



# Browncroft Crier

NEWSLETTER OF THE BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, New York 14610  
<http://browncroftna.org>

May 2023

## BNA Executive Committee

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### Inside This Issue

President's Message

Browncroft Thru the Years

Landmark Society Tour

History of Brighton  
Browncroft

Detectorists

Go Green

Lifespan Respite Program

City Forester

Ice Cream Social

Calendar of Events

## BNA ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 30TH, 2023

7:00 P.M. at the  
Ark of Jesus Church  
1000 Winton Road N.

### *Celebrating 50 years of Browncroft Neighborhood Unity*

For this special achievement BNA has invited a  
Special Guest Speaker:

Congressman Joseph Morelle,  
U.S. House of Representatives



Rep. Morelle has represented our area at various levels of government since 1991 – as our NY State Assemblyman, and as our Representative in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2018, succeeding Louise Slaughter. He began his political career first in the Monroe County Legislature representing the area around Irondequoit.

As our NY State Assemblyman he was instrumental in helping area neighborhood groups, particularly our neighbors in North Winton Village, realize many of their improvement goals, which has positively impacted our quality of life in Browncroft. .

### Matters of Business

Election of Officers for 2023-2024

Celebration of BNA Activities Through the Years

Cake Cutting

Social Hour

The Browncroft History Slide Show will Run for neighbors to enjoy while socializing, as well as a surprise attraction.

# From the President.....

Frank Fields

Neighbors and Friends,

As I write this, we are approaching the weekend of the Browncroft Neighborhood Garage Sale. This is the first time we have been able to enjoy this event since the Covid pandemic crept into our lives.

Many thanks to all those who have helped to put together all that was needed to make this happen so smoothly. And thank you to all the households who participated with their offerings of the many items for sale. This time of year our neighborhood is in its full glory and the Garage Sale is a wonderful way to enjoy our special corner of the world and to share it with visitors.

This is also the 50th Anniversary of the Browncroft Neighborhood Association! We will be holding our Annual Membership Meeting on May 30th, 2023 at 7:00 P.M. in the Ark of Jesus Church on Winton Road. Our US Representative, Joseph Morelle, will be our special guest speaker. Congressman Morelle is well known to the neighborhood and has been active in local, state and national politics for many years. I hope you will be able to join us to hear his insights.

We will also be conducting elections of officers of the BNA and I encourage you to seriously consider stepping up and contributing your time and talents to the BNA, either as an officer or one of our street representatives. It has been the participation of volunteers over the years that has made the BNA a solid organization and the entire neighborhood such a unique place.

# BROWNCROFT ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE YEARS

Before there was BNA there were issues that neighbors organized to overcome:

In 1946 an apartment complex was proposed on the land that was Browncroft Park (Brown Brothers gift to the subdivision of their nursery display gardens and offices that was bounded by Winton Road, Corwin Road, Ramsey Park and Dorchester Road. A court case to defend the Browncroft Subdivision deed restrictions was successfully taken by Vilas Swan Esq., a resident at 156 Newcastle Road, on behalf of a group of Browncroft property owners. Today's residents on the east side of Ramsey Park can thank their predecessors for their view of traditional housing across the street. And BNA can thank these neighbors for donating \$600 of leftover fundraising monies to our treasury 27 years later when BNA was born.

In 1973 another Pre-BNA, neighborhood organizing issue was the 3-Ton weight restriction on Browncroft Boulevard and Merchants Road, which sought to reestablish that weight limit after the resurfacing of Browncroft Boulevard and a new Schedule C (approved truck route map) caused the mysterious disappearance of Browncroft's signage limit-

As we celebrate our successful fifty years as an organization, remember that it is not only the physical neighborhood itself that matters, but the wonderful and caring neighbors who are the heart and soul of our community. Let's hope that the tradition continues for at least another 50 years!

ing trucks. Suddenly convoys of semi-tractor trailers were rolling down the street starting at 5:00 in the morning, shaking the houses on their foundations, contributing diesel air pollution and waking the residents. The negative effects of the truck traffic were felt on the back streets parallel to Browncroft and Merchants, and sympathizer petitions were signed by many supporting neighbors. The organizing efforts taken to get City Council's and the Monroe County Legislature's approval to direct the Monroe County Traffic Commission to take Browncroft, and consequently Merchants Road, off of Schedule C made it clear that neighbors united for one issue needed to stay organized for future issues.

Hence the "Browncroft Merchants Neighborhood Association" was born with the help of the North East Area Development (NEAD) organization, of which Robert Genthner, a resident on Newcastle Road was a principle. "Bob" has been active in the neighborhood association ever since – as author of the Constitution and Bylaws, President, newsletter editor, Street Rep, and Webmaster, his current position. A triangular logo representing the Browncroft Boulevard/ Merchants Road intersection was designed by Phil Grannon, Elmcroft resident and retired City Engineer.

Skip forward to 1978 when it was decided the name of the organization was confusing as it seemed



continued on page 6

## Landmark Society's 2023 House & Garden Tour In Brighton Browncroft

June 10th and 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days

The tour features six houses and two unusual gardens. Houses on the tour include a fabulous mid-century modern house designed by Olga Valvano, a Harvard graduate and one of the first female architects in our area. Its neighbor was designed by celebrated African American architect Thomas Boyde, Jr. An additional mid-century modern defies description (no, you are not entering a garage!) and three classic early 20th century houses complete the tour.

Tickets must be purchased in advance. The ticket is good for both days of the tour, with a limit of one visit to each site. Ticket cost for members is \$30, non-members \$40.

Tickets are available on the Landmark Society's website ONLY, where you will find information regarding the logistics of the ticket and guide book - <https://landmark-society.org/housetour/>. You must have a valid email address to receive your tickets.

## HISTORY OF BROWNCROFT EXTENSION OR BRIGHTON BROWNCROFT

The Brighton Browncroft neighborhood is a Brown Brothers/Browncroft Realty subdivision begun in 1926 known as the Browncroft Extension because it continued the Browncroft Subdivision (started in 1914) from its eastern edge at Newcastle Road into the Town of Brighton. Some of the streets of the original Browncroft – Corwin Road and Windemere Roads -- were cut off by the I590 expressway constructed in the early 1960s and continue into the Browncroft Extension east of it, because the expressway did not exist when the newer subdivision was laid out.

The design layout of the streets is different in the newer subdivision. Instead of a grid, by the time

the extension was laid out there was an incoming popularity of curving roadways that conform to the natural contours of the geography. This was introduced by Fredrick Law Olmsed, and Brown Brothers took advantage of this technique on this piece of land that has a small stream running through the middle, and the subdivision culminates at the edge of a ravine overlooking Ellison Park.

These branching-off, curving roads create two small triangular islands that were planted with a large floral display by Brown Brothers similarly to the tree lawns in Browncroft proper. A picturesque composite stone arched bridge with balustraded guardrails was built to carry Corwin Road

over a small creek that joins Irondequoit Creek in Ellison Park.

Soon after Browncroft Realty subdivided the Browncroft Extension and sold off approximately 25 of the lots, the depression hit. Sale of the new lots in the Browncroft Extension, as well as Orchard Park off Empire Boulevard -- another Brown subdivision -- came to a halt. This, coupled with the costly improvements – streets, curbs, sidewalks - including the bridge on Corwin Road, which cost \$250,000 (\$4,215,586 in today's dollars) caused Brown Brothers and their realty company to go bankrupt.

The new subdivisions were reclaimed by nature with the exception of some lots with homes built in the late 1920s, and remnants of roads, curbs and sidewalks winding through the wild growth. What areas that had been landscaped by Brown Brothers in the style of the original Browncroft Subdivision, as advertized before bankruptcy hit, disappeared or were removed by developers when building resumed after World War II.

A park road connects the Extension to Ellison Park at Corwin Road. Prior to the expressway, residents of Browncroft were able to walk straight down Corwin Road into Ellison Park.





# DETECTORISTS FIND BROWNCROFT ROSE GARDEN

The BBC television show “The Detectorists” has turned this treasure hunting activity into a humorous human interest adventure drama. So when two such characters turned up in the Browncroft Rose Garden with their metal detectors this spring to see what they could turn up, our curiosity was peaked.

We shared some historic pictures and information with them, such as what is currently a City garden park and greensward was once the barnyard of the Charlton Nursery farm donated to the City for a park. And they shared photos of their findings at the location.

*[Historical note: The Charlton family land extended on the north side of Browncroft Boulevard from their house at 116 Browncroft Boulevard east almost to what is Ellison Park today. It included the simple farmhouse of Moses Smith, c1840s, at 67 Merchants Road, which became used as housing for their tenant workers.]*



Danny and Adrien near circle bed



## MARCH MEETING ATTENDEES LEARNED ABOUT “CUES”



Dr. Shaun Nelms spoke to a group of engaged Browncroft neighbors on March 21st, as Director of the Center for Urban Education Success of the University of Rochester’s Warner School of Education and the Superintendent of the U of R – East Educational Partnership. On the following day the Democrat and Chronicle announced that Dr. Nelms was to become the U of R’s vice president for community partnerships effective

July 1st.

During his talk about the Center for Urban Education (CUES) he explained the relationship between the University’s East High program, the State of NY, and the Rochester City School District; the improvement in graduation percentages under their program, and the increased number of college ready and college bound students. A program information folio was offered to attendees to take, or a business card with the QR code

below that would take one to the same information in digital format.



below that would take one to the same information in digital format.

## BROWNCROFT HISTORY WALKING TOUR

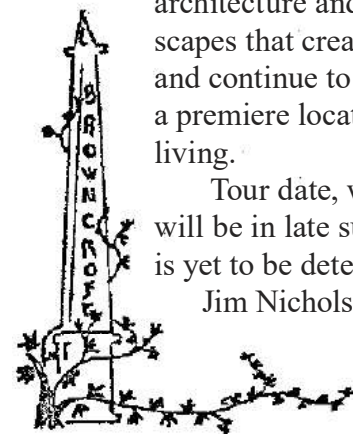
For more than 100 years the Browncroft neighborhood has been among the city’s most desirable places to live. Have you ever wondered how that came to be?

Take a walk with us and learn of the history, the people, the

architecture and landscapes that created it and continue to make it a premiere location for living.

Tour date, which will be in late summer, is yet to be determined.

Jim Nicholson



## Go Green.

A rather pleasant, and infinitely more healthful, alternative to the use of herbicides to kill unwanted weeds in lawns is to eat them or turn them into tinctures and salves. Our yards are cornucopias of nutritious and medicinal herbs that benefit humans, birds and bees.



Rather than poison them, and ourselves in the process, we should physically gather them from the places we don't want them and take advantage of the magic properties they hold.

There is a charming YouTube series called "Danu's Irish Garden" where she demonstrates the ease of making useful things with findings on our properties. There are many others, as well; and I pulled out my own dusty herbal books for confirmation.

**Dandelions** – The flowers, which provide food for bees are edible and beautiful in a salad. The leaves, a rich source of vitamins A and C, can be put in a salad, cooked or used for tea beneficial for the urinary tract and liver. Why buy dandelion greens in Wegmans when you can harvest them out of your lawn for free if you do not use herbicides or pesticides?

**Plantain** – In your yard it is an eyesore. In your body it is a wonder drug as an anti-inflammatory, an astringent that helps tissues, and outside, an antiseptic and a poison extractor for cuts and stings. A leaf can be chewed and placed over an insect bite or cut for instant relief – but not if it has been sprayed with herbicides and pesticides.

These are just two of many so-called weeds that were brought to America by Europeans for their use, and quickly appreciated and used by Native Americans, too. Some may see them as invasive species colonizing their manicured lawn, but an effective way to treat invasive-specie weeds that happen to be wholesome is to eat them or turn them into other herbal products. If there is more than can be used, manual removal and composting or disposal is still the best thing to do for the environment.

Additionally, anyone not concerned about the dangers to birds and bees from the poisons we use, consider recent, highly publicized research pointing to the use of pesticides and herbicides as contributing to the rise in Parkinson's Disease in our population, and be concerned for yourself, your pets and your neighbors.

*Note: Always make sure you have identified these plants correctly, as there are similar looking ones that could be harmful.*

## LIFESPAN PARTNERS IN CARING RESPITE PROGRAM

LifeSpan has a new program called "Partners in Caring Respite Program". Its purpose is to offer a caregiver a break by providing a respite volunteer to sit with their loved one for a few hours. This short break is so beneficial to the caregivers, who are usually family members and so overwhelmed that they tend to neglect their own health. Currently Lifespan has a few families waiting for volunteers in the Browncroft area.

Lifespan is seeking volunteers who can give the gift of time. A caregiver near you could use a break for a few hours to shop, nap, talk, take a walk or visit a friend.

To become a "Partners in Caring" volunteer with Lifespan, or for more information, please call Mary Alice Schmidt, Lifespan Volunteer Coordinator at 585-287-6392"



[www.lifespanrochester.org](http://www.lifespanrochester.org)

Toll Free: 844-249-7126

**Spring Clean-Up  
in the  
Browncroft Rose  
Garden**  
was rained out and  
**Rescheduled to  
May 13th  
at 10:00 a.m.  
Come and Help!**



# MEETING WITH THE CITY FORESTER

# Browncroft Years

continued from page 2

Andrew Place, City Forester, met with a committee of eight residents from different sections of the neighborhood who are concerned about the Browncroft tree canopy in the public right-of-way. It was a good opportunity to meet our newest City Forester and reestablish our neighborhood's long standing appreciation for the importance of maintaining our shade trees that gracefully line our streets and contribute to the beauty and value of our properties, as well as the environment.

He listened to our concerns, which included that ornamentals, such as magnolia trees, should not be planted on the tree lawns going forward because they will not produce a uniform shade cover in the public right-of-way. That includes additional magnolia planting in the Browncroft Historic district section of the neighborhood south of Browncroft Boulevard, unless a shade tree has been planted along the sidewalk on the private property by the homeowner as part of the preservation of the historic Brown Brothers' landscape design.

We have also been provided with a copy of the City's standards for planting a tree based on tree-lawn width, street light and stop light location, utilities and private tree proximity. It has been determined that our tree lawns in both the Elmcroft and Browncroft areas of BNA can support specific shade trees based on these standards.

In preparation for the meeting a windshield survey was done on most of our streets, and shared with Mr. Place, in order to get an idea of where young trees have been planted on the tree lawns in the last few

years, what varieties they were, and where there are empty spaces in our tree cover along the right-of-way in which we recommended a tree be planted. The City will plant where residents have requested a tree, so residents are encouraged to keep the neighborhood green by calling or writing City Forestry and requesting a shade tree be planted on an empty tree lawn in front of their property. It is important for the visual esthetic of a street to get young trees planted in those areas in order to ensure a uniform line of trees similar in height and width continue the entire length of the street.

This was a very good meeting and we appreciated Andrew Place's taking the time to meet with us, and hopefully continue a working relationship with Browncroft tree enthusiasts.

*Regarding the Browncroft Historic District's specialized landscape: As part of the National Register of Historic Places Survey of Browncroft, in 2003 former City Forester and later Parks Director, Hilland Knapp surveyed the plantings from the front wall of each home to the City curb. His notations were put into a table organized by address, tree lawn space, and front yard space. Volunteers are needed to update the chart of each street by crossing off the trees that are gone now, and making a notation for new trees that have been planted. Also, volunteers are needed to contact homeowners regarding the possibility of planting new trees in all parts of the neighborhood. Please contact Cassy Petsos, [chkpetsos@frontiernet.net](mailto:chkpetsos@frontiernet.net)*

it was a merchants' group; hence the "Merchants" was dropped and the name became "Browncroft Neighborhood Association". The boundaries remained the same - Elmcroft Road south to (but not including) Blossom Road and Winton Road (not including) east to the I590 expressway. The association's structure also remained the same in that the Board of Directors is made up of the officers – President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, 1 representative from each of the 17 streets and standing committees chairs – Budget and Finance, Crime Prevention, Beautification, Zoning, Newsletter, Hospitality.



Through the years, in addition to attending to issues that address the quality of life, including but not limited to transportation/traffic, crime, beautification and zoning, it has maintained a newsletter distributed to every household and has hosted general meetings with guest speakers on topics of neighborhood interest, as well as hosted social events such as picnics and winter holiday parties.

All BNA activities have been done by volunteers -- not paid staff.

As this anniversary year goes on, we hope to provide here a look back at some of the issues and happenings in which the Browncroft Neighborhood Association has been involved, as well as some that it has not, which were pursued only by individual neighbors working collectively. Either way the BNA has been instrumental as a networking tool for neighborhood organizing.

Cassy Petsos

# Ice Cream Social

*Come One and All - Young and Old*

Netzkins Ice Cream On Wheels will be here

Friday June 23rd

7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

at the School 46 grounds.

Enjoy a Summer Evening with

Your Browncroft Neighbors

FREE for BNA residents

2 scoops of ice cream in a cone or dish

10 flavors & lots of fun toppings of your choice

[**Attention:** ice cream truck is not a nut-free or allergy-free environment. Probability of cross contamination with allergens (especially nuts) is high.]

(HELP WANTED To organize festivities for children. Call Jim Bishop at 303-5667)



## GARAGE SALE

As of this publication, the Garage Sale has concluded. A report in the next newsletter will give more details. As of May 3rd there were 141 official registrants. Thank you. Anyone who did not get a chance to send in their \$5.00 fee to help BNA cover the costs of organizing the sale, but took advantage of the outstanding opportunity the event offers – it's not too late. You can send your \$5.00 contribution to the BNA P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, NY 14610.

Thank you to the Garage Sale volunteers who do all the work to make it happen - publicity, accounting list compilation, mapping, posting on the web, write-up, balloon packaging/distribution, sign posting and take down: Sharon Bloemendaal, John McQueen, Sara Castro, Bob Genthner, David Kaiser, Holly Petsos, and Patricia Fields.

In case you missed it hope you enjoy a few pictures on the next page.

## BNA CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2023

May 6 & 7 - BNA Garage Sale

May 13 - Spring Clean-up in the Browncroft Rose Garden

May 16 - Executive Committee Meeting

May 30 - Annual Membership Meeting / 50 Year celebration

June 23- Ice Cream Social

July 18 – BNA Picnic

August 19, or 20 as rain date - Movie Night In the Browncroft Rose Garden

September - Date TBD - Neighborhood History Tour

October 28 - Fall clean up, Rose Garden

November TBD- Fall membership meeting with guest speaker

*Volunteers Needed - Some activities may not occur unless neighborhood volunteers come forward to help make them happen.*





# SALES AND SUN AND STUFF AND STREETS OF CARS

