

Top of the Hill Newsletter

Spring 2022

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Co-Presidents' Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Greetings! Spring weather has finally arrived in Newport. We hope everyone had an enjoyable Memorial Day weekend. We've been strolling through the neighborhood enjoying everyone's beautiful gardens and wishing the lilacs would stay in bloom throughout Summer!

The association leadership and the Community/Events Committees have been busy planning a series of events. We'll be hosting a community forum on June 14th (6:30-7:30pm) with Newport Second Ward Councilman Charlie Holder at the Newport Public Library. You should have received a save-the-date email last week, and if you haven't already, you can email any concerns or issues you would like addressed during the forum to community@topofthehill.org. Our annual garden party is slated for Saturday, August 13th. We're still exploring venue options, if you have any recommendations or would like to volunteer your backyard, please contact us (email below). More to follow as plans evolve.

The Events Committee organized two successful group events with a lot of participation – the first was a movie night that started at Stoneacre Brasserie and then went across the street to Jane Pickens Theatre for the movie “Automat”. The second was an outdoor afternoon concert at Rough Point's Formal Garden, with a performance of music and dance from China, by Phoenix Performing Arts.

A couple of weeks back we sent out an email notifying you all about the grant we were awarded to revitalize Admiral Luce Park. Planning is in full swing for this effort. The goal is to make the park a more inviting greenspace for neighbors and visitors alike. The current redesign plans include repositioning the Admiral Luce Monument (installed on Armistice Day 1932) and prolonging the life of many of the existing cherry trees through pruning and ivy eradication, while planting a few additional specimen trees. Read on for more information and a peek at the latest design proposal sketch.

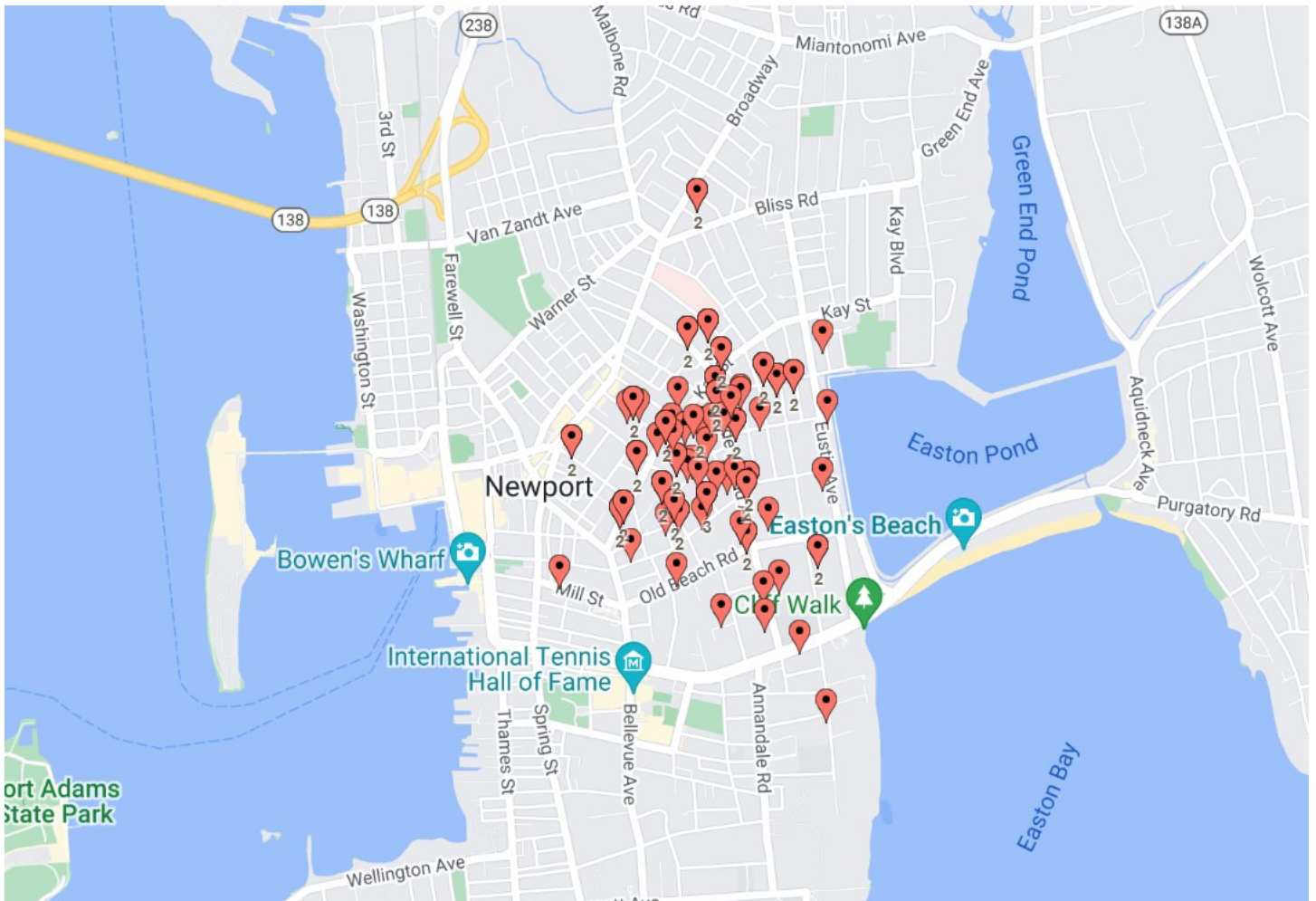
We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. As always, we encourage any feedback and ideas about future content. Please contact us at TOHinfo@topofthehill.org or santiago.r.neville@icloud.com.

Stay safe and stay tuned!
Warm regards,

Maureen and Sandy Neville

TOH Membership Directory

Top of the Hill Membership Directory is now available to access. As a previous announcement email explained, this directory is intended to allow our members to engage more easily amongst each other while maintaining a requisite level of security and privacy. Each of you were asked to either decline or opt-in at a desired level (name, street address, and/or email) and information will be pulled from a password protected registry that will be linked to our membership database hosted by Constant Contact. One of the convenient features of the directory is the ability to link content to an interactive map that displays the location of participating members. See below screenshot as an example. As of this newsletter's publication date, 115 members have agreed to be included in the directory. This directory, one of our Community Connections initiatives that we outlined when we first took office, has been a long time coming and we'd like to thank Dan Lackner for putting it together! If you'd like to be included in the next directory (updated every six months), please let Dan know at dlackner@hotmail.com.



TOH Revitalization of Admiral Luce Park

Back in March, the TOH leadership was asked to submit a neighborhood restoration project proposal for funding through the annual H&R Block/Nextdoor “Make Every Block Better” annual competition.

Out of over a thousand submissions, our project for revitalizing the small neighborhood green space on the corner of Kay St and Rhode Island Ave, formally known as Admiral Luce Park, was one of the ten nationwide grant winners (click on link to see the press release announcing the winning submissions <https://www.hrblock.com/tax-center/newsroom/around-block/about-us/community-led-projects-to-benefit-1-6-million-people/>). The competition sponsors are funding \$10,000 to plan and execute the project. Over the next couple of weeks, a small team will be coordinating with key city representatives to scope out the details.

The park revitalization will be completed over the course of the year through a mix of city workers, grant-funded contractors and neighborhood volunteers. An H&R Block/Nextdoor-sponsored culminating event will take place this fall which will gather volunteers and contributors for various gardening tasks, as well as a photo opportunity and project celebration.

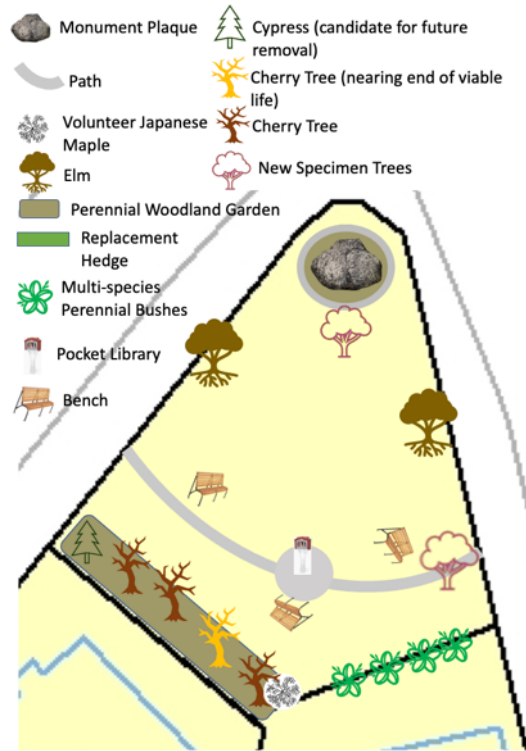
There are several ways for TOH neighbors to be involved, including:

- Volunteering to be part of the planning, gardening, excavation or event teams who will aid in the project and event planning, clean-up, weeding/ivy eradication, excavation (path prep) and planting tasks. We welcome all skill levels.
- Contributing to the replacement of the existing TOH park benches or the purchase and planting of new specimen trees.

More details about volunteer and donation opportunities will be disseminated once the park design plans are finalized and approved by the city and key stakeholders, hopefully by mid-June. In the meantime, here’s a look at the latest design sketch (see next page). We welcome your comments, questions, and gardening/excavation skills! Email inputs to TOHinfo@topofthehill.org.

Current Design

Proposed Design



TOH Operational Alignment Working Group

At a recent Board of Directors meeting, the decision was made to establish a TOH Operational Alignment working group that will meet periodically over the course of the summer. The working group will review the TOH constitution/by-laws, examine current operational structures and activities and explore new approaches to running the association. Their efforts will include soliciting inputs from TOH leaders and members (interviews and/or survey) and exploring best practices of our fellow neighborhood associations. The working group will brief their findings and recommendations at the annual meeting this fall. We are looking for a mix of new and veteran TOH members to comprise the working group. If you are interested in helping shape the future of the TOH organization, please consider volunteering to be a working group member by emailing TOHinfo@topofthehill.org.

Spring Gardening on top the Hill by Claire O'Donnelly

It is official, gardening season has finally kicked off! What a glorious time for the garden! The daffodils seemed to be especially vibrant this year. I say a huge thanks to John Hirschboeck (Mr. Daffodillion) for every last one of them.

So, topic number one, Daffodils, to tie or not to tie, that is the question! Growing up in Scotland surrounded by fanatical flower growers, I was taught to tie my daffodils when the flowers were spent so that the other garden beauties could push through and be seen without obstruction. Neat and tidy gardens at all cost seemed to be “De Rigueur”! As I have become more interested in learning about gardening I have begun to question this wisdom. Daffodils feed their bulbs during this time of no flowers by using photosynthesis through their leaves to build energy in the bulb. In this way they will add flowers the following year and naturalize giving a plentiful and spectacular show year after year. The effects of tying or cutting back are slow to be seen; you may lose only one or two flowers each year but after five years you may think that something has “killed” your daffodils. This is sad for so many reasons, not least being that drifts of daffodils in a forest can flower for twenty or even more years so why would you cut short the flowering life of the daffodils you have planted?

So, bottom line I am going to leave my daffodils alone this year removing only those leaves that yellow or brown. After six more weeks which for me will be the middle of June, I can cut them back, or not, if the rest of my plantings have disguised them.

So, topic two: Roses, a wonder for both the eyes and the nose! In my opinion there is nothing quite so lovely as a rose and they grow exceptionally well here in Newport. If you have never tried them in your garden, you might want to start with “Knockout Roses” a variety that can be found in many different colors and which are sold in many different places. These roses have been cultivated to bloom profusely all season with very little input from the home gardener. I cut mine back in March and now they have grown into healthy looking bushes. (No flowers yet, but they are coming) when I cut them back I also put some rose fertilizer around the base of the plants. I use Espoma Organic Rose Tone Rose and flower food. It is of course still not too late to do this if you have roses already. I also spray the leaves of my roses with Bonide Neem oil which is diluted in water. This helps with blackspot, powdery mildew and a host of insect pests. Throughout the season I will dead head the spent flowers, with secateurs and LONG gardening gloves, (Thanks Cathy!) and I will also remove any leaves that show signs of disease or pest infestation. Always take these leaves and flowers away from the plant and put them into your yard waste bag to be sure that you have minimized the risk of spread to other parts of your roses. Once removed from the living plant they usually do not survive so they will not contaminate the compost. I treat my regular roses in the same way. I have a rose bush in the garden which may well be older than me and which survived being buried with roof tiles and then being relocated when we first moved into this house. They really are feisty little plants.

And finally, annuals. The jewelry of any garden. What not to love, plants that flower all summer with very little care, come in every color of the rainbow and are cultivated for all light and sun needs. Once you have determined the amount of sun that any particular part of your garden gets, use this to choose your annuals. The labels at the nurseries are very helpful. Most will need to be planted with a slow-release fertilizer sprinkled into the

planting hole (I use Osmocote Plus outdoor and indoor, which is a slow-release fertilizer). They will also require a little deadheading, even the self-cleaning varieties; dead flowers clinging to the plant not only look bad, they can also rot the leaves. It's a great excuse to be outside chatting with the neighbors who pass by!

Being the frugal and impatient Scot that I am I tend to buy my annuals in hanging baskets. For many years I have found that with four plants in each basket, they often cost the same as four individually potted plants but are two or three times larger! Cue instant garden! Just a thought! It is certainly more work to separate the four plants and divide the root systems up so it may not be for everyone, just the impatient like myself!

I will leave you with this lovely quote from the late Robin Williams: "Spring is nature's way of saying 'let's party!'" So let's, till next time..... Claire

History Corner by Mike Margonis

In my introductory piece in our last newsletter, I gave an overview of some of the great Gilded Age residents of our neighborhood. In future installments I'm going to focus on one or more of our historic neighbors for an in-depth look into who these people were, their importance, and their lasting legacy on Newport, America, and even the world.

There were many worthy members of our neighborhood to start with, but the one man who seemed to be at the center of Newport "High Society" was a brilliant and energetic man named Col. George E. Waring Jr. (And yes, I'm alluding to the 1956 film "High Society" starring Grace Kelly, which was filmed in Newport)

Waring was born in Pound Ridge, NY on the Fourth of July 1833. Son of an industrialist who manufactured agricultural tools in Stamford, CT, Waring was a self-educated agricultural scientist. He wrote multiple books on the subject and lectured throughout New England. Making a name for himself, he moved to Chappaqua, NY in 1855 to manage the farm of Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, Congressman, and one-time presidential candidate (losing to Ulysses S. Grant in 1872). Waring gained much of the knowledge he would later use in Central Park, and that he wrote about in his 1867 book *Draining for Profit, Draining for Health*, during his years at the farm. Just three years after starting at Greeley's gentleman's farm, he was appointed Superintendent of Drainage for Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Greensward Plan, today's Central Park. Olmsted commented on Waring's work writing, "I believe it to be the best work in the world." Olmsted and Vaux may have designed the layout of the park, but it was Waring's engineering genius that made it all possible. Many of Waring's original water features can still be seen in Central Park today.

Waring would go on to enlist in the Union Army in 1861, being promoted to Colonel a year later. He participated in part of the Manassas Campaign and raised cavalry units for the state of Missouri. After the war he settled in Rhode Island, managing the Ogden Farm in Middletown (Mitchell's Lane). Edward Ogden also had a home on Narragansett Avenue. Waring lived in the famous "Hypotenuse House" at 33 Catherine Street, on the corner with Greenough. Extensively altered by Richard Morris Hunt, it was moved to the Catherine Street site around 1870 from what is now the Viking Hotel property. Hunt rented and then

sold the property to his good friend Waring. In the following years Waring would become a founding member of the Town and Country Club, with many meetings at the house. This was the intellectual and artistic heart of Newport that included many of the era's social elite.

Waring's later accomplishments included being appointed by President Hayes in 1878 as a Commissioner to solve the yellow fever epidemic that killed over 5,000 people in Memphis, TN. Waring came up with the "Memphis sewer system", credited with eradicating yellow fever in the city. Of all his accolades he is probably best known for being appointed the head of the Sanitation Department of New York in 1894. Prior to his leadership New Yorkers were dying of disease at a rate of 40,000 people a year due to unsanitary conditions. Hiring three thousand men known as "White Wings" for their gleaming white helmets and uniforms, Waring treated the men like a military unit fighting the war on filth. Waring pioneered concepts like separation of waste, recycling, and street cleaning. In 1896 Waring orchestrated and was at the head of the NYC parade of "White Wings" down Fifth Avenue. Waring and his men were credited with cleaning over 400 miles of city streets and for saving tens of thousands of lives. Cities across the country started adopting his sanitation procedures which in turn saved many more lives.

In 1898, President McKinley sent Waring to Havana, Cuba after the Spanish-American War out of fears of a possible yellow fever outbreak in American military camps. After giving his recommendations, he went back to New York City where he came down with yellow fever, the dreaded disease he was trying to prevent. He died four days later at the age of 65, and his body was cremated. The whereabouts of his remains are unknown but there is a cenotaph in Woodland Cemetery in Stamford, CT honoring this lesser-known but still meaningful hero.

Additional TOH Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to become more involved with TOH, there are several volunteer opportunities available. We invite you to join one of our committees or volunteer to help develop our quarterly newsletter. For more information and/or sign-up, please contact one of the representatives below:

Newsletter Publishing Support:

Sandy and Maureen Neville - TOPinfo@topofthehill.org or santiago.r.neville@icloud.com

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin: community@topofthehill.org

Events – Barbara Baum: TOHevents@topofthehill.org

Membership – Donna Elkin: membership@topofthehill.org

Welcome – Susan McCoy: welcome@topofthehill.org

Newcomers – Larna Lackner: larnalackner@hotmail.com

Beautification – John Hirschboeck: beautification@topofthehill.org

Upcoming Events - Save the Date

Tuesday, 14 Jun (6:30pm): Community Forum with Councilman Charlie Holder – Newport Public Library

Saturday, 13 August: Summer Garden Party

Useful Links and Contacts

City of Newport - <https://cityofnewport.com> City website

City of Newport Clean City - <https://cityofnewport.com/cleancity> Contains information about trash pickups, holiday and storm delays, recycling, scheduling trash pickups, dropping off garbage at waste management, etc.

Child and Family RI – childandfamilyri.com. Child & Family is the largest and most comprehensive social service provider in Newport County, and one of the largest in the State of Rhode Island. It is a center for community involvement – a place where people come together to give help, to receive help and to support the work of others. With state-of-the-art Community Centers in both Middletown and Providence, Child & Family provides important services and programs to thousands of children, teens, families, and elders throughout Rhode Island each year. Programs and Services for elders include Case Management Services, Information and Referral Services and the Victims of Crime Program.

Report It - https://seeclickfix.com/newport_2 (requires registration) You can report problems such as potholes, litter, missed or uncollected garbage, snow covered sidewalks, graffiti, unsafe sidewalks, streetlights, etc.

Second Ward Councilor Charles Holder – Go to city website

<https://www.cityofnewport.com> and look him up by name in the Staff Directory tab (upper right, next to the “City of Newport” banner). You will then be able to email him through the City email system.

Top of the Hill (TOH) Neighborhood Association - <http://www.topofthehill.org>

NextDoor Top of the Hill – NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH OUR ASSOCIATION!
<https://nextdoor.com/neighborhood/topofthehillri--newport--ri/> NextDoor, in conjunction with H&R Block, is providing us with the \$10,000 grant for the revitalization of Luce Park.

NewportThisWeek- <https://www.newportthisweek.com> Informative weekly newspaper with useful local-event calendars, advertising including restaurants and businesses, and reporting on local issues.

Newport Daily News - <https://www.newportri.com>