

# newsletter



## Call For Change in our Education System

*A Northgate neighbor gives her view from the classroom* ALLIE HALPERN

My name is Allie Halpern and I am a second-year Teach for America corps member, living in Northgate Park. I am excited about all of the current media coverage of the education crisis in our country, from the Race to the Top initiative to the documentary *Waiting for Superman* that was released last month. While I have my own opinions about where there are 'kinks' in the system, I wholeheartedly support the excitement and passion that is currently evolving around education reform. Currently, I teach one hundred and fifty seventh-graders at Mary Potter Middle School in Oxford, NC. Oxford is in Granville County about 30 minutes northeast of the neighborhood and is a fairly depressed rural area (You also may remember Oxford as the setting of Tim Tyson's nonfiction novel on racial issues *Blood Done Sign My Name*). Teaching in a low-income school district has been the most transformative experience of my life.

I was born and spent my early childhood in the northeast, but moved to Wilmington, NC in

late elementary school. Even in the relatively affluent coastal town of Wilmington, I noticed a distinct achievement gap between my "country" high school and the other high schools in my county. My school had less AP classes, a lower graduation rate, and fewer students attending 4-year colleges than the other schools in the area. I applied to Teach for America my senior year at UNC-Chapel Hill, from which I graduated with a B.S. in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. When applying to TFA, I remembered the distinct difference between the schools in Wilmington, and thought about the bigger picture: that many students across America were receiving an education that was inadequately preparing them to be successful, in all areas but especially in the sciences. I decided that with my unique background I had the ability to excite and invest students in the sciences. In April of 2009 I was accepted to the 2009 TFA Corps in the Eastern North Carolina region.

Having one hundred and fifty students is overwhelming. I

may have one hundred and fifty trials or triumphs on any given day. Every day on my commute home I am frustrated, thankful, angry, proud, and happy- all at the same time. The past year and a half has been difficult, but I keep thinking about students like Shania, who came into my classroom last year having failed her EOGs and every class in the sixth grade. Even with an incredibly difficult home life and a second grade reading level, Shania left my class a star. When I taught genetics, she was the first student to rush to the board to complete Punnett square problems in front of her classmates. When we learned about the human body, she was a professional when we dissected frogs (even though she swore to me that she was not touching a frog on the day before). When we learned about physics, she could calculate the distance, speed, or time traveled by any moving object. Even though I was Shania's teacher, I also learned from her. She moti-

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Night of Lights and Luminary Sale

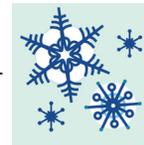
On the Night of Lights, luminaries are lit at dusk in neighborhood yards and around the park to make a beautiful backdrop for the holiday season. This year's night of lights will be **December 19**. NPNA will sell luminaries (votive candles in white paper bags weighted with sand) on Sunday, December 19 at the large picnic shelter by the tennis courts from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Luminaries will be sold in pack-

ets of ten for \$5 for NPNA members or \$8 for non-members. You can become a member of NPNA at the Sale!

We'll be setting up approximately 300 luminaries around the park in the late afternoon, probably around 4 p.m. If you happen to be taking a stroll or want to come down, grab a few and help us set these up around the park.

We also need volunteers to help

put the luminaries together at the beginning of the sale. If you can help us out, please contact Ian Pond at [ian.pond@yahoo.com](mailto:ian.pond@yahoo.com) or just show up. We will have a fire burning at the shelter and **Cheryl Shiflett will provide homemade chicken gumbo!!** Please come out on December 19 to get your luminaries!



### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- *Park Clean-Up—December 11, 2010*
- *Night of Lights/Luminary Sale—December 19, 2010*
- **NO DECEMBER NPNA MEETING**
- *January NPNA Meeting—January 20, 2011*
- *February NPNA Meeting—February 18, 2011*

### JANUARY NPNA MEETING

At our January meeting, Cheryl Shiflett will present information about PAC 2 (Partners Against Crime District 2) meetings and programs. She will include information about the Durham Pace Car program to reduce speeding. Please join us: January 20, 2011 at 7 pm at the Civitan Club at 2510 Glendale Avenue.

### Didn't Get to Apply to NERP?

Wish you had? You're in luck! Clean Energy Durham reports they still have spots open, so it's not too late to apply.

FIRST: Go to <http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/nerp/> and click on the "Prequalification Application."

SECOND: Download a pdf of the NERP application on the NPNA listserv website at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NPNA/files/NERP/> or contact Amy at [NorthgateNERP@gmail.com](mailto:NorthgateNERP@gmail.com) if you're not on the listserv. After you fill it out completely, turn it in directly to Clean Energy Durham. Contact Ann Roy at [ann@cleanenergydurham.org](mailto:ann@cleanenergydurham.org) for details on getting your application to her.

# Our Neighborhood's History—More Snippets

*Part Two of a Two-Part Series about Northgate Park History* IAN POND

Many people think that the house just next door to the Park View Baptist Church is part of a parsonage. In actuality, two brothers (Wesley Loftis was one) purchased the two lots, just north of the site where Park View Baptist Church now sits, after they returned from World War II in 1946. The two houses were later purchased by Line and Terri Dempsey in 2006 and 2008, who became the second owners of each home after 60 plus years.

It is interesting to note that in the Wesley Loftus house, four generations lived in the house at the same time in this small two bedroom one bath house. Although the houses sit next to each other, their street addresses are two different streets (Acadia Street and Elgin Street).

These two houses have featured large in NPNA over the years – Wesley Loftis was a founding Board member of NPNA in 1987 and Line is the most recent Past President!

Fred Westbrook and Marni Goldshlag live in 2303 Glendale Avenue, which is the second house up from the corner of Chamberlain; across from the park. This house was built by Edison Johnson (the Edison Johnson Recreation Center up on Murray by NCMLS is named after him) in 1948 and his family owned it until Fred and Marni bought it 3 years ago. Edison Johnson was the director of public works in

Durham in the 50's, 60's, maybe into the 70's (exact dates unknown). Mr. Johnson also wrote the first NC state building code.

Bus routes used to run through Northgate Park (there was one stop at the junction of Gresham and Shenandoah and another near the traffic stop at the junction of Lavender/Glendale) taking local workers to the Tobacco Warehouses.

In 1980, the section of Acadia that runs where the Tennis Court Picnic shelter now sits was closed permanently.

The Dog Park used to house the Jaycee Ball Field.

Fowlers Grocery store was where the pawn shop is now on Roxboro and Club before it moved to Brightleaf Square. Fowlers subsequently moved to alongside Morgan Imports and after a couple of changes of ownership became 'Parker and Otis.'

The original "Museum" was called the "Children's Museum", founded in 1946, and was housed in the white house on the junction of Lavender and the Creek, on the right as you look upstream. The Museum was moved to the South side of Murray where it became the Museum of Life and Science. The Mercury Redstone rocket was trucked up from Alabama during the height of local space enthusiasm driven by the training of astronauts in Chapel Hill. 1960s Museum attractions included a two-headed calf and a stuffed wallaby! Our beloved Bronto is just one of many exhibits from the original Dinosaur Trail (founded around 1970 by Richard Westcott and open until Hurricane Fran wreaked havoc in 1996). 2009 saw the Save the Bronto campaign (spearheaded by Northgate Park neighbors), which raised over \$20,000 to restore and protect the famed beheaded-Bronto.

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## Call for Change

*(Continued from page 1)*

vated me to create more tactile lesson plans, so that students who had trouble reading would not be hindered from learning science. She also taught me patience when her behavior was less than superb. Even though Shania swears that she does not give hugs, I saw her in the hallway this past week and she draped her hand over my shoulder to say, "Hey Ms. Halpern." It is students like Shania who I wake up for every single day. While I do believe that knowledgeable and

motivated teachers can change the life trajectories of kids, I also believe that teachers are not the end-all-be-all solution to the education crisis in our nation. I read in a NY Times article by Trip Gabriel last week saying that 12% of African American males are proficient in reading in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade compared to 38% of white males and by 8<sup>th</sup> grade only 12% of African American males are proficient in math compared to 44% of white males. The achievement gap illustrated by these statistics starts even before kids enter a kinder-

garten classroom. If we want to really close the achievement gap in this country, we need to implement more and better early childhood education programs, parenting resources, and mentoring programs in addition to reforming what is going on in our school buildings. We need people demanding changes at all levels in our education system. Please join me, no matter your age, race, gender, or profession, as making education reform one of your 'issues.' Demand better for our kids, they deserve it.

**ABOUT NORTHGATE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

**NPNA Meetings:** Northgate Park Neighborhood Association meets the third Thursday of every month (except June and December) at 7:00 p.m. at the Friendly City Civitan Club at 2510 Glendale Avenue. All neighbors are welcome to attend!

**NPNA Board of Directors:** President: Jeff "Boomer" Bakalchuck; Vice President: Ian Pond; Treasurer: Dan Singer; Secretary: Alice Kolacinski; Members at Large: Katie Coyle, Line Dempsey, Caroline Elliot, Mike Konvika, Alyssa Platt, and Adam Shestak.

## Up the Creek with a Paddle IAN POND

Ellerbe Creek and the Little, Eno, and Flat Rivers combine to form the Neuse River, which when damned by the Army Corps of Engineers, created Falls Lake. My goal was to paddle from Hickory Hills ramp to the Ellerbe Creek estuary in Falls Lake and go as far upstream as water level and fallen trees would permit. In doing so, I wanted to photograph some of the trash and creek-blocking trees on the way that need attention.

I put in at 10:50 a.m. to mildly choppy water as the breeze carried across the clear two-mile-plus stretch of Falls Lake that straddles I85 and immediately came across a sunken boat stranded on a sand bank. It struck me that my wife Carol had high expectations I would end up the same way! Hope we can prove her wrong.

Most of Falls Lake is less than five feet deep but today's water level of 249.5' (measured as above sea level, not real depth!) was several feet lower than the normal 252' so sand banks were everywhere – it's a bit disconcerting to ground on a sand bank a quarter-mile from shore. Carol's misgivings cross my mind again!

By the time I reached the I85 bridge (this, by the way, is the only pleasurable way of viewing I85) I had already seen four Blue Herons, and as I passed under the bridge it was pocked with Swallows nests. Immediately to the West of the bridge the water calmed to the smoothness of a Mill pond and the paddling was fast and easy allowing me to reach my target area fifty minutes after putting in despite sight-seeing.

At this water level the embankments of the old Ellerbe Creek extend in to Falls Lake a good 2/3rds of a mile like two train rails with the lake on either side before submerging under the lake's surface. The low-water exposed areas are covered in summer grass . . . and hundreds of drink containers; bottles, cans, jugs and junk are everywhere.

As I paddled further up the estuary that still lies within Falls Lake I reached embankments that remain exposed at higher water levels. Here the exposed roots, bushes and trees are littered with dangling trash, like grim holiday decorations. The low water level means that at the train track crossing, where the Southern line bridge delineates the Lake from the current creek, the lower trestle is high enough above the water line for me to glide under. Normally I would have to portage around the bridge and re-enter upstream. The low trestle acts as a dam for large timber flotsam heading downstream and the flotsam acts as a sieve to retain an island of trash. At this water level much of the trash has flowed in to Falls but at higher levels I have seen trash islands that are 40' by 20'. There's still plenty of trash today though.

At this point we leave Falls Lake and enter the current estuary of Ellerbe Creek. The creek here is some 30' -40' wide and more akin to stretches of the Eno with no noticeable current. As I move away from the lake the water quality changes quickly and suddenly I can see the bottom of the creek quite clearly.

Within eyesight of the current train crossing is the dismantled old train bridge. It also acts to

retain huge amounts of timber and trash which make a spectacularly ugly heap on the upstream side. This scenario is repeated many times to a lesser extent on the upstream side of fallen trees. I continue up past Red Mill Road and snap a photo of what looks like an eagles nest from a distance but the "eggs" are really plastic bottles. In a few yards I have to scramble over a couple of creek-wide fallen trees. The first couple I can scoot my kayak over without getting out but the third is a big beast and I have to exit. Lesson – don't try to slide down a fallen tree back in to the water in a flat water boat – the keel makes that move very different from the same move in a flat-bottomed whitewater kayak! I can hear Carol laughing in the background!

I'm now only a hundred yards or so upstream of Red Mill Road and can see that a few more yards up there is a major blockage that I will have to portage. I scramble out of my boat and walk up the bank to see beyond the blockage. Upstream looks a bit prehistoric with over-arching greenery, sand banks and rotting fallen trees. The number of fallen trees upstream and the now low level of water dictate that this is the end of my adventure.

I snap a few more photos and head back downstream. That always seems to go so much faster!

*(continued on page 4)*

## Neighborhood Real Estate News NANCY RIZZO

There were 15 houses SOLD in Northgate from January 2010 to end of October 2010.

The average sales price was \$124,227 for a 2 bed, 1 bath home with 1023 SF living space. Days on the market from 4 to 169.

Interestingly 15 homes sold during this same period 2009. The average sales price was \$130,985 for a 3 bed, 1.5 bath home with 1191 SF living space.

Days on the market from 14 to 343.

All information was taken from the Multiple listing Service and provided by our neighbor Nancy Rizzo, Broker.



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## Up the Creek

(continued from page 3)

As I pass under the train bridge again and move from the high-water embankments to the newly exposed area I can't help but notice the contradiction that although the area is littered with hundreds of bottles I am also in the company of more Blue Herons than I have ever seen in one place. At fifteen I lose count and continue paddling. The bird life across this part of Falls is extensive with flocks of geese, crows and seagulls joined by a sprinkling of wrens and huge hawks. I could have played just about every team sport while I was en route – football, basketball, soccer, beach ball and softball were all represented in flotsam.

Heading back towards Hickory Hills I managed to follow more of the path of the original creek

and had decent water depth most of the way, passing by picturesque islands with semi-fossilized trees exposing their roots.

If you do this route take care on the way back not to hug the right-hand bank too much – you will end up in cul-de-sac lakes that you'll have to turn around and paddle back out of or portage over a land strip to get back to the main lake.

Under the bridge, which they handily put an I85 sign on in case any boaters were unsure of where they were, there is just time for one last look at the sunken boat before hitting the exit ramp three hours after putting in and heading home.

On the way home I scouted areas to allow a

litter collection group to get closer to the creek and avoid the four-mile return trip across Falls Lake. The best point is to put in on the upstream side of Red Mill Road bridge and paddle down to the train bridge. There is also a creek-side path there that you can use to move upstream and collect trash from the bank.

The following day I returned to the train crossing using a local path and on my way back passed a group of four fishermen on their way to the creek with a 24 pack of beer; I wonder how many of those bottles will see the recycling can tonight?

## NPNA Committees

Following is a list of the NPNA Committee chairs and members:

National Night Out - Line Dempsey

Neighborhood Watch/PAC 2 - Cheryl Shiflett and Nancy Kneephen

Yard Sale - Mike Konvicka

Halloween Liaison - Katie Coyle; Elgin St Chairman - Donald Clary

Night of Lights/Luminaries - Carol Henderson

Stream and Park Clean-up - Mike Shiflett, alternate Ian Pond

Annual Meeting – NPNA Board

Programming - Jeff Bakalchuck

Membership – Jeff Bakalchuck (Dan Singer—Treasurer handles monies/responsible for membership rolls.)

INC (Inter-Neighborhood Council) - Mike Shiflett will continue until January when new representative is to be appointed.

Newsletter - Katie Coyle, Ian Pond

Internet/Web Communications - Alyssa Platt

*If you would like to become a member of a committee, please come to one of our monthly meetings or email Katie Coyle at [katie.coyle@gmail.com](mailto:katie.coyle@gmail.com)*

## Join the NPNA Listserv IAN POND

If you've ever wondered how your neighbor always seems to select great local contractors while you get ripped off, or why you always see other people picking up great free items off the curb but you didn't know those items were even there, the answer may be the NPNA Listserv! The listserv is a Yahoo group open to all Northgate

Park residents and select non-residents. Members of the listserv can submit and read emails on all types of fun topics, including:

- Items for sale or going free
- Recommendations for local contractors/services
- Social events in the neighborhood
- News and events affecting residents

Joining the listserv is FREE and EASY! Simply go to Yahoo.com, select "groups" and search for "Northgate Park". That will present links to details of the site and the option to "Join this Group". Or you can send an email to [npna-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:npna-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will receive a response to your application to join within a day or two and from then on your life will be full of bargains and great fun, guaranteed!

You can elect to get all the individual emails or select a summary of the days' postings if you'd rather.

Don't be left behind, join the listserv now!

### HOME IMPROVEMENTS

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References available

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Green Moms of Durham Meet-Up**

Green Moms of Durham meets every second Sunday of the month at 11:00 a.m. at the Civitan Club (2501 Glendale Ave.). Check out [www.greenmoms.com](http://www.greenmoms.com); select "Groups" and then look for Durham, NC.

### **Cool web sites:**

[City-data.com](http://City-data.com) allows you to view stats at neighborhood level.  
[Bulldcityrising.com](http://Bulldcityrising.com) - blog about life in Durham.  
[preservationdurham.org](http://preservationdurham.org) - all things historical about Durham.  
[NCmuseumofhistory.org](http://NCmuseumofhistory.org) - NC Museum of History in Raleigh.

### **Attention Seniors**

**Park View Church has a fellowship club which meets once a month (except in summer) - usually for a group meal out, covered dish at church, snacks and bingo. We really need suggestions for things to do, places to visit, interesting speakers, musical entertainment - any social activity that will get seniors out and active.**

### **Park View Church**

**2500 Acadia St., 919-220-8006**

### **December Park Clean-Up**

Park Clean-Up is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 11, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Meet at the picnic shelter near the pedestrian bridge. We'll be picking up trash, debris, and fallen limbs around the park. We will also gather kindling and wood to burn at the following week's Luminary Sale! Bring gloves, clippers, whatever tools you've got that would be handy.

**Everyone welcome!!**

### **SUBMISSIONS?**

The NPNA Newsletter is published on a quarterly basis. If you would like to submit articles, news, recipes, favorite websites, or announcements for next quarter's issue, please email Ian Pond at [ian.pond@yahoo.com](mailto:ian.pond@yahoo.com)

### **Want to Join the NPNA Listserv?**

Go to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NPNA>  
and click on "Join this Group"

OR send an email to:

[npna-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:npna-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

## **The Gardener's Corner**

A Semi-Regular Column by and for Neighborhood Gardeners and Gardener Wanna-Bes

Hello Neighbors! With all the gardeners in the neighborhood I thought it might be nice to have a little gardening tip every quarter...perhaps pertinent to the season and also to the common environments found in our neighborhood. The idea is to have this little "corner" of our newsletter rotate around to different gardeners, so we can learn from each other. This is not really meant to be a detailed article, just something small, personal and simple. I have volunteered to start it. So, here goes...

For winter blossoms and year round greenery choose the elegant hellebore! I had never heard of this plant until I moved here to North Carolina and met a friend with a beautiful, old shade garden in her front yard. Every winter her front yard would explode with color... white, light green, purple, yellow, and deep violet (almost black). It was the elegant and hardy hellebore (also known as the Lenten or Christmas rose) that blossomed there in the coldest days of winter. Not only did it blossom, but it seemed to thrive under the big old oak trees in her front yard without much attention.

I thought to myself, "Boy, my sweet little Northgate park neighborhood is full of woodland environments like this!" So, when she decided to divide

some of her plants I was first in line to take some home!

Much like her yard I have two very large oak trees and mostly shade during the warmer months and more sunlight during the winter when the leaves

have fallen. I also prefer plants that do not require too much attention. Much to my pleasure the plants have thrived. Though, since they were juvenile plants when I first received them they have taken a couple of years to establish, but well worth the wait! I haven't even fertilized much, I just stuck them in the ground with some leaves and peat moss surrounding the roots so they'd be able to stretch out and grow. Now mine are propagating too, so I am able to spread them 'round the yard a bit more every year.

If you would like to try your hand at this lovely plant I'm

quite sure you can find them at Stone Brothers and Bird. If not there, I know the Durham Garden Center sells them. But, they aren't cheap! Maybe you'll get lucky with a friend who wants to share like I did!

Just a little side note... I'm told the Hellebore Festival at Pine Knot Farms in

Clarksville, Virginia is well worth the drive in March. Find more information about this Hellebore Farm and the festival at

[www.pineknotfarms.com](http://www.pineknotfarms.com). I hope you all enjoy the winter garden and Happy Holidays!

Your Gardening Neighbor,  
Martha Dyer



## **Bronto News!** NANCY RIZZO, SAVE THE BRONTO COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

There are still Bronto t-shirts available for sale. There are fewer than 75 shirts remaining of the original 1,000. Sizes and colors are limited to grey small, white XL and white XXL. These shirts will be collectors' items as we have no plans to reorder. They are \$15 each, with proceeds going to the Museum of Life and Science Bronto Maintenance fund. Checks should be made out to "MLS Bronto Fund." For more information or to order t shirts contact Nancy at [nrizzo@nc.rr.com](mailto:nrizzo@nc.rr.com). Check out the Bronto's Facebook page, **Brontosaurus Durhamite**. The Bronto has almost 1,000 friends and celebrated another Birthday on November 11th. Happy Birthday Bronto! Thanks to all who donated funds to repair the sculpture, future generations will enjoy the Bronto for years to come. Come by and see Bronto and the new pathway "Wescott's Bronto Trail" named after the sculpture's creator, Richard Wescott.

### **Summary of Bronto Maintenance Fund Income and Expenses:**

#### **SUPPORT AND REVENUE**

Donations: 15,995.00  
 Community Service Other: 4,000.00  
 Closed NPNA Account: 504.40  
 Additional t shirts sales: 90.00

**TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE: \$20,589.40**

#### **EXPENDITURES**

Subcontracts: 9,900.00  
 Equip/Furn Maintenance/Repair: 1,253.00  
**TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$11,153.00**

**TOTAL ASSETS AS OF NOV 7, 2010: \$9,436.40**