

The EVERGREEN NEWS

A Neighborhood Newspaper Working With Vollintine - Evergreen Community Association

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GREENBELT WANTED

Adapting the abandoned L&N tracks into a greenbelt designed for joggers and bikers was the consensus reached at a Vollintine Evergreen Community Association membership meeting Sept. 27 at Lindsay Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Citing weeds, vagrants and wild animals as major problems with the current state of some two miles of right of way that bisects the VECA neighborhood, the approximately 75 residents agreed that the greenbelt idea would remedy the ills and add beauty to the area.

The VECA executive committee had asked L&N and the city to send representatives to the meeting, but none were present.

Frank Moore explained that the L&N right of way was acquired about 100 years ago by usage, direct grant and easement, because there is no record of title for many of the tracts, in order for the city to buy the land an extensive title search would have to be done, costing between \$50,000 and \$100,000, with no guarantee of clear title.

In May, 1980, after getting permission from the city to abandon the line, L&N agreed to remove the rails and allow those tracts originally granted by easement to revert to the original land holding. In August of that year the city asked L&N to donate the property. L&N said the money from the sale of the land would offset the advantage of a tax write off. In April, 1981, the city dropped the idea of acquiring the land because no clear title could be granted.

Until the property is legally disposed of, the Tennessee Public Service Commission and the City Weed Department are the ones to call to have the weeds cut. L&N says they are not going to maintain the right of way.

Residents whose property abuts the abandoned line can get a quit claim deed from L&N for a minimum of \$500. But residents should be aware that they either may already own the property or that a quit claim from L&N may not give them clear title. Also, L&N may appraise the land and ask considerably more than \$500.

Some of the concerns the residents expressed

(Continued on page 3)

VECA AND CRIME

Autumn's cool breezes blew an ill wind into the VECA area as far as crime was concerned. After a relatively quiet summer, police reported about a dozen residential burglaries in the VECA area in September.

Some of the burglaries occurred in the 1800 and 1900 block of Faxon, Tutwiler, Mignon, Lyndale, Snowden and the 1300 block of McLean as well as the 1400 block of Jackson and the 1700 and 1800 block of Autumn.

In some cases entrance was gained through a back window or rear door during daylight hours.

Tom Givens, owner of Universal Security Service, said in early October that two suspects had been arrested in connection with several of the burglaries which apparently involved two men faking car trouble and knocking on a resident's door as if to ask for help. If no one came to the door, they would break into the house.

In a burglary attempt on Mignon, a woman saw two suspects drive away in an early model white and tan Impala.

Hopefully, this fall's rash of burglaries will have ceased by publication time of this article and things can get back to normal, but Officer Ralph E. Confer of the Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program (ICAP) says neighborhoods should never completely relax about crime.

"If people keep aware and abreast of what's happening and remember that crime exists at their back door, it puts you far ahead," Confer said. Even people in uniforms or marked business vehicles are not above suspicion, he said.

VECA is still relatively crime free compared to other areas in District 425 of the West Precinct. The area we call VECA is bordered by Cypress Creek on the north, the former I-40 right-of-way on the south, Trezevant/Springdale on the east and Watkins on the west. Most crime happens outside the VECA borders. For instance, many burglaries of automobiles and auto thefts occur in Overton Park. Most purse snatches occur at Poplar and Cleveland or at the shopping area at Poplar and Avalon, police say.

"Overton Park is a prime area for rapes and robberies," said Confer. "People are vulnerable when they're out some place relaxing and the criminals know this. It's also an open area that's hard to police because it's so big."

Crime analysis shows that a person in the Overton Park area is more likely to be robbed at 10 p.m. or 1 p.m. and either on Wednesday or Thursday.

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SECURITY SERVICE UPDATE

It has been more than a year now since Universal Security Service began offering its private security and patrol service to residents and businesses in the Vollintine-Evergreen area.

There are 464 subscribers who pay \$18.50 per month for the service. That's up \$1.50 from last year.

One patrol car covers an area bounded by Vollintine on the north, Trezevant on the east, Watkins on the west and Poplar on the south. Another patrol car is stationed in the Central Gardens area bordered by Union on the north, York on the south, Rembert on the east and Cleveland on the west. These cars are on patrol 24 hours a day all week and there is an additional back-up car at night.

Tom Givens, owner of Universal, said the service is expanding and adding an additional patrol car which will be stationed between the VECA area and Central Gardens. Up until now this area has not been patrolled by Universal. New subscribers are already being solicited in this area which is bounded by Belvedere on the east, Poplar on the north, Central on the south and East Parkway on the east.

"People in the VECA area will benefit from this additional car because the areas somewhat overlap," Givens said.

The service receives about 100 calls each month and they cover a wide range of problems, from burglary attempts, suspicious persons, unattended vehicles to house escort calls. The average response time is two minutes, Givens said.

Burglaries in the VECA area have dropped significantly in the last year, but it is hard to say whether that has been caused by the initiation of the security service or by the capture of several criminals individually known as "Big Foot" about a year ago, said Patrolman Tommy Ray of the Police Department's West Precinct. "Big Foot" was the nickname given to several burglars who were convicted and sentenced to prison for many burglaries

in the VECA area. They would gain entrance into most homes by kicking in the door.

It might be hard to give exclusive credit to the security service for a drop in crime in the VECA area, but police say it is a contributing factor. "The more visual signs of law enforcement in an area, the better it is," said Officer Ralph Confer.

Givens likes to cite Hein Park as an example of how increased subscriptions can improve crime activity. Ninety percent of the residents there subscribe. In one 13-month period there were only two burglaries, no car thefts and no serious crimes in this area, Givens said.

Givens said Universal receives several notes of commendation with monthly payments from satisfied customers, especially the elderly who say they have a "very secure feeling." There have been only two formal complaints, he added.

One complaint came from a subscriber whose wife interrupted a youth trying to steal the family lawnmower. The youth left the mower and fled on foot north of Vollintine, outside the security service's territory. The subscriber was upset Universal did not go after the youth. But Givens explained there was an inadequate description of the youth, for one thing, and there was no stolen property to recover.

"We won't go outside our territory to chase a suspect that we don't have enough on to arrest," Givens said.

"If we do have reasonable cause we'll chase him to the steps of city hall if we have to," he added.

Givens explained that the security service must operate under the same constitutional restraints as police officers.

"A lot of people, especially the elderly, think it is against the law if someone walks up in their yards, but it is not. We can come and run them off, but we can't just sweep everyone off to jail," Givens said.

The patrol cars will leave their appointed territory for crimes that happen outside the territory

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only in cases of emergency. One such emergency happened in September.

When two young women and a baby were kidnapped at gunpoint by a man near a 24-hour banking machine, Sgt. Jim Gleaves of Universal Security Service was monitoring the police radio in his patrol car and keeping up with the details of the ordeal. The man finally let his victims go but was northbound on Cooper in the victim's car. Sgt. Gleaves spotted the car and pursued it and called the police on his car radio. The car was stopped by police and the man was arrested at Poplar and Highland.

Presently, Givens and two other staff members live in the VECA area. "I have to live somewhere it's safe," he said.

If you have any questions or concerns, Givens welcomes your calls or letters. The address and phone are Universal Security Service, 2011 Union Ave., 274-1794. By Susan Helms and Kathie Jarmon Kerr

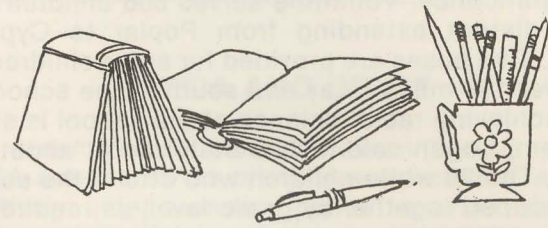
GREENBELT (cont.)

dealt with kudzu and other weeds which harbor bats, snakes, rats and raccoon. The high weeds also provide a good hiding place for criminals. Some residents were concerned that a developer could purchase some or all of the property.

Those residents in attendance agreed that the greenbelt idea would solve the problems, and Veca President, Dennis Heitzmann, said the executive committee would pursue the matter. If this is to work, all residents along the right-of-way have to pull together. They are urged to contact Heitzmann before making individual plans. Heitzmann's phone number is 276-6084.

The next meeting of VECA will be November 22, 7:30 P.M. at Lindsay Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1663 Tutwiler. In the event of a runoff in the mayoral election, the candidates will be invited to this meeting.

By Dorinda Smith



CLOSE-UP: VOLLENTINE SCHOOL

Vollentine Elementary, serving children from kindergarten through grade three, appears to have much to offer the children of *The Evergreen News* readers; specifically, a beautifully tended older building at Evergreen and Vollintine, and, according to principal Roy Logan, motivated teachers and a demanding curriculum competitive with any other offered to this age group.

"Quality education is directly related to the quality of those directing the learning of the students," says Logan. "Presently 64% of our staff holds a master's degree."

These teachers place major emphasis upon mastery of basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) in the traditional self-contained classroom. This year Vollentine was selected for early implementation of a program called Basic Skills First and received considerable extra instructional materials as well as almost \$2,000 for the purchase of more.

Special needs of students are met in many ways. Class size is fairly small at 26-1 and cooperating teachers group high achieving students from different classes for special reading and math challenges. Clue and Orff music are available. Remedial students receive federally funded individualized programs and state resource class.

Parents and volunteers from Trinity Methodist Church, Vollentine's Adopt-A-School sponsor, staff the unique media center which works with various groups of students on teacher-assigned projects

(Continued on page 4)

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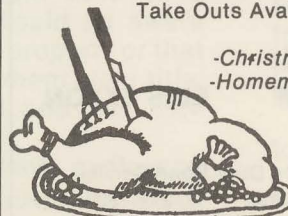
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Vollentine (cont.)

three days a week.

Logan says budget cuts have affected only Orff music. This popular program is now offered only half the year. Vollentine has never had busing for integration, so the recent busing changes by the board have no significance. Vollentine serves 508 children in a huge district extending from Poplar to Cypress Creek. Two buses are provided for some children living over 1½ miles away and south of the school.

Achieving racial balance at the school is still a problem, Logan said. It has stabilized at about 6% white. The 30 white children who attend the school are grouped together by grade level, as required by law, Logan added.

Vollentine is in somewhat of a "Catch 22" situation. White parents who visit the school are impressed but are hesitant to send their children there until other white parents do, Logan said.

The problem is Vollentine must compete for white students in this area with two optional schools, Springdale and Idlewild, Logan added.

The principal predicts one of two things happening before successful integration at Vollentine can occur.

"Either parents will become more realistic about the optional programs and realize they're not for all children and begin to look around for a more fundamental program or Vollentine will go optional," he said. Vollentine has no immediate plans to become optional.

Visits at Vollentine at any time are greatly recommended and warmly invited by Logan who feels that observation of the daily activities in almost any classroom will reaffirm our community's growing confidence in the Memphis City Schools. (Next month, Close-Up will look at Snowden Junior High School.)

By Elona Charbonnet

NEW LOOK FOR ARTIST

Brad McMillan, long-time VECA resident and local artist well-known for his detailed and amusing illustrations, will host in December his first new showing of works in almost three years.

"It's a different, totally new look for me," McMillan said. "There are a lot of colorful inks and acrylics and some three-dimensional type works."

The overall theme of the show is "women" and will open with a reception from 5-9 p.m. Friday, December 3, at McMillan's studio and gallery, "The Shop of TUT-UNCOMMON" located at 116A South Front Street. The exhibit will be up throughout the month of December. Regular hours are 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

McMillan, a Southwestern graduate, has spent the past few years getting the gallery off to a good start. "I have 1,800 square feet to carry other Memphis artists' prints and pottery and we have six or eight complete showings at the gallery each year." Also, over the years, he has generously given of his time to do illustrations for *The Evergreen News*.

The McMillan showing will consist of about 50 new works which are 16x20 inches or larger.

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