



Happy New Year, Lake Claire!

A Few Reminders of Why We Love Our Neighborhood



As we embark on the New Year, it's a great time to think back on the tremendous successes of 2010 for Lake Claire, and think ahead to the projects and plans we hope to achieve or initiate in 2011. The new executive committee will be meeting early in the year to discuss what worked and what didn't, what we want to do as a neighborhood and where we want to go in the coming year. To that end, here's a recap of the past year's accomplishments and some ideas for this year:



Lake Claire Activities in 2010

The launch of the Lake Claire Security Patrol: In February, at the helm of VP of Safety Jennifer Horn, the security patrol began, with three APD officers monitoring our streets and the homes of members. A separate entity from the neighborhood association, the LCSP was fully funded by midyear.

The "Ski Lake Claire!" cheering section at the ING Marathon: In March, more than forty Lake Claire residents came out to cheer on runners at the official cheering section at the corner of Clifton and South Ponce. We didn't win, but we had a lot of fun—despite the grey and wet weather.

Dog park exploratory committee meetings: Beginning in May, and under the guidance of Elise Cormier and Melissa Pressman, neighbors met to discuss the pros and cons of creating an official dog park in Lake Claire. While it was decided an official park wasn't a viable option, communication among neighbors

increased and a number of alternatives were proposed.

The 2010 Lake Claire Home & Garden Tour: In October, after many months of planning, the neighborhood staged its first tour of homes in years, drawing Atlantans to our beautiful neighborhood on a gorgeous day and raising \$4,000 for the neighborhood and Clifton Sanctuary Ministries.

The neighborhood yard sale: Although not an "official" effort as in 2009, the neighborhood-wide yard sale in October was a grassroots effort that involved more than twenty households.

The Halloween parade and party: This annual event was a casual affair with the always-colorful parade and a kids' party in Lake Claire Park.

The Harold Avenue Greenspace workday: In November, Elise Cormier organized a workday to begin planting native and butterfly-friendly flowers in the greenspace, the first step in a plan to transform the space into a haven for animals and people alike.

The holiday party and potluck: The recent holiday party drew a more modest crowd than last year's, but the food, the conversation, and the music were all hits with kids and adults alike.



Proposed Activities for 2011—and Beyond

We've seen what we can do with some good, dedicated help from the neighborhood. Here are a few ideas for the year, or years, ahead:

- A park-to-park fun run
- Summer movie nights in the park or at Clifton Sanctuary

Ministries

- Frazer Forest workdays
- Lake Claire Park workdays

Have ideas for ways to raise money for the neighborhood while also bringing neighbors together as a community? Email our new VP of Fun[d]raising, Cynthia Baer, at fun@lakeclaire.org.



Start the New Year Right! Pay Your Lake Claire Dues!

To accomplish these activities and achieve our goals, the neighborhood relies in part on dues. If you haven't paid your dues in a while (or ever) or aren't sure how to do it, here's a quick reference:

Dues are \$20/year per household. Pay every year in January, and you won't have to remember when you last paid! Even if you just paid in the fall of 2010, you can go ahead and pay for 2011 and not have to worry about it for another year. If you're not sure when you last paid, contact Cara Stevens at treasurer@lakeclaire.org.

You can pay your dues online or by check. Go online to www.lakeclaire.org and pay by PayPal, or send a check to P.O. Box 5942, Atlanta, GA 31107, Attn. Treasurer. Make your check out to Lake Claire Neighbors.

If you aren't able to volunteer



with neighborhood activities, paying your dues and attending the monthly neighborhood meetings is the best way you can support your neighborhood. Cross this one to-do off your list, and have a wonderful start to your New Year!

—Heidi Hill



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Classical Music Meets Musical Mayhem



Lake Claire's Reuben Haller, known far and wide as "Ruby the Clown," is premiering his first-ever, all-new show this month. "The Clown Virtuoso" is a family show for clown and symphony orchestra. Children and adults will

love this fun classical concert in which the clown, as violin soloist, gets wild, zany, and very funny.

Haller, who has worked for the Big Apple Circus for ten years, has performed in several of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's family concerts as a clown, the Cat in the Hat, a hunter, a sailor, and a wizard, all of which inspired him to create his own symphony show. He is a multi-instrumentalist and loves to conduct and play with symphony orchestras. Haller says, "I have been dreaming of this show for a long time. My goal is to tour 'The Clown Virtuoso' worldwide. People who come to the show will be amazed and amused!"

Reuben is performing with the Atlanta Philharmonic Orchestra, a gay-lesbian-founded community orchestra. Musical selections include works by Schubert, Handel, Rossini, and Shostakovich.

"The Clown Virtuoso" premieres Sunday, January 23, 2-3 pm, at the 14th Street Playhouse ([404] 733-5000). Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children and seniors.

—Reuben Haller



Letter from the (Former) Editor

Happy New Year! It's a time for new beginnings, and at the *Clarion*, we have a big one to announce! Palifox resident Leslie Slavich has assumed the role of editor for the paper, and helped me put together this month's *Clarion* as well. Leslie has told me that she's excited to meet more neighbors, so if you have an idea for a story or have a letter to the editor or even just want to get in touch, please email her at editor@lakeclaire.org (you can also reach her by calling the LCN voicemail at [404] 236-9526).

As for me, I'll be continuing to help out with the neighborhood as VP of Communications. I'll be in touch soon (in these pages!) with news on that front.

I want to thank everyone who has helped me this past year and a half with tips, stories, photos, and art, making the *Clarion* a truly community-made paper. It's been a real joy getting to know you all.

Thank you!

—Heidi Hill

Kudos and Gratitude for Outgoing Editor



A huge thanks and congratulations are due to Heidi Hill, who is officially wrapping up her tenure as Editor of the *Clarion* with this, her eighteenth issue. Heidi brought tremendous energy, creativity, and quality to Lake Claire's all-volunteer neighborhood monthly. We hope we can live up to her example as we continue without her able leadership.

Note: The layout staff snuck this blurb into the paper at the last minute without Heidi's knowing about it, so please forgive any misspellings, grammatical error, improper punctuation; or general awkwardnesses.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing in reply to a letter published last month. I wholeheartedly agree with the writer's call for kindness and respect among neighbors. I don't believe, however, that kindness or lack thereof correlates with house size.

I have worked for many years to support better zoning laws and measures to ensure appropriate scale for new homes constructed in existing neighborhoods. I am very interested in preserving the character of older neighborhoods like ours.

My next-door neighbors on each side are in homes larger than mine, one of which was built two years ago after a smaller house was demolished. The new residents are wonderful people; my neighbors on either side and I get along well: I absolutely love their children, we watch each other's houses and pets, share garden cuttings, help out in emergencies, etc. We are *FRIENDS*: it does not matter which of us lives in a larger home.

I firmly believe that people come first. At the same time, I continue to hope for better zoning codes to prevent builders from constructing out-of-scale homes with disregard for people who live in surrounding homes. I do not want residents of any house to be uncomfortable or feel unwelcomed, nor do I want those who speak up about their concerns to feel that way.

I do want builders to take care not to place air-conditioner units where neighbors can no longer enjoy open windows, to place windows to maximize privacy to the extent possible, not to block the sun from existing homes,

etc. I also want builders to avoid mounding dirt for a "mansion on the hill" effect, to take care not to cause drainage problems for adjacent properties, and to design new homes with first floors that do not tower over ground floors of neighbors, *even if it requires extra expense or excavation in order to create living space in basements*. I want the opportunity to work with builders who make these types of considerations, and I would support variances as necessary for site plans that show awareness of the needs of neighbors.

I think that much of the communication difficulty at the last neighborhood meeting was due to people's passions about the election, the zoning issues presented, and the sheer size of the crowd (over 100). I did not think that anyone in a leadership role treated people differently based on their opinions or the size of their house.

I hope that the author always feels welcome in the neighborhood. I also hope that we can all work together to protect the character of our beautiful neighborhood, whether it is via obtaining historical status (as Candler Park is exploring) or improving the zoning laws of the city. I believe that new construction can blend in well with old construction and still meet the needs of new buyers, protect the assets of existing neighbors, and preserve the overall charm of the neighborhood.

I hope that we can continue to treat each other with politeness and conviviality as we work toward these goals.

—Beth Damon, twenty-one-year Lake Claire resident

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Lake Claire Neighbors

P.O. Box 5942 Atlanta, GA 31107 (404) 236-9526

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

It's that time of year to pay your LCN dues!

How? Mail a check for \$20 to Lake Claire Neighbors, attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 5942, Atlanta, GA 31107, or go to www.lakeclaire.org/lcn/members.htm.

Why? Help your neighborhood association clean up greenspaces, install signs, organize community events, and publish the *Clarion*.

Tips on Using 911 in Lake Claire

At the Lake Claire Neighbors October meeting, representatives from 911 came to talk to us about the best way to use the system. For many of us who do not use regular landlines, it can get confusing. Gwendolyn E. Favors, E911 assistant director/communications manager, was kind enough to provide these tips on using the system in the best way as a resident of Lake Claire.

Dial 911 When You Have an Emergency

When you dial 911, the operator will have different information depending on what type of line you are using:

- If you're calling from a landline phone, the 911 operator will receive:
 - Your address and the phone number you are calling from
- If you're calling from a cell phone, the 911 operator will receive:
 - Your phone number
 - The tower location that picked up your call
 - The longitude and latitude of your call
 - A radius of about 500–600 feet of where you are located
- If you're calling with VOIP (voice over Internet protocol)*, the 911 operator will receive:
 - The address that was registered with your Internet connection

*With VOIP, if you are not at the registered location, provide your location first and then state your problem.

No matter what type of line you're using, be sure to answer all the questions the operator asks.

Making EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Calls

Your EMS calls are handled by **DeKalb EMS**. Although you live in the city of Atlanta, you are in DeKalb County. You can expect to be transferred to Atlanta 911 if police is needed, or vice versa if EMS is needed.

In all cases, if you experience any problems when calling Atlanta 911, please ask to speak to a supervisor.

—Katie Brady

A Shaggy Dog Worm Composter Story

I woke up with a decision made. I wanted a worm composter.

A few months ago, we quit composting and began throwing our food waste in the garbage again. My son and husband breathed a sigh of relief. I have been feeling guilty ever since.

My husband and I had bought a very nice, theoretically rat-proof, three-tiered composter in the mid-90s. Soon after, we discovered that it wasn't really rat-proof. Yes, it was tough plastic, and yes, rats were unlikely to chew through it, but that was because they could dig up through the bottom, which was open to allow for worms. We had provided the rats with a cozy dining hall.

We tried putting concrete pavers on the bottom, which kept the rats out but also most of the crawlers. Then we moved to the UK for six years, during which time the composter disappeared.

Upon returning, I got a largish kitchen garbage can with a convenient metal carrying handle and plastic bin insert. I have a lot of compost.

I couldn't take the compost to the backyard, because of the rat problem, but a kind neighbor had donated an above-ground drum composter (rat-proof) to the Land Trust. That worked for a while, until it filled up on both sides without actually composting, and plans were sketchy for where to put that kind of almost-composted material next. Also, it was placed between a thorny pomegranate and a thorny rosebush.

My friend Veronique, who is great with permaculture, kindly allowed me to use her compost pile. She was happy for the extra waste and didn't even mind the dead rodents my cat provided. Veronique was using a system that broke down everything quickly into a writhing mass of maggots (no kidding!), which then became nutritious food for her chickens.

She is out of town for the year, and I don't think her tenants will appreciate my visits. I rather envy her system, but without chickens, I fear I might be mostly just left with a hill of

writhing maggots.

Meanwhile, my compost garbage can broke—first the convenient carrier handle, and then the plastic insert. I couldn't get the insert out to wash it anymore, and fruit flies took up residence in the can and in our kitchen. I hated throwing out the perfectly good metal can, so my husband did it for me.

Now I am researching worm composters. I have found a very nice site that promises an excellent composter for balconies, decks, and apartments with just two (ugly) ten-gallon plastic boxes and a drill. The worms transform the waste into compost and then move (independently and considerately) into the next bin, leaving a full box of ready-to-use castings behind.

I had a nagging recollection that it wasn't so easy. It is only on the next page that the site mentions that the worms need a temperate environment to thrive—that is, 50–80 degrees Fahrenheit. In Atlanta, that means that for about half the year, the worms will need to live *inside*, with us.

On the other hand, the maggots (black soldier flies) thrive in temperatures between 80 and 90 degrees.

Because of my preference for beautiful things, I do not want ugly plastic bins in our living room. Nor do I really want to see an ugly plastic trash can half buried in our backyard. This is another possibility, but one that does not allow the worms to crawl considerately to their new bin.

I don't want to move the worms to the crawlspace every summer and winter. But I do want a worm bin. The castings are the gold standard of gardening.

On the other hand, maggots will digest dog poop and neutralize the bad bacteria. We have a lot of dog poop. Maybe I want worms *and* maggots.

I have not yet discussed these possibilities with my family.

—Leah Pine

Leah Pine is a neighborhood landscape architect and arborist specializing in sustainable design. For more about her, see www.leahpine.com.

Mark Your Calendar

January

5 Back to school for APS; Red Cross blood drive, Epworth Church, 2–7 pm.

11 Montessori 101: Demystifying the Words and Wisdom of the Montessori Method, Montessori In Town's Glen Castle campus, 750 Glenwood Ave., 6:30–8:00 pm. This class will explore the history, terminology, and basic tenants of the Montessori method of education. The class is free and open to prospective parents and community members, but RSVPs are requested: (404) 784-1038. Learn more about Montessori 101 and the school's Primary program (ages 2½–6+ years) by visiting www.montessoriintown.com.

17 Martin Luther King Day

19 Georgia Organics January Workshop on Edible Trees for the School Garden, Toomer Elementary School, 65 Rogers St., Kirkwood. Learn about growing fruit and nut trees as a way to get delicious, nutritious food into your school garden. Robby Astrove, Atlanta's expert on fruit and nut trees, will discuss orchards in schools and community learning gardens. Please RSVP by emailing nichol.e@georgiaorganics.org or calling (678) 702-0400.

20 Lake Claire Neighbors meeting, 7 pm, Frazer Center atrium, 1815 S. Ponce de Leon (back entrance is at end of Ridgewood Rd.).

27 NPU-N meeting, 7 pm, Little Five Points Community Center, 1083 Austin Ave. NE

29 Panel discussion on human rights, the Friends School of Atlanta, 862 Columbia Dr., Decatur, 6:30–8:30 pm. Confirmed panelists include Atlanta mayor Kasim Reed; Juanita Abernathy, widow of Ralph David Abernathy; her son Kwame Abernathy; Dr. Roosevelt Thomas, renowned in the field of diversity management; and Bill Nigut, executive director of the Anti-Defamation League, among others. The panel will examine how leaders of the civil rights movement and all those who advocate for human rights have long been trying to transform our society to the Beloved Community Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently described. The panel discussion is open to the public. General admission is \$10 per ticket. Premium tickets are \$100 each and include an invitation to a reception with the esteemed panelists at 5:30 pm. For more information about the event and to purchase tickets, or to learn about the school and admissions, visit www.friendschoolatlanta.org.

February

10 Taste of Inman! 2011, Inman Middle School, 774 Virginia Ave., 5:30–8 pm. Join Inman Middle School and your community, neighbors, and friends for this dining extravaganza, featuring an array of tasty menu samplings donated by at least twenty of our neighborhood's finest restaurants. Presale tickets will be available the week of the event: \$7 for students and \$17 for adults. At the door, tickets are \$10 for students and \$20 for adults. Proceeds benefit the Inman Middle School PTA. See www.inmanmiddleschool.org for more information.

Next LCN Meeting

Thursday January 20

Lake Claire Neighbors meets every third Thursday of the month at the Frazer Center. Meetings begin at 7 pm and are open to all. Sign up for the newscast at www.lakeclaire.org to get the meeting agenda.

News from the Land Trust

Chef Doz'ia Loves the Land Trust!

Chef Leonard Doz'ia of Doz'ia Catering dropped by for a visit at the Lake Claire Community Land Trust and fell in love. At least that's the only plausible explanation for what happened next: he offered to serve our community a free catered meal! Rusty Gilbert, a resident at the Hearth who just happened to be handy, had served as Chef Doz'ia's guide, so he took responsibility for organizing the dinner. The invitation was open to the first fifty people to respond, but as it turned out, no one had to be turned away. "Ethnic Fusion Tastings" came together at the Hearth on Friday, December 3, on the eve of the Land Trust's newly revived Holiday Craft Sale.

Chef Doz'ia is a professional caterer specializing in "fusion cooking with a flair." He arrived with no fewer than six of his family and staff members and set up a buffet in the Hearth's lofty studio space. While they worked, forty or so neighbors and friends milled around, socializing. Some enjoyed a fire burning just outside in the crisp winter weather. It seemed so long since we had gathered for anything except a meeting that we marveled at the unfamiliar luxury of wine, beer, and conversation.

When the feast was ready, Chef Doz'ia gave a short speech expressing his appreciation for what our community has created and why he decided to respond in kind. "God told me to do this," he said with a broad smile. As we say around the Land Trust, "Magic begets magic."

Then we lined up to heap our plates with what was

for many of us our first experience of "ethnic fusion." It turned out to be a fairly simple concept: dishes from different parts of the globe lined up in a row for easy sampling, made from the ultra-fresh ingredients Chef Doz'ia takes pride in. There were grilled chicken kabobs with brown sugar/mustard glaze, African peanut sauce, yellow rice, sweet and hot shrimp, spicy jerk chicken, and more. Vegetarian options included egg rolls, an Asian stir-fry, and a fabulous green salad.

We supplied our own drinks, but Chef Doz'ia provided everything else. The donation jar collected over \$200, some of which went to the Hearth for use of its space. The chef preferred not to be reimbursed for his expenses, but Rusty was eventually able to persuade the chef to accept the rest of the money after a major fender bender nearly totaled his car a few days later. The meal was just too good to allow him to foot the bill all by himself.

The whole evening was such a treat that we were left wondering how we could ever repay such generous hospitality—delivered right to our door. The only appropriate response, we decided, was to award Chef Doz'ia "five stars" for fine dining, and spread the word here in the 'hood. If you're planning a party and would like to discover "ethnic fusion cuisine" for yourself, check out Doz'ia Catering at www.doziacatering.com, or contact the chef at (404) 610-2359. Tell him the Land Trust sent you.



Celebrating the Season with Friends, Food, and Music



Neighbors enjoying the home-cooked food and live music.



DJ Myles Nielsen.



Neighbors enjoying the home-cooked food and live music.

About sixty neighbors braved the cold and rain to come out for the annual holiday potluck and party at the Frazer Center on December 16. Once inside, we were warmed by a delicious meal and sweets, festive music selections, and lots of friendly conversation. Thanks to Kathy Evans, who organized this year's party; the planning committee: Elise Cormier, Jennifer Sams, and Heidi Hill; Cara Stevens and the staff at the Frazer Center; all the neighbors who brought potluck dishes; Myles Nielsen, who, as DJ, put us all in the holiday spirit; and Brad Morris, who performed hits with his kids, Jack and Lily, and the rest of the children in attendance.

Photos courtesy of Beth Damon and Kathy Evans.



Musician Brad Morris entertaining with "The Chanukah Song."



L-R: Sharon Doochin, Beth Damon, Kathy Evans, Heidi Hill, and Glenn Frankel.



Cara Stevens and Sarah Wynn.



The abundant dessert table.



Noah Cohen-Frankel

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Further Adventures of the “Real-Life Lorax”: Tom Coffin



Tree climbing at a fund-raiser for the Tree Next Door.

Many may recall that Dr. Tom Coffin was Atlanta's senior arborist and was dismissed two summers ago, causing a great deal of controversy. Tom, who has been referred to as the “real-life Lorax,” was let go after alerting superiors about lax enforcement of Atlanta's Tree Protection Ordinance, which requires builders, homeowners, and businesses to meet criteria before cutting down trees. He had helped write the ordinance and was trying to be vigilant in the enforcement of an ordinance that has evoked praise from lovers of Atlanta's green canopy—and scorn from developers and some property owners.

Tom's “whistleblower” lawsuit to get his job back is still on the docket of the City Law Department. The City has rescheduled it several times, but he thinks it is firmly scheduled this time—for **February 1, 2011**. The Tree Next Door (TTND)*

may also plan some sort of action at City Hall in advance of the trial, directed at insisting that the Tree Protection Ordinance be enforced.

Tom is now acting as a technical adviser to TTND. In a recent report entitled “Double Trouble” (submitted to TTND), Tom analyzes a continuing series of violations by arborists retained this year, using data that TTND obtained in Open Records requests. It includes multiple violations by the field arborists and a blatant disregard of the ordinance, much of which centers on lack of recording findings in the arborist database. It is important to recognize that *nothing happens*—no tree removal permits are issued, no time-sensitive posting is registered, no certificate of occupancy can be completed, no calculation of recompense for illegal removals can be made, no machinery for removal of nuisance trees is implemented—without a data-

base entry. One-third of the inspections allegedly made by the arborists in July alone did not result in tree removal permits, either approved or denied. Similarly, only 11 percent of either arborist's postings and *none* of their inspections for certificates of occupancy were recorded.

As Tom says:

...to date, the City's response to this unfolding series of violations has been dead silence. The field arborists are not held accountable, the arboricultural manager is not held accountable, the head of the bureau is not held accountable, the commissioner is not held accountable, and so on, up the chain of command and line of responsibility.

In the meantime, scarce tax dollars allocated for the implementation and enforcement of the Tree Protection Ordinance are

simply being wasted. An expensive database critical to the functioning of the City is allowed to be compromised. The manager in charge is asleep at the wheel; his superiors sit on their hands.

These violations also mean that the data necessary for any long-term study of the workings of the arborist division are corrupt and unreliable, both for TTND and the City itself. The GIGO rule — “Garbage In, Garbage Out” — certainly seems to apply to the recorded (and unrecorded) work of both field arborists retained by the city in July 2010.

You can see the complete report at www.treenextdoor.org.

Late-breaking news: On Wednesday, December 15, just before the *Clarion* was due to go to press, the City of Atlanta replaced the Arborist Division manager and is naming a

new director for the Bureau of Buildings, which oversees the Arborist Division. As announced by the City of Atlanta chief operations officer, Peter Aman, the City also plans to investigate the performance of several Arborist Division employees in the next forty-five days or so. These actions seem to indicate Aman's—and the administration's—intent to protect our tree canopy. The Tree Next Door has announced, "We look forward to supporting the new Arborist Division manager, once named, and the new Bureau of Buildings director, Don Rosenthal, to help Atlanta be both an economically vibrant city and a 'City of Trees.'"

You are welcome to get involved with this important issue by attending the next meeting of the Tree Next Door, January 10, 2011, 7:15–9:00 pm, at 3488 Woodhaven Rd., NW. Tom Coffin hopes to be rehired and get back to enforcing the tree ordinance. He repeated to me recently, "Atlanta's 2003 tree ordinance was the strongest in the nation. We're trying to avoid losing that law. My job's not so important; the law is very important."

—Beth Damon

The Tree Next Door

The Tree Next Door (TTND) is an organization of individuals and neighborhood groups that seeks to protect Atlanta's lush tree canopy. They are concerned about the number of trees that are being removed without the proper permitting and the lack of enforcement of our city's Tree Protection Ordinance. Atlanta has one of the strongest ordinances in the country, yet it isn't worth anything if it goes unenforced. To this end, TTND's mission is one of advocacy and education:

Advocacy. We strive to ensure that Atlanta's Tree Protection Ordinance and arboricultural standards are enforced as written. We provide assistance, identify resources, and act as a liaison between citizens, developers, and the City. At the same time, we identify weaknesses in the ordinance and its enforcement procedures and advocate and organize to eliminate them.

Education. We work with other organizations and individuals to educate Atlanta's community about their rights and responsibilities under the law and about the importance and value of maintaining a healthy urban forest.

We call ourselves "The Tree Next Door" because most people get concerned about trees when it's the tree next door to them that's being impacted, not a tree on the other side of town. The group formed in the spring of 2009, when Atlanta residents began to realize that too many of us were having "tree next door" issues and realized that the City wasn't fully enforcing the

Tree Protection Ordinance, which is supposed to result in no net loss of trees for the City.

Need a speaker for your civic association, garden club, or other organization concerned about your community's trees? Here are two possibilities:

"How to Spot a Dangerous Tree"—Peter Jenkins. We all know how important trees are. But trees aren't always safe to be around. Certified arborist Peter "Treeman" Jenkins has inspected, pruned, and removed dangerous trees all over Atlanta for over thirty years. Jenkins outlines and illustrates a systematic way for homeowners to identify many signs of diseased, dying, or hazardous trees and then to determine whether a professional arborist's help is needed.

"The Rise and Fall of Atlanta's Tree Protection Ordinance, and Finding a Way Back"—Tom Coffin. Atlanta's dismissed senior field arborist, Tom Coffin, speaks on the history and possible future of Atlanta's Tree Protection Ordinance. Dr. Coffin briefly considers the history of the law from its inception in 1965, major advances made from 1997 to 2003, and the unfortunate loss of will and direction to enforce it since 2006. His talk concludes with suggestions for citizens to revive and reclaim this critical law.

Check out the website at www.treenextdoor.org and feel free to get involved by donating or coming to a meeting.

—Beth Damon

Neighbors Pitch in for the Harold Avenue Greenspace

Thanks to a great group of energetic volunteers from Lake Claire and a truckload of donated plants from Epworth Church, the Harold Avenue Greenspace received its first plantings on Sunday, November 21! The Nielsen family pitched in with planting borders, mulching, and watering. Mulch came from the remains of a large toppled oak on Muriel, and water was generously shared by our outgoing LCN president, Glenn Frankel. Local organic gardener Robby Handley stopped by to help relocate the benches and assist in planting a sweetshrub

and coral honeysuckle, kindly donated by native plant enthusiast Kathy Ryan. Elise Cormier, the project designer, supplied hot chocolate to keep the volunteers smiling.

There's more to do, but it can wait till spring. For now, our butterfly-friendly flowers—ageratum, irises, daylilies, Argentina skies salvia, sweetshrub, coral honeysuckle, and wood violets—are resting in their new homes, preparing for a colorful 2011!

Abundance to Share

Last year, Epworth Church received a onetime grant from Lake Claire Neighbors to assist in building the Smart Landscapes Project gardens. This year, we're able to give back!

The Harold Avenue Greenspace is a passive-use open space at Harold and Muriel Avenues in Lake Claire, at the edge of the Frazer Forest. The neighborhood oversees the City of Atlanta-owned park space, removing invasive plant species and maintaining the street-edge social space. After several years of battling invasive plant species, the neighborhood began plans this fall for beautifying the site.

November 21 was the first community workday, and Epworth donated a truckload of pretty plants—including wild ageratum, a great butterfly attractor—from our gardens for neighbors to install at the greenspace. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of many more opportunities to share our abundance!

Thanks, Lake Claire, for the chance to give back!

—Epworth Church

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News from Mary Lin Elementary School

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Kerri Brooks, the fifth-grade social studies teacher at Mary Lin Elementary School, along with the rest of the fifth-grade team, tries to make these words come alive each year for Mary Lin students through an Ellis Island simulation. Each student is given a new “identity”: some become a European immigrant from the late 1800s or early 1900s who yearns to come to America. Others become an already-settled immigrant who processes the newcomers at Ellis Island.

To prepare for their role-play adventure, students work on letters, either to a relative already in the States or to one still in their homeland, about the struggles, hopes, and fears they have, and try to capture the authentic voice of their new identity. On the day of the simulation, usually the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, the students come to school dressed in character. Some students wear authentic costumes of the homeland of a parent or grandparent, reflecting the diversity of our little corner of Atlanta. Others forage in closets, but all transform themselves into those who lived over a hundred

years ago.

The immigrant students line up outside the auditorium and wait to go through the processing stations inside. Using the biographical information they have been given, the immigrants must demonstrate that they should be allowed to stay in America. Many students make it and become citizens, but some are rejected and told to return to their ship. The students take their roles seriously and this year, as with every year, learned much from the experience. Candler Park resident Ben Taylor commented, “It was scary, exciting, and hard to get into America,” while Lake Claire resident Evy DiSalvo remarked, “I felt tired, worn out, and I was nervous.”

The Ellis Island simulation was instituted at Mary Lin over six years ago and was adapted from a lesson plan that was created by high school history teachers in San Diego. The enthusiasm the students show for the event each year means it will likely continue to be a regular part of the fifth-grade curriculum. Perhaps next year you’ll be driving by that day and see the new crop of tired souls waiting to find out if they can realize their dreams of becoming American citizens.

—Mary Jo Bryan



Callie Thweatt.



Ava Hager.



Lola Johnson and Akobi Williams.



James Bryan, Robert Weimar, and Louis Cameli.

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The Lake Claire Volunteer Corner

Meet Don Long



Volunteer coordinator for Clifton Sanctuary, Don Long.

The Clarion: How did you come to be involved with Clifton Sanctuary Ministries?

Don Long: I guess you could say the hard way. But I prefer to think of it as the best way. I became homeless in 2009 after a long period of illness. I was referred to Clifton by one of their partner agencies and spent the next several months at both Night Hospitality and Joe's Place. Then I got my housing. As a guest I fell absolutely in love with Clifton, as so many guests do, and I became determined to become a staff member so I could be a part of this most noble effort.

TC: What part of your job do you enjoy the most?

DL: I get to wear a lot of different hats in my job. That in itself is very exciting to me. I was in customer service for many years and also worked in the nonprofit sector. Organizing volunteers is very much like customer service in some ways. For me, it is imperative that our volunteers walk away with a meaningful experience. I love being involved with the local community. Through my job I have made so many wonderful new friends in Lake Claire. But to honestly answer this question, what I love the most beyond all else is the time I spend with the men we call our guests. It's like having thirty brothers at a time. And I miss them when I am not there.

TC: What's the hardest part of your job?

DL: Finding material resources. It all comes down to the lack of funding to be able

to accomplish goals. The Lake Claire community's embrace of Clifton's volunteer needs is astounding. At least twice a week I get a phone call or a visit from a neighbor who wants to roll up their sleeves and get involved, and so often I just don't have the materials—be it lumber, plants for the grounds, or any number of things—to be able to meet both their and our needs. As a result, I am often out in the community making connections and seeking donations from local businesses.

TC: What do you like about working in Lake Claire?

DL: I would have to say the very residents that make up the community. I have lived in Atlanta for thirteen years, and it just never felt like home. I lived and worked in Buckhead. But it wasn't until I came to Clifton that I discovered the real Atlanta that is these smaller communities, where people smile and say hello. The most magical thing about the relationship between Lake Claire and Clifton is how the neighborhood doesn't see us as just a homeless shelter and our guests as just homeless men. Lake Claire validates us by making us feel like an integral part of the community. Not beside it, not separate from it, but instead a part of it. I think very much that Lake Claire and Clifton reflect each other's ideal of hospitality.

TC: Tell us something about the people who volunteer at Clifton. How many hours do they devote to Clifton? What do they do there? Where do they come from?

DL: The diversity of our volunteers is vast: local Brownie and Girl Scout troops, community leaders, the Greater ATL Men's BBQ, local businesses, so many churches and mission groups, colleges, and neighbors. We are fortunate to have such a successful web page that generates much interest in our different programs. Some volunteers come once a week, once a month, or even once a year. They offer their services in helping us keep up our clothes closet and sort donations, assisting in computer training for our guests, gathering food donations, doing yard work, serving meals, doing laundry, and helping with building maintenance. We are always on the lookout for local volunteers who have grant research experience. You don't have to have a specialty to get involved; sometimes just visiting and getting to know the men we serve can be the most rewarding opportunity.

TC: In what ways can Lake Claire neighbors get involved with Clifton?

DL: I so much would like to see the neigh-

borhood look at Clifton not only as a community cause but also as a community resource. Children play in our large park-like yard, people walk their dogs there, and a few cats adopt us from time to time. I'd like the neighbors to take advantage of our large parking lot, yard, and central location. Let's get an organic farmers market started. Let's show movies on the lawn and call it the Lake Claire Drive-in. How about bringing in some bands and having a low-country boil? The possibilities are endless. The recent tour of homes showed us that.

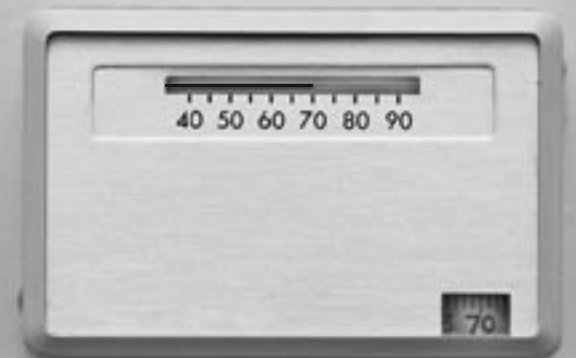
TC: What would you like neighbors to know about Clifton, or about homelessness, that they might not know?

DL: I'd like them to know that Clifton is a loving, safe, warm, and wonderful place not just for our guests but also for our neighbors. There are at least a thousand reasons why someone becomes homeless. Mine is just one of them. Almost one-third of the homeless people in the United States are veterans of the armed forces. When history is written one day, what will it say about the richest, most powerful nation in the history of civilization that it didn't take care of its indigent? I'm not sure what it will say about the nation, but I know it will give Lake Claire glowing reviews!

—Sarah Wynn

Clifton Sanctuary Ministries is a nonprofit organization at 369 Connecticut Avenue that provides shelter and nurture to men seeking to overcome homelessness. To donate or learn more, visit www.cliftonsanctuary.com or call Prince Davies-Venn for information at (404) 373-3253, ext. 7.

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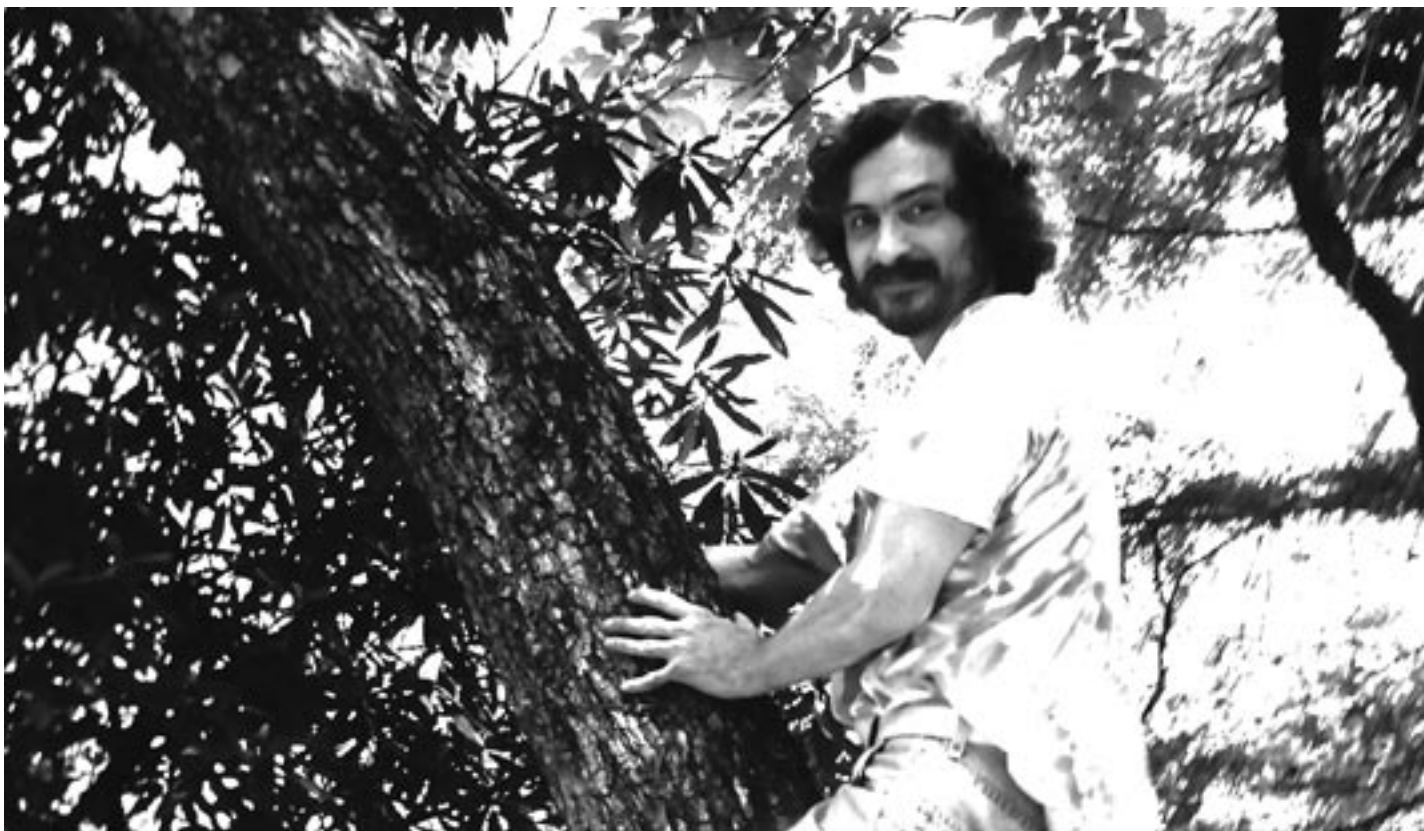
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What the Lake Claire Community Land Trust Means to Me...



Stephen Wing.

I moved to Lake Claire in 1993 because I discovered the Land Trust. A good friend (now deceased) had brought me over with my wife, Dawn, for a casual visit. I had not lived in Atlanta long and didn't even know what I was craving till I walked the Land Trust's block-long expanse of green, then mostly undeveloped. I enjoyed meeting a couple of the folks responsible for purchasing and preserving it, but it was that miniature wilderness in the heart of the city that called me back. Dawn and I were lucky enough to find a house for rent three doors away, and even luckier to be able to buy it when our landlord put it up for sale six months later.

The land has changed immensely over my seventeen

years as a neighbor. I personally would have preferred living down the street from the wild nature preserve that originally drew me here. But the neighbors who founded the Land Trust had a different vision, and I have learned to trust their wisdom.

I had never lived in a real neighborhood before, one with actual neighbors who take part in each other's lives. Like too many of us, I had never experienced the down-to-earth, day-to-day phenomenon called "community." Until recently, this ancient way of life was taken for granted by humans around the world, in both rural villages and urban neighborhoods, and in many places it still is. But here in the USA, its true value was hard to measure until the postwar generation had traded it in for mobility, suburbia, and other mod-

ern luxuries. Only now, as the inevitable consequences unfold, is the tide of change beginning to shift the other way.

With unfashionable foresight, the Land Trust's founders decided in the mid-1980s that the purpose of their empty plot of land would be to turn a neighborhood into a community. The relentless work, sweat, meeting time, and creative energy they poured into the project has carved the original acre and a half of wilderness into a little nature-themed park with an attraction for everyone.

The playground brings a constant stream of little ones with their parents and babysitters. The garden plots attract green thumbs like bees to a patch of wildflowers. Students bring their books to the picnic table overlooking the pond. Dog walkers cross paths and stop for a

chat. Big Lou the Emu hobnobs with visitors through his fence. The sauna fills with steam and inspired singing at least one evening a week. The drum circles draw a diverse and enthusiastic crowd twice a month, from elders to new-borns. Music lovers gather every Friday night for an old-fashioned

sing-along. Neighbors meet every month on the thirteenth for a potluck under the gazebo. Families flock to the annual Easter egg hunt and Halloween pumpkin carving. The stage and amphitheater host music festivals several times a year, with food and beverages served at the Gorilla Grill.

Where else in Atlanta could I ever want to live than virtually next door to an urban paradise? But four years ago, when a run-in with cancer refocused my perspective and reshuffled my priorities, I realized that I too had begun taking community for granted. Somewhere along the way, the Land Trust and my amazing neighbors had receded into the background. After my recovery, I began attending board meetings and getting involved.

In the meantime, the original trustees had decided it was time to share the burdens and rewards of their twenty-year commitment by writing new bylaws inviting non-trustees to join the decision-making process. The neighbors who responded have brought a diverse new set of skills and interests to the table. One by one, these folks have been voted

...cultivating sustainability in the city.

onto the board. This year, in our first formal election as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, I was elected for a second term as a board member, and then voted (more or less by default) into the position of secretary.

My particular interest as a board member is in cultivating the Land Trust as an example of local sustainability. Though I'm not a natural gardener, I see food production as more than a hobby and our rentable garden beds as just a beginning. Depending on long-distance shipping for our food supply will inevitably become cost-prohibitive. Many cities are miles ahead of Atlanta in recognizing this reality. The Atlanta Local Food Initiative, a coalition of local organizations, is still getting under way, but I intend to make sure the Land Trust gets involved. Examples like the Land Trust and sister projects like the Oakhurst Community Garden Project might persuade the City of Atlanta to

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devote some resources to helping other neighborhoods follow our lead.

I've also joined two other neighbors in beginning to explore ways to make the Land Trust more self-sufficient. We're looking into grants to help us add more solar capacity to our solar-powered well pump. Our goal is to power all of our daily electrical needs and occasional events completely on our own, and possibly even sell power back to the grid. The rain barrel network we are currently installing will reduce our dependence on city water, but eventually we hope to eliminate it altogether. If anyone out there has ideas, resources, expertise, or even plain old enthusiasm to share for projects like these, please get in touch!

But to me, what's most special about the Land Trust is that it's a place where my obsessions and enthusiasms can intersect with the very different interests of my

neighbors—people whose focus is raising kids or vegetables, drumming or strumming, sweating toxins out of their bodies or enjoying a sunset up at “the Peak.” A true community consists of all the above and more, peacefully coexisting and interacting, magically adding up to a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Maybe I'll run into you at the gazebo one of these days and stop for a conversation that will enrich us both.

—Stephen Wing

Stephen Wing of Arizona Avenue is a poet, a novelist, an essayist, a professional editor and recycler, and the newly elected secretary of the LCCLT. His novel, Free Ralph! is available at Donna Van Gogh's, Sevananda, and neighborhood bookstores. Check out his poetry and other writings at StephenWing.com and his original bumper stickers at GaiaLoveGraffiti.com. Contact him at swing@stephenwing.com.

Could Lake Claire Be a “Transition Town”?

Community building in little neighborhoods like ours has global implications. Groups of neighbors around the world—part of the “Transition Towns” movement—have begun actively planning for drastic changes in climate and weather, the peak and decline of cheap petroleum, and continued economic instability. Local community turns out to be a key factor in adapting and thriving in the face of these converging crises.

Most of us think of big cities like Atlanta as monstrous engines of environmental destruction. But on closer inspection, the per-capita carbon footprint of city folks tends to be lighter than those of rural ones. A higher population density, it turns out, allows a host of efficiencies of scale. But older cities like New York do better than others laid out more recently, like Atlanta, which tend to favor automobile transport. Rather than scattering urban populations into the countryside, the future of civilization lies in taking advantage of this potential.

Though small in size, the Lake Claire Community Land Trust is uniquely positioned to serve as a model for neighborhoods throughout Atlanta and other urban areas. We have begun networking with like-minded folks in other neighborhoods, such as the Oakhurst Community Garden, and citywide alliances, like the Local Food Initiative. The next step could be to start Georgia's first “Transition Town” group to work toward local sustainability in our city.

Please get in touch if you're interested, and let's get started!

—Stephen Wing, swing@stephenwing.com

Who'd a Thunk It?

More and more often, I am hearing folks muse aloud about the days before cell phones. Not so long ago, was it? And, more recently, what about Craigslist and Facebook? I have tales to tell of my “high-tech” adventures, particularly with Craigslist. I have two lovely and unexpected stories that have played out on Craigslist last year alone.

The first was a routine exchange over an ad I placed on Craigslist to re-home a horse I bought and could not keep. I ended up with a tenant/good friend who is helping me achieve my lifelong dream of owning a working farm and my own horse. Here's how it happened:

While searching Craigslist in the early stages of pursuing my dream, I came across a lovely Tennessee Walking Horse that we later decided must have been drugged in preparation for sale. She was beautiful but nutty and needed a knowledgeable owner to help her adjust, not me. So I put my own ad in Craigslist to find her a caring new home. One of the respondents (Edie) was particularly interested and engaging. We exchanged emails, and that was that.

Then I decided to mention that I was looking for someone to live at my property in Kentucky and watch my place and future horse in exchange for rent. As it turns out, she was in transition, with three horses of her own, and interested in living in Kentucky somewhere but had no leads for a place that would allow her to keep her horses with her. Bingo.

Come to find out she is founder and president of a horse rescue organization as well.

After checking her references, meeting her, and having her visit the property, I invited her to move to my place, where she lives in her luxury RV, gives all our horses TLC, and is constantly coming up with and executing projects to make the place more functional and livable. I am learning lots from her about horse care, managing a farm,

email to a total stranger, I get my dream come true. Before last summer, the place was woods, pasture, and a one-room cabin/shed. Now we have a fenced habitat, storage sheds, water tanks, and horse care. Edie is a trusted friend and partner-in-crime. We scheme and ride together. Not exactly Thelma and Louise, but that is not my dream anyway.

My next adventure happened one weekend last fall. It involved my brief search for a chicken to

well hidden from the street that you would never guess such an operation was going on way in the back. It was like chicken paradise. There was room for the chickens and roosters to roam, sandboxes for them to wash in (who knew?), and fancy and not-so-fancy birds just ambling and cooing. There must be lots of eggs coming from that place. Seems they supply a couple of small local restaurants. What a great idea. It doesn't get any fresher than that.

While I was there, picking the family's brains about this and that, I met another fellow purchasing a couple of birds who had a coop to give away! And I was just thinking about altering or expanding our chicken pad. He was a very nice fellow who encouraged me to contact him about the chicken house. It was fun to get in on the conversation and actually know what they were talking about.

So, I wonder, has technology really put more distance between us, as many of us have often supposed? I'm thinking not. Not for me, at least. I think technology is just another part of the landscape for our humanity to play out on. Who cares if we are now dating online? We still have to eventually answer to the longings of our hearts one way or another. Care and caution still apply. Lovely people are out there everywhere, needing everything from money from a sale to a cure for cancer to their first horse. You can probably guess that I err on the side of taking chances.

—Gay Arneri



Gay and her rescued thoroughbred, CiCi, on her farm.

and enjoying the gifts of life that can be so elusive. Her husband drives a truck for a living and is there occasionally, working his tail off on one project or another. He's a lovely guy, and they have made a very productive team. Mostly when I am there, Edie and I hang with the horses, enjoy the country sunsets, and talk about what we would like to do next with the farm. How great is that? All for a second-thought

replace a hen I lost. We urban chicken farmers are becoming more plentiful than I thought. I responded to an ad on Craigslist for egg-laying young chickens for \$8. I emailed the family; then we talked on the phone. As it turns out, they live very close to me (in Druid Hills/Fernbank) and had an enormous pen housing fifty-three chickens and roosters.

Their yard was a wonderful work in progress and was so



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