



The Neighborhood Newsletter

Volume 14, Number 2

The Metamorphosing Issue, July, 2007



THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER IS CHANGING!

Dear Neighbors,

We're taking some steps to make the **Neighborhood Newsletter** better, sharper, clearer, more responsive to what what's going on and what you want.

Here are some of the details:

1. First, we're planning to broaden our organizational base, with more people involved in our Newsletter operations. This will help us get more voices into the mix, reflect the diversity of our neighborhood, and cover different topics than we've done in the past.

2. And second, we're aiming to get more of you involved as writers and contributors, in small ways that are manageable for you - and that don't involve meeting time.

How does this sound so far?

As for the first point, we've assembled a core group of neighbors who have agreed to come together 3-4 times a year, for the next year or more. Beginning in the fall, we'll go over what should be in the next issue together, and then help round up the stories we want, more or less on time. You'll find our names below.

And as for the second point, there are some regular or semi-regular features we'd like to include - especially if we can find neighbors like you to generate them. So, here's what we're In Search Of...: Who among you out there might be interested in writing (or coordinating) a brief, informal neighborhood-related column on:

- * New neighbors, who've just moved into the neighborhood, or onto your street
- * Parties or other social events in your corner of the neighborhood
- * What's happening, or what you'd like to see happen, on your street (Would you like to be a correspondent for your block...?)
- * Neighborhood traditions, or neighborhood history, that you know about
- * Special accomplishments of any of your neighbors - and there are plenty of these
- * Interviewing a particularly interesting neighbor, of which there are plenty as well
- * Home renovations and changes
- * Or, a different perspective, life in our many apartment buildings and condos

There are many more possibilities. Perhaps you might be able to:

- * Take the lead on a Poetry Corner, to feature one poem per issue - or to make Arts News your beat
- * Likewise for a Kids Corner, with articles written by neighborhood kids
- * Or alternatively, a "Kids Voices" column, where a question might be posed and reactions solicited from kids of different ages
- * Strengthen our presence on the Web, at www.jhitesnews.org, which is certainly something we'd like to do
- * Or take on something else. Or -
- * Help raise some money to support all of these new ideas!

If you are any of these people - or if

you might be any of these people - we'd like to hear from you. All it takes is an e-mail expressing your possible interest; for the moment, you can send it to Mary at Jhitesnews@comcast.net, or to Bill at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu. We'll follow up - and then soon you could be in business.

We are excited about these projected changes. But who is the "We"? The answer is just several neighbors who value our neighborhood and neighborhood life, and who want our neighborhood to continue to be a strong, vibrant, and caring place for all of us to live.

And of course, the "We" can definitely include "You." We hope you can join us. Please consider yourself invited. We hope to have our next planning meeting on August 22nd, to begin planning the Fall issue. Let us know if you would like to come.

In the meantime, Happy Summer, everyone. Looking forward to good times ahead. And see you in the Fall!

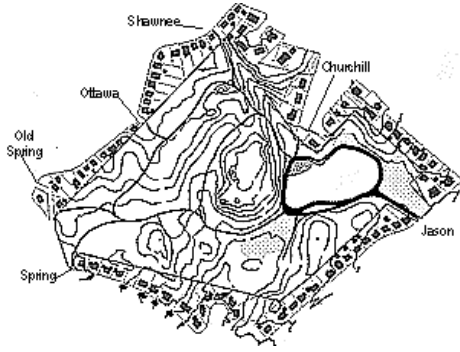
From our **Newsletter** team (in alphabetical order):

Joan Black (Bartlett Ave.)
Colin Campbell (Morton Road)
Marianne Curren (Hillsdale Ave.)
Doina Ilescu (Jason Street)
Steve Johnson (Jason Street)
Erin Manna (Bartlett Ave.)
Jane Spickett (Gray Street)
Cindy Starks (Monadnock Road)
Chris and Donna Wren (Hillsdale Ave.)

As well as:

Mary Cummings (Jason Street)
Bill Berkowitz (Pelham Terrace)
Dolores Schueler (Brunswick Road)

For the **Neighborhood Newsletter**



MENOTOMY ROCKS PARK CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS: AT LAST!

By Elizabeth Rehfeld (*Temple Street*)

The Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park have advocated for many years for capital improvements to our treasured park, so we were very pleased to see the beginning of construction in June. Most of the work will be concentrated on Hill's Pond and the paths and fields around it. By September, we'll have new pathways, irrigation for the renovated back field, a new aeration system for the pond, ramp access to the waterside, and repairs to masonry and fencing. It will be the same, but better!

Here are some project details:

Pathways: The new Pond Loop pathways will be pitched away from the pond. A row of rocks will be laid pondside in shallow trenches. The main pathway will be 10' wide to accommodate emergency vehicles and will run all the way along the back field up to the entrance to the woods. Secondary paths will be 6' wide or less. French drains will be installed in areas where there are no tree roots.

The farmer's walls near the water fountain will be kept as is, and the rebuilt path leading to the playground will be 5' wide.

The 10'-wide path at the Jason Street entrance will be pitched toward the swale with a couple of dry wells installed for drainage. Large stones arranged in a pattern called rip rap will be installed along the pond pathway near the Churchill Avenue entrance to improve drainage.

Hill's Pond: Four new aerators should help keep down the algae and reduce the need for chemical treatments.

Trees: Two damaged trees near the water fountain have been removed; new trees will be planted. The Friends of Menotomy Rocks will also be planting shrubs in the fall.

Beach Areas: The four beach areas will feature large boulders and stone steps down to the water. The existing granite blocks will be used and repositioned, and the Town has some blocks at the Res that could be used. The beach nearest Jason Street will be graded for wheelchair access with an S-shaped approach. Grading of the beach near Centennial Rock will be raised.

Fields & Irrigation: The Back Field will be renovated – soil stripped, fresh top soil installed, and reseeded. We'll also add an irrigation system to the back field.

Jason Street Fence: The DPW will remove the paint from the wrought iron fence running along Jason Street, and Arlington High School students have volunteered to repaint it black.

Woods: Work in the wooded area of the park will be limited to installing water bars to keep storm water from washing out the slope down from the woods.

What's a Water Bar? A water bar diverts serious volumes of runoff from a trail, and all of you who use the Park know we have some serious volumes. It is created by digging a trench across the trail at an angle, reinforcing the downhill side with a log or rocks, and lining the new runoff path with stones to slow erosion.

Walls: About half of the wall running along the path by the Front Field will be rebuilt.

Stilling Basin: A 30' semicircle near the pond wall will be dredged to maintain the stilling basin.

Staging Area, Work Areas, & Closings: The Front Field will be used for staging equipment, and silt fencing will be used around the pond while work is under way. Otherwise, we expect the Park to stay open all summer.

AFTER THE RENOVATIONS: NEIGHBORHOOD PARTY COMING UP!



It's almost time to come together for a Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Party! The party is planned as a grand re-opening to coincide with the completion of park renovations in September. There will be music, games, neighbors, and plenty of food; we hope it will become an annual event. More details will follow – and watch the park bulletin board for announcements.

An initial group has been meeting to plan the festivities, but we need your help. Please bring your ideas, creativity, and expertise to the table by joining the planning committee. If you are interested in learning about how you can help, contact Erin Manna at EMDreidame@hotmail.com.



The Neighborhood Newsletter is delivered to your door by dedicated volunteers coordinated by Dolores Schueler. We're looking for a few more volunteers to help with the coordination as well as distribution. If you're interested, contact us at jhitesnews@comcast.net.



PAINTING NEIGHBORHOOD SCENES

By Amy Lees (*Jason Street*)

Scene One: Where We Are

How lucky we are! Ours is the prettiest, most tender neighborhood. (That's my self-centered story and I'm sticking with it.) It is kind and open. The gardeners are out, showing their own tenderness, keeping it all going, this thoughtful cycle of blooming to closure. Shouldn't we appreciate the way the evergreens stay with us all year? Instead, we focus on the wonderful gift the deciduous trees and seasonal flowers give: Change.

Many of us approach change with at least apprehension, if not downright dread and fear. So why are we settled in our four-seasoned place instead of San Francisco, or Miami for that matter? Where blooming is not a thing that comes and goes, but a constant? Change. It keeps us here.

Scene Two: Front Yard

Change, it happens all around us: Last week the kids and I noticed a plump raccoon stumbling across our front yard as we pulled into the driveway mid-day. We followed her into the back yard and watched her shimmy up a tall thin tree. She looked down at us bravely with glowing eyes. This week she came back in the evening, this time with no urgency in her stride. She sleepily strode toward our shiny headlights, then disappeared into the hedges. We waited for her to show again, but I imagine she got comfortable under there, perhaps on a smooth patch of earth. Have you seen her? She likes our neighborhood, perhaps she's stumbled across your front yard.

She showed up a third time, this time with her tiny offspring, who was standing, wobbly, in the middle of the street, waiting to become a road pizza. The little guy looked like he'd had one too many scotches; his head was loose on his neck, his snout swinging to and fro as he attempted a few steps. We positioned our car in the road to protect the babe from oncoming traffic. It was late at night and cars were whizzing by, and I knew it was a matter of moments before the baby raccoon was hit. Perched in the half-chopped-down tree in our front yard was the mama, who finally did run into the middle of the road to the small thing, but it appeared that she was giving him a beating, not trying to rescue him. I thought she'd pick him up by the nape of the neck, but instead she seemed to bat him around and bite him a little.

I dismissed myself from the car because I was getting too emotional and left Eric and Aidan to deal with the problem. I went in the house and called the police. They told me that Animal Control hours are Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm. Unlucky little bugger. They told me they could come over and

shoot it. Well thank you. Anyway, I saw no sign of the baby the next day, but told my children that the mother likely took her baby back to the nest and tucked him in safe and sound. All I really know for sure is that, after much deliberation, he safely reached the sidewalk.

Tonight my mother-in-law called me out to the yard. She wanted to show me something. Well I'll be darned, there is a family of raccoons living in the hollowed-out tree we share with the neighbors. She's ours after all.

Scene Three: Back Yard Sights and Sounds

In winter, a wind chime sounds an alarm: "Cold wind blowing, beware!" But in spring the chime is a song, a calling, "Come see." This is what I hear on Mother's Day, from my position on the deck. That, and the neighbor cat, meowing with her green eyes yearning for connection. She trots over like a puppy, and even fetches, the little sweetheart. Hers is a saunter, that comes with a vibrating purrrrr. Hard to resist.

Like the sun. The sun melts everything. It retains youth and gives energy. Through the rays, the birds call across the yard to each other. Their songs are varied and specific. What spring has done is give me back my senses and slow everything down. Thank you! The neighbors are unveiled. Yesterday they turned their pool's heat up to a hundred degrees so the children could enjoy the afternoon swimming, despite the sixty-degree air. Let's get out there. The birds are calling.

Scene Four: The Park

Walking the neighborhood with this clipboard and pen, I see the tiny lines, the specifics. Reaching Menotomy Rocks, I sit by the pond, and drink up the surroundings. Here, it is raining rose petals from the trees, dotting the path to the pond. Ah the cherry blossom. And the sky is so blue today. Do they make paint that color? It's azure with cream and lavender. And it'd bring life to our dry, chalky upstairs hall. Bring the outside in. Do any of you readers paint murals? I'd like a tree going up my stairs on top of this blue/white/purple sky. Leave out the wind. Put a solitary cardinal on a limb. (That's the symbol of my father. I don't believe in reincarnation, yet the idea that he's a cardinal feels sweet and warm and we've all agreed: Dad's a cardinal.)

What I notice is the optimism of trees and flowers in bloom. Screams of positivity abound, even in the dandelions. A slow wind gives life to a tree, and there it is, a poem. Trees have gestures, you know. They wave and clap. They certainly smile. They hug and they love. They unfold our tight hospital corners. We loosen with appreciation. They recognize us and we revel in the recognition. Sometimes, in a rare moment, they bend to kiss us as we walk by.

Elizabeth Gilbert wrote about that human reaction whereby one can wear a look of trauma or sadness when presented with a generous gift or something as simple as a beautiful scene. I guess that explains my crinkled brow and choke in my throat as I look across Menotomy Rocks pond at the yellow-green trees lining this olive water. I hear the birds planning a party. I think I'll do that, too.



USING ART TO INSPIRE AND HEAL: KAREN DILLON

By Helena Halperin (*Gray Street*)

The luckiest people in the world are those who have useful and fulfilling work that draws on a wide range of their strongest talents. Our neighbor Karen Dillon is one of those lucky people.

Karen grew up in Arlington, the daughter of pediatrician Dr. Irving Koretsky. She's pleased with the changes in Arlington since her childhood. As our population has become more diverse, townspeople's sympathies and human understanding have grown, and because of these changes her children have not experienced the kinds of discrimination she occasionally witnessed.

She was always passionate about art. After graduating from Arlington High School, Karen was accepted in the Fine Arts program at Framingham State College, and has continued her advanced art studies throughout her adult life. What was once her avocation has become her vocation.

Karen is now a second term member of the Arlington Cultural Council (ACC), whose main function is to support the arts. She's full of ideas for using public art to help at-risk youth, beautify the town, and involve families in shared artistic activities. She is the one who created the two Arlington Art Hunts; her 2006 version won a Gold Star Award from the Mass. Cultural Council. Karen thought up the Art Hunt activity as she found herself noticing architectural and cultural details on her daily walks around town. Wanting to share what she appreciated, and wanting to create a healthy family activity, she created the Art Hunt brochure.

Another focus in Karen's life is volunteer work. Since 2000, Karen has been volunteering at The Children's Room, a

center for grieving children and teenagers, helping children use art to express and endure grief. As a result, and remembering the ways that art has helped her at difficult times in her own life, Karen now offers after-school art enrichment classes for children ages 5-17 in her own home studio, ArtisTRY.

Karen is concerned that the school art programs have been cut so severely due to budget constraints and MCAS focus, because she knows first-hand how valuable such programs are for helping children develop both their artistic creativity and their emotional resilience. She has seen the life-long benefits children get from artistic self-expression, learning to resolve emotions otherwise too confusing to articulate. Karen's classes provide ample, varied, high-quality materials, top-notch inspiration from a working artist, and small class sizes where students can have enough individual guidance to flourish as artists.

Karen is very glad she attended her tenth Arlington High reunion. There, she became reacquainted with a classmate whom she had only known slightly in high school, Paul Dillon. They married, and now have two children in the Arlington schools, Rachel at the Ottoson, and Michael at Bishop School – the same one Karen and her two brothers attended in childhood.

It's always intriguing to see artists' and architects' homes, because they are often very beautiful. Karen and Paul's house is quite special.

Neighbors, do you remember the house at 38 Brantwood Road that was wrapped in blue plastic for many months? I became very curious about what could be happening under that plastic when I walked past it many times during the renovation. Interviewing Karen gave me a chance to see it. Karen and Paul's home reflects their shared love of design. Paul is a sales manager and interior designer for an international company that designs hair salons. He and Karen gutted their home, and completely refurbished the interior, adding a great deal of space. It is filled with

authentic craftsman details, but it is new, and very beautiful.

How many tales have we all heard of marital stress when couples are building or renovating a home? Different artistic ideas can create huge frustration. So many couples say, "We'd never do it again; we'd get a divorce first"; that didn't happen to Paul and Karen. They loved working together to create something beautiful. When I asked Karen whether she would do it again, I heard the most surprising answer possible: "I wish I could do it continually. I love re-designing living space. When I can't fall asleep, I try to relax by thinking about how I would redesign a particular room." Karen and Paul have done a beautiful job on this one.

For more information about Karen's art classes, contact her at kpdillon@rcn.com or visit her website at www.artistrystudio.homestead.com. Because she wants to include children whose families who can't pay full market rate, she will offer sibling discounts as well as occasional scholarships.

COMING UP IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

* A special feature on home insurance in our neighborhood. Can we take steps together to get the rates down? What are your own thoughts here?

* An article on relationships among neighbors, based on neighborhood survey and interview data.

* Plus a humor column, and many other features, especially those you'd like to see included – or help write yourself. Keep us posted. And watch for our next issue in the Fall!



WARNING

There have been a couple of burglary attempts in the neighborhood. Please take necessary precautions and look out for each other.



OUR LOCAL ICE CREAM OSCARS...



No limos rolled; no lightbulbs flashed; the local press stayed home. But it was a big night for all three contenders. The chandelier glittered overhead. Clad in their cups of sage green, swagged blue, or plain old-fashioned Styrofoam, the creamy scoops all shone.

Awards night for Arlington’s ice cream took place on an unnamed dining room table in our very neighborhood. Four judges sat with spoons raised over dishes of vanilla from three establishments: Chilly Cow, inheritor of the former JP Licks storefront; Brigham’s, the hometown favorite located on Mill Street; and the Chai Cafe, an unexpected addition to the downtown scene.

The race began at 9:30 p.m. The judges, selected purely on the basis of their wakefulness at this hour, ranged from male to female, with an average age of 29. Each judge was persuaded to rank the contestants on flavor, texture, and value, awarding from 1 to 5 points in each category. (They were permitted three additional ice cream flavors to cleanse their palates between vanillas: Chilly Cow’s Dulce de Leche, Brigham’s Wicked Chocolate, and Chai Cafe’s Kulfi.)

The value ranking proved no contest, as the Chai Cafe packed two generous scoops for \$2.95, its “large” size, earning a 4.25 average from our judges. Brigham’s came in second at 3.12, providing slightly less ice cream in its “medium” serving for \$3.66. Chilly Cow trailed at 2.75 with a price tag of \$3.95 for a similar amount. “But they’re all outrageous,” scoffed one foreign judge. “Just go to Wisconsin.”

Meanwhile, Chilly Cow’s vanilla gained points when it came to texture, with a clear 4.0. “Dense” and “reliable” were two comments. Brigham’s followed with 3.62 (“extra points because it’s not melting so fast”), while the Chai Cafe lost at 3.12. “Their vanilla was the least cohesive,” lamented one judge.

Yet the closest ice-cream contest came last: flavor. The judges tasted and tasted again, but vanilla was something Brigham’s knows best. “Hands down,” “silky,” and “best bouquet” were some descriptions, with an average of 4.25. Chilly Cow garnered 3.875 (“not up to my grandma’s standard”). Chai Cafe’s vanilla, at 2.75, had “a rice flavor.”

Here’s the ratings summary:

	Chai Cafe	Brigham’s	Chilly Cow
Value	4.25	3.16	2.75
Texture	3.125	3.625	4.0
Flavor	2.75	4.25	3.875

Yet die-hard dairy fans shouldn’t let this settle their debates. When you live in Arlington, the world’s your oyster, or rather, your ice-cream bar. At Brigham’s, for example, the menu features several dozen flavors, including local traditions like Black Raspberry and Big Dig. The Wicked Chocolate received mixed reviews: “non-imposing, hints of fudge, “not unique,” and “not too intense – the name made it disappointing.”

At Chilly Cow, the selection changes daily. Those with iron stomachs can try pink or blue flavors; the Dulce de Leche might satisfy the fainter-hearted. “A cross between coffee and caramel.” “Too sweet, but very smooth – I like that.” “It might grow on you, but I’m not going to stay to find out.”

Or, suggests one judge, try the Chai Cafe for “less standardosity.” The Indian store serves Mango, Coconut, and other exotic flavors. Their Kulfi ice cream was “way cool” (“Is that ginger?” “No, cardamom!”) and deserves “points for pure fun.”

WILL THE PARMENTER SCHOOL BUILDING BE SOLD?

New plans for the Parmenter School building could be in the works.

As you may know (or maybe not!) the Parmenter building – the site of the former Parmenter School – has for many decades been owned by the Town. After the Parmenter School closed in the early 1980’s, the building was rented, and remains rented to the newly-renamed International School and to the Arlington Children’s Center. Jurisdiction over the property belongs to the Arlington Redevelopment Board.

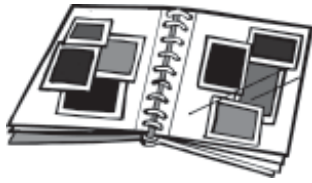
This spring, Town Meeting voted to continue that arrangement through June, 2011. However, as you probably do know, the Town faces a continuing budget shortfall. Barring a local aid windfall, or a future override, few new revenue sources are on the horizon. As a result, the Town is continually looking for new sources of income. And it’s true that significant new income (though one-time income) would be generated if the Parmenter School building were sold.

Will that actually happen? The Selectmen report that no sales proposal is on the table right now. But investigation by the School Department and others will continue, and a proposal could come before Town Meeting next year. Do you have thoughts on this matter? If so, you might let your Town Meeting and School Committee members know about them.
– BB



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READY FOR SCRAPBOOKING?

By Erin Manna (*Bartlett Avenue*)

Are you interested in making the most of your family memories? Summer is the best time to do just that – the kids are out of school, and you have an entire year’s worth of photos. Stop making excuses and start having fun with your memories!

For novice scrapbookers, organizing all of your photos might sound like a daunting task. Don’t worry; it’s easier than it seems. Many scrappers generally start with a holiday or birthday when it comes to making their first book. There are usually more pictures from these occasions, and it’s easy to find embellishments.

To get started, lay out all of your pictures and decide how you would like to organize them – by person, chronologically, geographically, etc. Next, group like photos together and find a common color scheme that would work well with each of the pictures. Generally, it is best to put an odd number of pictures on a page (three is the most pleasing to the eye). Make sure to include a title and some journaling; it would be a shame to forget who attended your celebration in the years to come.

If you are interested in a neighborhood scrapbooking club, please contact Erin Manna via email at stampinspectacular@hotmail.com. Scrapping is always more fun with friends!



WATCH OUT FOR RABIES

By Donna Wren (*Hillsdale Road*)

A raccoon on the bike path during the day, staring at you and not running away. A skunk dying in the backyard. A bat landing on your head when you open a patio umbrella. All these things have happened to our family in the past four years.

What should you do if this happens to you? Should you worry about rabies? Yes. Rabies is a common problem in this area. Last year, 6% of the animals submitted for testing in Middlesex County tested positive for rabies. The animals most likely to have rabies in our area are raccoons and skunks, but bats are also high on the list.

The best thing to do is to try to avoid exposure. If an animal is acting strangely, avoid it and call Animal Control. In particular, if a usually nocturnal animal is out during the day, stay away! Make sure your pets are up to date with their vaccinations, to keep them and your family safe. If you are bitten, go to the emergency room. Not only do you have to think about rabies, but the bite itself needs attention to prevent infection and tetanus.

Bats are a special case, though. Their bite can be so small that you don’t know it’s there, especially if you wake up to a bat in your room or you find a bat in the room of a child. In the US between 1980 and 2002, 91% of the cases of rabies were from bats; but only 3 of the 29 cases reported a bite. In general, if there is even the slightest chance of exposure to a bat, it’s best to get checked out and get medical advice, since rabies is almost always fatal.

Where should you go for treatment? Most physicians’ offices do not stock rabies vaccine and would direct you to a local emergency room. Gone are the days of “thirty shots in the stomach,” but full treatment still requires multiple injections over 28 days. You would most likely have to return to the emergency room at regular intervals to receive the full treatment. This is designed to prevent the development of rabies, and consists of two parts. The first day involves an injection of Human Rabies Immune Globulin, which is an antibody to rabies obtained from cells grown in culture. The second injection, also on the first day, is the Rabies Vaccine. The immune globulin starts fighting any potential rabies virus, while the vaccine has time to induce your own immune response; so both are necessary! Then there are more Rabies Vaccine injections on Days 3, 7, 14, and 28. There is no contraindication to getting the injections if you are pregnant.

If you happen to find a dead or dying animal in your yard or in the park, call Animal Control. The animal can be collected and taken to the state for testing, providing useful information for state officials and medical providers in our area.

When not keeping a watchful eye on her young family, our neighbor Donna is a Staff Physician at North Shore Children’s Hospital.

The Neighborhood Newsletter is produced through generous contributions from neighbors, the assistance of Swifty Printing, and the underwriting support of Judy Weinberg of Venner Road and RE/MAX Leading Edge Real Estate, judylynnweinberg@gmail.com.



... And while we’re on the topic, please consider making a contribution to help support the **Newsletter**.



NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING MARKET

By Judy Weinberg (*Venmer Road*)

I was deciding what to write about for this issue, when I opened the *Globe* today and saw the following headline in the Business section: “Hopes for Real Estate Revival Wilt.” The sub-heading was “Single-family Home Sales Drop by up to 9% in May, Cap Disappointing Spring.” Anecdotally, though, I’ve seen Arlington have very strong real estate activity these past few months, so I thought I’d compare Arlington’s sales figures against those statewide.

The Warren Group, a real estate data publisher, stated that from January to May 2007, the number of single-family homes sold in Massachusetts is down 3% compared to the same period last year, and the average price is down about 5%. In Arlington, the volume is the same (110 in 2006, 108 in 2007) and the price is down about 3% (\$541,042 in ’06, \$525,303 in ’07). So far, this year is turning out to be relatively flat compared to last year. I wouldn’t exactly say it was wilting.

There are currently 66 single-family homes under agreement in Arlington, and the average amount of days they were on the market before accepting an offer is less than 30! That shows a very promising level of activity.

Our Neighborhood in the News

Boston Magazine had its annual real estate issue in May, and the main article was entitled “The Best Streets to Live On: Did Yours Make the List?” They listed 65 streets in the Boston metro area, and our own Pleasant Street was cited. Their description was “On one end of Pleasant is Route 2; on the other, Arlington Center. In between are \$700,000 single-family homes blessed with views of Spy Pond.”

The following chart shows all real estate sales in our Newsletter neighborhood between March 18 and June 25, 2007:

Single-Family homes	
22 Addison Street	\$ 516,000
26 Bailey Road	\$ 425,000
9 Bonad Road	\$ 475,000
76 Brantwood Road	\$ 746,000
30 Brunswick Road	\$ 780,000
104 Churchill Avenue	\$ 628,000
24 Irving Street	\$ 1,000,000
7 Woodland Street	\$ 715,000
Condominiums	
34 Jason Street, #1	\$ 324,000
40 Pleasant Street, #2	\$ 499,000
60 Pleasant Street, #510	\$ 203,500
125 Pleasant Street, #1	\$ 205,000
125 Pleasant Street, #405	\$ 340,000

NIKA – HOMEWARD BOUND

By Marianne Curren (*Hillsdale Road*)

As the neighborhood stay of Nika (our nearby student from afar) draws to a close, it seems an appropriate time for both a follow-up and a look-back.

In August when she arrived from Azerbaijan on a Future Leadership Exchange scholarship, Nika was awed by the sights and somewhat uncertain of her English. Now, as she prepares to leave with an entire academic year behind her, she’s confident, analytical, and determined to apply what she learned in Arlington and in our neighborhood within her hometown of Baku.

Before she left Azerbaijan, Nika had seen herself as mature, fully formed. Ten months later, she marvels at what she’s experienced. The diversity in Arlington and elsewhere she visited exposed Nika to “different opinions, religions, ethnic backgrounds.” She “learned to think from different points of view,” and now debates – even with herself – over issues that once seemed obvious. And after working for a week to help rebuild in New Orleans during her school vacation, she also now knows that there is contrast in America; the surprising selfishness of some people and some government officials is what she claims to have liked least about her American adventure.

Nika departs from her Menotomy Rocks neighborhood feeling “this place is perfect.” Just recently she fully realized that there are no fences around our homes, and enjoys the physical beauty of the area. She feels very safe, commenting that people trust each other, even to the extent of often not locking their doors. Finally, she also loves the idea of animals as our pets and companions, particularly dogs – not possible in Baku, where residents are apartment dwellers.

An aspect of local life that truly appeals to Nika is environmental awareness. While recycling is presently not an option in Baku, much to Nika’s dismay, there are eco-friendly programs Nika hopes to introduce at home. Passing on textbooks will be one focus, as the cost of buying their own books keeps some kids out of school. Community service, a graduation requirement at Arlington High School, is another concept Nika would like to share. Motivated teens in Baku spend much of their time studying and the balance on chores and leisure; Nika believes that compulsory service would benefit everyone. The drug and alcohol awareness programs at AHS also made an impression, and will make it onto Nika’s list of ideas to pursue. “I hope I can make a difference,” Nika says.

As a passionate young woman, Nika of course has words of advice for other foreign students: be patient. And she encourages all teens to learn about other cultures and “look at the globe once in a while.” As she packs to go home and reunite with her family, Nika acknowledges that re-entry will pose challenges. She admits that she has changed, but states firmly and proudly, “I know that I’ve changed in a better way.” Our little corner of the world is happy to have played a role, however small, in the process.

ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD PARTY TALE

By Will Stein (*Oak Knoll*)



The suggestion in a recent **Neighborhood Newsletter** to have more neighborhood parties and get-togethers, brings to mind a party-warming activity that we saw at a good friend's 50th birthday; we then incorporated it ourselves into my wife Miriam's 60th birthday affair.

If the attendees range from those who have known the honoree(s) for a long time to those who have met him or her (or them) only later in life, and perhaps even more recent acquaintances, it is great fun to do this and instructive for all. At a party to welcome new neighbors, a modification of this game is given below:

Designate somebody to be master/mistress of ceremonies (M.C.), typically the one with the video camera or a long-time friend or neighbor. Have the guests arrange themselves in order of how long they have known the honoree(s), from the M.C.'s left to right. Then the M.C. calls on each, in turn, to say how long they have known him or her (or them) and give a brief anecdote about their relationship. The M.C. must not forget to take his or her turn at the appropriate time.

At my wife's 60th birthday get-together, for example, we started with her mother, moved on through her school and early college friends, then me, continuing through the years up to her most recent friends and co-workers. It was enjoyable and memorable; everybody learned something that had been outside of their previous experiences with her.

In the case of a party to welcome new neighbors, one might still carry this off as a presentation to the new honorees arranged from oldest to second-newest in the neighborhood. The anecdotes should be pitched to humorous neighborhood situations that have some instructive or other side benefit to the new arrivals.

If you do make a neighborhood-oriented party using this idea (or a further modification), please share the experience and some of the anecdotes in a future **Newsletter**.

Thanks, Will, and looking forward to hearing from others of you!



Neighborhood Photo Contest

What better way to start an online **Neighborhood Newsletter** photo gallery than with a contest. We're looking for pictures that show what our neighborhood is all about. Send your pictures to jhitesnews@comcast.net. The prize will be a framed copy of the winning photo. Written permission must be provided from any recognizable humans in the pictures.

GRATEFUL GARDENERS

By Jane Spickett (*Gray Street*)



One garden not enough? Or too much?

If you are interested in gathering together to share work in each other's gardens or to offer our help to neighbors who would be kind enough to let us help them, please call me:

Jane: 781-646-7539

(Yes, I know it's New England; but asking for help really does give us the opportunity to give!)

NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING

By Betsy Kamborian (*Pelham Terrace*)

Interested in discussing big ideas? World politics? Touchy issues?

Would you enjoy testing your beliefs with neighbors who disagree with your position?

Are you a secret fan of John Stuart Mill?

Well, then, consider joining our newly-formed discussion group, *The Sapient's Salon*. We will meet bi-weekly to discuss issues of interest to members of the group, operating on the principle that intellectual development results from thoughtful challenges to our positions and beliefs, not from agreement with them.

Come, bring your ideas and beliefs, find out what it takes to defend your position. Discover how challenging others or advocating a different point of view can keep you on your toes intellectually. And be ready to be stimulated!

If you are interested in being part of this new neighborhood venture, please contact Mary at jhitesnews@comcast.net, or Bill at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu.

CONTACT THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

We always welcome your letters, articles, or suggestions, as well as any donations you might be able to make. To contact Mary Cummings, Editor:

Write to: 135 Jason St.

E-mail: Jhitesnews@comcast.net

Website: www.jhitesnews.org

To make a contribution to **The Neighborhood Newsletter**: Make checks payable to "Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association" and send to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace. Thank you for your support!