



# The Optimist

SPRING 2023

INDIANHEAD LEHIGH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## Nene Fest and 5k Run

By Nene Fest Planning Committee

Join neighbors and friends at Optimist Park on April 29 for Nene Fest, the Indianhead Lehigh Neighborhood Association's annual community celebration! This will be the lucky 13th "festival for neighbors by neighbors," and as in the past, it will offer an array of activities for folks of all ages.

Hearty individuals can begin the day by participating in the Nene Fest 2-way 5K or 1 mile Fun Run, on a well-marked course through the Indianhead neighborhood. From 4:00 to 9:00 p.m., the festival will feature music, food, and booths showcasing art, crafts, and community projects. Throughout the day, dedicated volunteers will be working onsite to set up the array of family-friendly activities. Come join the fun!

If you are interested in lending a hand with the race or the festival, please contact festival organizers at [indianheadlehighna@gmail.com](mailto:indianheadlehighna@gmail.com). See page 2 for a summary of the events.



**This year's Nene Fest design  
was created by Laura Nicole Floyd.**

## Summary of the Events

### **Nene Fest 5K and Fun Run**

Registration: from 6:45 to 8:00 a.m.

Times: 5K begins at 8:00 a.m.

Fun Run begins at 9:00 a.m.

Needed: runners, walkers, supporters, and volunteers

### **After 5K—Yoga by Laura Nicole Floyd**

Donation Yoga @ Optimist Park, 10:00 a.m.

Open Level, with equal amounts relaxation and strengthening/stretching. Beginner friendly. Inclusive, encouraging, and non judgmental group!

### **Nene Fest Stage and Festival Set-up**

Time: begins at 12:00 p.m.

Needed: ladders, rope, and lots of helping hands

### **Merchandise Sales**

Time: one-hour shifts from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Needed: assistance selling festival tee shirts and other merchandise

### **Art, Craft, and Business Showcase**

Time: set-up in the early afternoon

Needed: artisans, artists, crafters, businesses, and organizations that would like to share information about their group or sell handmade products. There is no fee, but exhibitors must bring their own canopy, table, and supplies.

### **On Stage**

Time: from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Needed: performances that feature individual performers and bands related to the local neighborhood.

### **Food**

The Nene Café will sell hot dogs and burgers, with side dishes and desserts provided by neighbors. The Global Café of Tallahassee will sell vegan food.

Needed: volunteers to make side dishes and desserts and to help serve food. We also will need volunteers to help keep water and tea coolers filled throughout the afternoon.

### **Stage and Festival Disassembly and Clean-up**

Time: April 30, beginning 9:00 a.m.

Needed: lots of helping hands!

## About the Nene Fest 5K and Fun Run

Since 1998, the neighborhood hills annually have hosted the Women's Distance Festival in September on a certified course familiar to many local runners. In 2014, the Nene Fest 5K began to use the same course in the spring, and last year it became a 2-way race. Runners can choose to tackle the course counterclockwise (the traditional way) or clockwise.

As in previous years, this race benefits Hartsfield Elementary School. Supporting the Hartsfield PTO with proceeds from the run will help enrich the experience of Hartsfield students, support their dedicated teachers and administrators, and encourage community investment in the neighborhood public school.

Residents can help to make the race a success by running, sponsoring, or volunteering! Here are some details about how to get involved.

### **To register for the 5K race or Fun Run:**

- Go online to [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com); or
- Sign up on race day at Optimist Park, starting at 6:45 a.m.

### **Entry fee**

Before April 26: 5K—\$20; Fun Run—\$10

Day of race: 5K—\$25, Fun Run—\$10

Hartsfield students: \$5

### **Race details**

6:45 a.m.: packet pick-up begins at Optimist Park

8:00 a.m.: 2-way 5K starts

9:00 a.m.: 1 mile Fun Run starts

Motorists will be encouraged and assisted by the course marshals to find alternate routes during the morning.



2022 Nene Fest 5K runners at the start line on East Indianhead Dr.

## What is a 2-way 5K?

All runners begin together on East Indianhead Drive. After 700 yards, counterclockwise runners split left, while clockwise runners continue straight up the hill. Both groups cover the middle miles of the course in opposite directions. The two courses converge 550 yards before the line, and runners finish together. Counterclockwise runners hit the highest point of the hilly course at Hartsfield Elementary School, after four kilometers. Clockwise runners hit the peak after 1K. Participants decide which direction they want to take.



Post-race awards and door prizes

## How to be a volunteer, donor, or sponsor

Volunteers are needed to help with set-up and to ensure the event runs smoothly and is fun for all. They will help with registration on the morning of the race and serve as marshals along the course and at the finish line. Please contact Marie-Claire Leman at (850) 728-7514 or [marieclaireleman@gmail.com](mailto:marieclaireleman@gmail.com) to become involved.

Businesses, organizations, and individuals are encouraged to become race sponsors and help support Hartsfield Elementary. Various levels of recognition are offered based on the level of sponsorship. To be a sponsor, a volunteer, or for questions about the race, contact Marie-Claire Leman (see details above).



Runner and Hartsfield student Iris Lee with her mom and race volunteer Cassie McGlynn

*Photos courtesy of Marie-Claire Leman*

# News & Notes

## Celebrate Earth Day at the Quaker Meeting Open House

By Vicki Mariner

Earth Day is a time to delight in the renewal of life and the beauty of our blue-green planet. The Quaker Meeting on Magnolia Drive will recognize the event by hosting an Open House on Saturday, April 22. Highlights will include a plant give-away, activities for folks of all ages, an area where participants can make a peace prayer flag, and information tables about home and community gardening as well as Quaker traditions concerning peace and non-violence.

Members of the Tallahassee Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have been meeting in Tallahassee since the 1970s. After gathering at various locations for many years, the Friends Meeting bought a residence on Magnolia in the mid 1990s. Architectural features of the eighty-year-old house, including a pine-paneled interior, large central room, high-peaked ceiling, and large windows make the meeting area a comfortable space to gather for functions as well as worship. During the Open House, community members will be available to answer questions about Quaker traditions and beliefs, such as how followers came to be called "Quakers."

The two-acre property also includes six vegetable gardens in which produce is grown for donation to the I-Grow center near Old Bainbridge Road. Planting fruit trees also has become a priority, with figs, citrus, mulberry, and plums added in 2022. A raised garden was planted with flowers to attract butterflies and insects. Society members hope their Meetinghouse will become a resource for information as well as inspiration for Tallahassee's Southside neighborhoods, with guests using the patio and outdoor spaces as well as Meetinghouse for small interest groups and community gatherings.

Located at 2001 South Magnolia Drive, the Quaker Open House will extend from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. For additional information, go to [www.tallyquaker.org](http://www.tallyquaker.org) or contact the group via Facebook at Tallahassee Friends Meeting (Quakers).

## IHLNA Yard Sale

IHLNA's Annual Yard Sale is on Saturday, April 15, from 8:00 a.m. to noon at Optimist Park. Whether you join neighbors as a vendor or browser, bargaining and socializing will be the main actions of the day. Participation is free for residents who have paid their 2023 association dues, and \$10 for nonmembers. Don't miss this chance to pass on the items that no longer spark joy in your household. For details, email [indianheadlehighna@gmail.com](mailto:indianheadlehighna@gmail.com).

**Yard Sale  
April 15**



The Religious Society of Friends

## Quakers

A spiritual practice of contemplation,  
community, and social justice action.

Sunday Meeting, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

All are Welcome!

# The Concept of Neighborhood: A Place or a Community?

By Sharon and Terry Kant-Rauch

*"Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept."*

—Rabbi Joachim Prinz, *March on Washington, D. C., August 28, 1963*

When we think about our neighborhood, we often are in awe of the Neighbor as a moral concept. Many readers may be familiar with intentional communities in Tallahassee, such as the Miccosukee Land Co-op (MLC), Grassroots Community, and the DayStar cohousing community. Folks often have referred to Indianhead Acres as "the Co-op without the meetings."

Thirty years ago, when we began to look for a home in which to buy a house, we vacillated between Indianhead and MLC and looked at houses in both communities, knowing that a neighborhood was important to us. In the end, the house itself tipped us to Indianhead, but the neighborhood community was and continues to be the glue that keeps us here.

Over the years, Indianhead Lehigh has gotten even more connected, with monthly potlucks, Halloween parties, Nene Fest, community gardens, block parties, neighborhood runs, yard sales, meal cooperatives, and welcoming parties for new residents. Neighbors also volunteer for Election Day activities, support Hartsfield Elementary School, and even attempt to rid the neighborhood of invasive plants! One of the latest additions is the amazing N3 in the Nenes, which helps elders to live independently in their home. The parks regularly are used for homeschool groups, birthday parties, sports, and information meetings. All of this connectedness helps to build community and friendships.

Over the past few years, more and more children who were raised here are moving back with their own families, making this a multigenerational place to live. We often bring our five-year-old granddaughter, Sophia, to Optimist Park and watch her play on the same monkey bars that all three of our children played on.

During times of difficulty, we come together and support each other. After hurricanes, we gather to share food, coffee, and generators to charge phones and attitudes, sometimes meeting at the park for a pancake breakfast. Just the other night, we got a call from a neighbor who thought he saw our daughter's dog running down the street. Since we couldn't reach her on the phone, that neighbor drove one of us around to look for the dog. It turned out her dog was safe and sound in her house at the other end of the neighborhood, but this type of spontaneous good neighbor effort happens a lot.

On our daily walks, we frequently run into people we know, often pausing to chat for a few minutes. We hear about births and deaths, lost dogs and new puppies, good books and the latest vegetable growing in the garden.

Getting to know one another and supporting each other at various times and in various ways is living "a moral concept." Unless you are living in an Intentional Community, getting this level of connectedness is rare.

We are so grateful it exists here in Indianhead. For each of us, this neighborhood not only houses our body; it also houses our soul.

*Sharon and Terry Kant-Rauch have lived in Indianhead for 33 years. Rabbi Joachim Prinz, whose words open this article, was a German-American Rabbi who was outspoken against Nazism.*

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## N3 Statistics Reflect Commitment to Service

By Carrie Gaudio, N3 Executive Director

In 2022, volunteers with Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes (N3) provided services to elders in the Indianhead and Lehigh Acres area more than 400 times. Program coordinators know not only the number of services, but also which ones are most popular because of the detailed efforts of N3's technology committee and the diligent reporting by our volunteers. Transportation for appointments, to get groceries, and to run other errands was the most popular. Connecting neighbors together to build friendships and reduce isolation, "Friendly Companion" services (in-person and via phone) were a close second.

Accessible transportation is a vital part of ensuring that folks can remain independently in their homes. The National Association on Aging and Disability Transportation has stated that public transportation is insufficient in meeting the needs of aging populations, and creative community solutions are necessary to fill the gaps. N3 is committed to building a network of volunteers to meet these needs in the neighborhood, as well as ensuring that residents who are over age 65 feel comfortable reaching out when they are in need.

A recent study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that socially isolated older adults have a twenty-seven percent higher chance of developing dementia than older adults who have strong social ties. This research supports the value of N3's Friendly Companion programs, and it is a reminder of the inherent value that a connected neighborhood provides to everyone.

In 2023, N3 hopes to continue to foster these important programs, while also encouraging additional neighbors to get involved as volunteers and service recipients. Even for elders who may have robust social networks and modes of transportation, we encourage anyone over age 65 to consider N3 as a resource for needs associated with other short-term challenges such as surgeries, injuries, or familial illness. A little extra help with yard work, meals, cleaning,

or decluttering can be a relief when an acute situation is occurring.



### Three Cheers for 'Boss' Judy Rainbrook!

You may not always see her on the front lines, but Judy Rainbrook is one of the pillars who helps N3 to run smoothly. Armed with talent and drive, she is a renaissance woman: a bookkeeper, web manager, volunteer coordinator, and mentor extraordinaire. Judy's efforts to collect service data have been immense, allowing N3 to understand where services are needed and to look at trends and patterns. Her efforts with volunteers, bookkeeping, and the organization's website have set up N3 for success.

Judy volunteered hundreds of hours of her time in 2022, and N3 is beyond lucky to have her brilliance and perseverance as part of the organization. Judy is one of the many volunteers who make N3 run smoothly behind the scenes. Folks who are interested in joining the Tech Committee, Resource Library Committee, or any of N3's other volunteer opportunities can reach out to Judy at [info@aginginneneland.org](mailto:info@aginginneneland.org).



To learn more about Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes and how to become involved, contact us at (850) 901-7818 or [www.AgingInNeneland.org](http://www.AgingInNeneland.org). Please be sure to support the businesses that support N3: P3 Automotive; Kant Realty of North Florida; The Clothesline; Michael A. Bell, CFP; Sandra's Flower Basket; Blue Ribbon Cleaners; and Bada Bean.



Carrie Gaudio  
N3 Executive Director

### N3 Welcomes New Staff

Last fall, Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes hired Florida State University alum Carrie Gaudio as its first paid executive director. N3 took this significant step thanks to support from the NextFifty Initiative, IHLNA residents and supporters, and neighborhood businesses. The measure helps to ensure that its services will be sustained and available for local elders in the future.

While working for many years at the Agency for Health Care Administration, Gaudio oversaw statewide initiatives as the Policy Coordinator for Health Information Technology. She became interested in national aging systems while in school, but her experiences as a State of Florida employee and a longtime caregiver imbued a passion for finding and fixing gaps in local and national aging support networks. Gaudio maintains a strong commitment to education by serving as board president for the SAIL High School Foundation, a volunteer for the Southern Shakespeare Company and the Grassroots Free School, and a board member for Colorful Talks, a national nonprofit that supports diversity education. A native Tallahasseean and former Indianhead resident, Gaudio shares her life with a partner and their remarkable child. She can be reached at [agingwithcommunity@outlook.com](mailto:agingwithcommunity@outlook.com).

Let's put down some roots!

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# If a Tree Falls in the Forest, But No One Hears It...

By Ryan A. Wilke

Sixty years ago, biologist, conservationist, and writer Rachel Carson warned us in her seminal work, *Silent Spring*, of a world without birdsong. The threat then was a slow, creeping accumulation of pesticides that would damage the habitats of birds and, ultimately, the birds themselves.

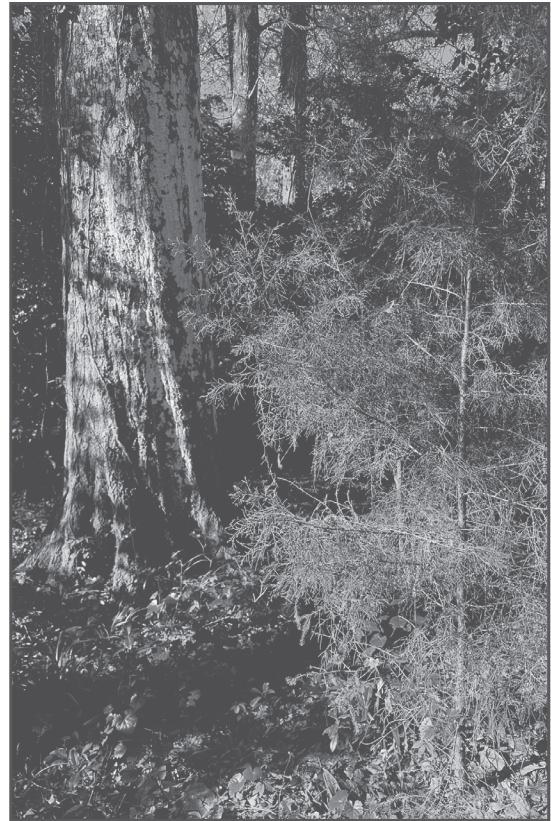
Today, an equally insidious threat to wildlife has snuck into our neighborhood: the loss of native trees. One tree at a time. One here. One there. This tree because it was sick; that tree because it was too close to the house. Perhaps yet another because the leaves were too much to rake. No one may have noticed one tree missing, but our collective removal of them, one at a time, has had an impact.

People used to ask, "Where are you?," when talking to me on the phone. The cacophony of springtime birdsong erupted all around my home each morning. But the birds have slowly begun their departure. The loss of a nest in one tree. A loss of a food source in another. After all, a single oak tree can support thousands of species of insects.

But there is hope if we are willing to give up some space for it. In his recent work, *Nature's Best Hope*, Dr. Douglas Tallamy, professor of environmental sciences at the University of Delaware, writes about what we can do, together, to return our suburban yards to ecologically productive places. Tallamy says this could happen by encouraging more native plants and trees on our property and by collectively assembling our yards into a backyard national park—a dense patchwork of slightly wilder places to support wildlife. With one tree at a time coming up from our grassy yards, we can restore our canopy and give nature a chance at restoration too.

So, what stops us from planting and growing trees?

Native trees are not very expensive. If we can just leave a square (about 6 x 6 feet) unmowed for a year, oak, magnolia, pine, and hickory trees likely will emerge. Alternatively, for about \$20, one can find native trees about four feet tall, well on their way,



Young eastern red cedar in our neighborhood emerging among old laurel oak



Young red buckeye growing in oak leaf litter



at a local nursery. Native trees are often drought tolerant and require only a bit of extra water their first year. Many are disease resistant and require little or no care after planting. There are species that don't lose too many leaves. And there are a great many beautiful and interesting, medium-sized trees that have a good wind resistance profile and, if planted in the right location, pose little threat to one's home.

Trees shade our yards, buffer the noise of the urban environment, and protect our water supply. The leaves can sparkle in the summer sun and crunch beneath our feet in the fall. The shadows of leaves dance quietly upon a wall as the sun goes down, and in the mornings ahead of us, thousands of birds may return to perch on our trees to sing to the rising sun.

Trees enrich our lives at every turn. Consider adding one of the following medium-sized, excellent options to your yard this year.

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Witch hazel   | Eastern red cedar |
| Yaupon holly  | Red buckeye       |
| Cabbage palm  | Florida maple     |
| Winged elm    | Hophornbeam       |
| American plum | Red mulberry      |
| Sparkleberry  | Eastern redbud    |

Ryan A. Wilke is associated with Indianhead Lehigh Friends of Native Trees. He can be contacted at [ryanawilke@gmail.com](mailto:ryanawilke@gmail.com). The book he cites is Tallamy, Douglas W. *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* (Portland: Timber Press, 2020).

All photos courtesy of Ryan Wilke



A mix of native trees in an Indianhead backyard



A young winged elm in the Indianhead neighborhood

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# What? The Greenway with No Trees?

By Karla Brandt

Our beloved Indianhead Greenway could lose its trees if residents don't eliminate plants that don't belong here.

On a stroll through the greenway, look down at the ground. You will come upon thick mats of small, bright-green plants blanketing the ground. These blankets consist of two related species: small-leaf spiderwort and dotted bridalveil, native to South and Central America, respectively. Although these plants are not very big, the damage they do is mighty—and could be irreversible. These are but two of the more than twenty species of invasive plants that are not native to Florida that have been identified in the greenway.

Look up from the ground, and you will see large canopy trees, such as sweetgum, swamp chestnut oak, and spruce pine. Try searching for young trees, and you will find very few. Our young native canopy trees can't get started because their seedlings are outcompeted by invasive plants. Very few canopy trees are growing up to replace the big ones, so once the big trees are gone, we'll be left with a very different greenway. The most common young trees in the greenway are Cherry laurels, a native tree that can spread by roots as well as by seeds. Cherry laurels, however, max out at around 40 feet.



Close-up of small-leaf spiderwort; photo by William M. Ciesla, Forest Health Management International, Bugwood.org



Dotted bridalveil; photo by Jean Burns, Florida State University, Bugwood.org

Experts with the City of Tallahassee Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Affairs Department and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are coming to the rescue. The agencies plan to use a well-tested herbicide called triclopyr to eliminate non-native invasive plants. This will take an important step in restoring the greenway's tree community.

At present, the treatment schedule has not been set. When work starts, signs will be posted at greenway trail entrances, notifying neighbors of spraying.

When you smell that smell, know that it's paving the way for a new generation of trees to keep our lovely greenway the shady, green mecca that it is today.

Triclopyr has been used for many years to control unwanted plants in natural areas, according to FWC biologist and invasive plant expert John Kunzer. Spraying is done by highly qualified contractors who target these unwanted plants. "Crews are trained as to what plants to kill and what to leave alone," Kunzer said. Triclopyr interferes with and mimics a plant growth hormone called auxin—a hormone not found in animals. Triclopyr can irritate human skin and eyes, so it's best to stay out of the greenway for a day or two after spraying.



You may remember that the greenway smelled bad for a few days after the 2019 application of herbicides to clear out coral ardisia and other invasive species. John Kunzer explained that this is mostly due to the oil in the oil-based version of triclopyr. The oil helps the herbicide penetrate the bark of woody invasive species, such as camphor tree and tallow tree. Either the oil-based or the water-based formulation of triclopyr may be used, at slightly different concentrations, based on weather conditions at the time of spraying.

Coral ardisia; photo by James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

## You can help save the Greenway!

Stamp out invasive plants in your yard, which will eliminate sources of seeds that can be spread by birds and breezes. For practical (and free) advice on identifying and eradicating these plants, call the UF/IFAS Leon County Extension Service at (850) 606-5200.



# Hartsfield Principal Reflects on 2023 Transitions: Growth, Partnerships, and Future Plans

By Dr. Rhonda Blackwell-Flanagan

As the 2022–23 school year draws to a close, we are happy to be back in full effect. We meet in person; our community events are in person; our service providers and therapists see students face-to-face; our mentors are returning, and our volunteer numbers continue to rise. There is momentum in place, and we are heading in a positive direction! Teachers and students continue to see success in the classroom, and our partners provide support along the way. As almost anyone touched, impacted, or supported by Hartsfield can attest, “One Love, One Heart” energy and synergy keep us connected and thriving. We enjoy having our surrounding communities on this journey and sharing some of the great things happening within Hartsfield’s halls.

Last May, the Leon County School Board approved our name and status change. Officially, we are The Hartsfield Magnet School for International Studies (HMSIS)!

We hope this speaks to and encourages parents to choose a school that is different, unique, and more than an education. Rather, it is an experience grounded in a rigorous, transdisciplinary curriculum that develops dispositions for global-mindedness, agency, and action in students. Parents are now able to choose HMSIS as a magnet school of choice. We look forward to increasing enrollment and enabling families to begin their child’s IB career at Hartsfield!

## Transition Principal

As I prepare to retire in August 2023, I can look back with satisfaction and pride at the many accomplishments the school’s team of educators, administrators, parents, and supporters have achieved. To ensure this momentum continues, Superintendent Rocky Hanna made the decision to appoint a transition principal for the 2022–23 school year. This will help to ensure that 1) the partnership between the community and the school continues; and 2) the trajectory toward IB authorization and the Conscious Discipline implementation is firmly established. Mr. John Olson is a former teacher at Hartsfield and has returned to work with me in school improvement, student achievement, and Reaching Our Goals with Heart and Soul!

## Primary Years (IB) Program

It’s remarkable to think that around this time last year, we were preparing to pilot our first PYP Unit of Inquiry with our learners. We are now on the final stretch of our IB Primary Years Programme journey to authorization. Teachers have completed the process of writing the curriculum, which consists of grade-level-specific Units of Inquiry that incorporate the state standards, and we have completed the articulation of our schoolwide Program of Inquiry. We already have seen an increase in our learners’ level of engagement through this process, as we successfully integrated schoolwide events, grade-level learning excursions, and campus visits by community members to support our move toward concept-based learning, international mindedness, and transdisciplinary teaching. With our application submitted in early March and an anticipated authorization visit in late April, we are looking forward to joining the IB World School family!

## Parent and Family Engagement

This February, we hosted our 4th Parent and Family Engagement Conference. Unique in Leon County, this conference grew out of a desire to build an innovative pathway for parents to engage with the school. We thought that if we could give parents the tools and strategies they needed, raise awareness around best practices in parenting, and connect them to



resources, they could then build stronger families in our community and be more engaged with the school in the education of their child. Our conference theme this year was "Breaking Barriers and Building Connection and Community." Parents who attended enjoyed a documentary film, workshops with experts in their fields, an exhibit hall of local providers, and a lunchtime panel while their children had fun in Hartsfield's own Kid's Camp.

## New Café

While construction of a new café has been stalled due to rising construction and material costs, it is now 100 percent certain that a new café will be constructed in the coming year. The old café and music building will be demolished and a new cafetorium almost twice the size will be built. Another opening and ribbon cutting we can look forward to in the near future!

## Exciting Projects on the Horizon

You soon will notice two other projects when passing the school.

- HMSIS has partnered with Second Harvest of the Big Bend to be the second location for a Food Locker to increase access to fresh food 24 hours a day. The lockers are temperature controlled and will be a spot where parents and community members can order and pick up 20-pound food boxes for their family. The locker will eliminate barriers by increasing food accessibility.
- HMSIS is partnering with Knight Creative Communities Institute (KCCI) to bring the Crosswalks to Classrooms project to the community. With this project, high-use crosswalks near schools are painted in bright colors and designs to engage students and parents, enhance safety, and improve the livability of our streets. The initial project will include the crosswalk at the entrance to the school. Eventually, the crosswalk at the corner of East Indianhead Drive and Chowkeebin Nene will be enhanced as well. To learn more about KCCI and the Crosswalks to Classrooms project, go to <https://kccitallahassee.com>.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support of Hartsfield Magnet School for International Studies!

Dr. Rhonda Blackwell-Flanagan, Principal 2017–23.

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# The Beavers of Indianhead Marsh

By Gordon L. Magill

If you've visited the wet marsh at the north end of Indianhead's greenway, you may have seen evidence of beavers living there. While scanning the area, you likely saw several beaver dams that hold back shallow pools of water. In the middle of the marsh, the beavers' "lodge," constructed of branches and mud and surrounded by cattails and grasses, rises above the marsh.

Longtime Indianhead resident Grant Gelhardt says that in the 1980s, he could walk across the marsh without getting his feet soaked. For some years, the marsh basin or "steep head" was a dumping ground for concrete and construction waste. Remnants of this dumping can still be seen. Gelhardt says beavers began to appear fifteen to twenty years ago, although their origin is unknown. They may have made their way up Indianhead Creek from a pond, slough, waterway, or storm water pond elsewhere in Tallahassee and began to build dams. "This is something beavers do..., but this is the first time since Indianhead was developed in the '50s that beavers have dammed up the area and converted it to a marsh," Gelhardt says. Because beavers live up to twenty-four years, it is unknown whether today's occupants are the originals or their offspring.

The beavers' local appearance is exciting to nature watchers, yet it is part of longer and larger story. The beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is believed to have migrated from northern Europe to North America at least seven, and perhaps ten, million years ago. The oldest beaver remains, two fossilized teeth found in Oregon, are seven million years old. Zoologists believe that prior 1600 A.D., beavers lived throughout North America, and wherever they went, they created wetlands by damming whatever stream or river they found, thus creating habitats for myriad other species. However, as they were nearly trapped to extinction, wetlands simply dried up—estimated at well over 100,000 square miles in the U.S. Their almost waterproof fur was converted to myriad clothing items. However, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, restrictions were placed on beaver trapping by the U.S. and Canadian governments. Today, the North American population is estimated to be from ten to fifteen million animals.

The Indianhead beavers likely are of the subspecies *C. c. carolinensis*, or Carolina beaver, found throughout the southeastern states. As adults, they measure from two to three feet long (including their long, flat, scaled tails) and weigh forty to fifty pounds. The male is larger than the female. They are primarily nocturnal and active most of the night. By sunrise, they are safely back in their "lodge," preparing to snooze all day.



North American beaver; photo by Coniferousforest.com, Sudipto Chakrabarti



Lower main beaver dam on Indianhead stream; photo by Gordon Magill



Lower main beaver dam with pond in Indianhead marsh; photo by Gordon Magill



Beaver tracks at Indianhead marsh; photo by Gordon Magill



Beaver chews on red oak at Indianhead marsh; photo by Gordon Magill



Beaver canals at Indianhead marsh; photo by Gordon Magill

If you could watch them at night, you would see a lot of activity—swimming, exercising, and gathering tree branches, bark, twigs, leaves, and buds for food. In spring and summer, they also munch on green aquatic plants such as water lilies and cattail rushes with tender shoots and roots. Many of the tree species they eat—black cherry, red oak, aspen, birch, hornbeam, maple, sweetgum, and willow—grow at the Indianhead marsh.

Beavers must gnaw on wood fiber to wear down their four thick and strong incisors, which grow constantly. Their digestive system allows them to eat wood fiber and vegetable matter, which have high nutritional value and provide energy. Beavers store caches of trees and leafy branches in the pond near their lodge and can get through cold northern winters, swimming under ice from their lodge to their “wood pantry” to get fresh food.

Beavers also work at night to repair or enlarge the dams that contain water for their pond, and they are hardwired to do so. After a heavy rain, I’ve watched water drain from ponds through holes in a dam, into nearby streams. Within days, beavers have repaired the damage and nearly restored the water level.

To build a dam, a beaver cuts down small trees, gnaws off the branches, and drags or pushes the tree trunks and limbs downstream into a pile at a narrow place on the stream. With its dexterous front paws and powerful, webbed hind feet, it then excavates mud from the stream bottom or banks to push into place on top of the brush, adding grasses, stems of rushes, and even rocks. The result is a solid structure that spans both sides of the stream, backs up the stream’s flow, and forms a pond.

The beaver habitation of Indianhead marsh is worth protecting and preserving. They are among the unique animals that reside in our marsh, but they are part of a much larger ecosystem that includes everything from bugs and birds to frogs and foxes. People can protect native species by maintaining pools of water that will be visited and inhabited by wildlife. Even today, a watchful visitor with binoculars, especially in early morning or late day, may see wood ducks or mallard ducks, Canada geese, blue heron, night heron or green heron, white egrets or white ibis, red-shouldered hawks, kingfishers, and many species of songbirds. The marsh, its trees and plants, and the beavers that helped to create it, is a beautiful, living natural observatory of wildlife to study and enjoy just beyond our doorsteps.

*Gordon Magill’s complete article about beavers inhabiting in the Indianhead marsh will be posted on the Indianhead website at [ihlna.com](http://ihlna.com).*



Beaver canals at Indianhead marsh; photo by Gordon Magill



Beaver lodge at Indianhead marsh; photo by Karen Bachman

# Thinking of Selling Your Home? Keep These Tips in Mind

By Terry and Sharon Kant-Rauch

People sell their home for many reasons, including upsizing for expanded household needs, moving to a retirement community or to be closer to loved ones, downsizing as children leave and life circumstances change, or just wanting a change. Always in the factors is an eye for profiting off the sale of a home, which is often our biggest financial investment.

If you have owned your home in Indianhead or Lehigh for more than a few years, expect to make some serious money. The problem is that if you also have to buy a new dwelling, whatever you are purchasing likely has gone up in price as well.

There are several things to keep in mind if you decide to sell.

Markets are changing rapidly, although prices in Indianhead generally seem to be holding. However, some properties are taking longer to sell.

The number of multiple offers is not as many, although if the property is priced well, you likely will get more than one offer.

In pricing a home, keep in mind that most buyers need mortgages—which means your home needs to appraise at least at the sale price. If it doesn't appraise out, your buyer is purchasing with negative equity with more cash needed from buyer's end. Most buyers don't want to do this and won't.

The first few weeks of a new listing are most important, with the majority of folks seeing the listing either online or in person. If you price too high to begin with, you may miss a lot of people who glossed over it and don't realize that you may have lowered the price.

If you get a quick sale, but the inspection the buyer has done has certain issues, then disclosing those previously unknown issues and putting it

back on the market puts a seller at a disadvantage. It's best to get a prelist inspection, especially if your home is older, has a crawl space or a similar detail.

Indianhead has a lot of older homes that are located on a flood plain or are on a crawl space that can hold in moisture and fungus, or they have an older roof, HVAC, or electrical (a big deal is cloth wiring). These all can present issues for getting insurance in the ever-increasing squeeze on homeowners.

The pre-list inspection is the single most important thing a seller can do to prepare. Waiting for a potential buyer to do this after you've already negotiated your best price leaves a seller in a vulnerable place and also contributes to deals falling through more than anything else. Presenting a home at its best almost always pays off in higher prices and ease in selling. Be open to getting some things repaired or replaced that will make the rest go more smoothly. The normal decluttering, painting, tidying, and so forth always are good to do, but the inspection allows you to move forward with confidence that the transaction more likely will go the entire distance to closing. Be sure to get an experienced inspector and Realtor with whom you feel comfortable.

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