Nicollet Square Advisory Group Forms

by Stacie Milligan-Toffler

Like many in the Kingfield neighborhood, I have been watching with curiosity and anticipation as the Nicollet Square apartment building was built at 3700 Nicollet Avenue. I’ve read the statistics that, on average, 10,000 people are homeless every night in Minnesota, including more than 200 unaccompanied youth. That’s heartbreaking, and I’ve often wondered what I could do about it beyond feeling bad. It’s exciting to have a project right in our neighborhood that’s providing a real solution for homeless youth. When the call came looking for volunteers to serve as part of an advisory group, I raised my hand right away.

The Nicollet Square Advisory Group is a collaboration of the Kingfield Neighborhood Association and Plymouth Church Neighborhood Foundation to facilitate communication between all the service partners at Nicollet Square, the residents, and the neighborhood. Ultimately, I have two goals as a representative of the Kingfield neighborhood:

1. To help the residents of Nicollet Square feel welcomed into the neighborhood, build their connections with caring adults, and learn how they can become active contributing members of the community.
2. To facilitate connections between residents and Kingfield neighbors to help the community provide appropriate support and lend their expertise to the project’s success.

As I have been talking with friends around the neighborhood, most are curious to know who’s living at Nicollet Square and how they might get involved. Here’s a quick overview:

- Nicollet Square currently has 23 residents—about one half have experienced long-term homelessness, and one half are transitioning from foster care into independence.
- Nicollet Square residents pay $220/month in rent for their first two years of residence. After two years, the rent goes up $100 per year. Support staff are on-site, including someone at the front desk 24/7.
- I hope you will join me and other neighbors for a Grand Opening at Nicollet Square on May 5th at 5:00 PM. Come for a short tour, meet the on-site staff, and learn how to become involved. I look forward to seeing you there!
- As a neighborhood representative, please contact me with questions, ideas, or concerns about the project. I look forward to hearing from you.

Stroll on down to MLK Park, one-pot in hand if you care to share and test your dish against the current KFNA Board members, and enjoy a sampling of tidbits and tasty treats made with care by your neighbors. Fill your plate, catch up with neighbors not seen since the ice went out, cast your vote for your favorite one-pot dish, and join in the 7 PM annual KFNA membership meeting.

Bylaw changes and NRP Plan funding modifications WILL be made at this meeting. The KFNA Board will discuss and make their recommendations for changes at the previous board meeting on March 9th at 7 PM, at Martin Luther King Park, 4055 Nicollet. (All neighbors are welcome to come and listen.) The recommendations then will be posted at www.kingfield.org, as well as printed and left on the info rack outside the KFNA Office, Room 101, 3754 Pleasant Ave. S., or on before Friday, March 18, at 5 PM.

Six officers will be elected to the board for two-year terms. Questions regarding KFNA, its operating procedures, responsibilities, and mission can be directed to Sarah Linnés-Robinson, KFNA Executive Director, sarah@kingfield.org or 612.823.5980.
The Kingfield Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting is coming up on April 15... Try to contain your excitement! Seriously, this is not a Kingfield event that has as much buzz as, for example, the community art show, the upcoming Kingfield Local Small & Home-Based Business Market, or the Kingfield Farmers’ Market. But it is the most important event to attend for anyone who cares about the future of our neighborhood and important projects like these. The KFNA Board initiates and oversees projects that build our community, and the annual meeting in which the neighborhood elects the members to the KFNA Board who set the agenda, for the betterment of our neighborhood.

As I have mentioned in prior columns, the future of Kingfield is in doubt. The City’s decision to freeze $185,000 of Kingfield’s funding targeted towards housing only underscores this fact. More than ever, KFNA is going to need to rely on dedicated volunteers to keep the Kingfield neighborhood improving.

TUESDAY, MARCH 15TH • 7 PM
Martin Luther King Park • 4055 Nicollet Ave. S.

Have questions about Block Leaders? Contact Marshall at marsh@kingfield.org or 612-823-6226.
Complete the online survey to sign up as a volunteer, or for walkers to pause while their children participate in dance or music classes at the Center for Performing Arts, or for runners to run for the board, or by making your voice heard by speaking at an open forum, or by voting for the new board. I hope to see you on April 15.

The KFNA Board meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Martin Luther King Park, 4055 Nicollet Ave. S.

2011-12 KFNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
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KFNA NEWS
If you are interested in writing, editing, designing, or taking photographs for the Kingfield News, call KFNA at 612.823.5980 or email at info@kingfield.org.
Home Energy Workshops & Assessments Help You and Kingfield!

Kingfield homeowners rallied last year to make the Community Energy Services (CES) residential energy assessment program a huge success! More than 350 Kingfield householders attended workshops to learn techniques to save money and energy in their homes, 257 have also scheduled a home energy assessment to make sure they have addressed the number one problems in their specific home.

This makes Kingfield the #2 neighborhood for attendance in the city; Kingfield ranks 4th compared to other neighborhoods based upon the percentage of attendees to housing units! This not only makes our neighborhood greener, but it could result in some given in the pocket of KFNA. Cash grants have recently been established for neighborhood participation in this program, possibly up to $5,000 per neighborhood.

Kingfield neighbors are welcome to attend future workshops in any neighborhood (and Kingfield still gets credited for you attending!), but we are also scheduling another workshop for MLK Park in May. Remember, you must attend a workshop to be eligible for the $500 home energy assessment.

- Tuesday, March 22, 6:30 PM
  Whittier Recreation Center (425 26th St. W.)
- Tuesday, April 5, 6:30 PM
  Armstrong Recreation Center (2500 57th St. W.)
- Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 PM and Thursday, April 28th, 6:30 PM
  Jefferson Community School (1300 26th St. W.)

Visit www.kingfield.org for the date of the May workshop at MLK Park. While on the Kingfield website, sign up for the Kingfield weekly e-mail notice (look to the left side of the home page). This e-mail will inform you of the workshop date, along with other great happenings in your neighborhood.

As with last year’s workshops, participants will receive a package of materials and services that include a home visit (taking approximately 1 and ½ hours) from two energy professionals from the Center for Energy and Environment. These professionals will perform a blower door test to measure air leaks, and install energy and money saving materials such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, set back thermostats, low-flow showerheads, gasket seals, and pipe insulation.

To RSVP for any of the workshops listed above, contact Ashley Robertson at (612)355-0860 or agrahman@mpls.ore.

The Kingfield Neighborhood Association has teamed up with the Center for Energy and Environment, CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy through a grant from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to offer Kingfield homeowners this full-service residential energy program.

Park Events for Community Service Area 10: Martin Luther King Park, Fuller Park, Lyndale Farmstead Park, and Painter Park

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has a new registration program called ActiveNet. Neighbors need to create a profile for themselves and their family members to register online for Park programs. “Active Pass Cards” are issued to users ages 13 – Adult; Active Pass Cards are free and can be used at all parks throughout the MPRB system including Golf Courses, Water Parks and Recreation Center Programs. (activenet.active.com/minneapolisparks)

GYM SCHEDULE FOR MLK PARK
- Youth & Teens: M-F 3:00-5:00PM
- Youth & Teens: M, W & F 5:30-8:00PM
- Teen Night Owls: P & Sat 8PM-1AM
- People w/ Disabilities: Thursdays Noon – 3PM
- Family & Home School Open Gym: Fridays 1-3PM
- Open Gym: Saturdays 10:00AM-1:00PM (Active Pass Card required)

SPRING FLING - MARTIN LUTHER KING PARK
Saturday, April 23rd – 10 – 11:30 AM
$2 per person (max $10 per family)
Activities include cookie decorating, basket making, egg hunting with prizes, entertainment with “Mr. Jim,” and a petting zoo. Light refreshments.

YOUTH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL
For boys and girls ages 9 to 13. Registration forms are available at Martin Luther King, Fuller, and Lyndale Farmstead Parks. In-person registration only. These leagues are NOT in-house. Games are played at nearby area parks, and practices are set by coaches.

ADULT INDOOR CO-ED DODGEBALL
Wed, 6-9 PM 4/6 – 6/6 • Sat, 11 AM – 5/9 – 6/11
Resident $4.00 per session • Active Pass Required
Join us for Co-Ed Rec Dodgeball action. Games are not refereed, but use the honors system of calling violations.
Weekly registration at www.mndodgeball.com

SENIORS GET FIT – MARTIN LUTHER KING PARK
Mondays, 10-11:15 AM
Work your body through stretching, strength training, and light aerobic exercise. Class is sponsored by the SW Senior Center and MLK Park. For more information and registration, contact the Southwest Senior Center at 612-822-3104. Please bring a pair of light weights (1-3 lbs.).

COMMUNITY: 17TH ANNUAL EARTH DAY WATERSHED CLEANSUP – MARTIN LUTHER KING PARK
No pre-registration is required! Arrive at MLK Park on Saturday, April 16, between 9:30 AM and noon, and check in at the registration table. A site coordinator will give you gloves and bags, and instruct you where to go and where to leave trash.

Open Streets
Starting in 2011, Minneapolis bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, and wheelchair users will take over miles of streets to have the opportunity to explore and enjoy their neighborhoods without motorized traffic. An Open Streets event occurs on the Ciclovia from Bogotá, Colombia will bring together families and neighbors to mingle, recreate, and shop in their communities in a safe, car-free environment. The Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition is organizing an Open Streets event for Lyndale Avenue South between Franklin and 42nd on Sunday, June 12, 2011, from 10 AM to 2 PM. Upcoming volunteer opportunities include delivering ‘Dear Neighbor’ letters, and collecting approval documentation from businesses and residences along the route. For more information, please visit http://mplsbike.org/blog/ and email openstreets@mplsbike.org.

Move from “Me” to “We”:
MAKING IT A FLAMINGO SUMMER!

by Anne Birch

A recent Oprah program about happiness cited research that showed knowing your neighbors brings you happiness and a sense of safety. Our local activist Jay Walljasper encourages us to move from “me” to “we” in our thinking, which I agree is a good thing. I learned this early on.

As a Baby Boomer, I grew up with 33 other playmates right on my block. My world was filled with play, exploring the outdoors, and creativity, doing what kids do best—having fun. With so many kids playing outside, we knew everyone. Heck, I was in most everybody’s home. I got to see how others lived. We were all there, neighbors just living life together, a community engaged, all one. This is the way life should be. A house that flows beyond your walls makes a life with rich meaning, a sense of place, of well being, security and, yes, happiness.

Times sure have changed. As anthropologist Margaret Meade said, “Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. Without relatives, no support, we’ve put it in an impossible situation.”

For me, it’s all about expanding that box. As a National Night Out organizer and block leader, I’m fortunate. I’m surrounded with many like-minded people—neighbors open to experience all the great things in life as well as life’s challenges. Come what may, we work together. We look out for each other. And what a great group it is—all types of folks getting along in our lives. It’s the diversity and all our shared stories that make it so rich, fascinating, and—yes—a life of substance.

Years ago a friend of mine told me about their Flamingo block parties. I said, “I want to do that!” so I went home and put it on my calendar. When spring arrived, I bought a box of plastic flamingos and sent out an announcement:

“We’re Having a FLAMINGO SUMMER ON HARРИET!

What the heck is that? No-fuss, neighborly get-togethers. So go ahead. Make it happen on your block and see what transpires. Namaste.

“It if we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one which will make for a life rich with meaning, a sense of place, of well being, security and, yes, happiness.”

—Margaret Meade

Open Streets
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Dog Park Debate Raises Awareness of Dr. King’s Legacy

By the time you receive this newsletter, a group of citizens appointed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will be debating the merits of three sites in the East Harriet neighborhood for an off-leash recreation area (i.e. dog park). KFNA has designated two representatives to serve on the 10-member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) that is tasked with recommending the best location for the off-leash recreation area among these pre-determined East Harriet neighborhood sites; the Kingfield Dogpark Task Force was provided with one representative. The Park Board unanimously voted not to allow the CAC to consider MLK Park as a site option, even though the board originally had supported a dog park in MLK Park. The MLK Park site was controversial, raising anger and protests in a portion of the African American community, and so was withdrawn as an option.

But the dog park debate brought some needed attention to the state of neglect of many of the park’s current assets, and to the fact that KFNA has been struggling for over 15 years to find programs that build community for neighbors in that park.

Running parallel to the dog park discussion, the Park Board has led meetings with citizen groups to discuss how Dr. King should be respected and honored at Dr. Martin Luther King Park. Although much of the conversation has focused on the disrepair of the “Freedom Form 2” sculpture, discussion has begun about new programming for youth and adults, general site enhancements through gardens and art, and features for the park that could be used to attract more people from the immediate neighborhood, such as winter bouldering and ice skating, and summer community gardens.

If you would like your voice to be heard, come to the meeting on March 15, at 6:30 PM, at Dr. Martin Luther King Park. You will be able to review the ideas that have been brainstormed and rate them according to your priorities for implementation. The Park Board has committed an initial amount of $32,500 to begin to make these changes.

Additionally, a separate group of neighbors has been attending meetings coalesced by 8th Ward Councilperson Elizabeth Glidden. These discussions have focused on the divisions between our communities based on race, age, and experience that became apparent during the dog park debate. This group is moving forward by planning a series of cross-SIW community dialogues, which will be announced later this season.

If you have questions or opinions regarding the 6th District Off-Leash CAC, please contact the KFNA Representatives Brook Lenn-Tabor and Jeff Spencer, as well as Kingfield Dogpark Task Force Representative Jonathan Lee at dogpark@kingfield.org or 612.823.5980.

If you have questions or opinions regarding the MLK Park site, please contact Jennifer Ringold, Manager, Public Engagement and Citywide Planning, at jringold@minneapolisparks.org or 612.823.5980.

Support a Kingfield Nonprofit and Your Local Restaurants: DINE OUT FOR LIFE!

Looking for an excuse to hit your favorite local restaurant? On April 28, restaurants all over Minnesota will take part in Dining Out for Life, a benefit for The Aliveness Project, our local community center for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. A number of Kingfield restaurants are participating, and The Aliveness Project, a 25-year-old non-profit that serves nearly 1,000 Minnesotans each year, is moving soon to our neighborhood as well (Nicollet at 38th).

Support The Aliveness Project’s work by eating at your favorite local cafe, or trying a new one, on Thursday, April 28. Participating restaurants are some of our very favorites including:

- BLACKBIRD, CAFE ENA, EL MESON, and VICTORS 1959 (DONATING 33%)
- ANODYNE (DONATING 30%)
- CURRAN’S and GRAND CAFE (DONATING 25%)
- LA CHAYA (DONATING 15%)

Visit www.diningoutforlife.com for more particulars, and to view any new additions to the participating restaurant list.

Dine Out. Do good for Kingfield this April 28th by eating local! For more information about Dining Out for Life, visit www.aliveness.org or www.diningoutforlife.com.
