart set on a specific tree – and you don't mind shelling out a few hundred dollars on a hand-picked tree, plus the cost of digging a pit and the planting – you can do the job yourself. But you'll need to get the site approved by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and be sure to mind the DPR's list of approved tree species, which provides recommendations for sites where power lines hang overhead or where there are narrow streets. (You can find the full list of approved species, which features dozens of options, at TreePhilly.org under "Forms and Downloads.")

Free planting, perennial enjoyment

For those who prefer a tree that comes free of charge, you have a couple options. Working with the Bel Arbor Tree Tenders allows you to have a say in the type of tree that roots outside of your home.

The local tree tenders group works with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the DPR, and receives financing

through a state grant known as TreeVitalize, to provide residents with their own greenspace, says Puppini. Through Bel Arbor Tree Tenders, "street trees are provided for free, as well as the tree pit cuts," she says. Bel Arbor offers spring and fall planting sessions.

Your third option is the



Volunteers from the Bella Vista Tree Tenders plant trees around the Palumbo Rec. Center.

DPR's TreePhilly program, which also provides complimentary flora but comes with a hitch – the choice of tree will be decided by the group's officers.

To find out more about TreePhilly's street tree registration, visit www.treephilly.org. To learn more about Bel Arbor Tree Tenders, and to request your own tree, visit www.belarbor.org and watch for the BVNA e-newsletter in your email. ■

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TRIANGLE Continued from Page 1

the lot's being a park discouraged prospective buyers, so he fenced the property, keeping volunteers out. Then the fence was gone, now it's back, and the commercially zoned parcel, which last sold for \$290,000 in 2005, continues to deteriorate.

At one time the city was interested in buying the lot, but the presence of benzene from the gas-station past posed a stumbling block. The extent of the pollution, how it ought to be mitigated and at whose ex-

pense still complicate the way forward. Currently, the state is performing soil tests. Palmer believes minimal remediation would be necessary if the lot were to be maintained as a park.

"It would take volunteers only a few weeks to clean this up and restore Triangle Park to its former glory," said Palmer. "Returning it to park status is the right thing to do."

Anyone interested in keeping up with the one-time park may join the Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/TrianglePark>. ■



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Familiar Faces: Lieutenant Michael Goodson

By Martha Freeman

Things aren't as rowdy on South Street as they used to be, and prosperous times are ahead. That's the word from Philadelphia Police Lt. Michael Goodson, supervisor of the police mini-station at 905 South Street.

"The reality of South Street in 2015 is Stephen Starr restaurants, strollers, and puppies," said Lt. Goodson, who has been in charge of the mini-station for two years. "It's big events that draw thousands of people but have zero police incidents. In the minds of some people, the reputation hasn't caught up with the reality yet."

The taming of South Street is a result of shifting demographics as well as improved policing. For example, current technology enables the police department to do real-time monitoring of events that draw thousands of people and prevent behavior that might turn detrimental, Goodson said.

Like many major American cities, Philadelphia has seen a dramatic drop in crime over the last decade. Last year, violent crime in Philadelphia was down 7 percent over 2013.

Along South Street, Goodson credits improvements not only on policing but also on community members. "Safety involves being proactive, minimizing opportunities for criminals to commit crimes," he said. "You can't expect the police to do everything. It's important to take ownership of the neighborhood and know the issues."

Goodson, 40, lives with his wife and two children in Wyndmoor. During his 14 years on the police force, he has served in various divisions, including investigations and narcotics. A graduate of Temple University, he earned a master's degree from St. Joseph's University while working full-time



Lt. Michael Goodson

and coaching the Mt. Airy Bantams youth football team. Now he aspires to earn his doctorate.

"I don't sleep much," he said.

The South Street mini-station is staffed 24 hours a day. Officers patrol on foot, on bike, and in cars. A typical work day for Goodson means morning meetings with business and community groups, then patrol in the afternoon. Currently, a lot of Goodson's meetings involve planning for the upcoming papal visit, which will bring thousands of visitors to South

Street, long a popular tourist attraction.

As good as times are, Goodson reminds his officers not to get complacent. He sees recent high profile controversies in Ferguson, Missouri, New York City, and elsewhere as issues of perceived injustice more than policing. "The overwhelming majority of officers go into policing for the right reasons," said Goodson. "I'm happy to say that the relationship between community and police along South Street is one of mutual respect." ■

BY MARTHA FREEMAN

The Orphan and the Mouse

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Your Bella Vista neighbor Martha Freeman writes books for kids.

Her latest, set in Philadelphia, is "a rousing mouse adventure in the tradition of 'Stuart Little,'" according to Kirkus Reviews.

Meet her on the street, at Facebook.com/MarthaFreemanAuthor or at her website MarthaFreeman.com



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Police Mini-Station, Bella Vista and Friends

Why is Bella Vista such a great place to live? One reason: it's one of the safest spots in Philadelphia. This is partially due to the hard work of the officers of the Philadelphia Police Department at the South Street Police Mini-Station and the support of The Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station. The Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station was formalized as a 501(c)(3) about 5 years ago, but their efforts began well before that.

The Friends is made up of neighborhood organizations, also known as the Alliance, and volunteers who run communications and fundraisers for the organization. The Alliance of civic and business associations includes Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA), Queen Village Neighbors Association (QVNA), Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition (HEC), and the South Street Headhouse District (SSHHD). The group formed initially so that no one particular organization was burdened with supporting the station. The City provides the salaries and mandatory police equipment of the officers at the station, the landlord provides the space rent-free, while the Friends raises funds to support the rest: capital improvements such as heating, air conditioning, computers, the IT network, and bikes. SSHHD pays the operating expenses for the station itself.

The Friends have had at least five business and community sponsored events. Three



The police mini-station at 905 South St.

events, called Taste of the Neighborhoods, were held on 2nd Street at the Society Hill Dance Academy. Another co-operative event was hosted by Brauhaus Schmitz as part of their 5 year anniversary party. The most recent event was a pop-up "Blue Party" held at 7th and South in conjunction with the Good King Tavern, Nomad Pizza, Dickey's BBQ Pit, Supper/Global Dish, Bean Exchange, and the Philadelphia Brewing Company.

According to Friends President, John C. Smyth, the support of businesses in the neighborhood is crucial to the continued presence of the station and the Friends. "South Street has always been the hip street, the cool place to hang out. What really makes the police special is that the crowd can change on any given night, but the police adapt to whoever shows up and allow people to have a good time. To

to be really good with people."

The partnerships among businesses, civic organizations, and volunteers have created a respect throughout the community for the institution of law enforcement in general and the officers in particular. In general, most people have few interactions with police, and not always under the best of circumstances if they do. According to Smyth, "The Friends has allowed people to get to know the officers of the Philadelphia Police Department on a personal level, and see them as human beings as well as vital components of a safe and secure community."

The presence of the Police Mini-Station has allowed for improvements in its surrounding communities to the north and south, and SSHHD is repositioning their image because the police have a vested interest and hold themselves accountable. For more information, please visit www.policeministation.org. ■



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BVNA supports police mini-station



Did you know that BVNA is a partner in supporting our local police with the Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station? BVNA works with local civics and businesses together with the Friends to improve safety in the area.

www.policeministation.org

Ten Things to Know About Nebinger School

By Martha Freeman

Anh Brown would like you to know that there are plenty of great public schools in Philadelphia, and Nebinger is one of them.

Brown is in her second year as principal at George W. Nebinger Elementary School, located on Carpenter Street at 6th in Bella Vista. The school's enrollment is growing, with 330 students in kindergarten through eighth grades this school year and an anticipated enrollment of 350 in the fall. There are an additional 30 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten.

To get the word out about the high quality education Nebinger offers, Brown has instituted what she calls an open-door policy. Parents and other community members are welcome to visit anytime, provided they call to make arrangements.

"As soon as people come in the door and see what is going on here, they realize it's not what they expected. Instead, it's a clean, safe and respectful environment, a neighborhood school to showcase," said Brown.

Here are 10 more things Principal Brown would like you to know about Nebinger School:

- 1.** Nebinger offers studio art, choral and instrumental music, and – this year in partnership with the Walnut Street Theatre – drama. There is a dedicated science lab on the fourth floor. Spanish-language instruction will be added next year.
- 2.** This summer will see significant improvements to the playground with the addition of foursquare and basketball courts, tetherball, a climbing wall and an outdoor education classroom.
- 3.** All Nebinger middle school students have Chromebook computers while younger students have either laptop or desktop computers.
- 4.** Approximately 30 students participate in a gifted and talented program that meets once a week to work on a project-based curriculum.
- 5.** The student body represents diverse



cultural, ethnic and international backgrounds. Approximately 50 percent of students are African American.

6. Nebinger has a highly qualified and dedicated staff of 60, 30 of them teachers. All staff members are collaborative and committed lifelong learners who believe in honing their craft.

7. The staff works to create an atmosphere that fosters old-fashioned values like hard work, courtesy and respect.

8. Class size averages 25 students.

9. Nebinger hosts five autistic-support classrooms and follows the "Include Me First" statewide model for students with learning disabilities.

10. A community organization, Friends of Nebinger (FON), supports the school with fundraising and other initiatives. Since its inception in 2011, FON has raised almost \$30,000 in grants and donations.

For more information about Friends of Nebinger or to volunteer, contact Lisa French at lfrenchfam@aol.com. For more information on the school or to make arrangements for a visit, contact the school office at 215-952-6202. At 6pm, June 11 in the school auditorium, Nebinger students will present a theatrical performance developed in collaboration with the Walnut Street Theatre. The public is invited. ■

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Say "So Long," Not "Goodbye"

May 5, 2015 will mark the end of my 20+ years of community service on the Bella Vista Town Watch (BVTW) and the Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) Boards. It has always been an honor to serve the community, and after so many years there is much history to acknowledge and many people to thank.

A few concerned neighbors founded the Bella Vista Town Watch over two decades ago



John Smyth

in 1992. The neighborhood has changed considerably since those early days, when Bella Vista was still called the Italian Market area or Queen Village vicinity. At that time, the tension and conflict embroiling urban Philadelphia was acute, and our initial goals were crime prevention, graffiti removal, short dumping cleanups, spot zoning hearings and community communications. Things weren't easy, and a lot of peo-

ple wondered – and sometimes asked us outright – why we bothered to stay. The answer is that we stayed so that we could make a difference, and we have.

As the neighborhood transitioned, we added the Communications, Zoning, Beautification and Finance Committees to address the rapid growth and change in our neighborhood. We became members of the PMBC to grow our block captain list and founding members of the Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station and the Cross-town Coalition of Taxpayers. We facilitated zoning hearings, and witnessed the arrival of coffee shops, restaurants, and Whole Foods. We encouraged home ownership, planted trees and raised families. Through our collective hard work, Bella Vista is now one of the safest, most prosperous, and most livable communities in Philadelphia. Reference report: Mark Dent article in the "The Philly Neighborhood Index: The safest, loudest, and most livable 'hoods'" published on November 24, 2014 on www.BillyPenn.com

In 2014, we transitioned BVTW to Bella Vista Neighbors Association to better reflect the mission and the work of the organization. The name has changed, but the goals should always be to represent the citizens of Bella Vista, and I am excited to watch them succeed. Though I will no longer be on the board of BVNA, I look forward to remaining involved

in the community through my continued work with the Palumbo Recreation Center, the Charles Santore Library, and South Street Police Mini-Station. I would like to thank each and every person who has

helped BVTW/BVNA succeed, either directly or indirectly. Your contribution to our community has been invaluable. I look forward to seeing you around our neighborhood.

-- John

STAY INVOLVED!

BVTW maintains a lively schedule of zoning meetings (the second Tues. of each month, 7:30pm at Palumbo Rec Center) and other community get-togethers, including:

Police Service Area (PSA) 1 meetings:

PSA1 meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm at Santore Library, 7th & Carpenter. These meetings are open to all and provide an opportunity to raise concerns and review crime reports.

"Love Your Park"

May 9 - at Cianfrani and Bardascino Parks

BVTW Annual Meeting and Board Election :

Come on out and meet your neighbors! Tues. May 5, 7 pm, Palumbo Rec. Center.

Thank you!

Thank you to our sponsors. Please support these local businesses. If your business would like to sponsor our next issue, please contact us: info@bellavistaneighbors.org

BVNA thanks our newsletter editor, Michelle Atherton, and writers Martha Freeman and Richard Scott for their work on this issue. New volunteers always welcome - if you would like to help with a future issue, contact us!

BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

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