

The Vullintine Evergreen Community Association Magazine

VECA VOICE

Spring 2022



Contents

- 1 **President's Letter**
- 2 **Spotlight**
- 3 **Greenline**
Volunteerism,
You Keep Us Going
- 4 **Feature**
Tara Stringfellow
- 7 **Places**
Eating Local
- 9 **Places**
Places of Worship



Original plot plan of Good Shepherd Church on Jackson Avenue

Photo courtesy of Memphis Historic Archive

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello, neighbors!

I love springtime in V&E. There are beautiful trees blooming along the Greenline, neighbors saying hello to one another from their respective porches, and so much to look forward to in Memphis.

V&E has so much beauty that makes it shine as a neighborhood – and it's amazing to me that I can stay local and experience beautiful blooms, an amazing walking trail, and gorgeous architecture. But what's made V&A really stand out to me as a local neighborhood is its people.

I'm looking forward to more time spent gathering together as a neighborhood this spring and summer. It's crazy to think that, just a couple of months ago, more than 200 of us came together for VECA's annual meeting. Time has flown!

At our annual meeting at Mosaic Church in January, we heard important updates from our board members on how to reimagine the Jackson/Evergreen Corridor and updates from our historic committee and the Greenline. We asked questions of Councilwoman Michalyn Easter-Thomas and Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis. (If you missed our annual meeting, we have a full recording at [facebook.com/VECA.Midtown/videos](https://www.facebook.com/VECA.Midtown/videos)).

As one neighbor told me, his favorite part of the morning was "breaking donuts among friends and gathering again." VECA wants to create more and more spaces this year for our neighbors to get together safely and break bread together.

Warmer months are ahead, and I'm looking forward to block parties and BBQs. Hold your calendars for a VECA block party on June 11, and if you are interested in helping to host on your street, let us know at info@veca.org.

How do you want to gather in V&E this spring and summer? How can we foster more local pride and belonging among our neighbors? Reach out, I'd love to hear from you. Enjoy springtime in V&E!

Caroline Bauman
VECA President
president@veca.org

SPOTLIGHT

Not tootin' our own horn here but VECA was selected for a **2022 Midtown Memphis MOJO Award** earlier this spring. A grand awards ceremony was held at the Memphis Dance Collective Studio (also an award winner this year) on April 6th. Lily Gilkey and others thanked all of the folks involved with VECA, especially the Historic Landmarks Committee for the enormous amount of work and time they put into achieving Historic District status late last year for us.



V&E Greenline

Recent groups from **Rhodes College** and the **University of Memphis** worked on areas of the trail to remove fallen branches, leaves, and bags and bags of trash from along the trail. Volunteer Coordinator Joshua First and his team (thanks Dennis!) got the teams organized and working and provided the donuts and coffee! Large groups are always welcome for volunteer days on the trail. See the article about volunteering by Dennis Ostrow also in this issue.

Membership

Membership **tee-shirts** are available to purchase. Reach out to membership@veca.org for details. They will be available in our website store soon. They come in green and are \$20.

Enjoy Spring

Get out there and enjoy spring in your yard and in our community. There are so many beautiful spots around to enjoy on a fine spring weekend! Our cover photo was taken along the Greenline by our magazine designer, Melissa Petersen. ■

HELP SEND A CHILD TO SUMMER CAMP!

GIVE901.ORG

SCAN TO GIVE!

CHOOSE 901

GIVE 901

ALL MEMPHIS KIDS DESERVE A SAFE AND ENRICHING SUMMER EXPERIENCE. MAKE IT HAPPEN. DONATE TODAY.

WE'RE STRONGER, TOGETHER

Join VECA Today!

You Keep Us Going!

Sharing your time and skills keeps the trail going for everyone BY DENNIS OSTROW



University of Memphis Volunteers

In 2017, after a chance meeting with a veteran V&E Greenline volunteer, I decided to jump in and lend my time and talent to help with maintaining the trail. I learned that the V&E Greenline was (and still is) totally volunteer maintained and financially supported; and my wife and I wanted to do our part to help.

Fast forward to 2022 and I am in my third month as the V&E Greenline Committee Chair. It has been a bumpy but satisfying ride to get here and I am still excited to participate, not only behind the scenes but along the trail doing maintenance and working with other volunteers that have become my new trail "family."

Part of what I do as the Committee Chair is talking to people about the trail, how it got started, how many people and groups enjoy it and use it, and how each of us can help sustain it. The trail and greenspaces along with it are a unique benefit to living in VECA. The fact that it is entirely community owned, operated, maintained, and funded sets it apart from every other "greenline" or park trail in Memphis. It is a fact that I find myself still marveling at.

Being entirely community owned, operated, and maintained means that volunteers – just like you and me – have to step up and do our part to keep the trail clean, safe, and enjoyable for everyone in our community. That's our mission and that's what every volunteer you see working along the trail mowing grass

or raking leaves, cutting branches or picking up trash, weeding a garden bed or planting trees, is out there doing. They are all helping to keep the trail clean, safe, and enjoyable for you and for everyone who visits the trail and enjoys it.

Now it's your opportunity to help. Donations are certainly needed and we are grateful to those who can. Every donation, no matter how large or small, goes directly to supporting the costs of owning, operating, insuring, and caring for the trail. But we also need your time. There are opportunities for as-needed or longer volunteer commitments. Without volunteers to do the mowing, trimming, planting, and so much more, the trail would not be what it is today; a place that all of VECA can enjoy, be proud of and that stands out as a space where people, just like you and me, can make a difference. Just like we have for over 25 years and for years to come with your help.

Please consider supporting the V&E Greenline as a regular volunteer or at one of our Second Saturday activities or at a trail event such as Earth Day on April 30th. You'll be joining a great group of neighbors that enjoy the work, enjoy each other, and enjoy all of the benefits this beautiful trail brings to living in VECA. Join us! **Learn more on our website at vegreenline.org.** ■

Dennis Ostrow is the V&E Greenline Committee Chair.

She's got the world on a string

Tara Stringfellow is an author, poet, teacher, artist...and your neighbor

BY MELISSA PETERSEN

You may not realize you know her, but you're sure to recognize Huckleberry, Tara Stringfellow's friendly, handsome, cheerful hound, from their frequent walks along the V&E Greenline. Though Huck is apt to steal all of your attention, it's worth getting to know Tara as well.

As we sit down to chat in her cozy VECA home, Huck immediately claims a space on the sofa, tangles himself in the microphone cord, and falls asleep. Tara clearly adores the pup, as do I. But we're here to talk today about her and her highly anticipated new novel—*Memphis*.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm a pistol! (laughs) That's what my daddy always says. I'm a firecracker. I don't know what that means, but I'm a Memphis woman, a North Memphis woman. I moved here when I was 10 just like my main character, Joan, in my novel *Memphis*. The streets of North Memphis raised me. When I first moved here we moved into Douglass into my grandma's house and she did hair out the back of her house. She had a beautiful front porch and there were always kittens and dogs on it. And we'd go fishing. It was a beautiful place to move to as a child and I've loved it ever since.

Is the house still there?

Yes, it's still there. In the book I put it on a different street. My ancestral home is the setting for the book.

Did you write as a kid?

Yes. My first poem was published when I was 10. I knew it was my calling. I saw my name in print and said "I have to do this the rest of my life." Since then, every decision in my life has been how can I be published? How can I write a better, truer sentence? Or a better, truer poem? Is it furthering my writing? If it doesn't; I don't do it.

Tara shares the epic battle her 10-year-old-self had with her dad about getting her first poem published. I think only Huck has the ability to bend her will.

I left Memphis to go to school—Northwestern. I stayed in Chicago all through my 20s. Went to law school. Then went to Northwestern again for my MFA in poetry and fiction. I didn't leave Chicago until 2016. After Trump won the

election, I moved to Spain and I finished my degree there. It took me about 4 years to write the book. I was a teacher at White Station, 10th grade English. It was so hard. I had a class of 230 to 250 students. I had 6 periods. It was my first job teaching after my MFA and it was just me. We had so much fun. It was the best job I've ever had in my life.

Do you miss teaching?

I do. If I were to go back to work, I'd want to go back to that same classroom at White Station and be with my kids.

Because I was so busy during the year teaching, it didn't give me an opportunity to write. I was at White Station and KIPP and I put in 70 to 80 hour weeks. I worked longer hours as a teacher than I did as an attorney. They don't pay teachers enough for all you do for them—the kids. But it allowed me to have summers off. So then I'd save up my little pennies. I was so poor! And I'd go to Cuba or Italy and I'd spend the summer there. And I wrote the book.

How long have you had the idea for the book?

Probably all my life. It's lore. All the stories you hear all your life. There wasn't a moment where I found out my grandma marched with [Dr. Martin Luther] King. I grew up knowing it. So I can't pinpoint an instance where I said, "yes" I know what I'm going to do.

I guess after Trump won the election. I said, I need to write before every artist in this country is censored. I thought I might be put in a cage and locked up for my views. Before this novel I was a spoken word poet in Chicago and I would write



political poems and avant-garde poetry and feminism poetry; things about Black Lives Matter. I knew I might get censored. I was worried. So I went abroad. I knew as a black artist abroad I'd be taken care of. More so than in my own country.

The conversation veers off course and we discuss sex trafficking, Calvary Waffle Shop, and Tara's different experiences in Memphis vs. Chicago.

How did you feel about returning to the U.S.?

At least I live in Memphis. If I gotta live anywhere, at least I live in a black city that's ancient. Memphis has a European feel to me; sort of old-world. My home was built in 1912. It's filled with antiques. The neighborhoods are constructed in a way that feels very old and Southern. Of all the places in America I don't see myself living anyplace else but here. There is violence and racism in this city. Not as much since, thank God, most of the city's black, but there are still instances...there are still some things in this city that we could do better. Right? But for the most part I feel loved and safe here.

What do you like most about living in VECA?

I love the people. I've met so many people other neighbors who are my friends now. Everyone comes together and takes care of one another. Misty and Jason brought me tea, cold meds, soup, and walked Huck when I had COVID. Lena (and her dog Zuko) help with Huck. Mark, with the big German Shepherd, he's my personal trainer. Everyone's an artist; everyone is so friendly and nice. It's really a village.

Are there Memphis things in your book that readers will connect with?

Oh yes! Streets, food, dialogue...how we talk to each other, music, certain songs. Yeah, a lot of folk who have read the book say Memphis is the final character. Herself, the city, she's like a living entity in the book. I mention Rhodes, Memphis

College of Art, Douglass High. My mom went to Douglass and my grandma was a teacher at Douglass for like 30 years so I wanted to shout-out Douglass in the book. So I hope all the kids that go to Douglass are happy about that.

What's been the most unexpected part of being a writer?

The book deal. Like how big this deal is. This is my first time writing fiction. It was picked up by Penguin Random House. It's their lead title for the year. The press, attention, and resources that are going to me and my little book, most debut authors don't get this sort of press and hype. They're positioning it to be very big.

We digress to fawn over the sleeping Huck for a bit.

What are you working on now?

Interviews! I'm on tour. I'm writing several non-fiction pieces for magazines. I'm editing my second poetry collection... due out 2024. Last month I was in London doing press. Shaking hands and kissing babies.

Do you enjoy that part of the process?

Not as much as I do writing. I'm glad folk are liking the book and are excited, but us poets are introverts. I just want to be at home with Huck and write.

What's your favorite type of book to read?

Sci-fi—I love getting away from things. My favorite book of all time is probably *Dune*. You don't get better. I read *Leave the World Behind* by Rumaan Alam. It's really good. It's not sci-fi, but it's dystopian. I love stories like that. I can't write sci-fi, I don't have a science background so maybe that's why I read it and am just fascinated by it. I love Mary Doria Russell. She wrote *The Sparrow* which is one of my favorite books of all time, well other than *Dune*. *The Sparrow*—it's gorgeous.

The conversation meanders off to book-to-film adaptations, waiting for books to come out, and her love of Pachinko, the book and the show.

Are there more novels in you?

Of course! I'm going to start my second novel this summer.

What else would you like people to know about you?

I love gardening, making my home cozy. I like travelling and making a good Italian meal, cuddling with my dog.

A friend's daughter summed it up best, "If she's not in the writing room, she's in the garden. If she's not in Memphis, she's in Italy."

I'm not sure Huck's going to let me leave (he's now sound asleep on my phone). I reach over for a few last ear scratches...

Huck will always be more famous than me. It's how I've met everyone. Everyone loves him.

Look for *Memphis* wherever books are sold. (Tara narrates parts of the audio book too!) The next time you see Huck on the Greenline, be sure to take some time to say "hi" to Tara, too. She's a lovely lady and neighbor and she's worth getting to know. ■

Melissa Petersen lives in VECA with her husband and is a sucker to pet any dog she meets on the Greenline.

**Find out more about Tara Stringfellow: www.tarastringfellow.com
Instagram: [tarastringfellow](https://www.instagram.com/tarastringfellow)**

Eat Local: Our guide to delicious dining in VECA

BY KRISTEN DAVIS

Today, we've included a sample of the delicious dining we are lucky to have in the Vollintine Evergreen neighborhood. Please share your favorites with us on the VECA Facebook page and we will include them in a future issue.



Cafe Eclectic

cafeeclectic.net • 901-725-1718
Monday-Saturday 7:00 am-3:00 pm,
Sunday 9:00 am-3:00 pm
603 N McLean Blvd, Memphis, TN 38107
Dine in, pick up or delivery, online ordering

Cafe Eclectic has been family owned since 2008. As a conscientious member of the Memphis community, they use as many local vendors as possible and are Project Green Fork certified.

This lively cafe has a wall of paintings by Memphis artist Paul Edelstein. Order to go at the counter from a case full of pastries or grab a seat inside or out depending on the weather.

My personal favorite is the toasted cheddar bacon scone to-go or Rachel's breakfast wrap and a London fog tea at the cafe for a more leisurely morning. They are the only cafe serving Illy coffee in the city.

If you are in the area at lunch time, Cafe Eclectic is ready for you. They serve everything from burgers and fried chicken sandwiches to a variety of vegetarian and vegan options. I love taking a short lunch break to walk over and pick up their black bean wrap and french fries.

Energy Famous Pasta

energyfamouspasta.com
901-236-7320
Tuesday-Sunday 11:00 am-9:00 pm
1689 Jackson Ave, Memphis, TN 38107
Dine in, carry out, online ordering, DoorDash and Uber eats delivery, available for private events and catering.

They're working on a plan to provide their own delivery service.

The newest on this list, Energy Famous Pasta has been in VECA for a year and a half but is already a neighborhood hit.

On my first visit, we ordered the cajun chicken philly with fried okra, a chicken quesadilla and the colorful energy margarita. They also serve seafood pasta, egg rolls and chicken and waffles amongst other things. Every plate that passed our table looked fantastic and it was hard to decide what to get. With some friendly advice from the staff, we made our selections and were not disappointed. Everything was as delicious as it looked.

The atmosphere is casual and relaxing. Depending on when you go, you may need to wait but while you do, check out the full bar options, specifically, the vibrantly colored cocktails. The staff is incredibly helpful with recommendations and they create a happy atmosphere for customers.

**Every plate that
passed our table
looked fantastic...**

Photos by Kristen Davis



Dino's Grill

www.dinosgrill.com • 901-278-9127

Tuesday-Sunday 11:00 am-8:00 pm

645 N. McLean Blvd

Dine in, pick up, catering with at least 2 days notice.

Plate lunches T-Fr and Sun

All you can eat spaghetti Thursday

Family owned and operated since 1973

Most recently, I veered from my favorite dish here (pesto alfredo) and ordered the cheese sticks, homemade lasagna, creamed spinach, and the half & half spaghetti and ravioli with garlic bread and it was delicious. All of their food, including the pasta, is made from scratch. Dino's is also known for their "New Orleans style" muffaletta and Tiramisu.

They serve beer and soft drinks but a great option is also bringing your own wine because they don't charge a corkage fee.

Dino's has been owned by the Grisanti family since 1973. The current owner, Mario, is the 4th generation to operate the restaurant.

Sliding into a red booth, you feel like you might be a member of the family too. The atmosphere is relaxed and the walls are decorated with an interesting combination of Italian and war memorabilia. The staff is efficient and friendly and truly makes it a delicious and comfortable experience.



Alex's Tavern

www.facebook.com/Alexs-Tavern-101573985713663

901-271-9886

3:00 pm-2:00 am

1445 Jackson Ave

Dine in, to-go. Catering is also available.

Established in 1953

Owner Rocky Kasafes took over the tavern from his father, the original owner. It's the oldest family owned tavern in the city. My personal favorite is the Greek burger while my husband can't get enough of the chicken wings and ribs. Some of the best ribs in Memphis are located right here in VECA.

Alex's has an atmosphere that keeps people of all ages coming back. The shuffleboard table and 2 classic jukeboxes with over 5000 oldies have seen a lot of action over the years and there are enough big screens around the bar to show everyone's team. Walls are filled with enough memorabilia to keep your eyes busy if you happen to come in on a day where the people watching doesn't occupy you.

Rocky offers local beers but something about the atmosphere might lead you to order a pitcher of Budweiser. If you want to branch out from the classics on the menu, Alex's also offers Rock-mo's Gumbo and Momma K's (the original first lady of Alex's) Veggie Beef Soup. ■



Sliding into a red booth, you feel like you might be a member of the family too...

Kristen has lived in V&E with her husband Dominic since 2016. She works on the Give901 campaign for City Leadership in Crosstown Concourse and loves walking her dog, Faxon, on the Greenline.

Places of Worship and Reflection

VECA shares a historic relationship

VECA shares a historic relationship with places of worship in our community. VECA was started in the early 1970s by individuals from St. Theresa Catholic Church to take on housing problems. We share a part of the history of the Jewish community in Memphis and the Baron Hirsch Synagogue to the north of VECA. It continues today through the participation of many churches in our programs and efforts. And who can forget how lovely it was to hold our annual meeting earlier this year at Mosaic Church?

If we have missed a place of worship that you know of in VECA, please let us know!

Open Door Bible Church

1792 North Pkwy
901-278-4311
odbcmemphis.com

St. John Orthodox Church

1663 Tutwiler Ave
901-274-4119
stjohnmemphis.org

Peace Lutheran – ELCA

1548 Jackson Ave
901-274-3677
sites.google.com/site/peacelutheranmemphis

St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church

1644 Jackson Ave
901-276-1412
littlflowermemphis.org

Mosaic Church

815 N McLean Blvd
901-496-8565
mosaicmemphis.com

Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal

1971 Jackson Ave
901-725-9768
goodshepherdmemphis.org ■



Photo courtesy of Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal

Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal

VECA
1680 Jackson Ave
Memphis, TN 38107
Online at veca.org

**VECA is a great
place to live, work,
play and just *be* in
Memphis.**

**Join or renew
online at veca.org**

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