

MCC switching to e-mail for contacts with membership

For a long time, the MCC has discussed the possibility of communicating with its members by e-mail, rather than through the US Postal Service. This would include sending out the Miller Message by e-mail, and would also make it possible to send occasional special notices. Most of the money the MCC spends goes to the Post Office, so the change will result in significant cost savings to the organization, and will get the news to members on a more timely basis. (There is a reason why the Postal Service is referred to as “snail mail”.)

In preparation for the change, we are contacting members for whom we do not have e-mail addresses, to make our records more complete.

The Miller Message will still appear in the Lakeshore Shopper, for the benefit of the many persons who pick the paper up on the street. We also recognize that some MCC members do not have e-mail access, and we will probably continue to reach them through the regular mail.

A specific date for implementing this change has not been determined, but it could be as soon as next month.

Plans for a Lake Street lodge develop despite snafu

For more than a decade, the City of Gary has been planning to redevelop the site of the former Coast Guard facility adjacent to the Lake Street Beach. The space more recently housed the Charter School of the Dunes, until it moved this past year to its new location on Rt. 20 at Old Hobart Road.

Plans for the Lake Street site call for the construction of a lodge with 150 rooms and a restaurant overlooking the beach. There would be a traffic circle with a large amount of free parking for automobiles, along with a separate lot for vehicles with trailers hauling boats or jetskis which would pay for parking. The new facility would have a low silhouette, less obtrusive than the current structure, and would occupy 4.5 acres of land which is already “disturbed”. The proposal was approved by the former superintendent of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Costa Dillon, who expressed interest in having a visitors’ center inside the lodge.

This all sounded pretty straightforward, and Gary’s Board of Works recently voted to transfer the property to the

Redevelopment Commission so the project could proceed. However, at some time in the past, the space occupied by the Coast Guard Station had been combined, in the property records, with seven other parcels of land totaling about 80 acres, and the whole expanse was mistakenly deeded over to Redevelopment. This caused a significant uproar, since it would potentially allow for private development of a large swath of beachfront property. Forest Hayes, the Redevelopment Commission President, quickly recognized the mistake. He has pledged to have the Board of Works rescind their earlier vote, and redefine the development area to include only the four to seven acres of land already in use.

Watch for these further developments early in 2014.

Bead Town Northwest IN is here

Louisiana artist **Stephan Wanger** has recycled colorful beads from Mardi Gras necklaces to make large-scale mosaics, depicting realistic scenes and fantasies. Dozens of his works, all made from beads, will be on display at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake Street from now until mid-February, sponsored by the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District (MBACD) and the Methodist Hospitals Foundation.

The exhibit will have an **opening reception on Twelfth Night - Monday, January 6 - from 7:00 to 10:00 pm**, with wine, beer, champagne and hors d'oeuvres. A donation of \$25 will benefit the Methodist Hospitals Foundation. To reserve a place, call Maria Diaz at 219-886-4468.

Sue Rutsen and George Rogge are hosting a reception for Stephan Wanger on **Saturday, January 11 at 7:00 pm**, in their home at 1130 N. Vigo St. in Miller, with Mardi Gras food and décor and live music. Donations of \$50 per person will benefit the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District. Space is limited, so please reserve no later than January 8 by contacting karrenlee@pmllee.com or call 219-306-6880.

On **Friday, January 24 at 7:00 pm**, the Arts District will present a film, *Bead Town, Louisiana*, at the Gardener Center. The admission fee is \$20, including light refreshments.

The public can also take part in the Bead Town event by attending **Bead Town workshops**. All, including children, are encouraged to help the artist to complete historic scenes of Northwest Indiana. Workshop times will be announced later.

Duly noted . . .

COME FROLIC IN THE SNOW. The Douglas Center of the Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Street **will lend skis, snowshoes, boots and poles for free every Saturday** when there is more than an inch of snow on the ground (like right now). This is a great opportunity to get acquainted with outdoor winter activities. Try it – you might like it! The Center is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Kids can enjoy the nature play zone outside or warm up inside with hot chocolate while enjoying the Saturday feature film or playing with hands-on exhibits.

GARDENING 101. While we wait for the snow to melt, the **Miller Garden Club** is presenting a class for prospective gardeners, so they will know how to make their gardens thrive when spring arrives. The program is **free** – just show up at the Aquatorium in Marquette Park on **Saturday, January 11 from 9:00 am to noon** for helpful advice on planning, planting and nurturing your garden. If you have questions about the event, contact Corya Channing by e-mail at artisticpartners@att.net or by phone at 938-8532.

BIKE PATH PROGRESSES. Plans for the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore include the development of a bike path which would stretch from Porter County to the former railroad station on Broadway in Gary. This project has been held up for years over the acquisition of 21 parcels of land in Miller. **Now**, the Miller Business Association (MBA), in cooperation with the Miller Community Fund, is paying for the title search on the 21 parcels, and a “rails to trails” specialist at a South Bend law firm will handle the legal work for free. The National Park will then be able to acquire the land and complete the bike path.

WATCH FOR BURGLARS. There has been a rash of burglaries recently in the Miller and Aetna area, including one incident in which the resident was at home and slept through the event without waking. On a number of occasions, persons have been observed cruising the neighborhood and checking for doors which are unlocked or knocking on doors to see if anyone is home, then pretending to look for a fictional person if someone answers. If you observe such activities, **CALL THE POLICE** and alert them to be on the lookout for the suspicious individuals.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES. The Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) recently approved the construction of the Illiana

Expressway, connecting I-65 in Indiana with I-55 in Illinois. Miller residents spoke in opposition to the project, but Gary Mayor Freeman-Wilson gave it her approval, along with south-county representatives. Looking ahead, the next meeting of the **NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee** will be held on **Tuesday, January 14 at 9:00 am** at the NIRPC headquarters on Southport Road in Portage. Miller residents have been keeping an eye on the committee deliberations to protect the Lake Street South Shore stop, which some people would like to eliminate or relocate.

ARTFUL BOARD-UP. The JJ Fish shop at Miller Avenue and Lake Street ceased operation after a recent fire, and the vacant building needed to be boarded up. The Miller Business Association Unsafe Building Committee arranged with the city to have this done by **Chris Topfer from the Foundation for Artistic Board-up**, a Miller resident who does business all around the country, sealing buildings in a more attractive manner than just slapping on plywood. Many people have noticed the difference.

JANUARY 2014 MCC MEETING

THE NEXT MCC BOARD MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 13 AT 7:30 PM, IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD.

MCC 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. You can also visit the MCC website at www.millercitizenscorp.org.

JASPER COUNTY AIR SHOW. At their December meeting, the MCC board members voted to oppose the move of the Gary-Southshore Air Show to a location in Jasper County. They argue that Miller Beach is the best venue for visitors to watch the show and to experience the attractiveness the Miller community. Beyond that, the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority, which is sponsoring the show, is supported by the taxes of Lake County residents to promote tourism in Lake County, not Jasper County; and the recent

renovation of Marquette Park included about a million dollars of electrical work to support the air show.

MEN AND BOYS. Joe Petras reports that this year's twenty-third annual Men and Boys Benefit Brunch raised over \$700 for the maintenance of the Marquette Kids Park.

MCC DANCE. The MCC is still trying to organize a winter dance, but in March, rather than at St. Valentine's day in February.

TRIVIA AT THE TEMPLE. The popular Trivia Night at Temple Israel has been scheduled this year for Saturday, January 25. For more information, contact Robin Rich at 938-1383.

Miller is in the spotlight

The Legacy Foundation has been a significant source of funds for specific projects by not-for-profit organizations in Northwest Indiana. For instance, they recently funded the installation of air conditioning at the Gardener Center on Lake Street. They have now announced the **Neighborhood Spotlight Program**, which will expand their goal to using strategic grant-making for community revitalization. They have brought together the Knight Foundation (source of funds), the Federal agencies HUD and EPA, the local Regional Development Authority (RDA), Congressman Visclosky's office, the City of Gary and neighborhood residents in a partnership to solve local problems. As a start, they have provided a grant of \$70,000 from the Knight Foundation for the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development (IACED) to design a model for community change and project implementation.

All this is relevant for the Miller community because the Foundation has decided that "Gary Northside" will be their first project area. Although Mayor Freeman-Wilson may submit "several Gary neighborhoods" for consideration, we expect the focus to be on Lake Street in Miller. We will be watching for the next several years to see how this project develops, and we expect local organizations like the MCC and the Miller Business Association to be intimately involved in the process.

The first Neighborhood Spotlight Information Session is scheduled for Friday, January 31 at the Radisson Hotel in Merrillville.