

VOLLINTINE EVERGREEN

N E W S

A Neighborhood Publication Sponsored by VECA, the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association

MAY 2010

VECA Health Fair

- What:** Vollintine Evergreen Community Health and Wellness Fair
- When:** Saturday, June 5, 2010 from 8 a.m. to noon
- Where:** VECA Welcome Center, 1680 Jackson Avenue
- Why:** To inspire and motivate a health-conscious community. Shot Nurse will be available. Information and activities for all ages. Blood pressure and cholesterol screenings. Elderly care and benefits information from various agencies. Lots of giveaways and door prizes.

Summer Jubilee and Ice Cream Social

It is that time of year again: Time to beat the heat with cool treats in your favorite neighborhood. VECA is sponsoring its annual Ice Cream Social.

The social provides an opportunity for Vollintine Evergreen residents to gather in a relaxed atmosphere with neighbors and celebrate the neighborhood.

The event is held on Sunday, June 27, at 4 p.m. at the V&E Greenline and Hawthorne Street (north of Tutwiler and west of McLean). We would love to see you there!

Look for more details in forthcoming VECA email announcements and on the website at veca.org.

V&E Greenline Volunteers

A special thanks to Clay Keeler for his work on the V&E Greenline to improve drainage. Pools were forming, so Keeler cut new ditches and used the excess dirt to crown the walking path. AmeriCorps workers, working this spring on VECA projects, spread gravel to form a solid base for the trail.

Hershey Corp. recently made a donation to the V&E Greenline in the name of its employee Bill Rehberg for his volunteer work on the V&E Greenline. Rehberg, who mows the section of the Greenline east of University Street, served on the Greenline Board as Vice President and currently serves as a representative to ParkFriends.

Craig Jordan, Greenline Committee member, recently relayed his memories as a

volunteer on the Greenline: "As we were gradually placing bollards throughout the Greenline to stop vehicular intrusions, we soon learned that the center of the Greenline is a very tough place to excavate. Decades of trains pounding the rails created a rail bed that was more like concrete than gravel. Our solution was to rent a jackhammer. Though it is backbreaking task, for me it was the excitement of fulfilling a childhood dream—the little boy envying the muscular construction guys with that heavy tool. It didn't take long for me to realize my skills were minimal, my back and arms were out of condition, and that the fun would be brief."

Joining the V&E Greenline Committee is the most effective way of volunteering on the Greenline. For meeting dates, see veggreenline.org.



Clay Keeler drives a Bobcat provided by Keeler Ironworks, a business partner of the V&E Greenline. He is also a frequent user of the Greenline and can be seen on the week-ends walking his two dogs.





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Conrad Presses for Financial Reform

By Meredith Cavin.

Of the 13 people serving you on the Memphis City Council, 10 signed on since 2007. Kemp Conrad, with whom I met one sunny April afternoon, is one of these recent additions. He represents Super District 9, Pos. 1.

Mr. Conrad was reared in Atlanta and moved to Memphis to attend Rhodes College in the early 1990s. He later graduated from Vanderbilt's Graduate School of Management and, since then, has been active in Memphis business, specifically commercial real estate. He also served as the Republican Party Chairman for Shelby County, a job for which he coordinated volunteers, raised funds and built relationships. He won his City Council seat in 2008. Conrad says that the City Council and its many newly elected members have a fresh sense of urgency to create positive change. He says there has been talk about Memphis's "potential" for a very long time, but now there is a "window of opportunity" to get things done.

Conrad is active in economic development programs in Memphis. Memphis city taxes, he says, are too high; that Memphians pay a higher percentage of taxes than those in many other cities to make up for the fact that our property values tend to be lower. He believes that because property taxes are higher in Memphis, businesses are less inclined to move into our city. He would like to see city agencies streamlined so that potential investors would have an easier time getting through the system. He points out that as new interstates are built through Memphis in coming years, there will be increased opportunities to attract businesses.

On the city's budget, which is \$600 million dollars, there is a \$50 million dollar gap, he says. Conrad points out that there are about \$60 million dollars of unpaid fines and fees such as parking tickets. If the city better enforced payment of these fees, the budget gap could be filled without raising taxes. Conrad says that while the Memphis population has held steady, the city government has grown. He believes that, to rein-in spending, city government should privatize some work it now does. For example, he says the government-run vehicle-inspection stations, which see approximately 416,000 vehicles per year, would be managed more efficiently by private firms, and he recommends the city outsource the job. Creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset — traits rewarded in the business sector — will help government run more efficiently, he says.

In addition to his commitment to financial reform, Conrad is devoted to social issues. He is a board member for the National

Civil Rights Museum. He is also a father of two who he believes Memphis needs to reach kids at an earlier age. He is a past director of Partners in Public Education and a former board member of Hope House, a day care and early education center for kids affected by HIV/AIDS. He is a founding member of MPACT Memphis, an organization that brings young adults together to forge relationships across racial lines and promotes civic engagement. He supports funding for programs that have been proven to be effective. Conrad believes nonprofits should be held accountable in order to best serve the community.

In his mission to make city government more effective, Conrad encourages Memphis residents who need help to email City Council members. (City Council contact info is available at: <http://www.cityofmemphis.org/framework.aspx?page=690>)

Conrad says he has gotten calls about ignored code enforcement reports and that he can use his position to demand results. He notes that photographic evidence of code violations helps. While he hopes all of those working in city jobs will do their best to resolve problems in the community, he says that in the short-term the City Council would like to work directly with residents whenever necessary.

Kemp Conrad represents the VECA area south of the V&E Greenline.



VECA President Paul Herron (left) with City Council member Kemp Conrad at VECA's 2009 annual meeting.

Classified Ads

Apartments for Rent

VECA has apartments for rent located at 820 and 795 Maury Ave. These are large one bedroom apartments with carpeting, a sunroom, and a front and back entrance. The front porches look onto the beautiful landscape of the historic neighborhood. Parking is available in the back of the apartments. These apartments are currently available for occupancy and rent for \$450 and \$500 per month. Please call the VECA Welcome Center at 276-1782 for more information or to set up a showing.

Business Site for Rent

A business site at 1570 Vollintine Ave is available for a very affordable rental rate or sale price, but you will need to clean up the site before occupying. This is a great opportunity for someone starting a new business who wants go get into a building for a low cost and expects to be a long time occupant. Contact Mid-South Realty at 761-4444.

Rummage Sale

A wide variety of items are available at this large annual rummage sale. Church of the Good Shepherd located at 1971 Jackson Ave—corner of Jackson Ave and University Street on June 12, 2010 The sale starts at 8:30 and continues until the items are sold.



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Cleaned, Cleared and Planted

Morgan Hanna, a Community Development intern from Rhodes, will be assisting block clubs this summer. Among her duties will be to write a manual on starting a block club. She can also make space available at the VECA Welcome Center for block club meetings. There is also literature that can be handed out to residents.



Morgan can be reached at the VECA Welcome Center at 276-1782.

The VECA Block Club Committee is planning a cleanup at a site in VECA's Northwest quadrant. A dumpster will be provided to residents to discard trash and unwanted items.

Cleaned, Cleared and Planted

Springdale Baptist Church sponsored the semi-annual cleanup of the area around Springdale St. More than 300 people from the church and other entities partnered for the cleanup. Among the many accomplishments: Vacant lots were cleaned, litter picked up, a community garden planted, and a walking path constructed. Some of the partners included Clean Memphis, Rhodes College, University of Memphis, City of Memphis, and Cypress Middle School.

Coordinating committee members: (from left) Janet Boscarino, Jeff Shelton, Deion Shelton, Erin Foster and Barbara Gavalas.



VECA Membership and Contribution Form

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Be one of the following types of contributors—everything above \$10 is tax deductible

Member.....\$10 Supporter.....\$50 Leader.....\$100
Neighbor.....\$25 Neighborhood Mayor.....\$500

Any Size Contribution: Bumper Sticker _____
\$25 or more: Historic Plaque _____ or Poster _____

VECA Poster



Artist Anthony D. Lee's design, *Candid Trees*, was the 2009 winner of the Art for Communities Poster Contest. Each year, proceeds from the sale of the poster will go to a community association. This year, all of the proceeds from sales of this poster go to the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association. The Art for Communities Poster Contest is sponsored by: CODA at Rhodes College and the Rhodes College Urban Studies Program, but would not be successful without support from Memphians like you.



Purchase the VECA Poster
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Gardening Shout-Out

Do you enjoy gardening? Tell us about it!

We want to feature your garden stories in the July issue. Tell us what works, what doesn't, what plants are your favorites, what plants you avoid.

We'd love to share photographs of VECA gardens with the community!

Send your story by June 15 to: VECA at 1680 Jackson Ave., Memphis TN 38107 or veca@veca.org.

Talking About Trees

Monday, May 17, 5:30 pm
Location: On the V&E Greenline at Belvedere

VECA's Neighbors for Trees offers a special forum with guest speakers on Monday, May 17. Everyone is welcome!

Eldra White of Memphis City Beautiful will provide details on the Memphis Memorial Tree program. Robert Mayer of Shelby Farms Park will tell us about his plans for a tree nursery at Shelby Farms. He'll also share his experience with Heartland Tree Alliance in Kansas City, MO.

Jared Powelson, OD Mike Gerstner, OD

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Lowery Keeps Focus on Jobs, Education

By Meredith Cavin.

Memphis Councilman Myron Lowery, serving his fifth term, was first elected to the City Council in 1991. He represented Super District 8, Pos. 3. Before becoming an active political leader in the city, Lowery was a TV news anchor in Memphis. During his time reporting, his job was to put together a "sensible story that the public would understand." As he explored, however, Lowery grew frustrated by the policy-making process, both the dynamic and the decisions. He felt that the three African-American council members, out of 13 total, were not being treated with the respect they deserved. He also disagreed with what he saw as the disproportionate way local government distributed project funds. His personal mantra became: "If it's meant to be, it's up to me".

He first ran for City Council in 1983 and lost. He ran again in 1987 and lost. Many City Council positions at this time were "at large," meaning candidates for those positions had to appeal to the whole city, rather than just one district. Majority ruled, and Lowery believed that system made it more difficult for African-Americans to be elected. The courts agreed, and a compromise was put into place. Seven of the 13 City Council members represent Districts 1-7. The other six members represent the two "halves" of the city: Super District 8 and Super District 9, both of which have three positions on the council. Lowery represents Super District 8, home of the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood.

City Council members collaborate on policy issues. Lowery's aim is to try new strategies to "keep us efficient." He says some members want to control costs by giving city employees lower wages and fewer benefits. Lowery would prefer passage of a referendum that would require city employees to live in Memphis, so their wages would more likely be spent in ways that would benefit other Memphis city residents. We need to "be open to new methods," he says. His personal goal and challenge is to be as creative and enthusiastic as he was his first day on the City Council.

He asks with excitement if I've heard of red light cameras, and then says with a big smile, "That's me!" Such cameras are installed at red lights to catch drivers doing illegal moves so that they can be accountable for their actions, even when a police officer isn't around. Lowery first saw red light cameras during a trip to Bangkok, Thailand, 20 years ago. Upon his first suggestion of implementing them in Memphis, people laughed, saying it was too much like Big Brother is watching. Now, he says, 90% of cities in the United States have them. He is proud that Memphis got

them last September and that, as a result, our community is safer.

Another safer-community project that Lower supports is the gun buy-back program. Starting in 1994, residents voluntarily gave government officials their unwanted guns and, in return, received \$35 dollars worth of food and gas coupons donated by local companies. Lowery points out, that's \$35 in 1994 dollars. The first round of gun buy-backs took place at the fairgrounds, and Lowery remembers the line wrapped around the block. In eight hours, the city collected 1,600 guns, which were destroyed. By trading guns for donated coupons, Lowery made Memphis safer without spending a single city dollar. The city has reproduced the project a couple of times.



Lowery says his priorities over the years have been constant: reduce crime and poverty, attract industry and create jobs, and focus on education. Lowery lauds the VECA neighborhood for its sense of community. He says we have made great efforts to reduce environmental pollution and create good housing. He is impressed by our neighborhood's commitment to and appreciation of diversity. Lowery, who grew up in housing projects in Columbus, Ohio, believes "cities are supposed to serve citizens."

Myron Lowery represents the VECA area north of the V&E Greenline.

Newsletter Advertising

\Want to reach 3,500 VECA residents and other neighborhood supporters? Why not advertise in the *Vollintine-Evergreen News*? Local businesses can receive community support by appearing in our pages.

Just \$100 buys 4 prominent ads in our newsletters. Don't wait! Call our advertising manager at 276-1782. It will help you get customers and help the neighborhood at the same time.



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Everybody Comes to Alex's

By Anne Cunningham O'Neill
 Article courtesy of *VIP Memphis Magazine*

Alex's Tavern at 1445 Jackson Ave. dates back to 1953 and is the oldest family-owned tavern in Memphis. I stopped by one afternoon to talk to current owner "Rocky" Kasafes, who carried on the family tradition after his dad, Alex Kasafes, died in 1978. I was instantly struck by Rocky's friendliness and warmth, and knew I happened upon a true "Cheers" bar where, soon enough, everyone would know my name.

The title of this story is an international reference to Rick's Café of Casablanca fame. Like Rick's, Alex's Tavern has long attracted a wide cross-section of regulars—from Rhodes and UT medical and dentistry students, to radio and TV personalities to baseball umpires and restaurant servers who come late, after their shifts. There have been many world-famous personalities, too, through the years. Stella Stevens also sat in the front booth (Rocky refused to tell me with whom!). Tim McCarver, Don Henley of the Eagles, Gregg Allman, actress Christina Ricci, Dennis Quaid and many, many more have passed through Alex's doors. Local movies and an HBO special have been filmed at Alex's.

Rocky's dad was proud of what he called the "rustic" atmosphere of this old-fashioned "shotgun" bar which is comparable to any number of similar vintage establishments in New York, Chicago, or New Orleans. There are no cosmopolitans or apple martinis here, I can tell you. Rocky attributes his success simply to ice cold beer, good burgers (the award-winning Greek burger) and great music. Christmas tree lights, two "Yings and Wings" red revolving signs, and old photographs and pennants give the place oodles of character. The tavern walls are loaded with memorabilia of all kinds, including a resolution from the city council giving the tavern a key to the city. There is a bar shuffleboard game which you don't see many of these days, but it's the two juke boxes that are Rocky's true pride and joy. His dad loved Ella Fitzgerald, Glenn Miller and Frank Sinatra ("Summerwind" was his favorite). Those songs are still there, but more recent hits as well—5,000 in all!

Along with music, sports are very important to Rocky as they were to his father—baseball in particular. Rocky makes the distinction that Alex's is not "a sports bar, as such" but "it is a great place to watch sports." With six televisions, I would say that's an understatement.

Maintaining family tradition is part of the charm of Alex's Tavern, and it is certainly part of who Rocky is. Naturally he worked at Alex's off and on in his younger days, assisting his dad, and Eugenia, his mother, helped out with bookkeeping and

making hamburger patties. He speaks with great affection of Sonny Wilson, the tavern's legendary bartender for 40 years, who is greatly missed by all. Today, Miss Eyvette and Rob Miller are two indispensable additions to the tavern's staff.

Rocky, of course, enjoys telling colorful stories about his father, who always stressed manners and gentlemanly conduct. But he was feisty, and if you cussed in front of a lady in his tavern, you were out on your ear. Once the infamous, tough Tiller brothers paid him a visit, and said they were "gonna tear the place apart." Alex asked them to sign their names on a piece of paper. When they asked why, he said, "Cause you are signing your [blanket-blank] death certificate!" As the story goes, they high-tailed it outta there.

Rocky, like his dad, is engaging and uniquely entertaining. I spoke on the phone to his childhood friend and Little League baseball buddy, radio personality John "Bad Dog" McCormack of Rock 103. Bad Dog, who also worked at Alex's Tavern in his youth, says that people come there because of Rocky and of course his father before him. It's that simple.

Rocky's dad always said, "It's not how many people come; it's how many come back." Our VIP Memphis magazine team visited this unique neighborhood oasis on a recent Friday night, and things were humming. We had a wonderful time, and I am here to tell you that we will be back very soon. By the way, Alex's Tavern opens at 11.00 a.m. and stays open until the wee small hours of the night.



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VECA: Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association

VECA is a neighborhood organization made up of volunteers and paying members. The *Vollintine-Evergreen News*, VECA email, the annual meeting, and committee activities are the ways in which VECA communicates with its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The VECA area is bounded by Watkins on the West, Cypress Creek on the North, Springdale on the East, and North Parkway on the South.

Contact VECA by writing to
 1680 Jackson Ave, Memphis, TN 38107
 (901) 276-1782 Website: veca.org; email: veca@veca.org

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Stay Safe, Learn More

The VECA Safety and Security Committee has good news to share: You now have more resources than ever to find out what's working to keep us secure, including a monthly safety meeting. VECA residents are encouraged to attend the Midtown Security Community (MSC) meetings the first Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m.

See midtownsecurity.blogspot.com to learn about the meeting location and agenda, and also to find details of previous meetings. MSC is a joining of neighbors, businesses, churches, schools and the Memphis Police Department to make Midtown a safe and secure place to live and work. At each meeting, MPD Union Station representatives share the latest crime statistics by neighborhood, and other Midtown neighborhood groups share what's working for them.

VECA residents Garnette Stephens and Erin Sogal recently attended the two-day Situational Crime Prevention Training (SCPT). SCPT includes theory of crime prevention, situational awareness, protecting your home and personal property, child

safety, crime prevention through environmental design, Neighborhood Watch and communication efforts. Coming soon: Monthly sessions to focus on these topics. Learn how you can be empowered to become an active participant in reducing crime. You can make a difference!

The Safety and Security Committee welcomes volunteers. The Committee would like to network with Block Clubs, other VECA committees, and residents to share information, provide safety tips, and discuss how we can better work together. Do you have any ideas? Want more information? Want to be involved? Contact Garnette or Erin at garnettestephens@kw.com and erinhartong@hotmail.com

Are you on Facebook? Become a fan of VECA (search "Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association"). Residents can post messages to the community and share interesting information about what's happening in our neighborhood.

STOW IT! DON'T SHOW IT! SECURE YOUR VEHICLE!

Did you know that thefts from vehicles represent a large percentage of property crimes in VECA? To file a police report or for any non-emergency, dial 901-545-2677 (901-545-COPS).

Make Way for Walkers

By Louis Patrick.

After an unseasonably cold, rainy winter our beautiful trees, bushes, flowers and shrubs are beginning to flourish! Please check to see if spring has sprung into the pedestrian path. Do you know that, as a property owner, you are responsible for trimming trees or vegetation along the sidewalk in front of your house?

Sidewalks should be accessible to all people, including wheelchair users and the visually impaired. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires the clear zone must be at least 36 inches wide and 80 inches high. No bushes, flowers or grasses should protrude into the walkway. Please make way for walkers by trimming your hedges and tree branches.

If the vegetation is in the public right-of-way (the grassy strip between the street and the sidewalk) and too big for you to handle, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center for city action at 576-6500. Unkempt vacant property can be reported to the same place, although, as an adjoining neighbor, it may be easier to trim the shrubs yourself.

If the overgrown sidewalk belongs to a neighbor, start by politely asking the property owners to trim their plants so pedestrians can safely use the sidewalk.

Walking through the neighborhood is a great way to enjoy the greening and flowering of spring. But it's no fun if you're ducking and side-stepping to avoid vegetation. So please, remember to make way for walkers by keeping your sidewalk area clear. Thanks!



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VECA Thanks Community Development Interns

By Meredith Cavin

Three Rhodes College seniors have worked for VECA as Community Development interns during the 2009-2010 school year. These young women graduate in May, and we would like to honor their contributions to VECA.

Casey Mohan, a political science major, began working at VECA in August 2007 and has helped VECA in many ways. She has edited and distributed the newsletter, surveyed and researched foreclosures, made GIS (Geographic Information System) maps on the computer, created the new VECA Web site, updated the email system and provided general tech help. In addition, she's always ready with a story and is quick to make a joke, sharing her infectious smile. "It's great to continuously find people interested in bringing positive change to the neighborhood," she says. Casey, who knew little about VECA when she started working, says she has enjoyed the learning process and the diversity of neighbors. She wants to see other young people get more involved with the organization (and vice versa), and adds that one of the best parts of working with VECA has been gaining knowledge of urban problems and solutions. She sees opportunities for businesses. For example, she believes a full grocery store is imperative to increase the health and well-being of the neighborhood. She supports projects that will encourage community across different blocks and sub-groups of the neighborhood. Casey says, "The opportunity to see a community through the eyes of its residents has given me the knowledge and understanding that I will carry on to future jobs."

Erin Foster, an urban studies major with a minor in religious studies, began working at VECA in January 2009. Her projects have included putting together a large yard sale at VECA and events at the station house. She has enjoyed interacting with neighbors and gaining insight into community issues, such as Lick Creek and Greenline maintenance. Erin adds, "The neighbors are so quick to help one another, be it preparing for a community event or meeting or finding a lost dog." Working at VECA helped her feel like part of a community outside of Rhodes, one where "people have truly been neighbors to one another." She now understands the passion that residents have "for the place that they call home and community." Erin has thrived in VECA because of her own passion, drive and consistently positive presence.

Meredith Cavin, a political science major, joined VECA in August 2009. Her focus has been conducting interviews and writing articles

for the newsletter. In addition to studying political science at Rhodes, Meredith also studied Transforming Communities and Public Policy in Washington, D.C. After learning how businesses, nonprofits and government interact, Meredith was glad to jump into VECA, a warm environment where she could see these mechanisms firsthand. She has interviewed small business owners, dedicated volunteers and local leaders in government. She has been inspired by these people who utilized their passion and talent to solve problems and help others. She has been proud to work at VECA this past year and hopes that the organization will continue to use Rhodes as a resource.

Like Casey, Erin and Meredith, most of the students at Rhodes are driven, curious and eager to be part of their larger community. We hope that as these three students graduate, others will join VECA and contribute to the community that benefits their everyday lives.

The three seniors would like to thank Professor Michael Kirby, Marci Hendrix and Suzanne Bonefas, who have each facilitated their community work at VECA.

The Community Development interns are funded by a grant to Rhodes College from the City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development. VECA offers a special thanks to Robert Lipscomb and Mairi Albertson from the City for their program support.



Meredith Cavin, Erin Foster, Casey Mohan

VECA Contact Information

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Email: veca@veca.org
Website and Calendar: veca.org

VECA Board: Paul Herron
VECA Housing: Chuck Fox
Vollintine-Evergreen News Advertising: TBA
V&E Greenline: Len Cobb

Safety and Security : Garnette Stephens and Erin Hartong
Neighborhood Preservation Committee: Chris Floyd
Neighbors for Trees: Marci Hendrix and Andrée Glenn
VECA Businesses Committee: TBA
VECA Email and Communication Committee: Marci Hendrix
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Rhodes Community Development Interns funded by City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development

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