

## Arts District moves forward

The Miller Beach Arts and Creative District (MBACD) has sponsored three “Pop-up Art” events in September, October and December, which drew large numbers of interested spectators and buyers to Lake Street. The District is now moving ahead with plans for the future.

The MBACD has obtained title to the former Miller Drug building on Lake Street, as a gift from the Marshall Gardner family. They plan to develop the building into the **Marshall J. Gardner Center for the Arts**, with gallery space and workspace for artists. (Marshall Gardner was a pharmacist who had the building constructed in 1959 to house his drug store, which he moved from the present location of Ming Ling’s. He sold the business, but not the building, to his employee Frank Persic in 1974. The store closed in 2008.)

The Arts District is now seeking grants to develop the Gardner Center and to construct the outdoor display pavilion which they have proposed next to the old Miller School.

## The future of property taxes

There is nothing new to report concerning property assessments and taxes for the current year. The Calumet Township Assessor has not made any **mass corrections** for properties in the beach area which were over-assessed for taxes payable in 2011. However, the Assessor’s office has made adjustments for some property owners who came to the office and complained. These corrections have not followed any discernable pattern.

Meanwhile, George Rogge and the MCC Tax Committee have been looking forward to the general reassessment of property which will take place this year. They have been talking to the Lake County Assessor, Hank Adams, in an attempt to assure that the new assessment groups properties into fair and reasonable “neighborhood codes” with realistic land values, resulting in equitable market-value assessments with limited reliance on “influence factors”. They have found Adams to be very cooperative, and they are confident that, with his influence, the structure created for the new assessment he will result in assessed values that are fair.

Ron Gholson is the new MCC vice-president overseeing the government affairs committee. He is planning regular committee meetings and has indicated that the subjects for discussion may include MCC support for a Lake County income tax.

# Duly noted . . . .

**BIG-TIME CONCERT.** Gail Archer, College Organist at Vassar College, will play the nationally-recognized organ at **St. Mary of the Lake Church, 6060 Miller Avenue, in a concert on Sunday, January 29 at 3:00 pm.** There is no admission charge, but contributions will be accepted. The event will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organ, which was designed by Lawrence Phelps and built by Casavant in 1962. A reception with free refreshments will follow the recital.

**TRIVIA NIGHT RETURNS AT THE TEMPLE.** Gather your team for the 2012 version of Trivia Night at Temple Israel, 601 N. Montgomery St. on Saturday, January 28. Doors open at 6:00, game starts at 7:00. There will be pizza, hot dogs, baked goods and drinks for sale, a silent auction, and fun prizes. The entrance fee is \$15 for individuals; \$100 for a table of 8 or \$125 for ten. Participants can earn points by bringing canned goods or donations for local food pantries. To reserve your seat or table, make out a check to Temple Israel. For additional information, e-mail [rich7310@comcast.net](mailto:rich7310@comcast.net), or call 743-0624.

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 9 AT 7:30 PM IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD. Members are invited to attend and participate.**

**Contact the MCC between meetings at P.O.Box 2645, Gary, IN 46403, or e-mail [mceaton@aol.com](mailto:mceaton@aol.com). You can also visit the MCC website at [www.millercitizenscorp.org](http://www.millercitizenscorp.org).**

**BAKE SALE.** The Funeral Service Committee at St. Mary of the Lake Church on Miller Avenue will hold its **annual bake sale on Saturday, February 4 from 5:00 to 6:00 pm** in the church vestibule and on **Sunday, February 5 starting at 11:00 am in Lessard Hall ("The Gym")**. Home-made baked goods of all sorts will be offered. On Sunday morning, free coffee and punch will be served. The proceeds will support the work of the Funeral Committee, which serves meals to the families and friends of deceased members following funerals in the church.

**MONEY FOR THE KIDS' PARK.** Joe Petras has announced that this year's **Men and Boys Christmas**

**Lunch** raised a record \$840 for the maintenance of the Marquette Kids' Park. Over the years, 100 different "men and boys" have participated in this annual event, which has raised \$5,535 in total.

**WINTER FUN AND GAMES.** Enjoy fun events for the whole family at the **Winterfest Celebration**, sponsored by the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore from **noon until 4:00 pm on Saturday, January 7, at the Douglas Center on Lake Street.** Borrow the park's cross-country skis for free and, with or without snow, learn about trails to explore from experienced park rangers. Kids can enjoy a puppet show and other activities, and there will be refreshments to warm up the participants.

**VISCLOSKY FORUMS.** Congressman Pete Visclosky will talk and listen to the public at a series of January forums. One of the meetings will take place in Miller, at the **Woodson Branch Library on Lake Street, on Thursday, January 12 at 5:00 pm.** Other nearby meetings with the congressman are scheduled at the Gary YWCA, 150 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Ave., on Tuesday, January 10 at 2:00 pm and at the Lake Station City Hall, 1969 Central Avenue, on Monday, January 9 at 2:00 pm. **Come out and exchange views with the man who represents us in Washington.**

**THANK GOODNESS IT'S FONDUE.** The **Northwest Indiana Humane Society** will hold its Annual Fundraiser on **Saturday, January 21 from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm at Service Doctor, 5150 E. US Highway 30 in Merrillville** (aka Hobart). Chef John Rooney will present a menu of fondue selections, from cheese to chocolate to veggies. In addition, there will be beautiful baskets donated for the silent auction; a 50/50 raffle; wine, beer and pop; and pets on display that are up for adoption. Keenan Baxter will provide live jazz music in the background. Tickets are \$35 in advance or \$40 at the door. Contact the Humane Society at 219-938-3339 for more information.

**MLK TRIBUTE AT HOLY ANGELS.** The annual tribute to Martin Luther King will be held at Holy Angels Cathedral on the afternoon of January 8. One of the highlights of the free event will be the performance of the **Emerson Concert Choir.**

**BEACH COMMITTEE ON VACATION.** The Shoreline Committee is taking two months off in December and January, but will resume regular monthly meetings starting on February 17 at 6:00 pm in the meeting room of St. Barnabas church. Meetings will continue to be held on the third Thursday of each month. The committee will be establishing relations with the

incoming city administration, with emphasis on beach safety.

**SCHOOL ISSUES.** The MCC education committee has been meeting on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 pm, an hour before the monthly MCC board meeting. MCC members who are interested in school issues are invited to join the committee and attend. The committee notes that Ivy Tech has developed new programs and is offering college credit courses for high school students. School systems throughout Northwest Indiana are participating in this program, except for the Gary Community Schools, which feel they have other priority interests. At the December board meeting, **the MCC voted to support dual credit courses and partnership with Ivy Tech for Gary students.**

**MCC CONTRIBUTIONS.** The MCC has been holding monthly board meetings at the Marquette Park United Methodist Church and Shoreline Committee meetings at St. Barnabas Church, rent-free. In appreciation, the MCC has voted to make a donation of \$300 to the Methodist Church and \$100 to St. Barnabas.

## **Marquette renovation lags**

In an effort to show progress in the Marquette Park renovation project, the city held a dedication ceremony for the statue of Fr. Marquette and its reconstructed garden, signaling that this segment of the work is complete. However, work on the Pavilion is not progressing on schedule. Estimates indicate that work is two months behind the latest schedule (city's view) or as much as six months behind (opinion of architect and contractors). The city is taking reservations for events in May, but there is no assurance the building will be ready for use then.

The delays have resulted in cost overruns, for items like heating in winter and rental of a tent for events scheduled last summer. These costs have been covered by contingency funds, which are running out.

Recently, there have been several break-ins at the construction site, by burglars stealing supplies and tools. The most recent break-in was well publicized because the vandals started a fire and wrote graffiti. Suspects in the case have been arrested, and Mayor Freeman-Wilson has pledged that guards will be added in the future.

In the meantime, Eric Reaves reports that the new windows for the Pavilion have not yet been ordered, and there is continuing discussion over the color scheme, which was supposed to be settled months ago. On the other hand, quality work is being done, the project will

eventually be completed, and the result promises to be wonderful.

In the background, the development of a Park Conservancy, to finance and operate the park after work is completed, is also lagging, because the park board does not want to give up any control over park operations. Hopefully, this effort will progress under the new mayor.

The catering contract for the facility is to be awarded in January, and everyone recognizes that this is a critically important decision, which can make the Pavilion the prime location for big parties in the region – or not.

## **MBACD proposes TOD**

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) is eager to attract more riders by speeding up service to areas east of Gary. They have been receptive to construction of a new Gary station at the intersection of I-65 and Route 20, which would replace the downtown Gary station and the Miller station.

The MCC has opposed this proposal and has strongly supported the continued operation of the Miller station. Currently, the planning committee of the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District (MBACD) has proposed a Transportation-Oriented Development (TOD) at the location of the existing Miller South Shore station. The proposal would include a long raised platform to speed entry and exit of passengers, greatly increased parking capacity, and associated commercial development, all of which are designed to meet NICTD objectives.

The proposal has been discussed with John Parsons, the planning chief for NICTD, and has met with a positive response. However, many parties, including the new Gary mayor, will have to be satisfied before a final decision is reached on restructuring South Shore service to this area.