



West Mt. Airy Neighbors
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WMAN NEWS

MARCH 2009 | VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1

THREE CAUSES, THREE LEADERS

West Mt. Airy Neighbors supports local initiatives in many ways. Fortunately, volunteer committees work with us for the betterment of Mt. Airy.

Finding and keeping volunteer leaders and committees is more challenging than ever. Here is the first installment of a three part series about three volunteer leaders who have identified causes that needed attention, and successfully recruited and retained volunteers.

What is the secret behind their success? Read on.

Photo: Ed Spector



Doris Kessler, second from left, with volunteers Sharon Corbin, Dick Kessler, and Sue Davis.

I SPEAK FOR THE TREES:

Doris Kessler and the Streetscapes Committee

Walking around her neighborhood with her husband, Doris Kessler would complain about its being environmentally impoverished. She noticed that over the past 30 years, sick and dead trees had not been replaced.

A few years ago, Kessler came to WMAN's Quality of Life Committee to share her concerns about environmental issues. The result? A Streetscapes Committee (née Street Trees Committee) was created as a subcommittee of the Quality of Life Committee.

Kessler got to work. She contacted others who shared her interest. In March 2007, a group convened and identified local "neglected spots." The intersection of Allen Lane and Lincoln Drive became the group's focus.

continued on page 4

IN THIS ISSUE...

2

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

4

GET CONNECTED

7

SAFETY CHECK

WINNING NUMBER:

311

8

WMAN BOARD
OF DIRECTORS

2008/09

WMAN RECEIVED

\$5,000

PRESIDENT'S PAGE: Looking Both Ways

LOOKING BACK - 2008

2008 was a busy and productive year for the West Mt. Airy Neighbors. We want to thank everyone who participated in a project, fundraising campaign, event, committee meeting, or volunteer work-day.

Here's what our joint efforts achieved.

Committee Work

Under the leadership of Board Member Mary Hale Meyer, the **Strategic Planning Committee** completed the West Mt. Airy Neighbors' Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. The four strategic goals are Neighborhood Engagement, Community Advocacy, Community News and Information and Organizational Viability.

Milt Cohen, WMAN's **Community Relations Specialist**, had over 600 phone, e-mail and face to face contacts with various individuals and Philadelphia service agencies. Milt provided information on services available through the city (e.g. abandoned houses and cars, barking dogs, and leaf and trash collection), worked with city departments to see that services were actually delivered and occasionally helped neighbors resolve disputes.

The **Streetscapes Committee** has been extremely active in 2008. For more details about the Committee's progress, please read this edition's lead article.

Ned Wolf Park was rededicated on October 12, 2008. The work of the Friends of Ned Wolf Park will be the subject of a future installment of our series, *Three Causes, Three Leaders*.

With the downturn in the real estate market and the attendant reduction in development, the work of the **Zoning Committee** has slowed down. The Committee is now considering zoning variances applications at a rate of about one every three months, down from three per month. Members of the Zoning Committee are currently providing input for the City's Zoning Code Commission as it rewrites Philadelphia's zoning code.

In the Community

WMAN hosted two community meetings on the plans for the **Allen Lane Train Station Renovation**. WMAN advocated with SEPTA to show them the importance of this project.

WMAN worked with **Carpenter's Woods Town Watch** to clean the vandalized sand box/play area at Germantown Jewish Centre last July.

For over a year, 400 people received weekly WMAN newsletters highlighting the progress of the **Germantown Avenue Reconstruction** which was completed last November. Behind the scenes, WMAN met with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the contractors, and local business and civic leaders on a weekly basis regarding the reconstruction. WMAN also helped resolve construction issues experienced by nearby residents.

WMAN helped promote numerous local events and resources through our weekly WMANewsflash, monthly eNewsletter, and web site. We also sent out timely Mt. Airy Safety Network Alerts.

LOOKING FORWARD - 2009

Implementation of our Strategic Plan has begun. In January, we sent out a Communications Survey to learn how Mt. Airy residents get their community news. If you haven't taken the survey yet, we invite you to visit our website, www.wman.net, and click on the *Communications Survey* link. Your input is appreciated! Stay tuned for an updated web site.



Photo: Catherine Soyre
by permission of the Mt. Airy Times Express



WMAN's 50th Anniversary is fast approaching. During our 40th Anniversary, we received such positive feedback on our "40 Good Neighbors" that we're soliciting names for our "50 Good Neighbors". Your nominations are welcome. Please e-mail wman@wman.net with your neighbor's name, what makes him/her a good neighbor and contact information. More 50th Anniversary news will be coming soon.

We're organizing a joint meeting with the Mt. Airy-Nippon-Bryan-Cresheim Town Watch and have invited the Police Commissioner of Philadelphia, Charles H. Ramsey.

Quality of Life Committee

We will continue to respond to the needs of the community through our various subcommittees and resources, such as Milt Cohen, WMAN's Community Relations Specialist. The Streetscapes Committee has already offered its services to the Allens Lane Train Station project and has planned a tree planting for the end of April. The Friends of Ned Wolf Park will continue to oversee maintenance of the park.

Our membership and annual giving drives are important to the vitality of West Mt. Airy Neighbors. We will be sending our fundraising solicitations and hope that you will donate to WMAN.

Our annual *Eat Your Heart Out!* dining event is fast approaching (Saturday, March 14) and we're looking forward to working with East Mt. Airy Neighbors to plan Mt. Airy Day in May.

We're eagerly anticipating another fruitful and exiting year. Join us! If you're not already plugged in to WMAN, sign up for our mailing list by sending an e-mail to admin@wman.net.



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THREE CAUSES, THREE LEADERS Part I: I SPEAK



Photo: Doris Kessler

Fairmount Park Commission staff

Kessler, who holds a degree in landscape architecture from Temple University, became the project's organizing core. She reached out to other groups. Aided by Dave Dannenberg from the Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) and others, she developed a comprehensive, professional plan, and helped area neighbors understand and appreciate what was involved. The plan included section elevations and plantings, individual responsibilities, necessary resources and who could provide those resources. She contacted the Fairmount Park Commission (FPC), which owned the property, and got approval to proceed from Christopher Palmer, the Commission's Director of Operations.

Kessler got help from WMAN, which publicized the Committee's activities and assisted with postage and mailing. WMAN's Executive Director, Laura Siena, intervened in political and organizational issues and procured in-kind donations from local

vendors, such as the High Point Café and Weaver's Way Co-op, for volunteer work days.

February 2008 marked the first clean-up. The FPC brought in trucks, heavy equipment and a dumpster and removed debris, invasive trees and the fence. FOW member Ed Stainton fabricated a new fence, which he, Dannenberg and 12-14 volunteers installed. The FPC provided compost, mulch and half of the plants. The other half were donated anonymously. Native plants were used whenever possible. Kessler explains that many beautiful and popular garden plants are non-native and may become invasive, displacing native vegetation which provides food for plants and animals.

Kessler avers that "you can't do this without volunteers and it's important to let them know you appreciate them." On work-days, Kessler provides lunch and coffee, then follows-up with a personal note. She profits from the fact that volunteers "really seem happy to be there and that they've accomplished something."

GET CON

WMAN needs community contacts. In fact, Goal #3 from our Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 is "Community News and Information." This goal has taken on a new significance with the recent closing of the *Mt. Airy Times Express* and the *Germantown Courier*.

Here is Strategic Goal #3 from the Strategic Plan highlights in the Fall 2008 issue *WMAN News*:

Become a vital source for community news and information through the expansion and development of print and electronic communication activities, including email alerts, newsletters, WMAN's web site, and local news media coverage.

NOW, HERE'S HOW YOU CAN "GET CONNECTED".

1. In January, we sent out an online public survey through surveymonkey.com, a site which takes our questions, formats them and tallies the responses. We'd like to know what news is important to you and how you receive that news. **Please take ten minutes and complete the survey**, which you can access through our web site, www.wman.net. Your input is very valuable to us.
2. WMAN sends out several communications via email. It is a quick, effective, and "green" way to disseminate information. **Please sign-up for our email list today** by visiting www.wman.net. Let us know which of the following e-communications you'd like to receive:

FOR THE TREES: Doris Kessler and the Streetscapes Committee

Many volunteers return and build up their expertise. Volunteers teach newer volunteers what to do, raise their consciousness, and inspire them to care more about the environment. As Kessler has said, "There is plenty to do and I wish we had the money, volunteers, and energy to do more."

Trees need regular maintenance for the first years after they are planted. Near neighbors are learning how to be the stewards of this area. Passersby remove weeds and pick up trash. There is an anonymous grass mower. The site remains clean and Kessler has seen no signs of vandalism.

Once the area has stabilized, the Streetscapes Committee will take a step back and invite the neighbors to take a stronger hand. According to Kessler, the neighbors have become invested in this project and she is really happy about their participation.

Next on the horizon? Kessler has communicated with Steve Stroiman from the Mt. Airy-Nippon-Bryan-Cresheim Town Watch, which has been maintaining the area around the Allen Lane Train Station in anticipation of its long-awaited restoration. Kessler says that the Streetscapes Committee has offered to help organize the maintenance of the new landscape.

Now when Kessler strolls through the neighborhood, she can identify which trees the Streetscapes Committee has planted and she knows that she has helped make her environment healthier.

For a street tree application for fall 2009, e-mail your name, address and phone number to wman@wman.net. Applications are due March 27. To volunteer at the next tree planting in April, e-mail your contact info to wman@wman.net.



Photo: Doris Kessler

Friends of the Wissabickon volunteers

CONNECTED

- WMAN eNewsletter - monthly newsletter with upcoming events and community news
- WMANewsflash - weekly email for those who want to stay in close touch with what's going on in West Mt. Airy and the environs
- Safety Network Alert – timely alerts on safety issues in and around your Mt. Airy neighborhood

We will not sell or give your email address to any other person or organization.

3. Visit www.wman.net. We are in the process of updating the look, content and capability of our web site so that it reflects the needs of the community.

4. **No internet?** We will continue to connect with the community via *WMAN News* and other news vehicles. If you have suggestions on how better to reach you, please let us know by calling 215-438-6022 or sending us a note at WMAN, 6703 Germantown Avenue, Suite 200, Philadelphia, PA 19119.

Thanks, and let's keep in touch!

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SAFETY CHECK

Photo: Alexandra Morigi



WMAN's Executive Director, *Laura Morris Siena*, with Officer Synell Hall.

The 14th District Police Department, 43 W. Haines Street, has some great offers. Officer Synell Hall, a Crime Prevention Officer and 13-year police veteran, will do a free security survey of your home, and identify any weaknesses which may make your home more susceptible to crime.

The Police Department also has a SAVE Sticker (above) which helps deter auto theft. If your car has a visible SAVE sticker and is being driven between midnight and 6:00 a.m., the police have the right to stop the car and ask the driver for identification. To get a sticker, you'll need to visit the 14th District and fill out some paperwork. Each SAVE sticker has a unique identification number.

For more information or crime safety tips, please contact Officer Hall at 215-685-2148.



WINNING NUMBER: 311

To reach the City of Philadelphia's non-emergency services, dial 311. This is the only number you need to call when you need information or help from the City. Philly311 will help eliminate the need to sort through the 500 phone numbers and hotlines available to contact the City government. You can always call 3-1-1 and a customer service specialist will connect you to the information and services you need.

This new system uses a single number to report issues such as pot-holes, a raucous car alarm that won't stop, or a missed garbage pickup. Callers will be given a tracking number so they can follow the progress of their requests. We're interested in learning your experience with this new resource. Please email Milt Cohen, WMAN's Community Relations Specialist, at wmanhelp@hotmail.com with your feedback.



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Photo: Alexandra Morigi

Laura Morris Siena, WMAN's Executive Director, thanks State Representative Rosita C. Youngblood for her support of the West Mt. Airy Neighbors. Through Rep. Youngblood's efforts, WMAN received \$5,000 to help fund communications and crime prevention activities.

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