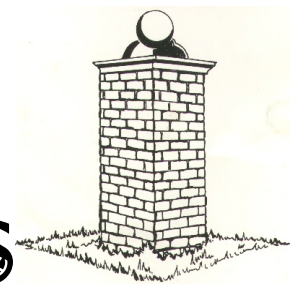


The Columns



Forest Hills Philanthropy

I collected new hats and mittens for needy children in November/December from some of the moms in Forest Hills and delivered them to Coburn Place. It's a housing program for women and children who are homeless due to domestic abuse (www.coburnplace.org).

A couple of weeks later we collected items from their holiday wish list at Coburn Place. People donated nonperishable foods for the kids' programs, diapers, sheets, laundry detergent among many other needed things. In addition, we received a couple of very generous, monetary donations from FH residents which we delivered to them.

The entire back of my car was filled and they were thrilled to receive it!

Thank you to everyone who participated in making the holidays a little brighter for some women and children, living right here in Meridian Kessler!

Beth Olson

Luminaries

Thank you once again to Katie, Beth & Luke Habig who went to so much effort organizing the Forest Hills luminaries again this year! They were all assembled and delivered to homes on December 22nd, just in time for Christmas Eve. Thanks to all of the volunteers, including: Pattie Gulley, Julie & David Sheffield, Jennifer & Kate Crist, Susan Vinicor, Jamie Meyers, Jack, Jennifer & Chris Laughner, Kathy Davis, Derek & Jennifer Payne, Belinda Mulhern, Jerry Jones, Jim & Gracie Garrettson, and Jill de las Alas. Sorry if I missed anyone--please know that your help is appreciated! This year's participation may have been the best in the history of this wonderful neighborhood tradition, so thanks also to all of you who helped out absent neighbors
Beth Olson.

Curbs

A lot of us didn't have a chance to finish our raking before December's early snows. When we do have warm winter days, however, it's really important to try to get leaves out of the curbs. Heavy rains will wash them into our sewer drains. Clogged sewer drains lead to flooding and sewer back-ups. This especially happens in the low lying areas along 58th Street. It's also important, as much as possible, to keep our sidewalks free of leaves

and snow, the combination of which makes for some really treacherous walking. JMG

Property Taxes

With the legislature back in session, now is the time to increase our efforts to remind our representatives just how important this issue is to us. The Governor, our local elected representatives, and both the past & present Mayor, already understand the problem. However, in a considerable portion of the state, mostly in suburban and rural areas, there just isn't a property tax problem. If the urban areas of Indiana are going to survive, it's imperative (irregardless of your politics) that both the Governor's tax cap plan, and the recommendations of the Kernan-Shephard Commission are adopted in this session. It's also important to let our council representatives know that we understand that local income taxes may have to increase to support the shift away from property taxes. JMG

Crime

OK folks, we've had more crimes. A neighbor had their car broken into, which allowed the criminal into their garage, where more stuff was stolen. Another car and garage were also burglarized. This isn't remarkable. Most of our crime comes from being easy - leave you garage door open, something will be gone, eventually. Leave your car out, something will be gone, eventually. We don't have master criminals, we have opportunistic criminals, or at worst, sloppy ones. John Roby, The Cat, doesn't work Forest Hills, but a lot of people from other neighborhoods walk, or at least pass through here, and for some, temptation is, well, temptation. If it looks too easy, they'll try it. If your garage is too full to pull the car inside, consider cleaning out the car so nothing inside looks attractive, and don't leave the opener in the car. When you leave for a few days, stop your paper and your mail. Keep your yard clean - if it looks like no one lives there, it looks easy. If you have a dog, get them a collar, and put an ID on the collar. If it gets out, you may just get it back. We're a crime watch neighborhood, which doesn't mean anything if you don't communicate with your neighbors. There's someone at home all day on every block in Forest Hills, but if they don't know you, strange activity at your house doesn't look strange to them. At night, leave a porch light on. If your shrubs provide good shelter from seeing an entrance to your house, consider trimming them back.

If you live on any of our north-south streets, and you park on the street overnight, some drunk from Broad Ripple may eventually smash up your car as they look for a less patrolled way home - it's happened dozens of times in past years. Oh, we have the crime statistics from Carmel - our neighborhood is safer, mostly because we watch out for each other, but also because most of us have learned some simple rules. JMG

Trash

For the past couple of years, we've had a new trash service here, and the guy who picks up our trash used to be the Soup Nazi on Seinfeld, which means he follows his rules. He won't pick up cardboard boxes that aren't broken down and he won't pick up tree branches that aren't either bundled or put in a trash container. He also doesn't pick up Christmas trees, but you can drop those off at Broad Ripple Park for recycling. He also gets a little nuts over what he calls construction debris, so if you pulled the tile in your kitchen, try spreading it between a few bags of regular trash, and tie up the bags - he's been known to search. JMG

Dues

All of you received dues envelopes in the last two issues of your Columns. Dues in Forest Hills run from summer picnic to summer picnic, or, basically, from July to July. For your dues, you get two free parties a year, free advertising for the most popular garage sale in the city, and free Christmas luminaries. Those of you not living on College, Kessler, or Northview, also get your streets plowed. You get all that for \$25 (\$35 if you're in a snow plow area). That's one heck of a bargain. If you're not sure if you've paid, give our Treasurer, Keith Lerch, a call at 251-8822, or just pay twice, we accept donations.

Meridian Kessler Neighborhood Association

Forest Hills is part of the larger Meridian Kessler Neighborhood Association. At least five or six of our residents also serve on the Meridian Kessler Board of Directors, and many more serve on its various committees. MKNA works for Forest Hills on many issues that are simply too expansive for an area of only 250 homes. Because there are 6000 homes in Meridian Kessler, we receive a significant amount of attention from Marion County officials, including IMPD.

MKNA's standing committees work on crime issues, zoning issues, code enforcement issues, local schools and many, many other problems that impact Forest Hills directly. MKNA's tax committee is in almost daily contact with both the Governor and the Legislature regarding the property tax issue. Anyone who's lived here for a while can think of innumerable issues that MKNA has helped Forest Hills solve.

MKNA dues are \$25 a year, running from the date they're paid. Join at the \$50 level, and MKNA will give new members a FREE copy of their magnificent coffee table book; The History & Architecture of Meridian Kessler, which includes a nice section on Forest Hills.

Want to learn more about MKNA? Contact Jason & Jody French, Judy Goldstein, Joni Albright, Novella Nedeff, Steve & Laura Knitter, or Jim Garretson. Send your dues to MKNA, 526 E. 52nd St., Indianapolis, IN 46205, or drop them off at any of the above neighbors'. JMG

Graffiti

Thanks to Mark Lanza and others for trying to keep up with our persistent graffiti artist who regularly defaces the signal box at Kessler & Winthrop with his catch phrase of 'Don't Buy Jap Crap.' Our artist must live pretty close to our area, because every time Mark gets it cleaned up, it's back again. If anyone gets a look at our budding Picasso, IMPD would love to hear from you, as they have a lot of graffiti cleanup projects for convicted defacers of property. JMG

Volunteers

With several new committees formed by our new Board of Directors, there are many needs for volunteers. In hope of delegating responsibilities, eight of our nine board members chair at least one committee and report to the ninth, our president. On these committees serve you, our neighbors, to enhance our wonderful neighborhood. If you can walk, talk, breathe, and you live in Forest Hills, you are eligible to volunteer. We want YOU! Here's a sampling of open slots:

Communications Committee: Open Volunteer Slots
Chairs: Adam Gibson & Bill Melind,
adam@adamgibson.com, bill.melind@eds.com
465.9003

1. While we have many, twenty in fact, block captains, someone has to organize them. Can you help?
2. Can you use a desktop publishing program? You could create a permanent template for The Columns, enabling the chief writer to easily insert content, while maintaining a professional appearance. Also, the annual directory needs a template. We can use your help!
3. Are you a website designer, or can you recommend one? We need to rebuild a neighborhood site representative of Forest Hills. Many prospective home buyers view our website before stepping foot here; a more impressive online presence in keeping with our distinguished neighborhood will serve to enhance home values.
4. We need someone to help with ad sales for the upcoming directory. Now that it is published annually it stays more current than in the past. It's also an important revenue source for the neighborhood.