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Mount Pleasant Village Newsletter

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www.mountpleasantvillage.org

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Welcome New Members!

Charlene Minor-Howard - Hobart Street NW

Craig Scherer & Laureen Andrews - Rosemount Avenue NW

Francis Norton & Anne Stauffer - 18th Street NW

Romain Bordes & Onur Ozlu - Lamont Street NW

William Minter - Newton Street NW

Kathleen Gibbons - Park Road NW

Aaron Myers - 18th Street NW

*New since publication of July newsletter

Village Launches Neighbors Helping Neighbors Volunteer Services Program

On November 1, the Village launched its new volunteer services program, *Neighbors Helping Neighbors*. Building on the success of the community-wide *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* (NHN) response to the Covid pandemic, Village and NHN volunteers have combined forces to continue providing services to Village members *and* the wider community. Volunteer Kevin Fitzgerald is looking forward to working with the Village, noting, “This collaborative effort is a great opportunity for neighbors to pitch in and assist neighbors. It’s very satisfying work.”

The goal of NHN is to help older residents, persons with disabilities, those living in isolation, and other neighborhood residents continue to live in their homes and in our community safely and comfortably. As Village member and volunteer Pat Case said, “This is what the Mount Pleasant Village is all about. We’re helping each other age in our community. I volunteered to be an active part of that and to be a good neighbor.”

The new program extends the multigenerational initiative begun by the Village and Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC -1D) during the pandemic. A committed and enthusiastic cadre of volunteers has been vetted and trained to provide a range of services,

During the initial program roll-out, NHN is offering services in four areas:

1. **Transportation.** Including: rides to/from hospital or medical appointments; social/cultural events; or personal appointments (shopping).
2. **Running Errands.** Including: grocery shopping; picking up groceries or prescriptions; delivering packages to post office/UPS.
3. **Home Maintenance and Gardening.** Including: changing lightbulbs, replacing batteries in a smoke detector, moving furniture, watering

plants, picking up mail/newspapers, decluttering, grass cutting, raking leaves, snow/trash removal.

4. **Tech Support.** Including: setting up computers, printers, smartphones; trouble-shooting operating problems; setting up email/apps; tech tutoring on specific topics.

The program is already proving to be rewarding to recipients of volunteer support and to the volunteers. Village member Leo Sanchez reported on his experience in helping a client with gardening, “Had I not met and assisted [her], I would not have made a new friend, learned about her background and connection to Mount Pleasant, nor had a chance to see her wonderful collection of botanical prints. It was a very rewarding experience.”

Requests for services can be made by phone or email:

- Call: 202-573-7548 (please leave a message and contact number)
- Email: NHN@mountpleasantvillage.org (please include a contact number)

A Request Coordinator will then contact you within 24 hours about the details of your request. It’s always helpful for service requests to be submitted as far in advance as possible.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors looks forward to working with you!

Hello Neighbor Update



Hello Neighbor pulled out all the stops and sponsored **two** community-wide events this fall.

On September 21, the **ChalkFest** brought children and caregivers to Lamont Plaza for an afternoon of coloring with chalk, listening to live music, and playing with bubbles.





We were inspired by the work of local artist Chelsea Ritter-Soronen, of [@chalkriot](#), who created an original work for us to symbolize the beauty and vitality of Mount Pleasant and the deep connections between older and younger residents. Music from the Lilo Gonzalez Trio charmed the kids (and the adults) and brought a lively Latin vibe to the event. We are grateful to our funders at the [Washington Home Foundation](#) for their vital support of this event.

On October 22, we held the first (annual??) **Dance Party**, with music from DJs Lone Wolf and the Cub (actually, Winston Yu and Adam Krell) and eye-popping fluorescent design elements by David Greenfield-Boyce.



The music ranged from disco to salsa to funk and more, and people of all ages were drawn onto the dance “floor”, where black lights brought out the vivid geometry of David’s retro design.



Extensive publicity is one reason for the success of these events. We have used flyers (throughout the community), reminders to members, our partnerships with schools, parent groups on Facebook, NextDoor and even an Instagram account *#helloneighbormtp* (with more than 600 followers - which means a lot of people are looking at Hello Neighbor posts). The Village is more visible than ever in Mount Pleasant because of efforts like these.

We are so glad to be able to build relationships in the community through these events for all ages. The Hello Neighbor team, a part of the Village Diversity Committee, will continue to look for ways to expand our presence and create goodwill throughout Mount Pleasant. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Judy Byron, judy@judybyron.com.

P.S. New Hello Neighbor autumn-themed banners and yard signs are here - a formal announcement is coming soon!

Giving Back

We all observe Thanksgiving in our own ways, but many of us take the name and focus of the holiday to heart and, at this time of year, express thanks for those parts of our lives that sustain and inspire us. This year, especially, we may be able to point to specific people who have helped us to maintain our equilibrium through the ups and downs, hopes, disappointments, and revived hopes of the past 18 months. As we make appointments for our booster shots and find relief in knowing that the children around us can, at last, be vaccinated, we can also reflect on what has helped us remain connected to our community.

For a growing number of Mount Pleasant residents, the Mount Pleasant Village has become that connective tissue. Whether through meetings on Zoom or socially distanced in-person events, we have been able to maintain contact with one another. Indeed, many Villagers have noted that they have become closer with other Village members and Mount Pleasant neighbors during this time, thanks to activities in their clusters, outdoor Hello Neighbor gatherings, and meetings held by Zoom. Thanks to the weekly videos curated by Rick Reinhard (who has also produced many of them), we know more about many of our fellow Villagers than we might ever have imagined. We have patronized local businesses and sought to maintain the commercial viability of Mount Pleasant Street. And there is hardly a block in Mount Pleasant where the greeting “Hello Neighbor!” is not on display, on yard signs and banners facing the streets and alleys or the masks on the faces of many we meet.

The Village has been very fortunate to receive grants from the District’s Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL) and the Washington Home Foundation. A volunteer-managed organization, Mount Pleasant Village relies on our own members for inspiration, energy, and hard work, keeping expenses low and Village activities fresh and vital. The truth is that we cannot claim that more financial support from its friends and members is needed to support current Village programs and activities.

But our current good fortune puts the Village in a position to plan and build for the future. For example, we have spent the past year redesigning the Village’s volunteer program, incorporating both volunteers and structure from the Neighbors Helping Neighbors partnership with the ANC that started when COVID first descended in March 2020. We are reaching out to parts of the

community we are not yet serving, recognizing that all in Mount Pleasant should be able to age in their chosen surroundings. The Village movement is still in its infancy, and we expect our Village, like others, to continue to grow and improve as we learn more from our members about what they want. And one thing we've learned from recent surveys and conversations with current members is that most expect to rely on the Village as they age in homes they hope to occupy for as long as possible.

So, this year, we hope members will make donations to the Village as a way of demonstrating both gratitude for the structure that keeps us connected and faith that the Village will be strong and responsive when we need it. There's really nothing seasonal about gratitude, but we hope you will find now is a good time to say thanks to the Village and make a donation. Thank you for your support.

To donate to Mount Pleasant Village, please visit www.mountpleasantvillage.org and click on the "Donate Now" link at the top of the home page. Or send a check payable to Mount Pleasant Village, 1735 Lamont Street, NW, Washington, DC 20010.

Warm regards,

Bill Emmet
President, Mount Pleasant Village

Winter 2021 – Fall 2022

Meet the Street

MPV to fund meals at these restaurants*2021:****November:** Don Juan's – lunch***December:** El West – holiday shopping suggestions by owner Veronica, followed by lunch either at Corado's or Taqueria Nacional**2022:****February:** Purple Patch – lunch***March:** Frugalista – spring shopping & meet the owner/manager, followed by carryout from Ericilia's to eat at Michelle Hannah's nearby apartment courtyard**April:** Haydee's – dinner***May:** Village Picnic in Rock Creek Park, across from Pierce Mill**June:** Rose Jeweler – meet the owner/manager, carry out from El Pollo Sabroso or one's carryout of choice to eat at Lamont Plaza**September:** Marx Cafe – dinner***October:** Beau Thai – lunch or dinner*, tbd

Toasting Mount Pleasant's History and the Village's Future



“Aging in Place” can mean different things in different situations. Village members have come to associate the term with the experience of growing older in the home and community they choose. Remaining engaged while we age in our Mount Pleasant community is the goal of Village members and the core of the Village’s mission.

Longtime Mount Pleasant resident John Loughner came across a slightly different meaning when a friend told him he had discovered an empty whiskey bottle that had been sitting under the roof of a row house under renovation on 19th Street, apparently left behind by the original builders in 1911. While the bottle, labeled Mt. Pleasant Club Whiskey, had definitely aged in that setting, its presence provided a link to an earlier time in our neighborhood’s history. John saw an opportunity to strengthen that connection by creating a new product bearing the same name.

The full story of Mt. Pleasant Club Whiskey is told on the website of the company John created to bottle and market the revived product, www.reboot-bev.com. From Mount Pleasant Village’s perspective, however, the especially appreciated angle is this: “We pledge to give 25% of profits of every bottle of Mt. Pleasant Club Whiskey to the local community so that we have many more stories to come,” the website reads. “We’ll be donating these funds to the Mt. Pleasant Village.”

John Loughner first approached the Village with the idea of providing support in this way early in the summer. As the proposed arrangement was new to the Village, the Board wanted to be careful about how to proceed. A particular principle was that the Village not be perceived as endorsing this or any commercial product, especially as more than a few Village members and their families have struggled with alcohol use over time.

At the same time, however, the offer of support from a neighbor seeking a way to use his company’s profits to improve life in the community was quite compelling. The Board was therefore very pleased that John understood our concerns, and, together, we found a way to show Mt. Pleasant Club’s support for Mount Pleasant Village that emphasizes our shared community spirit.

The Village is very happy to acknowledge Mt. Pleasant Club’s support for our work, and we hope we can look forward to a relationship that itself ages in this treasured community.

News from the Village Board of Directors

The Village board met on September 18 via Zoom with a full agenda - we have been expanding, with more funding from the DC Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL) on the horizon, and our community activities, like Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Hello Neighbor, blossoming. (You can read about those in this newsletter.)

Our treasurer, Ross Hamory, has been tracking the grants we've received to support projects like Hello Neighbor. Planning is now underway for the coming year; an expected \$50,000 grant from DACL provides an opportunity to build a budget that will strengthen the Village's "infrastructure" for some time to come. The Village operating committees (Partnerships, Program, etc.) are considering how best to use these funds to build long-term capacity and expand our activities, all while staying true to the Village's mission and existing strategic plan. We value your input - talk to your cluster coordinator if you'd like to connect with the Board or serve on a committee.

The Village Survey revealed that members valued their clusters and the COVID support that the Village has provided. There was also clear interest in looking outward and growing our role in the community. For more information on the survey, please see the article about it in this newsletter.

The Volunteer Management Committee reported in depth on their progress - look to the article in this newsletter for more information.

The Governance Committee is looking for a volunteer Archivist to help organize and maintain Village documents. If you are that person, you'll learn a lot more about how we work and meet some wonderful people. Contact Michelle Hannahs at michellehannahs267@gmail.com.

Villagers Respond to Survey

If there's a typical question Villagers ask one another when they first meet, it is: How long have you lived here? With 66 of the Village's roughly 200 members having answered the member survey conducted this past July and August, we now have a way to help members see how they compare with

their Village neighbors in residential longevity as well as many other categories. Just so you know, the Villager who has occupied his/her home the longest arrived in 1956; the most recent came just this year. Most, however, have been living in their homes since the late 1980s.

“...the Villager who has occupied his/her home the longest arrived in 1956; the most recent came just this year.”

The purpose of the Village survey was to shed light on who Village members are and what they want. Thankfully, we had a statistically valid response and now have results that can help us to plan for the Village's future. We've learned that the Village has a large cohort of members who are quite self-sufficient now (85% drive themselves for errands, etc.) but recognize their needs may rise in the future.

“The oldest respondent was born in 1930, and the youngest in 1982.”

For example, the survey tells us that most Villagers (53%) want to continue to live in their current residence for the rest of their lives. Twenty percent say they are very confident they can get the help they need to live in their residence for as long as they'd like, while another 70% say they are somewhat confident. Perhaps this reflects the high numbers of Village members (over 82%) who reported no current need for mobility or accessibility supports. In case you're wondering, most Village members would qualify as boomers, having been born in 1948 or 1949. The oldest respondent was born in 1930, and the youngest in 1982.

One issue that COVID has brought into public consciousness is the need for social connectedness. The survey allowed our Village to understand more about how this issue plays out among our members. The Village survey showed that 70-80% of Villagers report they hardly ever feel they lack companionship, feel left out, or feel isolated from others. We can hope that connections made possible by the Village contribute to its members' sense of engagement, but we cannot overlook indications that 20-30% of Village members sometimes or often feel alone, isolated, or disconnected.

During the height of COVID, specifically, over a third of respondents relied on the Village more than usual for social connection, a third said they relied on the Village the same as usual, and a third of respondents found the Village

helped them feel less isolated and lonely. A third also said the Village was a source of reassurance. Thirty percent praised the Village for giving them an opportunity during the pandemic to serve others through volunteering.

“During the height of COVID, specifically, over a third of respondents relied on the Village more than usual for social connection...”

Isolation and a lack of social connectedness, thankfully, do not plague most Village members - at least at the time of the snapshot provided by the survey. But a significant number of Village members clearly see the Village as one tool they can use to stave off loneliness if it becomes an issue, and many credit the Village with keeping them connected through the pandemic. Armed with this knowledge, we can continue to shape Village programs and activities to meet Villagers' needs for social connection.

Members were asked to look beyond COVID and predict what services or programs would be most valuable to them when the crisis has passed. A whopping 62% said they were looking forward to social events (parties, shared meals, theater excursions, etc.). Twenty-nine percent said they were looking forward to opportunities to volunteer.

Just as important as the hard numbers that came from the survey are the many, many comments respondents made in response to open-ended questions. For instance, Village members were asked what activity or support was most valuable to them, and why. Several said something like, “I didn’t need any services, but it was good to know they were there.” Others pointed to specific activities such as Senior Yoga, Meditation Group, Walking Group, Book Club, and Cluster meetings.

Another said, “I value the opportunity to meet and volunteer with people across our Mt. Pleasant community.”

In the end, no comments were more revealing than the answers from respondents to the question, *what do you value most about your Village membership?* Words like *connection* and *connectedness*, *neighbors* and *neighborhood*, *friends* and *friendships* all rose to the top. But the word that was repeated in almost half of the responses was *community*. Several respondents simply noted that the Village fostered a “sense of community.” One Village member valued “Being part of an organization that values the

community that we live in.” Another said, “I value meeting people in my age group who are committed to aging in the community together. I value meeting people of different ages and backgrounds in my community through my Village’s outreach and partnering.” Still another said, “I value the opportunity to meet and volunteer with people across our Mt. Pleasant community.”

Ultimately, the survey revealed that the Village is composed of people with different ideas, different interests, and different backgrounds. And to many, that is its beauty.

For more on the survey results, please contact Bill Emmet at president@mountpleasantvillage.org.

Village Annual Meeting on December 4

The Mount Pleasant Village 2021 Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, December 4, at 2:00 p.m. It will be a hybrid meeting, taking place physically at the Mount Pleasant Library Community Room and available live on Zoom. The Zoom link will be shared closer to the meeting date. Those who attend in person will be required to be masked, and, sadly, no food will be served.

As is the case every year, the meeting will give Village members an overview of Village activities that took place over the past year as well as a vision of what’s coming up in the new year. The Village’s finances will be reviewed, and this year’s Board election will be completed, with the results announced during the meeting

It has become a Mount Pleasant Village tradition to build each annual meeting around a theme; this year’s is “Volunteerism”, and a panel will explore the role of volunteering in our Village. Please keep an eye out for more information as plans for the Annual Meeting take shape over coming weeks, but mark your calendars now! As always, the meeting will be a great opportunity to connect with your fellow Village members, whether in person or virtually.

Join Mount Pleasant Village!

Membership Fee: \$50* annually per individual. For more information, contact Michael Burke at membership@mountpleasantvillage.org.

Donate: Make a tax-deductible donation by sending a check to Mount Pleasant Village at 1735 Lamont Street NW, Washington, DC 20010 or clicking the “Donate Now” button on our home page (mountpleasantvillage.org).

*Dues can be supported through a “scholarship” fund if the cost is a hardship.

The newsletter is a cooperative effort! If you have questions, comments, or news to share, contact: info@mountpleasantvillage.org



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