

WEST PLAZA

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



Mark Your Calendar ☒

Upcoming General Meeting

Tuesday, July 28, 7-8 p.m.

Swinney Dual Language Elementary School
1106 West 47th Street

Guest Speaker: Jerry Shechter
KCMO Office of Environmental Quality
Drawing for \$25 Gift Card

The July general meeting is something new for the WPNA. We historically have not held a meeting during the summer, because many people are out of town or otherwise occupied during the good weather. But we have so much going on in the neighborhood these days, we'd like to keep everyone informed and keep the momentum going.

Our speaker this month will be Jerry Shechter of the Office of Environmental Quality, a branch of the City Manager's office. He will present a slideshow and discuss Kansas City's initiatives to make sustainability a basic principle of city operations. The goal is to provide the quality of local government services that residents deserve in a sustainable way.

In addition, we will be asking for input about topics and programs that members would like to learn about at future general meetings.

Please come to the meeting with your questions, concerns, and ideas. See you there. ■

Neighborhood Cleanup

More than 70 residents participated in the cleanup ("the dumpster event") last May 30, proving what we already knew – it is a very popular event that the WPNA is pleased to sponsor twice a year in cooperation with the city. We know as well that residents appreciate the opportunity to clean up their properties, both inside and out, and have a convenient place to take their waste materials.

As an additional service, volunteers take usable items to thrift stores or charities so that others can continue to derive benefit from them. This year, items

were donated to Maj'R Thrift, The Pet Connection, and Halfy's Thrift Boutique in Mission, Kansas (which benefits the Pet Connection).

These cleanup events are staffed by neighborhood volunteers, who carefully pack the bins to maximize the use of the space. For safety reasons, they are not allowed to fill them beyond the top.

A part of the operation that we cannot control is the timing of the arrival of the dumpsters; and although we announce that the event will start at 8 a.m., inevitably residents come early and begin filling the bins. Because of this, ever so often, some people who come later in the morning are not able to leave their items because the dumpster is already full. This causes distress for both the resident and the volunteers, who are reluctant to turn them away, but cannot overfill the bins.

We want to accommodate as many residents as possible in an equitable way. For this reason, we are changing how we structure the event. In October, be aware (and you know we'll remind you ahead of time!) that the cleanup will begin whenever the bins arrive (possibly as early as 6 a.m.), and will end when the bins are full. As always, volunteers will be there to assist. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

If you want to discard bulky items at other times, you may schedule a pickup by the city by calling 3-1-1 or online at <http://www.kcmo.org/bulky>. ■

2009 Events & Meetings

WPNA general membership meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the third Tuesday of odd numbered months at Swinney Dual Language School, 1106 West 47th Street.

General Meetings: July 28 (new summer meeting – fourth Tuesday), September 15, November 17

Fall Cleanup: Saturday, October 10

Do Not Post

by Joe Montanari

I am barely old enough to remember the elections of 1956 – I was eight years old at the time. I have no recollection who any of the candidates were, other than Eisenhower, who was running for re-election against Adlai Stevenson. I remember that trucks would cruise our neighborhood with a big loudspeaker on top, and some candidate or another would drone away about why everybody should vote for him.

Another thing I remember is that campaign workers would nail signs for their candidate all over the telephone poles, and a short time later, the other side's campaign workers would plaster them all over with their own posters. While you had to admire the workers' enthusiasm, the only result was that the telephone poles became an unsightly and mostly unreadable red, white, and blue blur, having little, if any, effect on the election outcome.

That same year, the City Council enacted new ordinances into the city code, ***strictly prohibiting the posting of any signs whatsoever on trees, utility poles, fences, or anywhere else in the public right of way.***

These rules are still on the books, and they make a lot of sense yet today. While nobody really minds seeing a flyer for a lost dog or cat, or an occasional garage sale notice, it seems that lately, commercial businesses have been posting signs wanting to buy your house, sell you low-cost health insurance, guarantee weight loss, or make you rich working at home. Other enterprising persons want to sell you a condo, mow your lawn, or do home repairs. In a few instances, signs have been nailed directly onto the trees. This is not only visually obnoxious, but it is unhealthy for our beautiful trees.

Your West Plaza Neighborhood Association would like to remind everyone that the posting of advertising signs on public property is strictly prohibited. Please be a good neighbor, and do not post signs on our trees and utility poles – and if you see someone doing it, please remind them too. Thanks. ■

West Plaza Picnic

Almost 100 people enjoyed the food, camaraderie, and entertainment at this year's picnic. The weather was perfect, the food was delicious, and Eco Elvis was terrific! Photos of the picnic will be posted on the neighborhood website (westplaza.org) soon.

We would like to thank **Marsh's Sunfresh**, who donated the hot dogs, hamburgers, and condiments; **Print Tekk**, who donated the soda; and **Pryde's Old Westport** and **Westlake Ace Hardware**, who donated a \$25 gift certificate and a camp chair, respectively, as door prizes. Thank you to the board members for organizing and doing all the behind-the-scenes work that makes it happen. And of course, thank you all for coming. It's the people who make the picnic! ■

www.Westplaza.org

The WPNA newsletter is published six times per year – every other month, in time to announce each upcoming general membership meeting. We try to publicize every activity involving the neighborhood, and disseminate other relevant news and information. Because of the lead time involved in writing, collecting, and editing the articles, and printing, mailing, and hand-delivering each issue, late-breaking news is not our forte.

However, the WPNA does have a resource that we use to announce and publicize late-breaking news and events: our website, www.westplaza.org.

The website also features current and archived newsletters, West Plaza history, and old maps and photos of the area. There is also a Contact Us feature that allows you to get in touch with board members.

We would like to expand usage of this wonderful resource, created and maintained by our neighbor, Matt Nugent. Please check it out and let us know what you think. ■

Newsletter layout is provided compliments of Final Draft Secretarial Service. Printing is provided by Print Tekk Printing and Mailing. Both are West Plaza neighborhood businesses.

West Plaza Garden Report: Walkway's Finished, Garden's Growing, and Bunny Trouble!

by Ed O'Donnell, Gardener-in-Chief

A lot has happened in the garden (bounded by Roanoke, Jarboe, and 46th Streets) since the last report. All of the cosmos, marigold, and creeping thyme planted by Sharon Pendleton earlier this Spring, as well as her Shasta daisies, are blooming. I have planted little bluestem, beautyberry, Missouri coneflower, silky aster, and a few others. In mid-May Joe Padilla helped me with the "mulch as we go" process. On Memorial Day, Sharon and I planted, weeded, and watered the garden, while Joe Montanari finished the fieldstone walkway. It looks magnificent! I noticed that a wicked bunny had stopped by to nibble on a few of the coneflowers. Five of the seven butterfly bushes we had been given didn't make it, so we replaced two of them. Parsley, a larval food source, has been planted near them to encourage butterflies to stay for awhile.

Thanks go to Craig Cotton for securing two water sources for us. And to Valarie Lovan, who donated three large, heavy landscape rocks for the garden path. Joe Montanari has been a lifesaver – not only has he been helping keep the area mulched, but his truck has been put to good use. BIG thanks go to Sunshine Flowers for donating \$100 worth of perennials: creeping phlox, mountain bluet, and red hot poker, to name just a few. On a weekend in mid-June, Katie Paynter and Sharon were a tremendous help in getting them in the ground. Julie Tenenbaum helped pull weeds on Sunday mid-day, and Sharon and I returned later in the day for more of the same. On that day I noticed rabbit damage on two of the zinnias.

The garden is about 2,000 square feet, and though I have sprayed, I cannot get too close to the desirable plants. That is why we are pulling so many weeds and spreading so much mulch.

We are beginning to plan a dedication ceremony for the garden this fall. Keep your eye on the newsletter and the website (www.westplaza.org) for more information.

We need funds for more mulch, as well as to replace some of the annuals with perennials this fall. To donate, please send a check payable to the WPNA to the address on the first page of this newsletter. If you wish to join the volunteers, give me a call at 816-531-4692.

Check out the garden, and if you see any rabbits dining there, tell them to beat it! ■

Summer Security

With the warmer weather, it's easy to forget about home security, but traditionally the summer months mean an increase in burglaries.

By following some simple steps you can help to protect your home and belongings and still make the most of the summer.

At Home

- If you're in your backyard, make sure you keep doors and windows secure.
- Use strong locks on all external doors and easy-to-reach windows, such as those on the ground floor, above flat roofs, or near drainpipes.
- Don't hang keys where they can easily be reached through a letterbox or window, and never leave them on a table where they are visible.
- Keep valuable items away from windows where they can be seen by passers-by. This includes home computers and television sets.
- Never leave garden equipment unattended, even for short periods of time.

Garages and Sheds

- Keep your garage door open only for as long as is necessary. If thieves can see there is something worth stealing from a garage, they could come back later and break in.
- As with items in your home, valuables stored in either a shed or a garage should be marked with your house number so if they are stolen and recovered, you can be traced and reunited with your property.
- Large expensive equipment, like lawn mowers, should be fastened to something bulky. Alternatively, fit anchor posts to the floor to provide a fixed point for locking up your belongings.

Before Going on Vacation

- If you're going on vacation, use timer switches on radios and lamps to give the impression the property is occupied.
 - Don't make any significant changes to the exterior of your property. For example, if you never shut your gate when you're at home, don't shut it when you go away.
 - Make arrangements with a trusted friend or neighbor to check on your home while you're away.
 - Look at your home through the eyes of a burglar. If you can get into your house without keys, then so can a burglar. ■
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A Brief History of the West Plaza,

Part II (Continued from the May-June newsletter)

by Joe Montanari

West Plaza in the 1920s

Before motorized vehicles came along, horses and buggies were the principal means of transportation. The building on the southeast corner of 46th Street and Bell was a livery stable, the old-time equivalent of a parking garage, where the horses were kept, groomed, and fed. By the 1920s, the electric streetcar system extended all the way to the West Plaza, to 45th and State Line, where it turned around and returned downtown. Now it was possible to work downtown and live in the “suburbs” south of 31st Street. The antique district along 45th Street was the neighborhood shopping area and had a drugstore, a small grocery, a pharmacy, a butcher, a bakery, and at least one “watering hole.” Hopping off the trolley, one could stop and pick up dinner fixin’s on the way home. This was important, because before the days of modern refrigeration, folks depended on an ice-box to preserve fresh foods. Like a camp cooler, it only worked as long as the ice lasted.

Stone Walls in the West Plaza

While most of Kansas City’s topography is flat or very gently rolling hills, West Plaza is steep, with narrow streets, some lined with stone walls. These stone walls are a feature that is characteristic of West Plaza, but not of the rest of the city. The walls are necessary partly because of the naturally steep terrain, and partly because the terrain has changed a lot over the years. For example, the 4600 blocks of Genessee and Bell Streets used to be much steeper than they are today. Many of the small homes had already been built when the water, gas, and sewer lines were extended into the neighborhood. While digging up the old streets to install these modern services, the city took the opportunity to improve the street grade, giving it a gentler, more gradual slope. In doing so, they lowered the street level in front of some of the homes, making it necessary to shore up the front yards with stone walls. Today, many of these old walls still stand, adding a unique and charming feature to West Plaza.

Homes Association vs. Neighborhood Association

As J. C. Nichols developed his master plan for Kansas City, he was careful to include strict legal limits as to what could or could not be done in his

exclusive neighborhoods. All homeowners were required to belong to their respective homes associations, thus ensuring that each association would have plenty of money to fund whatever neighborhood improvements they desired, as well as plenty of political clout downtown at City Hall. These rules were included as deed restrictions written into each deed and recorded at the county courthouse. The continued success of J. C. Nichols neighborhoods proves the wisdom of this farsighted plan.

West Plaza and other older neighborhoods do not have these deed restrictions and cannot require anyone to belong to a homes association. Instead, our West Plaza Neighborhood Association functions on an entirely voluntary basis, with no paid staff, and only the membership dues and donations freely given by those who care enough to do so. The fact that our little West Plaza neighborhood continues to prosper is a tribute to the generosity, determination, and strong community spirit shown by those who support WPNA. This community spirit is all the more evident when our local politicians listen to West Plaza and other midtown neighborhoods, because we continue to produce a proportionally higher voter turnout in nearly every election. ■

Advice for the First-Time Homeowner

by Brad McCormack

Like many people in the neighborhood, my wife and I are first-time homeowners who are getting accustomed to the word “mortgage” instead of “rent.” While every experience is different, we have found some advice to be more helpful than others. Here’s what we’ve discovered:

- Pace your home improvement. Whether you are completely flipping the house or just touching up some paint, you may do too much too soon. While you may want it all done at once, set realistic goals and spread them out over time.
- Don’t throw any paperwork away. Unless you have an accountant, your tax returns just got a lot more complicated.
- Meet your neighbors. There are some great folks in the West Plaza. Just step outside your door and say hello to them! ■

Meet Your Neighbor: Rie Clark

by Kevin Pinkowski

This month's neighbor is Rie Clark, one of our new board members who happens to be the recently installed principal at the Swinney School at 47th and Holly.

Rie has lived in the neighborhood at 47th and Fairmount since 2006, when she moved here from Romanelli Gardens, near 71st and Gregory. Originally from Denver, CO, Rie moved to Kansas City with her former husband. When they split, she looked for a small house in a centrally located, friendly neighborhood with a park. She had always loved the "neighborly" feel of the West Plaza. That feeling was reinforced when she awoke after the first night in her new home to find a sidewalk chalk note that read in large letters, "Welcome to the Neighborhood!"

Before coming to Swinney School, she served as vice principal at Gladstone Elementary, Central Middle, and Southwest Charter School. She has three children. Her oldest daughter, Stevie, is currently on her way to live in Normandy, France; her younger daughter, Annie, is a junior at KU getting her degree in education; and her youngest, John, will be a freshman at Rockhurst.

When she's not working on her master's degree in English as a Second Language or at her second job at Peruvian Connection, a clothing store in the Crossroads, she's reading (she likes to keep three books going at one time) or gardening. Her garden is primarily vegetables, but she also dabbles in flowers. When asked why she joined the WPNA Board, she quickly replied, "I believe change happens on a grass roots level, and to effect a change, you have to start in the backyards."

If you see Rie around the neighborhood, say hi. She'll be the one standing outside Swinney School, rain or shine, every day (wearing cowboy boots in winter), welcoming all of her children to school. ■

Request for PIAC Suggestions

by Kevin Pinkowski

Have you ever noticed that one day, the broken curb inlet lid down the street was magically replaced while you were at work? Or how all of a sudden, there is new curb and gutter in front of your house or a neighbor's? In Kansas City, Missouri, construction projects like these, considered to be small for a city project, but too large for a homeowner, are often paid for by tax funds through an

organization called the Public Improvements Advisory Council. PIAC is administered through the Capital Improvements Management Office (CIMO), a division of the City Manager's Office. Amidst all of these acronyms and bureaucratic sectors, all you need to know is that the PIAC project hearings are coming up, and the WPNA is taking recommendations for PIAC requests for submittal!

A capital improvement must have the following characteristics:

- It serves an essential public purpose.
- It has a long, useful life or significantly extends the useful life of an existing fixed asset.
- It is comparatively expensive and is not of routine nature.
- It is fixed in place or stationary.
- It is related to government functions and expenditures.
- It is a usual responsibility of a local government.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- Curbs and gutters
- Park or street improvements
- Drainage improvements
- Street lighting

Sidewalks are not eligible for PIAC funds, as they are the responsibility of the abutting property owner. (The property owner can set up an individual program with the city to have a sidewalk repaired or replaced, with a six-year repayment term for the construction cost, but that is independent of the PIAC process.)

We currently have two pending PIAC project requests, but we thought that WPNA members would be able to give us additional items that your board members might have missed. If you have a suggestion, please call me at 913-486-7043. PIAC recommendations must be submitted before August 31. Please note that requests submitted by members of the West Plaza Neighborhood Association will receive preferential consideration. See the back of the newsletter for membership information. ■

To find out about West Plaza's new **Park Partnership** (Adopt-a-Park) with the KCMO Parks Department, go to www.westplaza.org.

Summer at Swinney Dual Language Signature School

by Rie Clark, Principal & WPNA Board Member

Bienvenidos!

Summer school is in session at Swinney from Monday, June 8th, through Friday, July 17th. The Swinney building is being used by students from Hartman Elementary School because of their building renovation schedule. There are approximately 300 Kindergarten through eighth grade students enrolled in the summer program.

As you may have noticed as you walk or drive by Swinney, the rose garden facing 47th Street is coming alive! Swinney received an award of nine rose bushes through the Bayer Foundation earlier this Spring, and thanks to the diligence and hard work of our Swinney friend and supporter Roma Lee Taunton, the roses have begun to bud.

The roses are a new hybrid called "Cocoa" that are hearty to our climate. Their blossoms will be a rich mauve-brown tinged with a subtle orange. If you see Roma Lee hard at work, thank her for making our neighborhood more beautiful. This project will be taken over by students in the fall, as we have plans to create our own potpourri using fallen petals.

Roma Lee is a member of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, whose congregation has recently chosen to form a partnership with Swinney. They will be working with us during the 2009-2010 school year by mentoring, tutoring, and participating in the lives of our students in other ways. Research tells us there must be at least three significant and meaningful relationships in a child's life in order to promote healthy and successful emotional, social, and physical growth and development. If you are interested in donating your time to your neighborhood school, please contact the school office in August by calling 816-418-6275, or email me at crieclark@aol.com.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or thoughts. Have a wonderful summer!

PS: I am often asked what needs we have that can help our school. Here are few:

School clothing for students (all sizes) – khaki pants and navy blue polo style shirts

- Kitchen utensils and items to stock our staff kitchen for school dinners and luncheons
- Washer, dryer, refrigerator (our old one has finally bitten the dust!)
- Used gift items and other "stuff" that we can use in our Swinney Boutique (student rewards)
- YOU as a volunteer! ■

Newsletter by Email Now Available for Members

Would you like to receive your newsletter by email rather than by U.S. mail? We now have the ability to do that, and we would be happy to save the labor, postage, and paper involved in mailing out the paper version to our members.

If you are a WPNA member, email Julie Tenenbaum at jatkc@aol.com to request this service.

Members will still receive a hand-delivered newsletter. We know that makes you get two copies, and we know it appears to make no sense, but here's why:

- We want to make sure our members receive the newsletter, so we mail (or now, email) them a copy.
- We also want all of our neighbors in the West Plaza to receive the newsletter. These are distributed by volunteers.
- There is no easy way to tell the volunteers which houses NOT to deliver to. Just imagine the extra time it would take the volunteer coordinator to specify 170 addresses – out of 1,100 – not to deliver to. Plus, there is a different group of volunteers each time, each of whom may have a different route each time. And imagine the extra hassle for the volunteers to refer to a list of addresses where they should NOT leave a newsletter. Yikes! (I guess that's why we pay the USPS the big bucks.)

So even though we'd like to save the resources, it's more important to us that all residents in the neighborhood receive each issue. Pass along your extra copy to a friend who lives outside the neighborhood. We're proud of our neighborhood, and we wouldn't mind if everybody in the city knew what we're doing in the West Plaza! ■

Two Commercial Spaces for Rent West of the Plaza

Rent \$850.00 plus Utilities / 700 sq. ft.

Storefront – Located in charming Fuge Hall, one of the oldest buildings in Westport. This former Pilates studio is located at Westport Road and Bell Street. Features hardwood floors, large windows, and one bath.

Rent \$2,000.00 plus Utilities / 2,000 sq. ft.

Commercial Loft – Former ballroom turned fitness studio, this space includes 1½ bathrooms, front desk, waiting room, hardwood floors, and large windows. Located at Westport Road and Bell Street.

**Contact Greenwich Properties
Danie Dunn Designs
816-561-7771**

1801 Westport Rd., Kansas City, MO 64111

West Plaza Neighborhood Association Newsletter
Edited by Julie A. Tenenbaum
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Phone: 816-931-2276 email: jatkc@aol.com

Submit suggestions for newsletter articles or association activities to Julie at her email address. You must include your name and your contact information for your suggestion to be considered. Articles may be edited for length, accuracy, and grammar. The submitter's name will be used only if permission is granted.

Advertising rates (display ad other than listing in business membership):

Business card size	\$25 per issue
Quarter page	\$35 per issue
Half page	\$50 per issue
Full page	\$100 per issue



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- To avoid contaminating land and waterways
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- To recover valuable metals, plastic and glass

For a complete list of electronics recyclers in Kansas City, go to www.recyclespot.org or call 816-474-8326.

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A \$25 Business Membership includes your name and contact information in each WPNA newsletter.		
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Join Your Neighbors in the WPNA!

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West Plaza Neighborhood Association ▪ P.O. Box 32826 ▪ Kansas City, MO 64171-7826 ▪ www.westplaza.org

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Check if you want to receive your newsletter by email: [] **[NEW!]**

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