

NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

COMMUNITY NEWS

NOTABLE
NEIGHBORSRALPH & JANET
WRIGHT

By John Bange

I would like you to meet Ralph and Janet Wright, longtime residents of Aikenside Avenue. I first met Ralph a few years ago when I was out walking and I saw him at work in the garden in front of his home. We struck up a conversation. Ralph grew up in Dayton, Ohio and went to Stivers High School. He was a natural artist, and a natural in athletics. He was all-city in basketball and track. He won a scholarship to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio for both. He also played a little football. He selected art as his major. In those days the teams were called the Miami Redskins (changing to the RedHawks in 1996).

Ralph arrived on campus in the fall of 1958. Adapting to a large college campus and keeping up with his course work and sports kept him very busy. As athletes they rode the bus a lot, to games all over the Midwest. The other guys on the team were able to read and study on the bus, but it was virtually impossible for Ralph to draw and paint on a bus in motion. He eventually decided to switch to a major that was more bus-friendly and worked toward a degree in Physical Education.

Ralph and some friends were walking on campus one day, clowning around as young men do. They came across some young local women on the Sycamore Street sidewalk. He began talking with a girl named Janet and they kinda liked each other. She was a student at Talawanda High School. They started spending time together and Ralph always made sure she had a few free tickets to come to the games and watch him play basketball.



Ralph and Janet in their home recently, holding a mosaic that Ralph made as an art student at Miami University in his Freshman year, 1961.

Ralph excelled at basketball. He played against some future NBA stars. In games against the University of Cincinnati, he played against Oscar Robertson. Against Bowling Green State University he played against Nate Thurmond. Ralph also set some high-jump records that stood at Miami for some years. At 6'-0" he acquired the nick names "Leaping Lizard" and "Bounding Beast!"

Ralph graduated in 1963 with a degree in Physical Education. He landed a job with Cincinnati Public Schools as a Physical Education teacher. And on November 9, 1963, Ralph and Janet were married in Oxford. In Cincinnati they lived in Bond Hill, Madisonville and then found their current home in Kennedy Heights in September 1968. They liked the diversity of the neighborhood, felt safe and

Continued on page 3

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A Letter From Our President



Sharifah Tafari

Happy New Year Neighbors and welcome 2024!

We hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday season. Kudos to Ellen and her crew of staff and volunteers who made Winterfest a spectacular holiday event. And we are so thankful for each and every neighbor who helped to lift up and sustain our beloved community all year long. Whether it was volunteering at an event, attending community council meetings, checking on a neighbor or picking up trash on your street, every action matters and you are appreciated!

Now it's time to rev up, get involved and stay involved for this new year. And we're counting on you! How can you get involved? You can start by attending a community council meeting for ideas on how to "get in where you fit in." Our monthly meetings will continue to be in person at Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church in Fellowship Hall as well as virtually and via phone (info on the back page of the newsletter). We will chat about the many opportunities to strengthen your connection to our awesome neighborhood at our meeting this month. So please join us one of the three ways. This is my invitation to you. We look forward to your presence!

We'll see you in the Heights!

Peace,

Sharifah



A Word from The Caring Place

From Sharifah Tafari, Executive Director

Greetings Neighbors! Many, many thanks to everyone who has donated to and volunteered for The Caring Place. We couldn't help our neighbors in need without you. You all are greatly appreciated!!

The Caring Place is moving to a new temporary home later in January. When? TBA.

As you all may know, the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church has been sold. Thankfully, that beautiful building will stay intact and continue to be used as a church by the new owners.

The Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church has invited us to utilize space in the basement for the food pantry. And we are ever so grateful!! This will give us more time to try to find a permanent space that has these features:

- ~accessible building with a spacious parking lot
- ~2,500-5,000 sq ft (preferably a little larger to have room for growing services)
- ~electrical capacity to support our refrigerators (4) and freezers (7)
- ~within our service area (KH, PR, Silverton and Golf Manor)
- ~on the bus line
- ~a place that we can afford

And, as you may have guessed, we will need a LOT of boxes and a LOT of help packing and moving. You can drop off sturdy boxes on Tuesdays and Thursdays 8am-2:30pm. TBA on the actual moving date.

We have a hard pause on donations due to the move. We can only accept winter coat, boots, gloves, hats and scarves, as well as new socks and underwear.

If you know someone, who knows someone, who knows someone that may have a lead on a property or space that could be a possible fit for us, please email cincinnati.caring.place@gmail.com or call (513) 841-1499.

And if you know a neighbor in need of help with food insecurities, The Caring Place is open for services on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 2pm. You will need a photo ID and a piece of mail no more than 30 days old.



Notable Neighbors (cont'd)

liked their neighbors and have stayed for 55 years. Sadly none of their original neighbors are still here, but they love their new neighbors.

In 1974 their daughter Tess wanted to play softball on a team. The problem was that there were no girl's softball teams on which to play. The team was organized with girls from Kennedy Heights, Madisonville and church members. During the eight-year span, they won four championships including one unbeaten season!

Ralph taught for 30 years at Heberle Elementary School on Freeman Avenue. Besides Phys Ed he also taught General Science and coached Volleyball, Track and Field and the Gymnastics team. Janet attained a job as a secretary with Cincinnati Public. After 30 years, Ralph retired in 1993 and Janet retired in 1998.

The Wright's daughter Tess lives in Cincinnati and their granddaughter Janay is currently in Toledo on a medical internship.

Around 2016 Ralph had a spiritual calling to be a minister. He and Janet had been active at the First Baptist Church in Oakley for many years where Ralph taught Sunday school. It was a wonderful transition for this man who knew scripture and was strong in his faith, to be a minister as he had many years of experience as a speaker in front of crowds as a teacher. He now mostly fills in to help his minister friends in various churches when they are on vacation or absent.

Janet has been very active at the Caring Place pantry. She has used her time and donations many times.

It is always enjoyable to talk with Ralph and Janet . . . you can converse about sports, family, education, the Lord, Christian music, the music of Sam Cooke, art, gardening and life in Kennedy Heights.



FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL TO SANCTUARY: The Evolving Legacy of Kennedy Heights Presbyterian

By Christina Miller

In its 95-year history, The Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church has been true to the mission that is Kennedy Heights--building that which is diverse racially and ethnically, and welcoming.

Don Johnson (not the Miami Vice Don Johnson) is the current Clerk of Session. His remembrance of the history of the church includes its beginning in a house, not unlike some churches still today. Somewhere between 1905 and 1909 there was a Sunday school which eventually grew to a church that would purchase the current property in 1929. The budget for that new church, Don recalls, included a line item of \$5 for horse services.

Over the life of KHPC, there have been seventeen different pastors, the current of which is Ebenezer Yebuah from Ghana. As many as 1,500 congregants have worshiped there, the likes of which have included civil rights activists, Koreans, Hispanics, Egyptians and Cameroonians. Its diversity a result of the work of Dr. Lester Kemper and the community to battle White flight in the 60's and 70's. The Church has served as a polling place, the breakfast location for the community 5K run, a host for the Progressive Dinner, a site for AA, the in-person location for our Community Council and also the food pantry-- the Caring Place.

There are currently about 60 congregants which has led to the decision to move to a more economically suitable space. While there are no firm plans, leadership is currently in talks with another church, a younger church, to purchase the property. If that happens, the current body would use the Fellowship Hall area for morning services until they find a new space. They are hoping to stay in the area, but acknowledge that their congregation is no longer local. For the Caring Place, it means moving to Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church at the beginning of the new year until it too can find a permanent home.

Don stressed that there are no talks in place with developers for one of the many high rise apartments we've seen going up in Cincinnati.



Don Johnson, current Clerk of Session at KHPC.

Kennedy's Canopy Series: Part 1: Embracing Urban Forestry

By Amber Ziegler

When Lewis Kennedy first began developing Kennedy Heights in the late 1800s, he wanted the area to have a park-like atmosphere and intentionally planted trees to accomplish that goal. Today, the tree canopy in Kennedy Heights is 49.14%, which is well above the average urban tree canopy cover of 40% (though Drake Park gives the Kennedy Heights tree canopy a major boost). Nearby Pleasant Ridge's tree canopy is 39%, and the tree canopy in Oakley is just 25.94%, due to the large number of commercial buildings and parking lots.

Cincinnati Parks Urban Forestry has divided the city into four districts, and each district is assigned a Forester. Kennedy Heights falls in the north district, along with 8 other neighborhoods. Our Urban Forestry Specialist is Kurt Kastner, who has 23 years of experience working for Urban Forestry (plus 9 years as a contractor with the city before that). According to Mr. Kastner, "all kinds" of trees can be found in Kennedy Heights, including Serviceberry, Lacebark Elm, Zelkova, Pin Oak, Cherry, Japanese Tree Lilac, Sugar Maple, Red Maple, River Birch, Dawn Redwood, and Beech Trees (just to name a few!).

But the important thing to know is that there are two categories of trees: private trees and street trees. Private trees are trees that are located on private property, in someone's front, back, or side yard. The property owner is responsible for the maintenance of private trees, and if needed, removal. Street trees, on the other hand, are located on city property, such as the part of residential property located between the sidewalk and the road, often referred to as the right-of-way. Urban Forestry plants, maintains, and removes trees in the right-of-way, as they are city property—although Duke Energy, in coordination with Kastner and Urban Forestry, does a lot of tree pruning and removal to protect power lines.

So what is Kastner's job, in a nutshell? Urban Forestry "maintains the health of street trees," Kastner says, but that task is more complex than it sounds. There are 1125 street trees in Kennedy Heights, according to the latest



Street trees lining Zinsle in late fall.

inventory. It takes 5 years to do a city-wide inventory of every street tree, and there's a 6-year pruning cycle. Per Kastner, Urban Forestry is currently doing preventative maintenance in Kennedy Heights, with pruning complete on 400 of the 1125 trees. This pruning and preventative maintenance is an important part of protecting the power lines and making sure residents aren't without power due to a fallen branch or tree. "People want electric, but they want trees. It's a balance. That's the hardest part," says Kastner.

Check the March/April issue of the newsletter for Part 2 with more information on street trees in Kennedy Heights!

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



6546 Montgomery Rd.

Gallery Hours:

Tue & Fri, 10am - 5pm

Sat, 11am - 4pm

www.kennedyarts.org

Jazz @ KHAC

Lindner Annex

Kennedy Heights Arts Center is the place to be for jazz! Join us for enchanting evenings of jazz music featuring world-class performers from Cincinnati, New York and beyond at KHAC's Lindner Annex, 6620 Montgomery Road.

CJA Faculty Concert: Angie Coyle Quartet - Fri, 1/12 at 7 pm

At the Cincinnati Jazz Academy, we employ some of the most talented jazz musicians in the city as instructors--and we're sharing their amazing talent in a series of free Faculty Concerts. Saxophonist, Flutist and Clarinetist Angie Coyle leads up a quartet in this month's show.

Melissa Stylianou - Fri, 1/26 at 7 pm

Canadian-born, New York Jazz vocalist Melissa Stylianou has garnered acclaim as both a gifted songwriter and a bold, imaginative interpreter of wide-ranging material spanning diverse genres, from the Great American Songbook to Johnny Cash to Joanna Newsom. Tickets \$5-25.

Frank Vignola and Tessa Lark - Sun, 2/11 at 7 pm

Legendary guitarist Frank Vignola teams up with versatile, Grammy-nominated violinist Tessa Lark to create an intimate musical experience unlike any other. Tickets \$5-25.

Winter Art Classes for Youth & Adults

From painting to pottery, choose your creative adventure this winter! Whether you want to stretch your own creative muscles or give the gift of artistic exploration to someone else, our classes cater to all skill levels – from kids and teens to adults. Classes for adults include: drawing, watercolor painting, collage, sewing and embroidery, clay hand building, and open studio. Youth will enjoy Young at Art for ages 5-8 and 9-12, and Teen Artists for Change.

Classes start the week of January 22nd. Register at kennedyarts.org/learn. We offer sliding scale fees for those with financial need.

Juneteenth Cincinnati Presents Voices of Freedom

Déjà vu: Creativity Repeats Itself

February 3 - April 13 @ Lindner Gallery

Co-curated by Brandon and Ewaniki Hawkins, this exhibit pairs five youth/young adult artists with five seasoned/elder artists to symbolize how the past shapes the future - reflecting on and giving reverence to how we always look back to remember our history and show love to the ones who came before us, as we gather our strength again and again to sustain and forge a greater future. The veteran artists and youth artists will represent five different forms of art, with each pair "mirroring" their selected art form.

Resilience Through Clay: Community Exhibition w/ Vibrancy Fellow Erika NJ Allen

February 10 - March 16 @ Kennedy Gallery

For 5 months, multi-disciplinary artist Erika NJ Allen conducted a series of ceramic workshops with community members, with each month focusing on a particular theme: empathy, unity, equity, and diversity. Erika is the latest recipient of the Vibrancy Fellowship at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center, a program designed to empower emerging artists to take risks and explore new creative challenges while deeply engaging with the community.

This exhibition features ceramic works from all the workshop participants, as well as a body of work created by Erika NJ Allen during her Fellowship.

WINTER CHECK OUT CHALLENGE

The Winter Check Out Challenge returns and will run from January 16 through February 26. Adults aged 18 and up can complete challenges by visiting libraries, checking out physical or virtual items, participating in programs, and more to win prizes. Available at all library branches in Hamilton County.

JAN - FEB AT THE LIBRARY

- **Family Storytime:** Every Tuesday at 10:30 with Craftivity at 11.
- **Imagination Station:** All month. January – Laundry Day. February – Construction.
- **United Way Affordable Connectivity Program Discount Internet Services:** 1/3. 11AM.
- **Pleasant Ridge Branch Bookclub:** 1/11. 2/8. 2PM. Adults.
- **Teen and Tween Hangout - Pancake Art:** 1/13. 11AM.
- **Imagine Lab:** 1/17. 2/21. 3:30PM. Youth.
- **Nature in Our Neighborhood at Kennedy Heights Park. Co-sponsored by Kennedy Heights Community Council:** 1/20. 2/17. 2:30PM. (this will be a monthly event)
- **LEGO Builders Club:** 1/22, 2/26. 3PM. All ages.
- **Genealogy for Beginners:** 1/23, 2/27. 6:30PM. Adults.
- **Pressed Flower Bookmarks:** 1/27. 11AM. Adults.
- **Fantasmagoria Book Club @ Nine Giant • Fermentorium:** 1/31. 2/28. 7PM. Adults.
- **Stories in the Stars/Telescope Stargazing with UC's**
- **Classics Department:** 2/9. 7PM. All ages.



cincinnati public library



Mon. & Tues., 10-8pm
Wed. thru Sat., 10-6pm

The library will be closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (1/15).

Available services:

- curbside service
- take & make activities
 - browsing
- computer access (limited)
- assistance with faxing/copying/scanning & printing

Erik Brueggemann
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Visit our website at www.chpl.org to access all our eBranch offerings and for the most current information on the services and programs offered through any of the branches.

More events are added regularly, so make sure you check the website or call the branch.



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Steve Grieser



Brandon Nixon



Jan Lane

COUNCIL MEETINGS

In person at Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church, 6312 Kennedy Avenue 45213
 Join by computer at: meet.google.com/amo-fjbm-bgq
 Join by phone: Call +1 574-241-1036 and then follow the prompts. PIN: 453 185 950#

**Find us at kennedyheights.org or check us out
 on the Kennedy Heights Community Council Facebook page.**