

Top of the Hill Newsletter

Winter 2022

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Co-Presidents' Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Greetings! We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are staying warm and healthy. 2021 certainly was a challenging year with the pandemic continuing to restrict our ability to travel and socialize with family and friends. We were so happy to be able to resume some of our annual gatherings, the latest being the Top of the Hill Holiday Party. It was so nice to see so many members join in the festivities at the Edward King House on the 5th of December. The rooms were festively decorated, and we all enjoyed a feast of tasty appetizers and desserts contributed by everyone who attended.

With the approach of Spring, we'll be busy planning our normal line-up of annual social events, including a Community Forum, the Summer Garden Party, and the Annual Meeting. We also hope to have a few smaller, ad hoc events throughout the year; more to follow as plans progress.

This Winter's edition of the TOH Quarterly Newsletter features our first history corner written by Mike Margonis along with another installment of gardening advice from Claire O'Donnely. Officer Merrie Scott of the Newport Police Department also provides us with some useful information. Lastly, we've included an article about Senior Soundings, an informational program developed by Child and Family of Rhode Island designed for seniors. We thought some of our members, of course not all, may find the programming content useful. We can certainly attest to the high production quality, as we are volunteer members of the taping crew; Sandy on the sound mixer and Maureen operating one of the cameras (hopefully, not the shaky one).

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

Stay safe and stay tuned!

Warm regards,

Maureen and Sandy Neville

Newcomers' Social

Newcomers Committee Chairperson Larna Lackner and her husband Dan hosted another fun Newcomers' Social at their home last November. Everyone enjoyed an icebreaker team challenge followed by a delicious chili dinner with all the fixings. Among the newcomers that attended were Shari and William Daily, Lorna Linder, Maria Nelson, Susan and William Forgione, Linda Sticca and Shelia Plaisance. We look forward to welcoming additional new members at future socials this Spring.



Dan Lackner (Communications Director) and Sandy Neville (Co-President) work on the Marshmallow Challenge with newcomers Lorna Linder and Maria Nelson



TOH members (newcomers Lorna Linder, Bill Forgione, and Will and Shari Dailey) chat while enjoying a delicious chili dinner with Mike and Joan Beachnau (Co-Secretaries) and Larna Lackner (Newcomers Committee Chairperson)

2021 Holiday Party

On Sunday December 5th, 2021, we celebrated the first Top of the Hill Holiday Party in two years. As in previous years, the event was at Edward King House, a beautiful mansion just off Bellevue Avenue, facing Aquidneck Park. About sixty members participated. As usual, everyone brought delicious appetizers and desserts, accompanied by wine and soft drinks. We also collected 45 pounds of canned goods and non-perishable food for the Food Bank at Martin Luther King Center in Newport.

Below are a couple of photos we took during the event.



Wine and desserts in the Library at Edward King House



Potluck in the Main Room at Edward King House

Gardening on the Hill by Claire O'Donnelly

So, last time we met, I blithely said, "See you in spring!" Why didn't someone point out that winter comes before spring? There is no denying that in two weekends in February) that winter did come! Boy oh boy, did she come with a jolt! I am pretty sure that most of you could see nothing at all of your garden after this last snow fall so you must be thinking, why on earth is she writing a winter gardening column?

Well, I have a couple of thoughts for you. The first is something I like to do in the fall but left until too late and could not find the product I needed, as it had been taken off the shelves and replaced with Christmas trees and other Holliday decor. What I like to do is put a heap of composted manure around my shrubs and trees. I find that if I do this in the fall, or in this case, the winter, the rain, and snow wash it deep down into the plant and provides a great fertilizer for the spring. So, if you are lucky enough to find Composted manure, I really swear by this and given the amount of rain we get in the spring it is never too late for this easy plant feeding.

My second thought is a caution. As we all know, March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb! What that means for us gardeners is that throughout the month of March Mother Nature starts to tease us with nice weather which in turn leads to those tantalizing first shoots of green all over the garden. Having been cooped up inside all winter, I know that those first shoots make you want to rush outside with spade in hand and start digging and planting. My advice is, don't! I know, I know, it's pure torture! What can a gardener do instead? Dig out all those gardening magazines (pun intended!) and start dreaming of the perfect garden and planning all the things you want to do this year in your garden when the time is right. If you have space in your basement you might want to try planting a few seeds. If you have any luck, would you please let me know how to do it!

The Farmers' Almanac says Newport might get frost right through April 23rd and then qualifies that by saying that frost dates are only an estimate from historical climate data and should not be taken as infallible. Even after this date there could still be frost, the actual probability being as high as thirty percent (Not unheard of to have frosts in Newport on Mothers' Day!). Oh my, what is a gardener to do? Best answer, wait and keep checking the forecast before setting out to plant your garden!

History Corner by Mike Margonis

The "Top of the Hill" neighborhood we call home today was once the intellectual and cultural center of Newport, a place where America's intelligentsia gathered to discuss topics like nature, literature, art, and music. In some ways this remains true today, with the neighborhood being home to such institutions as the Redwood Library and the Newport Art Museum and Gallery. During the Gilded Age, a period of great economic growth that spanned the three decades following the Civil War, the neighborhood was

home to artists, writers, actors, painters, and architects. In fact, the term Gilded Age was coined by author Mark Twain, a visitor to Newport in 1875. He wrote a friend that summer from Bateman's Hotel describing the town as "that breeding place — that stud farm, so to speak — of aristocracy; aristocracy of the American type." He was referring to America's wealthy class, but he could have been speaking of Newport's intellectuals, many of whom lived in the homes we live in today.

These Gilded Age intellectuals were members of such groups as the Town and Country Club founded by Julia Ward Howe (who wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" among others) in 1871 and the Bellevue Dramatic Club. Members of the group included Richard Morris Hunt (architect for Belcourt Castle, The Breakers and Marble House, among others) and Col. George Waring (world-class pioneer of sanitary engineering), both TOH residents. The neighborhood drew many luminaries from around the U.S. and abroad. The Shakespearean actress Charlotte Cushman lived on the corner of Catherine Street and Rhode Island Avenue. She performed in "Macbeth" for President Lincoln in 1863. Visitors like Statue of Liberty sculptor Auguste Bartholdi came to Newport frequently to see good friend and fellow artist John La Farge. During John Singer Sargent's first visit to America in 1876 he stayed at the Admiral Case house on Catherine Street, painting members of the family that summer. In 1887 Sargent would return to Newport, staying at Linden Gate on the corner of Rhode Island Avenue and Old Beach Road with Henry G. Marquand. Marquand was a philanthropist, art collector, and Board President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Even local architects like Dudley Newton and George Champlin Mason had a major influence in shaping the architectural and artistic landscape of Newport.

These are just a few examples of the impact our neighborhood had on the Gilded Age and why Newport became known as "America's Society Capital." These intellectuals were the vanguard that helped promote Newport as the place Twain's American "aristocracy" would choose to build lavish mansions into the 20th Century.

In future newsletters I will write about some of these and other TOH luminaries of the Gilded Age.

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

Community Policing Corner

Officer Merrie Scott, our Community Policing Officer, reports:

Newport PD Camera Registry

Home delivery has increased significantly since the pandemic began, and shows little sign of abatement despite easing of COVID restrictions. There has been a corresponding increase in reports of packages being stolen from doorways and delivery areas in Newport homes. This may worsen as people return to work and other daytime activities, and are not home to receive packages during delivery hours. Newport police have a new system in place to crack down on this type of crimes, and aid in other types of investigations (such as larceny, burglary or vandalism): a voluntary camera registry.

If a crime occurs, Newport police can check their camera registry to determine who has cameras in the surrounding area that might have picked up some evidence. It saves investigative time since officers need to knock on fewer doors to try to figure out who may have a security system. They'll already know, thanks to the registry. With Newport's new

camera registry, home and business owners can [register their video surveillance systems online](#). The program is strictly voluntary and participants can cancel at any time; all personal information will be kept confidential by the city.

To sign up for the registry, go to the City of Newport homepage and search for “Newport Camera Registry Program (CRP)” or visit the link below:

<https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/city-hall/departments/police/records/camera-registry>

You can also sign up at Newport PD.

The registration form clearly states the intent of the program and provides details on how and what kind of information can be acquired, and associated privacy protection.

Please remain safe and healthy!

Merrie

Officer Merrie Scott

Community Policing Division

Newport Police Department

120 Broadway

Newport, R.I. 02840

(O) 401-845-5862

(F) 401-847-5598

Email: MScott@cityofnewport.com

Informational Television Program for Seniors

Child and Family of Rhode Island, in coordination with public local-access channel East Bay TV (EBTV), has created an informational program designed to address topics of interest to Rhode Island seniors. Named “Senior Soundings”, the half-hour program, hosted by Gerald LePage (Information and Referral Specialist at Child and Family) informs seniors about a variety of issues through interviews with experts and service providers from non-profit groups. A new program is taped and aired each month. Previous topics include Medicare open enrollment; reverse mortgages; telephone/email scams; Alzheimer’s research and treatment programs in Rhode Island; and most recently meal home-delivery services for seniors and stay-at-homes in Newport and the East Bay. The program can normally be viewed Tuesdays at 6 p.m. and Wednesdays at 10 p.m. on Public Access channel 18 (Cox Cable), which is the Public, Education and Government (PEG RI-TV) channel, affiliated with PBS. Additional airings can be found statewide on Cox and Full Channel 13 and Verizon Channel 32, Sundays at 9 a.m. and Mondays at 9 p.m. Check the

most current programming schedule to confirm air dates and times (ebtv2.godaddysites.com). The programs are purely informational, as the PEG broadcast authority does not air content that contains advertising or solicits revenue.



Recent taping of Senior Soundings at the East Bay TV studio in Portsmouth, RI. Gerald LePage (Child and Family) interviews Meghan Grady (Meals on Wheels), Mary Hughes (Savory Fare) and Caitlin Mandel (Hope and Main - Nourish Our Neighbors)

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>

Next Door Top of the Hill – NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH OUR ASSOCIATION!
<https://nextdoor.com/neighborhood/topofthehillri--newport--ri/>

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>