



PORTAGE PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Community
News & Views

MAY 2010



Meetings & Announcements

PORTAGE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION:

Next Meetings:

Monday, May 10th

7:30 p.m.

4839 W. Irving Park Rd.

Meeting Agenda

- **Special speaker Bruce Beal to discuss TIFs**
- President Update
- Treasurer Update
- Secretary Update
- Communications Update
- EDC Update
- Membership Update
- Parents Committee Update
- CAPS Update
- Business Update

C.A.P.S. MEETINGS:

All meetings at 7 p.m.

Beat 1624 — May 26

*at Biagio's Banquets,
4242 N. Central Ave.*

Beat 1633 — May 18

*at Merrimac Park,
6343 W. Irving Park Rd.*

Beat 1634 — May 27

*St. Bartholomew Church,
3601 N. Laverne*

16th District CAPS Office,

312-742-4521 for more information

PPNA ONLINE:

Get current info from our website or renew online:

www.portagepark.org

Contacting the PPNA board:

board@portagepark.org

Preview the New-and-Improved PPNA Website!

By Gerard Staniszewski, President PPNA

By the time you read this, there is a good chance the new PPNA web site will be up and running. We hope this new site will allow us to communicate with you in the most timely and efficient manner. Keep in mind, this is just a start. We will be working on the site for the next few months. We will be adding to it and changing it as we go along. We will be looking for your thoughts and suggestions. We are working to turn the site into the place to go to for current information on the community.

You can access the new site through our old site www.portagepark.org. At the top of the former home page, you will see a link to the new site that says, "Visit our new site." You can also access it here: <http://portagepark.squarespace.com/>. For your reference, the old site has a green background and the new site has a white background.

The PPNA Board thinks this is an opportunity to get more real time information out to our members in the community. The site can be updated by more individuals, so we will not need to rely on one person to do the updating for us.

As of now, our boundaries will remain the same. The PPNA Board is considering expanding the boundaries of the organizations communication outreach. But, with all of Portage Park having approximately 65,000 households, this will be a challenge. At this time the PPNA Board is only seven people. We will need to walk before we run. In order to stay effective, we will need more board members and more volunteers.

A question we always get is "if you call yourselves the Portage Park Neighborhood Association, why aren't your boundaries the true boundaries of the Portage Park neighborhood?" Our bylaws allow anyone to become a member of the PPNA and enjoy all of its benefits. If you live in New York, you can be a member. The only restriction is, if you live outside our boundaries, you cannot vote on organization matters, that is it! You get all the other privileges.

2010 Independence Day Parade date is drawing near!

We are still looking for volunteers and donations for our annual parade on Sunday June 27th.

To help out or to learn more contact Gerard Staniszewski at gerardms1@netscape.net or 773-736-3076.



Join us for PNNA Meeting on May 10th to Learn about Tax Increment Financing (TIFs)

Ever hear us or anyone use the word TIF? Do you know what we are talking about? Well, first, TIF is not a word it is an acronym for Tax Increment Financing. Still lost? Well, come to our public meeting on May 10th 4839 W. Irving, 7:30 pm and all your questions will be answered. TIFs, good or bad are community tax dollars at work, you should know about them.

Bruce Beal who is a community organizer with the Lakeview Action Coalition will be giving a presentation and answering questions.

LAC Lakeview Action Coalition
Developing Leaders • Fostering Diversity • Acting Together for Justice



Speaker and Activist Bruce Beal

Portage Park Palates *Jill and Jan*

Half of Portage Park Palates lives near the corner of Montrose and Milwaukee, so when we feel like pizza, we pick up the phone and call **Pizza by Alex**. If we are adventurous, we walk down and get it, or if we are lazy, they will deliver- even though it's only 3/4 of a block. Sometimes we grab a bottle of wine or a six pack of our favorite beer of the moment, and head over to dine in. Alex Rodriguez has operated the restaurant for years. He saw the potential when it was a Caponies, and bought the place. He knew he could make a successful business. And he has always been a great friend of the PPNA, donating food, gift certificates, and a spot in his window to advertise our events. He is always glad to see us and say Hello.

We reviewed the restaurant in 2008. Alex had just opened the store front next to the take out, and made a lovely sit down restaurant, complete with a brick oven pizza oven. We had a great time, looking back, and reading the old review. We went there for dinner the other night, and realized they have upped their game. There is a new chef in town, besides Alex, and he is bringing new sauces and new dishes and turning the menu upside down, in a good way. So, we decided it was time to review Pizza by Alex again. I can tell you, that this place is doing a very good business, and is getting a following.

I met my partner on a Thursday night last week, and three other members. We took over two tables pushed together near the pizza oven. We brought beer and wine, and the beer was placed into a bucket of ice. There was water all around, and a crusty warm loaf of bread, with butter, or olive oil and parmesan cheese to dip. We looked at the menu and the new specials sheet inside. There is a new to go menu as well. Much larger and glossier. We opted for an antipasti salad appetizer for \$5.99, which includes ham, provolone, pepperoni, black olives and tomatoes, as well as artichoke hearts and marinated sliced mushrooms. It was delicious. Three of our party decided to share a pizza. They picked a fourteen inch thin crust with sausage and mushrooms for \$12.50, and they had plenty with a few pieces to take home. They loved it, and though I know they would have gladly shared, two of us opted for a new item on the menu and an old standby. I knew they had a new salmon dish, and since I love salmon, I try to get it if it's on the menu. It's still not formally on the menu, but I ordered it and was rewarded with a well cooked filet with a butter wine sauce, grilled vegetables (zucchini and red peppers) with a choice of soup or salad. I picked the cream of broccoli, and a choice of a side of pasta, and I picked farfalle with pesto. The sauce was delicious, and not your normal pesto, but a buttery garlicky basil sauce that was hard to put down. The other diner ordered Chicken Parmigiana (\$13.95), and he ordered salad with blue cheese and marinara sauce to go with his spaghetti. They goofed and brought out a second salad right when he was finishing the first one, so he ate that one, too. It is his go to dish when we dine out at Pizza by Alex. He loves it, and he gets it all the time. Quite a recommendation.

But I think it is all great, and now it's even better. It was warm by the brick pizza oven, and the night was a little warm. I moved a little further away from the oven and we ordered two desserts to share. The first was the classic Tiramisu (\$4.50), and the other a flan (\$2.50). We all had a bite, and they were wonderful. They also offer cannoli (filled to order), fried dough, cheesecake and ice cream. And this restaurant offers so much else. I just ordered a meat lovers sub. The big one is \$6.00 and I split it with my other half. I also ordered a full order of farfalle and pesto for dinner, which came with bread and a side salad. We will have that tonight with a couple or leftover pork chops. We ordered cannoli to have for dessert tonight, but they forgot to add it to our order, and when I called, he apologized for the oversight, and offered to comp our next two cannoli's. Nice guy.

But wait, there's more. Pizza by Alex is a great place to have your next party. In fact, sometimes the restaurant is full due to a party. We went when a wedding rehearsal dinner was taking over the back of the restaurant. Alex put several pizzas on the bar for the party to serve themselves, but the party came complete with salads, entrees and desserts. The party brought their own cases of beer and boxes of wine. And it looked like they were having a great time. HHHHmmmmmm...good food, byob, friends, what's not to like?

So, when you are wondering where to go for your next dinner out, grab a bottle of wine, or a few beers (Miska's is around the corner if you need to buy it), and get a table at Pizza by Alex. And have a great evening. You'll leave stuffed and happy and your wallet will be pleasantly surprised. There are a few deals, like dinner for two for \$25, which includes house salad, one appetizer, one pasta entree, one 12 inch brick oven Specialty pizzas and one dessert. It makes me hungry and I just had lunch.

Pizza by Alex is at 5040-77 W. Montrose. It's open Monday through Thursday from 10:00am to 10:00pm and Friday and Saturday from 10 to midnight, and Sunday from 11am to 10pm. Their phone number is 773-427-8900. They deliver, \$2.00 charge and \$10 dollar minimum. You can call and pick up. Order online, which is new-Pizzabyalex.com Or dine in. All fine choices. And say Hi to Alex, one of the best reasons to go to Pizza by Alex. And the waitress is nice, too. Alisha waited on us last Thursday, and she did a great job. And there were a few other tables with happy customers. The secret is out.

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 2010 we hope you will continue to suggest restaurants and join us when we meet. If you would like to join us, our only requirement is that you do not notify the restaurant. We all pay for our own portion of the check, share the dishes and offer opinions for the review. An article about the restaurant will appear in the following PPNA newsletter. Send your emails to membership@portagepark.org or communications@portagepark.org.





CAPS REPORT

16th District Community Update

► TOP 10 CRIMES: BEAT 1624 (COMPARED TO PREVIOUS MONTH)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Criminal Damage 7 (-10) | 6. Assault 3 (-2) |
| 2. Battery 14 (+5) | 7. Robbery 3 (0)* |
| 3. Theft 17 (+9) | 8. Motor Vehicle Theft 2 (0)* |
| 4. Narcotics 5 (0)* | 9. Criminal Damage 7 (-10) |
| 5. Deceptive practice 2 (-2) | 10. Burglary 6 (-5) |

► TOP 10 CRIMES: BEAT 1633 (COMPARED TO PREVIOUS MONTH)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Theft 29 (+4) | 6. Assault 11 (+2) |
| 2. Criminal Damage 29 (+7) | 7. Narcotics 8 (0)* |
| 3. Battery 11 (-5) | 8. Deceptive practice 14 (+7) |
| 4. Motor Vehicle Theft 18 (+6) | 9. Robbery 3 (+1) |
| 5. Burglary 11 (-1) | 10. Criminal Trespass 2 (-4) |

*No Change

Minutes for Beat 1633 meeting 4/20/10: The construction business taping construction advertisement to the garage doors has been asked to stop and they said they would comply.

A theft occurred at A&G where a wallet was stolen out of a purse in a shopping cart by a woman who was carrying a small child.

About 200 vehicles who have revoked or suspended license plates have been impounded. Many of the owners of these vehicles do not live in the area. This seems to be a good tool to combat crime in our area.

Leslie Galiardo has been awarded Police Officer of the month. A black male was at Central and Wilson suspiciously carrying garage tools. She placed the subject under arrest for theft of these tools. When his name was called in they discovered he was on parole for murder of a 9 year old child and a registered sex offender. On him was the article about the murder. He is now in prison.

There is definitely a burglary problem in this district. A presentation by the new members of the police academy spoke on ways to prevent burglary from happening.

A man was arrested for stealing from the Poor Box at St. Pascal. Five minutes after a surveillance camera was installed they caught the suspect.

Major problems in the neighborhood seem to stem from multiple families living in homes. Folks stated they have called the Alderman's office but there seems to be a shortage of people working for the department responsible for looking into these types of problems.

News for residents of the 45th Ward

Ald. Patrick Levar is offering residents assistance in filing an appeal on their 2009 real estate tax bills.

Property owners in Jefferson Township who want to appeal their taxes may complete a 2009 Real Estate Assessed Valuation Complaint to be filed with the Cook County Board of Review by May 5, 2010.

"I know property taxes are high, that's why I have voted against them," said Ald. Levar. "My office is offering Assessed Valuation Complaints and assistance in completing them. If home owners in Jefferson Township believe their taxes were too high, this is an opportunity to file a complaint to get them appealed."

The 2009 Real Estate Assessed Valuation Complaint can be picked up at the alderman's office, 5205 N. Milwaukee Ave., from 9 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, except April 23. The alderman's staff will help home owners complete the forms, if needed, and have them available through May 3.

For additional questions or information, you may call the alderman's office, 773-545-2545 or the Cook County Board of Review, 312-603-5542.

News for residents of the 38th Ward

Beginning in April the Department of Streets & Sanitation has modified the way that they sweep the streets.

They will use a base amount of 40 sweepers, drivers and laborers as a daily starting point to clean streets rather than 50 of each. They are redirecting the 10 drivers and 10 laborers made available by this service change to assist with refuse and recycling collection efforts. This ensures that there will be the resources needed in alleys while still providing effective street sweeping services in all communities.

To view a street-sweeping schedule, please visit:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/streets/provdrs/san/svcs/street_sweeping.html?cq_ck=1270072520948

St. Robert Bellarmine News

MAY CROWNING—May 7, at 7:00 P.M., in the church. Everyone is welcome to attend this beautiful service.

"WE LOVE OUR KIDS DAY"—May 14 is our second annual "We Love Our Kids Day" will be held on Friday, May 14, from 8:00–11:00 A.M. Children can have a special person, such as a grandparent, mom or dad, or another adult relative or friend, join us for a wonderful morning of prayer, classroom visits and activities.

TALENT SHOW—May 20th. The Student Talent Show will be on Thursday, May 20, at 1:00 P.M. and again at 7:00 P.M., in Kernaghan Hall. A variety of entertainment will be provided by our students.

PHIL'S PIZZA D'ORO FUNDRAISER—Entire Month of May Dine in, pick up, or order for delivery on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday during May and Phil's will generously donate 10% of your bill to St. Robert Bellarmine. Mention St. Robert's when you place your order. Phil's is located at 5800 N. Milwaukee, 773-763-2285.

GLOBAL GIGGLES COMEDY NIGHT—May 22, Kernaghan Hall. Doors open at 6:30 P.M., show from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M., dancing afterwards. Tickets are \$20 in advance /\$25 at the door and include one drink door prize raffle. Only 275 tickets will be sold. 21 and over. Beer, wine, and sangria will be available for purchase. Funds raised will benefit gym renovations for the school's sports teams. More information and a ticket order form can be found on the Events/News page of the school website: srb-chicago.org and after masses.



BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR... **VOLUNTEER!**

PARENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Lead efforts to provide services targeting parents and children. Contact Gerard Staniszewski at 773-736-3076 for more information.

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XOX SALON.COM



MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT—show your card and receive discounts from these PPNA business partners **WOW!**

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

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

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, 2010.

PPNA Financial Report

Balance sheet as of April, 30, 2010

	BOA	Parkway
ENDING BALANCE		
Previous	\$3,104.32	\$0.00
Current	\$2,278.44	\$159.00
INCOME		
Membership	\$0.00	\$159.00
Total Income	\$0.00	\$159.00
EXPENSE		
Newsletter Printing	\$0.00	\$0.00
Membership Committee	\$101.46	\$0.00
Insurance	\$400.00	\$0.00
Parade	\$182.66	\$0.00
Communications Committee	\$141.76	\$0.00
Total Expense	\$825.88	\$0.00

- Chiropractic • Massage Therapy
- Rehabilitation • Acupuncture



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Advertise your business in the PPNA newsletter!

PPNA News & Views is distributed electronically to members via email and through our website communications. Issues may also be emailed to those who request it and to certain individuals and institutions outside of the Association boundaries at the discretion of the PPNA Communications Committee.

Our ad deadline is the 15th of the month preceding the issue month.

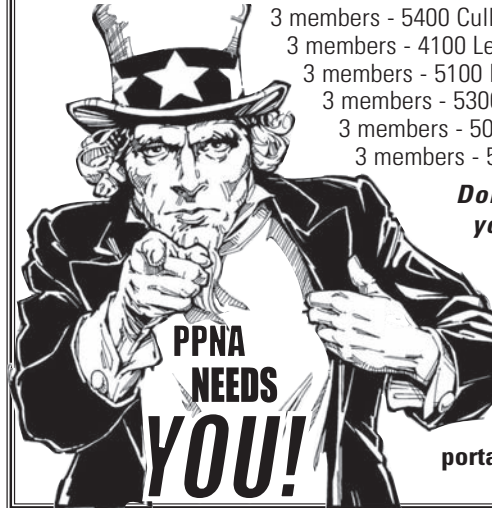
WEB RATES T.B.D.

► To reserve your ad space contact board@portagepark.org.

Show your neighborhood pride!

Member block counts! Renew for 2010 Today!

- 6 members - 4100 LeClaire
- 4 members - 4100 Lawler
- 3 members - 5300 Cullom
- 3 members - 5400 Cullom
- 3 members - 4100 Leamington
- 3 members - 5100 Hutchinson
- 3 members - 5300 Berenice
- 3 members - 5000 Berteau
- 3 members - 5400 Dakin



**Don't see
your block
listed
above?
Join or
renew your
membership
today at:
portagepark.org**

PPNA 2010 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:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development/Zoning* | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising (Parade, Holiday Party) | <input type="checkbox"/> History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Delivery | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior's Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter (Distribution, Writing, Layout) | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Activities (Members Only Events,
Portage Park Palates) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety/CAPS | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website Development | |

* 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
4839 W. Irving Park Rd.

Or, mail completed membership form with payment to:
Portage Park Neighborhood Association
Attn: Jill Staniszewski
5159 W. Montrose Ave.
Chicago, IL 60641

HISTORIC CHICAGO BUNGALOW INITIATIVE



SEMINAR SERIES

Bungalow Masonry: Keeping up Appearances, Keeping down Energy Costs

The Historic Chicago Bungalow Association offers seminars on a broad range of home repair, financing and green topics. The Seminar Series is made possible by the City of Chicago, Chicago Public Libraries and Peoples Energy.
All seminars are free, but space is limited!

This masonry workshop with Mario Machnicki from Marion Restoration will focus on the importance of maintaining your Bungalow's masonry, not just for great curb appeal, but also for ensuring your home's energy efficiency.

WHEN:

Thursday, May 13, 2010, 6:30-7:45PM

WHERE:

West Belmont Branch Library
(3104 N. Narragansett Avenue)

TO RSVP:

Please email reservation@chicagobungalow.org or call Joanna at 312-822-0505.

GREEN CORNER

For Our Community, Our Planet



North Park Village Nature Center FREE Event

EXPLORING NATURE THROUGH DRAWING

Working with a variety of drawing mediums, uncover nature's poetry and rhythm. While drawing from life, discover new ways of seeing the landscape, fauna, and found objects. All materials provided.

Where: North Park Village Nature Center,
5801 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60646

When: May 22, 2010; 12 - 2:30 pm

Garden Club Update By Jan Kupka

► PERENNIALS ARE EASY FLOWERS TO GROW IN A GARDEN AND THEY PAY FOR THEMSELVES AS THEY COME BACK EVERY YEAR.

Friends and family are usually more than willing to share their perennials with you. Here are a few of the most popular.

Black-Eyed Susan is truly an American icon. Blooming from midsummer until frost, its orange or golden yellow blooms just keep coming. They grow to around 2 feet high them the perfect for the middle or back of the bed flower. They love sun and are drought-tolerant.

Columbines are easy to grow and beautiful. They bloom in spring and early summer. The colorful blooms are loved by butterflies, hummingbirds and gardeners alike. Growing to about 2 feet high this adaptable plant does well in well-drained soil in sun or shade. Native columbine offers dainty pink, violet, purple, red and yellow-spurred flowers.

Coral-bells are front-of-the-bed favorite offering a multitude of charms. Especially noticeable is the crinkly multicolored foliage. The tiny flowers, borne on stalks above the leaves, appear in late spring. They like sun or partial shade.

Daffodils are dependable perennial bulbs, blooming in early, mid, or late spring, depending on the cultivar. The flowers have a central trumpet or corolla -- the length varies among cultivars - surrounded by a collar of petals that can be a different color. Colors include yellow, orange, white, red, and peach. The strappy, narrow leaves emerge before the flowers do and are a little shorter than the flower stalk.

Peonies are sweetly fragrant. It is a very long-lived plant that forms 2- to 4-foot-tall clumps in shrub like bunches. Its numerous varieties offer a wide range of colors - with some bi-colors. The blooming periods are from late spring to early summer.

Russian Sage is suited to larger gardens. This 3-foot-wide by 5-foot-tall perennial creates clouds of blue flowers in late summer. Russian sage likes sun, and is tolerant of drought and heat. Plant it at the back of the bed and give it room to grow.

Sedum 'Autumn Joy' fleshy leaves and bright flowers make sedum a popular perennial. It is practically foolproof, and offers spectacular color during the latter part of the growing season when most other flowers are fading. One of the best-know varieties of stone crop is 'Autumn Joy' sedum. This 18-inch-tall upright plant produces a bumper crop of rosy, flat-topped flowers that persist from late summer to frost, fading to brick red as the weather turns colder.

Shasta daisy is one of the most cheerful perennials. It is a long-time easy to grow favorite, drought tolerant and attractive to butterflies. It offers simple white flowers with sunny yellow centers for most of the summer. The sturdy stems and long vase life make them unbeatable for cutting. Shasta daisies thrive in full sun or part shade in well-drained, not overly rich soil. Plants grow to about 3 feet tall.

► THE KILBOURN PARK ORGANIC GREENHOUSE ANNUAL PLANT SALE WILL BE HELD THE WEEK-END OF MAY 15 AND 16. HOURS ARE SATURDAY FROM 10-3 AND SUNDAY 10-2.

The greenhouse will sell more than 150 varieties of organically grown vegetable, herb and flower seedlings. Plant prices range \$2 and up. The half price sale will be held Wednesday, May 19 from 5 - 7:30pm there will also be a question/answer session by the Master Gardeners of Cook County Chicago. The Kilbourn Park Organic Greenhouse accepts payment for plants by cash only. Kilbourn Park, located at 3501 N. Kilbourn Ave. is the home to the Park District's only organic-teaching greenhouse, offers workshops throughout the year. For questions regarding the organic plant sale or to register for a class, call Kilbourn Park at either 773-685-3351 or 773-685-3359 or visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

► THE 7TH ANNUAL PLANT EXCHANGE FOR THE PORTAGE PARK GARDEN CLUB WILL BE HELD SATURDAY, MAY 22, 9:30AM - 11:30AM IN THE AUDITORIUM AT VAUGHN OCCUPATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, 4355 N. LINDER.

Parking is available in the lot just east of the building, and enter through the back door. This will also be the 1st book and card sale. The horticulture teacher will give a tour of the greenhouse. For the plant exchange, bring a plant(s) from your yard, home or a nearby garden store. Guests are welcome. Refreshments will be served.

GREEN TIP OF THE MONTH: How YOU can help... Kick the Disposable Battery Habit

Americans buy about three billion household batteries (about 10 per person) annually, according to the Environmental Protection Agency—and nearly all of them end up in landfills. The next time you need to power up your gadgets, choose rechargeable batteries instead. Unlike disposable alkaline batteries, rechargeable batteries can be reused hundreds of times, which not only saves money and resources, but also reduces global warming pollution associated with battery manufacturing and transport. An independent study conducted for battery manufacturer UNIROSS estimates that using a disposable battery to create 1 kilowatt-hour of electricity has a global warming impact equivalent to driving a car 283 miles; using a rechargeable battery is equivalent to driving 10 miles.

Rechargeable battery technology continues to evolve, but there are only a few types widely available today: **Nickel-metal hydride (NiMH)**, **Nickel-cadmium (NiCad or NiCd)** or **Lithium-ion (Li-ion)** batteries.

No matter which type of rechargeable batteries you use, you can make them even greener using these strategies: 1. **Choose an energy-efficient charger**, preferably one that's Energy-Star rated. 2. **Care for idle batteries**. Do not leave batteries uncharged or unused for long periods, which can shorten their life. Remove batteries from infrequently used devices and store away from heat and moisture. 3. **Dispose of batteries properly**. Rechargeable batteries contain toxic materials and should not be thrown out with regular trash. Check for local recyclers (many Walgreen's have battery recycling programs).

Interview with Co-Founder of Seanachai Theatre Company

Michael Grant

By Marlena Ascher

Michael Grant is a founding ensemble member of Seanachai Theatre Company and currently is the Co-Artistic Director. He previously served as its Artistic Director from 1995 to 2003. As an actor, Michael has appeared in nine of Seanachai's productions. Favorite roles in Chicago include George (Seanachai's production of War), Sherlock Holmes (The Sign of the Four at Apple Tree Theatre), the Invisible Man (Scientific Romances at Next Theatre), Arthur Miller (Are You Now or Have You Ever Been... at Next Theatre) and Hugo (God's Man in Texas at Northlight Theatre). Michael is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame.

MA: When did you know you wanted to be an actor?

MG: In high school. Acting in the theatre is a calling rather than a chosen career path. In a day and age when there are 600 cable channels but nothing on television, theatre is a unique entertainment form. No performance of a play is ever the same twice. It never can be, because it is always influenced by the people who are there - the audience who comes to see it, so it is a truly fluent entertainment experience. For those of us who love theatre, we find a vibrancy that is lacking sometimes on television and even sometimes in film.

MA: What inspired you to found this theatre company?

MG: In 1995, a colleague of mine, Ann Noble, wrote *And Neither Have I Wings to Fly*, and she and I raised funds to produce it, and we co-founded Seanachai as the theatre company that would launch it. We chose the name "Seanachai" because it is Gaelic for "storyteller", and it was an Irish play. We hired a director and cast a terrific group of actors. It premiered at the Body Politic Theatre's space within what is now Victory Gardens' Greenhouse Theatre at 2257 N. Lincoln Avenue. It was so embraced by theatre-goers that it had an amazing 115 performance, nine-month run. It won New City's best play award and was nominated by American Theatre Critics Association for both the Osborn Award for Emerging Playwright and its award for Best New Work. The actors we assembled formed a natural ensemble, with leading men and women as well as character actors, so we decided to become an ensemble company with the mission of producing new works and the works of Irish writers and plays set in or about Ireland.

MA: What are some of Seanachai's most important achievements?

MG: Seanachai has won 5 Joseph Jefferson awards (Chicago's equivalent to the Tony Award) and 7 After Dark awards. This includes a Joseph Jefferson award for best new play to Ann Noble for Seanachai's production of *The Pagans*. Additionally, ensemble

member Coburn Goss won the Osborn Award from the American Theatre Critics' Association for Best Emerging Playwright for Seanachai's production of *Marked Tree*. What makes us unique is that, in addition to producing new works, we are the only professional company devoted to the Irish playwright. The Irish language is very rich and lyrical. The characters are very open, and the emotions are powerful and engaging. In recent years, we have explored the works of contemporary Irish writers in addition to those written by classic writers such as Brian Friel (*Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Translations*), who is revered as one of the world's greatest playwrights. Last year, we produced *Our Father* written by M.G. Stephens and *Mojo Mickeybo* written by Owen McCafferty. Next fall, we will produce *The Weir* written by Conor McPherson, and Mr. McPherson is considered to be one of the new, leading voices of Irish drama. The Steppenwolf Theatre recently produced McPherson's *The Seafarer*.

MA: Why do so many non-Irish people love the work of Irish writers?

MG: In the world of English-speaking drama, for a long time British writers wrote about the upper class while Irish writers wrote about the middle and lower classes. While that has changed and evolved, a lot of Irish drama has the heart of the common man in it. That is what gives Irish drama the ability to cut through and touch emotional nerves within us. These characters are not distant. Their joys and pains are recognizable.

MA: Now that Seanachai Theatre Company has moved into the Irish-American Heritage Center at Tripp and Wilson, what is the message you want to share with people who live on the Northwest Side of the city?

MG: Seanachai has been an itinerant theatre for the last 15 years. We have been in the Loop, Lincoln Park, and Lakeview areas. In those endeavors, it was a matter of inviting the greater theatrical community to join us. Now we want to bring the theatre to the people. It is important for people to know that Chicago theatre doesn't end with Steppenwolf, Goodman, or the Oriental Theatre with productions like *Billy Elliott* or *Bank of America* with productions like *Jersey Boys*. We won five Joseph Jefferson awards which are like the Chicago Tony awards and winning those awards is significant since we competed for them against large theatres with budgets 100 times what we have. You can find great theatre throughout the whole city. You no longer have to go to Monroe Street to see a downtown quality show. When theatres are in neighborhoods, it benefits the whole community. We love our new home at the Irish-American Heritage Center which is a really terrific, family-friendly venue for all kinds of cultural events. We hope that many people on the Northwest Side visit the Irish-American Heritage Center to enjoy performances of the Seanachai Theatre Company as well as to enjoy the multiple other cultural events sponsored by the center.

Eight-Week Summer School for High School Students

Saint Patrick High School will accept registration for summer school classes June 7-8 (for current St. Pat's students and Catholic school students), and June 9 (for all schools) from 9 a.m. to noon in the school's main lobby (5900 W. Belmont Ave.). Dates for the two summer sessions are as follows: June 14-July 9 (Session One) and July 12-August 6 (Session 2).

The summer school program at Saint Patrick is co-educational and fully accredited. The program is a vital part of the total educational program of St. Pat's. By offering an eight-week quality summer program to the community it serves, St. Pat's is attempting to make its facilities and educational programs available on a year-round basis. For more information, call the Summer School Hotline at (773) 282-8844 ext. 330.

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HAVE YOU NOTICED??

'Have You Noticed' contains opinions that may not be the opinion of the PPNA board or its members. Have you noticed anything that needs more noticing? Do you have an opinion? Send it to our new address: haveyounoticed@portagepark.org

Well, I guess people read our newsletters...we have many good opinions in this neighborhood. The PPNA looks forward to hearing more from members and the community at large—let's keep it going! Below is a piece submitted by Mr. Jim Moeller. Thank you, Mr. Moeller, for taking the time.

CPS Sports Cuts: Bad for Everyone

By Coach (Jim) Moeller—currently without a spring team

The recent decision to cancel sophomore sports by CPS is a hard hit to a crucial developmental period for our children. I have coached youth sports in the Chicago area for 30 years. I have coached park district as well as CPS and Catholic League teams. The joy of being a coach is watching the personal growth of a child from the beginning of a season to the end. As coaches, we know that such development involves attention to the mind, body and spirit. Coaching requires that we guide the body to perform during the sport—but we also cultivate a desire to possess knowledge and to do one's best.

It's no secret, underachieving students don't make good athletes. To find success on the field, coaches work with both players and teachers to ensure victories in the classroom. As a coach, I have repeatedly observed that the motivating power of participation in sports is predicated on strides made in the classroom. I have also observed the positive effects of sports achievement that turns into a lifelong confidence—in the classroom and in other endeavors.

Dropout rates in CPS, as with most high schools across the nation, are too high. Success in the first few years of high school is an obvious and critical factor in graduating. **Cancelling sophomore sports will prove detrimental to our children at a time when they need structure most.** Sadly, there is even talk of eliminating freshman sports in the fall.

As coaches, we regularly observe the stark contrast between youth involved in organized activities and those who aren't. I've been coaching in parks while squad cars rolled in from all sides, because children hanging out in the park had nothing to do and no other way to release energy. When my players finish a game or practice, they tend to go home, finish their homework and rest.

CPS recently created positions for community members to walk children home after school due to safety concerns—which is a short term solution to the problem. Because after these students arrive home, what positive community outlets will be available to them? I strongly believe that organized activities, and sports in particular, are a superior and longer-term solution to our safety concerns.

Dollars spent on CPS sophomore sports is a wonderful use of funds and a great investment in our community's future, for a small price. Coaches will often joke about being "in it for the money" because they receive very little compensation—especially considering how much time is spent beyond practices and games preparing fields and equipment. CPS coaches must often provide equipment and supplies from of their own resources. I've supplied bats, shoes and gloves for many of my players. I've coached in workouts and games where we borrowed an early big-league tactic of having players on one team leave their gloves in the field for the next team. Furthermore, officials (who also receive little compensation) are equally dedicated in providing materials and support. I've known umpires who've helped prepare fields for hours after rain storms. The bottom line is that we as coaches and officials are not asking for more compensation—we are merely asking for these programs to be funded.

At beat meetings or in the paper I hear about the issues that are arising with our youth—youth without access to community-organized activities Our school grounds used to be a place where children could go and play after school. But continued reductions in staff leave few positive outlets for our youth. Please join me in my quest to keep CPS sports active and funded as a key role in our children's development Let's encourage our politicians to spend our money on gloves, baseballs and coaches to avoid spending more on correcting the ills of social neglect later on.



The Portage Park Neighborhood Association News is a publication of the PPNA.
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