



# SPRING 2010 NEWSLETTER

## Greening the Empty Lots:

### *The Rolliston Gardens Project*

Dominic Liberatore passed by the fore-closed house every day for months. In January 2009 it was torn down at last. But while others shook their heads and clucked at the shame and the waste, he and a few friends saw an opportunity.

An avid gardener since his childhood in Lyndhurst, Liberatore missed having the open space and sunshine a good veggie garden needs – and he knew of others who felt the same way. By April a group had been formed to create a community garden. Its first act was to send a letter to City Hall expressing an interest in the Rolliston lot.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Dept.'s reaction could be summed up as: "Great idea! How do we do it?" And the newly-constituted nonprofit's

response: "We were hoping *you* could tell *us*." No one had ever built a community garden on Shaker property before, and guidelines had to be developed before the plan could take root.

But now, a little more than a year since 3623 Rolliston Road was demolished, the Community Gardens of

burden, as well as at least one lot reserved for a youth gardening co-op.

The city's guidelines stipulate that everything grown in the gardens be used for personal consumption – there will be no special "Lomond" section in Heinen's produce department. But Henrietta Silberger, who is on the CGSH

## Community Update:

### *Ingleside, Rawnsdale fires*

Families with children at the Lomond School were stunned by the news that two of their number had survived a horrific fire on Ingleside Road. No one was hurt, but the families escaped

## Lomonder Profile:

### *Willa Walker Linking Lomond with City Hall*

It's a grand title for a volunteer: VP of Community Affairs. And Willa Walker's job in the Lomond Association is an important one.

"I see my role as being the liaison between the community and the government," says the adult and continuing education program director for Cleveland area schools.

Walker attends every Shaker City Council meeting. But she has also kept Lomond informed about developments at the local government level. Often enough, those developments affect funding for grassroots initiatives like the Gridley Triangle Beautification project, which hopes to add such amenities as a natural play area, a water pump, an herb garden and a community bulletin board to the



As the weather turned cold, the flower baskets on Gridley Triangle were replaced with "Winter Interest Banners." The banners were designed by Preservation and Beautification Committee chairman David Thal and painted with assistance from Dena Smith and Kim Pappell (middle photo shows two neighborhood installation volunteers). The banners will remain up until the end of March. Photos by David Thal.

Shaker Heights is opening registration ([applications@gardensofshaker.org](mailto:applications@gardensofshaker.org)) for the 2010 growing season. Three sizes of plots will soon be available for around \$35 a year. There will also be "scholarship" plots for those who find the annual fee a

board, hopes some day to provide fresh, locally-grown food to a homeless shelter. "We also might be able to sell donated fruits and vegetables at a farmer's market," she says, adding that the proceeds would be plowed directly back into the Gardens of Shaker organization. ➡

with little more than what they were wearing. The call went out to Lomond residents and aid came pouring in. Cash as well as gift cards from local supermarkets and department stores were divided between the two families, ➡

## **Lomond on Four Legs: Best Friends in the Neighborhood**

It doesn't take long for a Lomond newcomer to notice that there seem to be an awful lot of people walking their dogs around here. And if you strike up a conversation with any of them, you're likely to find that they're well-informed not only about the temperament and health characteristics of their breed but also its history and development – or, in other cases, about the background of the shelter from which their furry friends were adopted.

A lot of Lomond dog-owners apparently acquired a taste for the fine art of pooper-scooping when they first moved to the area.

"It's definitely more dog-friendly here than where I grew up in Philadelphia," says John Kosich, whose son Aidan goes to the nearby Lomond School. "Having a dog has been great for Aidan, who sees himself as Rumsey's big brother and plays a big role in helping to take care of him."

Kosich also touts the advantages of dog ownership when settling into a new community. "It's an unbelievable way to meet your neighbors," he says. "The only problem is that I usually end up remembering the pet's name and not the

owner's."

Linda Marie Wetzel can attest to that. A Normandy Road resident, Wetzel works at the Cleveland Museum of Art. One day at the museum she found herself standing next to a woman she recognized, but didn't know from where. A few rounds of "Do you know so-and-so?" "No, how about so-and-so?" ensued.

Then, says Wetzel, suddenly the other woman cried out, "'I know you! You're ChiChi's mom!' Immediately I recognized her. She was Honey's mom!" The two women knew each other "not by who we are or where we live or what we do, but because of our dogs."

Strolling through the neighborhood one encounters stories, from the heartwarming to the heart-rending, at the handle of a leash. There's the psychologist who works with developmentally challenged children all day, then comes home to her high-strung rescued dog and continues with canine therapy. There's the family who adopted an abandoned senior dog in order to teach their young daughter "that aging and death are an important and unavoidable part of life." And there's the frantic owner of a dog with a treatable form of cancer who's trying to find more affordable imported drugs from Canada. To adopt a phrase, one could easily say of Lomond: This community is known by the dogs it keeps. ❖

## **Gardens cont'd**

CGSH's eventual aim is to create gardens all over the city on the lots of demolished homes. It's a back-to-the-roots endeavor in more ways than one: Shaker Heights, after all, is named for a self-sustaining community that prided itself on pulling together no matter how tough the times were. ❖

## **Fires cont'd**

who are currently living in temporary housing belonging to John Carroll University. Judith Kalan, Lomond School head secretary and coordinator of the aid effort, says that even when the call went out for furniture there was a generous response.

"I was very proud of our school and our community," adds Kalan. "Everything that was sent was so very, very needed and very much appreciated. It saved the day."

Lomond Association members might also remember the Ogbuji family on Rawnsdale who were victims of a fire last year. Mike Hoffman, president of the Sussex Association, was grateful for the concern and said that the Ogbujis have now returned to their home on Rawnsdale Road. ❖

## **Walker cont'd**

knoll (for more info, go to [www.lomondonline.com](http://www.lomondonline.com)). There have also been beautification grants for various homes in the area, and funding for youth projects through MyCom, a program

of the Family and Children First Council of the Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services Department.

Walker plans to create a committee in order to get additional Lomond Association representatives into more local government venues like MyCom. "We want to have a wide variety of people involved," she says, "so that we can find out what their concerns are."



After growing up in Alabama and raising her children in Cleveland, Walker moved to Riedham Road a decade and a half ago. She's been involved with the Lomond Association ever since.

"I'm not interested in politics," she says. "But I am interested in people enjoying, and being aware of, and getting the most out of their community." ❖

## **Lomond Association Newsletter**

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The Lomond Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit, residential neighborhood organization. To join or for other information visit our website: [www.lomondonline.com](http://www.lomondonline.com). You can also e-mail us at [lomond.association@gmail.com](mailto:lomond.association@gmail.com).