

Tenth Annual Mid City Dog Days Sidewalk Sale Takes Best in Show

BY MARK F. JOHNSON

The intersection of 14th and U Streets, NW is known for its nighttime party atmosphere. The several blocks of 14th Street from V Street to the north and Rhode Island Avenue to the south are full of clubs, bars and restaurants that host after-hours crowds every weekday and particularly weekend nights, especially in the summer. But the 10th annual Dog Days Sidewalk Sale proved that 14th and U could be just as active and certainly as festive during daylight hours as well!

Sidewalk Sale Takes on Carnival-like Atmosphere

Anyone who has been around on the first weekend of August and strolled out to the previous nine Dog Days might have been pleasantly surprised at this year's event, held on August 1 and 2. In the past, attendance has been moderate to mild -- after all, the point of Dog Days is to entice those few shoppers still in town to come out and support the 14th and U merchants, many of whom are small businesses that really feel the heat when summer sales slump. But this year's event seemed more like a street festival than a sidewalk sale. Perhaps because of the recession, people are staying closer to home, but whatever the reason, people from all over came out to be a part of what was going on.

In addition to the usual sidewalk steals, the flavored snow cone treats from Go Mama Go, the dancing dragon outside the Black Cat night club and the raffles that several businesses offer, there were lots of new attractions that added to the car-

nival-like atmosphere of the event.

A 'mini amusement park' at 14th and R streets where a used car dealership used to stand, featured a dunking booth and inflated kiddy slides. Further down the street, one new business on the block, ACKC, a chocolatier, was offering Italian sodas in addition to its chocolates, and covered outdoor seating. Further down, the Studio Theater was having an open house and selling what looked like most of its props from previous shows. There was a gorgeous piece from Road to Mecca, and furniture spanning the decades from Victorian to Mid Century Modern. There was an old radio, and lots of interesting clothes from several vintages.

But while most of the action was on 14th Street, U Street held its own. From 16th Street to the west and from about 12th Street to the east, the U Street merchants enticed shoppers with bargains, music, food and more bargains! The farmers market at 14th and U in front of the Reeves Building was packed with people in search of fresh ingredients for the evening meal. "My hope is that this is the biggest Dog Days ever," said Natalie Avery, executive director of the Mid City Business Association, the group that sponsors Dog Days. "There are more business here than ever, more excitement this year than ever and more participation than ever," she said.

"I'm out looking for deals, for unusual items and also to support the local merchants," said Randy Kuczor, co-owner of DC Guesthouse in Shaw. His business partner, Tom Bell noted that Dog

Days provides an opportunity for the community to come together and to see how the neighborhood has grown. "I notice a lot more participation by merchants," than before, he observed. There were many who had never even heard of Dog Days before, but either read about it in the newspaper and came from other parts of the region or were told about it by a friend. Derron Taylor, who moved to DC from Pittsburgh three years ago, had no idea the event was going on, but was making a bi-monthly trek to Whole Foods at 14th and P Streets. "It caught my attention," he said. "I ran into a friend who had just bought something and told me to check it out." In addition to his food purchases, Taylor had acquired some cookbooks from the Studio Theater book sale. "I wanted to support the Theater so I bought these books," he said. "I've never even been to the Studio, but I will now go to see a show."

Laura Lein came vintage furniture shopping all the way from Springfield, Virginia on Sunday, traditionally a quieter day than Saturday. "I have my favorite stores down here that I love to visit on the weekends," she said. "I knew it was Dog Days and I really wanted to avoid the crowds."

The success of 14th and U's Dog Days seems to have caught the attention of other business districts in the city. Adams-Morgan held its very first "Summer Sidewalk Sale" on Saturday, July 23. Many of the local merchants participated in the one-day event. Adams--Morgan has been a shopping destination for far longer than 14th and U, but the fact that it has just this year initiated a summer sidewalk



Clockwise from Top: Derron Taylor bought books at Studio Theater's sidewalk sale.

The Chinese lion dances to the African drum outside of the Black Cat.

Recently Arrived Universal Gear sold clothes on 14th.



sale shows that other neighborhoods are able to take a cue from Mid City. It also shows that, in a recession, old dogs must learn new tricks.

Obama Park Newly Renovated Columbia Heights Park Unofficially Named for the President

BY MARK F. JOHNSON

It has been a short life for the recently renovated park at 14th and Girard Streets in Columbia Heights. But already, the park is having an identity crisis of sorts. The small neighborhood park re-opened on July 10 after being closed for months while undergoing renovation. Mayor Adrian Fenty and other city officials including DC Councilmember Jim Graham (D-Ward 1) held an official “gate opening” ceremony and invited the neighborhood to come see the new recreation digs. Visitors got to see the new shiny bathrooms, the new concrete tables and the seating area and also the new lights. Perhaps, most important to many in the community is the new basketball court that the park now sports. In all the renovation cost the city about \$1.6 million. But before the first good game of skins versus shirts could be played, the park closed down again for what is estimated to be a two week period. City

officials determined that corrections needed to be made to some of the concrete work as well as utilities.

A New Name for the Park

Those who visited the park on the first day participated in an impromptu vote to rename the park. They voted overwhelmingly to name the park Barack Hussein Obama Park after the first African-American, former Chicago White Sox-loving, interracial and intercultural community dwelling and basketball-playing President of the United States.

The thought was that naming the park for Obama was another way of welcoming him and his family to his new home town and reminding him that just two miles away from his new abode on Pennsylvania Avenue was a community much like he left in Hyde Park on Chicago’s South Side, rich in multiculturalism, racial and economic diversity and spiritedness.

Most in the community seemed to agree with the sentiment behind the park’s renaming. But some now question whether this little parcel is really the right place for a park named after the President. They let it be known that just because there was a vote to name the park Obama Park, that doesn’t make it so. Only action by the DC Council can change the name. To that end, Graham immediately introduced a resolution in the Council to allow the park to wear the Presidential moniker. That resolution will need a Council vote. The bill would then go to Mayor Fenty’s desk.



Barack Hussein Obama Park. Photo: Mark F. Johnson

From Malcolm X to Obama?

Meanwhile, some in the community are calling for a time-out before this name change thing becomes a slam-dunk. “In time it would be more fitting to have [our Congressional representative] petition the Department of the Interior to rename Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park, a federal park, after President Obama,” suggested neighborhood activist Gustavo Ventura. “Can you imagine that amazing park with a huge statue of him overlooking the cascading fountains,” and thus looking downtown toward the White House and the Washington Monument, he added. Ventura said that would be more fitting for a Presi-

for Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant and Adams-Morgan parks. “Whatever we end up naming the Central Plaza at 14th and Park Road we should use the same name for the surrounding smaller parks using North/South/East/West designations,” Henock Gebreamlak offered. Under his proposal, the park at 14th and Girard would be called South Park.

Even though he has his own White House basketball court, perhaps the President could get in a game on the freshly built court when he wants a change of scenery. Of course, it could always be named Small Change Park, while Meridian Hill/Malcolm X could be called Big Change Park.



Scenes from a recent WIT Neutrino Project rehearsal. Photo: Mark F. Johnson.

dent that so many Americans expect great things from.

He and others suggest that, instead, the small park with the big basketball court should be named for a local figure like the District’s first mayor, Walter E. Washington or perhaps even Jim Graham. Graham came in second to President Obama in the vote to re-name the park. While no attention has been paid to former Mayor Washington’s basketball prowess, Graham has not yet laid claim to any hoops ability. He did say however that he understood the push to name the park after the President, noting that there is considerable pride in Ward 1, the city’s most diverse Ward, at Obama’s election.

Others in the community have suggested a different naming structure

Washington Improv Puts the Audience in Charge at the Source

BY MARK F. JOHNSON

While you could spend the summer watching reality TV, it’s reality theater that definitely puts the controls in your hands! You suggest it and they do it. That’s the way improvisational theater works and that’s what The Washington Improv Theater (WIT) brings to local audiences. Washington Improv is one of the four theater groups in residence at

the Source on 14th Street near T Street, NW. While they perform improv in rotation with the works of the other three companies that share the stage, for the next month the WIT will bring the Neutrino Video Project back to local audiences.

The Neutrino Project, named for the improv group in New York City that first created the process, starts with an audience suggestion, often a word, and then, WIT's six actors, working in three teams, actually do a performance using that suggested word or phrase as their point of reference. In doing so, they actually leave the theater, followed by a team of cameras and runners who film them throughout the neighborhood as they carry out their performance. According to Tophier Bellavia, WIT's managing director, the company has talked to several nearby businesses including St. Ex Cafe, Go Mama Go, Hunted House and Pulp to ask them to allow their retail space to part of the "stage." As the actors go in and out of these business establishments as part of their performance, the cameras film their actions and runners run the film back to the theater where it gets edited and made ready for the theater audience to see.

"We did the project twice in 2004 when we were in Adams-Morgan," noted Bellavia. "As a performer, it's fun to work with 10 crew members running around," he added. Bellavia described the improv project as a combination of creative art and a test of technical skill and physical stamina. "Plus it gives us a chance to really get to know our new neighborhood and meet our neighbors." He described 14th Street as dynamic and vibrant with outdoor cafes, furniture and home accessory stores and also the Black Cat which hosts live band performances.

The Washington Improv moved into the recently renovated Source in March of last year. They share the Source with Constellation, In Series, and DC Arts and Education Collaborative. Each company has five seasons of six-week performances.



Deer grazing at the edge of Rock Creek Park. Photo: Ned Farrar.

The Improv ensemble totals 40 players, although only six are part of the Neutrino Project. The Improv performances are every Friday and Saturday night at 8 p.m. and the show runs from Aug 7 through Sept. 5. Total performance time is about 50 minutes and tickets cost \$15. The Source Theater is located at 1835 14th Street, NW.

Wards 2, 4 and 5 News White-Tailed Deer vs. Sharpshooters

BY TANYA SNYDER

The next time you take a stroll through Rock Creek Park, you might come across something new: sharpshooters.

The National Park Service is promoting a plan to use sharpshooters to thin deer herds in Rock Creek Park.

NPS just released a 400-page report outlining four possible plans for addressing the high deer population in the park. The report says white-tailed deer herds "have increased substantially within and around Rock Creek Park in recent years" and need to be managed to diminish the adverse effects of the deer on native vegetation. A study two years ago indicated a population

of 82 deer per square mile in the park.

The NPS worries that deer are becoming "the dominant force in the park's ecosystem," causing "a decline in tree seedlings caused by excessive deer browsing and the ability of the forest to regenerate in Rock Creek Park," among other problems.

NPS has outlined four possible plans to thin the herds. The first is to continue doing what they've been doing: monitoring and researching the issue, and taking measures to keep deer out of some landscaped areas. The second alternative would use non-lethal actions like large fences and sterilization of does. In the third possibility, "direct reduction of the deer herd would be achieved by sharpshooting and by capture and euthanasia of individual deer in certain circumstances where sharpshooting would not be appropriate." The last option combines the second and third: reducing the herd size initially by killing the deer, and then using population control methods to maintain the reduced size (though they do leave open the option of continued sharpshooting, if necessary.)

NPS makes clear in its report that the last option is the "preferred alternative."

Beth Mullin, the executive director of Friends of Rock Creek's Environment, says she expects the plan to be controversial. "There is a

lot of concern about the effects of the deer population on the ecology of the park," she says, noting that the deer's browsing is destroying the native vegetation so that only invasive plants grow well. But she says there is also "concern about the deer."

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals campaigner Nicole Matthews rejects the plan. "Continuing an endless kill cycle is no way to regulate a population," she says, adding that deer overpopulation is part of a larger ecological problem, where the deer's habitat has been reduced and their natural predators killed off.

"We need to be creative in our steps to reduce their fertility rather than killing the animals and stimulating them to breed because more food and habitat is available for the species," says Matthews.

The NPS plan is available for public comment until Oct. 2. Public meetings on the plan are expected to be held in August and September, though NPS has not yet announced dates. Those who wish to view and comment on the document can do so at parkplanning.nps.gov/rocr.

Trading Bicycles for Smiles

BY AMANDA ABRAMS

Caron Butler is cool. Not just the kind of cool that can breezily catch a ball from a teammate and then make a basket without sweating, though the Washington Wizards forward is that, too.

No, the coolest thing about Butler is the way he can smile directly at a kid as if that boy or girl is the first person he's really looked at all day – and then do it 100 more times with the same open expression.

The all-star basketball player demonstrated his cool – and then some – on July 25 at the Kennedy Recreation



Learn about bike safety skills... Photo: Amanda Abrams.

Center in Shaw, 1401 Seventh St. NW. Butler gave away 150 bicycles and helmets to Washington-area kids before leading the group on a ride around the block.

For Butler, it was nothing new. "This is what we do all summer," he said. "We give back." A native of Racine, Wis., Butler has been holding a day of service and doing bike giveaways in his hometown for years and received the NBA's Community Assist Award for his philanthropic work in June 2007. But this was his first big effort in Washington. He chose Kennedy because it's close to the Verizon Center where he plays.

By 8 a.m., the recreation center was already buzzing. Inside, volunteers were finishing transforming Kennedy's gymnasium into a bicycle warehouse: roughly \$10,000 worth of pink, purple and blue bikes was grouped according to size, with each recipient's name taped to the seat.

Out front, a small crowd of kids and parents hovered near the center's doors. The families came from all over the Washington area and had signed up for the bikes ahead of time. Keeping them amused was G-Wiz, the Wizards' furry blue mascot, and a bevy of cheerleaders in short shorts and knee-high boots.

Keith Williams and his twin 14-year-old sons live at First Street and Rhode Island Avenue NW and were among the waiting families. Wil-

liams was impressed with the bicycle giveaway – "It's beautiful" – but his teenage sons kept a lid on their enthusiasm. "I'm not sure about biking," said Deonte.

"Excited? Yeah," said Leonte in a monotone.

Shortly before 9 a.m., the doors opened. The operation proceeded smoothly: one by one, kids walked into the gym and were greeted by Butler and their new bike; a photo was taken, quick words exchanged; and then the new owner wheeled the bicycle out the back door. Through it all, Butler retained his good cheer and presence, observing the children's moods – whether shy, anxious or excited – and saying a few soothing words to each. Out back, the kids were fitted with helmets and then gathered in groups to learn basic bike skills.

Finally, it was time for the group ride around the block. It went by quickly, but the exercise clearly energized the kids. Both Deonte and Leonte wore big grins when they got off their bikes, and Leonte admitted the event was "great."

Reaching the kids is what Butler aims for in his service activities. "I look at how I was raised, with people making it and not coming back. As a kid, it was a void I wish had been filled, and it wasn't. So I made it my business to do it," he said. Seeing the kids' faces that day, he said, is "a feeling like no other. This was just unbelievable."

Developer Hopes to Get Started

Lot at 13th and Rhode Island Sits Vacant for Over Three Years

BY KELLEY DUPUIS

Drive past the corner of 13th Street and Rhode Island Avenue and you'll probably ask yourself the same question a lot of people have been asking for the past couple of years: what's up with that vacant lot?

Signs in bold red-and-white have promised new development on that corner for a long time. And there's still nothing there but a big patch of weeds ... and the bold signs.

Realtor John Schlick of Bethesda-based Jobin Realty says he is finally hoping to get something going on that corner before the end of the year. Zoning work is in progress, and at press time a plan modification request was in the works.

If your guess as to what's been holding things up is the obvious one – money – you're on target. Things are tough all over, as people used to say.

And real estate – especially vacant lots with signs on them – remains a reliable barometer of how the economy is doing.

"Sept. 7, 2008, is pretty much considered by the media and the cognoscenti to be the day the financial markets melted down, but it actually began much earlier," Schlick said. "The company that owns that land has owned it for a long time. Over the course of a couple of years they got permission to build a roughly 323-unit building. It was going to be five stories with a basement. But by March 2008, when they got the building permits and were ready to go forward, there was no money for the project."

The development group tried to get financing together again, but by September 2008, the partners gave up, and Schlick's company, which had originally sold them the land, got it back.

Now Schlick would like to get something going forward on that corner, but whatever kind of apartments he manages to build, the development will be smaller than what was originally planned.

For one thing, he's contemplating four stories instead of five.

"We're looking at 260 units, plus or minus, which is plenty for that neighborhood," he said. "We have prepared the necessary stuff to go back to zoning, and I'm working on financing. I've got a builder who's

A sign at the corner of 13th Street and Rhode Island Avenue NE has boldly announced a new apartment building ... for more than two years. A Bethesda-based developer hopes to get the project moving despite the sluggish economy. Photo: Kelley Dupuis.





A team from Casey Trees prepares to do some spring tree-planting on the campus of Brookland's Catholic University of America. Photo: Kelley Dupuis.

willing to build it; it's just a question of getting it all together and moving it in the right direction. The financing is the hard part."

Schlick said he would like to have a building permit in hand within the next three to four months, "and then there's a lot of excavating to do."

"In DC you can get a foundation permit before you get a full building permit," he said, "but a lot of that depends on what the people you're borrowing money from will let you do or not."

Greening Brookland Casey Trees Builds Up Neighborhood's Supply of Trees

BY KELLEY DUPUIS

Brookland residents who remember the unsuccessful campaign a couple of years ago to persuade the city to underground new power lines along 12th Street in order to preserve

the neighborhood's trees may well remember the involvement of the group Casey Trees.

Casey Trees, whose goal is to restore and protect what it calls DC's "tree canopy," didn't stop its efforts with the undergrounding push. Although not the lead agency on that campaign, the group contributed its knowledge and know-how about the planting and care of trees.

Group spokesman Jared Powell says Casey Trees remains very busy in and around Brookland, with tree-planting initiatives and educational programs of all kinds either current or in the planning stages.

"We're doing a lot of stuff," Powell said. "We have four major departments. Tree-planting is a venture we're known for, getting trees in the ground. This past spring we did a tree planting at Catholic University where we put 33 trees in."

Casey Trees' other initiatives include community tree-plantings in which groups can identify places where 10 or more trees might be planted. The group also has "citizen foresters" who

are trained as volunteers to work with groups that have gotten approval as to where trees can be planted, what trees may be planted, and such questions as whether shade or a certain color of tree is desired.

"[The volunteers] work with groups to identify the best trees for their need," Powell said, "and then we move in with technical assistance for free. We have planted as many as 35 trees at a time and have more planned for the Brookland area this fall."

Powell said plantings usually take place between October and December.

"The first one this season will be at the Crosby Noyes Education Campus at 2725 10th Street," he said. "We'll be sowing five or 10 trees there. We're also working with schools, getting involved with youth, teaching them how trees affect their lives."

Casey Trees' planning and design department works with universities as partners.

"Since universities are large landholders, we're teaching them about the importance of tree canopies in the District, using the universities as a

model," Powell said. "There are different ways you can make innovative tree designs; we use campuses as a testing ground for that."

Every five years the organization's geographic resource department does what amounts to a tree-inventory.

"It's called Urban Forests Effects and Values," Powell said. "It determines the health of the trees, and the information allows us to determine where the greater need for trees is, and how we can advance our public awareness initiative."

The group also sponsors designer workshops where individuals can attend two-hour classes on how to tree-scape their own yards. Those who participate receive a free shade tree.

"Twenty-seven people in Brookland participated in that this past spring," Powell said. "We also have a tree rebate program. If an individual plants a tree in the neighborhood, we might send them a rebate for one tree per household. Forty-two people in Brookland have taken part in that."

For more information on how to participate in these and other programs relating to tree-planting, call 202-833-4010 or e-mail friends@caseytrees.org.

A Hotel for Shaw – Finally

BY AMANDA ABRAMS

On July 13, the DC Council approved public financing for a new Convention Center Hotel at Ninth Street and Massachusetts Avenue NW. It wasn't a moment too soon for Shaw boosters and business owners.

The 1,167-room hotel, which will be owned by Marriott and financed together with the city, was initially slated to open in 2007. The project was stalled due to questions about the city's ability to take on more debt, but supporters emphasized that the center needed an adjoining hotel to remain competitive. Groundbreaking should occur this fall, with an estimated opening date of early 2013.

Alex Padro, advisory neighborhood commissioner for the area and director of the Shaw Main Streets organization, is looking forward to fi-

nally seeing a hotel on the corner site. “When it opens, there will be thousands of additional potential customers for small businesses,” he said.

Dominic Mouldon, executive director of ONE DC, an organization that advocates for low-income Washingtonians, was also supportive of the project. “It can be a good thing if the 600 or more jobs go to the people that live in DC. And if we can get a community benefits agreement signed between the Convention Center Authority and ONE DC.” With an August meeting scheduled with the Convention Center Authority, Mouldon was hoping the group would agree to hire only District residents and commit to providing other community benefits.

On a quiet Ninth Street in the shadow of the hulking Convention Center, business owners unanimously agreed that the hotel would be a good thing.

“The hotel was supposed to open in 2007 – that’s why we came here,” said Debra Chatman, owner of Chatman’s D’vine Bakery and Café. “We’ll be happy when the hotel comes in because it’ll give us more people coming in. We’re trying our best to hold out, but it’s very hard.”

Across the street at Cuttin Up Barbershop, owner Anthony Quildon echoed her remarks. “I think it’s good, it’s a win-win,” he said. “We’re not doing OK, but we’re keeping our head above the water. I hope it gets better once the Marriott comes.”

Post Office Blues

BY TANYA SNYDER

Residents are boycotting the Lamond-Riggs Post Office. They say the customer service is poor, and the office is operating outside of legal hours.

Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Judi Jones (4B-07) says she’s been working for seven years to bring improvements to the post office. Her main beef is the post office’s insistence on offloading mail in the middle of the night. She says they have offloading shifts at 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. She’s even woken up to confront them during the 1 a.m. shift.

Jones led the community in finally

deciding to boycott the post office a few months ago. She called a protest outside the post office at the end of May, with a petition demanding that the postmaster stop violating zoning laws regarding hours. She says businesses along Chillum Place must operate only between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. Despite repeated confrontations, Jones reports that the post office is still offloading before 7 a.m. and on weekends, though she allows that the noise has subsided somewhat.

The neighborhood has had problems with other late-night operators, from Waste Management to Standard

Mail is also frequently misdelivered. Sensitive items like prescription drugs and unemployment checks have been opened and delivered to the wrong address. One resident who complained was even more unsatisfied when she received the post office’s response: a comment card asking, “Are you satisfied with our service?”

The post office cancelled two Citizens Advisory Council meetings in the spring. The CAC is the principal liaison between the community and the post office. Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser sent a letter to DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton about the is-

Artists Working on Public Art Project Edgewood Mural to be Unveiled Aug. 22

BY KELLEY DUPUIS

A platoon of young artists and students, under the guidance of professionals from around the United States, is hard at work this summer on a large-scale public art project near the Safeway store at 12th Street and Rhode Island Avenue NE.



In this photo it may be just a big white wall, but when these and other young artists are finished with their summer’s work, a colorful neighborhood mural will decorate the area near the Safeway store across the street from the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station. Photo: Mika Altskan

Office Supply, but the post office is the most persistent violator. The postmaster has reportedly said that since the post office is a federal entity, it doesn’t have to follow zoning laws.

Residents also complain of long lines and disrespectful customer service. The post office responds that they are retraining personnel but that union contracts prevent them from firing workers.

Issue once the boycott was announced, trying to pawn the issue off onto her since “postal service is a federal matter.” Bowser emphasized that neighbors were now traveling to Maryland to go to a different post office.

Others have complained about the Brightwood and Silver Spring post offices as well. As Jones says, “It is eye-opening to know that the District line is no barrier to rude, inept behavior.”

The Edgewood Mural project, sponsored by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, has 45 students from around the area painting a mural 300 feet long and 20 feet high on a wall adjacent to the grocery store. When completed, it will be clearly visible to commuters passing through the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station across the street.

A group of Washington, DC, art-

ists, as well as artists from Philadelphia, San Francisco and San Diego, is guiding the youngsters' efforts at creating the large-scale work of public art.

"[The commission] has funded a lot of murals around the city," said Peter Krsko of Albus Cavus, a nonprofit organization that specializes in creating public art. "But this project is unique. We are developing a curriculum lesson plan for students to go through a program of public mural creation."

A textbook will be distributed to the students working on the mural project, Krsko said, and the goal is to get students working on creating murals in other cities as well.

"The whole concept is of creating art in public spaces," Krsko said.

The mural, part of the commission's Youth Summer Employment program, is being painted on a large wall behind the Safeway shopping center. Students working on the project range in age from 16 to 21. Some are art students and some have other backgrounds, but they're all using the same media, a combination of acrylics and aerosol – spray-painting.

The official unveiling of the finished project is scheduled for Aug. 22, Krsko said. But there will be a "preliminary" event a week earlier, on Aug. 15.

"This event will bring additional artists to the wall; plus people who live in the neighborhood will be able to come and take a look at it," said Krsko. City officials and various types of performing artists will be invited to the Aug. 15 preview.

"We are working within the framework of the

neighborhood," Krsko said of the mural's subject matter.

Krsko said the mural, when completed, will reflect the history of the neighborhood in which it appears.

"The cultural background and the overall theme could be summed up as 'going beyond the edge of the world,'" he said, "which means that we would like to say that this art work is to encourage people to go beyond their limits, learn something new, bring it back to the community and enrich everyone who lives in their neighborhood."

A Loss for Ward 2 and Washington

BY AMANDA ABRAMS

Ward 2 has lost a dedicated advocate. On July 12, Desi Deschaine, communications director for Ward 2 Councilmember Jack Evans, died in an apparent drowning in Baltimore. Committed to public service, Deschaine, 29, was active in a number of civic groups around the city.

Arguably the greatest beneficiaries of his efforts were Ward 2 residents, particularly those living in Logan Circle. In addition to working for Councilmember Evans and formerly serving as the Ward 2 community outreach coordinator for Mayor Anthony Williams, Deschaine, a Logan Circle resident,

was vice president of the Logan Circle Community Association (LCCA).

"Desi really cared about the neighborhood, both personally and professionally, which you don't see a lot," said Jennifer Trock, president of LCCA. "We're going to miss him greatly. He was really a pillar of the community."

Association members first met Deschaine through his work as a Ward 2 liaison for Mayor Williams. "He was so responsive and helpful in organizing people," said Trock. "He dedicated a lot of his time." In 2006, the group presented him with LCCA's annual President's Award for his commitment to the neighborhood.

The same year, he was elected vice president of the association. Deschaine's duties included organizing monthly membership meetings and coordinating volunteers, but his real cachet came from his relationships with the city's movers and shakers.

"He knew everybody," said Tim Christensen, an LCCA board member. "We'd say, we want the mayor [to come to a meeting], and he'd get the mayor. Or we'd say we want to talk to Parks and Recreation, and he'd get Clark Ray [the former department head]. He was fabulous in that regard."

Equally appreciated was Deschaine's unfailingly positive attitude. "He was just so perpetually optimistic, always looking for ways to find solutions rather than dwelling on problems," said Trock. "He was really a special character."

Evans agreed. "Desi loved being involved in the community," he said. "His energy, enthusiasm and



House Explodes - Gas Leak Suspected

BY TANYA SNYDER

No fireworks here: a less welcome explosion occurred the evening of July 4. A house collapsed on the corner of Oregon and Nebraska avenues due to some sort of explosion loud enough to drown out the fireworks. No one was home at the time, and the cause of the explosion that leveled the house is still under investigation. The initial guess that it was a natural gas explosion is still

unconfirmed, though firefighters said they noticed a strong smell of natural gas when they responded to the emergency call.

Fire officials estimated the damage to be as high as \$3 million, saying the house appeared to be a "total loss."

The explosion was so strong neighbors reported that it shook their own homes and even caused items to fall off the walls. It was heard from literally miles away.

great smile will be missed by me and my staff and everyone in Ward 2 he has worked with over the years.”

A memorial service is being planned by LCCA and other groups, including Evans’ office, the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club and the Washington National Opera. No date has been determined yet.

Friends of Deschaine’s have established a foundation in his name, the Deschaine Foundation for Excellence in Government, honoring public service and a focus on local governance. For more information, visit www.deschaine.org.

Park Place \$350

BY TANYA SNYDER

Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser and Mayor Adrian Fenty joined representatives of Donatelli Development for a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 15 to mark the opening of Park Place, the largest mixed-use development along Georgia Avenue.

“Mixed use” is an urban planners’ term indicating a development that combines retail and residential space, potentially with office space mixed in. The Park Place development is especially appealing because it is located on top of the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro station, connecting the new shops and apartments to convenient public transportation.

Bowser says Park Place “is just one example of the revitalization necessary to keep the District competitive even in our economic downturn.”

She hopes the Park Place development will increase the “desirability” of the Georgia Avenue Corridor.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) may landscape the medians nearby on New Hampshire Avenue from Georgia Avenue to Grant Circle. ★

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