



SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLY ANNUAL REPORT 2014

“The mission of the Assembly shall be to improve the quality of life for all residents of Southwest; to open to every resident the wide cultural horizon of urban living; to help create rich and equal social, educational, and economic opportunities for residents of Southwest; to assist in providing the opportunity for gainful employment for all; to promote development of the economic and aesthetic potential of Southwest, and preserve its diverse history. This mission shall be pursued without regard to the social, economic and racial barriers that have divided cities in the past.”

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SWNA 2013-2015 Officers and Board Members

(as of March 1, 2015)

President: Bruce Levine

Vice-President: Perry Klein

Secretary: Donna Purchase

Treasurer: Anne Martin

District Representatives:

1st District: Jason Kopp and Pat Spencer

2nd District: Saadia Athias and Dena Walker

3rd District: Kenneth Prater

4th District: (vacant)

Task Forces:

The Southwester: Shannon Vaughn

Youth Activities: Thelma D. Jones

Education and Scholarship: Vyllorya Evans and Thelma D. Jones

History: (vacant)

Technology: Perry Klein

Emergency Preparedness: Ben Curran and Thelma D. Jones

Message from the President

Bruce Levine

2014 was both a year of continuity and change for the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly—continuity in that we continued to serve as volunteers to “improve the quality of life for all residents” and change in that, after almost four years of service to our organization and the citizens of Southwest, Kael Anderson decided to step down as President and I assumed the position for the duration of his term. On behalf of our Board, we gratefully thank Kael for his dedication and hard work and wish him the best going forward.

Even as all residents of Southwest are, by definition, members of the Assembly, most of the heavy lifting is done by the individuals who contribute their time and energy by taking positions on our Board of Directors. This requires more than coming to our monthly board meetings at our offices at 1101 4th Street, and to our monthly community meetings—between the meetings, much work needs to be accomplished, inquiries responded to, plans made, etc. It has been a pleasure for me to join this group of concerned citizens and to now be leading them through a time of change unlike anything the community has seen for many decades. We should all be thankful to these volunteers who have stepped up and for any who may step down after our March elections, we are proud to have worked with you and appreciate your commitment.

Beyond the Board, our Task Forces are the way in which the Assembly impacts the daily life of Southwest. This year, our Youth Activities, Education and Scholarship, Emergency Preparedness, and Technology task forces were all very active, and the beauty of these is that there is no limit to how many members of the community can get involved. Each Task Force will be filing its own annual reports below so no need to enumerate here their many accomplishments. However, on behalf of the Assembly Board, we do want to recognize and sincerely thank Cecille Chen, who stepped down from the board and the History Task force during the year, for the invaluable efforts she made to ensure that the history, architecture and other great features of the community are preserved for us all and those to come.

Also critical to the success of our efforts are the many established and new partners in and around SW. Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, an established one, has been a gracious host for most of our community meetings and we look forward to the continuation of that relationship. Over the course of the year we began collaborating with Steve Moore, the Executive Director of the soon-to-be fully functional Southwest Business Improvement District, which will be a very important asset to the community. After assuming the presidency, I began a “listening tour” of the community in which I reached out to various stakeholders (and will continue this process for however long I am president) to, in part, make clear that the Assembly’s mode of operation is to collaborate and partner around important initiatives and issues, and I am grateful for the time they have all given me in this pursuit which we expect to pay dividends for us all in 2015 and beyond.

Critically, in 2014, The Assembly worked to solidify our role as Southwest’s leading “convener” and authoritative information source, and in our recent Board strategic planning session, we reaffirmed our commitment to playing these related roles. As a convener, we hosted a wide variety of popular community meetings, ranging from a forum on Shakespeare Theatre’s plans for the Southeastern University building to two well-attended Mayoral candidate forums. In addition, we held a special

meeting on the planned development at Buzzard Point and another on the District's initial planning for a new SW Library. The final convening of the year was our holiday party, held at a very welcome newcomer in Southwest, Masala Art Indian restaurant—we were so pleased to see a great turnout of our friends, including our new Ward 6 City Council member Charles Allen and Elissa Silverman, Councilmember-at-Large, also a resident of Ward 6.

We are continually reminded of how valuable the print version of *The Southwester* is to the community and we are fortunate to have a team of dedicated volunteers who make sure that we all see a copy every month. We do recognize that electronic means of communication afford us enhanced ways to provide timely information to all of our members and throughout 2014, we sent out email blasts periodically, and continued to work on both *The Southwester* and Assembly websites to make them as valuable as possible. More work lies ahead on this front, and we were also involved in working to establish a Public Information Display System, in conjunction with the DC Department of Transportation and Safeway that we hope will be up and running as early as spring of 2015.

Fortunately, in a community like Southwest, there are always residents with good ideas for civic projects that need some kind of home and we at the Assembly view ourselves as an appropriate incubator of such endeavors. Accordingly, in 2014, we continued to provide administrative and fiscal agent support to the Neighbors of the Southwest Duck Pond, PAWS of Southwest, and Southwest Gardens Group. One of the exciting events of this past year was the opening of the Dog Park in Lansburgh Park.

In 2014, we started to make an effort, as some of you may have noted, to refer to ourselves as the Assembly or even by our full name—Southwest Neighborhood Assembly—rather than SWNA. We realize that using the acronym is convenient but we believe using these other appellations is more conducive to the brand we wish to build—and so we hope that all of you gradually get comfortable in joining us in this effort.

As we wrap up our 2014 year, we on the Board hope that the Assembly has had a positive impact on the lives of all of you in big or small ways. That is always our intention and 2015 will see us moving into some new endeavors and working to do even better at what we have always done. Certainly, not every decision we make and step we take will garner unanimous praise but be assured that everything we do is considered in the light of whether it will “improve the quality of life for all residents.”

The Southwester

Shannon Vaughn, Editor-in-Chief

Julia Cole, Copy/Web Editor

Over the course of 2014, *The Southwester* published 12 monthly issues – seven eight-page issues and five 12-page issues for a total of 116 pages. All of the issues are available in PDF format online at www.thesouthwester.com and as part of a DVD containing the past 50 years of *Southwester* issues, available for a donation of \$50 or more.

Some highlights of *The Southwester's* 2014 issues include:

- Extensive coverage of The Wharf development and its impact on the community
- Articles on the DC United stadium deal
- National Cherry Blossom Festival
- 5x5 art installation, SW ArtsFest, and (e)merge art fair
- Opening of the Southwest Dog Park

Some of our other accomplishments during 2014 include expanding our coverage of Near Southeast, particularly in terms of the new businesses that have opened at Navy Yard, as well as the continuation of our regular features such as “Know Your Neighborhood” and “Welcome to the Neighborhood.”

This year we also continued our aggressive social media campaigns on Facebook and Twitter, where we now have about 150 likes and more than 900 followers, respectively.

In 2015, *The Southwester* hopes to increase readership even more than we already have and continue to provide the community with a high-quality newspaper, both in print and online.

Technology Task Force

Perry Klein, Chair

The Southwest Neighborhood Assembly is one of only four Microsoft Registered Refurbisher located in the District of Columbia. With the discontinuation of Microsoft's support for Windows XP, the Technology Task Force has found it necessary to upgrade our refurbished computers to Windows 7. This has involved installing not only the operating system, but also often, additional RAM and larger hard drives.

In 2014, the Technology Task Force installed a computer center at the Greenleaf Community Family Resident Council office, which is now used for workforce training (see the photo below).



The Technology Task Force set up internet access for the computer center we had installed at the Randall Community Center. We also provided notebook computers to several of the students who received scholarships as part of the Education and Scholarship Task Force program. And we filled requests to provide additional computers to Amidon-Bowen school.

Youth Activities Task Force

Thelma D. Jones, Chair

Established in 1982 by a group of committed volunteers, the SWNA Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) has a mission to provide support to the more than one thousand youth in our community, ages 6-21, by identifying needs, raising financial contributions and then distributing the raised funds to various groups that support youth in Southwest (20024). Over the thirty-year history, support to youth has taken many varied forms. In 2014, ten grants were made to support the following activities:

- Assist with purchase of basketball uniforms for the King Greenleaf (KGR) “Wolfpack” basketball teams (\$450)
- Assist with purchase of “Wolfpack” baseball program equipment (\$216)
- Help support Greenleaf housing Easter Cookout (\$200)
- Purchase snacks for Amidon-Bowen Elementary School for testing days (\$202)
- Purchase kits and manual for Safe Sitter training class (\$1,423)
- Support KGR “Young Ladies on the Rise” program (\$330)
- Assist with expenses for the Greenleaf housing summer basketball camp (\$525)
- Purchase healthy refreshments for Computer-For-Kids classes (\$55)
- Support SWNA Technology Task Force program that provides refurbished computers to graduates of Computer-For-Kids program (\$600)
- Support annual Southwest CommUnity Day (\$800)

Also, we partially reimbursed one YATF member’s expenses for attending a grants training workshop (\$200)

TOTAL of 11 items: \$5,001

Most of the community grants support programs and activities conducted by community members who volunteer much time and energy to engage the youth in our community (e.g. coaches, educators, community leaders). The primary program implemented by YATF members is our “Computers-For-Kids” computer training classes, a program that began in October, 2007. In 2014 two classes were held (eight sessions each). Twelve youth participated and six youth successfully completed the two classes. Since its inception, approximately 85 children have graduated.

In order to fund these activities, YATF through its volunteers seeks contributions, primarily via an annual mailing solicitation. During the year, a little over a dozen donations were received that totaled about

\$1,300, the largest of almost \$400 coming from a fall yard sale that members participated in at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Then in November we mailed out over 300 letters to solicit contributions. This resulted in a little over 30 individuals contributing over \$4,000, just enough to cover the expenses for the year. (Note: some of this was received in early 2015 so is not reflected in the 2014 Financial Statement found elsewhere in this Annual Report.)

We wish more residents would respond to our efforts to solicit donations. The needs far exceed the Task Force's ability to support programs for our youth. Therefore, we will conclude this annual report by asking all who read this to immediately send in a contribution for 2015. No special form is needed. Simply send in a check payable to SWNA-YATF (no need to spell it out) to the following address:

SWNA-YATF, PO Box 70131, Washington, DC 20024.

Thank you! Our neighborhood youth will appreciate and benefit from your generosity.

Current YATF Members:

Thelma Jones, Chair, Renee Feder, Secretary, Rick Bardach, Treasurer, Safiyyah Aleem-Woods, Saadia Athias, Vyllorya Evans, Frank Fu, Cheryl Hansberry-Moore, Perry Klein, Dale MacIver, Vincent Matthews, Beryl Rice, Marcellus Watson, Delmar Weathers, and Andre Wilkinson.

Education and Scholarship Task Force

Vyllorya Evans and Thelma D. Jones, Co-chairs

Six students received \$1,500 scholarships this year, including two selected and sponsored by the Friends of Southwest DC and one partially sponsored by Westminster Presbyterian Church. Several students received refurbished notebook computers from the Technology Task Force, two of which were sponsored by individual donations.

Of the six students who received scholarships, four were first time recipients. The students were recognized Saturday, August 16, 2014, at an awards ceremony at Westminster Presbyterian Church. More than 40 guests, including former scholarship recipients gathered to meet this year's recipients. Participating in the program were the SWNA Technology Task Force and Friends of Southwest DC. Prior to the program, students participated in a Setting Your Financial Goals workshop conducted by Morgan Price and Clarence Taylor of Sun Trust Bank Investments, Inc. During the interactive workshop participants shared their goals and discussed budgeting and managing debt. They received \$150 in gift certificates to help with their college expenses.

Over the past four decades, this community supported fund has helped approximately 280 neighborhood youth achieve their educational goals by providing grants to help defray the cost of tuition, purchase textbooks and provide for small necessities.

The Applicants

Any student who lives in the Southwest" community Zip Code 20024 and has been accepted to an accredited college or post-secondary institution is eligible to be considered for a scholarship. A personal

interview, scholastic achievement, financial need, and community service are considered when making the awards.

Because of the varied housing and income levels of Southwest, our scholarship recipients come from public housing, subsidized housing (Section 8) and middle-income residences.

Committee Members

Vyllorya Evans, Co-Chair, Thelma D. Jones, Co-Chair, Rick Bardach, Cheryl Hansberry-Moore, Perri Hamlin, Audrey Hinton, Dale MacIver, Donna Purchase, Dena Walker, Delmar Weathers

The Scholarship recipients for year 2014/2015:

Khadijah B. Chase, Trinity Washington University

Gary T. Hill, Cheyney University

Asha R. Marshall, Radford University

Marlon Mitchell, Kent State University transferred to Jackson State University 2nd Semester

Tyree Price, Lincoln University

Yurlee Tinsley, South Carolina State University

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Emergency Preparedness Task Force

Ben Curran and Thelma D. Jones, Co-chairs

Established in 2011, the SW Emergency Preparedness Task Force has been largely dormant over the past couple of years; however, it is now being revitalized and led by Ben Curran and Thelma Jones, former leaders of the original group. Curran, the recipient of the 2014 Mayor’s Community Service Award for Emergency Preparedness and Public Safety, organized a community discussion on “Building a Disaster Resilient Community” at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School in September 2014, and became interested in re-firing up the Task Force together with Thelma D. Jones, recipient of the 2010 Mayor’s Community Service Award in the Category of Lifetime Achievement.

The mission of the Task Force is to be a center of excellence in the District that promotes individual, family and community emergency preparedness, and carefully builds a “disaster resilient SW community” that will be better able to cope and withstand the effects of any kind of disaster – earthquake, hurricane, major ice storm, major fire, or other crisis.

The values underlying the work of the Task Force focus on:

- Patience. Important not to try to do everything all at once. Building the kind of cohesive community network that leads to a disaster resilient community takes time. It grows a little bit after each interaction, each community activity, each added participant in the process, each commitment made towards becoming prepared for a disaster.

- Respect for others' contributions, ideas, and efforts especially each volunteer participant in the process.
- Inclusiveness of the whole community – youth; seniors; houses of worship; homeless; housing communities; businesses large, small and micro; non-profits; schools; the library; government offices...everyone.
- Coordination that is close, constant and well-integrated with Serve DC, local first responders, American Red Cross, the DC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the ANC, local elected officials, and other community emergency preparedness leaders from elsewhere in the city.
- Empowerment and self-determination in order to encourage all members of the community to take responsibility and prepare for disasters.

The (all volunteer) organization of the revitalized Task Force will have two co-chairs, a Special Assistant, an Events Planning team, a Strategic Communications team, a Community Liaison team, and a Community Emergency Response Training team.

The expected activities will include:

- (co)-hosting two or three focused talks and discussions per year about various aspects of disaster preparedness, response and recovery – including some international disaster case studies;
- hosting informal open discussions held at a local community spot;
- drafting a simple descriptive promotional brochure;
- organizing a web-page with practical information for community members;
- having an active training program that promotes further CERT training in order to build up the cadre of SW members able to assist in the event of a deployment by Serve DC;
- creating an outreach campaign to promote wide-spread adoption of the AlertDC “Be Aware, Be Ready, Be Safe” communications tool;
- establishing an active emergency preparedness information dissemination campaign utilizing local festivals, the library, the Southwester, condominium associations, houses of worship and any other local community hubs of activity;
- organizing possible field trips to various disaster offices/sites including DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency Operations Center; American Red Cross Disaster Operations Center; the Pentagon 9/11 Memorial; Designing for Disaster exhibit at the National Building Museum;
- participating in ongoing disaster drills and exercises, as possible, with the long-term desire to host a drill in SW;
- leading a small Community Disaster Resilience Think Tank to review DC disaster history and also which disaster resilience practices from around the country to consider applying in SW;

Members: Thelma D. Jones and Ben Curran, cochairs; Saadia Athias, Robert Graham, Andrea Mitchell, Tanya Stevenson, Haregewoin Tesfahun.