

INDEPENDENCE PARK COMMUNITY

VOICE

BEAUTIFICATION

Preserving the Treescape of Independence Park

Patti Kimbel

The GIPNA Board extends heartfelt gratitude at the amazing response to our plea to help support treatment for our neighborhood Ash Trees. We can excitedly announce that 50 Ash Trees were treated in September, which will extend their lives another two years. The donations were beyond expectations and we raised enough not only for this treatment, but made significant progress toward the next treatment needed in another two years. GIPNA will continue to collect donations specifically designated to treat and protect our Ash Trees for future years and future generations.

The second exciting development that also occurred in September



was an additional 28 trees were planted in the GIPNA neighborhood parkways. GIPNA partnered with Openlands for this project. Founded in 1963, Openlands is a non-profit organization dedicated to urban conservation in the greater Chicago region. It is one of the first organizations in the United States to address environmental issues within a metropolitan region. Openlands focuses on environmental protection of land, water, and trees while also working to involve and educate communities in their initiatives.

Openlands operates a Tree Planters Program and any neighborhood association can apply with a minimum commitment

of 10 community members. Our neighborhood 'tree keeper,' Katie Miller, spearheaded this initiative by applying for the Tree Planters Program grant. Community members must commit to watering a new tree weekly from spring to fall for a three-year time period. Once approved, Openlands may plant from 10-40 new trees in a neighborhood with each new tree estimated to be worth \$200. Katie worked with Keith O'Herrin, our neighborhood Arborist and Forrester for the village of Highland Park, to evaluate viable locations for the trees. There were 30 people that responded, and out of those, 20 qualified based on the needed land specifications and water main restrictions.

GIPNA was awarded grant approval earlier this year. Initially, the plan was for a spring planting but then due to the COVID pandemic planting was delayed to the fall. The Independence Park neighborhood has many Silver and Norway Maple trees.

These are fast growing trees but they tend to be weak-limbed, have shorter lives, and are more susceptible to black fungus. Openlands carefully chooses trees ideal for our urban environment: trees that are pollution tolerant, amenable to compacted soil, and able to handle salt. Three different species of trees were planted including Red Oak, Burr Oak, and Ironwood. These are all amazing native trees that with proper care and protection have a potential lifespan of over 150 years, and will likely outlive us all.

In this grant-seeking process, ideal locations for trees were identified and homeowners were solicited to commit to the watering specifications. Some individuals did not respond or were unable to commit to the care of the tree required for three years. Therefore, we did not plant quite as many trees as hoped. However, we are able to apply for another grant

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November GIPNA meeting is Wed. Nov. 4, 7 p.m., December meeting is Tues., Dec. 1, 7 p.m.
Join us online. Link to join these Zoom meetings: Meeting ID: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Due to the on-going coronavirus pandemic, some future events are cancelled for the foreseeable future. Please contact GIPNA (info@gipna.org), IPAC (ipac.chicago@gmail.com), AFAC (athleticfieldpark.com), Friends of Murphy (friendsofmurphy.org), and CAPS (CAPS.017District@chicagopolice.org) for updated event information.

NOVEMBER

TUES., NOV. 3—VOTE!

WED., NOV. 4—GIPNA Board Meeting, 7 p.m., online Zoom Meeting ID: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA

MON., NOV. 9—AFAC Meeting, 6 p.m. (online)

DECEMBER

WED., DEC. 1—GIPNA Board Meeting, 7 p.m., online Zoom Meeting ID: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA

MON., DEC. 5—Virtual Beer & Barbecue Tasting Fundraiser Event 7 p.m. - 8 p.m., online

MON., DEC. 14—AFAC Meeting, 6 p.m., online



Individual \$10
Family \$20
Business \$15
Lifetime \$100

Join as a new member

Renew your membership

Donate to GIPNA



RECYCLING

Green Tidbits

Pat Clark

Do you have fabric, trims, ribbons, arts and crafts supplies, tools, containers, hardware, musical instruments, metal, wood, surplus or outdated stock, science equipment that you would like to unload? The CCRx Oasis, 3039 W. Carroll Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612, 312-909-5902, is the place to donate so many things that can be reused. Check out their web site at www.creativechirx.org for a complete list of what they accept. The list is amazingly long!

Unused medications? Black out your name on the prescription bottle and take it to the 17th District Police Station, 4650

N. Pulaski Ave. There's a special secure receptacle in the lobby.

Plastic bags in your Blue Recycling Bin are a big no-no. The truck will not pick up your recyclables when plastic bags are present. No Styrofoam either.

Do you have dead electronics? Until the end of the year, the City has an easy way to get rid of cell phones, computers, video game consoles, computer monitors, portable digital music players, TVs, digital converter boxes, printers, faxes, scanners, cable and satellite receivers, keyboards and mice, small-scale servers, VCRs, DVD players, and DVD recorders. There are two sites close by: 6441 N. Ravenswood Ave., 1st Wednesday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4808 W. Wilson Ave., 1st Friday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To get more info on electronics and other recycling, please go to recyclebycity.com/Chicago. The web site is informative and entertaining.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Welcome Your New Neighbors

Susan Ryan

During the past year, 28 properties within the GIPNA boundaries have changed owners and that means many new neighbors have joined our community. Canceled activities, social distancing, and face masks have made it a challenging time for new neighbors to connect with us. Perhaps now is a good time to be proactive and introduce yourself to the neighbor who recently moved in next door or across the street. If you go for a walk, give the friendly wave and a hello. The winter months will be here soon enough and with it, indoor hibernation. If you know of new neighbors, send an email to info@gipna.org and the new neighbors will receive a GIPNA welcome packet.

INDEPENDENCE PARK COMMUNITY

VOICE

The Independence Park Community Voice is published by the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association (GIPNA), a 501(C)3 corporation.

This newsletter is for the Independence Park community. Please consider renewing your membership or joining GIPNA now. We need your support. Thank you.

Editorial: Sue Ryan
Photography: Robin Hochstatter and Cindy Schuch
Writers: Pat Clark, Terry Cunningham, Lis Drew, Robin Hochstatter, Patti Kimbel, Rebecca Martinez, Laura Miltner, Ellen Ryan, Sue Ryan, Gretchen Siffing, Anne Watkins
Student Intern Writer: Oliwa Otalova
Design/Production: Cindy Schuch

For submissions for Jan/Feb 2021 issue:

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The editorial board reserves the right to edit all submissions. Errors in advertisements are the sole responsibility of the advertiser.

E-MAIL: INFO@GIPNA.ORG

MAIL: GIPNA, P.O. BOX 18184
CHICAGO IL 60618

WEBSITE: WWW.GIPNA.ORG

The Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association (GIPNA) is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the Independence Park community by involving, informing, and encouraging people to participate in matters relating to the community, and by protecting the historical, social, cultural, and architectural character of the neighborhood.

This all-volunteer publication is made possible by the creative voices of our community and the generous support of area advertisers.

Join GIPNA on Facebook

Check out the GIPNA Facebook page for news, alerts, and conversation with your neighbors. Post your own comments to get the word out on your activities and announcements. To find the page and like it, search for GIPNA: Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association.

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3800 Springfield - Roseann Seablom

COMMUNICATION

E-Blasts to GIPNA Members

All GIPNA members who have access to email should be receiving e-blasts twice a month. The emails are compiled by GIPNA and feature such news as announcements of events in the community, crime reports, and notices of meetings.

If you're a member in good standing and are not receiving the blasts, send an email to us at info@gipna.org. We'll sign you up so that you don't miss any more neighborhood announcements.

Continued from page 1
if we have a minimum of 10 individuals interested and able to agree to the watering commitment. Currently, the wait is over three years if you request a tree to be planted by the city for the parkway.

Trees are critical to our livelihood, neighborhood, and environment. Chicago is losing 30% of its current tree canopy with the impending loss of many of our Ash Trees. Given the close proximity to the expressway, trees in the Independence Park neighborhood stave off pollution and act as 'air purifiers.' Trees further help improve our water quality as trees help clean rain water as it descends into the soil. Trees also attract birds and protect wildlife. Trees are vital to the beauty and conservation of this neighborhood and draw new homeowners to this area.

On a final note, Katie Miller also recently completed the Openlands TreeKeeper course and is a designated TreeKeeper. TreeKeepers learn how to help keep trees green and growing and volunteer to help care for street trees. This four-week course is open to anyone interested. The courses started being offered virtually this year and the last course of this year started in October. Course information can be found at the Openlands web page (www.openlands.org) if interested. We owe special gratitude to Katie for all of her efforts from start to finish in obtaining the grant and her continued commitment to nurturing our newly planted trees. Recognition is also owed to Keith O'Herrin for his collaboration and Scott Dewey for spearheading the fundraising aspect of this project.

COMMUNICATION

Connect With Your Community

Rebecca Otalova

As a relative newcomer to this neighborhood, I feel so fortunate to live in an area full of people from so many different walks of life. At the *Voice*, we want to represent the rich diversity of our beautiful neighborhood by showcasing writings and photography from as many neighbors as possible. This newsletter is for all of us and is a wonderful way to connect with your community. We encourage anyone who is interested, to please reach out so that your voice is heard! If you are interested in contributing to the newsletter on an ad hoc basis or as a regular writer, we want to hear from you at info@gipna.org.

COMMUNITY

Have an Idea for the Newsletter?

If you want to see something in the neighborhood highlighted or just want to provide feedback, reach out to us at newsletter@gipna.org.



Join US! Virtual Beer & Barbecue Tasting Fundraiser Event

December 5, 2020
7-8 p.m.

FUNDRAISING

GOOD FOOD, GOOD BEER, GOOD FUN FOR A GOOD CAUSE!

What is a Virtual Beer & Barbecue Tasting Fundraiser Event? When you purchase a ticket, you will receive a specially crafted assortment of 3 beers and 1 cider paired with a 4-course tasting menu prepared by Chef Chris Cunningham from JT's Genuine Sandwich Shop, and chefs from the award-winning Independence Pork barbecue team. Each course will be introduced by the chefs and a beer connoisseur along with a discussion with our neighborhood "tasters." We'll also have some great music by our own Max Bessesen and other surprises – all in the comfort of your own home!

No babysitters, no dress-up.

Heck, you don't even have to shower!

COVID-19 is having a serious effect on our daily lives and on charities that support those affected by the pandemic. This year's GIPNA annual events, including the Pancake Breakfast, Fine Crafts Fair, Farmers Market and now the Wine & Cheese Party were all canceled due to COVID-19. These events helped raise funds for Murphy School, the Irving Park Food Pantry, Lydia Home, Openlands, and needy families at Disney II and Murphy Schools during the holidays, plus maintenance of gardens in the neighborhood.

For more information on tickets, food, and beverages, go to our website, gipna.org or GIPNA's Facebook page. Tickets are \$50. If you're a member, you'll receive updates by email. If you're not a member, please join at gipna.org. What better way to enjoy delicious food and drink in a safe environment and it's all for a good cause!

COMMUNITY

A Vigil Honoring Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Susan Ryan

Residents of Independence Park came together on September 19th to pay tribute to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg who passed away from pancreatic cancer. Bader Ginsburg was an icon and role model who fought tirelessly for equality and civil rights. The vigil was spearheaded by neighbor Susan Dowd, who wanted to honor RGB's life. According to Dowd, "I couldn't go to the vigil downtown, but I could do one in the park, so I just sent out information on messenger. We gathered in a circle, lit candles, and went around and said what RGB meant to us. Bader Ginsburg was such an inspiration to so many people. She was a forward thinker and we will all miss her."

Even though Bader Ginsburg graduated at the top of her class



from Columbia Law School, no law firm would hire her because she was a woman. As a judge, she penned many opinions on all types of discrimination. In her later years on the Supreme Court, she became famous for her dissents, often in 5-4 cases. One of her most notable dissents came in 2013 when the court struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act. She was known for her unrelenting work ethic and fought for the rights of others until the end of her life. According to Jewish tradition, those who die on Rosh Hashanah are considered most righteous. How fitting that Bader Ginsburg passed away on this date. Rest in Peace.





PANDEMIC

How to Survive—and Thrive—Through the COVID Pandemic in the Winter

Laurel Miltner

Confession: I'm an inside person. One of my online accounts that requires users to answer a question in addition to a password asks for my "favorite winter activity." My selection is "watching movies."

So, suffice it to say that when we wanted to do a *Voice* article on thriving through a COVID winter,

my response was "I got this."

If you're concerned about being cooped up for the next few months with nowhere to go, hopefully you'll find some inspiration from the suggestions here. Thanks to the community members who shared many of these ideas.

Music lovers: Start a Music League with friends or family. Players take turns choosing a theme for which all the players submit a song. After submissions are in, the app creates a Spotify playlist and the voting begins. A running leaderboard keeps track of top players for the round, and the league as a whole. Check out the website musicleague.app to get started.

Foodies: Create a socially distant Sunday Supper Club. Choose a cuisine, a cookbook, or another theme each week or every few weeks. You can trade dishes completely, or coordinate a main, sides and dessert, and make sure everyone gets some of each dish to create a complete meal.

Travel bugs: Study a place you've

always wanted to go, and make a day or night of it at home, or on a video call with friends or family. Order in or make a regional dish, watch a movie from the country, maybe learn a few sentences for when you can get there. Take turns with your housemate or friends, sharing things you've learned about the culture and history.

Bookworms: Start a socially distant book club, or get involved with One Book One Chicago (OBOC). OBOC is a program through the Chicago Public Library in which Chicagoans "explore a theme from multiple perspectives, as recounted through personal experience, imagined in literature, presented in politics, or synthesized in music and art." The current theme is Beyond Borders. Learn more at www.chipublib.org/about-oboc/

Exercise enthusiasts: Get a great workout at home (without breaking the bank) with FitOn, Nike training apps, or the HASFit app. Neighbors suggest the HASFit and Yoga with Adriene YouTube channels.

Nature lovers: Don't let the cold keep you too cooped up! Go for a walk in the woods at Gompers Park, LaBagh Woods, or North Park Village Nature Center. Rent a nearby cabin and go sledding or tubing. There's no such thing as bad weather—only being poorly dressed.

Movie fans: Start a socially distant movie club. Just like a book club, participants take turns recommending a movie they love or have always wanted to see, and spur a discussion about it. Or here's an idea: Watch every Academy Award Winning Best Picture.

Theatre goers: Host an online table reading of your favorite shows—theater, movies, TV shows, anything goes! Get some folks, find and share a script, select roles, and engage in art in a brand-new way. Bonus points if you choose a musical and sing along, though you can also pull up the soundtrack for support.

Have a suggestions to share? Let us know at info@gipna.org and we will print it in the next issue.

Are you a GIPNA member? Join today!

Pay at www.gipna.org or mail in the form below with a check. For information, send an e-mail to: membership@gipna.org

GIPNA

MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Must be 18 yrs old) Fill in this form, and send with check, payable to GIPNA, to: **GIPNA**
P. O. Box 18184 Chicago, IL 60618

Check amount enclosed:

- Single \$10 Family \$20
 Business \$15
 Lifetime \$100 per person

Check here if a new member

Annual Dues enclosed: \$

Tax Deductible Donation for GIPNA: \$

Total of enclosed check: \$

Check if you would like to volunteer for events.
(GIPNA is an all-volunteer association.)

PLEASE PRINT: DATE _____

NAME #1 _____

NAME #2 _____

ADDRESS _____

Check here if new member, new to the neighborhood.

PHONE #1 _____

PHONE #2 _____

E-MAIL #1 _____

E-MAIL #2 _____

Home Sweet Indy Park Home

Robin Hochstatter

Residents in the GIPNA area have been busy this year updating their homes to make their outdoor space more usable during the ongoing pandemic. Many folks have been able to gather safely with small groups of friends and family in their yards or have just found their outdoor areas a welcome break from their Zoom calls.

Greg Shea and his wife, Liz, on Monticello started a renovation on their house early in 2020. They both knew they loved the area and were committed to staying a long time, so why not make the changes they needed this year. Their original plans included expanding the kitchen and finishing the basement so they could create a private living space for Liz's mother.



When the pandemic hit in March, parts of the project slowed down tremendously, especially around permits and inspections from the city.

But once work resumed, the Sheas decided to expand the project to include exterior upgrades such as a new roof, new windows, new decking in the front, a new fence and lovely new landscaping in the back and front yards. Former Indy Park resident, Annette Held designed the outdoor space.



The job took eight months to complete and it was well worth the wait. As we finished our discussion, Greg was assembling a heater for the backyard so that they could continue to enjoy their beautiful outdoor space even as the weather gets cooler.

During the spring when the parks were closed this writer and her wife, Jan, decided to play pickleball on their front driveway. The passing neighbors cheered on these aging athletes who were desperate for something to do. Much to their chagrin, they realized that the many cracks that were normally hidden by their cars made it too dangerous to play on.



As luck would have it, their neighbor had a cement contractor working in their yard next door at the time and like all good neighbors Jan asked him if he did driveways as well. He said, of course, and two weeks later the new surface was ready for parking and playing once again.

You can always count on seeing the Cunningham family on Monticello out on their front porch most of the year. Whether they're visiting with their neighbors, playing ball with their two young sons

or showing off Chris's exceptional cooking skills, we all know we'll see them there. So, the front porch is a pretty special place for this family.

After repairing their front porch many times since buying the house in 2012, they knew it would need replacing soon. During COVID they knew they'd be spending even more time at home so why not do it this summer. They called on their favorite neighbor and craftsman, Chris Mastroianni, otherwise known as Master Johnny, to come through for them one more time. Chris had done several interior jobs for the Cunninghams over the last eight years as they renovated most of the interior of their house.

Neighbors watched in amazement as Master Johnny and his assistant erected this beautiful new front porch in just a few days. The composite materials used are maintenance free and will be able to handle all of the fun that's yet to come on this family's favorite spot. Be sure to wave next time you pass by the Cunningham's house. They'll be out there.



On Lawndale, long-time residents Dakota Cima and Theo Pintzuk had been thinking about downsizing from their 1886 Victorian home to a condo earlier this year. They have lived in the house since 1986 and have done an extensive amount of work on it over the years, including pulling off the old siding themselves.

"When we moved in, the area was nothing like it is today. Our house was in pretty bad shape and we had a lot of work to do." Dakota recalls. When COVID hit, they made a decision to stay in their home and take advantage of the work-from-home offices that they had created. A trusted contractor rebuilt their front porch and designed a beautiful new side screened-in side porch so that they could enjoy the outdoors while being sheltered.



Travelling over to Springfield, we came upon Dianne and Todd Kibbey enjoying their new front porch. After living in the house for 16 years and working on interior projects every year, they decided in 2019 to start on the exterior upgrades. The front porch was first reconstructed and then they signed a contract this March to have their roof, siding and exterior painting done to complete the new look of the outside of their home. The work began and then a few days later the state closed down due to the pandemic. All work stopped and the exterior areas were in a state of disarray for a few weeks until the crew knew they could return safely to work.

Unfortunately, Todd lost his job due to the pandemic and things were pretty tough for a while. Thankfully, he found a new job and the work was completed in a few months.

Coming to America—Specifically Chicago

Ellen Ryan

Up to now, I've known Gus as the friendly owner of a home with one of the most well-manicured gardens in the neighborhood. It should be — I often see him and his wife, Lisa, out there weeding and pruning. However, after my recent conversation with him, I'll think of him as someone with an amazing "Coming To America — Specifically Chicago" story.

Gus was born and raised in Hidalgo, in the state Michoacan, Mexico. He realized in his late teens that there were few good job opportunities in his village. Some of his friends had returned from the U.S. and told him he should check out Chicago where his brother and brother-in-law were living. They gave him the name of the coyote who had helped them get to Chicago earlier on. In 1975, at age 19, he decided to give it a try and set off with three friends for a new life. They took a two-three day bus ride from their village to Tijuana and had to walk for an hour through the mountains to get to San Ysidro, California. Then — GET THIS — not one, not two, not three, but FOUR of them SQUEEZED into the trunk of a Cadillac where they stayed for two to three hours while being driven to their next destination. This was of course to avoid the immigration authorities placed along Highway 5. They were eventually taken to someone who arranged their flight to Chicago. They arrived in February — in the middle of a blizzard — the first time Gus had ever seen snow.



Hello Chicago!!

Gus immediately started looking for a job but it took him six weeks to find one. Most of his friends were working in restaurants which is where he got his start. He started as a busboy and worked in different capacities in several different restaurants around the city. He met his wife, Lisa, at a wedding and stayed in Chicago until 1979. He decided to return to Mexico because he missed his family. When he got to Hidalgo, he worked with his dad selling furniture. However, the money was not as good as what he was earning in Chicago. After six or seven months of doing this, he decided he needed to return to the U.S. so he could sufficiently support himself. Plus, I think Lisa may have had something to do with his decision. He returned by himself but got caught in the mountains two different times. The third time was a charm and he made it back to Chicago. Despite these obstacles, Gus said it was so much easier to get into the U.S. from Mexico back then as compared to today.

Gus and Lisa, a hair cutter, were married in 1981. Lisa's parents were U.S. citizens so both she and Gus applied for and were granted legal resident papers in 1983. They became naturalized citizens in 1985. Gus continued to work in the restaurant industry but caught a big break when he met someone who was employed by the post office. He got a job as a customer service associate at the

post office in 1987 and still works there today.

Gus and Lisa have three grown kids and three grandkids. Gus mentioned incurring racial slights and even physical abuse due to the color of his skin. Nonetheless, he downplayed those incidents and said that the U.S. was and still is the land of opportunity. If you work hard, you can get ahead. Hearing Gus's story, seeing him and Lisa tend to their beautiful garden in front of their lovely home in Independence Park, and listening to him talk about his grandkids, it is clear that he and Lisa's lives are testaments to that sentiment.

COMMUNITY

Let's Talk About Race

Rebecca Otalova

I have never seen my country, my friends, or my family more divided along racial lines than I do today. I find it incredible that so many of us still struggle to recognize what has created this division. Religion and politics. As a young adult, I was taught that these two topics are not to be discussed at dinner, parties, work functions, or virtually anywhere outside of a classroom, debate stage, or amongst your closest friends. Why? Because in my experience, discussion of religion and politics often lead to divisiveness, anger, and discomfort.

Somehow, race seemed to make its way onto this list of taboo subjects, albeit in a clandestine way. Race has evolved into a subject that, when brought up, causes some to visibly squirm and others to audibly scoff. Eyeroles and arguments are likely to follow. Conversations are shut down completely, either by being openly unwilling

to discuss race or more subtly by someone acting as if race is a non-issue, often with a declaration that they don't even see color!

Minimizing the topic to a game of cards, strategically played at a person of color's discretion, is the most common way I've witnessed and experienced the denial of race as a valid and important subject to explore and discuss. At times, when I choose to point out racial discrepancies, I've been called out for pulling this imaginary card. As if being a racial minority has afforded me a special privilege. It hasn't.

But when, and more importantly why, has the topic of race become unacceptable? Why is it that the discussion of a social construct, which is almost always evident upon first sight and affects all of us, became limited to sociology lectures?

I intend to explore how, when, and why our society went from openly and explicitly excluding people of color from achieving economic prosperity and social equality, to aggressive denial of the implications those ideologies continue to have on our society.

It is crucial for us all to acknowledge our nuanced and difficult past. When some people benefit from the current societal structure at an exponentially higher rate than others, the division is stark. This acknowledgement is no easy feat and involves difficult discussions. However, it's necessary. I hope to unpack these divisions in order to better understand them and to demonstrate that, while we may not look the same, think the same, or be the same, we don't need to be at odds with each other. In fact, we must work with diligence to unite, find our common ground, and together fight against racism as a community.

Learning through the Pandemic: Back to “School” in 2020

Liz Drew

For most families, this year has been one unexpected challenge after another, with often confusing guidelines and conflicting information about how to keep our kids safe and learning. By the end of April, my family and I were at home with a new baby and a four-year-old missing her routine, friends, and teachers. As spring turned into summer, everyone we knew anxiously awaited word on whether schools would open. Throughout the neighborhood, COVID friendly balloon displays and car parades congratulated recent graduates in lieu of parties and ceremonies.

Over the summer, families pieced together childcare and socially-distanced camps including Independence Park. Chicago Public Schools finally announced in early August that all learning would be remote for the start of the school year, with private schools allowed to go forward with in-person teaching.

Luckily for us, our daughter’s daycare, Ladybug and Friends on Irving Park, re-opened in early June. New precautions include masks for teachers and kids, temperature checks and distanced drop-off and pickups.

I wanted to learn a little bit more about how other families are managing right now, so I asked around. While some parents opted to start sending their children to private schools to ensure in-person learning, others have

created learning “pods” where a few families enlist one or more private teachers to help their children follow the online instruction.

Other parents—often moms—are making difficult decisions about leaving jobs or reducing their hours to stay home with their children. Meanwhile, schools are pivoting to serve families and students that have additional needs during the pandemic (see more on what Murphy Elementary has been up to and how to support their critical efforts elsewhere in this issue). Fortunately, CPS families can still pick up meals to go, including at Disney II and Murphy.

Here is what our community offers as advice: first and foremost, go easy on yourself as a parent or caregiver and recognize that these are unprecedented times. Prioritize your children’s emotional wellbeing and your own mental health. Communicate openly and often with your learning team. Remember that schools are building and operating new systems with limited resources and few models to draw from and your teachers miss being in the classroom as much as our kids do.

Educator and mom Elizabeth Gonzalez, Assistant Director of Ladybug Daycare, told me about her two children’s experience: while she is relieved her kids are avoiding COVID by staying home, online learning presents several challenges. For her 7th grader (who attends Murphy) and her 10th grader (at Lincoln Park High School), 6+ hours of screen time a day on outdated devices is proving difficult and makes her concerned about eye strain and lack of stimulation. Like many kids, Mrs. Gonzalez reports hers are feeling overwhelmed and stressed by both the workload and lack of in-person support. She is recommending that the days be



broken up and that more hands-on activities be incorporated to reduce time sitting passively in front of a screen.

For some families, the extra time with siblings, parents, and pets has some benefits, although they still look forward to in-person learning. Murphy 4th grader Allie Siffring (who is learning at home alongside her three sisters with her parents’ support) offered her take: “It is fun but I like to be in school better because it’s not glitchy and you can actually see the people.”

Many families also need safe childcare options that allow their children to continue learning while their parents work. I recently spoke with the staff at the Irving Park YMCA about their new program for on-site remote learning support. Kids ages 5-12 can be dropped off by their caregiver to attend an all-day program which includes help following online learning assigned by their child’s school, as well as other activities and exercise, all with social distancing and other COVID safety precautions. As of mid-October, slots were still available (those interested can call member services for more information at 773-777-7500). While YMCA is not able to accommodate in-person volunteering due to the pandemic, they welcome donations toward tuition scholarships.

Independence Park residents have also come together in recent months to show solidarity with

other neighborhoods in Chicago. Katie Miller of Avers Street (who also created that great native garden on the Parkway) has been volunteering with the Englewood community group M.A.S.K. (Mothers Against Senseless Killing, www.ontheblock.org). Katie brought several of us to volunteer at a back-to-school fair in September at 75th and Stewart, where we helped distribute donated supplies including headphones, tablets, and backpacks.

As fall turns to winter many of us are thinking about how to keep our collective spirits up and our anxiety and boredom low. In addition to gearing up for spending as much time outside as we can (maybe our daughter will finally discover a real affinity for shoveling snow!), we plan to start a weekly postcard to share our gratitude for the many amazing teachers and essential workers in our lives. And I plan to keep checking in on parents I know who are struggling a little bit more than usual.

It gives me hope seeing the tremendous generosity, compassion and empathy throughout our community during this time.

Do you have tips or resources for navigating this year’s “back to school?” Please feel free to visit the GIPNA Facebook page to share your own stories and ideas to help our community get through this, together.

A Check-in With Students: How 8th Grade Is Going

*Olivia Martinez, Student Intern,
Murphy Elementary School*



As many of us know, 2020 has been a very different and challenging year. It has affected many people and one of those groups of people it's having a big impact on is this year's 8th grade class. I am an 8th grader and this is definitely not the 8th grade year we were expecting. My first question for my classmates was how they would rank their 8th grade experience so far. The average score was around 7 or 8. We miss our friends and are unsure about if we will even be able to return to school for our final year at John B. Murphy Elementary. My fellow students and I believe it's easier for us to keep track of work and we don't have to get up as early as we usually would do.

My next question was how they would rank learning online. I got mainly 8s out of 10. It's easier for us to get our work turned in but Wi-Fi is a struggle and can disrupt class. My next question was on a scale of 1 to 5 about how much we wish we were learning in person. Most answered 5 and I agree. We miss having in-person social

interaction and seeing our friends and teachers.

Next, I asked what their favorite part of 8th grade was so far. My personal favorite part is getting to know my class better and having more time in the mornings. My classmates said they like their teachers and they get more sleep and that it is easier to get to class on time. They also said their least favorite parts were not being able to see friends and that we do everything online.

I then asked if they believed their grades were affected by this new way of doing school. One student who wishes to stay anonymous believes that we have more work and that it is harder for teachers to grade things. Other students believe that their grades have stayed the same if not slightly better. I also asked them if their mornings were easier and they all agreed. It is easier for us to get to class and we can get more sleep because we do not have to get up as early.

I asked what is more difficult to do in online learning. Some believed that school work is harder to do because of forgetting to click the button to send it to the teachers. Plus, it's harder to get in contact with our teachers because they get a lot of emails and we can't just go to their class and talk to them. Although when I asked my next question, some thought that it was easier to do their schoolwork and keep track of it because it's all in the same spot and harder to lose since it's online.

I also asked them what their workspace was like at home. Some people did not have very many things in their work area because they did not feel the need to have more. Others had a lot of

things around them but they were organized.

Also this year we will be applying to high schools. Some believe that high school applications will be easier. Some think it will be the same. Others, including myself, believe it will be harder. When I think of pros and cons, since there are virtual open houses, we don't need to go to lots of different schools. We can just do it on the computer without worrying about being on time and being at multiple schools on the same day. Since we are not in-person, it's harder for the teachers and counselors to show us how to apply and learn about the high schools, and it's harder to know what the schools are like looking at them online.

My classmates would like teachers to know that when we don't turn in our work, we are still trying our hardest but it is a bit more difficult now. They would also like our other classmates to turn on their cameras. We miss them and it is awkward when we are the only people with our cameras on and also to not be lazy and keep their microphones muted when they are not speaking so we don't have a bunch of background noise.

We would also like our parents to know that we are trying our hardest. One of my fellow 8th graders, Stella Nelson, would like to let parents know that they should not be on top of us all the time and that they should give us some space. We all agree that this is not the 8th grade year we were hoping for and don't know if it ever will be. I hope you learned some information about what the neighborhood 8th graders are experiencing in this tough time. I would also like to say thank you to Stella Nelson and my other classmates

who would like to be anonymous for allowing me to ask them about their 8th grade so far.

SUPPORT

Feeling Blue and Need Someone to Talk to?

The on-going pandemic has many of us feeling isolated, stressed and depressed. If you or someone you love is facing mental health issues, resources are available. Below are a few organizations that are ready to help.

The City of Chicago Mental Health Clinics

North River MHC, 312-744-1906, 5801 N Pulaski Rd. The city has reopened six mental health clinics across the city. Counseling is available and in the next few months the clinics will initiate telepsychiatry. Ask a staff member for more information.

Hours of Operation: Mon.- Fri.: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/behavioral-health/mental_health_centers.html

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

If you are in a suicidal crisis or emotional distress, call 800-273-TALK (8255). Crisis workers are available 24 hours a day. Calls are free and confidential. <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

National Mental Health Alliance (NAMI)

NAMI Chicago Helpline 833-626-4244. NAMI is now holding virtual support groups <https://www.namichicago.org>.

Checking in With Our College Students

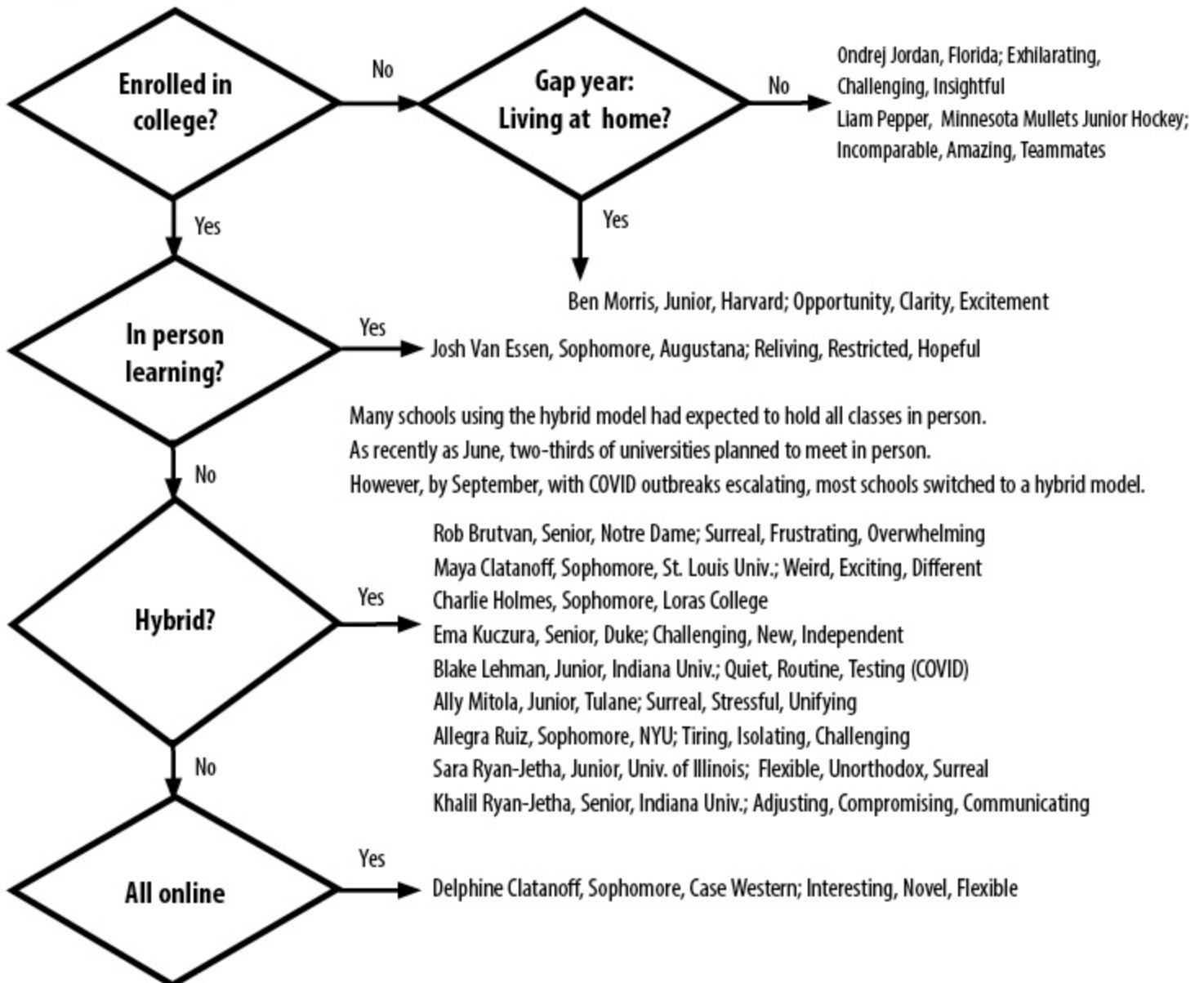
Susan Ryan

In the blissful pre-pandemic days, the norms for asking neighbors about their college bound kids were so easy. It would be some version of “Hey, where is Blake headed?” That statement had built-in assumptions. Yes, Blake is in college, he is headed there for the fall semester and of course, his classes are on campus and in person. Ah, those wistful days and the assumptions that came with them were upended in March when the majority of universities sent their students packing up their dorm rooms to finish the semester online from home.

Gone are the days when a 15 second response was sufficient to bring your neighbors up to speed on your college kid. Now several subsets of questions pepper the conversation. Are they going back to school? If yes, are their classes in person, online or a hybrid? If online, are they synchronous or asynchronous? Don’t know the difference? Just ask Allegra Ruiz at NYU who has classes starting at 1 a.m., yes, one hour after midnight to sync with those on the Shanghai Campus. Are students staying on campus or Zooming from the bedroom that they grew up in? Surprisingly, none of our under-graduates enrolled in college this fall chose to continue living at home.

For now, the best way to address these questions is through a decision tree. Here is sampling of our neighborhood’s college-aged students and their experiences (in three words) for fall 2020. If you’d like to give an update on your college student, please send the information to info@gipna.org and it will appear in our next issue.

College Fall 2020: Who, Where and How.



Many schools using the hybrid model had expected to hold all classes in person. As recently as June, two-thirds of universities planned to meet in person. However, by September, with COVID outbreaks escalating, most schools switched to a hybrid model.

SCHOOLS

With a Little Help From Our Friends

Gretchen Siffing

We are fortunate to live in a community where neighbors help each other and work together to improve the lives of those around them. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wonderful display of support for our neighborhood elementary school, John B. Murphy Elementary. Over the past several years the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association (GIPNA), Athletic Field

Advisory Council (AFAC), Friends of Murphy (FOM), SOW Chicago, Murphy Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and many generous individuals have given their money, time, and effort to support the needs of the school.

Murphy has welcomed this support to provide opportunities for the children in our community to have a safe and beautiful place to learn and grow. The students have been given options to explore their artistic and creative talents through violin lessons, band, after-school theater classes, 8th grade art installations, and more. Investments have been

made in the gymnasium, music room, and auditorium, three of the most widely used rooms in the building (pre-pandemic). Generous donations of time and supplies have created an urban garden for the community to enjoy each year. Funds raised through various fundraising events have supplied classrooms with books, supplies, and field trips that allow the teachers to give Murphy students a well-rounded educational experience. And the school has been able to help distribute donated clothing, grocery gift cards, and meals for families going through difficult times.

Many in our community are experiencing these difficult times right now. CPS has restricted fundraising activities for schools, but the needs of the school and the school community are greater than ever. Already this year, our community has come together to fund remote learning supply kits for all of the Murphy students. If you have the means, please continue to support the fundraisers of the community groups (GIPNA, AFAC) and consider setting up a recurring donation at friendsofmurphy.org to allow these groups to continue to be able to support the needs of the school.

TALENTED NEIGHBOR

Passion Project

Terry Cunningham

I make handmade jewelry that has a vintage past. My designs feature eclectic timeworn treasures such as antique shoe buckles, buttons, fobs, dress clips, lockets and watch parts combined with my own handmade chains and connectors (a specialty!). Using vintage and antique pieces in my designs allows me to create jewelry that is not only sustainable but that also tells fascinating stories. I particularly enjoy researching the history of these pieces as well as creating highly personalized one-of-a-kind jewelry using a client's own keepsakes and heirlooms.

I have always been drawn to vintage treasures. And now, vintage has been drawn to me. I am making my "Hollywood debut" this fall as I was fortunate to have one of my pieces selected to be worn by a main character in the



current season of the FX black comedy/drama *Fargo*, set in the 1950s. I'm told it is part of a particularly sinister storyline so I can't wait to see it.

The attraction to vintage began for me when I discovered a "secret" cedar closet in the attic of my childhood home in Pawling, New York, and opened a stack of sealed boxes. Inside I found beautiful beaded dresses and sweaters my mother had once worn – her sister was a buyer for B. Altman and Company (a now closed luxury department store in New



York City), so she had amassed a wonderful collection of clothing no longer practical in a household filled with 5 children. I was entranced by the embroidered fabrics, sparkling sequins and colorful beads. Scattered in the mix were blingy rhinestone necklaces and brooches. Of course, I

peppered my mother with questions - when and where did she wear such wonderful things? - and her stories were fascinating. I was hooked!

For years, jewelry making and collecting were hobbies that I pursued in my spare time. After decades in the professional training and development field, I left the corporate world behind to start Two Quaker Hill, named after the address of my childhood home.

Locally, my jewelry debuted at GIPNA's very own Fine Craft Fair several years ago. Since that time, I've exhibited at many art shows throughout the Chicagoland area. I love the personal contact and festive environment offered by the art show circuit. Sadly, with COVID this hasn't been an option in 2020 so I've recently shifted to the online world. Instead of art fairs you can find my work at www.twoquakerhill.com.

SUSTAINABILITY

Give Second Hand a Second Chance

With so much time spent at home during the pandemic, now is a great time to make changes to your spending and consuming habits that can make an environmental impact. Many families have been cleaning out basements, closets, garages, and the nooks and crannies around their homes. People are also reassessing what they really need and what they can do without.

If you've done a "COVID clean-out" and created some extra space, don't fill it up again. Think twice before making a purchase, which can be challenging given the lure of the "Buy Now" button and guaranteed next day delivery. Consider how many items in your donation pile are casualties of an impulse buy.

When you really do need something, consider borrowing from a friend or neighbor, or purchasing second hand. You would be amazed what you can find, from toys, bikes, workout equipment,

electronics, clothes and shoes, kitchen gadgets, and home decor items, for significantly less money, in like-new condition. Second hand online marketplaces such as Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, Offer Up, Mercari, and EBay are making it easier and safer to buy and sell with limited personal interaction.

This goes for clothes too. Consider searching for your next pair of yoga pants or winter boots for your kids from a second hand marketplace. The second hand fashion market is booming right now and is predicted to surpass the fast fashion industry within 10 years.

The fashion industry is unsustainable, resource intensive, and tremendously wasteful. Yes, clothes are cheap and easy to buy, but millions of tons of clothing end up in landfills each year. Instead of throwing away old, worn out clothes in the garbage, add them to your donation pile. Many companies who accept donated clothing items participate in textile recycling.

To live is to consume, however, there are ways to be more mindful of our consumption habits.



JAIME

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Jaime Andrade, State Representative,
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