

Around The Town

News from My Hometown Northwest

Year End Report (December 2023)

Welcome New CEO's Carlton and Cathy Christensen

Life-long Rose Park residents Carlton and Cathy Christensen's first date went so well that within six weeks they were engaged and married four months later. Thirty-three years later, the Christensens are still in love with each other, and with Rose Park. Along the way they have raised two wonderful daughters, managed to have highly successful careers and worked extensively to build their communities via charity and church service.

Carlton, Chairman of the Utah Transit Authority, also served as a key administrator for his church for decades, and along with Cathy, was called to serve as MHT Co-Executives the same day he was released from his church calling in late October. Likewise, Cathy has been steeped in her career as a full-time piano teacher to local youth and is known as a difference-maker in all that she does. We welcome them both to the MHT team.



(Also joining My Hometown Northwest is Edwin Prince, who has been called by the Christensens to serve as Executive Secretary to the organization.)

Following is a summary of recent MHT activities, service projects, and events.

November – December 2023 Projects and Activities

ESL: The “English as a Second Language” courses were completed on November 30 (24 classes in all) at the CRC building. Joan and Craig Anderson headed up the project, enlisting a half dozen teachers and volunteers to instruct over 25 nearby residents who have come from such faraway places as Angola, Syria, Mexico, and Venezuela to be tutored in a second language. When food was the subject of one class, the teachers asked students to share their favorite dishes with each other. You might say it “spiced” up the evening a bit. Instructors brought Pizza and gave away prizes to celebrate the final class.

These well-received courses will resume in the Spring of 2024. An abbreviated course will also be taught in January.



Leaf Raking Project: On Saturday, November 18, the DOS Committee completed a final leaf raking and cleanup project for Rose Park residents who needed additional assistance. Approximately 114 volunteers helped rake leaves in nearly 50 yards. This was the last DOS work project of the year, finished just before Thanksgiving, and luckily, before the weather turned any colder. Thanks to organizers Robin and Mary Egan and volunteers from the Cottonwood area who pitched in. It was another highly successful beautification project.



Winter Youth Dance: This year's highly successful youth program culminated with a dance on Saturday, December 2nd at the CRC. Over 250 youth from the community attended and danced the night away as guest celebrity "DJ Wizz" (a highly regarded coach at West High school), spun the latest hits. Volunteers were impressed with how well-mannered and kind the partiers, ages 11 and up, were to each other as well as to the many volunteers in attendance.

Doug and Becky Farley oversee the youth program, which may have surpassed even their expectations. This night was no exception. Pizza, popcorn, lemonade, fruit and cookies were served, but often ignored so the youth could spend their time on the dance floor. Eventually, the food was consumed, and many youth participants stayed after to help clean up.

The dance was coordinated and planned by the recently formed Youth Council under the direction of Doug and Becky. According to the Farleys, "they were completely engaged in the planning, marketing and executing" of this highly successful event. (Note: A brief confrontation, instigated by two or three outsiders after the dance on the street as people were leaving, was quickly quelled by local police).





Community Connection Workshop: MHT partnered with the Pacific Islanders Health Coalition and helped supply them with needed equipment for this successful event, held on December 7th.



Santa's Photo Shop: On Monday night, December 18th, The CRC committee, under the direction of Kendrick and Kris Bytheway, invited a Spanish speaking Santa to host over 50 families from surrounding neighborhoods. It was the merriest of evenings. After receiving gifts, a picture with Santa and refreshments, including tasty Venezuelan arepas, one family actually called additional family members in Columbia so they could "facetime" with Santa, too! The photos below illustrate just how successful the event was, and most importantly, how excited these youngsters and their families were to attend.



Backman Elementary School Winter Market: My Home Town Northwest volunteers helped Shannon Wilson, school Vice Principal, and other volunteers complete another successful Christmas shopping day for students' parents at the school on Saturday, December 16th. This remarkable event has been held for more than 8 years. Several companies, including Lucid, Marathon and L3 Communications, donate newly purchased gifts (and lots of volunteer hours, too) to the school, enabling parents to play Santa for over 200 children, who might not otherwise have any gifts to open on Christmas Day. MHT volunteers and others wrapped gifts and helped shuttle parents to and from their residences throughout the day. Shannon says the program helps "relieve some burdens for parents, many of whom work multiple jobs and can barely find enough time to come to the school to shop." What a blessing for these families!



Cookies for Christmas Project: Hundreds of home-baked cookies were delivered to Backman Elementary on Wednesday, December 20 just in time for schoolteachers and staff to enjoy them and pass many of them on to neighbors. Marsha Parker and Connie Sturzenegger coordinated the event, a truly delicious Christmas “surprise” for all who gratefully received the treats. Thanks to the many MHT committee members who participated and found time to cook up some goodness at such a busy time of the year.



2023 Year in Review:

DOS Project Summary

In the last 12 months, close to 100 work projects have been completed by members called to serve in My Home Town Northwest. Seven monthly Day of Service events were held on Saturday mornings, beautifying neighborhoods and providing assistance to families in need.

The Day of Service Committee members and volunteers painted storage sheds, installed a wheelchair ramp for a handicapped family member, cleared debris from alleyways and busy thoroughfares, beautified Jordan River Parkway and The Folsom Trail, installed air conditioners, repaired faulty plumbing, helped create a residential irrigation system, and repaired damaged rooftops. Just for starters.

“It’s been so rewarding,” says Jared Parker, who along with his spouse, Marsha, serve as Committee co-chairs. “We estimate as many as 900 people, including many nearby residents, have donated time for these events,” adds Marsha. “We call it ‘neighbors helping neighbors’ and we are ever so grateful.”

CRC Project Summary

The other arm of My Hometown is the Community Resource Committee under the direction of Dirk and Lisa Anjewierden. Their goal is to develop community programs that can strengthen local relationships and provide opportunities for growth and success.

To date, numerous projects and events have attracted hundreds of residents to a variety of programs, including English classes, a family portrait session, a photo session with Santa, weekly basketball and futsal games, sewing classes, youth activities and dances, skateboarding and snowboarding classes, tennis instruction, folk dancing, reading and tutoring programs and a spring carnival for students and parents at Backman Elementary. Recently,

committee member Liz Zentner was able to organize the school's first PTA in many years, a significant accomplishment. A computer tutorial class is being added to the CRC curriculum in early January. Dirk commented, "It's almost overwhelming to see the impact of these programs." Lisa echoes his thought: "When we started less than a year ago, we had no idea how quickly these programs would take hold, and what a difference they could make in the lives of our neighbors."











What's Ahead

A number of MHT projects are now in the planning stages, and both DOS and CRC committees are rolling up their sleeves in anticipation of 2024.

As a final note, committee members are extremely grateful for the vision and leadership of Jim and Carolyn Woodward, founding Executive Directors for My Home Town Northwest, and to others who have played influential roles in its development, especially Rose Park residents Jeff and Julie Olsen, who continue to inspire us.

Happy New Year!

