

Top of the Hill Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2021

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Co-Presidents' Letter:

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's been a difficult and challenging 12 months. The COVID 19 pandemic has touched us all in a variety of ways, forcing us to adapt to new methods of connecting with family, friends and neighbors in an otherwise socially distant environment. From an association perspective, it has caused us to cancel many events including our annual Summer and Holiday Parties. We hosted other events virtually via ZOOM, including the Annual Meeting and a Community Forum.

When we first were elected to office at the 2019 annual meeting, we announced our intention to focus on community connections, fostering year-round neighborhood engagement and inclusion. Additionally, we discussed several supporting initiatives: enhancing outreach to new neighbors via increased contact, creating newcomer welcome kits and hosting newcomer socials; developing a social roster; and reinstating a periodic newsletter. Although some of these initiatives have been delayed due in part to COVID restrictions and privacy concerns, we have made progress on others. In fact, although long in coming, this serves as the first version of what will become a quarterly newsletter. We hope to expand on this initial offering with additional information relevant to our association and the greater Newport community. Please be patient as we work through growing pains and don't hesitate to provide feedback and suggestions about future content. We'd also welcome the support of anyone interested in providing content, editing and publishing services.

In the months ahead, we look forward to resuming our normal activities, along with adding some additional recurring events to help us foster community connections. Please read on for more information about some of our past accomplishments and future plans.

Stay safe and stay tuned!
Warm regards,

Maureen and Sandy Neville

TOH Donates to MLK Center Holiday Drive



MLK Center Executive Director Heather Hole Strout and Development Director Alyson Novick receive donations of gift cards, cash, and boxes of toys and gifts from TOH Neighborhood Association Vice President Hank Kniskern (left), and TOH Co-Presidents Maureen and Sandy Neville (right).

In previous years, in conjunction with the Top of the Hill (TOH) Neighborhood Association Holiday party, we have donated non-perishable food and some funding to Newport's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center (MLK Center), which runs one of the largest food banks in the region. In 2020, since there was no TOH party due to COVID, TOH Vice President Hank Kniskern looked into other ways that we could help the organization.

In regular years, MLK Center's Food Pantry has provided hundreds of families with meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and close to one thousand

Christmas-gifts packages for kids through its “Santa’s Workshop” program. This year, MLK Center was facing a time of greatly increased need. Due to business closures and sharply reduced incomes during the pandemic, many area families have had a very hard time meeting basic day-to-day food necessities, with many of them unable to celebrate with gifts or special holiday meals this year.

Working with MLK Center Executive Director Heather Hole Strout and Development Director Alyson Novick, Hank mobilized our TOH membership for a collection drive to fund the Food Pantry’s regular and holiday meals programs, and Santa’s Workshop. In two weeks, he coordinated cash, super-market gift card, and material donations; while the initial goal was to raise the equivalent of \$2000, the effort snowballed into donations of over 130 super-market gift cards with a value of \$2,750, and \$5,104 in cash contributions over a two-week period. Over 50 TOH households provided money and gift cards, with donations ranging from \$25 to \$1,000. In addition, Mike Beachnau gave a special “Santa Claus donation” of dozens of assorted toys and gifts that were directly given to children at Santa’s Workshop.

Co -President, Sandy Neville, spent one day at Santa’s Workshop when family members came to pick up food and gift donations; while this happened under very tight COVID-related health restrictions, the recipients’ joy and gratitude were wonderful to see. Well done and thank you to Hank, and to the generous TOH members who donated so much so quickly.



Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
COMMUNITY CENTER

Since 1922, Connecting People and Strengthening Newport County

December 7, 2020

Top of the Hill Association
c/o Sandy Neville
63 Rhode Island Ave
Newport RI 02840

Dear Friends of the Center,

We are so grateful for your generosity towards the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Community Center's Holiday Help programs. Your membership giving resulted in 131 gift cards totaling \$2,750.00, dozens of assorted toys and gifts and \$5,104.00.

Because of giving and community-minded people like you, the Center's Food Pantry helped 446 families at Thanksgiving and 599 families at Christmas last year. We were able to make Christmas merry for 947 children from 422 families, in Santa's Workshop. Your generosity does more than brighten the holiday season; by supporting the MLK Community Center, you enable our client families to redirect their limited resources to other critical needs during the harsh winter months – like rent, heat and medicine.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, we expect to help unprecedented numbers of people this holiday season. Thank you again for making a difference in the lives of our Newport County neighbors in need.

However you celebrate this season, I hope your holidays are joyous.

Sincerely,

Heather

Heather Hole Strout
Executive Director

Thank you all for caring
so deeply for our
community.
Happy Holidays!

P.S. To keep up with all the programs your support makes possible, please be sure we have your email address, and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @NewportMLK.

20 Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland Boulevard, Newport, Rhode Island 02840
Telephone: (401) 846-4828 • Fax: (401) 848-7360 • www.MLKCCenter.org

Letter from MLK Center thanking TOH for donations to the 2020 Holiday Help programs

TOH Annual Meeting

On November 8th, 2020, we hosted a Zoom meeting to review the year's events; it was attended by 18 households. Below are the highlights of the meeting (for a full summary, official meeting minutes can be viewed on our website: www.topofthehill.org).

We got off to a good start of the November 2019 - November 2020 membership year by holding our annual Holiday Party at the Edward King house in December. More than 80 members enjoyed a festive evening which included a presentation from the RI Ballet Academy dancers. Attending members brought over 100 cans of food for the MLK center holiday food drive. Unfortunately, Covid-19 cancelled almost all other events. In August, we held a scaled-down TOH Polo Tailgater with 18 attendees, much smaller than our normal 30-35 participants. Shortly before the November elections, we held a Zoom session with the Ward 2 City Council candidates, with 125 views. Each candidate gave us a sense for their priorities and answered questions submitted by TOH members. An email was sent out to our membership introducing our new local community police officer, Merrie Scott, who gave advice for neighborhood residents and listed her contact information (more from Officer Scott below in the Community Policing Corner).

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$2,238.61 as of 30 September 2019. Membership year (November 2019-November 2020) revenue received was \$1,793.95 (membership dues) and expenses were \$2,183.98 (sponsored events, recurring administrative and operating costs).

The 4-member Nominating Committee proposed continuing the same officers in their current positions, which was approved by vote:

Officers:

Maureen and Sandy Neville - Co-Presidents

Hank Kniskern - Vice President

Claire O'Donnelly - Treasurer

Mike and Joan Beachnau - Co-Recording Secretaries

Potential in-person events during 2021: COVID restrictions permitting, we plan to start with smaller events, like wine tastings or a Chili cook-off, as well as new-member introduction gatherings (see below for details). We hope that we can hold larger events such as the Summer and Holiday parties, and historical-neighborhood walks. Our good friends, George and Anne Oliver, who hosted the Summer Party for the last several years, have moved to Pennsylvania. We will need a new venue for the Summer Party. Suggestions are welcome.

Dan and Larna Lackner are stepping down as Events Committee co-chairs to focus on the establishment of a Newcomers Committee (see below for details); Barb Baum indicated her willingness to serve as a co-chair with another person — we are seeking a volunteer to serve as co-chair.

Membership/Treasurers Report

Paid-up membership stands at approximately 134 members.

Our financial position is strong, with a current balance of \$2582.88. In addition to paying for various recurring expenses (domain name renewal, web services, non-profit registration, Constant Contact), a portion of the funds will be applied to this year's upcoming main events (COVID permitting): the Summer Garden Party and the Holiday party. Having funds available makes it possible to provide sometimes hefty deposits required to secure venues and services for events.

Newcomers Committee Established

As part of our community connections emphasis, we are establishing a new committee: Newcomers Committee. Larna Lackner has graciously agreed to head this new group, which will be an extension of the existing Membership

Committee. The Newcomers Committee will focus on welcoming new and potential members, introducing them to the TOH and our existing membership in smaller group settings (cocktail parties, tea and coffee socials, etc). Newcomer Socials will be held periodically based on the number of new TOH accessions. TOH members who live near the new members will be invited to meet and greet their new neighbors. We hope to have our first Newcomer Social in late spring once vaccines have been widely distributed. The Newcomers Committee will also explore ways to improve content and dissemination of the TOH Welcome Kit. If you have any questions or suggestions, please email Larna at larnalackner@hotmail.com.

TOH Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to become more involved with TOH, there are several volunteer opportunities available. We invite you to join one of our committees or volunteer to help develop our quarterly newsletter. For more information and/or sign-up, please contact one of the representatives below:

Newsletter Publishing Support:

Sandy and Maureen Neville - TOPinfo@topofthehill.org or
Maureen.neville@mac.com

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin: community@topofthehill.org

Events – Larna and Dan Lackner (stepping down, seeking new co-chair):
TOHevents@topofthehill.org

Membership – Donna Elkin: membership@topofthehill.org

Newcomers – Larna Lackner: larnalackner@hotmail.com

Welcome – Susan McCoy: welcome@topofthehill.org

Beautification – John Hirschboeck: beautification@topofthehill.org

Community Policing Corner

Officer Merrie Scott, our Community Policing Officer, reports:

General crime statistics: Since I'm fairly new with the Neighborhood Association, I did some research and located that in the past you received information regarding crime statistics in the City of Newport's Top of the Hill area. I also found that some of your concerns have been consistent over the years. So, I checked for the month of January and the stats show the following:

- Simple Assault 1
- Vandalism 1
- Disorderly Conduct 3
- Traffic violations 1

Please keep in mind this is for your particular section of Newport. I checked the numbers over the years and find that they fluctuate over the course of the year, and certain crimes increase during winter months while others increase in summer.

As in the past, I can't say it enough that people need to lock their car doors. Breaking into vehicles is a crime of opportunity, in which a person walks down the street and to the average observer nothing is suspicious; however, this person is pulling on car door handles while walking by, hoping to find an unlocked car. When a person is attempting to gain access to a vehicle, they are less likely to break a window as it would bring attention to themselves, so an open door is a quick and easy target.

If you see a crime happening please don't take the matter into your own hands --- please contact the Police! I've read reports of thefts and break-ins, and some people say, "Well, we didn't want to bother you, it was only loose change they took." If you report crimes no matter how small, the Police can see where these crimes are occurring and hopefully solve the problem; gathering the statistics also helps the Police to identify where to dedicate resources. General guidelines for reporting follow

A crime or accident happening where there is any possibility of violence or serious injury, or major property damage or loss, call 911.

A crime or violation in progress that is relatively minor (for example active spray painting, public urination), please call 401-847-1212;

A crime that has already taken place (such as a car break-in that happened overnight), please call 401-847-1306.

Useful Links and Contacts

City of Newport - <https://cityofnewport.com> City website

City of Newport Clean City - <https://cityofnewport.com/cleancity> Contains information about trash pickups, holiday and storm delays, recycling, scheduling trash pickups, dropping off garbage at waste management, etc.

Report It Newport - https://seeclickfix.com/newport_2 (requires registration) You can report problems such as potholes, litter, missed or uncollected garbage, snow covered sidewalks, graffiti, unsafe sidewalks, streetlights, etc. Usually a very quick response.

Second Ward Councilor Charles Holder – cmholder@ymail.com

Next Door Top of the Hill – Our website
<https://nextdoor.com/neighborhood/topofthehillri--newport--ri/>

NewportThisWeek- <https://www.newportthisweek.com> Informative weekly newspaper with useful local-event calendars, advertising including restaurants and businesses, and reporting on local issues.

Newport Daily News - <https://www.newportri.com>

Alliance for a Livable Newport (ALN) - <http://newportalliance.org/news/>
Umbrella group for Newport neighborhood associations, provides information on significant local issues.