



Top of the Hill Newsletter

Spring 2023

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Co-Presidents' Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Greetings! We hope you are all enjoying the slow but steady arrival of Spring in Newport – you can see it in the vegetation at Luce Park, where the leaves are sprouting, and the plants are growing. The season is yet young, but we're already forging ahead with lots of new events and activities, as well as a new website. Lots more to come in the next several days and weeks, too!

Newport Tree Conservancy and City of Newport Parks planted the last three trees at Admiral Luce Park, completing the building and planting phase of the TOH-sponsored park renovation. Now we just need to maintain it...

We've had a series of events for our members: two historical walks in the TOH neighborhood; visits to Rhode Island's State flagship, the sail training vessel "Oliver Hazard Perry", for tours of the ship and conversations with the Captain and crew; and a guided tour of the Naval War College Museum. All were fully booked, so we'll be offering more of them in the future.

Since Second Ward Councilor Charlie Holder will be one of the guests at this Tuesday (May 2nd) Community Forum, along with Mayor Xay Khamsyvoravong, we're not running a Councilor's Corner in this edition of the newsletter. Instead, you will be able to engage with both our City Councilor and the Mayor in person on Tuesday. We've received a lot of input about what you want them to focus on during the forum, so it's bound to be an interesting and informative evening. See you at Newport library at 6 p.m. on Tuesday!

If you're interested in participating in future events, log in to our beautiful, easy-to-navigate, and very informative new website at www.topofthehillnewport.org, which describes the events and enables you to sign up for them!

We're also only a few months away from the end of the very long terms of office for our Co-Presidents and several our Board members, who are at the end of their term limits; it's not too early to think about signing up for these posts.

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

Stay safe and stay tuned!

Maureen and Sandy Neville



Our first logo created for the new website--

The pineapple became a symbol of hospitality, prosperity, friendship, and diplomacy in the 17th century...a wonderful representation of our neighborhood characteristics while also relating to our city's colonial heritage. The new website merited a befitting logo. 😊

We hope you are enjoying the resources and capabilities of the new website launched in early March. If you have not had an opportunity to spend some time on the site, please do so now. Our goal is to have 80% of members with active accounts by the end of April; we're at 25% today. The website has been created to foster interaction among our members and that starts with members creating accounts, so please take the few minutes necessary to do so.

Click on the **Members Page**: <https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/members> and hit the Login button. Please look to the top of the Log In page where it notes:

New to this site? "Sign Up" Click there and confirm your email with chosen password.

*Easiest to sign up on your laptop while confirming email on your phone

Your member account will usually be approved within a few hours if not sooner.

Once approved, please change your profile name on your account from your email username to your first and last name so you are easily recognized by other members.

Ex. BMG10@gmail.com changed to Bill Good

From there, please go to the **Groups Page** and join all that interest you...we have over a dozen: <https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/groups>

In addition to the **Events Page**, please check out the **Notice of Interest Page**. It is full of information about all the wonderful large scale events taking place in Newport and the vicinity. Check back periodically as these two pages are updated often and smaller events may not be widely promoted.

Forthcoming communications will contain more tips about the new website. For now, know that when you are signed in with your member account, and RSVP to an event, the site will auto-populate the fields for you. If you wish to cancel, simply return to the event and click the RSVP button again – it will ask if you wish to cancel...quick and easy.

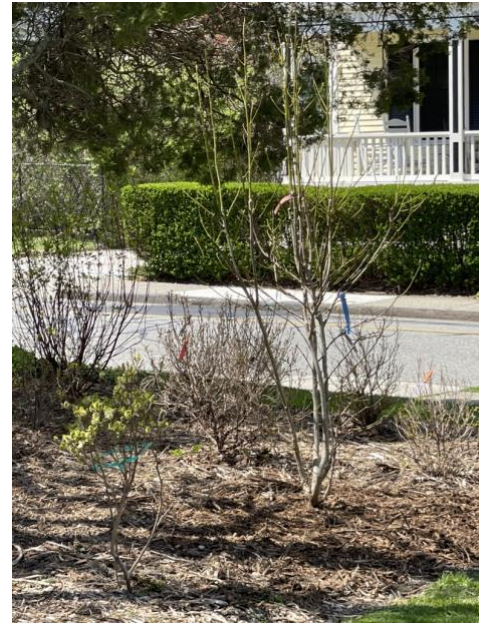
Most importantly, if you are having any issues with the website, please send a note to tohnewport@gmail.com I will do my best to resolve any issues or answer any questions that you may have. I hope you enjoy all the site benefits! Laurie

[Admiral Luce Park Revitalization Project Complete/Volunteer Park Maintenance Day](#)

On Tuesday, April 25th, Newport Public Services personnel planted three Sweetbay Magnolia trees in Luce Park, completing the Luce Park revitalization project that began last Spring and was supported by a \$10,000 grant awarded to the Top of the Hill Association through the H&R Block/Nextdoor Make Every Block Better program. A big thank-you to our Top of the Hill neighbors who generously sponsored the three trees through the Newport Tree Conservancy's Commemorative Tree Program:

- Nancy and Dan Bills
- Susan & Jeff Allen (in memory of Gail Darcy: Susan's sister, who lived on the Point)
- The "Case Villa" - Nicole Ayvazyan, Joe Del Buono, Maureen & Pete Gobbi, Geanne & Jon Griffith, Cynthia Kurja, Mike Margonis, John Michalak, and Margaret Read

We'll now focus our efforts on Luce Park maintenance, including watering the new plantings, raking, fertilizing, and weeding. We hope to have as many neighbors turn out as possible for our Spring Volunteer Park Maintenance Day on a weekend in late May / early June (details to follow).



April 25, 2023: Newport Public Service personnel plant three Sweet Bay Magnolia trees in Admiral Luce Park

[Gardening on Top the Hill by Claire O'Donnelly](#)

Ah spring! Is there a lovelier time to be in Newport? Although we were very fortunate with the mild winter, it was still a joy to see the daffodils bloom. They really are the most cheerful of flowers, mini rays of sunshine. How Lucky are we that John Hirshboeck chose to live in Newport and to work so hard to give us more than a million daffodils to enjoy every spring.

For this gardening newsletter I want to talk about bees. Scary, right? At least to some they are and often for good reasons. However, they are essential to our well-being. Most plants we need for food rely on pollination, especially by bees: from Almonds and peaches to squash and zucchini they all require pollination. Bees also pollinate around 80% of wildflowers worldwide, so our countryside would be far less interesting and beautiful without them. We may take bees and other pollinators like butterflies and hoverflies for granted, but they're vital to stable, healthy food supplies and key to the varied and nutritious diets we need (and have come to expect).

It is hard to imagine but there are hundreds and hundreds of species of bees, they all seem to look the same to me! A recent article I saw reported that over 700 species are currently at risk of extinction so that gives you an idea of just how many more species there are in total. The American bee population has plummeted by 89 percent in the last twenty years and has all but vanished from at least eight states. Now I know many people are afraid of bees and sadly allergic and so may be cheering at this sad news but as I noted above, we really need these hard-working little creatures.

So, what can we do here in Newport to keep the bees and other pollinators thriving? First step I know you are going to love is to delay your spring clean up till temperatures rise to around 50 degrees at night for a week. Leaving the leaves and twigs gives little critters somewhere to shelter till the weather warms.

Next, you could think about growing some of the plants that pollinators love. Try also to plant a variety of plants with staggered bloom times so that food is readily available throughout the year. A wonderful document from the University of Rhode Island that gives lots of great ideas for local plants that are bee friendly is posted to the website gardening group section. The link is <https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/group/gardening/about> . These same plants will often attract butterflies also, and who does not love a butterfly?

If you want to learn more about bees, here are a couple of book suggestions:

1. Buzz The Nature and Necessity of Bees by Thor Hanson
2. The Mind of a Bee by Lars Chittka
3. The Lives of Bees The Untold Story of Honey Bees in the Wild by Thomas D. Sheely
4. Bee Journal by Sean Borodale (this is a collection of poems documenting the life of bees, for those of you looking for some lighter reading.

Historian's Corner by Mike Margonis

George H. Norman and Belair - Old Beach Road

George H. Norman was a prominent figure in Newport society during the mid and late 19th century. Born in Newport, Norman made his fortune as a civil engineer and creator/owner of the Newport Water Works, which included Easton's Pond. He also was an engineer for other water works projects in New England and the Midwest. In fact, the highest honor given by the American Society of Civil Engineers today, America's oldest, is the Norman Medal. His greater claims to local Newport fame were of course his founding of the Newport Daily News in 1846 and his daughter Mabel's 1949 founding of the Norman Bird Sanctuary, named in his honor.

In 1851 Norman purchased a new home which was originally built for New York oil baron H. Allen Wright located on Buena Vista, or what we now call Old Beach Road. It was only one of four original houses on "The Hill." The property was made up of four acres of land; the original stone walls still outline much of the old property. At the time it would

have had a commanding view of Easton's Pond. The home itself was designed by local architect Seth Bradford, the mastermind behind Chateau-sur-Mer, Rockry Hall, and a handful of other stone homes still standing in Newport. When Norman purchased the home, he made many additions and alterations to the property. This included a high convex mansard tower and stables in 1870, as well as a gate lodge in 1875. The stables and gate lodge are really something spectacular architecturally. These additions were added by local architect Dudley Newtown whose unique designs can be found throughout Newport including his own studio on Bellevue Avenue.

George H. Norman died in February 1900 at the age 73 leaving a lasting legacy to Newport and his nine children! Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. even attended his funeral at Trinity Church and his burial in Island Cemetery. Even after Norman's death the original Newport Water Works remained in the family until the city purchased it in the 1930's. Belair remained in the family through his son Reginald Norman, a veteran of the Spanish American War and World War I. Reggie would also serve on the staff of two Rhode Island governors, Dyer and Lippitt. After his passing the house reverted to his wife until her death in 1965. By 1966 the contents of the home were auctioned off and the property subdivided into condominiums. Today it is a beautiful reminder of the grandeur that once was, and in some cases still is the top of the hill.

Every house has a story...



Belair Mansion



Belair Carriage House



Belair Gate Lodge

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 (tohnewport@gmail.com or via members chat on the website):

Newsletter Publishing Support:

Sandy and Maureen Neville – santiago.r.neville@icloud.com

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin

Events – Susan Kelleher and Laurie Love

Membership – Donna Elkin

Welcome – Susan McCoy

Beautification – John Hirschboeck

Upcoming Events

We have quite a few events planned for Top of the Hill in the next few months and wish to ensure that we have your interests and favorites - so we need your input!

Please review the events and share your ideas for additional activities. In addition to what is shown online, we are planning a backyard movie night, a homemade pizza party and a wine tasting event. What else would you like to do?

<https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/events>

Of course, we will also be holding many group events - so don't forget to create your member account join those groups of interest!

Your ideas are very much appreciated! Write to us at: tohnewport@gmail.com

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Community Forum on May 2nd!

Photo Gallery

Below are some photo highlights of some of the TOH events that were held over the last few months.



March 21, 2023: Coffee with the Captain, Oliver Hazard Perry



March 25, 2023: Historical Walking Tour led by TOH Historian Mike Margonis



April 19, 2023: Naval War College Museum Tour



April 25, 2023: Cocktails with the Captain on board Oliver Hazard Perry