

Leroy Freeman 1956-2009

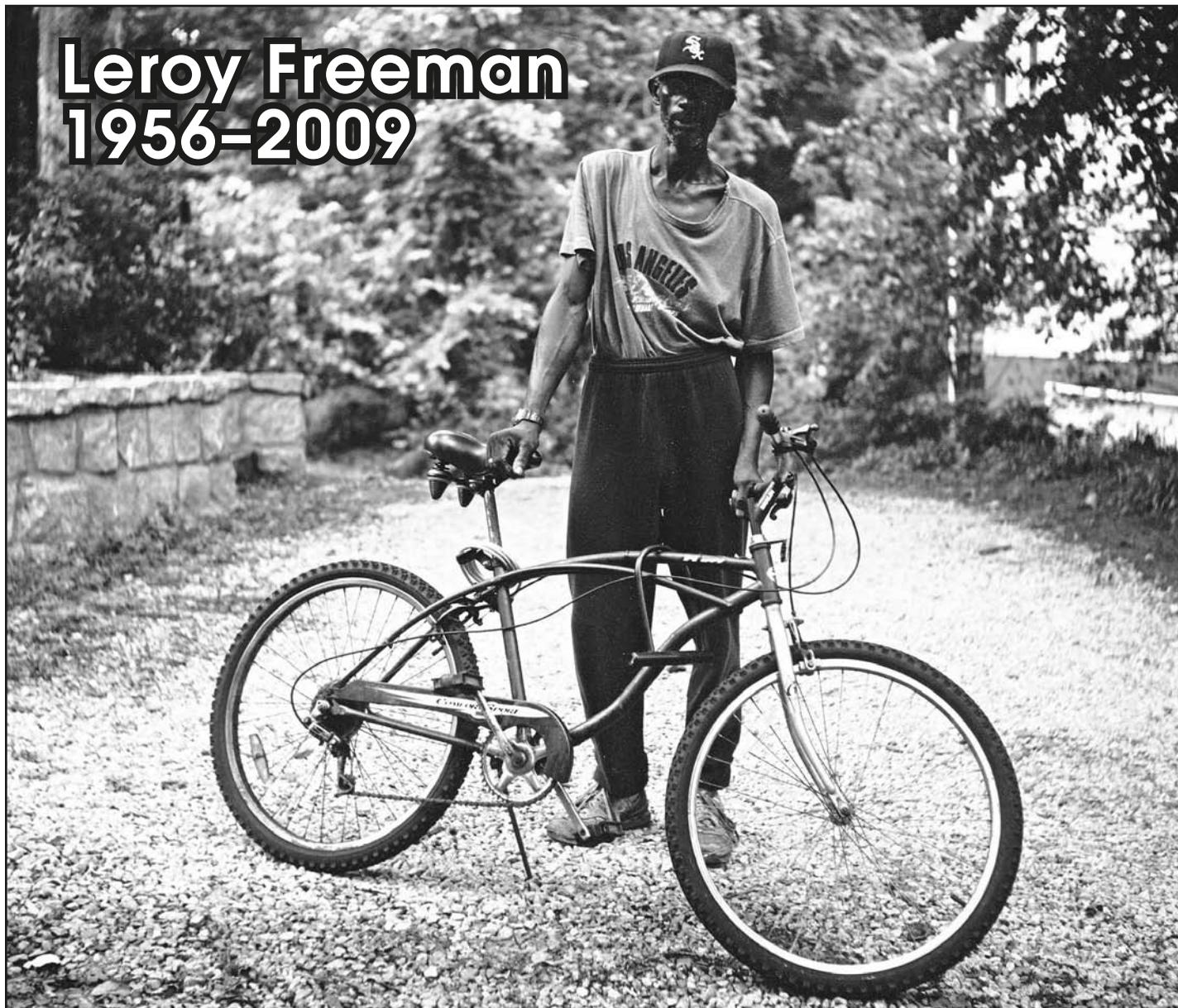


Photo credit: A Harold Avenue neighbor

In Loving Memory of Leroy Freeman

I can't help but feel like we have reached the end of an era. On December 28, 2009, we lost a neighbor, Leroy Freeman. He collapsed at the doorway of a neighbor on Leonardo Avenue, went into cardiac arrest, and later died at Emory Hospital. When 911 was called, the immediate response included two fire trucks, a police car, and an ambulance.

I met Leroy Freeman not long after I moved here, about ten years ago. He came to my door looking for work, and I took an immediate liking to him. He wasn't asking just for money but wanted to work. With an alert and friendly manner, he began a long and fruitful relationship with me. We were about the same age, give or take, and would often end the day chatting about our common interests, family, current events, the neighborhood, or what was next in line for the garden.

My garden in the backyard was transformed largely due to

Leroy's labors. It used to be bordered (choked, really) on two sides by privet, which I do not like. Leroy dug it all up for me, bit by bit. He also planted my newer trees that have now matured. I have a lovely Japanese Apricot, a huge Black Dragon cryptomeria, and a Mexican Redbud, among others, that he installed and now thrive.

Leroy taught me how to make biscuits from scratch. Now that was a fun day. He kept telling me how much he liked to cook and that he was a good cook. He particularly liked homemade biscuits. So I asked him what was needed to make good scratch biscuits, got the ingredients together, and then announced to him one morning that he was making biscuits for our breakfast. The look on his face was priceless. He washed up and got to work, explaining the quirks of each step as he worked. I think I made a batch alongside him, too. Mary Jo across the street can attest to the success of his cooking les-

sons.

My dogs loved him, too. Leroy would sweet-talk them and loved to sit and pet them whenever he came by. He would get the familiar greeting from the dogs—more tail wagging and less barking.

As with many (mostly) men who live on the streets, his demons would occasionally catch up to him. From time to time, as many of us know, he was not his usual self, becoming moody and perhaps a bit unpredictable, though never a threat. Once we had a bit of a row over a gardening project that he "owned" more than I sometimes realized. My son came out to see if I needed help. A short while later, while I was inside, he took my son aside and told him he would NEVER do anything to harm me and not to worry. We were just hashing out some details in our way.

One year, I managed to break my hand and was hampered in many chores. It was Leroy who came by to see if I needed any-

A Biography of Leroy Freeman

A few weeks back, I sat down with Leroy to interview him for an article in the Clarion. I had over the years heard some parts of his story, and I thought that the rest of the community would like to know more about him. At the time, I realized that if I procrastinated, these notes would be for an obituary—but I was thinking in terms of years of procrastination, rather than days. So here is my biographical article on Leroy Freeman. —Sam Collier

Leroy Freeman was born into a farming family near Covington, Georgia, in 1956. He learned from a very early age to gather eggs and pack them into twelve-flat trays for sale. This took special skill on cold mornings, because the eggshells were brittle in the cold. His family grew peanuts, corn, tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, and cotton. Leroy also milked the cows and fed the chickens and goats.

At the age of fourteen, Leroy and his younger brother walked from Covington to Atlanta to get away from their father, who was brutal toward them. They walked to their sister's house on Woodbine Avenue in the Kirkwood neighborhood. Sometime later, he moved in with his mother, who lived in the Englewood Manor housing project, south of Grant Park, near the proposed

Biography continued on page 6



What's Inside?

- 2 Granmaw Update
- 2 From the Editor
- 2 Mark Your Calendar
- 3 News from the Land Trust
- 3 Lake Claire Officers/ Newsletter Staff
- 3 Synchronicity Theatre
- 4 Remembering Leroy
- 5 Remembering Leroy
- 6 Remembering Leroy
- 7 Kids Cuisine
- 8 Classified Ads

THE CLARION IS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER.

Memory continued from page 1

thing daily, with no expectation of money or favors in return.

Knowing of my penchant for making use of used items, he frequently brought me good items found at someone's curb to see if I had any use for them. Sometimes he was selling; sometimes he was just thinking of me.

Those of us who have a close family member who is homeless or on the edge for whatever reason will relate to this. I have an older brother who is emotionally disabled, alcoholic, and bipolar. Growing up with him was a bit of a nightmare. For many years, I was not interested in having anything to do with him and was so grateful for his alcoholic wife, who managed to keep a roof over their heads. Helping out Leroy was, in part, my way of making up for my absence in my brother's life. Leroy was far more tolerable, grateful, forgiving, and giving a person by comparison. I felt lucky to know someone personally like him whom I could help.

Leroy managed to help me in more ways than I can say. He could lift my spirits with his abundant generosity of spirit. I can honestly say he was the most generous person I ever met, being able to give freely of what little he had through the abundance of his person. I imagine, or hope, that others in the neighborhood were lucky enough to experience this side of him.

We eventually parted ways over a less-than-lustrous episode, though my high regard for him survived. He loved this neighborhood. He did feel it was his, and he prized his neighbors. As attested by the flurry of e-mails with the news of his passing, many had felt comforted by his watchful presence. He knew it, too. He told me so.

—Gay Arneri

Granmaw Gordon Greenspace Update

The hearing for the appeal to the Atlanta Tree Conservation Commission concerning the Granmaw Gordon Tree Removal Plan took place on Wednesday, January 20. The Tree Commission denied the appeal, so the Granmaw Gordon activists will be appealing the case to Superior Court. More details are forthcoming from Teri Stewart in the next issue of the *Clarion*.

From the Editor

We are honored to make this issue of the *Clarion* a special tribute to Leroy Freeman, a long-time Lake Claire neighbor who passed away on December 28 of last year. Many Lake Claire residents submitted their personal and heartfelt memories of Leroy, which you'll find throughout these pages. Details of the funeral arrangements are still being worked out, but we will share them with the neighborhood as soon as they are known.

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, Feb 1: Summer camp sign-up at Little Shop of Stories, 10:00 a.m., 133A East Court Square, Decatur. A sampler mini-camp session will be held Monday, Feb 15–Tuesday, Feb 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.: two days of capture the flag, talent shows, art projects, science experiments, fort building, storytelling, games, and more. The camp is for kids ages 8–11. Cost is \$60. Space is limited, so call ahead to reserve a spot. For more information on all the summer camps, check out www.little-shop-of-stories.com.

Thursday, Feb 4: Taste of Inman! 2010, 5:30–8:00 p.m., Inman Middle School, 774 Virginia Avenue. Join Inman Middle School, your community, neighbors, and friends for a dining extravaganza featuring samplings from twenty of the neighborhood's finest restaurants. Advance tickets are \$10 for students and \$20 for adults; at the door, tickets are \$15 for students and \$25 for adults. More information to come at www.inmanmiddleschool.org/Taste_Of_Inman.html.

Thursday, Feb 4–Saturday, Feb 6: Opening weekend of One Twelve Gallery, a new local art space located at 112 Krog Street, in the Stove Works building. The gallery's first exhibition is the Works of Ted Haddock, the director of photography for the International Justice Mission. In conjunction with the opening is a conference entitled Dignity, featuring an artist lecture by Ted Haddock; a viewing of the Oscar-nominated documentary film *Kavi*, by director Gregg Helvey; and a panel discussion with local activists on Saturday morning on what they are doing and what

can be done to combat human trafficking in our city. Visit www.onetwelvegallery.com or <http://onetwelvegallery.wordpress.com> for more information.

Saturday, Feb 6: The Chicks in the City Symposium, 8:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Decatur Recreation Center, 231 Sycamore Street, Decatur. Presented by the Oakhurst Community Garden, with partners Georgia Organics, Decatur Active Living, and the Chicken Whisperer, Inc. Taught by local experts, the six sessions highlight how-tos, from coop design to breeds and from chicken illnesses to getting started with backyard poultry. Presenters will address local ordinances along with more practical, day-to-day concerns, such as keeping chickens healthy and coop maintenance. Cost is \$65; Oakhurst Community Garden Project members, Georgia Organics members, and City of Decatur residents pay \$50. Pre-registration is requested and limited to the first one hundred registrants. Register at <https://app.etapestry.com/cart/OakhurstCommunityGardenProj/cart2/index.php>. For additional information, call (678) 642-4977 or visit www.oakhurstgarden.org.

Monday, Feb 8: Valentine's Day, WaterHaven Style, demonstration and tasting cooking class hosted by the Atlanta Community Food Bank, The Cook's Warehouse Midtown/Ansley Mall, 7:00–9:00 p.m. Chef Chris Lee of WaterHaven will show you how to prepare a home-cooked meal for the one you love. One hundred percent of the proceeds benefit the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Tickets are \$55. For more details, visit www.acfb.org/events/simple_abundance/.

Saturday, Feb 13: 5K Walk/Run benefiting the Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) Foundation, 10:00 a.m., Medlock Park, Decatur. For more information, visit www.cdlsusa.org or e-mail pomfretj@comcast.net.

Sunday, Feb 14: Valentine's Day

Monday, Feb 15: Presidents' Day

Thursday, Feb 18: Monthly LCN meeting at the Frazer Center, 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, Feb 25: Monthly NPU-N meeting at Little 5 Points

Community Center, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Friday, Feb 26–Saturday, Feb 27: Five and Dime Kids Consignment Sale, Epworth United Methodist Church, 1561 McLendon Avenue NE. Friday, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., 5:00–8:00 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. (half-price day). For information on selling items and on shopping the sale, visit www.fiveanddime-kids.com.

Saturday, Feb 27: A Roaring Twenties Affair, a benefit for the American Lung Association in Georgia, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, 980 Briarcliff Road NE. Enjoy a night of intimate jazz, dinner, and dancing and help support lung disease research, education, and advocacy in the community. Tickets are \$125 per person at www.atlantaalaball.org or by calling (770) 434-5864.

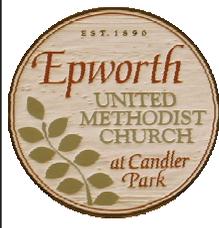
Friday, Mar 5–Saturday, Mar 6: First Baptist Church of Decatur Consignment Sale, 308 Clairemont Avenue, Decatur. Friday, 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. (half-price day). For information on selling items and shopping the sale, e-mail tskidsale@bellsouth.net.

Saturday, Mar 6: The Second Annual Decatur Old House Fair, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Holiday Inn Conference Plaza, 130 Clairemont Avenue, downtown Decatur. Hosted by the City of Decatur, in partnership with the DeKalb History Center and the Decatur Preservation Alliance. Owners of older homes can attend how-to seminars and workshops on restoring old windows, creating a maintenance plan, tax credits for rehabilitation, historic landscapes, researching an old house, and much more. The fair will also include a large exhibit hall of professionals, retailers, and suppliers that specialize in areas like home improvement, historic preservation, and interior furnishings. For a seminar schedule, exhibitor details, and ticket information, visit www.DecaturOldHouseFair.com. Tickets are \$10 when purchased in advance, \$15 at the door. Tickets can be purchased on the website or at select local establishments.

Claire's List

Do you have a service or an item that someone else might need or want—something that might add to your income or be a thrifty option for a neighbor? Let's help each other out in these tough times. Claire's List offers home-based services and merchandise for sale, rent, loan, barter, or free locally. It's also a place where you can post items or services you want. Add your posting for free by the 15th of the month prior to publication

Claire's continued on page 3



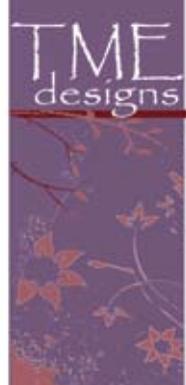
**PARENTS MORNING OUT:
FLEXIBLE WEDNESDAYS!**

Ages 2 – 4 years

9:30 am – 1:30 pm
Flat fee: \$30

Call 404.525.4746 or email epworthcandlerparkpmo@gmail.com
to tour our playrooms and reserve a Wednesday opening!

www.epworthatcandlerpark.net/pmo



www.tmedesignsllc.com

Allyson Turco McCarthy, AIA, LEED AP
Principal
ph. 404-395-4569
atm@tmedesignsllc.com

architecture
sustainable design
small commercial/residential design
color consultation

Next LCN Meeting

Thursday February 18

Lake Claire Neighbors meets every third Thursday of the month at the Frazer Center. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m.; the meeting begins at 7:00. Meetings are open to all. Check www.lakeclaire.org for updates to the meeting agenda.

Lake Claire Officers for 2010

President: Glenn Frankel, president@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Communications: Tish Ganey, comm@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Environment: Elise Cormier, environment@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Finance: Cara Stevens, treasurer@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Fundraising: Diane Moore, fun@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Safety: Jennifer Horn, safety@lakeclaire.org
 VP, Zoning: Dan White, zoning@lakeclaire.org
 NPU Rep: Kathy Evans, npu@lakeclaire.org; alternate: Jennifer Sams

Lake Claire Neighbors, P.O. Box 5942, Atlanta, GA 31107

Visit www.lakeclaire.org to sign up for the newscasts—timely updates on happenings in Lake Claire!

Newsletter Staff

Editor: Heidi Hill, editor@lakeclaire.org
 Advertising: Emily Veazey, newsletter@lakeclaire.org
 Layout: Tish Ganey, layout@lakeclaire.org
 Webmaster: Tish Ganey, comm@lakeclaire.org

The *Clarion* is published monthly. The deadline for advertising and editorial consideration is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Claire's continued from page 2

(e-mail to editor@lakeclaire.org).

Bookkeeping service. Lilith Management, Inc., is a bookkeeping service located in Atlanta that provides both virtual and on-site services. Small to medium-size businesses are our specialty. More than 25 years experience. Call (404) 377-1502 or visit www.lilithmanagementinc.com.

Brand New Karcher 1800 PSI electric power washer, new in box—\$150. Call (404) 377-2288.

Handyman looking for work. Doug Bryant is looking for handyman work, specializing in driveway, patio, foundation, and retaining wall repair/maintenance. Local references, reasonable rates. Call (678) 497-5429 or e-mail rdbjr79@yahoo.com.

Local filmmakers. We are documentary-style filmmakers who specialize in creating original and affordable video. Visit our Web site, www.karmalized-pictures.com, to see some of our products. We are all about eco-living and helping people, animals, and Mother Earth. Contact Mark Burch and Amy Jackson at (404) 373-3568 or at karmalized@gmail.com.

Looking for employment. Hello, friends. I am looking for employment. My specialties include helping hands, thorough house cleaning, child or elderly care, gardening, Girl Friday. Mature woman, references, own vehicle. Call Melissa Bell at (404) 384-5989. Thank you.

Minor electrical repairs and installations. Also cable, phone lines, Wi-Fi setup. Neighborhood references. Rate is \$35/hr + \$20 for house call (within three miles of Little Five Points only). Contact Norman Glassman at (404) 704-5546 or nglassman5@gmail.com.

Need firewood? Will swap logs cut to fireplace size for help pulling backyard kudzu. Call Alice Bliss at (404) 373-8169.

Need help with your resume? Need a second pair of eyes to look over a paper you're writing? Let a seasoned professional writer/proofreader help!

Call Susan at (404) 371-1229.

Pet sitting. Over ten years' vet and pet care experience. References available. Call Tina Smith at (404) 247-0914.

Tori's Pet Au Pairs! Pet sitting, walking & running since 2001. Check out my website at www.torispetaupairs.com or e-mail tori@toririce.com for references and rates. Or give me a call at (404) 627-7447.

News from the Land Trust and the Hearth

Greetings, neighbors and friends! It is with excitement that we are sharing our news here in the *Clarion*, our monthly neighborhood newsletter. We are the collective of the Lake Claire Community Land Trust, and our mission is to cultivate a local green space in the Lake Claire community where neighbors and the larger community can gather to cultivate and celebrate nature, the arts, and each other. This idyllic community-owned green space in the heart of the city is ideal for outdoor activities, meetings, classes, camps, and fundraisers and is intended to further the Land Trust educational, recreational, and charitable goals.

We greatly encourage neighbors to explore our property, located between Nelms and Arizona Avenues, just north of DeKalb Avenue. There are numerous garden areas, community gathering spots, and quiet private spots for reflection and calm in the center of the city. We also have a surprising menagerie of animals, including a frequent Great Blue Heron at the pond as well as an emu named Lou. People, plants, and animals come together to share space in wonderful ways here. We have drum circle gatherings on the first and third Saturdays of every month, and volunteer workdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on those Sundays, sharing efforts, fellowship, and pizza! Please

visit www.LCCLT.org for more information on music events, community work projects, and ways to get involved. The recent acquisition of more green space calls on us all to contribute what monies we can. The website has recently added Paypal links to make onetime or monthly donations easier. Come often and share what you can. We all benefit!

On the northwest border of the Land Trust lies the magical Hearth community, devoted to furthering communication, creativity, and sustainability within our community. The Hearth took its name from the desire to create a gathering place: a site of warmth, welcome, creativity, dialogue, and comfort—a Hearth of Community. Founded in 2008, the Hearth is a unique community center nestled on an acre of land, a peaceful oasis removed from the distractions of the city. Constructed by hand, the Hearth building feels much like a tree house with its nooks and winding staircases. Its grounds include an organic garden, a fire ring, and a pond, along with housing for our resident animals. Together the building and grounds create a serene environment reminiscent of a simpler time. Please be sure to check out ongoing classes and events at www.hearthatlanta.com.

Local Theatre Puts Seventies Hit on Stage

Every boy in this land / Grows to be his own man. / In this land, every girl / Grows to be her own woman. / Take my hand. Come with me / Where the children are free. / Come with me. Take my hand. / And we'll run . . .

—“Free to Be... You and Me”

Those of us who grew up in the seventies may remember the album fondly, able to sing all the songs by heart. Now perhaps with children of our own, we can introduce them to the not-still-revolutionary but just as important message of *Free to Be... You and Me*: that you can be whatever you want to be, no matter if you're a girl or a boy.

The book and album by Marlo Thomas and her friends, first published in 1973, is given new life by a fun, exciting, colorful musical production by Synchronicity Theatre, playing at 7 Stages from February 13 to March 7. The production is one of Synchronicity's annual Family Series shows, and the show that kicked off the series in 2002. It is intended for the whole family—kids ages four and up and the moms and dads

Theatre continued on page 7

New Amazing Tacos!



Est 1996

Free Validated Parking Beside our Huge Patio!

Huge Garden Patio!

16 Beers on Tap

Great Margaritas!

\$4.95 Frozen Raging Rita Pints Sun. to Wed.

Buy one Taco Plate, Get a 2nd entree

FREE

up to \$5, one per table Expires March 31, 2010

141 Sycamore St. | Decatur 404-377-3311

678-640-1858

petmeisters.com

insured * professional * green * affordable

Boarding starting at \$35/day



Daily rates starting at \$13/visit

PET SITTING

Serving Atlanta's Eastside Neighborhoods

Remembering Leroy

Leroy Freeman passed away on December 28, 2009. In the wake of his passing, many neighbors responded with memories and musings on Leroy's life.

On December 28, our Lake Claire resident street person Leroy Freeman passed away after a sudden heart attack. Leroy, with his bicycle, prided himself on watching out for the security of our area. Although he was frequently reported as a "suspicious person," he watched out for those of us who knew him. He has been "resident" on Leonardo Avenue for several years and has added much to our neighborhood security watch. He will be missed.

He was also a part of our household, reminding us that our trash was due at the curb or that we were overdue to take our compost to the pile (chores he did for us with persistent regularity). He collaborated skillfully with my wife Jennie on our gardening needs and did any repairs we mentioned to him. If we procrastinated on a task we mentioned to Leroy, he would show up with materials for the task to ensure the job got done. When the doorbell rings now, we feel great sadness knowing it is not Leroy looking for his Coke and cookies (as he called our peanut butter crackers).

By the way, the call to 911 for Leroy resulted in an extraordinary response. The call at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday in holiday season resulted in two fire trucks and an EMT ambulance within minutes. A second EMT ambulance and two police cars joined us sometime during the thirty minutes they tried to revive him before transporting him to Emory Hospital.

—Bob & Jennie Caine, 437 Leonardo Avenue

As was noted at Leroy's memorial service at Epworth, he was known for his persnickety taste in food. One day, Leroy came to our home and asked if we could make him a meal. We happily agreed, and I rushed to put something together for him as he waited at our front door. I handed it to him in a brown bag, and on our doorstep he opened the bag and looked in, searched with his eyes for a moment, and then looked back at me and said, "There's no drink." I asked him what he would like, and he responded, "Anything diet." Considering Leroy's beanpole structure, my husband and I thought that was so funny—the phrase "Anything diet" is still an inside joke in our family, and we fondly think of Leroy whenever we say it.

—Emily Veazey, Leonardo Avenue

I last saw Leroy Freeman on Christmas Day. He was retrieving his bicycle from the Branscomb-Collier family's front porch on Leonardo, where he had locked it. My family had just had Christmas dinner there, and we offered him some food.

No, he said, he was heading off somewhere.

Leroy was tall and thin. He wore nondescript clothes and a baseball cap. He could often be seen riding around the neighborhood on an old bike. In an era when we live so thoroughly inside our houses, Leroy was an exception. He was out in the open. He beat a path around the neighborhood.

I first met Leroy about a year ago, although I had heard people mention him for a long time. He came by our house on Marlbrook Drive and asked if we needed any work. He then proceeded to drop by weekly, twice weekly, and sometimes more often to mow the lawn and seek out any work we had. One morning before dawn, I drove past the Candler Park



Leroy working in the yard at Gay Arnieri's house in spring 2004.

Market, heading to work. I saw Leroy there, sitting bolt upright on a chair, sound asleep. He slept outside last summer but moved back into a neighbor's garage for the winter. I knew that he had breakfast every day with June Brown, who lives around the corner, and that he had lived in her garage for a time. He was a fast and competent worker. I was always amazed by his efficiency. I often wondered how someone as competent as he was had become homeless. But Leroy could be tough to deal with. He lived in the moment. He'd get mad if I didn't have work for him. He'd grimace and stomp away from the front door. Dealing with Leroy required me to make a firm decision about where I stood and what my limits were. I often questioned myself. It was only after his death that I realized the web of relationships he had. A neighbor mentioned she had seen a photo of him in a booth at the Candler Park Festival. I found the name of festival organizer Mark Clement and called him. Mark knew Leroy and was stunned at his death. I called Donna Van Gogh's shop asking if they might be familiar with the photo. Of course they knew Leroy. They were shocked at his death—they were saving him some Christmas goodies. In November, Leroy was sick. He came by daily for about a week, drinking the smoothies that my husband, Wade, made and left in the refrigerator. I urged him to go to Grady and offered to drive him there. Jackie Jones, who lives two houses down from me on Marlbrook, recalls she saw Leroy the Monday after Christmas, riding his bicycle fast, wrapped in a blanket, peddling as hard as he could. He rounded the corner from Marlbrook to Leonardo,

heading toward Hillary Felker's house. She thinks he was rushing there just before he died. He rang Hillary's doorbell, and then collapsed on her doorstep. He was fifty-three. My memories of Leroy and the work he did are everywhere. I walk up the steps and across my front porch. Leroy painted it. I open the garage door, which slides smoothly now. Leroy repaired it. I walk into my backyard. There's a huge pile of leaves at the back, just inside the woods. They'll be nice compost someday. Leroy piled them up there over time.

I hear the doorbell ring late in the afternoon. Could it be Leroy? When I think about him, I think about the inequities that exist. I think about our human failings and uncertainties about how to deal with each other.

But mostly, I recall Leroy's gift for friendship and how much I value it.
—Stell Simonton

As I drove home this week, I spied a figure on the sidewalk in the shadows on Clifton and was poised to roll down the window for my six-year-old son to shout a greeting when I realized that "Mr. Leroy" was gone. The tears slowly came down my cheeks. I will never again see Leroy's salute of recognition or hear his commentary on the pace of my three-mile evening walks. So many little interactions with Leroy have enriched my nine years in Lake Claire. I wish I had spoken at the Epworth memorial service, but I was still absorbing his passing. And I regret that I paid no heed to the little voice inside me that told me to take a picture of Leroy and my son, Nicholas, a few days before Christmas. I was packing suitcases when Leroy came to the door and asked for

Leroy continued on page 5



Signs of affection for Leroy written in the snow outside Epworth United Methodist Church.

Leroy continued from page 4

dinner. Nicholas brought him a plate and went to sit on the front stoop with him, as was their tradition. I heard Leroy laughing wholeheartedly through the door. Rather than sit in the open two-foot space, my son was trying to squeeze into the four-inch space between Leroy and the wall. Leroy let the little guy wiggle in, and they chatted away about Santa and school while Leroy ate. Then Leroy wished us a good trip and walked off into the night. That was my last memory of him.

For roughly the first three years that I knew Leroy, he was a handyman in the neighborhood who walked briskly up and down the streets with a lawnmower and a pair of gloves. We exchanged pleasantries and spoke about plants from time to time as I worked in the front yard. He knew my name, my dog's name, and my husband's name without ever asking. He borrowed tools occasionally and cut the grass a few times. Once while I was struggling to lean a twenty-foot ladder up against the house, he appeared out of nowhere at my side: "Let me help you with that." I cannot recall exactly when Leroy became a regular visitor at my house for jobs, food, and money. After working together a couple of months painting the exterior of my house, I learned parts of his life story and came to appreciate his sense of humor. I even found myself running to get him supplies or looking for his favorite brush and wondering who was working for whom.

Once I asked Leroy for what I perceived to be a huge favor. I offered him \$20 if he would bury what I thought was a huge rat I had found in the backyard. "Huge?" "Yes, Leroy, it's THIS big!" I said as I held my

hands shoulder-width apart. He threw his head back and laughed uncontrollably. "Two-foot rat! Ha! Twenty bucks?! This I have to see." On my way through the house to the back porch, I heard Leroy fretting his way down the driveway, "Women. This big?... Oh Lord..." Then he opened the back gate and saw my nightmare. Silence, and then: "What do you expect me to do with THAT? I'm not touching that thing." "But Leroy, you said..." "THAT is no RAT. THAT is a possum, and a mean, ugly one at that. Biggest one I've ever seen in my life. I thought you were nuts." I pleaded with him to remove it, and he relented, requesting tools and bleach and chuckling under his breath. He was my hero that day! For many weeks after that, each time I'd see Leroy, he would grin and hold out his hands two feet apart and shake his head remembering.

I trusted Leroy. Besides being an artful storyteller, Leroy was very good at reading people and their state of mind. He had endured a rough life on the streets but carried himself with much dignity. A few hard knocks he endured since 2000: he survived the fire set at the DeKalb Avenue VW repair shop, in which he was asleep; the blue bungalow on Harold he considered his was razed; his jaw was broken in a night shelter; he lost his disability benefits despite going through batteries of tests he felt were insulting; and his mother passed away at Grady.

During the last three years, Leroy's visits became more sporadic. Sometimes he stopped by for just an empathetic ear. His chronic health conditions were worsening, he looked tired most of the time, and I worried more about him. I hope our community can raise funds to give him

a proper burial. He had his idiosyncrasies, but he was an essential part of our neighborhood. Leroy was a good friend, and he will be missed.

—Celeste Provost
* * *

I moved into the Lake Claire community over two years ago. I first met Leroy in passing when he asked me for the first time for some change for bus fare at the time when it was only \$1.75 one-way. He needed to get to Grady for treatment, as his diet seemed to have given him problems frequently. I got my updates on MARTA fares through him as he occasionally grudgingly would ask for enough change and notified me of the inflated prices. I remember feeling more than compelled to help him out. It was easy to dig my hand into my pocket and graze my fingers across his rough hand every time I gave him change, but it was never easy for me to ask more questions about who he was as an individual. As time passed and through many interactions, I began to realize he was a part of this community, and people helped him all the time. It never occurred to me that I would contribute compassion to his way of life by merely giving him change or food, a basic human need. I experienced that my fear of street folk, like Leroy, would open me up to a new perspective on that lifestyle, as we all have common basic needs. Because Leroy was who he was, I learned to love him for it. Through this relationship, I found it easier to acknowledge any person for who they really are and simply acknowledge their existence and how much that may mean to a person, for a moment, even in passing. Thank you, Leroy! I honor your Light and Life!

—Tashi Deley & Cecilia Marrero
* * *

Leroy always had time for a smile and a friendly wave. He will be missed.

—Susan Drake
* * *

I love this neighborhood. I spent the early afternoon on Sunday, January 10, at Lake Claire Cohousing for the kickoff of a new statewide grassroots movement, Change Georgia Now, with a gathering of citizens, statewide

office holders, and candidates, including Jason Carter, a friend and neighbor who's the grandson of a former U.S. president and is now running for state Senate. Late afternoon was a memorial/tribute and blues concert in Candler Park for Mr. Leroy Freeman, a neighborhood fixture who had a heart attack a couple weeks ago and died at age fifty-three. No living relatives have been located, and his body is in the custody of the county awaiting burial. Leroy didn't have a house in Lake Claire; he had many homes—as he was invited into people's basements, porches, decks, garages. He was most often seen riding and walking his bike, helping out with gardens and chores. Between seventy-five and a hundred people showed up that day to prove that Leroy's life mattered. Many of them told how he had given them—figuratively and literally—as much as they gave him. We learned that when he was fourteen, he and his older brother walked from a small Georgia town to Atlanta to escape their abusive father. One mourner commented that when the three fire trucks and two ambulances showed up to attend to him upon his heart attack, it was most likely the most attention he had ever received from the government. We all privately contemplated our mortality. I don't remember ever actually meeting Leroy. Sometimes we grieve for those we know, and sometimes we grieve for those we didn't and the opportunities missed.

—Sheri Mann Stewart
* * *

It's said that bad news travels fast. The news of Leroy Freeman's death passed from neighbor to neighbor throughout Lake Claire and Candler Park in short fashion. I received numerous calls from folks who wanted me to know, because Leroy was important to us.

On Sunday evening, January 10, Bluesheart band had planned a free concert. As Leroy was the "guard" for the band (as they loaded and unloaded equipment for practices), it was agreed that this was a perfect way to remember him—inviting folks to come to Epworth to share memories and listen to music that he loved.

Leroy continued on page 6

Many folks spoke to me indicating that they would like to assist in giving Leroy a proper burial. I have notified the medical examiner to advise the family that the community of Lake Claire, Candler Park, and Epworth would like to assist in his burial expenses. As one neighbor said, "I don't want him to have a pauper's burial." Another neighbor indicated that they would like to donate a tree in memory of Leroy and have it planted at Epworth. Epworth will be the holder of these offerings and ideas until we get further information from the DeKalb County investigator. Please look for further details as they become known.

Regards, Pastor Lisa Dempsey, Epworth UMC at Candler Park



Epworth United Methodist Church held a remembrance concert for Leroy Freeman on Sunday, January 10.

Leroy continued from page 5

Leroy would have been taken aback had he seen the crowd at Epworth in Dobbins Hall. It was standing room only, an all-ages crowd that came to honor Leroy! Voices around the room recalled his pride in being our neighborhood watch captain. We fondly remembered his many bikes, his wave, and seeing him sitting up at the CP village. We recalled that Leroy could have good days and bad days (just like each of us!). It became common ground for all of us as we found that after a bad day with Leroy, he would “take a break” with us, but that he had a “sixth sense” about when it had been enough time and he could

come back around. Iris wrote the most beautiful adaptation of the Twenty-third Psalm for Leroy. We laughed together as we were reminded that Leroy had a definite idea about what he would eat and wouldn't just eat what we thought was good to share. For my part, Leroy taught this preacher many things over the five years we had a friendship. I developed a grudging respect for his wish to be independent. I shared that I resisted calling Leroy homeless—for he had many homes over the time I knew him, and certainly by the many faces there that evening, he did have many homes. Looking at the faces of the folks in Dobbins Hall that night, I saw that Leroy did some-

thing else for us. Not only did he help us to feel safer and remind us that we all have more than enough to share; Leroy taught us about ourselves. More than we knew before we lost him, Leroy was very much the heart of who this community is. The folks of grace that shared plates of food, clothing, shelter, cups of coffee, tea, and breakfast at the back door taught me the beauty of this neighborhood. Leroy opened up each of us to who we can be in the face of need, and not just his need. Our need to respect, love, care for, and share mercy with one another was fleshed out as Leroy rode up and down the streets of Lake Claire and CP.

I still catch myself looking for

Leroy at the corner market, with his bike resting beside him. I am sure that I always will. Leroy maintained his character and integrity regardless of his circumstance. He wasn't perfect, but neither are we. In the very best sense of the word, I hope that we can keep our “Leroy” lessons alive, and strengthen the bonds of our community, our neighborhood through this loss. We don't have Leroy to watch for us anymore, so we need to pull together and know each other better, love and share grace, and pass the lesson on to our children. Thanks be to God for the life of Leroy. He will be missed!

—Pastor Lisa Dempsey

In memory of Leroy Freeman, please consider making a contribution to Clifton Sanctuary Ministries.

Biography continued from page 1

Beltline. Englewood Manor was recently torn down to make way for a mixed-income development.

At seventeen, young Leroy had open-heart surgery, and it was around this time when he read on his birth certificate that his name was Leroy. Up until that point, he had gone by Lamar. When he saw the birth certificate, he started going by Leroy.

Several years later, probably in the 1970s, Leroy enjoyed living on his own, making good money at Addison Windows, on Ellsworth Industrial Boulevard. In describing these years, Leroy's voice was livelier, more animated, like this was a time when he had the world on a string.

And why not? He lived in an apartment complex with a pool and drove a candy apple red 1964 Chevrolet Impala with red crushed velvet upholstery. He bought it from a man who had rebuilt the motor and had in-

stalled dual pipes running down the sides.

But after about three years of enjoying this car, one day some guys followed him home from work, and that night they stole the candy apple red Impala. The VW he replaced it with did not come close to the Impala.

Leroy also had a period, in the 1980s, when he was living with the Mapp family in the West Side. He fathered a child, Travis, by the younger Mapp. (Just a few weeks before his death, he ran into a Mapp relative and found out that Travis had eight children, making Leroy a grandfather. He showed great glee at the possibility of finding his son as we looked on the Internet for his whereabouts, but sadly they never connected again before Leroy's death.)

During these years living in West Atlanta, Leroy would catch the bus in the early morning and ride to the Blackhawk, a pool hall on Decatur Street at Ivy Street. There, a school bus would pick

up all laborers gathered and drive them to Gwinnett County to pick up garbage. These were the days before that ancient human invention, the wheel, had been applied to garbage cans. So Leroy and the other laborers would walk up every driveway, bring the can from the side or backyard to the street, empty it, and return it, then walk back down the driveway.

These may have been the days before lids on garbage cans, as well—Leroy said he always dreaded the water that would weigh cans down after a rain.

At the end of the day, the school bus would take the laborers back to the Blackhawk and pay them on the spot for the day's work. Leroy says that many laborers spent a bunch of their wages in the Blackhawk right away.

Sometime after this, Leroy must have made his way to the Candler Park/Little 5 Points area, because he is reported to have been a frequent presence in that neighborhood before he made his way to Lake Claire.

Sometime in the mid-to-late '90s, Leroy came to Lake Claire. Over the rest of his life, this is where he made his home, even though he really did not have a home for much of that time. He was clearly a part of this community.

I met him when he was doing work for our neighbors. Over time, I learned that he had great skills planting most anything. I could sense the deep connection to the soil and growing things that he had developed on the farm, and he often told me about what he had learned from growing up on a farm.

I found out he also had pretty good skills as a painter. But working with the soil, planting things—that seemed to really be Leroy's joy.

Leroy lived in the moment. Planning ahead and saving for a rainy day—that was not something he did. So on rainy days, he would often do without. Spring days he was more likely to have food money. In winter, he often counted on the kindness of those neighbors who were nice enough to lend out their garages for him to sleep. I was not such a neighbor, but I know Leroy appreciated those neighbors who showed him this kindness.

Leroy prided himself on being

a neighborhood watch. The police knew him, and he tried to be aware of suspicious characters and tip off the police.

He would often go up to the house where someone had just moved in and introduce himself. If the new neighbor showed mistrust, Leroy would show great patience and grace. Then, over time, it would be clear that this was not just somebody coming through the neighborhood looking for work or handouts, but a part of the community—someone who would be back to ring your doorbell often.

Some spring days, when Leroy was helping me prepare the soil or plant, we would have a really nice time, laughing and cutting up. Other days, when I was not ready for the doorbell ring, it was a tenuous experience. But then a few days later, he would be back, and we would get a fresh start.

Leroy was a sort of glue in this neighborhood—everybody knew him or knew of him. Many had hired him once or often to do something. And he knew which of us had which tools we would not mind him using to do something we needed. He remembered also which members of which households would talk to him, and what time was too early to ring the doorbell.

And we may never know how many suspicious characters he tipped the police off to, and thus how many crime incidents he prevented.

Leroy found a way to be a “community-supported” homeless person. He wanted nothing to do with homeless shelters. I can't help but wonder if other neighborhoods couldn't support one person in this way, and even provide some modest shelter they could call their own, but only one per neighborhood.

I sure considered Leroy a member of our community, and I miss him. Rest in peace, Leroy Lamar Freeman.

—Sam Collier

Lennon and McCartney. Rogers and Hammerstein. Martin and Lewis. Burns and Allen. Ferrante and Teicher. Lucy and Desi. Bert and Ernie. Barbie and Ken. Bill and Hilary. Abbot

The Maya and Chris Team
Maya Hahn and Chris Carroll





Two Great Realtors Now Working As One

<http://www.MayaandChris.com>
Maya: 404-522-0011
Chris: 404-388-0023

For each property we sell, we will donate 2% of our gross commission to LCNO. For each referral you send us, we will donate \$40 to the non-profit of your choice.

and Costello. Barnes and Noble. Jules et Jim. Lewis and Clark. Lone Ranger and Tonto. Mork and Mindy. Nancy and



Kids Cuisine

In the course of writing this column, I've discovered a few things. In addition to finding many family-friendly restaurants that welcome children with open arms, I've found that our daughter is a better eater while dining out at a restaurant than she is in the house. I am unsure if this situation is a testament to my culinary skills or if it is a matter of being in a more formal, and structured, environment. For my sake, I will venture a guess to say it is the latter. Subsequently, I am always looking for proven kid-friendly recipes—and beginner-level recipes at that.

Before we proceed with the reviews, I would like to request some feedback and recommendations from the readership. My e-mail is below, and I would love to hear about your experiences. What family restaurants do you recommend? We are always looking to expand our circle of go-to family places. With that, two new recommendations are below.

In the summer months, we (re)discovered Oakhurst Village as we frequently visited McKoy Pool. One place that caught our eye was Saba. We've been on the lookout for good, down-home Italian for some time, and we found what we were looking for in Saba. *Atlanta* magazine rated Saba the best new pasta restaurant when it opened in 2006, and they've maintained this distinction by offering a wonderful array of pasta dishes, raviolis (the wild mushroom ravioli is terrific), and lasagna. In addition to the regular menu, they offer nightly specials ranging from chicken Parmesan to a fish of the day. The kids menu has several choices that are perfectly sized and priced. Tuesday is family night—kids eat free with the purchase of adult entrées. As I've mentioned before, some restaurants claim to be child-friendly, and others prove it. The first thing you see when you enter the restaurant is a large toy chest filled with books, action figures, stuffed animals, and the like. On one of our visits to Saba, our daughter immediately gravitated to a Curious George stuffed animal and clung on to the thing for dear life throughout the meal. Our server said as long as we made sure to bring it back, we could take it home with us so as not to upset our two-year-old. Now that is kid-friendly! Oh, and they also have a full bar... bonus!

In the same geographic area, we also love Mojo Pizza 'N' Pub. The restaurant has an edge to it, and their tagline, "My neighborhood pizza joint can kick your neighborhood pizza joint's butt!" reinforces the vibe, but the staff is witty and friendly. Aside from good New York-style pizza,

they offer salads, subs, calzones, stromboli, lasagna, pastas, wings, and phenomenal breadsticks, as well as a full bar (I'm just saying). I'm a huge fan of the lasagna, and our daughter—not typically a pasta eater—loves the penne with marinara sauce. On a recent visit, around 5:00 p.m. on a Saturday, it seemed the children outnumbered the adults

Theatre continued from page 3

who learned early to "run where the children are free." Says Synchronicity's producing artistic director, Rachel May, "We selected [*Free to Be...You and Me*] because the three of us who founded the company had all grown up on it and can sing every word.... For me, the album really was a huge part of what made me who I am. It encapsulates the notion that no matter what gender you are and what dreams you have, you can go for them." Although it was written in the seventies, when gender roles were seen as more predetermined, she adds, "a lot [of it is] still a fresh idea. You can be whatever you dream you want to be."

In the musical, four friends—William, Janet, Richard, and Vicki—played by adult actors, visit space, discover that it's all right to cry, and learn that it's just as okay if a boy wants a doll. This hip, groovy performance lets children know, in the words

in the dining room, and there was plenty of interaction among them. Mojo has a handful of video games and a pinball machine for everyone to enjoy (we tried our hand in a racing game and found out quickly that our daughter is a terrible driver!). Simply put, Mojo is a terrific local hangout for all ages to enjoy!

—Cliff Edelmann

of Thomas and her friends, that each of their happily-ever-afters can and will be different—and exciting.

Founded in 1997, Synchronicity Theatre is a performing arts group that is dedicated to supporting women artists, forging community partnerships, and developing new work. The group presents three contemporary plays for adults annually through its Bold Voices series and two to three musicals in the Family Series. Each year, it runs the Playmaking for Girls Program, an outreach program for at-risk youth.

Free to Be... You and Me opens February 13 with shows at 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. on Saturdays, 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, and

Cliff is president of ESQ Marketing, Inc., a firm that specializes in developing and implementing individualized marketing plans for attorneys and other professional service providers. He is also parent-in-charge of his two-year-old daughter, Amelia, Monday through Friday, and is in charge of nearly all meal planning. He can be reached at cedelmann@esqmarketing.com.

10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. After the 3:00 p.m. show on Saturday, February 27, come make your own ice cream sundae and join the cast for a post-show discussion. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$15 for kids ages twelve and under. Through the "Ambassador Program," every group of ten or more is awarded two free tickets. Purchase tickets at www.synchrotheatre.com or by calling (404) 484-8636. 7 Stages is located at 1105 Euclid Ave. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307.



TreeInspection.com

ARE YOUR TREES HEALTHY and SAFE?

Call today for an evaluation!

WE HELP YOU SAVE GOOD TREES AND IDENTIFY RISKY ONES!

- ◆ Hazard detection
- ◆ Consulting
- ◆ Tree testing
- ◆ Tree ID

ISA-CERTIFIED ARBORIST
PETER "TREEMAN" JENKINS

TREEINSPECTION.COM, LLC
www.treeinspection.com
ti@treeinspection.com
404-486-0144



In An Upside Down Real Estate Market Trust A Familiar Face



Number 2 in the Candler Park/Lake Claire Sales Area for 2007*

FREE Home Staging & Design Service

Your Realtor, Your Neighbor for Over 10 Years!

Michael Lewis, ABR
404.402.4643
www.MichaelLewis.net

ATLANTA INTOWN
REAL ESTATE SERVICES

*Per MLS data for market area 24

Neal & Wright LLC
Your Family... Your Business... Your Firm!

Free Seminar!
March 6, 2010 10 a.m.

Common Trademark, Trade Name, and Copyright Issues

Coffee & Donuts will be served
No registration required

All free seminars are held at the Neal & Wright LLC office conveniently located in Downtown Decatur. Visit us online for directions and more information.

www.nealandwright.com

We're in the neighborhood!



- * Adoption
- * Commercial Real Estate
- * Wills & Estate Planning
- * Probate
- * Corporate & LLC Formation
- * Other Business Legal Services

Cupid Lives!

Yes, Virginia, there is a Cupid—or, in this case, even two. And you can find the messengers of love at the corner of McLendon Avenue and Oakdale Road in nearby Candler Park, no less.

You, dear Reader, and I know these cupids as Dawn Kee and Wanda Nix, the engaging proprietors of Candler Park Flowers. For the last fourteen years, this talented duo has marked with floral artistry the memorable occasions, both joyous and solemn, in the lives of intown residents.

And now, with Valentine's Day 2010 fast approaching, the ladies are once again preparing to salute this event with luscious, hand-tied bouquets of blooms created just for the sweethearts of Lake Claire.

Dawn and Wanda invite you to visit their website—www.candlerparkflowers.com—to discover a glorious selection of their European-style handiwork. But, most of all, they invite you to drop by the shop and meet our neighborhood cupids in person.

Both take great pride in rendering superlative customer service to the steady stream of intown customers that passes through their doorway. Dawn firmly believes that it is their sterling

standard of care for intown communities like Lake Claire that is the truest measure of their success. Put their dedication to customer service together with the freshness of their product and their ability to concoct stunning creations at any price, and there you have it—our very own Cupid's award-winning formula for success!

Recently Dawn took a few minutes away from delivering arrangements to answer some inquiries about the shop and her Lake Claire patrons.

The Clarion: How did you and Wanda come to start this business?

Dawn Kee: In 1996, we were both working for a local municipality—unhappily, I might add. My background is in counseling and Wanda's is in administration. Along the way, I had discovered that I had a knack for sales and also a knack for design. After I opened the business, I invited Wanda to join me, and the rest is history.

TC: What current trends do you discern among your clientele?

DK: People love to arrange for their flowers to be delivered to the restaurant where they're dining. There's something really fun about creating what we

call the “ooh-aah” factor! We do everything within our power to make our customers' dreams come true.

TC: What's the most popular flower with your Lake Claire neighbors?

DK: I'd have to say it's the Gerbera daisy. The lily runs a close second, but people love the Gerbera for its vivid color.

TC: What is the best part about your business?

DK: Being a part of the neighborhood! We get to know our neighbors, their kids, even the family dog.

TC: Do you offer same-day delivery service in Lake Claire?

DK: Certainly!

TC: Could you tell us about your Frequent Flower cards?

DK: We keep a card on hand for each customer and mark it every time that particular neighbor makes a purchase. Then, at a certain point, we reward that loyalty with free treats. Our customers are quite adamant about keeping their cards current!

TC: To what do you and Wanda attribute your success?

DK: It's very simple: we like what we do!

So, yes, Virginia, there is a Cupid! And she is as close as the ring tone on your phone. Just



call (404) 522-0005, and let the cupids of Candler Park Flowers make this February 14 a day your Lake Claire valentine will remember always.

—Susan Drake



We ROCK so you can ROLL

rates from 4.85%*

auto loans

Get pre-approved at B.O.N.D. Community Credit Union. Our experts can also provide valuable tips & advice - before you shop!

Call ext. 217 for info on this or any of our other great loans.

B.O.N.D. COMMUNITY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
433 Moreland Ave NE, Atlanta GA 30307

404-525-0619
www.bondcu.com

*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. All loans subject to approval. See website or contact loan office for details.

Business Classifieds

Business classified ads are ONLY \$3 per line prepaid! For more info contact newsletter@lakeclaire.org

ABOVE THE HEDGES. Seeing Green? Got Spring Fever? Our best cure is Great Landscape Services and “Start me Up” for flower beds, clean-up, lawn and garden maintenance service. Begin with a FREE lawn weed n’ Feed (1 year) with Lawn Maintenance Service. Free Estimates—Licensed & Insured ADMIRATION GUARENTEED! 770-621-(YARD) 9273.

MINOR ELECTRICAL REPAIRS and installations, cable, phone, dsl, wifi setup. Intown locations only. Neighborhood references. \$35/hr+\$20 house call. Norman Glassman 404-704-5546 nglassman5@gmail.com

PIANO TUNING, REPAIR, RE-BUILDING, SALES Jane Purther 404-378-8310.