

# FOUNDERS' GROVE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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## Many Hands, One Heart: How a Community Built Wolf Park

*By Rhonda Massie & Deborah Halperin, friends who met through this volunteer effort*

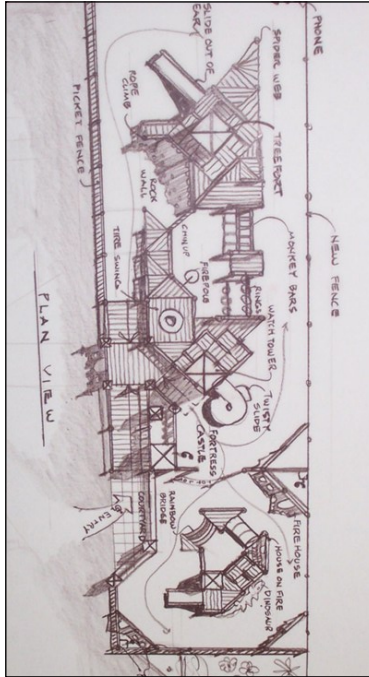
This month celebrates the 20th anniversary of Wolf Park, the 3,000-square-foot, one-of-a-kind playground at Washington School which raised \$120,000 in donations and was constructed by more than 1,000 volunteers (filling 1,497 volunteer shifts) during a five-day building blitz!

If you were there, you remember. If you weren't, you might not even know...

From May 3-7, 2006, these volunteers – many Founders' Grove neighbors – built the playground from the ground up. The barn-raising-style project was a complicated but worthwhile process which brought community members together for a common goal, with the benefit continuing for generations.

Wolf Park was the dream of Erik Prenzler, then a Washington School parent, who'd seen a similar playground in Woodstock, N.Y. After learning that project was led by Leathers & Associates, he became enamored by the community-oriented, self-build projects which the firm still spearheads today.

He got the Washington School PTO on board, recruited Deborah Halperin as co-general coordinator, and a playground was born.



During October 2005, Leathers & Associates visited the school for Design Day. They met with students from every grade to solicit input about playground features. Students suggested towers, a fort, an area for younger children, a slide coming out of an ear, and a rock-climbing wall.

At the same time, a six-month fundraising and volunteer-recruitment campaign was launched; a massive tool-and-equipment-lending initiative was organized; childcare for volunteers was arranged; and generous restaurants – Biaggi's, Kelly's Bakery, Denny's Doughnuts & Bakery and Avanti's (to name a few) – committed meals for volunteers. (Biaggi's even set up a coffee/cocoa tent.) Mike Thomas from Leathers was particularly impressed by the food served to volunteers, saying he was used to other sites serving soggy bologna sandwiches.

Read on, **PARK** — page 5



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

We're already halfway through spring and have had some wonderful events so far, with much more coming this summer.

The Easter egg hunt was a huge success with record attendance. For music lovers, the Vinyl Hullabaloo is set for Aug. 16, with Palooza the first weekend in October. We're hosting another pool party as a back-to-school event as well as another volunteer event at Midwest Food Bank. Check out the calendar on the last page for all the exciting events planned.

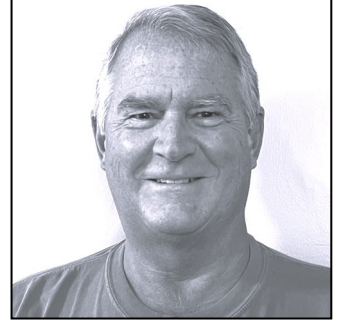
If you've wanted to advertise your business, have you considered sponsoring an FGNA event? For example, if you want

to be a Palooza sponsor, make a donation and we'll display your banner at the event.

Since the weather has warmed up, I'd like to give just a few reminders: Please pick up after your pet; keep yard debris out of the storm drains; and remember it's a city ordinance that your pet must be on a leash when off your premises.

The neighborhood board is looking forward to a great summer full of activities.

See you in the neighborhood!



**Please remember to pick up after pets!**




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**Know of an interesting neighbor to feature?**

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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](mailto:fgnabloomington@gmail.com)
- Venmo to @FGNABloomington
- Check to: FGNA (c/o Neil Gridley), 1219 E. Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61701

### 2026-2027 FGNA Board

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## Neighborhood Sales are June 5-6: How to get a sign and spot on the map!

**June 2 sign-up deadline:** For \$4, your sale will be listed on the neighborhood map, you'll be loaned a sign, and you'll help cover the cost of a Pantagraph ad.



- **Complete form** at [bit.ly/fgnasalesignup26](http://bit.ly/fgnasalesignup26).
- Email [lollarmatt@hotmail.com](mailto:lollarmatt@hotmail.com) with questions.

- **June 4 pay & pick up sign:** Between 6:30-7 p.m. at Centennial Christian Church, 1219 E. Grove St. Pay your \$4 here.
- **After the sales:** Leave your sign by the curb so it's easy for the Board to pick up on Sat or Sun.

### Need a tool temporarily?

The West Bloomington Revitalization Project has "Tool Library" lending.



**Learn more at:**

[westbloomington.org/tool-library](http://westbloomington.org/tool-library)

### FGNA flower garden needs volunteers to keep flourishing!

Our garden at the corner of Towanda & Washington Streets needs volunteers to periodically pull weeds and prune. No huge time commitment. If you can help, email [fgnabloomington@gmail.com](mailto:fgnabloomington@gmail.com).

### Recurring events in Founders' Grove

- ♦ 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, check [fgna.org](http://fgna.org) or email [fgnabloomington@gmail.com](mailto:fgnabloomington@gmail.com)

**Want to submit a free one-time classified ad here?** Email: [sonyajeremy@yahoo.com](mailto:sonyajeremy@yahoo.com)

## The Ripple Effect is Back! Have a need? Want to help?

*By Pastor Tom Cici*

**Do you need some outdoor help?** Centennial Christian Church is offering to assist residents of the Founders' Grove neighborhood (and their nearby friends) in doing small jobs again this year. Jobs may include cleaning gutters, painting interior or exterior, repairing wooden porch or garage, removing brush from a fence line, etc. Homeowners would need to pay for materials, but Centennial Christian Church will provide labor and small tools. We cannot repair roofs, provide plumbing or anything that requires a license. Work will begin as we receive jobs and as we are able to form teams.

If you need assistance in doing a small joy, please contact Pastor Tom Cici at the Centennial Christian Church office (309) 828-2185, cell (765) 541-0611 or email [marian64tom57@gmail.com](mailto:marian64tom57@gmail.com).

**Want to help others out?** Find more info on the church site: [centennialcc.org/ripple-effect](http://centennialcc.org/ripple-effect). It's just people helping and caring for people.



# How to Host Your Own Block Party!

By Leisa Barbour on Fairview Avenue

My street has a block party every year. It's fun and builds friendships between neighbors. It's especially wonderful to connect families with kids!

Planning a successful block party requires a bit of coordination with the City of Bloomington and your neighbors because streets will be blocked off. It's helpful to have a few people work together to plan the event.

## Here are some helpful tips to get started:

**Contact list:** First, have a couple people collect emails/phone numbers of your block for communicating. Your block can decide if you want people to invite others like their extended families or close-by block neighbors.

**Dates:** Choose a couple possible dates and find one when most neighbors are available. Hours allowed are between noon and sunset.

**Form:** If you want to close a street, fill out this form at least 30 days before the event: [bit.ly/blmblockparty](http://bit.ly/blmblockparty). A FAQ section on the site has good info. The city will deliver and pick up barricades.

**Signatures:** After the party is approved, the city will send a document that requires 90% of residents' signatures from your street. These are the houses impacted by not being able to get to their driveways.

**Food & Drinks:** Sign-up Genius works well for assigning who brings what. A dish to pass, and someone may offer to cook hamburgers/hotdogs. You could add plates, silverware, napkins and cups to the signup or have each family bring their own. A cooler with cold water and another with Pop-Ice and a pair of scissors is great for kids. Remember, no alcohol is permitted in public areas.

## Other essentials:

While it works well to have everyone bring their own chairs, at a minimum, organizers should arrange for tables and a trash can onsite. You can ask volunteers to bring tables and help set up through slots on your Sign-Up Genius.

## Entertainment:

Have neighbors bring their bag games – or you can have races or other contests. Have sidewalk chalk, water guns and bubbles for kids. Our block finds it is engaging to have the kids plan activities such as a craft or games to play.



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

To construct the fence around the playground, personalized pickets were sold for \$25. Founders' Grove neighbor Rhonda Massie managed a massive spreadsheet to track sales and personalization. The Woods Tech Class at Bloomington High School, with an assist from Founders' Grove neighbor/woodworker Franz Eckrich, personalized all 350 pickets using routers.



Volunteers do final staining of personalized pickets sold as a fund-raiser.

**Getting it Done**

As the ball got rolling on the build, a night of heavy rain left organizers scrambling to locate as much straw as possible (thank you AB Hatchery) in an attempt to dry out the site prior to the arrival of the Illinois State University football team which had been recruited to move 10-foot long, 6-inch-by-6-inch poles and set them into holes. Unfortunately, that wasn't the last the volunteers saw of rain, though no one seemed to mind. Volunteers used tarps to cover electrical outlets, made makeshift raingear out of garbage bags, and spread straw to keep mud under control.

Volunteers included Washington School families and staff, Founders' Grove neighbors, union members, youth and service groups, fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, as well as groups from residence halls, other schools, churches, businesses, etc. Along with Prenzler and Halperin, 12 Construction Captains – half "skilled"; half "unskilled" – spent all 14 shifts on site for the duration of the build.

Local artist and Founders' Grove resident Andrew Jumonville designed and created pieces of original art which remain today: a steam engine train, fire station, climbing wall of wolves, and a mini version of the Parthenon. Yet another



neighbor/volunteer, Jeff Stevenson, slept in the tool trailer each night to thwart any would-be thieves.

neighbor/volunteer, Jeff Stevenson, slept in the tool trailer each night to thwart any would-be thieves.

"People actually thanked me for allowing them to be involved in this project ... wet, muddy, tired people expressed their thanks before leaving," stated then Washington School Principal Jeff Lockenvitz in a letter to The Pantagraph. Lockenvitz also expressed being overwhelmed by the many volunteers who didn't even have children in the school.

The project was so well executed that work wrapped earlier than expected. Not wanting to squander free labor, Halperin asked Lockenvitz for a school project "wish list" and volunteers went to work painting halls, constructing benches and picnic tables, and adding a climbing wall inside the gym. "You can't pay people to work this hard," said Thomas.

On Sunday afternoon, Lockenvitz welcomed students to play at Wolf Park. The BHS marching band joined the celebration and Carl's Ice Cream was served. What started as a muddy lot turned into a playground everyone could be proud of.

Halperin and Massie remain friends and continue to work on community projects. They're also two of the three people who know where the Wolf Park time capsule is hidden.

**Needs continue:** Washington Elementary welcomes donations to maintain the playground. Mulch needs to be replenished and repairs made from wear and tear of daily recess use. Checks to the Washington School PTO can be mailed to the school at 1201 E. Washington St., 61701.

**Thurs, June 4 at 7 p.m. – Quarterly Meeting for all residents: Window Restoration**

- **What:** Evan Morefield of Timeless Restoration will discuss his process for restoring original windows in older homes, with Q&A and a sample of his work.
- **Garage sale sign pickup:** Before the meeting starts, 6:30-7 p.m.
- **Where:** Centennial Christian Church, 1219 E. Grove St.

**Fri & Sat, June 5-6 – Neighborhood Sales** (Usually run 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. but vary.)

- Watch for a map on Facebook. **Want to get on the map?** Sign up by June 2. See details, **page 3**.

**Fri, June 12 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social on Grove St.**

- **Where:** Melody Bryant's, 1122 E. Grove. Bring snack to share, BYOB, cash for 50/50.

**Sat, June 13, throughout afternoon – Route 66 “Poker Chip Rally”**

Kid Friendly

- **What:** To celebrate Route 66's 100th anniversary, join us for a cruise down 66 – with prizes! Starting in Bloomington and ending in Lexington, you'll make 5 stops, drawing 3 colored poker chips at each stop. The value of each color will be randomly determined at the end of the run, which will determine your total score. Prizes for the top 3 finishers. Cost is \$5 for each person participating in the poker chip rally. More details later on Facebook and monthly tidbits e-mail.

**Sat, July 4 at 9 a.m. – Annual 4th of July Parade & Potluck Brunch**

Family Event



**What:** Decorate bikes, wagons, strollers to join the parade; or line the streets to watch. Starts at corner of Grove & Woodland, then west to Harwood, south to Taylor, east to Vale, north to Grove. Finish with a potluck brunch in the Schulz's backyard, 1322 E. Grove.

**Fri, July 10 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social**

- **Where:** TBD. Watch Facebook or the monthly email update for details.

**Sat, Aug. 8 from 6 to 8 p.m. – Holiday Pool Family Night**

Family Event

- **Where:** Holiday Park Pool, 800 McGregor St., Bloomington
- **What:** We've rented the main & kiddie pools for FGNA residents **free of charge!**

**Fri, Aug. 14 at 6 p.m. – FGNA Happy Hour / Social**

- **Where:** TBD. Watch Facebook or the monthly email update for details.

**Sun, Aug. 16 starting at 2 p.m. – Vinyl Hullabaloo**

Kid Friendly

- **What:** Enjoy tunes on the turntable. Bring your own records or pick from the selection available.
- **Where:** Matt Lollar's backyard, 1304 E. Grove. Bring your lawn chair, beverages, snack to share.

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

For more info, email [fgnabloomington@gmail.com](mailto:fgnabloomington@gmail.com). Details to the best of Board's knowledge at printing. Get the latest: [facebook.com/FoundersGrove](https://facebook.com/FoundersGrove), [fgna.org](http://fgna.org) or request email updates at [bob@dawson1.com](mailto:bob@dawson1.com)