

FOUNDERS' GROVE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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HELLO, NEIGHBOR! Meet the Pratts on Vale Street

By Jen Johnson, East Grove Street

The joke that FGers don't move away, only switch houses isn't entirely true: some leave then return. When John and Paula Pratt drove west after their University of Kentucky graduation in a station wagon customized with a painted wooden roof topper, they didn't realize the road would lead back to the same block as John's childhood home.

The Road Home

After the epic summer road trip with John's younger brother, the two settled near Cincinnati where he worked in accounting and she in design. Before long they changed direction, returning to Central Illinois where they got married and John studied law at the University of Illinois as Paula worked in Peoria.

With a degree in interior design and an associate's in architecture, her role eventually expanded into facility management for a firm's Midwest locations. After John's Chicago clerkship, they decided to live in a smaller city and bought their Vale Street home where they live and raised their son, Robby.

Initially John joined his (late) father and sister in the Bloomington law firm started by his grandfather, Horace Pratt, in 1915. Now a partner with Meyer Capel, his practice includes real estate, probate and corporate work.

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, Paula lived most of her early childhood in the deep south and returned to her home state before high school. With a professor father, her family lived in college towns making BloNo appealing for her, too. A new position brought her back to her educational roots working in business development for an architecture firm.

Contributing to Our Community

Despite busy schedules, the Pratts enjoy community service. John is active with Sunrise Rotary, serves as



Paula and John Pratt, and son Robby, are all University of Kentucky alums

the attorney for District 87, President of the McLean County Bar Association and wrote FGNA's legal documents.

With Kiwanis since the early '90s, Paula volunteered in leadership and other roles with groups like Girl Scouts, Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Beyond the Books and Carle-BroMenn Service Auxiliary.

They also embraced Robby's activities in school, music and swimming –

*Read on, **PRATTS** — page 4*

**Don't miss
inside!**

- "Draw a pet" opportunity
- Stock the food pantry challenge
- Tips for tomato season
- Upcoming springtime events



HOT OFF THE PREZ - By Todd Vincent on Grove, Board President

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season, made it through the cold and are ready to jump into spring!

We had our first board meeting of the year and have exciting activities planned for 2026. Since the kids activities were popular last year, you'll see more this year. With the United States' 250th anniversary, the 4th of July parade should be bigger than ever. Not only is it the nation's birthday, 2026 is the 100th anniversary of the "Mother Road," Route 66. We're planning a special event to celebrate it.

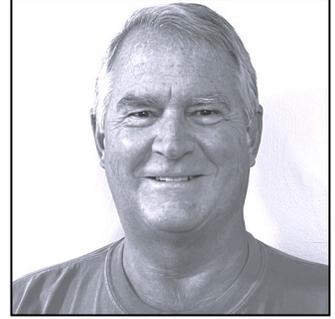
The volunteer day at Midwest Food Bank was well attended, and we're planning more opportunities this year. There's nothing like coming together as a

neighborhood to give back to the broader community!

Palooza will also be bigger than ever, expanding from two days to three (Oct. 1-3). It's pretty exciting to live in such a musical neighborhood.

As always, we welcome suggestions of activities that interest you and your family. If you'd like to host a social, coordinate or volunteer for an event, or share an idea, email fgnabloomington@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you.

We hope to see you in the hood at one or more of our upcoming events!



Visit the OHS Architectural Salvage Warehouse for all your old house needs!

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About Founders' Grove Neighborhood Association

FGNA is a 501c3 organization formed to enhance the community in which we live. We promote communication and a sense of community, with many social gatherings. Every residence on and between Oakland, Mercer, Washington & State streets is a member invited to join all events. The association charges no dues.

How you can donate to help fund activities:

- Cash in FGNA jars at events; or QR code to pay digitally
- PayPal to fgnabloomington@gmail.com
- Venmo to @FGNABloomington
- Check to: FGNA (c/o Neil Gridley), 1219 E. Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61701

2026-2027 FGNA Board

<p>President: Todd Vincent 309-825-9635 jtvincent@att.net</p> 	<p>Vice President & Historian: Rochelle Gridley 309-838-2597 rochellegridley@gmail.com</p> 	<p>Secretary: Amanda Hill Ahill8407@gmail.com</p> 	<p>Treasurer/ Webmaster: Neil Gridley nmgridl@ilstu.edu</p> 
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Draw Your Favorite Pet Opportunity

Choose one of your favorite pets (family pet, neighbor's pet, etc.)

Who: Kids 13 and under

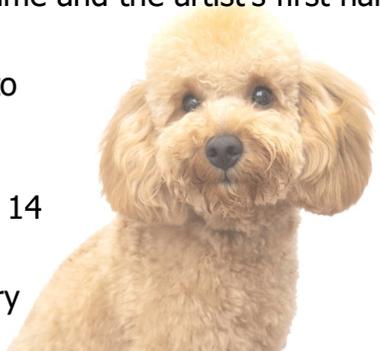
What: Color, draw or paint pet (no larger than 8.5" x 11" paper)

Label: The front with the pet's name and the artist's first name

Where: Take it to AB Hatchery, 916 E. Grove St., and make sure to fill out an entry form

Deadline: Bring your picture in anytime between March 14 - April 14

Surprise: 3 entry forms will be drawn for a prize from AB Hatchery



Let's Fill the Food Pantry on Grove!

Have you noticed the Food Pantry at Centennial Church on East Grove? This location is visited often and not always fully filled. So each month we're going to challenge several streets to bring non-perishable items to add to the pantry. There's also a little free library for book donations! It's a great opportunity for the whole family.

If there is an overage, the church would like you to bring items into the south door. If it's locked, please leave them on the bench near that door. They also have a freezer for frozen items. For example, if you bring Hamburger Helper, it's helpful to have a pound of hamburger to go with. If you have frozen items and the door is locked, text Kay (309-824-6934) or Leisa (309-824-0980).

January - Both sides of Mercer

February - Both sides of Jefferson

March - Both sides of Washington

April - Both sides of East Grove

May - Both sides of Oakland

June - Both sides of State, Leland, Warner, Fairview

July - Both sides of East Jackson

August - Both sides of Taylor

September - Both sides of East Olive and Moore

October - Both sides of Kreitzer, Willard, Florence

November - Both sides of Vale, Harwood, Woodland

December - All are welcome to donate, as is the case every month!

New faces on FGNA Board

Welcome to Laurie Loseke and Sherry Graehling as at-large members on the Founders' Grove Board. See the full Board list on page 2. Here's a little on Laurie...



Laurie Loseke

How long have you lived in FGNA? 20 years

"I always wanted to live here because of the trees and the houses."

How do you spend your free time?

"I am trying to be a gardener and just started bird watching. Mostly I'm rolling my eyes at my husband (Kevin) ... you have all met the pizza dude."



Recycle Your Old Paint (and other products)



To find local drop-off sites, scan QR code or visit paintcare.org/drop-off-sites.

Bloomington-Normal Locations:

- Ace/True Value Hardware Stores
- Sherwin-Williams: Area Stores
- RP Lumber: Area Stores
- Paint Depot, Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore

Continued... **PRATTS (from page 1)**



cheering as he broke the record set by his BHS Hall of Fame swimmer dad. Now Robby teaches music for LeRoy Schools.

"The Flamingos are Out!"

When Paula stepped away to explore working closer to home, it's not surprising a local non-profit position found her. As Development Director for the Miller Park Zoological Society, Paula brought her experience to her most rewarding role: supporting the zoo's priorities of caring for animals while educating and entertaining over 100,000 visitors annually.

Now retired, her fondest memories include hearing children shout, "the flamingos are out!" and watching the leggy pink birds dash to their exterior enclosure. She continues to support zoo projects, like a new Southern Ground African Hornbill habitat to give the two sisters, Morticia and Wednesday, more enrichment and generous space for roaming and exploring.

We're all benefiting from the family's service as they continue to give back over decades to the neighborhood and community John first called home.

Paula Pratt found it easy to be happy around her favorite zoo animals.



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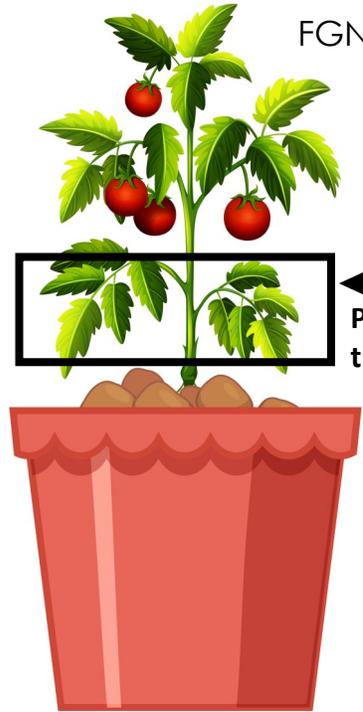
Growing Backyard Tomatoes

By Julie Murphy & Sue Anderson,
FGNA residents & gardeners



The days are slowly growing longer! Longer days have these two gardening gals thinking of spring and what gardening topic we would like to share with our neighbors. The answer is: tomatoes!

Tomatoes are one of the most rewarding plants for the home gardener to grow. Here we'll share tomato basics, explain the difference between determinate and indeterminate tomatoes, and suggest some varieties that do well in most home gardens.



Prune these

Is a bush or vine tomato best for you?

Understanding tomato types helps you choose the right plant for your space and needs.

Determinate Tomatoes (Bush)

- Grow to a set height, usually 3-4 feet
- Produce most of their fruit over a short period of time
- Little or no pruning needed
- Great for containers, small gardens and canning
- *Varieties:* Roma, Bush Early Girl, Celebrity

Indeterminate Tomatoes (Vining)

- Continue growing and producing fruit all season
- Plants can reach a height of 6 feet or more
- Require caging, trellising or staking
- Pruning is advised, especially to the side branches or "suckers"
- Provides a steady harvest of fresh fruit
- *Varieties:* Better/Big Boy, Brandywine, Beefsteak

What environment is best for success?

- **Timing:** Plant them in warm soil (65-75 degrees F) well after the danger of frost has passed. Do not rush to get them in the ground! General rule is after Mother's Day.
- **Sun:** Tomatoes love sunlight. Select a spot that receives at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight each day.
- **Spacing:** Tomatoes need room to grow! Space them at least 18- 24 inches apart to promote good airflow and reduce chance of disease.
- **Soil:** Well-draining soil rich in organic matter is what tomatoes prefer. Adding compost prior to planting will support nutrition and drainage. They can be grown in pots, but our personal experiences have not proven this to be the best environment.
- **Water:** Water regularly - not every day. But when you water be sure to give them a deep drink, aim for a stream of water at the base of the plant rather than the leaves.

A brief word on pruning:

Both types of tomatoes should have lower branches pruned to promote air flow and reduce the chance of contact with soil borne pathogens. Be sure foliage is not touching the ground, as shown in the illustration above.

Follow these guidelines and it won't be long until you are harvesting your own fresh tomatoes from YOUR garden!

Varieties known for reliability & disease resistance

Cherry Tomatoes: Sweet 100 or Sun Gold

Slicing Tomatoes: Early Girl, Celebrity or Better Boy

Paste Tomatoes: Roma or Amish Paste



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MARCH

FGNA CALENDAR

Fri, March 13 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social

- **Where:** Neil & Rochelle Gridley’s, 1219 E. Washington
- **What:** In addition to socializing, we’ll stuff plastic eggs for the hunt.
- **Please bring individually wrapped candy** to fit in eggs. No unwrapped candy like jelly beans. Bring a snack to pass, beverages, cash for 50/50.

Candy needed!



Sun, March 29 at 2 p.m. sharp!! – FGNA Easter Egg Hunt

Family Event

- **Where:** Grounds in front of Oakland Elementary School, Watch for an Easter Bunny sighting!!

APRIL

Fri, April 10 at 5:30 p.m. – Behind the Scenes: Donny B's Gourmet Popcorn

- **What:** Private FGNA family-friendly tour with fun facts about popcorn. Watch the fun stuff being made with sampling/tasting along the way!
- **Where:** Donny B’s, 1220 Towanda Ave.
- **Sign up:** Limited to first 25 signed up at fgnabloomington@gmail.com. Must be 4+ years old.

Kid Friendly



MAY

Fri, May 8 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social

- **Where:** The home of Donny B. (Bounds), 1306 E. Washington St.
- **What:** Food, drinks & conversation. Bring snack to share, BYOB, cash for 50/50 drawing.

Sat, May 16 from 10-11 a.m. – Annual Plant Exchange

Kid Friendly

- **Where:** Todd & Anne O’Neill’s, 1923 E. Jackson
- **What:** Please label what you bring to swap. But you don’t need to bring plants to participate!

JUNE

June 5 & 6: Neighborhood Sales

- For \$4, your sale will be listed on the sale map, you'll be loaned a sign, and you'll help cover the cost of a Pantagraph ad. **June 2 sign-up deadline:** To be included in publicity, complete the form at bit.ly/fgnasalesignup26. Email lollarmatt@hotmail.com with questions.

Fri, June 12 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social at Melody Bryant’s, 1122 E. Grove St.

SAVE THE DATE: October 1, 2 & 3: FGNA Palooza Music Fest

RECURRING MONTHLY EVENTS

- Play cards at **Euchre Club**. At **Music Guild**, share songs from bands/artists around a monthly theme.
- **Mystery Book Club** usually meets 3rd Thurs of month; **Washington Street Book Club** the 1st Tues.

For more info, email fgnabloomington@gmail.com. Details to the best of Board’s knowledge at printing. Get the latest: facebook.com/FoundersGrove, fgna.org or request email updates at bob@dawson1.com