

# VOLLINTINE EVERGREEN

**N E W S**

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

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2012

## VECA Annual Meeting and Membership Drive Saturday, January 28, 2012

### VECA Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 28, 9:00am - 11:00am  
St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church  
Fellowship Hall  
1644 Jackson Ave (at N. Belvedere)

Potluck Breakfast: 9:00 am  
Annual Meeting: 10:00 am

Bring your favorite breakfast food  
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be it breakfast or brunch fare*



**We are VECA  
You are VECA  
VECA is us together!**

The theme for the VECA's strategic planning initiative is a familiar one: **We are VECA – You are VECA – VECA is us Together!**

Indeed, we are all in this together, and we thank everyone for attending the four strategic planning meetings held in October and November. Next up is to come to the VECA Annual Meeting to hear an update on the Strategic Planning Initiative! This is an exciting time for the neighborhood and we look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting!

Vollintine Evergreen is a great neighborhood because of your volunteer efforts! Since 1970 VECA neighbors have been working together to keep our community a livable place. VECA's mission is "to maintain a quality residential neighborhood through the volunteer efforts of the neighborhood's residents." Without you, the effort would cease and we appreciate everything you do! Thank you!

January is also VECA's Membership Month. Dues to the Vollintine Evergreen Community Association are annual and

traditionally are renewed in January each year. Membership Month culminates at the VECA Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 28 where dues paying members elect the new board.

Your dues raise money for the volunteer work done in the neighborhood. Volunteers run the organization and your dues support projects, events and the Welcome Center at 1680 Jackson Avenue. VECA receives additional revenue from the homes and apartments which VECA owns and are managed by volunteers.

Being a member of VECA is the first step in involvement. VECA membership is from January to December. Please join now. If 2,000 residents join at the \$30 level we would raise \$60,000 for neighborhood projects; if 1000 residents join at \$30 we could raise \$30,000. Last year 300 residents joined VECA. Let's increase the number this year!

Join your neighbors and join VECA now. All dues are tax deductible.

**Join Your Neighbors – Join VECA**

## Plough's Halfway Mark

By Werner Viser

With the first year and a half of the Rhodes-Plough Transforming Communities Grant behind us, we are seeing many positive changes in the Vollintine Evergreen Community. With the goal of capacity-building in both the Midtown North and VECA neighborhoods, the grant has produced a number of success stories throughout the area. Whether through the establishment of community gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, community building, or business revitalization, the Plough Grant has made a positive mark on the community as a whole.

Over the past year and a half, many proposals have come into the VECA Welcome Center showcasing how involved and passionate neighbors are about keeping VECA safe, desirable, and the sustainable neighborhood that it is.

Many of the grants that have been awarded revolve around environmental issues. Residents on Lyndale Street have been working on a community garden that was built on a vacant lot donated to VECA. Rhodes student and environmental intern, Chelsea Peters, has been working alongside the neighbors on the project.

Chelsea has a vast background in "green" initiatives and learned how to build a compost tumbler that can be used by all of the neighbors at the garden. Chelsea says, "After a successful summer harvest at the Lyndale Community Garden, residents and volunteers were happy to plant fall greens and begin preparing the beds for spring. In addition to the garden, volunteers also cleaned a couple vacant lots on the street that will soon be sites for flower and tree plantings. The Lyndale Community Garden has now joined Grow Memphis for a greater community experience."

With the support of the grant, a commercial-grade mower has been purchased to maintain the lot, fruit trees have been planted, and fall

produce flourished thanks to the tireless work of the neighbors.

With the help of the Plough grant, neighbors have been working together to help keep their streets and neighborhood clean and safe.



A team of residents came together to clean Brown Avenue and coordinate the removal of a large tree that was restricting the view of a vacant lot. Another neighborhood group organized a successful effort to clean the alleys running between McLean and University to reduce both vermin and crime.

Plough grants have been used to support neighborhood togetherness and discussion. The VECA Fall Fest on October 13, 2011 was

coordinated to help unify the community in a neighborhood-wide block party. Rhodes student and Neighborhood Network intern, Elise Hastings, helped immensely with the success of the VECA Fall Fest.

In speaking about the event and its preparation Hastings says, "We were able to distribute all of our block party kits, and the event was a success. We then planned a thank you party for the neighborhood block party organizers, where they would be able to socialize and write grants." More than thirteen streets came together on the 13<sup>th</sup> to visit and discuss ideas for future projects in their own backyard.

A committee of VECA board members is currently working with consultant Shannon Dixon to develop a strategic planning initiative for VECA. Meetings were recently held in each quadrant of the community for neighbors to come and discuss their concerns. Rhodes student Marian Hill, VECA's communications intern, helped with this endeavor. "The meetings gave residents within the community the opportunity to tell VECA what they hope to see happening in the neighborhood," says Hill. Hill worked to publicize and prepare for each of the four meetings.

One large accomplishment that has been made on the business side of the Plough grant is with the Springdale Community Plaza on Springdale Street

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**Plough Grant continued**

between Brown and Howell. The business owners in this area banded together at the onset of the grant, and have just completed the first phase of the project which includes painting of the buildings, new awnings and signs, litter cleanup, and the refurbishment of a lit sign for the plaza. Rhodes student Danielle Jones, the Springdale focused intern, has worked with each business to make sure they have what they need to write both their reports and proposals for future grants. Danielle has also worked to publicize the grant in this area. "I've finished a flyer for Springdale residents to inform them of the opportunities that they have because of the Grant," she states.

We hope that even bigger and better things are going to come in the second half of our Rhodes-Plough Transforming Communities Partnership. If you or anyone you know is interested in applying for a Plough Grant or would like any more information please contact Werner Viser at viserw@rhodes.edu or 901-843-3226.

**Did you Know...**

- ♦ The Plough Grant is for **both** residential and business areas...**this means you!**
- ♦ The Plough Grant spans both the Midtown North and VECA Neighborhoods.
- ♦ Plough Grants usually range from \$250-\$1000.
- ♦ The Plough Grant began in August 2010 and will conclude in May 2013.
- ♦ Proposal forms can be found on the VECA website (www.veca.org)
- ♦ The author of this article, Werner Viser, graduated from Rhodes in 2010, and manages the Plough grant as part of her post-graduate Fellowship. She is ready to answer any questions or concerns you might have as you are planning your project!!


**Thank You VECA Volunteers!**

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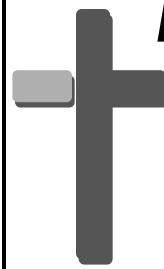
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## Web Design 1 Class

By Elise Hastings

Memphis College of Art professor and VECA neighbor Zark Strasburger and his students in Web Design 1 have found an innovative way to aid the VECA community – they are currently designing a new website for the V&E Greenline! The V&E Greenline is a 1.7-mile park that was purchased by the neighborhood in 1996. The trail runs from Springdale to Watkins, and is a much loved running and walking trail for Vollintine Evergreen residents. “We want to take images and icons from the V&E Greenline, so people can be like oh, I’ve been there,” said Jordan Jackson, a junior design major.

The class divided into four different groups, with each group inventing their own web design idea. Some of the designs are more image heavy while others are more graphic and design oriented. Once the class completes their designs, they will present them to VECA and discuss which design will work the best, and then Strasburger will make that web design go live on the Internet.

One of the main goals is to figure out “how can we draw people in and make them come to the V&E Greenline,” said Stephen Harris, a senior painting major. The final project for the students in Web Design 1 has always been community related. These projects are beneficial for their art education because it gives them a “live client interaction.” For example, “the V&E Greenline is going to actually use what the students make for them” said Strasburger. The

students are able to increase their portfolio, but also make something great to attract more donors and volunteers to contribute to the V&E Greenline.

Look for an VECA ENews announcement in the near future providing the new link to V&E Greenline website.



## ENews – Know it When it Happens!

The VECA Weekly ENews is where neighbors can advertise yard sales, list items for sale or giveaway, or plug upcoming events. Sign-up to receive emails via the website ([veca.org](http://veca.org)). Receiving VECA emails is the best way to stay up-to-date on neighborhood events, meetings and alerts.

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## Now is the Time for Stormwater Detention

By Mary Wilder, Member of the Lick Creek Stormwater Coalition and Resident of Vollintine Evergreen

Why is it important to include a stormwater detention when developing and building in Midtown?

Over the past 15 years flooding has become a hazard to residents and businesses in Midtown Memphis and VECA in particular. The area around Overton Square and the Union Avenue corridor has been developed without addressing its impact of flooding caused by stormwater runoff. Midtown development has been disruptive to the forces of nature because it has not planned for means to absorb, slow down or detain the rain when it comes in contact with roofs, streets and parking lots.

Before Memphis was built, streams, rivers, bayous, creeks, springs and ponds detained and moved the rain or stormwater over the natural landscape. Did you know that where the Turner Dairy and Studio on the Square are located, a lake once occupied the center of East End Park, a recreation destination in the 1890s? As we built our city we put these natural features underground in culverts or contained them in channels or concrete ditches. We directed the water from our roofs and streets and parking lots into storm drains that took and still take the water through these once-natural features to an engineered stormwater management system. The Lick Creek Drainage Basin thus became the Midtown stormwater management system.

Lick Creek's underground culverts, ditches, and open channeled waters were designed in the 1930's when Midtown had only a fraction of its current development and much more green space to absorb the rain. Today those systems can no longer handle the amount of runoff created during heavy rainfalls – and the result is flooding. If a stormwater management system can temporarily detain the water and release it slowly, flooding can be prevented. Large-scale detention can be engineered through facilities like the proposed underground detention basin in Overton Square. Smaller detention measures use

environmentally friendly technology such as rain garden medians, "green" roofs and French drains at the base of surface parking.

In 2006 the City of Memphis conducted a Lick Creek Drainage Basin study, followed by a technical review of the Midtown stormwater management system in 2010. Both studies recommend a series of detention sites throughout the Midtown area.

Early in 2009 city officials considered constructing a detention pond on the Overton Park Greensward. But the plan was opposed by the Lick Creek Storm Water Coalition – whose members include groups such as Park Friends and Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, representatives of Memphis College of Art, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Memphis Zoo, Clean Memphis and Memphis Heritage, and neighborhood organizations such as the Cooper-Young Community Association, the Vollintine Evergreen Community Association, the Evergreen Historic District and groups from Central Gardens, East End, Bellaire and Annesdale Rozelle. They believed it would destroy Overton Park's open space while failing to solve drainage problems in neighborhoods south of the park, including Bellaire, East End and Tucker-Jefferson, and that it would not significantly reduce flooding in the basin north of Poplar.

Areas being considered for detention include projects in VECA. At a Public meeting in September, city officials showed plans for a detention project as part of the Snowden School playing fields, a project on Auburndale at Tutwiler in Vollintine Evergreen and another at the playing field of Catholic High School. Christian Brothers has already built a detention project as part



of that school's soccer fields, and there is another one at Peabody Elementary School.


The detention for development and construction required by the Memphis Stormwater Ordinance will mitigate problems caused by years of growth without attention to water management practices. Homeowners, businesses and other tax paying residents of Midtown deserve a solution to stormwater flooding. We pay a stormwater fee with our utility bill and should expect our City departments of Planning and Development, Engineering, and Public Works to require detention for all new projects.



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## Professionally Blue

By Jeff Hendrix

Barbara Blue may sing the blues, but not about her time living in the Vollintine Evergreen community. She loves the architecture, of the homes – the English Tudor style – and, of course, the great neighbors.

She has lived in the neighborhood for close to six years now, having become acquainted with the neighborhood through her friends, Nigel and Tiffany Smith, who live on Kensington. Realtor friends, Jim Dobbins and Alan Strickland, who live on Sheridan directed her to the house she bought on Hallwood.

If you don't know Barbara from her time here in Vollintine-Evergreen, then perhaps you'll recognize her from her longstanding gig at Silky O'Sullivan's on Beale Street. She has performed there 5 nights a week for the past 15 years. She is accompanied by Nat "King" Kerr on the piano, and on Wednesday nights fellow Vollintine-Evergreen neighbor, Robert Maché, joins them on guitar. Barbara sings the blues in a traditional manner down to the signature old-school microphone she manipulates like a dance partner.

According to Blue, there is a definite Memphis sound, and she is trying to keep it alive. She credits Stax and musicians such as Willie Mitchell, Al Green, Booker T. and the MGs, and The Bar-Kays as major influences of this sound. It is a "down-home-blues" sound that emanates from Memphis. She sees its origin in the oppression of the cotton-field workers of the past. Yet, Blue said she doesn't see color in the music, "your soul is the music...you gotta dig deep." She believes the blues has a message that is accessible to everyone.

Blue likes to say that she has been singing all her life. She can't remember her first gig. "My mom and I have a laugh when it comes to answering this question, because I was born with six-month colic. So we say I came into this world hollerin'-I'm still hollerin'-and I plan to exit the same way!" said Blue. "I sang in church since day one, in school plays, in the

car, in the house, to the radio, to records, and to eight-track tapes. Yikes!" she exclaimed, "How old am I?" According to Blue, the Blues chose her. "I'm not bragging, I can sing all styles of music, but my love is the Blues."

Those other styles of singing are evidenced by her singing at St. Patrick's at Fourth and Linden, where she attends services. She has also worked with 4-year-old students at St. Patrick's Jubilee School, helping them find their own voice. Blue believes that finding your own voice is essential in being successful in music. She would take a recorder to the school and have the children sing and then play back the tape teaching them to listen for their voice.

Blue's wide range of singing styles was also recently evidenced in her hometown of Pittsburgh, PA, where she sang the National Anthem in front of thousands at a Pittsburgh Steelers football game. She felt highly honored to be asked to sing *The Star Spangled Banner*, and made a distinctive effort to sing it straight without a lot of fluff. It was confirmed to her that she did it right when she could hear the people joining in with her.

A USAF Major from the CA National Reserve who happened by Silky's in December 2010 heard Barbara sing the National Anthem and he has been a fan ever since. He says it was the best rendition he has ever heard. Blue was extremely honored and moved when he gave her a gift of a flag. On an Afghanistan drop mission on September 11, 2011, he flew American flags in the cargo and gave her one of the flags along with a certificate commemorating the mission.

Having grown up in Pittsburgh, Blue's career has taken her to several states, including Arizona and Michigan. It was a trip to New Orleans that led her to move to Memphis. Blue and a friend had gone to Jazz Fest in New Orleans, on their way back to



Blue at the Hard Rock Café Pittsburgh at the dedication of her memorabilia case August 14, 2011. Fittingly, the case is across from the Elvis memorabilia case. John Henry Photography copyright 2011

Pittsburgh they stopped at Memphis so they could see Tracy Nelson in concert. Stopping in Silky's for a drink, Blue was invited to sing a song with the band. "It was serendipity," she said. O'Sullivan brought his wife to hear her sing and they offered her a job. Blue returned to Pittsburgh and told her mom she was going to head to Memphis and that she would see her in a few months. That was 15 years ago. Barbara Blue is now a Memphis treasure, and one that can be found living at home in Vollintine Evergreen.

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## Barbeque — It's a Family Tradition

By Marian Hill

For the past thirty-four years, the Cozy Corner on North Parkway has been a family owned and operated BBQ restaurant unlike any other.

"We have four generations of family working here," owner Desiree Robinson said. "All work directly full or part-time for the business. The youngest is four and she greets people at the door with me."

Robinson kept the business going after her husband, legendary pit master, Raymond Robinson, passed away ten years ago. "[Raymond] always wanted to be a businessman," owner Desiree said. "But we never thought it would be in the restaurant business." Friends who enjoyed their cooking convinced them to open a restaurant.

The newly married couple started in Denver, Colorado, where they lived for eight years. They opened a restaurant there, but after a while the native Memphians decided it was time to go home.

"We knew we wanted to live in North Memphis," Robinson said. "We wanted to spend the rest of our lives in this area." The couple found a home on Michelle Circle in the Vollintine Evergreen neighborhood where they raised their family.

"We bought it together and we dearly loved it," Robinson said. "I love the neighborhood and I know my husband loved it." Robinson praises the active block club group on Michelle Circle and Avalon for keeping the community connected.

Having retired once years ago, Robinson vows not to retire again, saying that work is great exercise for her. She also enjoys being around people and even enjoys the camaraderie the Memphis barbeque shops share. She doesn't consider them competitors but taste preferences. Central is one of the shops she and friends will visit for a different taste — "it's all about the taste."

All the shops have their own niche. An interesting feature of Cozy Corner is the smoker. "We've had the same smoker since we first opened," Desiree said. "It has no gauges or anything, not even a thermostat. You just have to know."

Despite cooking without a timer, everything comes out most excellent according to the loyal customers who come from near and far.

"I like everything we make," jokes Robinson. "We're famous for our ribs, Cornish Hens, and even our bologna sandwiches."



The bologna sandwiches are made with thick slices, rubbed in dry sauce, cooked, and served on a bun with coleslaw. Desiree says many people second guess how good it is until they see and taste it.

In her distinctive white outfit, Robinson is a spotless and cheerful sight to behold and the customers love her. She fuels the start of the day with a time of prayer in the lobby before the restaurant opens. Robinson is a passionate advocate for living life in the moment filled with laughter, a strong faith in God and family. She enjoys her friends and family immensely and can't think of a better way to spend her time than with them.

Homey, comfortable and a classic "hole in the wall," the Cozy Corner is a true Memphis BBQ experience run by a dynamo who chose the Vollintine Evergreen as her neighborhood of choice for life!

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## Dust Off the Bike

With newly-striped bike lanes, McLean Boulevard is connecting VECA residents to other areas of Midtown and to a more healthful lifestyle. Eventually, VECA residents will have bike lane access to downtown as well as to East Memphis via the Shelby Farms Greenline. Kyle Wagenschutz has been instrumental in keeping the momentum moving forward in the bike lane projects. Wagenschutz, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the City of Memphis and the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization, describes the ongoing projects:

Beginning in Spring 2012, the city will continue its progress on repaving McLean Boulevard south towards Lamar Ave, striping bike lanes and improving pedestrians crossings along the way. Already VECA residents can see the benefits of restriping McLean – slower moving vehicles, dedicated space for cyclists, improved visibility at the crossing with the V&E Greenline. Future extensions of bike lanes in Midtown will ensure dedicated space for VECA cyclists trying to reach Overton Park, North Parkway bike lanes, Madison Avenue businesses, Peabody homes, Cooper-Young restaurants and shops, and other sites of interest.

Mayor Wharton is enthusiastically behind the bike lane projects in Memphis. From the Mayor's website he notes, "Making our community more walkable and bikable will inherently make us all safer and healthier by encouraging exercise, responsible street-sharing among motorists, and reduction of carbon emissions." John F. Kennedy has been quoted as saying "Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride." VECA now has an opportunity to find out why!



V&E Greenline Crosswalk at McLean Blvd.

## VECA Annual Membership Form - Become a Member

Join your neighbors in helping Vollintine Evergreen be the great neighborhood it is! Dues are tax deductible.

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### VECA: Vollintine Evergreen Community Association

VECA is a neighborhood organization made up of volunteers and paying members. The newsletter, VECA email, the annual meeting, and committee activities are 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.

VECA Housing: Chuck Fox

Lick Creek: Mary Wilder

Historic Committee: Cathy Marcinko

Communications: Jeff Hulett

Newsletter Editor: Marci Hendrix

Neighborhood Network: Gloria Singleton

Email: [veca@veca.org](mailto:veca@veca.org) Website and Calendar: [veca.org](http://veca.org)

V&E Greenline: Megan Wilkins Reynolds

VECA Businesses: Sarah Beth Larson

Safety and Security: Jill Williams and

Rick Maxwell

Neighborhood Preservation: Chris Floyd

VECA Board and Fundraising: Paul Herron

### Newsletter Deadlines for the March/April Issue

The V&E News is printed bimonthly

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