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Mount Pleasant Village Newsletter

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

The Village/Neighbors Helping Neighbors initiative provides volunteers to help with shopping, pharmacy pick-ups, and other tasks, as well as masks and food aid. To request assistance, call **202-573-7548** (please leave a voice message) or email request@anc-volunteering.org.

It's Survey Season!

by Village President Bill Emmet

Does it seem as if you can't make an online purchase or even speak to a

customer service agent on the telephone without a request popping up for “just a few minutes of your time” to take a survey about the experience? Of course, you are reassured, your opinions matter and will help your bank, insurance agent, or shoe store to serve you better! Thankfully, many such opportunities come with a “not now” option, allowing you to avoid the intrusion and get on with your day.

The truth is that, in this, Mount Pleasant Village is no different from Zappos, GEICO, or Capital One: we need to know your thoughts on how we’re doing and what we can do to make Village membership more valuable to you.

Many Village members have already completed a survey recently distributed by the Program Committee intended to help its members tailor upcoming programs to the needs and wishes expressed by the survey respondents. The results should be reflected in the Village’s programs starting later this summer. To those who took the time to share your thoughts with the Program Committee, thank you!

Now, Mount Pleasant Village is joining the other DC Villages to ask members a broader set of questions intended to help gauge our effectiveness during the pandemic and to give us an idea of what members are now hoping for from the Village as COVID restrictions ease. We hope to learn our members’ opinions and identify trends emerging across the Village movement. We last conducted such a survey about three years ago, before the pandemic, so your answers to this survey will be very helpful in bringing our understanding of members’ wishes up to date.

The survey is being conducted by an external evaluation partner, Sharp Insight, LLC, and your data will be protected by their security policies and procedures. To protect your privacy, our Village will receive a summary report of the data, but all individual responses will be reported in aggregate - meaning no single individual will be identified in any reporting.

You may complete the survey at this link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MtP_2021_Villages_Survey

The survey will close at the end of the day on **Friday, August 20**. If you have any questions, or if you would prefer to respond to these questions through an interview with a volunteer, please contact Village President Bill Emmet at

wemmet@gmail.com. And please do give us “a few minutes of your time.” Unlike the big box stores or large online retailers, Mount Pleasant Village really is interested in your opinion!

Meet the Street



On June 14, the Partnership Committee sponsored a visit to two stores on Mount Pleasant Street, with food in mind. At **Bold Fork Books** (<https://www.boldforkbooks.com/>), 20 members met with owners Clementine Thomas and her husband Sam Vasfi and learned of their history in opening their food-focused bookstore at 3064 Mt. Pleasant St., while enjoying the ambience of their business.

This was followed by a visit to **Mount Desert Ice Cream** at 3110 Mount Pleasant St., where 21 members were treated to delicious ice cream using Partnership funds that support local businesses. We met Brian Lowit, a co-owner of Mount Desert (along with business partner Melissa Quinley,) who shared the history of the building and the story behind the making of the ice cream. Foodies note: Mount Desert started on the island of the same name, in Maine, and has only three other locations: Portland, ME; Washington, DC; and Matsumoto, Japan. Check out <http://www.mdiic.com>.



Lunch, Learn, and Act with Empower DC

On Thursday, June 24th, the Village Diversity Committee held a Zoom event featuring Parisa Norouzi, the founder and Executive Director of Empower DC (<https://www.empowerdc.org/>). These lunchtime events are designed to facilitate conversations about racial equity and social justice issues that lead

to meaningful action. Empower DC is a nonprofit organization that trains low-income communities, especially communities of color, to advocate for issues that affect them and to create social change.

Because the Village has committed to engage in efforts to combat systemic racism, Empower DC was the perfect organization to speak at the Zoom forum. Attendees were able to learn about issues that disproportionately affect black communities and communities of color in DC and about efforts to fight against these issues.

After a brief introduction by Diversity Co-Chair Rick Reinhard, Ms. Norouzi presented the work of Empower DC. She first described some of recent victories of the organization, including obtaining a \$20 million grant to create a community center and park at the site of the historic Crummell Elementary School in Ivy City, NE. They were also part of a 4-year effort by a group of non-profits to amend DC's Comprehensive Plan, a document that guides city development, and succeeded in including policies that prioritized racial equity and deeply affordable housing.

She then described efforts that the organization makes in Ward-level organizing around equitable development. "Our focus is on building, specifically, the power of our directly impacted base because that, to us, is the real way to create social change," said Norouzi. "We don't want to just address issues...we want to address power."

While Empower DC works on advocating for public and "deeply affordable" housing, Norouzi explained that the city's priorities are not exactly in the same place. ("Deeply affordable" housing means housing reserved for the lowest-income residents of the community.) The DC government is planning for future growth to one million residents by 2050 and has focused development on gaining higher-income residents. This leaves deeply affordable housing scarce, while the existing units are neglected, especially in public housing where maintenance falls to the city. The edits to the Comprehensive Plan that Empower DC helped make, however, are supposed to ensure that future development and government spending on housing is geared toward a goal of racial equity. To ensure that this is enforced, they will continue to track the city's decisions and policies.

In answering a question about community organizing, Norouzi said the obvious - it takes time. She emphasized the importance of consistency and trust: "I

think sometimes people feel like the needs are so great and there's so many things we care about, that we're going to try to be great at all of those things, and then there's a shallowness to our involvement. That doesn't foster trust." Instead, she suggested focusing on one issue or talent and building from there.

Another question posed by a Village member was "How do we keep Mount Pleasant the way it is, and ensure that lower income residents are not forced out of the neighborhood?" Norouzi emphasized research into the factors pushing them out, and an effort to help residents fully understand their situation and their rights. Like Empower DC's work, this would allow those impacted by the push factors in question (be it predatory landlords, expiration of low-income tax credits, or anything else) to advocate for themselves and fight against displacement. Displacement and housing issues disproportionately affect people of color, so, to quote Rick Reinhard, "to get the diverse, multi-racial, multi-economic-level city that we want, we have our work cut out for ourselves."

Meet Our Helpers - Lauren Wright & Clara Morton

Clara Shapiro Morton

Hello Village Members!



My name is Clara Shapiro Morton and I am working with the Village and Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) as an intern this summer. I am a rising senior at School Without Walls High School in downtown DC, and my favorite things to do are play frisbee with my team and my friends and cook fancy meals with very little planning or help from recipes. If you are an NHN volunteer, you may already know me from the Sunday emails or from the monthly all-volunteer meetings. I'll be working on administrative and organizational tasks within the Village, and I'll also be helping with the Newsletter. I started working in late June and have already met so many of new people (virtually), and I hope to meet many more!

Lauren Wright



The Woman Behind the Instagram

By Clara Shapiro Morton

Everyone involved in the Village has undoubtedly heard of the Hello Neighbor Campaign, launched in April of 2021 to combat social isolation in the neighborhood. Frequently represented at the Farmers Market and on signs in many of our neighbors' front yards, Hello Neighbor has done an amazing job bringing the community together through in-person events and social media. Their Instagram, @helloneighborntp, now boasts almost 500 followers and focuses on highlighting community events and doing a "meet your neighbors" series about Mount Pleasant Residents.

The person behind this account is Lauren Wright, a 10-year DC resident and brand manager for an organization called Equal Justice Works. Since February of this year, she has been working part time for Village marketing: starting with tech support and formatting the announcements and newsletters, and then moving on to the Hello Neighbor campaign once it began.

Her absolute favorite part of the job is going out and meeting new people in the neighborhood. “Truly the purpose of Hello Neighbor”, she said, “is just to get people talking and feeling like a community, which of course, the pandemic made very difficult.” She loves the intergenerational aspect of the Village and of the neighborhood as a whole and wants the account to help promote that, quoting the famous saying, “If you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life.”

This wasn’t always what she had in mind, though. As a child, Lauren dreamed of being a dolphin trainer. Fortunately for the Village, this dream didn’t quite pan out. She now emphasizes her stance against dolphins living in captivity, remarking that “when I was a kid, I didn’t know the horrors.”

Now a long-time Mount Pleasant resident, Lauren likes to bike, garden, and go on walks with her eight-year-old dog, Sophie. She spent a lot of the pandemic volunteering at the farmers market and continues to make it part of her Saturday routine. “Even now that they don’t really need volunteers, I just go hang out with Robert, and I pet the dogs, make friends, and last week I got to sell a falafel!” she said.

While she is not featured in the Instagram account, you now know who she is! So, in the spirit of Hello Neighbor, be sure to say hello if you see her around!

Welcome New Members!

John Burnim - Park Road NW

Petra Socolovsky - Kenyon Street NW

Carol Munday - Hobart Street NW

Jerome Lamy & Wilfried Zeisler - Lamont Street NW

The Village Invites You to the Annual Picnic

The annual Mt. Pleasant Village picnic will take place on Sunday, September 12th from 3 to 7 pm at the fields across from Pierce Mill. Centered around family, kids, and the intergenerational aspect of the Village that we all love, this year's event will include activities like face painting, relay races, crafts, and more! The Village will also be inviting Neighbors Helping Neighbors volunteers to this members' event, making it even more diverse and intergenerational. There will be a barbecue as well as a potluck (details in the poster below). We hope to see you all there!



Hello Neighbor, Hello Fall



Summer weather in DC is not always supportive of outdoor events, and Hello Neighbor had to postpone its June picnic in Lamont Plaza because of a heat advisory. But some smaller activities continue, and the campaign will be back in September with a back-to-school celebration. We will support local schools with school supplies and other necessities. The Hello Neighbor banners and yard signs will also be refreshed with new designs that reflect the progress against the pandemic. If you are interested in knowing more, please contact Judy Byron, judyb1910@gmail.com.

Board Meeting Highlights

The Village board meets four times each year. Meetings are open, and minutes are available to members after approval by a board vote. At the June meeting, business included:

Presentation of **financial status**, including the award of an additional \$15,000 from the District Department of Aging and Community Living. The Village has a healthy bank balance and is managing the DACL grants and one from another funder, the Washington Home Foundation.

Updates from the **Village committees**. Many activities were curtailed this year because of the pandemic, but most committees found ways to move their meetings and events online. As vaccination rates improve, more face-to-face activities are happening. We are considering formation of a Development Committee to manage fund-raising.

A **reorganized Volunteer Committee** presented plans for new ways to recruit and manage volunteers, and to track requests for services. These plans will be launched in the fall.

The Village is exploring whether to expand its **advocacy** around issues relevant to older people. Some other villages already have active advocacy campaigns, including Capitol Hill Village. They have invited us to work with them.

We are undertaking a **legal review** of corporate documents, to be sure we are complying with requirements for tax-exempt organizations.

Move Over, Netflix - Village Videos

If you haven't dipped into any of the videos of Village members and activities, you are missing a great window into our community. The alley hopscotch contest, the Congressional Cemetery, adorable grandkids and grandpuppies, a Chinese New Year celebration, controlling Asian tiger mosquitoes - plus interviews with many Village members. Just click [here](#).

Commemoration of George Floyd

About 50 residents, including many members of the Village, gathered in Lamont Plaza on the evening of Tuesday, May 25th to reflect on that horrific day one year ago and all that has occurred since then. Mount Pleasant Village made vows to listen to those who have experienced racism, educate Village members, and engage in efforts to combat systemic racism in Mount Pleasant and beyond. In this multimedia program, Bill Emmet read the "Mount Pleasant Village Opposes Racism" [statement](#), which reaffirmed those vows and emphasized their commitment to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Luci Murphy sang about equality, bringing the attendees into the song with a call and response, and the keynote speaker, Aaron Myers, spoke about privilege. Both were filmed and can be seen in the video [here](#), along with a portrait of George Floyd by Luis del Valle.

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).

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



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