

Miller Message for January 2017

MCC Valentine's Day Dance, the "Miller Prom" is returning

Make plans, now, to join friends and neighbors in the elegant confines of the Marquette Park Pavilion, to enjoy the excitement and revelry of the traditional **Miller Prom**. The MCC is reviving the annual Valentine's Day Dance, which was suspended when the Marquette Park restoration was in progress. This year's festivities will take place in the **Marquette Park Pavilion on Saturday, February 11 from 7:00 to 11:00 pm**. This is a formal event, with music, dancing, hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Tickets are \$30 per person (or \$40 at the door, if available) and can be purchased right now at Ayers Realtors or the Lake Street Gallery. Tickets will also be available on-line through the MCC website, millercitizenscorp.org.

When the 30-year series of MCC mid-winter dances began in 1980, the specific aim was to bring white and black neighbors together in a festive social setting. We no longer have to prove that Miller is a welcoming place for all kinds of people. But, it's always the time to renew social contacts in the middle of winter, when lousy weather isolates people indoors. **So, put on the Ritz and party!**

Temple Israel Trivia Night

Everyone is invited to the eighth annual Trivia Night at Temple Israel on **Saturday, January 28**, when teams of eight to ten participants will compete to see who knows the most useless facts. **Doors will open at 5:30 pm and the game begins at 6:30**. This event is always a sell-out, so hurry to reserve your seat -- \$20 for a single individual, \$160 for a table of eight or \$200 for a table of ten. In the background there will be a silent auction and prizes for the best decorated tables; also table points for guests

donating canned goods or cash. Snacks and beverages will be available for sale. To guarantee seating, mail your check to Temple Israel, 601 N. Montgomery St., Gary, IN 46403. For additional information, e-mail templeisraelmiller@gmail.com or call 219-938-5232. **Don't miss this fun event!**

George Rogge named a Gary Legend

At the Gary City Council meeting on December 20, 2016, Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson honored George Rogge as a **Gary Legend**, to be remembered with the many people who “have made a positive impact in the city”. Here in Miller, we know him for his dedication to making our city the garden spot to live, raise a family and do business in the Midwest. In pursuing this goal, his list of activities is virtually endless.

As a businessman he pioneered affordable auto insurance for all drivers.

As a boxing promoter, he developed Mary McGee to be the Champion of the World.

Rogge has been a leader in dozens of organizations:

-----Long time and current president of the **Miller Citizens Corp.**

-----President of the **Miller Business Association**

-----Former President of the **Gary Park Board** for more than 20 years

-----Former Commissioner of the **Lake County Sheriff's Merit Board** for 7 years

-----Former Commissioner of the **Lake County Park Department**

-----Founder and President of the **Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium Society**

-----Director of the **Indiana Landmarks Foundation**

-----Former Director of the **Gary City-wide Development Corporation**

-----Director of the **Marquette Kids Park**

-----Former vice-president of the **Gary Jaycees**

-----Former Director - **Indiana State University Foundation**

-----Former Director – **Gary Chamber of Commerce**

-----Board Member – **Indiana Lincoln Highway Assoc.**

-----Former state director – **Independent Insurance Agents of Indiana**

-----Former President – **Independent Insurance Agents Assoc. of NW Indiana**

Rogge has also been an influential member of many other professional and civic organizations. And, he has accomplished all this while going to bed most nights by nine o'clock.

At the Gary Legends award ceremony, Rogge introduced his protégé, boxer Mary McGee, whom he linked to the proposed renovation of the North Gleason Park clubhouse, a historic haven for black golfers.

Especially important for Miller residents was Rogge's leadership role in controlling property taxes, which culminated in an amendment to the Indiana constitution. We can also appreciate his leadership in rescuing and restoring the Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, which has become a jewel of the lakefront and a prime meeting place in Miller.

The Miller Community Fund adopts a higher profile

The Miller Community Fund (MCF) was established ten years ago to improve the quality of life in the Miller neighborhood and the 46403 zip code by helping not-for-profit organizations present events and activities. Proceeds from an endowment at the Legacy Foundation provide funding for local groups such as the Miller Little League, the Aquatorium Society, the Crisis Center, and the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District. Recent contributions have gone to repair the sprinkler system in Marquette Park, to install trash cans on Lake Street, to construct the kayak launch pad in the Marquette Park lagoon, and to fund the annual Gallery Gallop race.

However, **most Miller Residents have never heard of the Community Fund**, so Sue

Rutsen, the current MCF president, organized a party to celebrate the fund's tenth anniversary, and to make its good works – and its potential for funding future activities – known to the public.

The Miller All-Stars

The organization which the public has never heard of celebrated its anniversary by recognizing ten “**Miller All-Stars**” – volunteers no one has heard of who work tirelessly to make our community a better place to live.

This is the all-star lineup for 2016:

Chester Baran has worked for decades maintaining the grounds around the Father Marquette statue and providing free instruction to beginning tennis players.

Susan Binkley has been gardening on Lake Street and in other community gardens, making Miller green.

Bernie Bonk has turned the slag pile at the South Shore station into a garden for everyone to enjoy, and has planted thousands of bulbs all around Miller. She runs the annual “Brats and Bulbs” event every October for the Miller Garden Club.

Tom Eaton has been an officer of the MCC and writer of the MCC newsletter, the Miller Message, for the past 37 years. Long ago, he served several terms as President of the MCC, and more recently he was helpful in dealing with the property tax crisis. He was a long-time board member of the Miller Garden Club and has served on various other boards and committees.

Ken Parr has promoted and led bike tours in the area, has helped many people with bike problems, and has worked at keeping Lake Street clean. He was preparing to open a bike repair business in the former Ralph's building when he died suddenly from

an aneurism, the week before Christmas.

Greg Reising has been instrumental in the renovation of the Aquatorium and its operation for the past twenty-some years. As president of the MCC, Greg organized an earlier reconstruction of the Japanese bridge in the Marquette Park lagoon.

Jessica Renslow has been around the world, but has ended up back home as the Miller Spotlight Community Builder. She is the person who organizes and coordinates the dozen Spotlight committees and helps them relate to everything else which is going on in our neighborhood. This means, she is always everywhere. (Jessica reports that she has obtained funding for another year, so she will continue to be everywhere in 2017.)

Ann Rose has been working tirelessly with the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District and the associated Farmers' Market.

Carol Smith is the guardian of the beach part of Miller Beach. As chairman of the Shoreline Committee, she is a great planner and organizer, motivator, communicator, and worker. She brings together the park people, the public safety people, and the volunteers, to make sure they know what they are expected to do; then she reminds them to do it. She is also the chief volunteer, and when the other workers fail to show up, Carol is there herself, picking up trash, planting and weeding.

Dawn Vanzo planned the 128 corner flower beds on Lake Street, then organized their planting and maintenance, and has jumped in to do the weeding and watering herself when she has to.

LOOKING AHEAD. The recognition of Miller All-Stars is intended to be an annual event, so you are encouraged to **nominate other volunteers to honor** in future years. The fund also **welcomes grant applications from local organizations**, which are evaluated by a grant committee and awards are made four times a year. Forward

suggestions by e-mail to suerutsen@comcast.net, or call her at 773-914-2574. Sue can also explain how to make (tax-deductible) contributions to the Miller Community Fund through the Legacy Foundation.

Duly noted . . .

GARDENING IN WINTER. The Miller Garden Club invites the public to its annual mid-winter soiree on **Saturday evening, Jan 21**, at the Aquatorium in Marquette Park. Enjoy bountiful appetizers and wine, along with a talk by LaManda Joy, creator of the Peterson Garden Project, who is considered the "Best Urban Farmer in Chicago" and also acclaimed as a speaker. Gather at the **Aquatorium** for a fun social hour at **6:00 pm** and speaker at **7:00 pm**.

MEN AND BOYS. For many years, Joe Petras has organized a lunch for the male members of the community, fathers and/or sons, as a fund-raiser for the Marquette Kids Park. Participants are invited to stop by, socialize, and enjoy some pizza or a sandwich. The event is usually held just before Christmas, but this year it has been rescheduled for mid-January. The "**Men and Boys Lunch**" will take place on **Saturday, January 14, from Noon to 2:00 pm at Miller Pizza**. The entry fee of \$10 will go to support the Kids Park. Over the years, this has been a major source of funds for maintaining the play-ground.

JANUARY 2017 MONTHLY MEETING

THE MONTHLY MCC MEETING 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. 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, www.millercitizenscorp.org.

HELP MAINTAIN MARQUETTE PARK. When you drive past the Fr. Marquette statue garden these winter evenings and are greeted by the bright Christmas lights, think about the Friends of Marquette Park and consider making a contribution to their work. The Friends organization has been established to support special projects in Marquette Park for which the Gary Park Department does not have funds. You can become a charter member of the organization by making a donation of \$100, but any donation is welcome. Con-tribute on-line by going to the Legacy Foundation website, www.legacyfdn.org, click on "Donate Now" and search for "Friends of Marquette Park", or mail a check to MCC, Friends of Marquette Park, P.O. Box 2645, Gary, IN 46403. Whatever you give will be put to good use, and you can see the results every time you pass through the park.