

The Valley View

Newsletter of the Greater Madison Valley Community Council

Issue 109, February 2003

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Guest View

How Healthy is our Health Care System?

By Bob Crittenden

Dr. Bob Crittenden is a longtime resident of the community and has worked in health policy for most of that time. This is the first of a series of three articles on the state of our health care system. He would welcome any comments.

It is no surprise that our health care system is dipping into a crisis again. At least one of these crises arises each decade, and each one is marked by the same symptoms and causes. Costs are going way up. People are being excluded from services. Many uninsured people are going broke trying to get care for their families. Is this the price we need to pay to have the "finest health care system in the world"?

Actually, we don't have the best health care system. By any population-wide measure we have, in fact, the worst system of all developed countries. We range between the 27th to the 29th best health system. Almost every country you can think of does a better job. We have sicker babies, more rotten teeth in kids' mouths, and worse control of chronic diseases than almost all other developed countries. Think of us as a sinking ship in terms of health status. We are going down the list - not up.

But, we do have the most expensive system. We are now spending 14% of our money (gross domestic product) on health services - and costs are increasing about 8% faster than is economic productivity and inflation. This is a significant factor. In the real world, it means that wages don't keep pace with rising health care costs, our health care takes an increasing cut out of families'

budgets. The situation is exacerbated by employers reducing the share of health care costs that they are willing or able to subsidize. And people who have to pay out of pocket are really getting stretched.

Interesting facts: half of the people without insurance are in debt due to medical bills and about a quarter of those people are not getting needed care because of those bills. And, the major cause of bankruptcy is debt assumed for medical care.

So, shouldn't people buy health insurance so they aren't caught in a financial bind? Of course they should. But health insurance is expensive and unaffordable for many people. A recent analysis sponsored by the Ford Foundation showed that a Washington State family of four needs \$45,000 to rent an apartment, buy food and clothes, and buy health

(Continued on page 2)

Neighborhood Transportation Trouble

Questionable Street Repairs: Open Letter to Mayor Greg Nickels

by Thomas Hubbard

Congratulations on your election. As a former King County employee, I have had the privilege of working with you on surface water issues. I admired your understanding of the challenges in this work. Your commitment to participation in last year's Earth Day activities was also admirable.

At the same time, I must bring to your attention something less pleasant. I would like to invite you to inspect the quality of paving and street repairs recently completed by city crews on my block of Madison Valley. A few weeks ago, crews from Seattle Public Utilities appeared on the 400 block of 27th Ave. E. (27th and Madison). I presume they were repairing sewer lines, which is a good thing. They cut large holes in the pavement, and a few days later the holes were filled with asphalt. You should personally examine the sloppy and shoddy repair to our

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Neighborhood Events

Upcoming Events at the Neighborhood Academy

by Miriam Roskin

February and March are shaping up to be active months at Safeco's Neighborhood Academy at 23rd and Jackson. Here are a few of the offerings that you may want to sample. The classes run from 7 to 9 p.m., and all are free.

FEBRUARY

4: Healing the Hurts of Racism. Gain tools for listening and releasing hurt with the goal of building unity.

6: Get Comfortable with Feng Shui. The principles of this ancient Chinese art of placement explain how optimal arrangement of your home can improve your relationships, health, finances and career.

13: Boost Your Immune System Naturally. Learn to create menus around immune-building foods, and fight the colds that do sneak in with natural therapies.

27: Your Cup of Tea. A glimpse into thousands of years of this favorite beverage: learn about different types of teas; how to buy them, brew them and serve them; and what to serve with them.

MARCH

6: You Can Be an Entrepreneur. Have a great business idea? Learn how to create a business plan, prepare a loan application, and identify the resources to help you succeed. This could be the start of something big!

11: Conflict Resolution: Working It Out. Petty or not, conflicts happen and they cause a lot of stress and tension. Don't get mad; get creative with new strategies for dealing with conflicts in a fast, effective, and collaborative way.

AND DON'T FORGET THE BOOK GROUPS!

Feb 25: *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf.

March 25: *We Were the Mulvaneys*, by Joyce

Classes meet at the Neighborhood Academy, located in Safeco's Jackson Street Center, 306 23rd Avenue South, Suite 200, in Seattle.

All sessions are free, but please pre-register by calling 206/521-1100 or emailing hocr@safeco.com.

Street Repairs, continued

street. Not only does it look terrible, but it also demonstrates to me a lack of pride in work.

We are glad to help solve the transportation troubles in our area. We have many small children and elderly people in the neighborhood, so speeding traffic is definitely a priority between the 400 and 500 blocks of 27th Ave. E. We have discussed speed bumps and/or traffic circles, and we understand that we will have to generate petitions and matching funds to have the City construct something to reduce the speed of cars on 27th Ave and E. Mercer. We are happy to do so, since these amenities would be an asset to our neighborhood.

Sloppily filled holes in the street are not. ▼▼

Fourth Annual Pancake Breakfast

The GMVCC is sponsoring its third FREE neighborhood pancake breakfast in honor of the City's Neighbor Appreciation Day.

Saturday, February 8, 2003

8:00 am to 11:00 am

Bush School Cafeteria, at 36th and E. Harrison

This is one of our most popular annual events — come have some blueberry pancakes, sausage, coffee, juice.

The Mayor and other City officials have joined us in the past — this is a special opportunity to spend time with both your neighbors and some of the City's key decisionmakers!

Health Care Crisis, continued

insurance — and that's if they are healthy; the cost rises if they have any health problems. Most of us have subsidies from our employers or the government so that we can afford insurance, but people without those subsidies are making a very rational choice to house and feed their families and hope they do not get sick.

But, don't we have a safety net that picks people up when they lose insurance? Washington State has had one of the best safety nets in the country. We have a fairly good Medicaid program and for ten years a Basic Health Plan that has filled in the gaps in a patchy system. People in the state have supported these well and a year ago voted a tobacco tax to expand the programs. However, even with these public programs, 644,000 people in Washington are without health insurance. Over 130,000 of these are people who have recently lost their coverage probably due to job loss.

Unfortunately, the budget proposals before the legislature this year will remove well over 100,000 people from insurance - almost all of whom are working people or their dependents. When times were good we gave tax breaks to the upper tax brackets and now are probably cutting health care and education for working people.

So, we don't have a healthy system any way you cut it. This may sound dismal, but there are ways to make our health system work. The next two articles in this series will discuss opportunities for making some improvements. ▼▼

School News

News from Garfield

The budget crisis continues to plague the school; the current deficit is over \$17,000. Parents are contributing basic supplies such as reams of paper to keep the school running. Paper use is estimated at 7 sheets per student per day. With an enrollment over 1,600, that's a lot of paper!

February events include a jazz performance on Feb. 7 at the Museum of History and Industry and the school's senior auction on Feb. 9 at the Scottish Rite Temple. Graduating seniors' concerns are at the forefront as they enter the home stretch of their high school years, and college and career counseling sessions as well as plans for year-end

Fieldhouse Update

Step up for Round Two

by Miriam Roskin

Kent Johnson, the architect engaged by the Greater Madison Valley Community Council to prepare a preliminary design for renovation of the brick fieldhouse near the soccer field just south of the Arboretum, has completed his work. The product is a series of fine drawings of an excellent design that would transform the vacant and locked building into a community hub with meeting space, a classroom, a small kitchen, and restrooms. Kent, whose firm provides innovative architectural services for residences and small commercial buildings throughout the city, has really done a superior job, and the Council is grateful for the attention and care he devoted to this project.

The Council has submitted the drawings to the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, which owns the fieldhouse building, and representatives of the Department's planning unit have responded enthusiastically.

So much for preliminaries. If the renovation is to become a reality, the gentle incline we've ascended so far is going to ramp up into a steep and challenging climb before long. Next steps include:

- Finalizing cost estimates for the renovation work (preliminary estimates came in around \$200,000);
- Developing and implementing a fundraising strategy;
- Preparing grant application(s);
- Engaging an engineer and architect to finalize the design and prepare construction drawings;
- Developing and implementing a construction management plan; and
- Engaging a contractor to carry out the renovation.

It may look straightforward, but each step has a series of critical substeps (door-to-door fundraising! Seeking private

celebrations are crowding many students' schedules. ▼▼

News from MLK

Test scores: Over 70% of our second graders are now meeting basic level reading skills.

Community Support: The Principal has asked the GMVCC to help pay for an outdoor readerboard to increase community awareness of school events. Volunteers from the Garfield Honor Society will be working on school beautification projects on Feb. 1. The school would welcome similar volunteer help from the GMVCC community, as well. Call Alma Brown at 252-2900.

Events: Parent lunch with school assembly to follow on Feb. 13. And no school for Feb. 18-21 — it's Winter Break! ▼▼

sector donors! Permitting! Utilities! Scheduling! Crafting a use agreement with the Parks Department!) that demand concentrated effort.

To that end, a fieldhouse committee of Jerry Sussman, Cathy Baker, and Sally Richardson met in early January. The project will clearly require public funding to proceed, and a City Neighborhood Matching Fund grant is a key target. However, these funds must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis. While some of this match can be provided through volunteer labor, pro bono services, and donated materials, it is certain that our community will need to raise a substantial amount of cash, as well.

Next steps are to initiate a fundraising process, secure commitments for cash and other contributions, and explore the possibility of partnering with other potential beneficiaries of the renovated fieldhouse.

As this process proceeds, Jerry, Cathy, and Sally would like to meet with community members who have specialized expertise in fundraising. The goal is to develop an overall fundraising strategy and implementation plan by spring. If you have fundraising experience and are interested in assisting the cause of the fieldhouse renovation, please call Jerry at 325-6308 or Sally at 323-6312. ▼▼

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Community Council Minutes

GMVCC Meeting of January 21, 2003

Gary Emslie called the meeting order at 7:30, and the minutes were approved.

Linda Hansen of FORM (Friends of the Ravine in Madrona) reported that the restoration of the ravine along Madrona Drive was going well. The first phase, cleanup, has been completed and they are beginning the second phase of vegetation management for invasive plants. They requested a letter of support from GMVCC to the City and requested volunteers for time, money and services. A motion regarding the letter was made and passed unanimously.

Adrienne Bailey has assumed the position of liaison between

(Continued on page 5)

Wellness

Clear Your Mind

by Rebekkah Dinaburg, Santosha Yoga

Inertia: A body in motion stays in motion, a body at rest stays at rest.

Movement is a celebration of our bodies. I love to move and breathe with awareness. It brings me to a place where I feel more fully alive. Spinning like a top, however, can drain our energy and leave us too tired to really move with intention.

The holidays can be a time of going and going, until they are going gone. After so much rushing to and fro (making this, buying that, remembering to) it can be hard to slow down again; and moving at this kind of a spinning pace is not what I call a celebration of our bodies or our lives. If you feel like you are "spinning out" try taking a few minutes to just sit and breathe.

Find a comfortable seat, either in a chair or on a cushion on the floor. Sit up tall, with your back long. This helps your lungs to expand and fill up with fresh air. Close your eyes and put your hands on your belly. Take deep breaths, deep enough so that you can feel your belly move as you breathe. Breathe in slowly and out slowly. Repeat 10 - 30 times. As you do, clear your mind and settle in. This quiet place might help you better sense what you would like to do or not do.

Next month: Simple steps to get energy moving and wake up to greet spring. ▼▼

Rebekkah Dinaburg is a yoga teacher and owner of Santosha Yoga Studio, here in Madison Valley.

Bring in this article and receive a free class.

For questions please contact Rebekkah via e-mail at info@yoga4everyone.com or by phone at 206 264 5034. The studio is located at 2812 East Madison St. on the 2nd floor .

Film Review

Pete's Meteor: Mike Myers Tries to Play a Streetwise Ex-Junkie

by Jenny McKinney, Island Video

This film is set in Ireland, present day. Three children whose parents have both died of AIDS are being raised in Dublin by their grandmother. I'm with you so far....

Enter the meteor . It lands right smack in the middle of the backyard. The children figure that their dead parents have sent this meteor down to earth for them, and will do anything to hang onto it.

While a chunk of rock the size of a car engine would most likely cause some sizeable destruction, in the film it leaves only a small crater. It's not a good idea for a dramatic film to stretch credibility to such lengths.


Another mistake -- casting a Canadian with no dramatic experience (Mike Myers. Yes, *that* Mike Myers, in his first dramatic role.) in the role of a Pete, an Irish, streetwise ex-junkie. Pete was the best friend of the children's dead parents, and the kids blame Pete for getting their parents mixed up with drugs, and hence, AIDS. I applaud Myers for trying to break free from the Austin Powers death grip. But if you are going to make the attempt, *make the attempt*. Though this role has ample room for depth and substance, Myers did little more with it than perfect a hard-to-perfect accent. Maybe he was too tired from counting all the dough he made from "GoldMember." Yeah, baby.

Alfred Molina plays the local scientist who comes to get the meteor. The reason for this character's interest in the rock is pretty unclear, but he does develop an interest in the children that amounts to one of the only interesting, if under-developed, plot lines of the film. Fans of "Boogie Nights" will remember Molina as the drug dealer who keeps a firecracker-throwing Chinese man in his house, and anyone who plays a role like that is O.K in my book. Molina brings charm to this otherwise flat role.

Perhaps the brightest spot of the film is Ian Costello, the boy wonder who plays Mickey, the oldest of the three children. Deeply troubled by his parents' passing, Mickey is constantly in fights and trouble with the "bleeding coppers." Costello plays this character well, and one alternately wants to hug and throttle this kid. Costello reminds me of Russell Crowe, before he got ruined. Brenda Frick also scores as the Grandmum with a hidden booze problem, and is as endearing here as in her turn as Mike Myers' mum in the fun and fresh "So I Married an Axe Murderer."

If you are looking for some weekend entertainment and are considering renting a video, my advice is to keep walking past "Pete's Meteor" and head over towards "Boogie Nights" or "So I married an Axe Murderer." Heck, make it a double feature. Even if you have seen those films before, they are going to offer you something you didn't notice the first time around, which will be far more fun than trying to stay awake through this snoozer. ▼▼

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Valley Business Highlight

Madison Park Tree

by Cathy Nunneley

Mark Herkert, a tall, lanky young man with the relaxed style of an experienced outdoorsman, inspires instant confidence. This is definitely a guy who knows and loves trees.

Mark, a certified arborist, is the sole proprietor of Madison Park Trees. He personally provides all the services and is dedicated to the beautification of our local neighborhood. Mark asserts that the most important message he can give his clients is that "I provide unparalleled personal customer service." His previous ten years as a social worker have given him the people skills to make this goal a reality. His on-the-job training was provided by highly experienced members of the Arboretum's staff and enabled him to pass the exam required by all certified arborists. Additionally, he attends six to nine continuing education classes a year to hone his expertise.

Mark is a passionate member of Plant Amnesty, upholding the organization's belief that it is possible to strike a balance between the needs of both the customer and the tree. He will not accept a job that endangers the health of a tree. Madison Park Trees provides all tree-related services with specialties including expert pruning, planting, and renovation. He is also pleased to offer consultation with clients who need assistance in dealings with the City for property concerns.

In his free time, Mark continues his 10 years of work with Outbound Bound. During the summer, he teaches mountaineering skills in the North Cascades.

Mark can be contacted by calling 322-4546 or on email at bethormark@aol.com. All consulting estimates are free of charge. Please consider Madison Park Tree for your future needs and for support of our local community's small businesses. ▼▼

Minutes, continued

the Council and ML King School. She requested that the Council consider appropriating \$1,500 for the school to use towards the purchase of a reader board, with provision for shared use of the readerboard by the school and the Council. A motion was made and passed approving contribution of one-half the cost of the readerboard, up to \$1,500. Adrienne will discuss the board's use with the school. Additionally, she requested the Council's assistance for school beautification projects such as gardening and interior painting. The school will provide materials and tools. A motion was made and passed resolving to provide this support. The Council will work on helping with volunteers and resources.

Gary discussed traffic concerns. Parking, signage, and speeding remain problematic. Revisions of SR-520 may exacerbate the situation. The Council decided to invite the Trans-Lake study group for an update. Gary will contact them.

Sat, Feb 8 8AM-11AM The Bush School will host a pancake breakfast which is free to the community. The Mayor will be on hand to meet neighbors.

A motion was made and passed to provide funds to print labels for the newsletter. An increase of about \$50/issue is necessary as our volunteer printer is unable to continue to provide this service.

Bush School announced that construction of the lower campus has been postponed for one year secondary to funding concerns.

Bob Edgerton of SNOW, a Puget Sound anti war group, has been hosting peace pot lucks with good attendance. Contact him at 325-0757 for info.

Field house Report by Jerry Sussman. No assurance of financing. We will submit a letter of intent to the City for a grant of \$100,000. We will need to approach foundations and do considerable fund-raising. We are discussing strategies for partnerships with other organizations that wish to use the field house.

Meeting was adjourned at 9 PM. ▼▼

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Your submissions are appreciated!

Mail to the address above.

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Next Community Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 18, 2003, 7:30 p.m.

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(parking available on playfield)



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