

Parkwood

Residents Association Newsletter, Fall 2016

The next meeting of the PRA will be held on Tuesday, October 25, 7:30 p.m.
Kensington Parkwood Elementary School, Media Center
Topic: Traffic and Road Safety in Parkwood

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PRA FALL Meeting: Traffic and Road Safety in Parkwood

Traffic and road safety are always a concern in our community. The fatal car accident on Cedar Lane this year heightened these concerns for many of us. Traffic has increased as nearby institutions like Walter Reed Medical Center mean more people hurrying to work. The number of home renovations and the growing number of students at KPES attest to the attractiveness of Parkwood, while also making it a busier place. The year long upgrading of the water system on Cedar Lane by WSSC is welcome, but it aggravates already congested traffic patterns. The traffic calming islands designed to reduce speeding have been greeted with mixed reviews.

Our speaker will be Kyle Liang of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). Kira Lueders, PRA President, met with him at his office to talk about some of the issues that we are concerned about. The County has learned a lot about traffic calming in the five years since the Cedar Lane islands were installed, and MCDOT is open to considering other options, but it is very important that he hears from as many of you as possible. He is someone who can answer questions about other traffic issues impacting Parkwood as well. Aaron Kraut, Legislative Aide to Council member Berliner will also join us.

This meeting will be an important opportunity to understand what can and cannot be accomplished by our various government bodies and to express your opinion about what needs to be done. If traffic, road safety, and the future of Cedar Lane are a concern for you, come share your thoughts.

The Fall PRA meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 25, 7:30-9:00 p.m., in the Media Center of the Kensington Parkwood Elementary School (KPES).**

FEATURE ARTICLE: Station 5, Kensington Volunteer Fire Department

Jeff Griffith, editor

In Parkwood we are fortunate to live near some world famous institutions like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. We also have some exceptionally fine regional organizations like the Strathmore Music Center and a very good public school system.



So we sometimes overlook excellence when it is smaller and closer at hand – like Station 5 of the Kensington Volunteer Fire

Department (KVFD) at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Plyers Mill Road. Five years after the town of Kensington was officially incorporated in 1894, a large fire destroyed the Town Hall. Despite the ringing of the bell at St. Paul's M.E. Church, there was little that could be done because there was no fire department. That very night – 120 years go -- the citizens voted to organize a fire company.

Today there are four stations that form the KVFD – in addition to Station 5 there is Station 18 at Georgia and Randolph (currently being rebuilt), Station 21 at Viers Mill and Gaynor Road, and Station 25 at Connecticut and Bel Pre.

Station 5, the one closest to Parkwood and the one most likely to respond to emergencies in our community, is exceptional for several reasons. They have the highest percentage of calls responded to by volunteers of any station in the County. Career fire fighters staff the station from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Volunteers staff the station completely from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. the next morning, Monday through Friday and 24 hours a day on Saturday and Sunday. That means that the 100 men and women who are “active riding” volunteers are charged with responding to calls for over 70% of the hours the station is in service, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There are a total of 200 volunteer members; those who don't ride help in many other important ways, such as handling administrative matters and installing children's car seats when requested.



And they are busy: Over 4500 calls last year, with increases projected for this year. That is more than 12 calls a day. Interestingly, as fire prevention measures have become more widespread -- safer building construction requirements, more use of smoke detectors in homes -- the number of calls involving fires has been declining. However, the overall number of calls has been increasing, especially as more citizens use 911 for medical emergencies, both in the home and on the road. And “on the road” can be especially dangerous when the Station has to respond to accidents on the beltway.

All volunteers have to be trained as EMTs – emergency medical technicians – to the same level as the County’s career firefighters. This requires about 130 hours of classroom training and then several months of practical training in the station and in the field before they can be certified. All volunteers who are also firefighters, a designation separate from EMTs, have to be certified as firefighters as well as EMTs, which requires an additional 180 hours of classroom and practical training. Paramedics, a third designation, must have further training beyond the basic EMT requirements so that they can use Advanced Life Support equipment, which includes more sophisticated medical systems and technology.

So why do they do it? The hours are long, their sleep is always being interrupted, and the pay is zero. As you would expect, they do it for different reasons, but the ones I heard most often were “it is in my blood”, “I want to do something that helps people”, and “I just love the work”.

I spoke with a number of volunteers whose families have been firefighters and EMTs before them. One volunteer EMT is from Brazil; his father is a firefighter in that country and he wanted to do the same when he came here. Another is a 3rd generation volunteer firefighter – like his parents and grandparents before him – and one of his nephews (4th generation) is doing the same. Some are first generation volunteers but have been fascinated with fires, fire engines, and fire companies since they were children. They don’t always know why, they just were.



Others volunteer because they want to help people in a concrete way. Some, like those with office jobs, want to do something that challenges their physical abilities as well as their minds and that makes a critical difference in people’s lives on the spot. And for some, the sheer excitement of the work is what does it. They come to the station not knowing what the night alarm will bring, but they know it will often challenge them greatly and sometimes be very rewarding.

The volunteer Fire Chief of the station, Jayme Heflin, is a good example of all three of these motivations. His grandparents, who are in their 80s and are former volunteers themselves, now

KVFD FACTS

- 100 active riding volunteers
- Handle over 70% of the nearly 5000 calls
- Wearing suits that weigh over 70 pounds with tanks
- Fire hoses can add another 25-30 pounds
- 85% of the calls are for medical emergencies
- These volunteers save the county hundreds of thousands of dollars every year
- There are many other volunteers who do not ride but support the work of the station in numerous ways

organize the canteen truck that brings water and other nutrients to firefighters who have to deal with fires or medical emergencies that may keep them on the job for many hours. He finds the greatest satisfaction when he can use his skills to put out a fire and save lives. And he likes the work so much that not only does he serve as the volunteer fire chief at KVFD, but his day job is as a career firefighter for the D.C. fire department. And still he loves it every time he walks into Station 5. "Being a fireman is my passion."

After signing the appropriate waivers, I was allowed to go on a run with the volunteers one evening. It turned out not to be dangerous, but of course we did not know that when we started. The caller to 911 had reported the smell of gas in the home. Because of the recent tragic building explosion in Silver Spring and the terrible loss of life, these calls have understandably been increasing. The call I went on had not been reported as an accident with possible injury so we travelled at a moderate speed up Connecticut Avenue. As we drove, the team put on their gear, which weighs up to 75 pounds (!) with the oxygen bottle (and costs \$3,500). Regrettably,

even with the siren going and horn blaring when needed, some cars still would not get out of the way of the engine until we were practically on top of them. Once off Connecticut we had to maneuver the enormous fire truck up a very narrow street with parking on both sides.

There are many challenges inherent in this work; among the first is getting there and doing it safely. The driver of the truck I was in was Norm Jones, President of the KVFD. He had once had to jump back onto his truck to escape being hit by a driver who had decided that he just couldn't wait for the emergency to be over and raced by the truck at high speed.

Teams from three different stations had responded to the call. In addition to Station 5, there was an engine from station 25 in case the emergency required the coordination of two trucks, and an ambulance from Wheaton for transporting people to the hospital if necessary. Once on scene, the problem was resolved quickly and safely. But that was this time. The thing about being a volunteer at Station 5 is that they never know what the next call will bring.

I asked what things the community should know that would help to make Parkwood safer. Three things were cited as especially important: learning CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), installing smoke and CO detectors in homes, and knowing where you are when you call 911.

Many of us could learn to administer CPR, sometimes called "bystander CPR". This technique requires pressing on the chest at a specific rate and has been found to be highly effective because of the amount of oxygen still in the lungs when someone has a heart attack. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is also valuable, but not everyone feels comfortable administering it. Immediate use of CPR, however, even by someone without medical training, can sometimes be the difference between life and death.

ADVICE TO RESIDENTS

- Learn CPR
- Install smoke detectors
- Install carbon monoxide detectors
- Know where you are when you call 911 - street and address if possible

Last winter Station 5 had a dramatic example of this: During the infamous blizzard of 2016, a man who lived in a neighborhood close to Parkwood was shoveling snow when he had a heart attack. His neighbors saw him and managed to get him back into the house. Because they had learned to administer CPR, they were able to keep him alive until the Station 5 ambulance arrived. The EMTs then took over and transported him to the hospital. The severity of the snow storm, however, meant that the ambulance had needed much more time to

get to the emergency than would have normally been the case. But because his neighbors had learned CPR, his life was saved.

The Red Cross and the American Heart Association offer training in CPR. And the dispatcher who answers 911 calls can talk a person through the technique over the phone if they are willing to try.

Installing smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors is less dramatic than administering CPR but also very important. If you don't have smoke detectors, Station 5 volunteers will come to your home to install them for free. You just have to call them at 301-929-8000. They will also install a child car seat or check to make sure it is installed properly. More examples of how the station serves the community. (A future article will be about the KVFD 9/11 memorial.)

KVFD tries its best to offer the most current support and services. Recently it converted an SUV-type vehicle it owned into an "ALS chase car". Because the chase car is much smaller than an ambulance, it can quickly carry a paramedic and the advanced life support equipment he or she needs to administer high-level care at the scene. The ALS thus becomes an emergency room on wheels. If the on-scene ambulance can then safely transport the injured person to the hospital, the paramedic can return to the station in the chase car and be available for the next call sooner. The addition of the chase car and the fact that Station 5 now has a paramedic on most calls means that their calls from the command center to respond to medical emergencies have increased.

A key point about this effort to equip a vehicle as a chase car is that it was funded solely by the Station. Rather than relying on the county budget, Station 5 purchases and therefore owns all of its equipment. It does this by using state and federal grants and especially by relying on the donations from communities such as ours.



ALS Chase Car

The chief of Station 5 has "an open door policy" and welcomes anyone to visit at any time. They will also attend functions or events your group is sponsoring, if it is appropriate. You might stop by sometime when you see the doors open to say hello and thank you.

And remember that this is fund raising time for the station.

Meet Your Neighbors

The Newsletter tends to focus on issues, events, and organizations in our area---all important information items for local homeowners. But, in addition, Parkwood is a friendly community where people greet each other cordially and help each other out when it is needed. However, we often don't get to know many of our neighbors more extensively. With the goal of learning about some of the many interesting people in Parkwood, this column will become a regular addition to the newsletter.

The Liptons



The garden as seen from Saul and Cedar

Have you ever gone through the intersection of Cedar and Saul and wondered who owned that beautiful garden on the southwest corner? Meet Jill and Jim Lipton, residents of Parkwood since 1985, a place they say they "...fell in love with even before it was as good as it is now."

The Liptons moved here from Manhattan with some trepidation – they had been city dwellers all their lives. But the natural beauty of Parkwood and the friendliness of the neighborhood won them over. Jim came here as a Public Health Service Officer and later began work at the

NIH Institute of Dental Research (now the Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research) where he combined his interests in research (PhD from Columbia) and his interest in dentistry (DDS also from Columbia). Their son, Gordie, was born in the Bethesda Naval Hospital (now Walter Reed Medical Center) the year they moved to Parkwood. Jill stayed at home until Gordie graduated from Walter Johnson (WJ) and went to Carleton College in MN. She then resumed her career as a psychotherapist.

One of the things the Liptons especially appreciate about our community is the school system. In addition to Walter Johnson, Gordie attended Kensington Parkwood Elementary School and Tilden Middle School. These schools gave him just the kind of socially diverse and yet challenging education that Jim and Jill wanted for their son. Jill was very active in PTSA work throughout Gordie's school years.

They were particularly impressed with the range of opportunities that their son was exposed to, from being on the football team to being a musician in the Montgomery County Youth Orchestra, which once played at Carnegie Hall. WJ had a "no-cut" policy at the time, which meant that if you wanted to participate in a sport, you could, regardless of your ability. You might not be a starter, but you had the experience of being part of a team. Jim says that the educational system here is one of the things that "I would recommend to anybody about this neighborhood."



Jim was also engaged with the schools beyond just being a supportive parent. In his son's junior year, Jim started a website designed to help him make a more informed decision about college. Jim describes it as the first major data resource for local high school seniors in terms of the colleges that previous graduates attended, the average GPAs and the average SAT scores at the

colleges they went to, etc. The irony is that while, according to Jim, their son "...did not care one iota about the website...", many other parents and students did and used it often.

Jim's involvement did not stop after Gordie left for college, however. With the cooperation of the principal and guidance department at WJ, he created a program called Access2College that advises and assists students with the college application process. The key criterion for being in the program is that the student has to be the first person in his or her family who will have gone to college. Jim started the program in 2006 with four students. Ten years later over 400 students have benefited from the program and each year 40-50 are enrolled. Jim has received a number of awards for this program, including the Nancy Dworkin award for volunteers working with the youth of Montgomery County and the Award for Distinguished Service to Public Education from the Montgomery County Board of Education. Especially meaningful to Jim are the words that students write about the program in a book at the end of each academic year. One student said: "Dr. Lipton, you changed my life." And as Jim acknowledges, "helping these kids is my passion."

But back to Jill and that garden. As Jim says, the garden was all Jill. She conceived it and, working with her gardener, has created and cared for it over many years. Each spring brings new challenges and new opportunities to add something beautiful. Jill estimates that she has had over 140 plants and trees in the garden at various times. While she takes understandable joy in the



The meditation path

results of her work, she is equally gratified when others tell her how much they appreciate it as well. What cannot easily be seen from the street is the meditation path through the garden that Jill walks almost every day. Beginning in April and lasting through August the smells that come from the flowers are wonderful. Color is also a delight, starting with an Ice Princess Camelia that blooms a delightful shade of pink in January.

The garden is not her only love, however. Since she cut back on her psychotherapy practice recently, she has spent more time with her cello lessons. While she closes all her doors and windows when she practices – she tells people that she “practices” not “plays” the instrument – she clearly enjoys it and would love to reach a level where she could join with other amateurs in Parkwood and offer free concerts to children and other groups.

Music, in fact, is important to both Jim and Jill. They are on the Board of Governors of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at Strathmore Music Center and enjoy the performances there immensely. “What could be better,” they say, “than having a world class orchestra play in an accessible music center that does not have a single bad seat”.

They have other loves, of course. From early childhood Jim has been fascinated with trains. So they are often found in their favorite seat near the window at the K-Town Bistro at the time of day when they can see and hear 4-5 trains pass by. And Jim even loves being on Cedar Lane. He admits that most people might not share his appreciation of the sound of the traffic, but it

brings back memories of some of the things that he did enjoy about New York City. And they experience that sound from their screened-in porch where they can see the beautiful trees and hear the birds all around them.

You can understand why they say “We are proud to live in Kensington”.

HOMES AND GARDENS

Renovations - Demolition or Deconstruction

One of the questions asked at the Spring meeting on renovations in Parkwood was whether it was possible to donate any of the materials or items – wood, bricks, appliances, etc. – that were being replaced rather than just discarding them. The answer is yes and the Washington Post carried an article on August 27, 2016 (“*Dismantling a house, piece by reusable piece*”) describing one way it can be done. There are companies that specialize in this, some in estimating the potential tax savings from the donation and others in carrying out the actual deconstruction. Deconstruction is more expensive than demolition but the tax savings may actually mean a net gain for the owner compared to doing deconstruction alone. It depends on the value of the material to be saved and donated. If you would like a copy of the article but cannot find it online, send an email to the editor of this newsletter (jeff@jandjgriffith.com).

Gardens

In response to a call in the summer newsletter for pictures of Parkwood homes that we find attractive, Patrick Grace sent us the pictures on this page and the next of his lovely garden. Thank you, Patrick.





BRIEF UPDATES

Kensington Park Library. The Friends of Kensington Park Library continued their work to make the library a great place for young and old readers. In June a team of volunteers planted the Wizard of Oz Garden, the first of several planned for the library. Later in the summer they installed comfortable and inviting seating near the main entrance. Come have a seat, read a book, gaze at the garden.



Walter Johnson Roundtable. Kensington Parkwood Elementary School is one of the schools in the Walter Johnson High School Cluster, that is, elementary and middle schools whose students go on to Walter Johnson. Most of these schools are already at or near capacity. In November 2015 the Board of Education authorized a Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group that was charged to develop general approaches to address the current, short- and long-term projected space deficits. In June the discussion group submitted its final report to the then interim superintendent of schools and the Board of Education. The full report, which addressed many possible solutions and garnered considerable input from representatives of the PTAs at each of the schools in the cluster, can be found at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/roundtable.aspx>

It is important to note that all of the alternatives for elementary schools assumed that the additional classrooms planned for Kensington Parkwood would be available for the 2018-2019 school year.

After review of the roundtable input, the **superintendent of schools submitted a recommendation to the Board of Education for inclusion in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).** See http://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIPFY18_SupplementB_WJClusterSchools.pdf. The Board of Education will conduct a work session on November 3 to review the superintendent's recommendation; they will hear public testimony on November 10 and 14, 2016 and take action on the recommendation on November 17, 2016.

The Parkwood listserv number 5502 has several very informative summaries of the key points in the superintendent's recommendation, especially as they relate to our community.

FALL PHOTO GALLERY: Then and Now

Remember the January 2016 blizzard? Did you know that it had a name? On the web it is sometimes referred to as Jonas, sometimes as Jonah. Either way, it was pretty bad, but it did bring many of us together to help each other in whatever ways we could. Neighbor to neighbor – always a good thing. So here to help us remember those moments is a picture on the left taken last January by Christine Schiponi. And to remind us that things can get better is the picture on the right taken this September by Jeff Griffith.



Upcoming photo gallery: What did you do on your summer vacation?

So your favorite travel picture did not get picked by the Washington Post for its annual photo contest? Never mind. There is still time and another possibility equally prestigious – the PRA Winter Newsletter. What could be better in January than to share a picture of that great trip you took this past year. Or maybe you haven't even taken it yet but are going to do it this fall. All the better because you can still make the Winter Newsletter. But you *do* have to send it in. You can't just think about it. Deadline is January 15, 2017. Don't worry, you will get a reminder.

The editor.

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