

A.H.N.A.

# ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

JULY - AUGUST 2013

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS &amp; VIEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION • WWW.ARLINGTONHEIGHTSNA.COM

## MAKING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD A COMMUNITY

by Christina Patoski

Whenever someone new moves to the 4900 block of Calmont Ave., they can expect a visit from Kit Law. It's a longstanding tradition for her to welcome them with a carefully crafted roster of residents living on the block that includes names, addresses, phone numbers and emergency phone numbers, as well as other important information, such as the Neighborhood Patrol Officer and the neighborhood fire station. "I give them the list and if they have time to listen, I give them a rundown of who the neighbors are," says Kit who has lived on the block for 62 years.



**Neighbors on Lower Ashland Ave. gathered for one of their many neighborhood parties, this time a front yard fish fry at Tracy and Dave Marshall's over Memorial Day weekend.** (Photograph by Pamela Anderson)

"I know everybody on the block, some better than others," she says. "Deep roots" is how she describes it. Kit's husband Harold started the neighborhood roster, but ever since he passed away 19 years ago, it's been up to Kit to keep it current. "Miss Johnson used to help out, but since she's been gone, it's usually up to me to organize everything," she explains. In the past, there were block parties, but not recently. "It's getting hard for me to go up and down the steps of some of the houses," admits Kit who is 88 years young.

Kit who has been a member of Citizens on Patrol for nine years believes that her efforts to keep the roster going is a good investment. "We'd be a better neighborhood if we knew our neighbors better."

One block north of Kit's home is another active block of neighbors, led by Brenda Helmer who moved there in 1998. "When we first moved here a lot of the people had been living here for a long time," says Brenda who started organizing her neighbors almost immediately. "We got to know everybody."

Like Kit, Brenda made a roster of the 20 households on her block and included email addresses and cell phone numbers and distributed the list to everyone

As the elderly neighbors started dying "new people moved in, so my husband Z. and I would always go over and meet the new neighbors," Brenda says. "I welcome them to the 'hood and encourage them not to open their doors to strangers, so I say 'get to know your neighbors so they won't be strangers.' " When her block went through the re-zoning petition process to change from duplex zoning to single-family zoning,

"I got to know the neighbors really well then."

Brenda is faithful about sending out emails to her neighbors, especially weekly crime reports from Neighborhood Patrol Officer Tom McNutt. "I also send out reminders, like 'if you leave something in your car' or 'keep you porch lights on' and things like that." As a result "everybody is more proactive about crime now."

"Know your neighbors--it's the most important thing," says Brenda. "I tell my neighbors 'I love my nosey neighbors'. I want my neighbors to know my schedule or when I'm out of town. So, if they see a stranger moving furniture out of my house, I want them to call the cops." Two of Brenda's neighbors have keys to her house.

Over the years, the Helmers have hosted four parties in their front yard, including one in early May that drew a crowd of almost thirty people. "Z. cooks and we gather our neighbors and get to know them," she explains. "Everybody brings a dish, we play yard games, get some Curly's Custard and that yummy fudge cake from Bluebonnet Bakery." It's BYOB and begins in the late afternoon to early evening on a Friday or Saturday in the spring or fall.

Anne and Mark Lydahl moved to the 1700 block of Thomas Place in 1992 where they were confronted with a problem drug house on the block. "We had a neighborhood block meeting about it, because we didn't think the police were taking it seriously enough," Anne remembers. "I was a Citizen on Patrol and the Neighborhood Patrol Officer suggested doing a neighbor list."

(Continued on Page 10)



## AHNA EXECUTIVE BOARD

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### Zoning/Board of Adjustment

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817-732-0586

### Neighborhood Animal Concerns

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817-798-0349

### Citizens on Patrol

Jan Bourne  
jan\_bourne@rocketmail.com  
817-737-6019

### Yard of the Month

Carol Berry  
carol\_berry@sbcglobal.net

### New Neighbor Welcome Bags

Jim Gentry  
jg76107@gmail.com  
512-450-4434

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Fort Worth, Texas 76147

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Christina Patoski

This past month, I drove down parts of Route 66 in New Mexico and Arizona. I've driven the road many times, and sadly, each time there is less and less to see. Tucumcari was especially sad, since many of the old motels with the iconic neon signs are now shuttered up. Most of the action is on I-10 where there is a new Best Western, Holiday Inn, Hampton Inn, and La Quinta. I understand most travelers today aren't looking for adventure and need more than fanciful neon to convince them to book a room. They want a predictable, clean place to spend the night; the motels on Route 66 have too many unknowns and no corporate flagship to answer to as far as standards.

It made me think of how fortunate we are in Arlington Heights to still have as much of historic Camp Bowie Blvd. as we do, like the Carleton Ave. fire station that just celebrated its 90th birthday. It's a wonderful building that's barely big enough to function as a fire station, but there's extremely strong sentiment among the nearby neighbors and the firefighters themselves to keep it as the handsome landmark building that it is.

We are also lucky that the businesses on the boulevard are thriving. With very few national chains, Camp Bowie has managed to retain the small-scale neighborhood charm that was there in the 1920s when there was a trolley running down the length of it. How we've managed to hold on to this treasure is nothing short of a miracle. There have been plenty of attempts in the past to re-vitalize and re-develop parts of it, but so far, the powers that be have been wise enough to realize that people are attracted to the boulevard because of its strong connection to the past and because of the unique boutiques, restaurants and businesses there. Many of us can't get enough of it; some of us even pine for it.

My family moved to Ridglea in the 1950s. I've watched that part of Camp Bowie be developed, and re-developed, and re-developed, some parcels many times over. Thankfully, our section of Camp Bowie is stable and, hopefully, not in danger of being re-invented as another predictable cookie-cutter, flavor-of-the-month shopping area.

I'm reminded when I was in the Woodlands, outside Houston, and discovered a new commercial area of one-story, intimate retail stores with head in parking. It felt familiar and inviting. Ironically, I later discovered that the developer had used Camp Bowie Blvd. as a design template.

Long live Camp Bowie Blvd. and all the distinctive businesses along it. Let them know you care about them by supporting them with your shopping dollars whenever you can.

### Neighborhood Patrol Officer

Tom McNutt  
817-992-0187  
thomas.mcnutt@fortworthtexas.gov

### Fort Worth City Councilman

Dennis Shingleton  
817-392-8807  
district7@fortworthtexas.gov

### Fort Worth Police

non-emergency  
number  
817-335-4222

### Code Compliance Officer

Rosalind Calton  
817-944-1796  
rosalind.calton@fortworthtexas.gov

## ADVERTISING RATES

Current circulation is 400 households bi-monthly

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# MIDSUMMER SOCIAL SET FOR JULY 15

We're doing something different for the AHNA membership meeting on Monday July 15. Instead of meeting at Arlington Heights United Methodist Church as we usually do, we're moving over to Lucile's Stateside Bistro at 4700 Camp Bowie Blvd. for a special happy hour social. It starts at 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. and includes free hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Free door prizes, too.

Lucile's is reserving the whole upper section for our party which is open to everyone, not just AHNA members. No guest speakers, no agenda, just a great opportunity to meet your neighbors in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere.

## FLOOD CONTROL UPDATE ON AUGUST 19

Sections of Arlington Heights have historically experienced storm drainage issues during heavy rain events. Ever since the City of Fort Worth's Stormwater Management division identified Central Arlington Heights as a top priority on its list of stormwater projects, property owners here have been jumping for joy to know that the city has finally committed to dealing with it.

Following a series of public meetings with affected area residents, a feasibility study was conducted which considered a variety of stormwater detention and conveyance options.

At the AHNA meeting on Monday August 19 at 6:30 p.m. Greg Simmons, Assistant Director of Transportation and Public Works at the City of Fort Worth, will bring us up to date on the flood mitigation projects underway in Arlington Heights, including the purchase of commercial tracts on Bryce Ave., across from Walgreen's, and the upcoming excavation and storm drain retrofitting of Ashland Ave. and Western Ave.



### AHNA Meeting Schedule

Monday July 15, 2013 (at Lucile's)

Monday August 19, 2013

Monday September 16, 2013

6:30pm-7:30pm Every 3rd Monday

Arlington Heights United Methodist Church  
4200 Camp Bowie Blvd. (enter on Hillcrest)

*The boundaries of  
Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association  
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Camp Bowie Boulevard on the north  
Montgomery Street on the east  
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Please mail annual dues (\$15 for household, \$25 for business) to:  
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### AHNA FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance as of 1/1/2013.....\$8,645.00

#### UNRESTRICTED DONATIONS

Advertising ..... \$2,425.00  
Business Memberships ..... 125.00  
Individual Memberships ..... 1,260.00  
Interest Income ..... 7.14  
Fire Station 18 90th Birthday Celebration 1,780.00  
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED DONATIONS .... \$5,597.14

#### RESTRICTED DONATIONS

Hillcrest Fire Fund ..... 270.00  
Feral Cats.....5.00  
National Night Out ..... 0  
TOTAL RESTRICTED DONATIONS ..... \$275.00

TOTAL DONATIONS ..... \$5,872.14

#### UNRESTRICTED EXPENDITURES

Newsletter..... \$1,201.47  
League of Neighborhoods ..... 0  
Office ..... 187.78  
Postage ..... 198.51  
Yard of the Month ..... 200.00  
Zoning ..... 0  
Meeting Expense.....804.92  
Website ..... 278.65  
Fire Station 18 90th Birthday Celebration 2,041.21  
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED EXPENDITURES .. \$4,912.54

#### RESTRICTED EXPENDITURES

Hillcrest Fire Fund ..... \$270.00  
Feral Cats.....60.00  
National Night Out ..... 0  
TOTAL RESTRICTED EXPENDITURES ..... \$270.00

#### RESTRICTED CASH BALANCE

Hillcrest Fire Fund ..... \$0  
Feral Cats.....283.83  
National Night Out ..... 0  
Western Avenue Project ..... 4,928.92  
TOTAL RESTRICTED CASH BALANCE..... \$5,212.75

UNRESTRICTED CASH BALANCE AS OF 6/30/2013 ..... \$4,627.07

TOTAL CASH BALANCE AS OF 6/30/2013 ..... \$9,839.82



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# FIRE STATION BIRTHDAY PARTY HUGE SUCCESS

The turnout for Fire Station 18's 90th birthday party on Sunday June 9 was nothing short of spectacular. More than 500 neighbors stopped by to congratulate the firemen as well as a number of the station's retirees. Party highlights included touring the historic fire station and meeting the firemen. Central Market's food truck served delicious hamburgers and drinks free of charge, with fantastic live music provided by Arlington Heights' own talented Kem Anderson, Joel McElhaney, and Justin Holt. Curly's Custard provided free tasty custard and Thomas Place Community Center loaned its bounce house for the kids. Fort Worth Girls Choir served lemonade, with adults enjoying free beer generously donated by Ben E. Keith. A commemorative cake and giant cookie was courtesy of Bluebonnet Bakery and Cookies by Design.

The Fort Worth Fire Department was out in full force with Fire Chief Rudy Jackson and a number of battalion chiefs, a bomb squad vehicle, the

SCUBA diving boat, and a vehicle from the Technical Rescue Operations. The Fire Safety House and accompanying clowns was a popular stop with the kids. AHNA member Nancy Berger brought her looms to give people a chance to try their hand at weaving.

Two beautiful plaques, designed and fabricated by AHNA Executive Board member Dave Marshall, were presented by AHNA to Station 18 for all their years of heroism and service.

The event was sponsored by AHNA, under the expert coordination of AHNA member Cindy Green and Station 18's Lt. Stephen Boynton, along with a long list of volunteers. Crestline Neighborhood Association and Dr. David Teitelbaum provided financial support.

The photos below are courtesy of Glen E. Ellman.



Fire Station 18's engine, named the U.S.S. Fort Worth, traveled to Galveston last September for the formal commissioning ceremonies of its namesake, the Navy's newest state-of-the-art combat ship, the U.S.S. Fort Worth.



Kids and adults were entertained by paramedics and Fort Worth Fire Department volunteers who teach fire safety from a mobile Fire Safety House.



AHNA President Christina Patoski holds up one of two commemorative plaques, designed and fabricated by AHNA Executive Board member Dave Marshall (right) and presented to Lt. Stephen Boynton (center).



Special t-shirts were designed for Station 18's birthday event and sold by AHNA at the party.

# OUTSOURCING WATER DEPARTMENT SERVICES

by Melissa Hunter - AHNA Representative to League of Neighborhoods

In an effort to maximize efficiencies in city services, the Fort Worth City Council named on March 5, 2013 a nine-member task force to investigate the feasibility of privatizing parts of the water and wastewater utility services. The council authorized a \$328,622 contract with EMA, Inc. to evaluate and solicit interest from private providers that "may result in lower costs for utility customers and that may add value for City ratepayers and municipal government." Assistant City Manager Fernando Costa told the Council that the city's consistently award-winning water department is already operating at a "high level of efficiency" and emphasized that the Water Utility Task Force's work is not about selling the water utility to a private company. Private partnerships could save money through long-term leases of infrastructure, service provision and upfront payment or debt reduction. Task force members include Chair Robert Pence who is the CEO of Freese and Nichols, Lairy Johnson of Miller Brewing Company (a big water user), Tarrant Regional Water District Board member Marty Leonard, engineer Raul Pena, former city development director Bob Riley, former assistant city manager Vernell Stums, Cantey Hanger environmental attorney Sarah Walls, former assistant city manager Libby Watson and former City Councilman Jeff Wentworth.

On June 6, 2013, I attended a presentation given by Mr. Costa to the Fort Worth League of Neighborhoods where he told us the proposal under consideration is a long-term lease. Allentown, Pennsylvania and Detroit were two cities mentioned that have privatized their water services.

The potential impact of a private company overseeing, governing and leasing the rights to Fort Worth water is a serious proposal. It is not a common practice among cities as large as Fort Worth. Proponents may argue the city will have the final authority at every stage, but a contract for a decades-long lease is set in its terms with potential legal penalties for either side's breach. Rate hikes are always a concern for private citizens. Privatization of city services is drawing a lot of scrutiny nationwide.

Taxpayers should ask why privatization of a successful city department is being considered. The Water Utility Task Force home page is at <http://fortworthtexas.gov/water/info/default.aspx?id=109382> and includes a link to Mr. Costa's presentation to the League of Neighborhoods. Go to [arlingtonheightsna.com](http://arlingtonheightsna.com) for links to more media stories about this critically important topic.

The Water Utility Task Force meets in Pre-Council chambers at City Hall on Wednesdays, August 21 at 2:30 p.m., September 11, at 3 p.m. and October 16 at 3 p.m. The meetings are open to the public, but not for input. The meeting for public input is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. Pre-Council and Council chambers are on the second floor of City Hall, 1000 Throckmorton Street, Fort Worth, Texas, 76102. The task force will submit its recommendations in October on whether Fort Worth should proceed or terminate the study.



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# CITIZENS FIRE ACADEMY CLASS OF 2013

by Brenda Helmer - Graduate of Class #19

I decided to enroll in the Fort Worth's Citizens Fire Academy this spring, along with my neighbor Tom Ames. It was a fun and fascinating eight-week course where we learned about all facets of the Fort Worth Fire Department, including the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (R.A.C.E.S.), the operation and use of fire extinguishers, smoke alarm safety, and CPR using the new hands-only technique.

We were introduced to the Fort Worth Fire Department's Swift Water Rescue, the Arson/Bomb Squad, and Technical Rescue. We participated

in the Fire Safety House and donned the fire department gear from Fire Station #6, including the oxygen tanks. We even got to feed a fire--the water pressure coming off the truck was amazing.

We took a field trip to Communications Central, the downtown office of Emergency Management, and to the Fort Worth Police Department's Fire Call Center on Bolt St. for the real call size-up. Another field trip took us to Fire Station #2 where we were briefed on their fire trucks and equipment where they even have a brass pole! The grand finale found us scaling a five-story building at the Fort Worth Fire Training Facility where we repelled



Brenda Helmer's daring descent down a five-story building was the grande finale of the eight-week course she took through the Fort Worth Fire Department. (Photograph courtesy of Brenda Helmer)



Fort Worth Fire Battalion Chief Richard Harrison congratulates AHNA members Tom Ames and Brenda Helmer at their graduation from the Citizens Fire Academy. (Photograph courtesy of Brenda Helmer)

down with the help of firefighters from Fire Station #1.

During the eight-week course, Tom and I had almost more fun than the law allows and we both learned a lot. Even though we are not commissioned firefighters, we have the unique honor of sharing a back stage familiarity with the operations of the Fort Worth Fire Department, including Fire Safety Education, Prevention and Code Enforcement, and Fire Investigation.

The Citizens Fire Academy was created in 1995 to create greater understanding and cooperation between the Fire Department and the citizens of Fort Worth. I heartily encourage everyone to consider enrolling in this awesome adventure and privilege. To find out more about the free classes, please contact J.R. Lopez at 817-392-6434 or Gabriela Yanes at 817-392-6862. Over and out!

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# AHNA'S JUNE YARD OF THE MONTH

Susan Toppin has been gardening pretty much all of her life at 4032 Dexter. She got the gardening bug from her maternal grandmother who started gardening at the Dexter house when she and Susan's grandfather moved there in 1935. "I can remember as a little girl working with her in the garden," reminisces Susan. "She took me to the plant store with her, too."

The gardening gene seems to have skipped a generation because Susan's mother never like gardening as much as Susan does. "I'm constantly out there changing something," Susan admits. "I like getting dirt under my fingernails."

Following her grandmother's death in 1972, Susan moved into the house to raise her own family, but still has some of her grandmother's original peonies, violets and larkspur in the backyard. "They're struggling to survive now, because there used to be a lot of sun back there, but the trees have all gotten so big, there's lots of shade now," Susan says. Recently, she had to cut down three 60 year old trees that died of old age.



*Susan Toppin developed her love of gardening from her grandmother who moved to 4032 Dexter in 1935. After her grandmother died, Susan moved there to raise her own family and has been gardening there ever since.*  
(Photograph by Kelly Jo Nial)

About a year ago, Susan replaced her front porch, so all the plants in the front had to go. "A lot of them had been in there for thirty years," she laments. Once the new porch was in, she planted knock out roses, Indian hawthorne, begonias, boxwoods and some of the tall purple larkspur that she propagated by sprinkling seeds from her grandmother's larkspur in the backyard. "It's a whole new experiment in the front yard," she admits.

An interior designer by profession, Susan says she's methodical about planning out her garden. "I sketch it all out on paper first," she says. She turns to Neil Sperry for gardening advice "because he's local and he knows what works here." She admits that she's not consistent with what kind of fertilizer and mulch she uses, but is religious about doing both. She is still trying to adjust to the city's new watering restrictions.

Susan's connection to Arlington Heights goes all the way back to the 1920s when her paternal grandparents moved into a red brick bungalow at 2009 Hillcrest St. where Susan's father grew up.

Susan remembers in the 1950s when the City of Fort Worth planted sycamore trees throughout Arlington Heights, allotting two in the parkway in front of each house. "That's why you see so many sycamores in our neighborhood," she explains. "There was just one left in front of our house when I moved here in 1973, and that one finally died a couple of years ago--I just hated losing that big, old tree."

Susan received a \$25 gift certificate to Archie's Gardenland and a free year's membership in Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association for being selected as AHNA's June Yard of the Month. Congratulations, Susan, for all your years in the neighborhood and for doing your part to make it a beautiful place.

If you would like to nominate a yard for the Yard of the Month award, please email [carol\\_berry@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carol_berry@sbcglobal.net).

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# AHNA'S JULY YARD OF THE MONTH

July's winner, Susi Rowe, is surrounded by a number of talented gardeners on Hillcrest St. who have all maintain beautiful landscapes. Susi has been working on her yard ever since she moved back into her childhood home in 1997 when her parents retired to an assisted living facility.

"The yard hadn't been taken care of, except the bare minimum," she says. "Everything was overgrown." The first order of business was to get rid of the "wildness". "My mother's idea of gardening was to throw some seeds out the door and hope something comes up," Susi laughs.

Susi knew "the only thing I wanted to do was keep the white picket fence which Daddy had built for my mom many years ago." The fence creates a small courtyard by the front door entrance where Susi planted hydrangeas, azaleas, salvia, caladiums, hostas, and impatiens. At the corner of the fence are daisies, leftovers from Susi's mother's garden.



*When Susi Rowe moved back into her childhood home at 2201 Hillcrest St. she faced an overgrown yard full of "wildness". It took several years, but she got it under control with a lot of experimenting and good advice from nearby neighbors. (Photograph by Kelly Jo Nial)*


Susi describes her style as "more natural" than her next door neighbor and good friend, Joelle Brazile who is "a meticulous gardener" and a future Yard of the Month contender. "I get a lot of help from Joelle," says Susi, a retired teacher who likes to mow her own lawn. So much help that when Susi recently broke her hand, Joelle mowed Susi's lawn for three weeks.

After a couple of years of trying to save an ailing pecan tree in the parkway, Susi finally had it taken out this spring. "It was deformed and diseased and the tree service said there was nothing they could do to make it better," because of the massive red oak tree towering over it, according to Susi.

She cleverly had her pecan tree cut into rounds and uses them for stepping stones inside the courtyard area. Now, the dilemma is what to put in the pecan tree's place. "It's a work in progress," she says. "I have to live with it, ponder it." Temporarily, she has put out a big pot and filled it with variegated jasmine, sweet potato vine, angelonia and petunias. Susi planted lantana around the ferns her mother planted there.

"I have a wide variety of plants," Susi says. "I get bored, so I'm always trying different things." She fertilizes her blooming plants with Super Bloom every two weeks and uses Archie's Blue Label for her grass. She prefers cypress mulch to "cut down on weeds and help with water".


"I used to think gardening was good therapy, but it's become expensive therapy, because I end up spending a lot of money!" according to Susi who as the winner of the July Yard of the Month received a \$25 gift certificate to Archie's Gardenland and a free year's membership in AHNA.



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**(NEIGHBORHOOD A COMMUNITY - Continued from Page 1)**

Neighbor Randy Pearce volunteered to do the hard task of gathering and formatting the original list of cell phone numbers, email addresses, vehicle descriptions, license numbers, and children's names. After the first year, "he turned it over to me, and I've done it for the last eighteen years," says Anne. "Keeping up the list isn't that much work."

To this day, when new people move in, "I take them cookies or banana bread and get all their information and add them to the group email list that I use to send out news to neighbors," says Anne who notifies neighbors about missing pets or pertinent crime statistics. "It keeps the block friendlier and keeps everyone informed." And is also a handy reference for remembering neighbors' names.

The Thomas Place neighbors were known for their annual get-togethers, like progressive Christmas parties and Halloween parties that turned into group trick or treating, but "it's been a couple of years since we've had a party," admits Anne.

By the way, Anne says the former drug house, a two-story Tudor, is today one of the nicest houses on their block.

The folks over on Lower Ashland, as they refer to themselves because their block is south of Bryce Ave., have forty houses on their block, one of the longest in the neighborhood. Their neighborhood roster has been going since the 1980s, when Linze and Luetta Foster started it. "The Fosters had lived on Ashland since the 1940s and Linze was our block watch person," explains Nancy Marchant who moved to Ashland with her husband, Gordon, in 1983.



When Linze died in the 1990s, Luetta stayed in the house until she was in her nineties. Then, their granddaughter Kristin Holze moved in and still lives there with her husband, Alex Taylor, and their two young boys.

"We have a good mix of ages on our block," says Nancy who remembers when she was the young kid on the block. "At one time, we had seven or eight people who were over 90 years old living on the block. Today, there are two brand new babies on the block just in the last three months."

Updating the neighbor list is a shared responsibility that is passed around "to whoever has the time and energy to keep it updated." In 2010, Nancy designed an exclusive Facebook page for the block. "It's a closed group; you have to be invited to join," she explains.

With 48 members, it's a very active Facebook page that includes the neighbor roster, along with photos from one of many parties that take place on the block, and notices when kids are looking for babysitting or lawn mowing work. Sometimes when a neighbor needs to borrow a wheelbarrow or something like that, they post it on Facebook, and bingo, someone says "come borrow mine."

"We also share information with each other, like 'look out for this' or 'there's a strange car in front of your house'," Nancy adds. "It's a fun way to keep the neighborhood together," she says. There's often an informal Friday afternoon gathering on someone's front porch. "This has always been an outdoor street where people sit on their porches."



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"It's a very family kind of thing and Facebook works well because it's a good way to reach a lot of people quickly," says Nancy who uses it for day to day things, too. "Karen Larsen got the word out when the water main broke again on our street, so we all had time to get prepared before the water was turned off."

Nancy used the Facebook page effectively when the city's Transportation and Public Works Department recently called a meeting of Ashland neighbors about the reconstruction of their street. "35 to 40 people showed up for the meeting which shocked city staff because they're used to just three or four people coming," according to Nancy. "It's a good example of how organized we are. We all asked good questions and I think it's part of the reason we're getting a concrete street instead of blacktop."

The Facebook page is also a good way to stay in touch with neighbors who move away. "Rebecca Sterns still posts, even though she and her husband moved to Calgary," says Nancy. "We all Skyped them from the Christmas party."

There are lots of parties, including ice cream socials and grilling parties where everyone brings their own grill. The Griffey family used to have a big 4th of July party in their backyard with a band. Tracy and Dave Marshall just threw a fish fry in their front yard over Memorial Day weekend.

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The annual Christmas party was always at Babs Rodriguez's, but when she moved away, it transferred over to Jessica Redman's who has also hosted an elaborate St. Patrick's Day party ("wear something green and bring something Irish") and an engagement party for one of the neighbors. "Everybody brings a beverage of their choice and a dish to share," says Jessica who looked for 2 1/2 years for her ideal neighborhood before selecting a home on Lower Ashland in 2010. "It's never just one neighbor doing all the work, it's team work."

She describes her beloved Lower Ashland as "a village in a city that treats neighbors like family. We look out for each other. When trash cans are left on the curb, someone will pull them in--that's neighborhood."

These are good examples of how some people in Arlington Heights have successfully turned their immediate neighborhoods into close-knit communities. There are plenty of other options out there to fit your individual needs and style. In 2010, the Nextdoor program, a popular new private social platform, debuted out of San Francisco to provide easy tools for you to get your neighbors talking through pre-formatted websites.

However you choose to do it, the rewards of knowing your neighbors are invaluable. Someone on the block has to decide it's important enough to make the first move.

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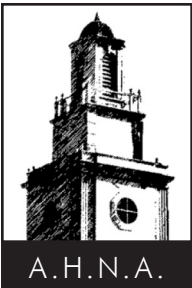
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