



Central Northside Neighborhood Council

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N e w s l e t t e r

July/August 2010

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President’s Letter: Notes on the Morality of Low Expectations

I’ll admit it; I’m a bit of a geek. I like to read stuff that a lot of other people would use as a sleep aid when there’s no remedy available in the bathroom medicine cabinet. I’d also like to think I’m not the kind of person who goes around trying to force books onto others [you really have to read this....]. But here’s an exception: *Culture of Fear: Risk Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* by British sociologist Frank Furedi.

I first read this book about 15 years ago and its central message sticks with me today. Furedi argues that there is a pernicious force afoot in our culture that makes almost all of the daily choices that we face seem to be too “risky” because we are always being reminded of possible bad outcomes. Want a delicious roast chicken for dinner? Be sure to cook it VERY well or risk food poisoning. Also, be sure to carefully wash your hands, the kitchen counter and anything else that may have come into contact with the “deadly chicken.” Going for a bike ride in the park? Be sure to wear a helmet and pads because there is a risk—however small—of serious injury or death from riding a bike.

Always fretting about the “worse case scenario,” we have adopted what Furedi calls, “the precautionary principle” wherein every choice seems to favor the most cautious approach, no matter how small the risk. This principle of caution over all other consideration forms what he calls, “the morality of low expectation.” [If you think he’s exaggerating, have you noticed how many people now say, “Have a SAFE vacation instead of have a FUN vacation?”]

Put simply, the morality of low expectation goes something like this: Since everything carries with it a risk, why should one do anything at all?

Such a morality is anathema to a free society. People in free societies MUST take risks if our economic and political system is to function well and cultivate a sense of freedom and choice in individuals. We

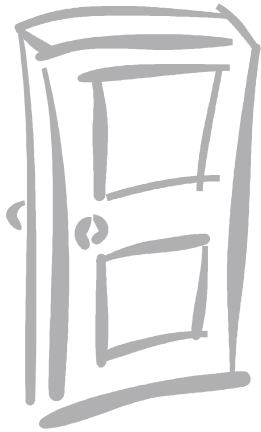
[continues on Page 6]

Greg Spicer
President, CNNC Board of Directors

Rich in diversity. Rich in promise.



Northside 'Doorways' Art Project



On Sunday, July 18th around 30 or so friends and neighbors came together at Randyland to help start the Northside Doorways Art Project. The aim, to paint recycled doors with fun designs and art work to place on vacant lots around the upper areas of the Central Northside.

Why? I hear you ask. Surveys of the neighborhood have shown that safety and trash are some of the highest areas of concern for neighbors, one

attracts the other, our hope is that as we place these doors on these lots people realize that we are working to improve the area and that someone cares about the lots and is working to put housing back in there, making it less likely to become a dumping ground and a hang out for gangs.

We are moving forward with the development committee to bring new housing to some of these lots but this will not happen overnight and

we need to look at ways we can make the upper parts of our neighborhood more inviting to those that would invest here.

We hope to get the doors positioned in the next couple of weeks and we would invite you all to start visiting the areas and let us know what you think. We will then start all over again and keep looking for other ways that we can also improve areas of blight in our great neighborhood.

[continues on Page 8]

... photos on page 6

A Clean Sweep

When I first moved to Germany, some 28 years ago, I was politely, but pointedly informed by my neighbors that by Saturday evening, every week, the street and side-walk were to be swept. It was the culture; and being a tidy person, myself, I thought it was charming and practical. (Less dirt in the house!) Amazing! There was a 16% sales tax, but the citizens did not expect the city, county, state, country to clean the streets! It was an individual household's responsibility! One of the last things I did when I departed four years ago was sweep the street and side-walk.

Well, folks, the city of Pittsburgh has abdicated the responsibility for cleaning our streets. It doesn't require much imagination to realize that the cleaner/tidier/more organized a neighborhood the less crime and more

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Neighborhood Development Marches On

Your friends and neighbors on CNNC's development committee have been working hard to make our neighborhood an even better place to live. Two major projects are at critical points.

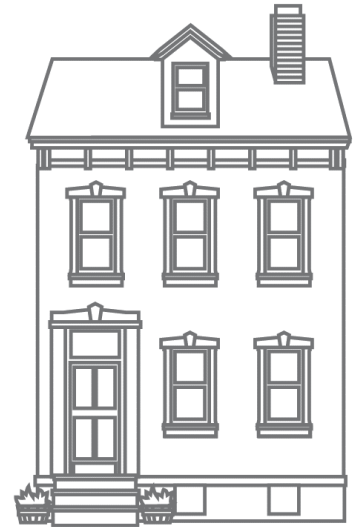
First, the new/rehab housing project. CNNC's goal has always been to promote housing that will invite a diverse group of people to live here. Several months ago a Request for Proposals (RFP) was sent out. We have received two excellent responses: S&A Homes, State College, PA the current builders of the very successful Federal Hill development and October Development, Pittsburgh, PA another local developer who has extensive work in East Allegheny. The development committee has reviewed the proposals and met with both developers. At the CNNC monthly meeting on Monday, July 12, the housing plans were presented and well received by the

community and membership. The Development Committee continues its discussion and negotiation with both proposed developers. Final decisions will be made by the CNNC board of directors and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA.)

Second, another RFP was sent out nationally by Northside Tomorrow (NST) to solicit plans for the redevelopment of the Garden Theater Block. NST is a joint venture of CNNC and the North Side Leadership Conference. Five responses were received: Wells and Company, Spokane, Washington; Zukin Development Corp., Philadelphia, PA; Barron Commercial Real Estate, Pittsburgh, PA; Resaca, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA and Aaron Stubna, Coraopolis, PA. These five proposals have been reviewed by NST. Through conference calls, NST has also completed initial conversations with

each of the developers. On Monday, July 19 at the Children's Museum a community meeting for the presentation of the proposals by the developers drew over 200 people. The atmosphere was charged with expectation and excitement. Those who attended were able to express their comments and ask questions. All who attended were pleased that finally, after so many years of neglect, something wonderful would happen to the Garden Theater Block. Discussions and negotiations with the proposed developers will continue through the summer. The future of our Central Northside community appears brighter every day. Thanks to all who give so freely of their time to help us move forward.

Dennis McAndrew



new
housing
&
rehab

A Clean Sweep [continued from Page 2]

care for the welfare and safety of the residents. Trash labels an area uncaring and prone to crime. Sorry, but that is a proven fact.

Wouldn't it be interesting to see what would happen if, together, we cleaned, swept and beautified our block, street, neighborhood? Who knows, we might turn the weekly clean-up into a neighborly "stoop." The Central Northside Neighborhood "stoops" are legendary and the envy of the city and other not so fortunate city neighborhoods.

Personally, I'm hopeful that, and going to be watching for, the city budget line

item expense for street sweeping to decrease. If the city can't do it, then it is obvious to me that personnel who cannot keep the machinery operating and personnel who had been employed to operate the machinery will not be needed anymore and must be terminated. That is, after all, how the city saves money, right??

So, how do we help the city save our tax dollars AND safe-guard our neighborhoods? With our narrow lots it only takes 1/2 hour on Friday evening or Saturday to clean/sweep our walks, curbs and streets.

Aren't you looking for a way to improve your neighborhood that will not cost a lot of time or money? Let's sweep the street.

Jan Meyers



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Venture Outdoors ~ Free Family Outdoor Adventure

Venture Outdoors hosts its third free Family Outdoor Festival of the season on Saturday, August 28th from noon to 4 pm at Allegheny Commons West Park. The afternoon of outdoor activities features kayaking on Lake Elizabeth, scaling a 30 foot climbing wall, geocaching treasure hunts, guided family bike rides and much much more.

The lake's featured shallow-water paddling loop is just 3 feet deep, perfect for beginner kayakers. The city skyline forms a beautiful backdrop to the city's oldest park near the National Aviary. Best of all: anyone above the age of three and weighing at least 35 pounds can kayak.

The festivals serve as signature events of Venture Outdoors' Family and Community Programs Initiative. Now entering its second year, the initiative encourages families to get outside, stay healthy, and creates a pattern of use and appreciation for the city's outdoor assets. The multi-year initiative seeks to reach families in diverse communities through outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship programs.

Over 15 family-focused, outdoor and environmental exhibitors will have booths during the festival with

activities for kids. To name a few, the Islamic Center will feature henna tattooing, Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest will host tree I.D. hunts, and the Regional Environmental Education Center will feature hands-on nature games. For the artistically inclined, the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts will lead art activities.

Family Outdoor Festivals are sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. The festival is open to the public with an intentional location and a targeted focus on getting the surrounding community involved.



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Saturday ~ August 7 ~ 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Sunday ~ August 8 ~ 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Tickets [\$15] are available at the tour entrance on Page Street, between Fulton and Manhattan Streets



AUUC and Blue Mountain Celebrate 5 Years of T'ai Chi and Qigong



T'ai Chi

Venerable Shih Tao-Fa, an ordained Buddhist Priest, has been teaching people from the Northside how to relieve stress, improve overall fitness, and center their bodies and minds through the gentle art of T'ai Chi and Qigong. These ancient Chinese forms of exercise blend physical movement with deep meditative breathing in order to boost energy, cultivate physical and emotional balance, and instill a sense of spiritual and physical well-being. During the last five years, T'ai Chi classes have met in the basement of Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church (AUUC) or in the park across the street on Thursday evenings.

'The classes began,' Ven. Shih Tao-Fa explains, 'as an 8 week seminar on Taoism and Buddhism, and included some T'ai Chi, which is known as 'moving meditation.' When the seminar finished, people wanted to learn more T'ai Chi, and so the class has continued for the last five years.'

In honor of this fifth year anniversary in August, Ven. Tao-Fa and Allegheny Church will open up classes to the Northside community at large. As Ven. Tao-Fa explains, 'We would like others to be able to experience the rewards of T'ai Chi and Qigong.' AUUC in conjunction with Still Mountain T'ai Chi will be holding a free event on Thursday, August 5th, 8:00 pm at the Church.

The free session is a unique oppor-

tunity for people to learn T'ai Chi from a true T'ai Chi Master and Buddhist Priest. Ven. Shih Tao-Fa has trained with some of the world's foremost and respected teachers, and has been featured in numerous magazines and newspaper articles. His T'ai Chi classes will be the focus of the Health and Fitness Section of *Pittsburgh Magazine's* 2010 Annual City Guide.

As Anita Prentiss explains, 'Since I have started taking T'ai Chi 5 years ago, I have experienced less stress and greater balance. I have a feeling

of being centered, peaceful and productive in my every day life. Ven. Tao-Fa's teaching style is patient, thorough, and fun! Any time I get the chance, I encourage people to take T'ai Chi. The investment of time and money is absolutely worth it.'

The August 5th event is free and open to the public, although advance registration would be appreciated. For further information or to register, call 412-480-9177, email dwc8@comcast.net, or visit www.stillmountaintaichi.com.

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You can't do a life without risk.

Notes on the Morality of Low Expectations [continued from Page 1]

must invent enterprises and open businesses, even though they might fail. We must voice our opinion, even though it might prove to be unpopular. We must buy homes even though the value of any one home might go down in any particular location. We must work for the betterment of our own communities, schools and government, even though some might consider the risk of public failure in any of these endeavors to be too great to continue.

To quote a phrase from popular psychology: You can't do a life without risk.

With the CNNC's bold new vision statement, the effort to quickly revitalize and populate our empty spaces and vacant storefronts in our neighborhood may seem to some too risky. What if there isn't enough parking? What if this or that feature of the built environment is changed forever in the process? I sometimes hear these questions put in a way that suggests that there is no future—that there is no way of solving new problems as they arise. I wonder if an overblown sense of precaution and low expectation may dampen our enthusiasm for this great enterprise we are undertaking together? I hope not.

As potential developers spoke at the Children's Museum the other night regarding their plans for the Garden Theater Block, I was struck not just by the large turnout [no doubt a sign of hope and public engagement] but also by the lack of open joyfulness at the prospect of a revitalized core not

only for the Central Northside but for the whole of the communities that comprise Pittsburgh's North Side. Maybe people were just being polite and "minding their manners" but I wonder if worry has not replaced hope as the new ethos of American culture. I hope not.

I'm surely not telling people not to concern themselves with risk [if I were riding a bike in traffic on city streets, I would wear a helmet and I do think it's rational to be careful

when preparing raw poultry.] I'm also not suggesting that we don't proceed carefully in what we do in terms of neighborhood development. What I am suggesting, however; is that the time has come to face the risks of failure and, with careful planning and broad community input, move boldly forward toward the Central Northside of the future, the looming risk of some inevitable failures notwithstanding.

Have a FUN, RELAXING and JOYFUL summer!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM of PITTSBURGH:

- **International Children's Painting Competition Exhibit** Through Sunday August 1 now through October 3, 2010
- **CURIOUS GEORGE: Let's Get Curious** through August
 1. Meet Curious George SAT 2:00-2:30 pm and WED 11:30 am-Noon
 2. The Curious Table
 - 'Fossils' August 2-15
 - 'Sea Stars' August 16-22
 - 'Turtles' August 23-31
- **Solar Concert Series** WED's 12:15 to 1:00 pm through August 25
 1. Bill Toms and Marc Reisman August 4
 2. EMay August 11
 3. Appalasia August 18
 4. Jerome Hawk Freeman August 25
- **Studio Music** THUR 11:00 -11:30 am August 5, 12, 19, 26
- **Starship Astrotron** Noon-2:00 pm and 3:00-4:30 pm August 10-16
- **Kindergarten . . . Here I Come** SAT 9:00 am to 1:00 pm August 14

CALL MALLORY LaPORTE at 412.322.5058 ext 231 for additional information.



'Doorways' Art Project

[continued from Page 2]

You can view the doors at our blog
[address listed below the photo.]

Special Thanks go out to Randy Gilson for donating his property, time and amazing energy to this project. Also to Regis Flaherty from Sherwin Williams Paints who donated our paints and also came with his wife and two beautiful daughters on Sunday to help us paint. And to all those that turned up and became artists for the day!!



'Doorways' Art Project Painters

<http://northsidedoorways.blogspot.com/>



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