

# Village News

Views from the Heart of Historic Plano

May-June 2006

## The Fabric of Downtown

Historic Downtown Plano encompasses five neighborhoods, each of which has its own unique infrastructure. These neighborhoods are interwoven by the area's history and the residents who have inherited it.

Melissa O'Neal lives in a beautifully restored home on 17th Street in the Haggard Park area. She serves as president of the Haggard Park Homeowners Association, and is a self-employed line editor and published fiction writer. When she first saw the house back in 2001, it had been condemned by the city and had no utilities. She felt compelled by not merely a desire, but a need to save the structure and make it her home. After a nearly two-year renovation, she and her husband moved in during March 2003. The O'Neals are the third owners of the house, built in 1893.

The O'Neals have lived in several areas of the country, but have spent more time in Plano than anywhere else. Melissa calls the area "the *real* Plano." The history of the area does not burden her, but rather makes her feel a part of it. Like many other Haggard Park residents, she feels a responsibility to respect the history and strives to maintain its authenticity.

The neighborhood has an annual get together - a potluck dinner at the home of Debbie and Tony Holman. Folks catch up on each other's lives, kids play, recipes are exchanged and the warmth of the neighborhood is felt by all. In addition to attending the functions at Haggard Park, residents here often enjoy impromptu backyard get-togethers to enjoy the music which spills out into the neighborhood during special events.

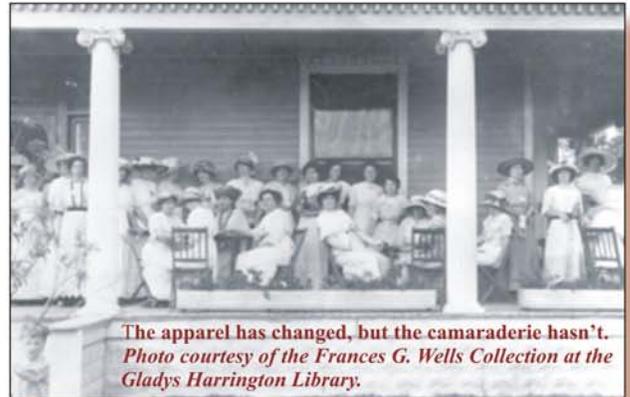
Phil Armstrong lives in the Olde Towne area, west of Avenue K between 18th Street and 15th Street. After 12 years of teaching in the Plano Independent School District, he now teaches science at Prestonwood Christian Academy. He and his wife Annette of 22 years have two teenagers. He is president of his neighborhood homeowner association.

Phil and his family moved to O Avenue in 1992 and immediately fell in love with the area's relaxing, quiet lifestyle. While living there, he and his wife admired another home in their neighborhood, Mary Alice Skaggs' on the corner of 17th Street and N Place. He wrote her a letter saying if she ever wanted to sell her home, he was interested. Much to his delight, his wish came true in April 2004, when Mrs. Skaggs, at age 96, felt a need to be closer to her sister in Celina. As she had saved his letter, the house never went on the market--Mrs. Skaggs sold it directly to the Armstrongs.

They are currently renovating the home, built in 1959 by David McCall Jr. from whom Mary Alice Skaggs purchased it. It is interesting that all three owners of the home have been educators. Mr. Armstrong did research, filed the appropriate paperwork, and the home has been designated as a heritage resource by the Heritage Commission.

Phil feels the history of the area when he notices things in the home, such as the pocket doors, molding and tile work. To him, Olde Towne residents share a true sense of community. People know each other, watch out for one another, and are proud of their neighborhood and its rich heritage.

He spoke of enjoying times during the summer, visiting with neighbors and spending some time with neighbor Bill Wheeler. According to Mr. Armstrong, "The people are concerned about the way of life here and want it to remain as pleasant as it is."



The apparel has changed, but the camaraderie hasn't. Photo courtesy of the Frances G. Wells Collection at the Gladys Harrington Library.

David Evans, at 34 years old, returned to his birthplace of Douglass Community two years ago. David is a real estate agent and living in the area provides him convenient access to the highway. He especially enjoys the "tight knit" community of the Douglass area, where homes have been handed down from one generation to the next, for as long as five generations - his mother owns two homes there. The entire neighborhood is one extended family.

David is the president of the Douglass Community Residence Group, formed initially to assist in repairing homes and beautifying the neighborhood. Recently the group renovated an abandoned home for use by a Katrina evacuated family. They also successfully challenged county appraisals that would have created unmanageable tax burdens on neighborhood homeowners. David deems the Douglass Community, "The best place to live in Texas."

Justin Nichols, age 21, lives in Eastside Village, an apartment community that is a neighborhood in itself. Justin was raised in Plano and chose to stay here when his family moved to San Antonio two years ago. He has become active in the community, working on voter registration drives and serving on the Republican Executive Committee for the county. He is a vice chair of the Heritage Commission and an election judge.

He enjoys the neighborhood for many reasons. Working in downtown Dallas and attending SMU, his commute from Eastside Village is easy, whether driving or using mass transit. Secondly, the staff of Eastside Village strives to maintain a good living environment with wonderful service and weekly social events such as bowling, stress seminars, free breakfast and video nights. He enjoys the diversity of the residents, including singles, small families and retirees.

The area offers the charm of a small town while being in an urban setting. From his window he can watch many events that he took part in as a child. In fact, he dressed in period costume last year for the Blackland Prairie Festival. As far as Justin is concerned, "Downtown Plano is a vibrant neighborhood with infinite potential to be the next great urban center of north Texas."

Doris Lynge's family has been the only owner of her home on 19th Street in the Haggard Addition area. She was raised in Christopher, Illinois, and met her husband, Gene, in St. Louis. In 1942, Gene's employer supplied airplane

(continued on page 2)

## Village People

parts for the war and moved to the Dallas area. Gene and Doris lived in Dallas from 1942 to 1948, when they moved to Plano. Their home, where Doris still lives, was built in 1951. They raised their two children in the neighborhood and Doris feels this was a wonderful experience for her family. Her daughter, who now lives in Madison, Wisconsin, was in the first graduating class of Williams High School. Her son was a navy pilot and died in a plane crash. Gene passed away in 1991.

Doris retired in 1981 from her position in public relations for the First National Bank in downtown Plano. All her previous employment in Texas was in this area, working for Miller's Dress Shop, Allen Drug Store and Harrington Drug Store.

Though she has no family in the area, Doris plans to stay in her home as long as she can. When asked why, she responded this is her "comfort zone." Everything she needs is in close proximity and she has a lasting circle of friends. Her life is interwoven with the history and people of downtown Plano. The residents of her neighborhood look out for one another. For example, Keith Robertson brings her newspaper and mail to her doorstep, and takes care of odd jobs. Though she is in her 80s, Doris still attends church meetings and an occasional card game. She has attended the Old Settlers Reunion.

Many residents of these neighborhoods feel they are stewards of Plano's history and as a result they feel more connected to one another. The small town ambience and the sense of community, woven together with the rich history of the area, make the neighborhoods of Historic Downtown Plano wonderful places to live, to raise a family and to build life-long friendships.

### Kay Askew

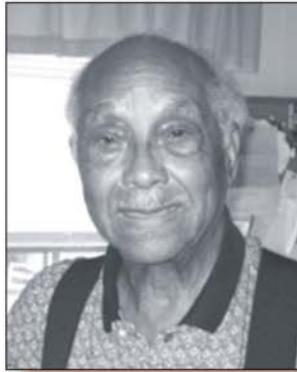
Kay Askew's camera captured images that were nods to nostalgia and often compassionate commemoratives. Our neighbor, award-winning photographer and gallery owner passed away March 7.

Kay worked almost exclusively with black and white film, and hand-tinted portraits. The technique, along with the frequent use of vintage clothing and props, gave her portraits a look reminiscent of photographs from the 1930s. About three years ago, when she relocated from Wylie to Historic Downtown Plano, her store and her wonderful personality fit in beautifully.

After the deaths of two young cancer patients who were clients, Kay established a nonprofit organization, Sunshine Faces. Through Sunshine Faces, young patients could come into the studio to escape the burdens of their illness and have a fun photo session in a nostalgic setting, complete with antique typewriters and worn baseball gloves.

Kay will be missed by fellow store owners and residents of the area. In addition to her sister Betsy Squires of Frisco, Kay is survived by two brothers and her sons, Grant Askew of Chicago and Blake Askew of Dallas.

Benjamin Franklin Morgan Thomas has been a pillar of the Douglass Community and much of Plano for many years now. Born in November of 1922, he has lived in Plano all his life and has been married to Frances for 63 years. The Thomases have four children, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.



Ben served as a driving instructor and worked in forestry and soil conservation in the Civilian Conservation Corps. After the Civilian Conservation Corps, Ben worked for Dr. Mitchell as his chauffeur, cook and landscaper. During his 23 years of service, the two men became close friends. Ben and Frances even accompanied the doctor on his travels. Dr. Mitchell sparked in Ben an interest in politics as a means of improving his community. Dr. Mitchell advised Ben if he waited for rights to come to the black population, they would remain at the lowest level of society. Ben then began to assist in the fight for voting rights for African-Americans and sought legal recourse to end the violence against the black community.

Over the years, Ben was influential in the integration of Plano. His approach was "philosophical," he spoke to the press regularly, but not negatively about the situation. As a result, he developed a good relationship with the press and gained respect from the city officials. He was a charter member on the Board of the Human Relations Commission for the City of Plano and served as its vice chairman. He was a key advocate for school integration. As the schools were integrated, he kept in touch with the students to be sure they were treated fairly.

Following his employment with Dr. Mitchell, Ben worked for Rockwell International (now Alcatel) for 21 years and was a charter member of the National Management Association for Rockwell International.

In his life, Ben has served on more than 25 committees, boards and commissions. Among them are: The Goals for Plano, Steering Committee for Collin County Community College, Police Advisory Committee, Collin County Minority Task Force, United Way and Affirmative Action Committee for the City of Plano.

Ben currently serves on the boards for Douglass Community Council, the Committee to Keep Plano Beautiful, the new African-American Museum (Thornton House), the Martin Luther King program committee and the Douglass Community Arts Advisory Committee. He has been a member of the Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church for 71 years and a Deacon for 45.

Ben and his father have both been honored for service to the community. J.L. Thomas Elementary School is named after his father; and the Douglass Community Center's gymnasium is named after Ben. In speaking at the Thomas Elementary School dedication, Ben's words were, "...I am humbly grateful." This statement sums up his sincere humility.

His satisfaction in life is derived from having made a contribution to his community and society in general. He views his lifelong accomplishments as having put into action the suggestions of wiser people. The walls of his home are not decorated with plaques and awards, but rather with photos of his family. His humble altruistic nature has been passed on to his children, who are also working to enhance the community in which they live. In his words, he has "taken the basic fundamentals of his life and applied them wherever they were needed."

## Street Talk

ArtCentre is sponsoring **Jump Start for Arts**, a free children's program with experiences in music, art, dance and drama, from May 20 to July 30. This free program for kids ages 8 to 12 is funded by The City of Plano. For details, contact 972-423-7809.

Dana Acuncius has opened **Fine Art Events** next door to The Rupp Fine Art Gallery, just in time for the Spring for Art Art Walk. She is in the business of hosting fine art events in this area and throughout the DFW metroplex. She has a wonderful display of art and will also be offering art workshops instructed by the professional artists represented by herself and Carol Rupp, in all media – even gourds!

**Room4Fun** is now open at 1308 E. 14th Street. The company provides a fun, clean, private, no-hassle place where you can relax and enjoy a memorable children's party experience. The Room4Fun boutique carries a variety of craft projects your child can "make and take." Come relax while your child makes a creative mess at their place! Feel free to bring a snack and stay a while. The boutique also features children's furniture and room accessories.

Kelly Mason and Carrie Hightower have opened **Jewels and Jeans** on Avenue K, across from Kelly's Eastside. The shop caters to young women with embellished jeans and tops, and handmade jewelry. These contemporary fashions include such brand names as True Religion, 7 of all mankind, Rock and Republic, and Levi's.



Did you know that **Hearing Aid Express**, on 15th Street near Ye Ole Butcher Shop, offers free complete testing with absolutely no obligation?

**Art-A-Rama Plano** will have Pizza Parties from 6 - 9 p.m. on May 5 and June 9. Kids get pizza, a project and party fun while parents get a break!

## Historic Views

Early in Plano's history all school classes, elementary through high school, were located in what is now known as the Cox Building. In 1951 the School Board began discussing the site for its first separate elementary school to be built with a \$25,000 bond issue. The architect Royall M. Strode teamed up with Connell Construction Company to accomplish this one year project. This educational landmark was initially named Plano Elementary School. The school was renamed Mendenhall Elementary School in 1961 for the notable first grade icon, teacher Aline Mendenhall.

Aline Harrell Mendenhall (1874-1963) graduated from Mary Nash College in Sherman in 1894 and began teaching first grade in the Plano schools. Following school policy, she left in 1900 when she married, but started a private school after her husband's death in 1909. She returned to the Plano Independent School District in 1920 and retired in 1947. Generations of Planoites passed through her first grade class and received from her a dose of cough syrup every winter morning. She was also known for her unique solutions to problems. For example, she tied rocks to the shirt of a boy who couldn't keep its tail tucked in properly.



The following is an abridged note from her grandson, taken from the school Web site: "At noon, Granny would get out her 'lunch bag' and split open a biscuit, then pick up a book and start to read to the several children who had no lunch to eat. Usually some of them were standing around her desk with bare feet. Granny would take a bite of a biscuit, then turn to one of those hungry listeners and say, 'Johnny, could you finish this for me as I can't continue reading with my mouth full,' or some other tactful way of transferring the food from her bag to the child in a dignified way."

There have been five additions to Mendenhall. Such innovative programs as The Goddard Environmental Camp, elementary bilingual classes and elementary science fairs began there. Mendenhall continues as a lighthouse for learning and its dedicated staff strives to make a positive difference in the youth and families it serves.

*Photo courtesy of Mendenhall Elementary School*

## Shopping the Village

**Just Got to Have It!** is now offering Essential Magnetics. You can turn back time with these treatments, to look better, feel happier, sleep more peacefully and have more energy. Stop by for a brochure and demonstration.

**Candy Bouquet** has unique, new, hand-painted ceramic serve ware called Cherry Pie. The line includes tea and coffee pots, cups and saucers, as well as sundae/dessert dishes, a covered pie dish, cake pedestal, pitcher, napkin holder, coasters, glasses with a carrier and canisters. Stop by the store and take a peak! While you're there, pick up some fresh fudge or a candy basket for Mother's or Father's Days.

Nantucket Baskets, made in Yarmouthport, Massachusetts, are now available exclusively at **Natural Elegance**. The design of these baskets is taken from the traditional and finely handcrafted Nantucket Lightship baskets made over 150 years ago by fishermen/seamen from Nantucket, Massachusetts.

The fresh flower shop is also now handling wedding arrangements and corsages. Stop by for unique Mother's Day arrangement with fresh cut tulips flown in from Holland or fresh cut orchids from Hawaii.



Looking for an elegant collectible? Visit **Creative Imprints** to see the Royal Copenhagen and Bing & Grondahl plates. Limited editions, and very early vintage (1897-1967) are available.



## Douglass Community



The Douglass Community will soon have an Italian glass mosaic mural entitled "Tracks of our Past and Future" at Avenue I and 12th Street. The 76 by 6 foot wall art project by artists Lynne Chinn and Shug Jones of Tesserae Mosaic Studios of Plano will be mounted on the wall donated by DART. The mural depicts the history of the Douglass Community and Plano, symbolizing the unification of the communities formerly divided by the tracks. The wall will be done at end of May. There will be a reception on June 16 at Douglass Community Center. The dedication and celebration ceremonies will be June 16 and 17. Call the Douglass Community Center for details, 972-941-7174.

### Keeping the Dream in the Community

Juneteenth marks the date in Texas and U.S. history, June 19, 1865, when notice finally arrived in Galveston, Texas that slavery had ended. Join in Plano's 2006 Juneteenth Celebration!

Friday, June 16

7-9 p.m. – Family Fun Fest - games, trivia and prizes  
9-11 p.m. – Blue Print - great live music with an "old-school" band  
11 p.m.-1 a.m. – Dancing & Music - with a DJ

Saturday, June 17

2-3 p.m. – Youth Challenge - relays and games  
3:30-5 p.m. – 3-on-3 Basketball Contest - ages 11 to 17 years  
7-9 p.m. – 6th Annual Old-School/New-School Basketball Game

### New African-American Museum

The Thornton House, on the corner of 13th Street and Avenue H, will soon become the Plano African-American Museum. This structure, built in the early 1900s, was owned by John Thornton, one of the area's first African-American homeowners.



Photo courtesy of the Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation

The house, once designated for destruction, was selected by The Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation and the Heritage Commission as worthy of preservation. It is a typical farmhouse and is constructed in Texas Victorian style. The house was well built out of solid materials and is almost all original construction. Funding for the project was provided by the City of Plano.

Local carpenter Kenneth Dziouch has restored the windows and doors by hand to their original condition. The interior restoration is complete and the exterior work should be finished by the printing of this newsletter. The museum will be furnished with authentic period pieces and will have membership benefits and tours. It will serve to present an era and a people neglected in history. The interpretive structure will also assist in Texas history education. According to Ted Peters, Director of the Heritage Farmstead Museum, "Historically, much has been written about slavery, the Civil War and the integration movement of the 40s and 50s, but little has been available depicting the time frame in between. The new Plano African-American Museum will bridge this gap in the city's past." The Heritage Farmstead Museum, 30 years in operation, is assisting on this project.

# Happenings

May/June 2006

## May

- 1-15 Plano Art Association National Juried Exhibit ArtCentre of Plano
- 3-30 Connections to Asia Exhibit Courtyard Theater
- 6 Collin County Ballet Theatre Courtyard Theater
- 12 & 13 Dream Catcher Dance Courtyard Theater
- 13 Spring for Art (Art Walk) Historic Downtown Plano
- 19 Adult Ceramics Night Art-A-Rama Plano
- 19 & 20 Plano Dance Theatre Courtyard Theater
- 20-31 Jump Start for Arts Exhibit ArtCentre of Plano
- 26-28 Dance Etc Courtyard Theater

## June

- 1-30 Jump Start for Arts Exhibit ArtCentre of Plano
- 3 Indian Fine Arts Academy Courtyard Theater
- 16 Adult Ceramics Night Art-A-Rama Plano
- 22-25 A Midsummer Night's Dream Amphitheater at Oak Point Park
- 23-25 Chamberlain Ballet Courtyard Theater
- 6/29-7/2 A Midsummer Night's Dream Amphitheater at Oak Point Park

# Spring for Art



Join us for the Spring for Art Art Walk on Saturday, May 13 from 4 to 9 p.m. in historic downtown Plano. This is the third collaborative art walk among local galleries, art studios and the City of Plano. The evening features special exhibitions, refreshments and entertainment free of charge to the public.

"There is so much going on in the local arts community. Spring for Art is a great opportunity to come and experience all the vibrant art that is going on right here in downtown Plano," said Tony Holman, owner and master artist of Holman Pottery. "For one night, guests can enjoy it all – it's a great evening with something for everyone."

Host galleries and studios include: Art-A-Rama Plano, ArtCentre of Plano, Courtyard Theater,

CYA Design Collaborative, Eastside Gallery, Fine Art Events, 14th Street Gallery, Holman Pottery, Kay Askew Photography, Michael D. Holter Studio & Gallery, Old Towne Gallery and The Rupp Fine Art Gallery. In addition, Plano Art Association, a local nonprofit organization comprised of professional and amateur artists, will be participating in Spring for Art.

Spring for Art guests can walk among art events while enjoying the area's specialty shops and restaurants. Parking is plentiful and complimentary. In addition, hospitality vans are available to transport guests during the event.

### THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Katie Armstrong | Marta Demaree  |
| Ted Peters      | Dolly Thomas   |
| Melissa Sauvage | Maggie Sprague |
| Anne Womack     |                |

# City Scene

Have you always admired the architecture of the Cox Building and Courtyard Theater? Special collectible prints of the Cox Building complex, signed and numbered by artist Jean Godfrey, are available from the Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation. Prints are \$75 each with proceeds going to programs of the Conservancy. Please stop in to see the print and order your copy.

The reconstruction of 15th Street from Avenue G to the rail tracks will begin in January of 2007. The project start was delayed to allow for completion of the holiday shopping and dining season. The project will include underground utility projects, drainage, and resurfacing of the street.

The City of Plano and the Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation will host a national preservation month ceremony at the Interurban Railway Museum on Thursday, May 4 at 5:00pm. The celebration will include recognition of



the Interurban Museums designation on the National Register of Historic Places, the City of Plano's Preserve America designation, and the annual Preservation Awards. Contact the Interurban Railway Museum at 972-941-2117 for more information.

## Camp Preservation for Ages 8-14

Are you curious about old buildings? Do you like deciphering symbols that link us to our past? If you said yes to any of these questions, then this adventure is for you! Join The Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation, Inc. and Outings and Adventures Everywhere! author, Lynda Morley, in a week long camp from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. where children will participate in a myriad of hands-on activities, including visiting a Plano cemetery to make charcoal rubbings, conducting oral history interviews of interesting Plano residents, touring the Interurban Railway Museum and creating original architectural facades as we explore the principals of historic preservation. Call 972-941-2117 to register today! Cost is \$85.00 for Session I, June 19-23rd and \$65.00 for Session II, July 5-7. Class size is limited.

*The City of Plano provides the Village News to members of our community to keep citizens informed about the activities in the heart of Historic Downtown Plano.*



## VILLAGE NEWS

PUBLISHER  
Dana Conklin

EDITOR  
Pat Dodge

EDITORIAL BOARD  
Pam Hatcher  
Debbie Holman  
Susan Lee  
Mary Jo Montgomery  
Dolly Thomas  
Jim Wear

City of Plano  
P.O. Box 860358  
75086-0358  
(972) 941-7250  
email: danac@plano.gov

Village News  
City of Plano  
P.O. Box 860358  
Plano, TX 75086-0358



PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Plano, Texas 75074  
Permit No. 837