



# the parkword



THE PARKWOOD HILLS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2017

## Owen Park Update

By Donna Rifken

Have you ever wondered who lives in that big house in Owen Conservation Park? I call him the park “ranger,” but he doesn’t wear a Smoky the Bear hat. He’s Charlie Romines, Assistant Superintendent for the City of Madison Parks – yup, all the city parks – he lives there with his wife and two teen daughters. He and his family moved to Owen Park in 2013 and have taken on caretaking duties for the park. Recently, Charlie and I sat down on one of Owen’s many benches overlooking our 90-acre conservation park to talk about invasives, wildlife, and upcoming initiatives.

Last fall, the Madison Parks Department conservation staff took down Buckthorn trees in the forested area to make way for spring ephemerals like Dutchman’s Breeches and Virginia Waterleaf. The seeds of those delicate spring flowers have been waiting years for the right conditions to grow, and, now, they have a slice of sunlight to savor.

The conservation staff also took aim at the towering stand of garlic mustard in the southeast edge of the forest – reluctantly deciding on the ‘nuclear option’ of herbicide to knock it back. I suggested that the poison ivy edging almost every trail be targeted with a similar strategy. Charlie took notes and agreed to pass on the request.

Charlie and his family have seen an explosion in turkeys, deer, and rabbits, probably due to our loss of valuable predators like coyote and fox. Apparently, we haven’t had a denning coyote or fox in the past three years. They pass through, snatching a few rabbits along the way but haven’t found our park hospitable enough to raise their young. As a result, the turkey population is estimated at around 55! Charlie explained that we don’t see all those turkeys these days because they are hunkered down raising young.



This fall, the Madison Parks Department may have to “harvest” some of the deer and turkeys, acting like the natural predators that we have lost. Charlie reassured me that all the adjacent neighborhoods would have plenty of notice before this effort begins.

When I asked Charlie, what our adjacent neighborhoods could do to sustain the health of Owen Conservation Park, he suggested that we consider forming a Friends of Owen Park group like the active, involved one at Cherokee Marsh. He said that having a Friends group\* makes it easier for the Parks Department to get input from neighbors and serves as an efficient way to channel information back to neighbors.

Finally, I asked Charlie to tell me a funny story about his tenure as Owen Park caretaker. He thought for a moment and smiled. Then, he told me how late one night, his wife looked out an upper bedroom window to see the parking lot ablaze with fire. Alarmed, she called 911. As law

**Continued on page 2**

### Table of Contents

Owen Park Update .....	1
Easter Pics.....	2
Your Brain on Nature .....	3
Spring Fling pics .....	4
Free Summer Events.....	4
Featured Figure .....	5
Parkcrest Pool News.....	6
Book Review.....	7

## Owen Park Update, continued from p.1

enforcement and the fire department raced up the narrow park driveway, they were greeted by a stunned and terrified high schooler and his prospective prom date.

The young man had found a creative way to ask his date to the prom by lighting hundreds of candles to spell out "will you go to prom with me?" He lined them up on the parking lot surface making it look like the parking lot was on fire. Charlie wants to remind all residents that this story is only funny in hindsight and should not be repeated.

In my short 30 minutes in Owen Park, I was wowed by a pair of Goldfinches chasing each other over the prairie grass, a Baltimore Oriole hiding in a sumac bush, a tiny rabbit sniffing my shoes, and a patch of brilliantly orange Butterfly-Weed. How fortunate we are to live on the edge of this beautiful, wild park!

*\*If you have an interest in creating a Friends of Owen Conservation Park group, email me and we'll see what we can get going: drifken@charter.net*



**Donna Rifken is a 25 year resident of Parkwood Hills, having raised 3 children in this amazing neighborhood. She walks the Owen Park trails in winter, spring, summer and fall, appreciating the migrating birds that rest in the ponds and the changing colors of the prairie. In her 'day job', she is a child clinical psychologist working with foster children.**

## Annual Easter Egg Hunt



**The Annual Easter Egg Hunt was held April 15 in Everglade Park. Congratulations to Claire Cowles, who found the Golden Egg. It was a great turnout and a wonderful time was had by all!**

**Thanks to Sandy Gregorich for coordinating the festivities! And thank you to the Easter Bunny for taking time out of his busy schedule to join us.**



# Your Brain on Nature

By Donna Rifken, Ph.D.

I am a regular walker and gawker in Owen Park. I head there year-round for a silent reprieve from words, people, and problems. It doesn't matter how long I'm in there – 15 minutes or two hours, I always come out a little calmer and happier. I know I'm not alone because I often see many of my neighbors sharing the space – out for a run or walking with their children.

I can't say I was surprised to learn that researchers are showing how spending time in the natural world positively affects our emotional health. There are now 100's of research articles on the benefits of being in, living near, and viewing nature in photos and videos.

Frances Kuo and William Sullivan, two researchers at the University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana studied the well-being of residents at the infamous Ida Wells housing project in Chicago. When the development was built in the 1940's, it was full of trees. But by the time Kuo and Sullivan arrived in the 1990's, many trees had died or been felled.

By studying a resident's proximity to trees, they discovered that the closer a resident lived to a tree, the less mental fatigue, stress and aggressive behaviors they reported. Even more amazing, apartment residents near trees made fewer law enforcement calls. The City of Chicago was so impressed with Kuo and Sullivan's series of studies, that they planted 20,000 trees around the city.

Other research has shown improvements in mood, working memory, and generosity when people are exposed to nature, even video clips of nature. People who watched a nature video improved their ability to remember a string of digits and repeat them backwards versus participants who viewed an urban scene. Surgical patients whose hospital rooms faced trees had shorter post-operative stays in the hospital and used fewer pain medications than patients whose rooms faced a brick wall.

One of the coolest studies I read showed how watching a short video of beautiful nature scenes led participants to be more generous towards a stranger than those who watched a short video with less beautiful nature scenes.

Jia Wei Zhang and colleagues had participants watch a short, one minute video of nature scenes pre-rated by others as "very beautiful". Other participants watched a



short nature video with nature scenes pre-rated as "not so beautiful". When the participants played an economic game where they were told they could either give up research money to an anonymous player or keep more for themselves, those who watched the "very beautiful" video were more generous to strangers.

Although most of the above studies examined adults and greenspaces, New Zealand researchers (Ward, et al, 2016) examined the amount of time that 11-14 year old teens spent engaged in moderate to vigorous exercise over a one-week period. Using a Global Positioning System (GPS), the researchers tracked where the teens engaged in the physical activities. To measure well-being, teens completed various neurocognitive and mood measures.

Teens who were physically active in greenspaces like public parks and wildlife areas, reported less depression and a greater sense of well-being than teens who were active inside.

In case you needed reasons besides your own enjoyment to seek out mother nature and lose yourself in her prairies and oak forests, you now have them. Summer is here, and every day brings something beautiful and awesome outdoors. Get your children and invite them on a walk, hike or run. You'll both feel better.

For more information on the studies referenced above, read:

- *Children and Nature Network* <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>
- *Greater Good*; "What Happens When We Reconnect With Nature"; [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what\\_happens\\_when\\_we\\_reconnect\\_with\\_nature](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_happens_when_we_reconnect_with_nature)
- Ward, J., Duncan, J.S., Jarden, A., Stewart, T., (2016) *The impact of children's exposure to greenspace on physical activity, cognitive development, emotional wellbeing, and ability to appraise risk*. *Health & Place*, 40, 44-50.

# The Spring Fling



The Spring Fling remains one of the Parkwood Hill Community Association's favorite annual activities, giving residents a chance to visit and to welcome some of our newest neighbors.

Thanks go to Peter Olson for organizing!

The 2017 event was held April 29 at the Vintage Brewing Company.

## Free Summer Events

### Ride the Drive 2017

Sunday, July 16, 2017

10:00am to 2:00pm

Brittingham Park · Olin Park · Law Park

For more information, view the route and to volunteer:

[www.RidetheDrive.com](http://www.RidetheDrive.com)

### Concerts on the Square

Wednesdays – July 5-August 2

7:00pm – King Street corner of the Capitol Square

July 12: American Potpourri

July 19: Orchestral Fantasy

July 26: Summer Thriller

August 2: Beethoven's Fifth

### Elver Park Farmer's Market

Saturdays – June 10-September 16

8am-12pm

Elver Park, 1250 McKenna Blvd.

**Olbrich Botanical Gardens:** Free admission everyday

**Bolz Conservatory** – Free admission on Wednesday and Saturday mornings

3330 Atwood Avenue

<http://www.olbrich.org/>

### Wisconsin State Capitol

Free tours offered daily; 6th Floor Observation Deck open in summer

2 E. Main Street

# Featured Figure: Tyler Zunker

A quarterly feature in which *The ParkWord* shares a conversation with one of our neighbors.



**Age:** 36 years old

**Years in Neighborhood:** 3

## Family

Nicole (UW Hospital RN in the inpatient PACU)

Tate, 6.5 years

Addy, 4 years

## Why did you choose Parkwood Hills?

“Nicole [wife] took a job with UW Hospital, and she wanted to move back to Madison to be close to

family. We liked the area, the pool, and that it is close to everything.”

## What is your job?

Tyler is a Fire Fighter (12 years) and Acting Officer (4 years) with the Appleton Fire Department

Tyler works two days on and four days off. He leaves home at 4am and usually gets home two days later at 9am. “When I’m gone, I’m gone. When I’m home, I’m home and do daddy daycare.”

Tyler’s commute is 120 miles, which takes one hour and 45 minutes, typically.

He arrives at his station (#5 on Brewster Street on Appleton’s west side) at 6am because “I might have to move. If there is an officer off, I move to ride in his/her position. I pack up my stuff and move to a different station.”

## Describe your typical day

“The only thing ordinary is that it’s not ordinary. Typical days are not typical. We average 7 runs a day (we go out with an ambulance, so 80% of the runs are EMS, and 20% of the runs are fire related.”

## How did you get into firefighting?

“My dad was a volunteer firefighter when I was a kid. I went to UW Lacrosse for business, but after a semester, I couldn’t imagine being in a cubicle for the rest of my life. I graduated with a business degree then went to Fox Valley Technical College for firefighting. I got my EMT license and fire degree, and the rest is history.”

## Best things about being a fire fighter:

1. Helping people
2. The excitement - no two days are the same; I get to see and do stuff that other people don’t get to see.
3. The state pension isn’t bad either. 😊

## Best advice for someone seeking a career in firefighting:

“Know what you’re getting into. It’s not for everyone. It is an extremely rewarding profession yet demanding. It’s demanding for your family since we work unique schedules (either 24 or 48 hour shifts). It’s rewarding in that you are able to help people when they are at their worst and help improve their day.”

## Best advice you ever received?

“Work hard. Know your job inside and out, and remember, both on duty and off duty, you represent both the city you work for and the department you represent. We’re held to a higher standard due to our career choice, which is a big responsibility.

“I’m not sure if it [can be attributed to] one specific person, but it’s more of the culture here at AFD and the mentality we instill in our young hires.”

## What are you looking forward to this summer?

“Hanging out at the pool and going on some family trips. Each summer, we head to my aunt’s house (Bay of Green Bay on Lake Michigan). We will also head to Minocqua in August.”

## Best part about living in Parkwood Hills:

“Neighbors, the pool, and being able to walk to all three schools.”

## Favorite Neighborhood event:

The pool Christmas party. This past year, with the Saturday Night Live theme, he and Nicole went as Hans and Franz – “We will pump you up.”

## Favorite activity outside of job

Tyler enjoys updating their home on Yellowstone Drive. “I love to build things in my basement workshop (I have enough tools to open my own Home Depot.) Our house was built in 1969, so there are always projects. I just completed a full bathroom remodel.”

Tyler also enjoys being outside and spending time with family and friends, and smoking meat.

# Parkcrest Swim and Tennis News

## By Charlene Drumm

If you have not been by Parkcrest Swim and Tennis Club lately, you should wander by. The pool and facilities are looking good and are filled with laughter and activity. Some of that activity is from our new members this year – double the number of new members from the previous few years.

This year and next, the pool is engaged in a two-year 50th Anniversary Membership Drive. **Yes – next year Parkcrest turns 50!** To celebrate, this year and next year only, Parkcrest is offering special first-time member one-year trial full family memberships for only \$449.

More on 50th Anniversary activities to come. In the meantime, it's worth highlighting two young adults who manage the pool in the summer.

### Meet General Manager Molly Walsh Anderson and Facilities Manager Chris President-Brown.

Molly Walsh Anderson has worn many hats at the pool. She started working at Parkcrest as a substitute guard when her family joined the pool 10 years ago. She then became a full-time guard, moved into directing the water ballet show, became the assistant manager, and is now the Pool General Manager.

What lures Molly back to the pool each summer? In childhood, Molly was a pool rat. She grew up at a pool, the go-to place to meet up with friends and hang out. She idolized the lifeguards – that was her dream job.

Molly enjoys working at Parkcrest. She says that the pool is the summer hub of the neighborhood. With the tennis and basketball courts, and the pools and social activities, there is something to do for all ages. And people participate. Molly

enjoys interacting with families and with the kids. She enjoys hiring and working with the staff – most are from the neighborhood, and some were her swim students when they were younger!

Chris President-Brown is in his second year at Parkcrest. Last year, he coached the 9-10 year olds on swim team. This year, in addition to coaching, he is also Parkcrest's new Facilities Manager.

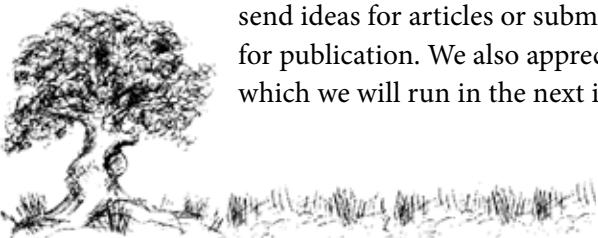
Chris first got involved with pools and swimming because of a bet. Chris had never taken lessons, but during his junior year of high school, a friend bet him \$5 that he wouldn't join the school swim team. Not only did Chris win the bet, he joined the team, and following his mother's advice to see through the things you start, Chris competed on swim team his junior and senior year seasons. Chris was hooked.

Chris became a life guard, then a life guard instructor, and most recently a CPO. For those of us not familiar with pool terminology, CPO stands for "Certified Pool Operator". Chris went through CPO training before becoming Parkcrest's Facilities Manager. As swim coach, Chris likes working with the kids, giving back to the community. As Facilities Manager, he is learning a lot at Parkcrest, getting to know our unique facilities.



## the parkword

This newsletter is published four times per year and serves as an important and integral communication tool for our neighborhood and community. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please send ideas for articles or submit your own articles for publication. We also appreciate any corrections which we will run in the next issue.



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**Approximate delivery:** Early October, 2017

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# Just Mercy Book Review

by Rosie Patton

*Just Mercy - A Story of Justice and Redemption*, by Bryan Stevenson, reveals the biases and flaws within the American Criminal Justice System, focusing on his stories of fighting capital punishment, representing those who struggle with mental illness, and children. Narrator and author Stevenson, an acclaimed lawyer (Montgomery, Alabama) works through the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization, which provides legal representation for those who are in desperate need of legal assistance. The story is a vivid firsthand account of wrongful incarceration in America. The book focuses on Walter McMillian, an African American man accused of murdering a white woman in Alabama in 1986. McMillian's wrongful accusation and death row sentence is a central narrative, yet Stevenson also weaves in other stories of similar legal system injustices.

I read the book with no previous idea about the issues of incarceration, prejudice, or even the death penalty, but I am extremely thankful that I read it. The continuing narrative of Walter provides a strong plot which drives the book and makes the reader want to continue. This, combined with Stevenson's immense knowledge of the history of prejudice against African Americans, imparts a factual basis for the book. I really enjoyed the weaving together of shocking statistics and heart wrenching narratives, not only of McMillian but other stories of men, women, and children struggling in our prison system.



I would highly recommend this book – a fast-read – to anyone. It is interesting, heartfelt, and informative. Stevenson is living proof that racism, bias, and prejudice are still prevalent in the American Criminal Justice System, especially when it comes to the death penalty. This book is really good for anyone who wishes to learn more about the long racial and legal narrative of America and how it still affects us today. I would recommend it to anyone in high school and beyond. For me, it changed my high school course selections and my extracurricular choices. It could very well change the way you see things too.

If you read this book and enjoy it, I would also recommend books such as *The New Jim Crow*, *Evicted*, *Between the World and Me*, and *Half the Sky*. All these books are similar to *Just Mercy* and their well-known authors are all respective activists.

**Rosie Patton is going to be a senior at Memorial HS this fall. She developed her passion for nonfiction books by reading *Just Mercy*. Since then, she has joined the Social Justice Book Club at JMM and helped run an All School Reading event at Memorial with the goal of fostering productive conversations about race and bias in 2017. After high school, she plans to study history or political science in college and hopes to go on to law school.**

Nobody serves you better in Parkwood Hills



Parkwood Hills resident

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## CLASSIFIED ADS

Personal classified ads are accepted for this newsletter, which is mailed to 500 households in Parkwood Hills. Ads may be edited for length. Ads from Parkwood Hills residents are free (up to 6 per year per address). Commercial ads (up to 4 lines) or ads from outside the neighborhood are \$10 each. Email your ad to [editor@parkwoodhills.org](mailto:editor@parkwoodhills.org) or mail your payment, name, address and phone number with your ad to Elizabeth Morrison, 6913 Colony Dr. Madison WI 53717. Please make your check payable to Parkwood Hills Community Association.

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## Parkwood Hills Community Association Board

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