

Heart of the City

The Newsletter of the Mid-City Neighborhood Organization

NEWS YOU'LL WANT TO READ AND SHARE, FALL 2009

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Upcoming in Mid-City



First Annual Mid-City Porch Crawl

Friday, October 23, 6:00-9:00pm
Starts at The Ruby Slipper Café
139 South Cortez Street

St. Patrick Park Movie in the Park: "Breakfast Club"

Saturday, October 24, Just after sunset
501 S. St. Patrick Street

Monthly MCNO Mixer

Plans are in the works for our November mixer, Details will be announced soon through the MCNO Newswire.

Monthly Membership Meetings

3700 Canal Street (Grace Episcopal)

Monday, November 2, 6:30-8:00pm
MCNO Bylaws—Your Vote Counts!!

Monday, December 1, 6:30-8:00pm
MCNO Elections—Your Vote Counts!!

The Mid-City Security District Swings into Action on Your Behalf

Reducing crime is one of the most important initiatives any neighborhood can undertake to further its recovery efforts. While the continual push to reduce crime is a multi-layered process, one of the first steps is to increase security visibility – putting more “feet on the streets,” as it were. As of August 15, the Mid-City Neighborhood officially joined 22 other neighborhoods throughout New Orleans with its own security district.

Many examples of promising past outcomes helped the Mid-City Security District (MCSD) pass easily through a vote of residents living within the boundaries of the district. Voters approved it in a general election by a two-to-one margin. Cities locally and nationally that have established quality of life initiatives like security districts have seen significant decreases in violent and organized crime. New York City’s Time Square, for example, is the beacon of quality of life improvement efforts. At a more basic level, such initiatives increase property values and attract more desirable businesses.

The security district is supported by a \$200 tax applied to property owner’s tax bills yearly. For businesses, the tax is \$300. Every resident in Mid-City, property owner or not, is a beneficiary of MCSD services.

The tax covers the cost of approximately three, 24-hour, New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) patrolling cars. Officers staffing MCSD will respond to emergencies, however, their primary function is to be visible in the community through regular patrolling; acting as a strong deterrent to criminal activity. These officers have the ability to make arrests and they will interact with residents and businesses in the area, enabling them to monitor and report upon suspected crime hotspots, and act upon the concerns of Mid-Citizens.

The MCSD is headed by Sergeant Ronnie Stevens, a 12-year veteran of the NOPD. Stevens spent the majority of his career in the Special Operations Division where he was assigned to the SWAT team as both patrolman and sergeant. In addition, he was the Commander of the Bomb Squad and the Marine Unit within Special Ops. Upon promotion to sergeant he was assigned to the Third District Task Force/Street Crimes Unit. Sgt. Stevens has a strong working knowledge of both the First and Third Districts, which make up the Mid-City Security District.

MCNO spearheaded the MCSD based on the Mid-City Plan, and took the District through the legislative process. However, the MCSD functions completely independently of MCNO, with its own board of commissioners, bylaws, and other organizational aspects. The Security District expires in 2016, when it will go back on the ballot for a vote.

MCSD Patrols can be reached at 252-1571 or 252-1570. For emergencies, always call 911. For more information about the security district, please visit the MCSD website at www.midcitysecuritydistrict.org.

From the President's Desk

Jennifer Weishaupt, President
Mid-City Neighborhood Organization

Happy October! Like me, you are probably looking forward to cooler weather and, soon after, the start of the holiday season. Even though the heat of summer is waning, there are several really hot topics I would like to share with you.

This summer, I enjoyed meeting many of you at the July BBQ and the August Mid-City Mixer at Clever Wine Bar. I missed the September Mixer at Bulldog, but heard there was lots of networking and socializing, and I look forward to meeting more of you, soon.

Our next—and most celebratory—event since Katrina is our new evening fundraiser, the Mid-City Porch Crawl. It's a brilliant event, during which you'll be fêted with food and drink on some of Mid-City's most charming porches. Tickets are limited, so I hope you will gather your neighbors and come out for an evening's stroll.

Now, to serious business...the Board of Directors has supported a change to the MCNO Bylaws that would restructure the Board to increase our capacity and effectiveness while improving and empowering the smaller neighborhoods within the larger MCNO boundaries.

The proposed change will be put to the membership for a vote at the November 2nd Meeting (6:30pm, Grace Episcopal Church, 3700 Canal Street). Your input is important, as the change will take effect with the Board elections held at the membership meeting on December 1st.

Proposed is a reorganization of the Board of Directors such that 12 of the elected Directors will each represent one "Zone" within Mid-City. These Zones are divided by major streets, and each contains 500 households or less. The remaining Board positions would be seven Executive Officers. In addition to core roles of the office, including policy steering through the Executive Committee, each Executive Officer would serve as a focal point for a key advocacy area.

The goal of this change is to gain better capacity in all areas of Mid-City while empowering individual Zones to identify and prioritize their own areas of focus with the support and expertise of MCNO assisting them. Ultimately, it will build more members and volunteers, since residents and business-owners can focus their energies in their own immediate neighborhood.

Further details on the proposal will be available at www.mcno.org. I welcome your questions and comments at president@mcno.org.



Mid-Citizens in Action: The Community Gardens of Mid-City

By Amber Tucker

Gardens have a certain mystique about them. They have the potential to transcend boundaries. In Mid-City, the things we love about community gardens parallel the things we love about our neighborhood itself: diversity, progress, and food!

Marilyn Yank, owner of Little Sparrow Farms at 201 S. Cortez St., was featured in a May article on myneworleans.com. When asked how she kept her garden free of pests without insecticides, Ms. Yank simply replied, "Diversity." Yank was, of course, referring to planting crops that would attract pest-eating insects, but the point was made.

Diversity is beautiful. Diversity is important. Never has a stronger case been made to support these words than in the actions of community gardeners around Mid-City. At the Pierce Street garden, co-owner Virginia Blanque has noticed that "everyone stops and asks about the garden...it erases all barriers."

Our community gardens are sites where those of any age, gender, race, or political background can make a difference. In July, Joseph Brock's

All Treats; No Tricks; Halloween Fun Comes Early to Mid-City!

Always the innovator, the Mid-City Neighborhood Organization has announced its newest social event and fundraiser: **The Mid-City Porch Crawl**. This delightfully eccentric, distinctly adult, Halloween-oriented celebration promises to become one of the hottest tickets in the city.

Participants will visit beautiful, historic Mid-City homes, enjoying food and spirits from neighborhood eating and drinking establishments while socializing on a lovely front porch.

What better way to enjoy a fine October evening than to casually stroll the neighborhood, visiting with friends and neighbors? And what is more "New Orleans" than paying tribute to the front porch: the true foundation of any home in the city? The intriguing event is sure to attract rave reviews of our beautiful neighborhood and become a true showstopper on the Halloween party circuit.



Mid-City Community Garden at 516 S. Salcedo was host to the Urban League's College Track community service day. Though many of the League's participants were initially hesitant to get dirty, within minutes, the teenagers were reluctantly enjoying themselves. When asked if he would ever return to work on the garden again, a young man of fifteen replied, convincingly, "Yeah."

The gardens are also an undeniable symbol of hope and recovery. For Blanque, the gardens represent "a symbol of progress," she says. "I bought it to get rid of blight," says Blanque, referring to the plot across from her home, which formerly housed an irrecoverably blighted structure. Blanque and garden co-owner, Bette Cole, had it demolished shortly after purchase.

"Initially I was in a hurry to put up residential," says Blanque. She says the bleak economic condition inspired a search for alternative uses. An empty lot, good soil and a neighborhood full of people who know the value of fresh produce made a community garden the next logical step. Less than a year later, the once-bleak abandonment is home to flourishing green space.

And of course, there's the food. Mid-City Community Garden, which has a chicken coop, announced in late September the arrival of its first white eggs. The garden also has a variety of greens and other vegetables. Pierce Street garden is preparing to plant its fall harvest, which includes potatoes, garlic and carrots. As for Little Sparrow, the garden supplies several local restaurants with everything from tomatoes, okra, and kale to dill and sunflowers.

For all that community gardens have to offer, creating and maintaining them is not an easy—or one person—process. Plant, harvesting, and weeding all take a lot of time and commitment, and helping hands are always welcome. The rewards for volunteering are myriad. For many, the promise of renewal and a sense of community is the greatest satisfaction. That promise is not lost in the tag-line at Mid-City Community Garden—"Neighbors Coming Together to Help Things Grow."

To help a Mid-City community garden, write to americorps@mcno.org.

The evening starts at The Ruby Slipper Café and the fun carries on from there. Multiple groups of approximately 25 will be led on a guided tour of numerous porches situated within walking distance to one another. Each group will visit every porch, but all at different times to ensure plenty of room for socializing, sipping, and supping.

Tickets are strictly limited, so reservations are recommended. Run, don't walk, and definitely don't crawl (until you get here), to reserve space. To purchase tickets, visit www.mcno.org or email events@mcno.org. For information, call (504) 451-9602.

Mid-City Porch Crawl

Friday, October 23, 6:00-9:00pm

Advance Tickets: \$30, MCNO members; \$40, Non-members

Day of Event: \$35, MCNO members; \$45, Non-members

Patron Ticket: \$100

Bronze Patron Ticket: \$200

All Out for Mid-City!!!



The Mid-City Neighborhood Organization is committed to helping neighbors find areas to put their love for their community to work. There are opportunities at all skill levels with MCNO and its partners, such as the PRC's Rebuilding Together. You can make a difference in as little as an hour or two a month. Whether your vision is to help a neighbor get back into his or her home, create more green space or build a better library, MCNO would be honored to work with you.

For more information about volunteering, please email americorps@mcno.org.

Spotted in the Neighborhood

Please welcome these new businesses to Mid-City. If you know of other new businesses, email communications@mcno.org. To be "spotted," businesses must have locations in Mid-City and be business-level members of MCNO.

In Mid-October, **Russell's Cleaners** (504-482-3153), will return to its original (since 1930) location at 3401 Tulane Avenue. The full-service laundry and dry cleaner is a community classic. "It is just like going home for us," says Andree Bauer, who runs Russell's with her father Richard Bauer and Russell Couco himself.

Green Coast Enterprises (504-281-4372) relocated to 3517 Canal Street in May. Principal Reuben Teague describes Green Coast Enterprises as "a real estate company...centered on sustainability and social equity." Teague chose Mid-City to because of its central location and easy access to the rest of New Orleans.

Lewis Automotive and Tire (504-309-2174) is a full-service auto repair and maintenance company at 4243 Canal Street. Owner Collins Lewis picked Mid-City because it "was just a good place for me. I love it." Lewis offers a \$5.00 discount on any service to MCNO members who present a copy of this article.

Though not a member of MCNO (yet!), **Theo's Pizza** (504-302-1133) gets a special thank you for their enthusiastic endorsement of Mid-City. Theo's opened at 4024 Canal Street on September 14. "We had been looking to open a new location...for two years. Mid-City was always in our plans," says Owner Greg Dietz.



Put a Better Mid-City in the Heart of New Orleans!

Your membership in MCNO helps fund activities that improve and revitalize Mid-City and New Orleans as a whole. Through your contribution, MCNO can continue to advocate on your behalf at City Hall and through other avenues for quality of life issues including commercial renewal, zoning and code enforcement, crime prevention, and blight reduction.

BENEFITS OF JOINING: Membership in MCNO includes a subscription to our newsletter and news blasts, and gives you preferred status at our monthly "MCNO Mixer" events around Mid-City, where MCNO residents come to meet, greet, and relax. (Members must be of legal drinking age to purchase alcoholic beverages at MCNO events.) In 2010 we will introduce a MCNO discount card, with special benefits at area merchants. Business members enjoy added benefits including announcement to members and on the MCNO Yahoo! Group.

If you have questions about membership in MCNO, please e-mail membership@mcno.org. Don't forget to join the MCNO Yahoo! Group (no additional charge). To join, send an email to: mcno-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ E-mail _____

Contact me about volunteering with MCNO.

I would like to receive occasional communications with information about new and existing businesses in Mid-City.

Note that MCNO will NEVER sell or give out your email address or use it for any purpose other than you request. Receiving our news updates, event reminders, and other information is a benefit of membership. If you prefer not to receive these, please notify indicate that on your membership application.

MCNO offers 4 levels of membership. All levels receive the benefits of membership (those who join at the Friend level must donate at least \$20 to be eligible for benefits.)

Membership: _____ Household (\$20/yr) _____ Business (\$35/yr) _____ Senior/Student (\$10/yr) _____ Friend (Any amount; donations of \$70 or more receive an MCNO t-shirt or tote bag). Can't afford a membership? Ask if we can waive your fee!

_____ Payment Enclosed _____ Bill Me (\$5 surcharge for processing) _____ I request a hardship waiver

_____ New Member _____ Renewing Member _____ Not Sure

Please return membership applications to the address below or bring them to the next MCNO event. Welcome aboard!



Mid-City Neighborhood Organization
P.O. Box 791023, New Orleans, LA 70179
(504) 486-MCNO

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