



# Browncroft Crier

NEWSLETTER OF THE BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1973 - Volume #214

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

Fall 2024

## BNA Executive Committee

### Officers:

President

Vice-President

Cassy Petsos

Secretary

Sara Castro

Treasurer

John McQueen

### District Reps

Elm

James Nicholson

Corwin

Holly Petsos

Croydon

David D. Kaiser

### BNA Email:

contact page on <http://browncroftna.org>

### Crier Editor -

Cassy Petsos

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## BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD 100 YEARS OLD: BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION: 50 YEARS OLD

The subdivisions that make up the Browncroft Neighborhood Association began their histories approximately 100 years ago: Browncroft, 1912; Elmcroft 1923, Kingsbury (Quentin Road), 1921. The neighborhood association officially organized 50 years later in 1974, though it was not the first time neighbors had organized around preservation issues, as there had been a predecessor group, which turned over \$600 of left-over funds to the newly formed BNA.

In the early 1900s developers were responsible for the infrastructure -- streets, curbs, side-

walks, trees -- which they turned over to the municipality when finished. Browncroft Realty set the tone, which the Elmcroft and Kingsbury developers emulated to some degree, advertizing their proximity to Browncroft and "like Browncroft." This was a reference to setting up an ideal environment in which lot purchasers could build. The charming setting was

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## THE 2024-25 MEMBERSHIP

The 2024-24 Membership Drive has begun.

Your membership is important to the Browncroft Neighborhood Association. It provides fiscal support to carry-out the activities of the organization, which build community among neighbors and communication with the City so that we can more effectively address concerns and continue to ensure the quality of life in our area.

Annual dues are \$10 per house-

hold and go directly to supporting the ongoing activities of the BNA described in the main article. The big-ticket expenses in the past year were the Crier newsletter, the Ice Cream Social and the books for the School 46 kindergarten. In the coming year improvements in the Browncroft Rose Garden will be another focus, such as replacing some of the rose bushes with ever-blooming varieties and replacing the damaged concrete bench.

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## Membership

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Equally important, your payment of dues is an expression of support and appreciation for the valuable personal volunteer time donated by BNA's 17 Street Representatives, 4 Officers, and 8 Committee Chairs who serve on the BNA Board of Directors, as well as the volunteers who perform their work for the betterment of this neighborhood of 682 residential households.

Please take the time to be a supporting member of BNA by enclosing your \$10 annual dues and mailing them to BNA in the pre-printed envelope provided with this newsletter and filling in your name, address, phone, email, and demographic information. This information is kept confidential. If you prefer to save postage, drop it off to your Street Rep (See list in this newsletter), who will turn it in to the Treasurer. If you lose the envelope, just inscribe the above information on a piece of paper, and mail it to the Browncroft Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, NY 14610.

Also, we recommend that you subscribe to the BNA-Announce list to receive notification of important neighborhood information or late breaking news. Your email address will not be shared with any outside entity, social media or other neighbors, but it is a great way to stay connected with BNA between newsletters and meetings.

**Thank you for your membership!!**

*If you are a BNA Announce subscriber, please check your spam folder, as some email service providers misdirect mail from BNA.*

## NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

The BNA Board is composed of 4 Officers, 17 Street Representatives, Standing Committee Chairs, and the Ex-Officio President:

### BNA Officers

President -  
V.P. - Cassy Petsos  
Treasurer - John McQueen  
Secretary - Sara Castro

### BNA Street Representatives 2024-25

One designated Street Representative from each area street serves on the Board of Directors. The streets make up Districts which are represented by District Representatives, who are one of the Street Reps in that district. The officers and District reps comprise the Executive Committee, which meets on alternate periods between full Board meetings.

### ELM District:

Jim Nicholson. District Rep (28 Berwick)  
Andrew Spadoni ( Elm Dr.)  
Cara Paul (141 Elmcroft)  
Kathy Boyle (84 Lanark)  
Kathy Nye (154 Merchants)  
Sara Cousins (55 Quentin)

### CORWIN District:

Holly Petsos, District Rep (175 Browncroft)  
Dede Ranger (193 Corwin)  
Ann Kanthor (175 Dorchester)  
Vacant (Gramercy Pk)  
Sam Walters (50 Ramsey Park)  
Kathy Grady (67 Windemere)

### CROYDON District:

David Kaiser, District Rep (375 Yarmouth)

Patrick Phillips (340 Beresford)  
Adam Agosti (97 Croydon Rd)  
Vacant (Gaslight La.)  
John Edelman (205 Newcastle)

### Committee Chairpersons

Beautification, Cassy Petsos  
Budget & Finance, John McQueen  
Communication, Bob Genthner  
Crime Prevention, Vacant  
History, Sharon Bloemendaal  
Hospitality, Kathy Boyle  
Membership, Vacant  
Newsletter, Cassy Petsos  
School 46 Liaison, Ann Kanthor  
Technology, Paul Tomblin

## VOLUNTEERS ARE THE LIFE BLOOD OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Very few neighborhood organizations have paid staff, and those rely more on volunteers to get the actual work accomplished, from organizing events to publishing communications to neighborhood park maintenance. Browncroft relies 100% on volunteers to get all those things done.

If our residents believe that having a vibrant neighborhood association is a benefit to the community then it is necessary for our residents to be involved. The payment of dues is only a start. The following positions must be filled soon to enable the Browncroft Neighborhood Association to continue:

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# 100 Years and 50 Years

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also complete with the architecture of the homes, which at the time – the post World War I building boom of the 1920s – was focused on historic picturesque styles, such as colonial revival, Tudor revival, and Georgian revival, but in a smaller scale suited for the “modern” families of the time. By the 1950s this idyllic setting became fully realized due to the majestic mature trees and their sheltering canopy. Their complex spreading root systems -- perfect for fairies to set up their houses -- completes the ambiance by the 1970s and today.

The Browncroft area is remarkably well preserved at 100, with the real estate values to match. Many of the older and majestic trees are succumbing to their age, especially in the historic Browncroft subdivision section. But after losses in the 1960s to Dutch elm disease in the Elmcroft and Quentin Road area, and on Dorchester and Yarmouth Roads, mass replanting around Rochester was done by the City and those trees are substantial today, recreating the arching canopy that is an asset to any street anywhere in the world. And Browncroft Subdivision neighbors have also been replanting one tree at a time as individual trees on their private property along the public sidewalks are lost, thereby keeping that unique historic landscape intact.

The housing has remained owner occupied, and therefore, well maintained by a large percentage of longtime residents, as well as a growing number of newer homeowners settling-in and enjoying the lifestyle that the neighborhood legacy provides. An indication of the enduring affection that chil-

dren who grew up here hold for this neighborhood is evidenced by the number of them who return as adult homeowners; the number who have moved to other parts of the country, but who return to visit the neighborhood as sentimental tourists; and the existence of a Face Book page for those who “grew up in Browncroft”.

Currently, it is politically correct to denounce the character and lifestyle this neighborhood provides rather than appreciate that the lot sizes -- sufficient only, in a majority of cases, for an outdoor garden room, with houses separated only by narrow driveways -- do not sprawl all over the landscape as did many of the post World War II housing boom of the suburbs. Detractors do not appreciate that low and moderate income apartment complexes flank the neighborhood on each border and their residents enjoy the walk-ability within this neighborhood.

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association has been around for 50 years, which is longer than even many of the longtime residents, and although it could not/cannot maintain people’s houses and properties for them, it can and did establish communication with local government to encourage positive improvements and prevent negative “improvements”; work with the City to refurbish and maintain the Browncroft Rose Garden; research neighborhood history to contribute a booklet as part of the City’s Sesquicentennial Neighborhoods Histories project, and later, for nomination of the Browncroft Subdivision to the State and National Register

of Historic Places; maintain an archive of neighborhood historic material that residents enjoy viewing, host lectures on a variety of topics; publish this newsletter, organize the BNA Garage Sales, Garden Tours, and social events; provide gifts of books for the incoming kindergarten students at #46 School; and maintain the necessary infrastructure of a strong neighborhood association.

The neighborhood association to-date, has never been a party to any lawsuit, contrary to the belief of some. Rather, it has been a beneficiary of private actions and investments of others that it can be said contributed to the continuation of the neighborhood as it has always been - a great place to live for anyone who wants the lifestyle it provides.

A 100-year old neighborhood and 50-year old neighborhood association is significant at this point in time. Is the neighborhood at a juncture? Are there enough younger generation residents expecting to live here long term, who recognize what they liked about the neighborhood when they moved-in and develop enough of a feeling of home and appreciation to see the neighborhood remain attractive, strong and safe? It may be necessary for newer neighbors to get involved the way older neighbors did 50 years ago, while working full time and caring for their families, when they took over from the residents who had lived here for the first 50 years.





## AN UNUSUAL GARDEN & A MYSTERY

At 124 Merchants Rd. is a charming stucco house with a frieze of the bust of a distinguished looking 18th or 19th century gentleman whose identity is a mystery. But the truly unique aspect of this residence is the elaborate and beautifully designed landscape behind the house.

The attractive flower garden is enhanced by a 7 foot high arched wall with ballustrades, a working fountain and pool, a fieldstone barbecue with a chimney and other architectural design elements. It is a scene much more typical of an estate than a small city yard.

It appears that this was the work of Edward Willems who lived there between 1932 and 1934. He was a landscape architect who worked for Willems and Sons Nurseries, 1101 E Main St. (subsequently moving to E. Main at Akron St.). A relative, likely his father, Peter, was secretary to the Brown Brothers Co. and president of Willems and Sons. Peter lived at



25 Gramercy Road.

It is not known if Edward Willem's yard architecture efforts on Merchants Rd. were for just his own enjoyment or intended to promote his abilities and the family business to those considering moving to this new neighborhood. Edward disappears from the records after 1934 leaving many unanswered questions.

Jim Nicholson

*[Anyone with any knowledge of the Willems family living in Browncroft or at Sayers Street in the 1920s and 1930s, or the origins of this garden hard-scape please send an email to [contact@Browncroftna.org](mailto:contact@Browncroftna.org).]*



## NEIGHBORS ENJOY SUMMER SOLTICE PARTY

On the evening of Thursday, June 20, about 30 neighbors from Berwick Road and Lanark Crescent gathered in my backyard to celebrate the longest day of the year! We had so much fun last year for our inaugural celebration of the Summer Solstice that we decided to repeat the joyful event this year.



Since many of us had been hibernating inside over the winter, it was especially enjoyable to reconnect again and to anticipate times over the summer months when we could be outside gardening, mowing the lawn and taking walks around the neighborhood.

The weather was again perfect for our party and we enjoyed a variety of snacks, desserts, pizza, sandwiches and beverages, contributed by all the attendees. One neighbor, an excellent baker, made and created a beautifully decorated cake for the special occasion, which we all enjoyed! Our youngest attendee was just one year old. Since the evening was so pleasant the last guests never left until after 10 p.m.!!

Throughout the evening as we all talked, we decided that we would meet again in my backyard on the Summer Solstice of 2025, the longest day of the year.

Written and submitted by  
Jeanne Loysen, Lanark Crescent  
Photo by Jeanne Loysen

## Volunteers

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President - currently no one has accepted taking up the mantle of "Leader". The President chairs the BNA Board Meetings (4-6 per year with a minimum of 2), the BNA Executive Committee Meetings (4-6 per year as needed between full Board meetings), and is generally expected to attend the social events if possible. Presidents are elected each year, and traditionally serve for two years.

Vice President - though this position is currently filled and acting as President until a President comes forward, a President/Vice President team working together wherein the Vice President takes on the President position when they "retire".

Treasurer - Our current Treasurer for the last four years has been John McQueen, to whom BNA owes much gratitude for a job super well done. Unfortunately for BNA, John will be moving away soon and this seminal officer position must be filled. Obviously, we cannot function without a treasurer. Therefore, someone with good ethics and some understanding of bookkeeping practices must be found.

Street Representatives for Gaslight Lane and Gramercy Road - Street Reps reside on the street and are expected to attend as many Board of Directors meetings as possible.

Membership Committee Chair - This position has been vacant for many years with the Treasurer taking up the work of maintaining the membership list. But ideally, this is done by the membership

## *POINT of VIEW* ... by Betty Dolce Reinventing the Front Porch: A New Gathering Space in Browncroft?

Growing up on Albemarle Street in the Maplewood District, the front porch was the heart of our community. Almost every house on the street had one, and those porches became the stage for countless neighborhood interactions. The best part was the unspoken invitation for neighbors to stop by and sit for a while. These spontaneous gatherings fostered a strong sense of community that I remember fondly.

When I moved to the Browncroft neighborhood 18 years ago, I was struck by how different the homes were. Unlike the familiar porches of Maplewood, most houses here were designed without them. While neighbors are friendly and always say hello as they walk by, those interactions are usually limited to quick greetings exchanged during lawn work or while passing by on a walk. It's typical here for relaxation time to be spent in the privacy of the backyard, away from the street.

Recently, however, I've noticed a delightful change taking place, especially on Beresford Road. More and more neighbors are setting up

inviting seating areas right in their front yards. Adirondack chairs, benches, and cozy outdoor furniture are popping up, transforming these spaces into new gathering spots.

It's heartwarming to see people reclaiming their front yards as places to connect. Now, as I walk through the neighborhood, I often see neighbors relaxing in their front yard seating areas, ready to wave hello or strike up a conversation with those passing by. This simple act of moving from the backyard to the front yard has brought a renewed sense of community to Browncroft, reminiscent of the front porches of my childhood.

I'm thrilled to see this trend catching on and hope it continues to spread. It's a wonderful reminder that community isn't just about where we live, but how we choose to engage with the spaces and people around us. So, here's to more front yard gatherings, more conversations with neighbors, and an even stronger sense of community in our wonderful neighborhood.

committee, as well as other formalities such as issuing thank you letters and membership cards. The membership chair could also assist the new Hospitality Committee Chairperson, Kathy Boyle, to make-up and distribute "New Resident Welcome Packs".

Crime/Safety Committee Chair - also has been vacant for a while. If you like to know what is going on around the community, this is a good job for you. This involves

attending Zoom meetings with the Rochester City Police Department, City Neighborhood Service Center and other neighborhood representatives once a month and reporting to the BNA Board items of interest or recommendations from the RPD.

Please consider stepping forward and volunteering for these activities, and possible other initiatives for today's neighborhood community, so that BNA will continue to thrive.



# SHADED BROWNCROFT GARDEN TOUR

On June 16, friends and neighbors alike enjoyed touring a series of gardens and hardscapes throughout the Browncroft Neighborhood.



In its 1st year, the newly re-branded “Shaded Browncroft Garden Tour” allowed residents to showcase their beautiful yards, gardens, and other hardscape features. Residents showed off beautiful perennials, annuals, shade trees, patios, water features, and everything in between. The rebrand of what was formerly known as the Garden Tour was an effort to spotlight the many beautiful ways that residents design their yards, while also drawing attention to the importance of shade trees and the historic Browncroft tree plantings. Also new this year was the ask of tour goers to donate a small amount of

money to assist with the planting of trees throughout the neighborhood. The Shaded Browncroft Garden Tour organizers would like to donate this money back to the neighbors who are interested in replanting a shade tree in their private lawn. If you are interested, please reach out to Shaded Browncroft Garden Tour Co-Host Patrick Phillips at [mpatrickcphillips@gmail.com](mailto:mpatrickcphillips@gmail.com) by November 1st. Of course, not only will these plantings be a benefit to the prop-

erty owner, but also to the many neighbors who walk our beautiful



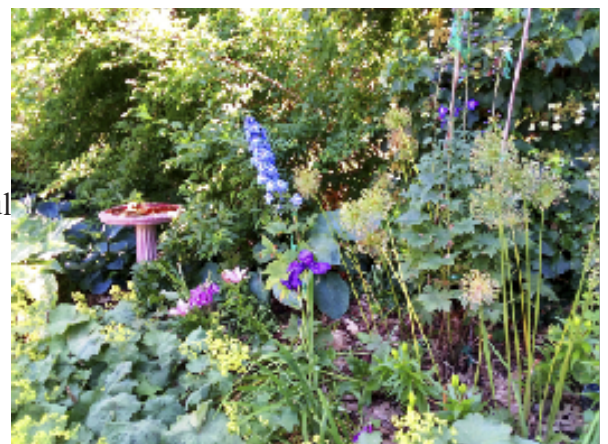
neighborhood, both current and future, who will have the benefit of the trees both aesthetically and

environmentally. Thank you to all of the homeowners for opening up and showcasing your beautiful yards for both neighbors and friends to enjoy.

The next Shaded Browncroft



Garden Tour will take place in the Summer of 2026 according to Co-Chairperson, Joyce Nagel





# UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER WILSON DAY STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

BNA was fortunate to be a recipient of 9 student volunteer workers from the University of Rochester as part of the university's Wilson Day of Caring. The students worked in the Browncroft Rose Garden for 2.5 hours on the afternoon of August 23rd. Six rose beds were partially weeded and



look much better. Working with the students were three BNA volunteer supervisors and workers, Cassy Petsos, John Edelman, and Sharon Bloemendaal.

Many thanks to the students and BNA volunteers.

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## NEW BOOKS FOR NEW STUDENTS



It is not too late to contribute to the gift of books to Kindergarteners. The Browncroft Neighborhood Association has a tradition of giving a fall welcome gift of 2 books to every kindergarten student at #46 School. We are still collecting donations for the 2024 class. You can send or drop off a donation ( checks made out to BNA) to Ann Kanthor at 175 Dorchester Rd. Rochester, NY 14610. Your support of this project is greatly appreciated!

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## MOVIE IN THE PARK

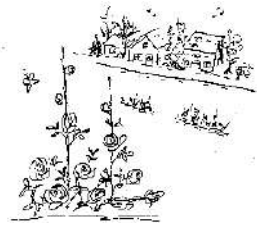
The movie in the park, originally scheduled for August 17th, was postponed due to rain to August 24th. The weather, after a brief sprinkle of rain, was perfect, and the attendees enjoyed *Ghostbusters Afterlife*.

**Mark's Pizzeria generously provided pizza and BNA snacks.**

Thank you to Mark's Pizzeria and the Movie in the Park organizers George Greven and Jim Nicholson.



## Fall Clean-up in the Rose Garden



Fall Clean-up in the Browncroft Rose Garden will take place on Saturday, October 26th at 10:00 a.m., with the rain date set for the following Saturday. This is a pruning activity to reduce the height of the bushes before winter. Some bushes will be slated for fall removal and replanting in spring, which may lessen the amount of work this fall.

Volunteers should bring pruners, loppers and wear thick garden gloves.



**Saturday, September 21  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**in the Linear Garden  
between East Main St. and  
Mayfield St.**

***Festival of  
Art - Music - Food***





# BNA SUMMER FUN



## June Ice Cream Social

It was a perfect summer evening on June 27th for the 2nd BNA ice cream social. Netsins Ice Cream truck pulled up in front of School #46 and provided the ice cream cones or dishes with loads of different toppings. BNA provided the funds and the opportunity for neighbors young and old to enjoy each others company.



## Annual Family Picnic

Another picture-perfect summer evening marked the BNA Picnic at Hazelwood Lodge in Ellison Park on July 18th. Most everyone took advantage of the veranda to be outside to enjoy it.

BNA President Ex-Officio, Frank Fields manned the grill pumping out hot dogs to go with the huge variety of delicious dishes neighbors prepared to share with their fellow picnickers.

Music filled the air courtesy of Allen Hopkins.



BNA's Ad Hoc Events Committee is to thank for these pleasurable events: Ann Kanthor, Kathy Boyle, Jane Way, Sara Castro, John McQueen, Cathy Smith and Kathy Grady.