



THE VALLEY VIEW

JULY — AUG 2011, ISSUE NO. 177

www.madisonvalley.org

This Community NOT for Lease: MLK Jr. School in Chaos

By Adrienne Bailey



Over recent weeks, a lot has been going on involving Martin Luther King Jr. School, First A.M.E. Church, Seattle Public School District (SPSD), the State of Washington, and Citizens for a Community Center at MLK (CCC@MLK). And just as confusing as the events, situations, and

decisions are, so too are the cast of characters and entities. Fortunately, through the valiant, vigilant, and resilient efforts of a Seattle Times reporter wanting to get to the real heart, soul and truth of the matter, the story has finally taken root and people are taking notice. If you haven't read recent reports in the Seattle Times, there is great suspicion about the sale of MLK Jr. School to First A.M.E Church last year, with allegations of back-room deals that circumscribed due process and neglected the best interest of the public. The State of Washington is currently investigating the school district's sale of the school.

While the future home of our community center sits empty, lifeless and void of activity, SPSP has decided to give First A.M.E. Church "until Dec. 31 to show that it can pull together a viable 'community center' at the M.L. King Jr. School." Dr. Brooks, First A.M.E.'s volunteer Executive Director, has stated that "It takes time to find the people to do that..." So in the meantime, putting up a "For Lease" sign for any taker will do. How can this be when SPSP qualified *selling* the school to First A. M. E. Church because of their "stronger track record in providing youth and community services"? If this is true, why is it going to *take time* to find the people to provide those community services? With the CCC@MLK group, community members had already undertaken the hard work to bring people, groups and organizations together from the very beginning of the campaign. Upon submitting their acquisition proposals, they had tenants, potential tenants and programming already lined up, so CCC@MLK could hit the ground running. First A. M. E. Church, on the other hand, is at a dead stop.

I've worked with Dr. Brooks in the past and recently spoke with him. We've agreed to get together and talk about what can be done and how we can collaborate, but we just haven't been able to connect as of yet. Needless to say, I am not very optimistic – from the very beginning (and at every turn)... 'Community' *Cont'd on p.5...*

Retirement? Not on Your Life

By Cathy Nunneley

After twenty years of faithful service as our GMVCC Vice President, neighborhood icon Charles McDade has decided to hang it up. Charles has attended every monthly GMVCC meeting each and every one of those years. His calm, caring and friendly leadership has been an inspiration to all of us. Charles has rarely been



heard to utter any negative remarks toward anyone, but he does not tolerate the evil doings of others. He was a forceful presence during the years of drug trafficking in the neighborhood. Charles will continue to serve the community as part of a care-giving group. The group will strive to offer support to our elderly and infirmed neighbors. Nor will he abandon the GMVCC! His words of wisdom will continue to guide us. **Many thanks Charles!**



Summer Events Calendar

Thurs, Aug 11, Fri Aug 12 & Sat, Aug 13, 7:00 p.m. — Shakespeare in the Park at Volunteer Park. Performing Antony & Cleopatra and The Tempest. See full details at: <http://www.greenstage.org/2011/performance-calendar>

Sat, Aug 13, 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. — Park in the Dark, at the Arboretum. Special family tours explore animal adaptations in the dark. Children ages 6-12 free, Adults \$6. At the Graham Visitors Center. Call to pre-register 543-8801. Also on Aug .13, **Moon Viewing at the Japanese Garden**, contact 206-684-4725.

Wed, Aug 17, & Wed-Fri 8/24-8/26 — Kayak Tours at Foster Island Wetlands, Washington Park Arboretum. 90-minute guided tours, no experience necessary. Time slots available all day. Equipment provided by the Agua Verde Paddle Club. Pre-reg. & pre-payment required. To schedule, please contact Lisa Sanphillippo at 206-543-8801 or lsanphil@uw.edu.

Sat, Sept 10, 2:00 p.m. — Madison Valley Community Picnic, at the Valley School. Sponsored by CCC@MLK & GMVCC



GMVCC ID STATEMENT



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The Next Submission Deadline is August 21st!

We welcome your events, bulletins, photos, stories and ads!



GMVCC News Briefs

Wed, June 15 — Council Meeting Highlights

President Lindy Wishard called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. Introductions were made. Discussion Agenda: Julia Lee Park was tagged with graffiti recently. Larry Levine will contact the owner and ask to have the graffiti removed. Larry also reported that four businesses were selected for inclusion in the *Only In Seattle* campaign.

MLK Jr. School: The GMVCC voted to support the efforts of CCC@MLK to rekindle the campaign to secure the school as a community center.

Summer Picnic: Saturday, Sept. 10th. We voted to go forward with the event and CCC@MLK offered to fund the picnic. Molly Van Nostrand, Fast Frame owner, will serve as chair for the event.

Officer Elections for 2011-2012 by unanimous vote (see at left).

Congratulations: Exiting Vice President Charles McDade received a standing ovation upon announcing his retirement. The GMVCC thanks Charles for his long and cherished service on our council.

Reminder: the GMVCC does not meet in July or August — our next meeting will be Wednesday, September 21st!

Merchant News

By Larry Levine, MVMA President

After more than 20 years, Gentlemen’s Consignment, owned and operated by Sally Dietrich, went out of business. We will miss Sally and the only men’s consignment store in Seattle, and the Northwest. Sally will continue to make her home in Madison Valley, where she takes pride in our residential neighborhood and business district. We appreciate the contributions she made and wish her all the best as she looks to what the future will bring — and more time in her garden!

I am pleased to announce that MVMA was selected to be highlighted on the *Only In Seattle* Website: www.onlyinseattle.org. From the City’s Office of Economic Development: “On November 16, 2010, the city of Seattle and its neighborhood business district partners launched the *Only in Seattle* marketing campaign, a visually lush celebration of the many locally owned ‘hidden gem’ retail shops and restaurants in Seattle’s unique neighborhoods.”

The initial campaign featured locally owned businesses in five Seattle neighborhoods: Ballard, Columbia City, Georgetown, Rainier Valley and West Seattle. This year, the *Only In Seattle* marketing campaign was expanded to include Madison Valley, Belltown, Capitol Hill, Greenwood-Phinney, Queen Anne, South Lake Union, and the University District. For each business district, four “hidden gem” retail shops and restaurants were selected to attract the public to the area. The Madison Valley businesses selected were: Canopy Blue (in Arboretum Court), The Harvest Vine, Lavender Heart, and Red Ticking. Congratulations to all!

Look for these businesses to be highlighted at the onlyinseattle.org website. You can find a complete directory of restaurants, shops, and businesses in Madison Valley at madisonvalleyonline.com.

Harrison Ridge Greenbelt Reforestation Project

The *Friends of the Greenbelt* have successfully continued their efforts to save one our community's important green spaces. All of the new baby trees and shrubs are thriving. We are currently adding a second layer of burlap and wood chips around the new plantings and keeping the weeds at bay. Mulching with the burlap and chips is paramount to the plants' survival. As competing weeds are suppressed, the layers of mulch keep the roots moist as they become established this year.

Our site has been chosen by the Forest Monitoring Team to evaluate its' health status. Additionally, we are awaiting word from UW regarding a grant award for additional education and help. We continue to hold monthly work parties and invite anyone to join us. Dates are announced on the Madison Valley yahoo group site. You may also contact me to be included on our email group. We work from 11am to 3pm. Come for any amount of time and bring your favorite gloves and tools. With occasional help from others, there are only three of us doing this valuable work. Please consider donating an hour or more of your time and energy to keep this important resource in our neighborhood. Without maintenance, the greenbelt will not survive. For info, contact Cathy at cjunoneley@yahoo.com

Next work party: Sunday, August 21st. Hope to see you there!

Join our Summer Sponsorship Drive!



If you love Madison Valley and like reading *The Valley View*, then become a sponsor today! Your tax-deductible donation, of any amount, will help support the continued publication of our community newsletter — bringing you more great stories, more local history, and more neighborhood news right to your doorstep.

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Fun in the Sun at the Basin — Fiona (left) and Siri (right) splash and play at the newly repaired stone fountain at the Basin. This highly popular water feature has not been working for the past several months, due to a blockage in the pipe. SPU has thankfully fixed the problem just in time for the summer heat!

What's Up on Madison

By Ann McCurdy

Ropa Bella has been moving back and forth between Madison Valley and Madison Park, and is now ...back in Madison Park. The 20-year-old clothing store left its last location at 2717 E. Madison, and is now located at 1928 43rd Avenue E. **Casa Del Caffe** (formerly My Coffeehouse, at 2818 E. Madison) has been "closed for remodeling" for an awfully long time, without any remodeling activity evident. Opened under that name in March 2010, it's had to deal with being close to the stormwater construction project. Let's hope that once the project is completed our local businesses get more customers.

A big THANK YOU to those Madison Valley and Madison Park businesses who supported McGilvra Elementary School's "March is for McGilvra" fundraising campaign! McGilvra is the public elementary school for most of the Madison Valley area, and the money raised will help support an art teacher and math and reading specialists among other things. Madison Valley businesses to support this campaign include **Bill the Butcher**, **Canopy Blue**, **City People's Nursery**, and the big money-maker, **Arosa Café**. That little coffee shop singlehandedly donated approximately \$350 to our local school. My McGilvra first grader and I thank you! 

Editor's Notes: Among other Madison news, the popular bakery Bella Dolce sadly closed its doors on June 30th. Owner Joanne Corsi has decided to relocate to Florida to be closer to her family. We wish her much luck in all her future ventures! It's rumored that a Bellevue company called New York Cupcakes will open a shop in the bittersweet void she leaves. Other disappointing news concerns the very sudden project cancellation of Cleanscapes' play equipment donation in Washington Park. Seattle Parks' Landscape Architect Pamela Alspaugh was kind enough to answer some lingering questions. Parks decided to keep the swing-set in place due to the community's vocal desire to have swings at the site. However, it was Cleanscapes' decision not to pursue a modified design (that might have included swings), instead choosing to move on to the other approved projects on their list. Many thanks to Ann McCurdy & Michelle McKelvey for pursuing and *almost getting* the competitive \$50,000 grant!



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'Community' cont'd from p. 1...

First A.M.E. Church has turned down invitations to work with our community. Apparently it is the belief of First A. M. E. Church that they already know and represent what "the community" wants at the school. They may be correct in some sense, because there is the "church community" and then there is the community where we reside, where we live our lives, in our own neighborhood. First A.M.E. Church's community is the *other community* - the church community on Capitol Hill, which sadly excludes anyone in Madison Valley, the Central Area, and any other neighborhood in close proximity to MLK Jr. School. Hence, there is a total disconnect with the people who will be directly affected by their actions and decisions at the school.



It is known in the local African-American community that, internally, First A.M.E. Church's congregation is (and was not) fully behind this purchase, because it's felt the motivations behind it are the career ambitions and aspirations of their pastor, namely to acquire a Bishop's Hood. Leading this charge is a small group devoted to their pastor, and willing to support him at any and all cost, including but not limited to, the church's fiscal stability. Being raised in the Seattle African-American community (including its church community), I grew up with friends and acquaintances who attend First A. M. E. Church. Contrary to what some people believe, or have said, there has never been a contentious relationship with First A. M. E. Church. From very early on, I have been in constant communication with some of these people, trying to find a way to create some kind of collaborative scenario where everyone would win, especially our neighborhood.

When the SPSD Board voted to sell M. L. King Jr. School to First A.M.E. Church, board member DeBell's response was that it was the best choice for the community. But now DeBell is saying "**At this point, I don't have a clear understanding of whether or not the church will be able to fulfill the covenants in the purchase agreement...**" Between then and now, what has changed? Nothing. First A.M.E. Church didn't have a viable plan in 2010 and they still don't have a plan today. So, at what point (and how) did the board come to the conclusion that their decision was in the *best interest of the community*? First A.M.E. Church's current solution is to stake a "For Lease" sign in the lawn and let the tenants find them. How is this responding to what our community wants or needs?

This is very troubling and shows just how cavalier First A.M. E. Church is about our neighborhood, with little understanding of how their decisions will affect the quality of life here. What CCC@MLK is talking about and working toward is the betterment of everyone — our elders, our young people, our families, our able-bodied and disabled citizens, for generations to come. We are all worth more than just putting our neighborhood and our community center up for lease.


Cont'd upper right...

Believing there was to be a meeting between SPSD, the State, and church officials regarding due diligence, CCC@MLK sent a letter to our elected officials via our Vice-President, Kimberly Larson. As it turns out, the meeting was only a walk-through of the site. However, we need to keep communication open with state and local officials to inform them what our community wants and whether First A.M. E. Church is being responsive to our needs (or not) and compliant with the services they are obliged to provide this community. **Most critical, CCC@MLK desires that the school property be made available for community use and access.**

You might have noticed the organization Green Plate Special is breaking ground at the corner of MLK Way and E. Union, for a community garden. They were an early partner of CCC@MLK and would have been growing their gardens at the school, but had to find another location when the school was sold to First A.M.E.

To date, First A.M.E. Church has not provided the community with meeting space, has not actively solicited community input, and has not made the playground open to the public. They held one community meeting (this past April) which they did not advertise and scheduled at an inconvenient time, a Friday evening at 6pm. CCC@MLK is also concerned that some media coverage hints the sale should have gone to The Bush School, based solely on the dollar amount they were willing to pay, and implying they had a plan to allow community use of the playfields. But when one reads their proposal more closely, after all their restrictions... *Cont'd p. 6...*

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'Community' cont'd from p. 5...

day camps and private rentals to other schools, there would be little, if no time, for regular community use. **A playfield is not what this community needs or wants – we already have playfields available within walking distance at Washington Park. What we need is a gathering space, with community programming, and a central playground for our neighborhood children.**

If First A.M. E. Church doesn't keep their promises pursuant to the purchase agreement, SPSD's only resolution is to "impose financial penalties" on them, which wouldn't benefit anyone in this community. In draining First A. M. E. Church financially, it would only further hinder their programming efforts, thus being more injurious to the Madison Valley neighborhood. It is believed that First A. M. E. Church is already having financial challenges, as well as issues with their Head Start contract and/or HUD accreditation. So penalizing them financially wouldn't help anyone, except SPSD. What we *can pursue* is to have First A. M. E. Church Quiet Title M.L. King Jr. School to the CCC@MLK group. SPSD has stated that they've never revised a sale decision, but there is always a first time for everything.


It's important to clarify that the money First A. M. E. Church received from the State is the same money CCC@MLK would have received if the School Board had voted to sell the school to CCC@MLK. Let us also remember that it was CCC@MLK who was instrumental in securing this funding from the State, providing the full amount needed to purchase M. L. King Jr. School.

If First A. M. E. Church were to eschew this public scandal and Quiet Title the property to CCC@MLK, the State could continue to provide all the monies and support they've committed to the property. SPSD already has their money – now we just need to right a wrong and ensure this school property remains available and accessible for community use for generations to come. We believe this is in the best interest of our community *and* the Seattle Public School District.

I'm writing this article as a CALL TO ACTION to the local community. We need to reconnect with all our partners, potential tenants, grass roots supporters, programming organizations and community groups. Many of you worked long and hard in 2009-2010 to help us connect with these entities. In order to ensure they're still on board we need your help! For those who can, please email me at Kismit_2000@yahoo.com and type "Collaborations" in the subject line. If you're interested in meeting with Dr. Brooks, *cont'd at right...*



please email me to be included in the meeting schedules, typing "CCC@MLK Meeting" in the subject line.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not over. With the State of Washington actively investigating the point of sale to First A.M.E. Church, CCC@MLK needs your support to insure we get the community center we deserve. We urge all our supporters to write our elected officials, the SPSD Board, and the States auditors! What's most important is that your words come from the heart. Make sure to put "MLK Community Center" in the subject line, so it's clear the cause you support! Below is some helpful contact information to get you started. 

How to Contact Your Elected Officials:

Frank Chopp - chopp.frank@leg.wa.gov

Adam Kline - kline.adam@leg.wa.gov

Eric Pettigrew - pettigrew.eric@leg.wa.gov

Sharon Tomiko-Santos - santos.sharontomiko@leg.wa.gov

WA State Auditor, Brian Sonntag - sonntagb@sao.wa.gov

Program Mgr, King Co, Carol Ehlinger - ehlingerc@sao.wa.gov

Fraud Mgr, Special Invest. Sarah Walker - walkers@sao.wa.gov

Seattle Public Schools District Board:

SPSD Board - boardagenda@seattleschools.org

Peter Maier, District I: peter.maier@seattleschools.org

Sherry Carr, District II: sherry.carr@seattleschools.org

H. Martin-Morris, III: harium.martin-morris@seattleschools.org

Michael DeBell, District IV: michael.debell@seattleschools.org

Kay Smith-Blum, Dist. V: kay.smith-blum@seattleschools.org

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Save the Date!

Citizens for a Community Center at MLK Jr. School is sponsoring the **2011 Madison**

Valley Community Picnic with food, drinks, and festive fun on **Saturday, September 10th** at the Valley School! All you have to do is grab your friends, family and neighbors and show up! We encourage musically-inclined residents to bring their instruments for a lively jam session! Molly Van Nostrand (owner of Fast Frame) has agreed to chair this year's event. If you'd like to get involved in the planning, or offer your assistance, please email her at gmvcc2011picnic@aol.com.



We can't wait to see you there!

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