Meetings and Announcements

Portage Park Neighborhood Association:

Next meeting:
Monday, October 12th
7:30 p.m.
4839 W. Irving Park Rd.

C.A.P.S. Meetings

All meetings at 7 p.m.
Beat 1624 — Oct 21
at Biagio’s Banquets,
4242 N. Central Ave.
Beat 1633 — Oct 20
at Wright College (Theater)
4300 N. Naragansett
Beat 1634 — Oct 22
at Portage-Cragin Library,
5108 W. Belmont Ave.
16th District CAPS Office,
312-742-4521 for more information.

PPNA On-Line

Get the most current info from the PPNA on our website: www.portagepark.org

Contacting the PPNA board:
board@portagepark.org

General questions or info:
membership@portagepark.org
communications@portagepark.org
seniors@portagepark.org
web@portagepark.org

NEW! Renew or Join OnLine!

You can join or renew your PPNA membership online. You can get directly to the form via:
http://www.portagepark.org/joinonline.html
Pay with PayPal.

Letter from the President: Changes for PPNA on Horizon

As many of you know, I will be stepping down as President of the PPNA at the end of December. I have been the President for the last six years and this is my final term. Between now and the end of December, I will be overseeing changes to the organization that the board and I have been working on for some time. We all believe, and we are excited to think, that the changes will help carry the PPNA into the future.

One of the changes is in the area of communications. John Arena, who is the organization’s Vice President and head of the communication committee, will be taking a leave of absence for personal reasons. John has been instrumental in keeping both the PPNA Newsletter and the rest of the Communications Committee afloat for the last ten years. He was the driving force in keeping us all informed on community issues and his presence will be sorely missed. I would like to take this time to thank John for putting in the countless hours he has in making the newsletter and the organization one of the best in the city. I would also like to thank his family for allowing him to devote the energy needed to accomplish this task.

With these anticipated voids in our PPNA Board structure, it offers the opportunity over the next 3 months for the PPNA to discuss ways to streamline our efforts to continue our involvement and role within the Portage Park Community. Since our inception over ten years ago, communication, public activism and community service have been cornerstones to our efforts as we strive to improve our community through the voice of its membership and neighbors. We look forward to continuing those efforts.

Our goal will be to introduce this new face of the PPNA on February 1, 2010.

There will be physical changes to the organization, but the roots of our organization will remain grounded and active. Some topics the PPNA Board is considering in order to be more effective and efficient include; reducing the number of public meetings, re-establishing volunteer committees that meet the community’s current interest, creating a more efficient means of communication and fostering stronger relationships with our neighboring community organizations. Our goal will be to introduce this new face of the PPNA on February 1, 2010.

Over the next few months the PPNA board will review and vote to revise our current Bylaws to accommodate changes to the organization. We welcome the community to review our bylaws on our web site at http://www.portagepark.org/ and submit additional suggestions or recommendations as to ways we could improve the organization to better serve you and the community. It is our intent to keep our established not-for-profit 501c-4 organization standing with the government. You can contact the PPNA board via email at: board@portagepark.org

As a founding member of this organization, it has been a joy of mine to see the constructive efforts not only of the past PPNA board members over the years, but the general membership and the community and for all the strides we made with the simple goal of improving our community through communication and active involvement. From the annual 4th of July Parade to the Christmas/Membership Party, from development & zoning communications to new park improvements, we sure have many examples of successes to build upon.

I would like to take some time now to thank the current board members, Chris, Bob, Jill and Maria. I would also like to thank Abigail Dean for her recent “behind the scenes” help alongside John with the well-respected newsletter publication. A special thank you is deserving to all the block captains who helped distribute the newsletter for all the past years. I would also like to thank the many past board members, the countless volunteers and all of our members. Thank you for your time and I hope you all will be as excited as we are with the new plans for the PPNA.

Best,

Gerard Staniszewski
The Tax Reform Action Coalition (Trac) Continues Its Mission to Enact a Fair and Predictable Property Tax System in Illinois

As the 7% property assessment cap expired prior to the 2009 property tax reassessment, we are faced, yet again, with the need to fight for reform. We have joined with state representatives in calling for a renewal of the 7% assessment cap – but that is not the long term solution.

TRAC has a plan for a permanent assessment cap. It is FAIR because assessment increases will be capped and consistently applied to all properties, apartment buildings, businesses and homes. It is PREDICTABLE because increases (as TRAC proposes) will be capped at a maximum of 2% a year, for everyone.

The permanent assessment cap prevents any skyrocketing assessment increases that are tied to bubble market values, and new assessments will be based on the purchase price of a property. This means that property owners will not be taxed on unrealized gains and the capped assessments will promote stability in our neighborhoods.

There will be opponents to this clear, logical thinking which is why we are asking you to support TRAC.

What can you do to help? Visit our website at www.trac-il.org and Join Our Email list. We will keep you informed of our Actions and Alerts. Or for more information contact: Les Kniskern, Outreach Director, at outreach@trac-il.org or 773-339-5915.

World Class Children’s Film Festival Comes to Bank of America Cinema Oct. 23-25!

The 26th Annual Chicago International Children’s Film Festival launches a new family-friendly venue: The Bank of America Cinema! The 300 seat cinema is located in the Portage Park Neighborhood at 4901 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL. School is out, but the CICFF is in session! Friday, October 23rd features 9:45am and 11:45pm screenings.

On Saturday, October 24th and Sunday, October 25th, the CICFF presents four programs each day. “My First Movies” (ages 2-5) will begin at 10am, and programs for kids 5-8 and 8-10 are scheduled at 11:30am, 1:30pm, and 3:30pm. Screenings for school groups are available Friday, October 23rd and November 2-6.

The Bank of America Cinema, formerly LaSalle Bank Cinema, is located in the back of the Bank of America and provides free ample parking! Turn south on Lavergne from Irving Park Road to access the parking lot and theater!

Shows sell out fast! Avoid the tears and join in the premiers! Get your tickets today! Learn more at www.cicff.org.

Austin-Irving Library to Host Two Author Appearances in October

“Chicago’s Polish Downtown” Wednesday, October 28, 7:00pm

Victoria Granacki, author of Chicago’s Polish Downtown will present a lecture with slides that will cover the history of the communities currently known as Wicker Park, East Village, River West and Bucktown. These neighborhoods once comprised the capital of American Polonia and served as the city’s oldest Polish settlement. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing after the program. This program is part of the month-long Chicago Book Festival.

“The Mind: User Manual Release 1.0” Wednesday, October 14, 7:00 P.M.

Resulting from twenty-five years of research into how the human mind works, this book digs deeply into philosophy and defines existence using everyday language that the reader can understand. Mr. Stachura’s quest for answers began seemingly by chance, when he started working as a computer programmer the day after John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Over the years, he developed a program named Cogitator, an artificial-mind program that mirrors the working of the human mind.

John P. Stachura was born in a small village in Central France at the end of World War II. His parents brought the family to Chicago in 1955 to begin a new life. Eight years later, at the age of eighteen, he became one of the first computer programmers at LaSalle National Bank in Chicago and started converting manual systems to automated processes.

In 1982, while attending a training class, he reached an understanding of how the human mind processes information. For the next fourteen years, he studied and researched exhaustively to design an artificial mind that would think, learn, and make decisions as a human being does.

In 1991, he met his partner who had created software that would serve this concept. It wasn’t until 1995 that Cognitor, Incorporated was co-founded and the name “Cogitator” was given to the software. After twenty-five years of research, “The Mind – User Manual” was released in April 2007. Largely self-educated, Mr. Stachura has traveled around the world, has an honorable discharge as a Vietnam veteran, spent two years in Saudi Arabia managing a software firm, and is a member of MENSA.

For more information contact the Austin Irving Library at 6100 W. Irving Park Road, 312-744-6222.
Recap of CAPS meeting held August 26th

- **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** still collecting cell phones and eye glasses for the Lions Club.
- **PROGRESS ON PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS:** no previously identified problems.
- **TOP TEN CRIMES** (compared to previous month):
  1. Theft = 25 (up 2)
  2. Criminal Damage = 22 (up 5)
  3. Battery = 22 (up 6)
  4. Assault = 10 (up 2)
  5. Burglary = 9 (down 9)
  6. Robbery = 7 (up 4)
  7. Motor Vehicle Theft = 5 (down 1)
  8. Narcotics = 4 (down 12)
  9. Criminal Trespass = 4 (up 1)
  10. Deceptive Practice = 2 (down 1)
- **NEW PROBLEMS AND ISSUES:** thefts from auto’s (GPS Devices)/Burglaries (Garage/Residential)
- **STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS NEW PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED:** Reminder do not leave any type of valuables in plain sight inside your vehicle (that includes stands for GPS devices and charges). Thieves look for these items knowing that there is probably a GPS device in your vehicle. Also do not leave loose change visible in your vehicle.
- **BURGLARY SAFETY TIPS:**
  - Close and lock all entrance doors
  - Use strong locks and solid doors
  - Reinforce door frames
  - Close and lock all windows
  - Keep trees and shrubs trimmed
  - Keep security gates closed
  - Be observant
  - Call the police (911) on suspicious persons
- **NEXT MEETING:** September 23rd at 7:00 pm (4242 N. Central)

Visit www.chicagopolice.org for sex offenders information, crime statistics, alerts, city programs, city services, etc.

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**SUGAR PLUM FAIRY’S Home Boutique**

With a wave of her wand, our home is magically transformed into a holiday boutique. Come and see many carefully selected, beautifully handcrafted creations. We serve hot apple cider and provide treats free of charge. Get a jump on the holidays, with our unique collection of holiday gift ideas. For information and show details go to www.skcrafts.com.

If you have and questions call Susan Kennelly 312-925-6661
MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT—show your card and receive discounts from these PPNA business partners

Membership cards can be used to receive discounts at participating area businesses. Participating businesses and their discounts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUSINESS</th>
<th>DISCOUNT OFFERED</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Newsstand</td>
<td>10% off everything on Tuesdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drehobl Art Glass</td>
<td>10% discount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Cleaners</td>
<td>10% off dry cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Copy</td>
<td>4¢ b/w, 75¢ color copies everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Fitness</td>
<td>$75 for 100 Business Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands Over Stress</td>
<td>$10 off 1 hour wellness massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Peña Restaurant</td>
<td>$5 off any 30 minute massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Tax Service</td>
<td>10% off entire check, every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meisa Cafe</td>
<td>50% off individual or business tax return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Pollock-Piano Tuning</td>
<td>10% off entire check, every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Six Corners Flowers</td>
<td>$10 off (773 286-6368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portage Park Handyman</td>
<td>15% discount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portage Theater</td>
<td>10% off with proof of membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Now Redesign</td>
<td>$2 off ticket price. (except silent films)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy’s Cycles</td>
<td>$50 off a Room Redesign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veranda Lighting</td>
<td>10% discount on non-sale merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wong’s Chinese</td>
<td>10% off entire check, every day</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As businesses are added, they will be listed in this newsletter and on our web site. If you are an area business and would like to participate, please contact the PPNA at membership@portagepark.org. If you have not yet joined or renewed your PPNA membership, please do so to take advantage of this benefit. Cards will be mailed to each paid member, and will be valid through Dec. 31, 2008.

PPNA Financial Report
Balance sheet as of September 24, 2009

**ENDING BALANCE**

Previous Ending Balance .................. $5,445.05
Current Ending Balance ................... $5,104.09

**REVENUE**

Parade ................................ $1,170.00
Membership............................. $163.00
Total Revenue ......................... $1,333.00

**EXPENSES**

Newsletter Printing ....................... $990.00
Membership Committee ................... $117.60
Communications Committee.............. $59.74
Parade ................................ $506.62
Total Expenses ........................ $1,673.96

WOW!

Monday, October 12, 2009
7:30 p.m.
4839 W. Irving Park Rd.

I. Call to Order
II. President’s Opening Statement
III. Old/New Business
IV. Meeting Adjourned

FOR SALE
Elliptical Step Machine
$175 o.b.o
Call: 815-978-9575
PPNA News & Views is distributed to 4,500 homes and businesses within the boundaries of the Portage Park Neighborhood Association (Montrose Avenue to the north, Grace Street to the south, Cicero Avenue to the east and Central Avenue to the west) on a quarterly basis (March, June, September and December). In addition, we also publish 6 Member issues in the months of February, May, August, October, November. In these months, the newsletters will be mailed directly to paid members. 1200 additional copies are available to the general public only at business locations that are current advertisers or business members.

Electronic issues will be emailed to those members who request it and to certain individuals and institutions outside of the Association boundaries at the discretion of the PPNA Communications Committee.

The newsletter is delivered on or about the first weekend of the month. Ad deadline is the 15th of the month preceding the issue month.

**RATES (per 3.5” x 2” ad)**

- 10 issues—$350.00  (4 quarterly, 6 Member Issues)
- 4 quarterly issues—$180.00
- Individual month—$50.00

**To reserve your ad space contact John Arena at 773-283-9887 or e-mail newsletters@portagepark.org**

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**PPNA 2009 Membership Form**

Name: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

Phone Number: ____________________________

Email Address: ____________________________

This is a _____ New Membership _____ Renewal

Would you like to receive email updates on PPNA news and events? Yes / No

Membership Type: _____ Household _____ Business

Dues: $15 per Household, $8 per Senior Household, $25 per Business

Please check any and all areas for which you would be willing to volunteer/participate:

- Community Service
- Economic Development/Zoning*
- Fundraising (Parade, Holiday Party)
- Newsletter Delivery
- Newsletter (Distribution, Writing, Layout)
- Social Activities (Members Only Events, Portage Park Palates)
- Safety/CAPS
- Website Development
- Other: ____________________________

* Restaurants/Entertainment/Cultural Venues, Residential/Retail Development, and TIF Advisory Committee

Please list any issues and/or topics that you feel the PPNA should address this year:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Please list any special skills you have which may be helpful to the PPNA:
(Public Relations, Legal, Accounting, Musical/Artistic, Bilingual, etc.)

________________________________________________________________________

Membership renewals are due January 1 and expire December 31.

Bring completed membership form with payment to the next public meeting, held the second Monday of each month at 7:30PM.

Peoples Gas & Coke Building

5159 W. Montrose Ave.

4839 W. Irving Park Rd.

Chicago, IL 60641

Attn: Jill Staniszewski

of the Portage Park Neighborhood Association

We invite members of the PPNA to join us as well as continuing to ask for suggestions naming your favorite restaurant in the area. In 2009, we wanted to get out the word that it is back and better than ever. Margaret’s is a great place to spend the evening and have really good food and drink. Mike’s Ale House is still the sign outside, but this year: Margaret’s is all Margaret, and that’s a good thing.

Michael came back over to get our dinner order and replenish our beers. He was funny and talkative and since the restaurant wasn’t busy, at our beck and call. Margaret came into the bar and we got to meet her. We were having a really nice time. We gave Michael our dinner order and we continued to talk and comment on the reopening of Margaret’s and how pleased we were at how it was going. My partners insisted the fries were really good, because they had them already. I wanted the tator tots because I used to love them when this was Mike’s. Michael came back and said they couldn’t make the fries because the cook made an error getting the frozen fries out of the freezer. It was disappointing, since we had such a spirited conversation about the new fries. But, it was also funny. Like it was meant to happen since they were looking forward to them.

In short order, our dinner was ready. My partner ordered the steak sandwich, which is marinated skirt steak, provolone cheese, peppers and onions, lettuce and tomato for $9.00. The side dish? Fries. Michael went back to the cook and told him that we were looking forward to the fries, and the cook did what he could to make it happen. Although the fries were somewhat lacking, we were impressed that the cook tried to make us happy. My other dining partner had the Margaret’s Steak Wrap. Grilled skirt steak, peppers and onions, cheddar cheese and spicy alioli.

I ordered one of the Ragin’ Cajun burgers, which has chipotle pepper, jack cheese, grilled onion and roasted red pepper. It rocked, just enough heat. In fact, my dining partners loved their steak sandwiches. We were all happy the dining option is back in the neighborhood and better than ever. Margaret’s is a great place to spend the evening and have really good food and drink. Mike’s Ale House is still the sign outside, but make no mistake, this place is all Margaret, and that’s a good thing.
What can you do?

1. **Green Your Dish Routine** - Energy Star dishwasher uses 41% less energy than regular models” and “if you use the air-dry setting, you’ll save 50% more energy.

2. **Learn To Love Your Microwave** - Using a microwave uses two thirds less energy than using your oven.

3. **Green Your Cookware** - Purchase pots and pans that aren’t covered with Teflon, which contains perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a known chemical that has led to cancer and birth defects in lab animals, and DuPont plant workers. You can usually find affordable cast iron pots and pans at any thrift store or garage sale, and they’re very safe to use.

4. **Green Your Fridge** - Your refrigerator is one of the biggest energy hogs in your home. Wait to store warm or hot food. If you just had a delicious and warm dinner, wait before your food cools off before you throw it in the refrigerator. The hot temperature of the food will cause the fridge to work harder.

5. **Stop Using Paper Towels** - The key to successfully ditching your paper towels is to have a basket of ‘clean up rags’ right where your paper towels used to be.

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**Organic Gardening Workshop at Kilbourn Park: Composting Basics**

Composting is the basis of organic gardening. This class will discuss a variety of options for producing compost from leaves, garden trimmings, food waste, cardboard and paper, and more. Learn about vessel composting, passive composting, worm composting, hot and cold piles, and the science of composting: so you can become a compost expert and share your knowledge with your friends and neighbors! Taught by Bill Shores of Shores Consulting. Details below:

**DATE:** 10/24/09  
**START TIME:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
**SCHEDULE NOTES:** For ages 18 & over — To register for this class: call the Greenhouse at 773-685-3359 and leave your name, class name, and your phone number or e-mail, for confirmation.  
**COST:** $20  
**LOCATION:** Kilbourn Park & Organic Greenhouse

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**Help Migrating Birds**

If you have found a stunned bird that has collided with a window, please follow these steps:

1. Place a flat folded paper towel in the bottom of an non-waxed paper sack or box. A paper grocery or sandwich bag is ideal, or a box with small holes in it. Most birds will do well in a smaller sack but larger birds such as catbirds, rails, woodcocks, thrashers and woodpeckers should go into a paper grocery sized bag or box. If you find an injured raptor or heron type bird, contact the Collision hotline (see step 4).

2. Gently pick up the bird and put it into the bottom of the bag or box. Try to keep the bird upright. Fold down the top of the bag or close the box so that the bird cannot jump or fly out.

3. Put the bag or box in a dark, quiet and protected location (preferably indoors). Do not open the bag to check on the bird, this is dangerous the bird may try to escape and cause further injury. If the bird is active, please put another towel or blanket over the box or bag. Light makes them active.

4. Please call the Bird Montior Collision Hotline at 773-988-1867 and leave the time, your name, a number where you can be reached and your location. If you cannot rescue the bird, leave the above information and the location and condition of the bird.

5. Do not give the bird food or water as this can be very dangerous for a stunned bird. It can even kill the bird.

To learn more about how you can help, visit http://www.birdmonitors.net.
New Editor and Chief for PPNA Newsletter  
By Maria Pollock

For the past several issues, Abigail Dean, a relative newcomer to the Portage Park area, has been regularly creating artwork and contributing articles. From now on, Abigail will be acting as the Editor in Chief for PPNA: Community News and Views. Welcome, Abigail! We applaud, and need, more volunteers like her—they’re the core of our association! The following is an interview with Abigail, conducted in September.

MP: Abigail, tell us a little more about you. How long have you lived in the area?
AD: I grew up in Louisville, KY, and have lived in Chicago for the past 13 years. My husband and I moved to Portage Park a year and a half ago. We bought our first home, a historic Chicago bungalow, last April.

MP: What do you like about Portage Park?
AD: I love the beautiful vintage architecture, the bungalows and Victorian homes. I also enjoy the sense of community—it almost feels like a small town. I have become active with the Silent Film Society of Chicago and frequent the Portage Theater for their silent films and horror fests. I also think Fantasy Costumes and Raffi’s Record Riot (music store) are gems! The thing that amazes me the most in researching this neighborhood is how people moved to Portage Park over a century ago (from more crowded downtown-Chicago areas) for the same reason people put roots down today: you get more for your money in terms of space and quality of homes, and you also gain a peaceful, quiet sense of community that’s absent from the more bustling neighborhoods further east.

MP: What made you decide to get involved in the newsletter?
AD: John Arena, the Communication Director, is also a designer, and he mentioned needing help in producing the monthly PPNA newsletters. This kind of work is second nature to me from doing it for a living so long. It sounded fun, and I dove right in.

MP: Do you have a background in publishing?
AD: Yes, for the past 10 years, I’ve worked at a business consulting firm as an Art Director and Copywriter. I design, market and publish several corporate newsletters and reports.

MP: What are your dreams for the neighborhood?
AD: I’d love to see the Six Corners revitalized with thriving independent businesses—and possibly all those vacant buildings for sale on Milwaukee filled with highly-successful anchoring stores, like maybe an Ikea or a Target, which would obviously require tons of new parking. I’d also love to see more recognition for neighborhood landmarks. I’ve dreamed about having architectural columns, like you see in the Villa neighborhood, distinguishing the Old Portage Park community. Finally, I think the Portage Park neighborhood could do a better job of advertising itself and the benefits of moving here, mainly value, community and convenience. I see other working-class neighborhoods campaigning, like Berwyn for example—you see billboards—and I think there is a big opportunity to draw young homebuyers who might not be aware that such a nice and affordable community exists on the northwest side.

MP: Thank you so much for sharing your story with us.
Send your comments to communications@portagepark.org.

News for residents of the 38th Ward

The Chicago Department of Health will offer seasonal flu shots at no charge at one day flu clinics through October 9, 2009. Family Vaccination Day is scheduled for October 3, 2009 at Wright College, 4300 N. Narragansett, from 9:00am-2:00pm. Please call my office for those clinic dates. There will be plenty of “seasonal flu” vaccine, and shots will be easy to get.

When the pandemic flu vaccine arrives, it will be offered at sites across the city for Chicagoans who do not have a health care provider or whose health care providers do not have vaccine. Again, please call my office for clinic dates as they come available. The Chicago Department of Health asks that you make an effort to cover coughs and sneezes, wash hands regularly with soap and water, and stay home from work and/or school if you have flu like symptoms (coughing, sore throat and a fever).

Mark your calendars with the Farmers Markets end dates. Your last chance to attend the Farmers Market at Eli’s Cheesecake will be on Thursday, October 15th and the Portage Park Farmers Market will have its last market of the season on October 18th.

The Six Corners Association presents The 4th Annual Monster Film Festival, on Friday October 23 and Sunday October 25th, at the Portage Theatre at 4050 N. Milwaukee Ave, with a special appearance by Svengoolie.

As always, if you should have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact our service office at 773-545-3838 or via email at ward38@cityofchicago.org.

Welcome, Abigail!

For the past several issues, Abigail Dean, a relative newcomer to the Portage Park area, has been regularly creating artwork and contributing articles. From now on, Abigail will be acting as the Editor in Chief for PPNA: Community News and Views. Welcome, Abigail! We applaud, and need, more volunteers like her—they’re the core of our association! The following is an interview with Abigail, conducted in September.

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Send your comments to communications@portagepark.org.

Garden Club Update

NATIVE PLANT LECTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Late this summer, Marian Thill, a master gardener and native plant expert, headed a lecture at the Portage Park Cultural Center about the benefits of gardening with native plant species. Many Portage Park Garden Club members were in attendance. Highlights from the informative presentation include:

1. Native plants are low maintenance: Compared to lawns, native plants do not need watering (except during establishment), nor do they require chemical fertilizers or any of the commercial insecticides—they are adapted to local conditions and to local “bugs.” Marian showed slides of her garden in a severe midsummer drought: where her neighbors’ traditional grass lawns were brown and dying, while her native garden was actually blooming!

2. Native plants are inexpensive to maintain: Since native plants effectively take care of themselves, there is little or no maintenance and hence little or no maintenance cost. While the cost of maintaining an average lawn is $700/year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

3. Native plants are environmentally responsible: 30% of water consumed in the Midwest goes to watering lawns. The standard lawn requires 10,000 gallons of water per summer to maintain a “green” look, while native plants require no watering at all once established.

4. Native plants attract more native species: Studies have proven that animals native to the Chicago area prefer nesting and feeding near native plants—their natural evolutionary food source. Marian has counted as many as 95 bird species and 20 butterfly species in her native garden.

Finally, Marian recommended two books for beginners, “Native Plants for the Home Landscape” and “Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife.” The Garden Club wishes to thank Marian for her interesting lecture!
Voting with Your Money by Abigail Dean

I am certain that EVERYONE has noticed the many vacant storefronts that haunt the Six Corners landscape and the Portage Park vicinity. It’s important to realize that the city government and the chamber of commerce can only do so much—we, as residents of Portage Park, hold the power to affect the fate of our neighborhood businesses, and in turn our community’s well being.

The other day I read an interesting quote in a Jefferson Park Historical Society newsletter that said supporting local businesses is like “voting with your money.” I was struck by how true this statement rings.

To choose Pizza by Alex over a restaurant in a different neighborhood translates to keeping Pizza by Alex in Portage Park. Every time you buy a magazine downtown or at the grocery store, City Newsstand misses your dollars. Statistics show that for every dollar spent at a locally-owned business, 45 cents remains in the community, versus only 13 cents of that same dollar spent at a national chain. It’s really true: by supporting our neighborhood businesses, we can ensure that Portage Park stays vibrant.

In the 1950s, the Six Corners was a bustling, booming retail district—the second largest in the entire city of Chicago. But as residents shifted their sights to the suburbs for shopping and dining, Portage Park and the northwest-side suffered.

On the streets I overhear people complaining about vacant stores, but if these residents are shopping at a suburban Home Depot over their local hardware store, their dollars leave the neighborhood.

Which brings me to my next point: why buy anywhere but Portage Park when you simply can’t beat the service and personalized experience of shopping within your own community? For example, just the other day the owner of Smolka True Value Hardware (on Milwaukee Ave.) had already closed his store for the night when he saw my car pull up. He then reopened the store and helped me find what I was looking for. Would this happen at Home Depot?

Another example: I recently had my wedding ring repaired at Schierer & Popp Jewelers (a family-owned business at the same North Cicero Avenue location for over fifty years). The owner thoroughly explained the repair process and offered a coupon for my next purchase. When I stopped in again, she remembered my name.

Sadly, these kinds of experiences are less common every day, as larger national chains take business from smaller competitors. Of course, this scenario is not unique to Portage Park. But we are fortunate to have many family-owned stores where personalized service still exists.

Whenever I buy anything now, I make a point of first asking myself, “how can I vote with my money?” And I challenge those reading this article to do the same. Remember: a dollar spent at a neighborhood business is an invaluable vote for Portage Park!