

- Bulletin Board -

OUR NEW AIA OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

- Odette Ramos, former Vice President, is the new AIA President -
- Steve Gewirtz, new Vice President -
- Kathleen Hruska is our new Treasurer -
- Paul Burk, new Member-at-Large -
- Miruna Patrascanu joins Jim Anthony on the Membership Committee -
- Patrick McMahon, PUD Liaison -

WELCOME!

Officers' Contact List

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The deadline for newsletter items is the 20th of each month

Jen Swanson
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RECYCLING SCHEDULE

Blue Bags: 2/13 and 2/27
Paper: 2/8 and 2/22
Regular trash pickup is every
Tuesday and Friday morning.

ROLL-OFF DUMPSTER

Is scheduled for Saturday,
March 4 at 31st & Abell!
Remember-may arrive on Friday!!
**NO HAZMATS OR
APPLIANCES!!**

HELP AN ADULT LEARNER TODAY!

The Greater Homewood Adult Literacy Program is seeking volunteers to tutor adults in math, reading, and/or writing. We offer free training and materials. Flexible schedules and a great environment. Located across from JHU!

Call (410) 261-3524 for more details.

A MESSAGE FROM JUDY BERLIN

I want to thank everyone who had been so helpful to me and my mother at the parties we came to. My Mother passed away 1/31/06. I know for a fact that she enjoyed the social events I took her to. She came to many AIA festivals, and ate many AIA hamburgers. Thanks again for your kindness to her. -Judy Berlin

SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

For over 35 years, Action In Maturity has provided services to seniors living in North Baltimore to enable them to live independently with a good quality of life. These services include regularly scheduled transportation in our mini-buses from private homes and apartments for grocery shopping, banking, and post office chores. Transportation for individual doctor, dental, and other personal appointments is also furnished. Various social activities are organized each month for the enjoyment of our members. Action In Maturity is a non-profit organization funded in part by the Commission on Aging & Retirement Education of Baltimore City. We would welcome being of service to residents of the Abell Community.

For further information, call the AIM office at 410-889-7915



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Abell Improvement Association Newsletter
February 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am very excited to have been elected as the new President for the Abell Improvement Association, and look forward to a great year.

As I articulated at our General Membership meeting in January, I hope that at our next meeting we can develop a statement about the vision for our community, which will help us define the role that the AIA plays in making that happen, and helping us all be strategic in our decision-making and work to improve our community.

Along those lines, another goal is to ensure all of us as residents of this community, are well-informed about the issues and events happening in our neighborhood, and make the newsletter a good vehicle for that communication. To that end, the Committee chairs, and our liaisons to various initiatives, will write regularly in this newsletter so that you are informed, and have an opportunity to comment.

We also hope to be able to convene meetings and forums about specific issues coming down the pike. Not only will you be informed, but asked to discuss your thoughts. This is important to guide the Executive Committee in making effective decisions.

I also hope that we can improve the look and feel of our website, which should be an excellent communication tool, both internal to our community, and helping others outside the community get information on events, like the Street Fair!

Last, we will continue our fun traditions - the Memorial Day Picnic, Street Fair, Caroling, and New Year's parties, and look to boost our membership so that we can continue to be a strong and powerful organization. You'll hear more about membership events soon!

This February issue of the newsletter is a report of our January Membership meeting. In this issue you will find the reports from each of the AIA Committees about the events and accomplishments in 2005.

You will also find more information on the new AIA Officers, and the proposed Day and Evening Reporting Center (DERC.)

Next issue, we will report on progress with the Pedestrian Street Lighting we have been fighting to get on 31st and 32nd streets, the walkers, and dates of events this year.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions, concerns, or ideas. I look forward to working with the new officers, and moving us forward.

-- Odette T. Ramos
President

END-OF-YEAR COMMITTEE REPORTS

Newsletter Committee

There have been several positive changes over the past year at the Abell Newsletter. As you've noticed, our format and layout have changed. Every issue of the newsletter is now 11x17", and we've struck a deal with Kinko's so we do not pay any more than we did with our previous printing house. The addition of the Bulletin Board has been warmly received. While feedback has been encouraging, submissions have tapered off over the past few months. Remember, the newsletter is for Abell, by Abell. We rely on your submissions! Last, but certainly not least, on behalf of the AIA, I extend a hearty THANK YOU to all of our distributors!! Without you, there would quite simply be no newsletter to speak of. The entire Abell Community thanks all of you who give your time and energy each and every month. -Jen Swanson

Street Fair Committee

The 2005 Street Fair on Sunday, September 25, was a community effort: at least 30 neighbors helped make the fair a resounding success. Several new attractions this year were a wine tasting, ethnic delicacies from the JHU African Students' Association, and a performance of improv comedy by the Baltimore Improv Group. For the third year we hosted a traditional crab feast, with, for the first time, corn on the cob. At the grill station, smoked bratwurst added to the standard fair menu of hamburgers and hot dogs. Shelley Treadway again sold enchiladas, and the bake sale table was complemented by fresh hot coffee from Carma's Café. Music was provided by Judith Geller, Michael Raitzyk Trio, Catalyst, and Payola Reserve. The second annual "Art Imitates City Life" exhibit featured works by Amelia Arria, Aubrey Bodine, Dennis Gray, and other local artists. Children's activities continued throughout the day in the Abell Community Park. The fair was a financial success for the AIA. Along with proceeds listed in our treasurer's report, Baltimore City and JHU contributed generously to the fair. This year as every year, the fair's real success will be measured in the memories created by the sharing of food, fun, and festivities with friends and neighbors in the shadow of our charming rowhomes. -Michael Treadway

PLUSH Committee

(Planning, Land Use, Sanitation and Housing)

After tireless activities, including letter writing to the Department of Housing and Community Development, the property at 3200 Abell Avenue changed ownership. Rehabilitation of the dilapidated home seems close to completion. Through collaboration with adjacent neighbors and after successful negotiations and letter writing, the crumbling, hazardous wall in the alley beside 323 E. 33rd has been replaced. Complaints about noise and unruly behavior have been addressed in numerous meetings with owners/tenants and JHU reps. These have resulted in noise abatement in several cases. New strategies to deal with unruly behavior have been discussed, and some have been put in place. The status of abandoned homes in the neighborhood is being investigated. -Susanne Riveles

Ad Hoc Grant Committee: "Bulbs for Barclay"

AIA formed a small committee in response to the Barclay School principal and teachers, who reported that nightly activities on the dark stairway entries of the school frequently left liquor bottles and syringes to be found by the students. The committee and Barclay School collaborated on a project aimed at deterring such behavior. The committee developed and submitted a successful proposal to the Baltimore Community Foundation. The grant permitted the purchase/installation of exterior security lighting. On July 29, representatives of AIA and the Abell community, and the Barclay School principal and students celebrated the successful completion of the project. AIA continues to monitor how the installation of the lights contributes to alleviating the issues. -Susanne Riveles

Beautifying the 300 Block of East 32nd Street

Our goal was to beautify a section of the 300 block of E 32nd, passed by many on their way to the Farmer's Market. A block grant was obtained from the Greater Homewood Community Corp, and a professional garden design was donated by Mary Washington. Working from March - May (a total of seven days) with helpers from Abell and Guilford Aves, the area was cleaned and planted. We spent a little less than \$700 on plants and mulch. Gerri Henchy, from the 3200 block of Abell, kept the garden alive during the dry summer by watering, weeding, and replacing stolen plants. The Charles Village Garden Club is available for continuing maintenance as needed.

Charles Village Community Benefits District Management Authority (CVCBDMA)

Odette Ramos and Emil Volcheck have represented AIA to the Board of the CVCBDMA. We've helped improve how the CVCBDMA serves you in several ways. Odette and Emil served on the Governance Committee of the Board, which is responsible for helping the Board run well and influencing the tone of how the Board behaves and governs. They organized an educational session to help train the Board, improved compliance with the Open Meetings and Public Information Acts, created guidelines and descriptions for Board committees, developed a job description for Board members, drafted a conflict of interest policy, and clarified nomination procedures. Odette chaired the Governance Committee and prepared better training and reference material for the Board. Emil also served on the Safety and Sanitation Committee. This committee studied the "Baseline Agreement" with the City and found ways to get more service from the City, reviewed deployment of the Clean Team, investigated charging businesses a fee for security escort service, and discussed how to improve customer service procedures. Current activities: Block Leaders Program is being revitalized; In specific blocks designated Healthy Neighborhood areas, low-interest loans are available for rehabilitation and the purchase of homes. Barclay Street between 30th and 33rd is part of that program; The new Main Street Manager is John Lundquist. Upcoming will be: Reauthorization; Review of programs and ways to improve sanitation and safety programs.

Treasurer's Report

Revenue in 05 (1/15/05-1/12/06) totaled \$9,623.33 against expenses of \$8,917.93. In July the AIA received a grant of \$3,480.00 from the Baltimore Community Foundation, and two weeks later an equal amount was disbursed to Hirsh Electric LLC for outdoor lighting for the Barclay School. These two transactions together amount to a simple pass-through; when they are excluded from the totals, revenue was \$6,143.33 and expenditure \$5,437.93, so that net revenue for the year was \$705.40. For comparison, revenue in 2004 was \$5,156, expenditure \$4,454, and net revenue \$702. Street Fair accounted for 95% of 05 revenue and 55% of expenditure-again excluding the BCF-Hirsch grant. Net revenue has been positive in both of the last two years and four of the last six.

Spending stayed remarkably closely to what was budgeted at the beginning of 05. Total spending differed from the budgeted amount by only \$12. However, spending on the Street Fair exceeded the originally budgeted amount by about \$500 (but by only 2.5% of the amount actually appropriated in the summer) and outward grants exceeded the budget by \$487; this is the amount dedicated (but not yet spent) from Street Fair revenue to Hurricane Katrina relief. On the other hand, none of the \$700 in budgeted funds for postage, committees, and environmental projects was spent.

Despite the higher than expected Street Fair spending, net revenue from the fair set an all-time record of \$2,353, although this was nearly \$1,000 less than hoped, because gross revenue was also less than expected. More than half of the fair's net revenue came from three items: grants from the City and from JHU, and the Kahoe's generous silent auction donation of a week at their Ocean City condo. The fair's grill and bake sale brought in more than expected, but the crab feast was less well attended than in 04, perhaps because of higher crab prices, and consequently revenue was 1/3 less than expected.

The AIA's bank balance stood at \$4,022.51 at the end of 05, \$293.87 above its level exactly one year ago. (This is about \$400 less than net revenue mainly because, in April, the Peace Camp reclaimed the \$300 that the Association was holding in trust for it, and because petty cash has increased by about \$150.) At roughly 32 months of average ordinary expenditure (that is, disregarding outward grants and spending for the Street Fair), the AIA's current balance is much more than enough to see it through, even without any further revenue, for at 1.5 years. -Michael Treadway

DAY & EVENING REPORTING CENTER PROPOSAL

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services is proposing to convert 2920 Greenmount into a Day & Evening Reporting Center (DERC). The building at present appears from outside to be vacant, and it has a for sale sign on it. The Maryland Department of General Services proposes to lease the building and to do the necessary renovations.

The proposal is for a total of 30 juveniles charged with non-violent crimes (including controlled dangerous substance violations) who have been arrested and are awaiting trial on juvenile charges and who would otherwise be held in detention to attend the program while living at home. Fifteen who are not attending school (because they have been expelled or other reasons) would attend in the daytime; they would attend academic classes, receive tutoring, and be involved in counseling, anger management classes, and the like. The other 15 who are attending school would attend this program in the evening, starting after school; they would have tutoring, homework time, counseling, anger management classes, and the like. All would be brought to the center by van after being picked up either at home or school, and all would be taken home at the end of their sessions. There are to be only two doors into and out of the center, in the front and in the rear, and opening either is to require knowing a combination. Hot meals and recreation will be provided to the students of the program. Staffing is to be 2.5 staff per student. Students in the program are to come initially from the entire City and later, after more centers are built, mainly from the 21218 zip code.

The objections to the program are that because of the size of the building (more than 11,000 square feet inside) and because of the cost of the program, it is hard to believe that it will not be expanded to take in a lot more students, that security may not be adequate, and that there may be budget cuts in the future which will affect staffing. Barclay Elementary-Middle School objects that the center would be much too close to the school. On the other hand, there is general agreement that there is a need for such a program.

Delegate Maggie McIntosh said at the AIA meeting on January 21 that our three delegates have asked for budget language that would require that no money be expended until there is a memorandum of understanding with the affected community groups and Barclay School. That budget language would have the force of law for the coming fiscal year, and Maggie promises to try to get the provisions of the memorandum written into law in the 2007 legislative session.

When this newsletter is published, there will have been a meeting on February 2 of representatives from a number of community groups and Barclay School to try to hammer out a common position on the DERC. At the AIA Executive Committee meeting on January 28, it was agreed that we will support the DERC if an acceptable set of conditions can be worked out. In addition, we very much made the point that we want support from the State government for programs, perhaps at 2920 Greenmount, that will involve our kids in activities that keep them out of trouble so that they never need the programs offered within the juvenile justice system. For example, Michelle Blue in Harwood has an excellent program to provide activities for local kids, and her program or a similar program is exactly what a lot more of our kids need. In essence, we are interested in working out a creative solution. For more information, contact any of the members of the AIA Executive Committee.