



Outgoing President Bill Emmet Celebrates Us (cont'd)

The masks and pins were quickly produced, and they began appearing seemingly everywhere in Mount Pleasant. School kids loved them and scooped them up when they were available. Village members, of course, would wear them in displays of tribal solidarity. Best of all, though, was that people with no inkling of the Village put them on, spreading the Village name and mission deep into the neighborhood's awareness. I am very curious to know if there are Village members today who first learned of the organization's existence through the pins.

Of course, the "Hello Neighbor" campaign blossomed into an even more visible community presence as yard signs and then banners with eye-catching artwork and bold colors were produced and started popping up all over the neighborhood. They became a very distinctive part of the Mount Pleasant identity. Hardly a block was without two, three, or more signs, and visitors from other parts of the city or even out of town asked how they could get their own to take home.

So, did the campaign achieve the goals articulated at its outset? Did Mount Pleasanters start to acknowledge one another more regularly on the street? Were they friendlier to each other? My very unscientific research points to a positive answer. Yes, Village members and the circles with which they interact – neighbors, Bancroft parents, Mount Pleasant Street business people – seem to recognize their shared humanity and the common bond that comes with living in this very special community. In this time of heightened awareness of the dangers of social isolation, this is no small thing. Indeed, combatting social isolation is at the top of the Village's priority list; anything the "Hello Neighbor" campaign has done to make us feel part of a greater whole is a step toward success.

Even as we tighten bonds with our neighbors, many Village members may also be embracing their humanity in a very different way: by coming to grips with mortality. To me, this is one of the other revelations of the past four years. For one thing, Covid has made us very aware of our vulnerabilities. Even if we didn't know anyone who died as a result of Covid, the headlines have kept us focused on the lethality of the virus and the toll it has taken. At the same time, with the mean age of our Villager neighbors hovering in the early to mid-seventies, it's impossible to overlook where we stand actuarially.

I first met Vivian Ling on a Village-organized trip to Iona Senior Services soon after I was elected to the Village Board. She detailed some of the challenges she was facing as a caregiver for her husband who had developed dementia. She knew she was not alone in shouldering such a burden, and she was wondering whether it would make sense for the Village to sponsor a Caregiver Support Group where caregivers could feel comfortable sharing their experiences and

seek advice from others in similar situations. Over the ensuing months and years, Vivian started and led monthly meetings of the support group within the Village.

When her husband died this past summer, she shared with me that, “I have been sustained the last several years by the love and support from friends in Mt. Pleasant. Life provides us with endless opportunities to learn and make a difference in this world. I get all my jollies from teaching and doing good, and I see myself as being in a better position now to support and guide others on this journey.” Vivian has since discussed the need not just to provide support for those already deeply involved in caregiving, but to find ways to help those at the start of their caregiving journeys to understand what may be coming down the road and to prepare for it as best they can.

Like Vivian, a number of Villagers had undertaken efforts to come to terms with the approaching end of life before Covid came along. A pioneer within our ranks was Bob Hoffman, known to almost all as Hoff. He organized “death cafés” and other opportunities for people to learn all they could to be prepared for the inevitable and to ease the emotional, legal, and bureaucratic entanglements that can await survivors when a friend or family member dies. Hoff’s own unexpected death earlier this year provided a cruel but clear emphasis to his message, one that has been picked up by others who have carried on the Village’s End of Life Issues Group. The Village is uniquely organized to provide a forum for such discussions, and the fact it is doing so is not only a testament to Hoff’s legacy, but a service that benefits us all.

I’m sure I could cite dozens more examples of Village members taking the initiative to make the best of their circumstances or, more important, to help others to benefit from their experiences. I’ve been so energized by the entrepreneurial approach Villagers have taken to the problems we face and the opportunities arising from them. Yes, we are living in interesting times, whether brought on by events in the world around us or related to the mysteries of aging and the certainty our lives will end. For me, the Village has been and will continue to be the indispensable resource enabling us all to weather the relentless onslaught. Thanks to the endless list of Villagers who collectively give life to this remarkable organization!

-Bill Emmet



Talking Diversity (cont'd)

In 2019 the PTO and Principal Morales asked the Village if we could provide volunteers to direct traffic, discourage parking and double-parking at arrival, and encourage driving parents to hug and go. The Village stepped up and provided these morning volunteers for two weeks.

When COVID came in 2020, everything for everyone was thrown into chaos. Our then-ANC created Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) as a way to provide support to older and more vulnerable residents, and from the beginning reached out to President Bill Emmet and the Village. A number of Village members joined about 200 younger MtP residents in this effort. Several working groups formed within NHN: food aid, racial justice, and Bancroft support. Principal Morales was active in encouraging the creation of a virtual tutoring program. I was a part of a trio, together with then ANC Commissioner Robin Sandenburgh and Sonya Hoffmann, building such a tutoring program. By 2022 tutoring transitioned from virtual to in-person, and I assumed coordination of it. We are now about 15 tutors, with a 50/50 mix of Village members and non-Village tutors. We have the complete support of the school administration, an amazing teacher liaison in Jaia Werner, AND very satisfied tutors!

When the pandemic abated in 2022 and students returned to in-person classes, Principal Morales and the PTO again turned to the Village for volunteers to assist parents and students in navigating the new rules and additional entrances. Village volunteers stepped forward to help fill the gaps and make things flow smoothly.



Villager and Community Liaison Mark Simon directs volunteers. Photo: Rick Reinhard

To see volunteers in action, [click here](#).

Villager Mark Simon, a former teacher, followed Hoff as community liaison to Bancroft, a role he has embraced. In Spring of 2023, Principal Morales and her team planned for but did not receive approval for closing the school block of Newton Street, N.W., during arrival and dismissal hours. In school year 2023-24, however, the stars aligned and the plan was approved. Mark and his PTO collaborators assembled a team (50/50 mix of Villager/PTO members) and launched the Safe Street Program with four volunteers per shift. Twice daily, the program creates a temporary plaza in front of the school to protect students, while showing itself to be an amazing opportunity for Village members to engage with PTO parents in an ongoing organic way, thereby strengthening the community and expanding the intergenerational aspirations of the Village. This is the only such program in DC!!

This end-of-year season brings yet another annual collaboration, this time between the PTO and the Village. The annual tree sale and festival began decades ago through the efforts of now-Villagers Claudia Schlosberg and Wayne Kahn. They continued to coordinate it well past the graduation of their children from Bancroft. The PTO has built on that foundation and Village members have supported the festival by buying trees, providing baked goods, and volunteering. The recent sale raised a groundbreaking \$25,000 for the PTO.



Village-branded (!) treats for sale at a Bancroft fundraiser. Photo: Rick Reinhard

As you read this, decisions are being made by the Deputy Mayor for Education, DCPS, and others with input from the Bancroft administration as well as the Local School Advisory Team (Mark Simon is a member) regarding how best to support a Bancroft at full capacity with more demand than it can absorb while at the same time maintaining its Spanish immersion program. The Village asked members to respond to a recent community survey and many of you did. Important issues of which geographic boundaries, if any, should be changed, as well as where Bancroft students go for middle and high school. Please stay tuned and attentive as important decisions are made, and the Village continues to find ever more ways to collaborate to the mutual benefit of all.

—Rick Reinhard



Villagers in Our Natural Environment (cont'd)

Katie Meyer, from the [Sierra Club DC](#) and [Beyond Gas DC](#), talked about the Healthy Homes Act (a bill to provide funds to retrofit 30,000 low-moderate income DC residents' homes) and free in home air quality testing. She circulated a sign-up sheet to indicate interest in testing for indoor air emissions from gas stoves. The [Beyond Gas DC](#) coalition is ramping up testing gas stoves over the next few months. It plans to test 500+ kitchens with gas stoves, and to release the results sometime this spring. The Coalition encourages DC residents to use this [toolkit](#) to help spread the word.



Tom Bartholomew, left, and Katie Myer, right, kicked off the first public meeting of the Mount Pleasant Village Climate Crisis Action Group.

Katie Ries described the upcoming launch of the DC working group of [Third Act](#), a national organization for people over 60 who wish to engage with others in the struggle for a sustainable planet and to defend democracy. [Washington's Third Act Working Group formally launches on January 10 from 7-8 pm. Sign up here](#) to join founder Bill McKibben at the launch call. Katie Ries is available to answer any questions you might have (kathrynries98@gmail.com).



*Katie Ries (left) at climate vigil on March 21.
Photo: Fred Solowey.*

The question-and-answer period covered catastrophic rains and flooding, the capacity of the District's storm water and sewage system, and how Mount Pleasant residents can mitigate damage to their property. Julie Byrne followed up about the District's plans to mitigate flooding with Nick Bonard, Branch Chief, Floodplains, Wetlands, and Groundwater, Regulatory Review Division, Department of Energy & Environment, D.C. Government. Issues include separation of sewage and storm water that are presently combined. Bonard says construction is well advanced towards separate systems, including optional installation of back flow valves on sewer pipes as the pipes exit houses. D.C. Water is preparing the data needed to model the effects of catastrophic rainfall on the city.

The Climate Crisis Action group is holding a second in-person meeting in January. Please see the Mount Pleasant Village Announcements for details next month. Also, please contact Elizabeth Prewitt (eprewitt2012@gmail.com) or David Tseng (davidclarktseng@yahoo.com) if you would like to get involved, be on the mailing list, or have any questions.

—Julie Byrne

Links to other potential collaborators:

[Elders Climate Action](#)

[Capital Nature](#)

[DC Commission on Climate](#)