

Bridges



Newsletter of the Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood

November 2008, Second Edition

Neighborhood "Association" – or Not?

The short answer is: No. The longer answer is that we discussed this at our June 10th Steering Committee meeting and decided to adopt the name "Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood" for our organization.

The core group of 15-20 people that meets monthly is called the Steering Committee. Any Northside-Hester Park neighbor is welcome to attend our meetings. The Communication, Events, Hester Park and River Walk Talk Forces were formed by, report to, and are accountable to the Steering Committee.

So what's the big deal about a name? A name helps define an organization. For many members of the committee the word "association" implied things such as membership, dues, exclusivity, conformity, rules, etc.

Our mission statement says "Our mission is to *involve neighbors in working together* to plan, make decisions, and implement plans and projects to keep our neighborhood an *inclusive, safe, desirable* place to live, work, play, and go to school. We will work to preserve the physical integrity and unique characteristics of the Northside-Hester Park neighborhood. In the process we will build relationships between neighbors based on *communication, respect, courtesy, neighborly concern, and shared efforts*".

As an inclusive neighborhood group, anyone who lives in the neighborhood is considered a member of our group. We *are* the neighborhood – hence the adoption of the name "Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood".

This name may also help dispel confusion and differentiate our group from our predecessor, the Northside Neighborhood Association, a group of residents who live close to the St. Cloud Hospital and have worked together throughout the years, often when expansion issues arose with the hospital or Water Treatment Plant.

Welcome to the "Neighborhood" – we look forward to your input and participation. Let's get to know our neighbors!

Neighborhood Watch

Are you concerned about safety and security in your neighborhood? Find out how to start a Neighborhood Watch Group. St. Cloud Police Office John Justin will meet with all interested neighbors to discuss how to get started.

Join us!

**Thursday, November 13th
7:30 p.m. Cathedral High
School Cafeteria (Door 1)**



Lots of hard work

Fall Clean-Up Time

Five neighborhood women gathered Saturday morning, Oct. 25th, equipped with rakes, tarps, compost site permits, a trailer and a pickup truck bed. Over the next 7 hours they raked 5 complete yards and parts of 2 more and deposited 5 trailer loads and multiple truckloads of leaves at the city compost site. This is the second year the neighborhood group has volunteered to rake for people who have trouble doing it for themselves.

They found out later that they helped Glenda Burgeson play a good trick on her husband John. He'd done some raking and left a huge pile of leaves in their front yard to clean up "after the game". Wanting to top off a trailer load of leaves, the women rang Glenda's doorbell and offered to load their leaf pile and take it with them to the compost site. When John went outside later he discovered that his leaf pile had "magically" disappeared!

Upcoming Neighborhood Holiday Event:

All neighbors are invited to a Holiday Party the Events Task Force is planning for Tuesday, December 16 at 6:00 p.m. at Area Learning Center. Entertainment will include the Southside Drummers and a talent show. Feel free to bring a dozen store bought cookies. Come meet your neighbors!

Historic Rau Field

In St. Cloud's earliest days, a stream ran NW to SE from a spring near the intersection of 14th Ave. and 8th St. North, eventually crossing what is today's Cathedral High School football practice field area heading into the river.

Three breweries popped up along the stream, not so much for the spring water as for a place to pour their effluents. One, located on the field area, is thought to have been St. Cloud's first.

Cathedral fielded its first football team in 1915. It practiced and played in the deep area just north of the gym, also known as "the pit".

Jim Rau, Cathedral class of 1948, was described in the 1948 yearbook as "forceful and determined". He was a tackle on the football team, as well as a member of the boxing, hockey and baseball teams. He even had a role in Cathedral's production of "HMS Pinafore".

Rau's family owned "Rau'sRec", once located near the Paramount Theater, and he became more well-known for his bowling skills. He was later inducted into the St. Cloud area Bowling Hall of Fame.

Rau served in Korea and returned to serve on several local civic organizations, including being the first president of the CHS Athletic Association. At that time Cathedral played their football games at Tech High School's field.

After Rau died in 1973 a large fund raising campaign allowed the development of a new, modern field on the river property. It was dedicated as the "James L. Rau Field" on September 26, 1974 in honor of Rau's dedication to CHS athletics. CHS has won more state football championships than any other local high school.

The early stream was long ago culverted and filled in, but it is thought to still be flowing into the river beneath the James L. Rau Field.

Enhancing Hester Park

The Hester Park Task Force met in October and began planning a Hester Park Beautification Project that will begin in 2009. The plan is to revitalize the park with new plantings and landscaping, restore the WPA bridges and walkways to bring some additional beauty and much-needed color to the area. The task force appointed Kelly and Pam Haugen to lead this effort. Our immediate next steps include reaching out to some master gardeners who may be able to offer expertise and help in the design phase; developing partnerships with the city, local businesses, and volunteers in and around the neighborhood; and promoting our efforts to raise funds for the project.



Jeanette & Virgil Meyer

58 Years and Counting

Recently Virgil Meyer admitted that he and his wife Jeanette “are getting to be oldies in the neighborhood”. Their house in the 1400 block of 8th Ave. N. was built for them in 1950, the year after they were married, for just over \$12,000.00 on a lot they bought for \$850.00. The garage was built later, since they didn’t have a car in their early years of marriage.

Jeanette and Virgil raised three children in their home: John, 58, Cathy, 48, and Tom, almost 44. “Kids those days didn’t have all these programs,” Jeanette said. “They had to go out and

find their own fun.” The kids played a lot in the triangle, mostly baseball.

Jeanette used a whistle to call the kids home at night and they could hear it all the way over in the triangle, almost 2 blocks away. They biked all over. They played at the Hester Park wading pool. Winter brought skating at Lake George and sledding at Hester Park.

Jeanette remembers winters with more snow, describing a picture of John and Cathy standing taller than the wash line on a snow bank in the back yard. One very cold day, 7 or 8 year old Cathy was having so much fun sliding she didn’t realize how cold she was getting. When she got home Jeanette “stuck her in the bathtub to thaw”.

One of the biggest changes they see in the neighborhood is fewer kids. They’re aware of only 6 children on their block now. Jeanette thinks people don’t get as “settled in” and stay in the same place as long as they used to. People are busy, and gone are the days of just “stopping over for coffee”. Jeanette still walks daily and makes a point of talking with any neighbors she sees outside.

After 58 years in her northside home, Jeanette has no desire to move. With good memories and good neighbors, she’s “going to stay ‘til they carry me out”.

Our Digital Neighborhood

We’re testing a neighborhood communications center (combination web site and email notices).

This would allow us to:

- access committee agendas and minutes
- communicate via a discussion board
- have our own private classified ads and share site

Explore our experimental “wiki website” at: <http://northside-hesterpark.wikispaces.com/>

Sliding Hill at Hester to be Affected by Water Treatment Plant Project

The St. Cloud Water Treatment Facility on 5th Ave. North along the river will be starting a three year rehabilitation project shortly, according to Patrick Shea, Public Utilities Director at the city. They will be upgrading or replacing equipment that was not taken care of during the early 1990's expansion. The contractor will be staging some equipment on the south side of the building and will be bringing equipment into the building on the north end.

They are in the process of installing some access control fencing and erosion control measures on the north end of the property. This fence will bisect the sledding area at the lower section of the hill.

In an effort to avert any liability issues, City Park Director Scott Zlotnik "felt that it would be necessary to limit sledding to a West to East direction in lieu of the traditional North to South direction". The intent of installing a temporary fence is to avoid any accidents or collisions with the construction fencing installed at the WTF and any collisions of sledders going in opposite directions.

"I do realize that a couple of years ago sledding at Cathedral was taken away by that school and by no means are we suggesting sledding is to be removed from Hester Park", Zlotnik said. "We simply are attempting to provide the safest park environment for our users."

The Neighborhood group plans to discuss this further and forward any suggestions or input anyone has to the Park Department for their review. Zlotnik has indicated a willingness to discuss this further with neighbors if there are additional concerns.

Life-Long Northsider

Dan and Cathy Becker live at 1121 N. 6th Avenue in a house built around 1920. Dan's parents bought the house in 1969 when Dan was 2 years old, so Dan grew up there and the Northside has always been his neighborhood.

Dan's father worked at the Hospital as a social worker and his mother worked at Caritas. Dan and his siblings, Michael and Heidi, went to Wilson Elementary School (now ALC), St. Paul's Jr. High and Dan graduated from Apollo High School.

Dan went to Rochester Institute of Technology to study psychology and while he was there he met Cathy, also a student. They were married in

1988 and are now raising their two children, Nell and Daniel, in Dan's childhood home.

In Dan's memory the neighborhood was full of kids and they played outside all the time. There was less traffic and hardly any parental supervision was needed so the kids just got together and played. The O'Briens had 8 kids and all of them loved playing "Kick-the-Can". For years kids came from blocks away with their coffee cans to play this game.



Cathy and Dan Becker

Mostly Dan remembers playing at Hester Park – sledding in the winter and swimming in the big pool with the water spout. When he was young the terraced rock pools would fill up with rain water and sometimes kids could swim under the bridges.

When Dan was 7 years old he had a dramatic experience at Hester Park that left him with a strong spiritual connection to the park. In April 1974 Dan, Michael, and their friend Eric were playing on the river side of the stone wall at the top of the river bank. The wall was 6 feet high and the bank was covered with dry sumac and leaves.

The boys started playing with a pack of matches and the dry leaves caught on fire and quickly got out of control. Michael and Eric ran away but Dan got trapped between the fire and the wall. He was choking with smoke and curled up into a ball when he heard a woman's voice calling to him "Come with me, little boy". He followed the voice down to the river and jumped along the rocks to escape the fire and run home. It was a big fire that damaged much of the park.

Since then Dan has been intrigued with stories about Hester Cronk Gilman, the woman the park's named for. He has written a history of Hester Gilman, and this year Dan and Cathy visited her birthplace in eastern Ontario. Dan believes Hester's spirit in the park keeps the children playing there safe from harm.