

Ravinia Neighbors Association

# My Ravinia

## A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR RAVINIA NEIGHBORS

2007

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[www.ravinianeighbors.org](http://www.ravinianeighbors.org)

What: Ravinia Neighbors Association annual general meeting

Where: At the Becker/Segal estate, 405 Sheridan Rd., Highland Park

When: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2007; tour of the estate, 6:30 p.m.; music and hors d'oeuvres, 7 p.m.; general meeting, 7:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual general meeting at the historic lakeside Becker/Segal estate, which will be open to us courtesy of its new owner, Orren Pickell.



The 17-acre estate, set among ravines and a high Lake Michigan bluff, is one of the finest remaining Prairie Style landscapes by its spiritual leader Jens Jensen, the dean of American landscape architects. The property's mansion was designed by the renowned Howard van Doren Shaw. The site is listed in the National Registry of Historic places.

Mr. Pickell kindly agreed to provide a tour of the grounds of the estate to get the evening started. Later, during the course of the meeting, he will offer his company's development concept for the Becker estate.

Mayor Belsky's introductory remarks will consider the past and the future of Highland Park's lakefront. Historian Elliott Miller will speak about the history of the city's lakefront, and Steve Meyer of the Highland Park District, joined by Stacey Weiss, Park District president and Ralph Volpe, executive director, will present the proposed lakefront plan that would greatly improve our four public beaches.

There will also be music at the event,

courtesy of the Midwest Young Artists, one of the nation's leading youth music organizations located next door in Fort Sheridan.

Ravinia's Tapis Rouge French restaurant has kindly offered to serve hors d'oeuvres and soft drinks.

Since there will be no parking available at the site, we encourage everybody who can to walk or ride a bike. If you need to, you can park at the Ravinia Festivals east parking lot, at the corner of Lambert Tree and Sheridan, two blocks away.

Also, if you need a ride, Dave Hanus, principal of the Reliable Limousine, has graciously offered a limousine shuttle to the estate from the parking area. The service will be available from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and then from 9:00 to 9:45 p.m.

This promises to be a lovely and informative evening and the RNA is pleased to sponsor this event. It is hoped that our guests who are not yet members of our association and those who need to renew their membership will take this opportunity to do so. Those out of the area, if they so wish, may contribute a small donation. Monies allow the RNA to continue its mission of promoting the character and quality of the Ravinia neighborhood.

(For your convenience, please find a membership form on the last page of this newsletter.)



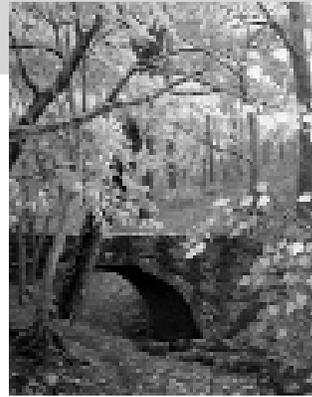
## Overflowing with Art

By Lynne Jungman

If it is true that there is a little of the artist in each of us, then there is a whole lot of artist in some of us. Yelena Klairmont seems to be one of those blessed with an abundance. Ms. Klairmont, who resides in Highland Park with her husband and three children, left Russia at 17 years of age, already a promising classical pianist. She and her father settled in Toronto where she attended the University of Toronto and continued to pursue music. She had by then fallen in love with the organ, and showed considerable talent. She began teaching and conducting choral music. As sometimes happens, life events intervene. Ms. Klairmont met her now husband and found herself relocated to Highland Park to a house atop a ravine.

Finding herself in this lovely natural environment of ravines, wildflowers and bluffs, Yelena developed an interest in Jens Jensen and his philosophy and passionate belief that art has its "roots in the soil"\*. It also provoked the artist's creative vision now to be expressed in paint. She entered and completed the academic program at the American Academy of Art in Chicago and immersed herself in the techniques of painting. Now she cannot pull herself away from the palette and the canvas. The piano and organ have been set aside, at least for this period in her artistic life. She muses that in a future decade, perhaps in her 60s, she may go back to piano and study jazz. Needless to say she has a passion for life and art and a belief in ongoing creative and recreating forces.

Yelena works in oils and typically in large scale. Some of her



The Bridge  
Yelena Klairmont

canvases depict Jensen's designs in Highland Park, such as the bridge on the old Rosenwald estate, now Rosewood Park, and various renditions of the circle council rings. In the Chicago area, she has captured beautiful images of Caldwell Pond in Lincoln Park, designed by Jensen's protégé, Alfred Caldwell. Other landscapes evoke the fragile beauty of local

bluffs, ravines and shoreline. Delicate forms and colors of native wildflowers are featured in another series of her paintings. Water abstractions, poetic expressions in paint, are yet another thematic series. Currently the artist is fascinated by scenes that are viewed from high above, capturing a vast panorama.

Ms. Klairmont has received numerous accolades, most recently a commission to execute a variety of paintings for Chicago Westin. Some of her Jens Jensen landscapes were exhibited recently at the Lake Forest Historical Society. Even more prestigious, her work will be shown at the international show ART CHICAGO in the Artist Project's at the Merchandise Mart this April. Ms. Klairmont continues to generate interest and regard in the artistic world.

Access her gallery [www.yelenaklairmont.com](http://www.yelenaklairmont.com).

\*Jensen, Jens, SIFTINGS, John Hopkins University Press, 1990

## Put a Smile on Your Face

By Lynne Jungman

Just walking into Debi Gordon's new shop in Ravinia, Sloppy Jo's, Lunchroom brightens the day and that's even before you eat! The sparkling interior with white walls, the bright trademarked logo and the cheerful orange and red trim ratchets up the fun, and the silver and black appointments and appliances compliment the whole snazzy effect. This upbeat sandwich and soup place reflects the owner's positive energy. It also attests to her environmentally friendly philosophy.

Debi is a resident of Ravinia and resides near Jens Jensen's former studio. She has obviously imbibed his love of nature and being its good steward. All the eating utensils and containers, even straws, will be made from biodegradable material, such as a spoon/fork combination from sugar stalks. The window box, an attractive black with red flecks, was made from recycled tires. Going green costs more but fits her philosophy. She is delighted to be so near the newly renovated Jens Jensen Park.



All the aspects of this lunchroom have been well thought out: ideas germinating for a number of years, after closing a successful coffee shop in Chicago, to devote time to raising her two children. She brings her restaurant expertise along with a management

background to this venture.

Along with some good old comfort foods and desserts, there are some very clever and child friendly touches. For example, there is a kiosk to plug in an i-Pod and play your favorites along with enough Etch-a-Sketches to keep the kids occupied until the sloppy joes or hot dogs with tator tots are served. Debbie also showcases a rack offering tee shirts and gibbitz (for Crocs) with her trademark logo and another display for old-fashioned candies or confections, many adored in different parts of the country, but probably new to here.

Check them out and see if one of your remembered sweet treats is there. If not, tell Debi, and she will search it out for you.

The opening is scheduled for April with proposed hours from 11am to 4pm. In the summer months the operating hours will be lengthened and vanilla ice cream in pretzel cones (an east coast importation) will be offered for those lazy, hazy days.

## Our Lakefront, A New Vision

*Steve Meyer, Manager of Special Projects, Park District*

Early in 2006 the Park District initiated a process to revitalize Highland Park's lakefront. As one of only 14 communities, out of over 1,200 in Illinois, which are located on Lake Michigan, Highland Park enjoys a special status in Illinois. Our lakefront has great ecological, economic, recreational, aesthetic, and educational value.

The Park District convened a Lakefront Planning Commission to develop a vision and guide planning for Highland Park's four valuable and unique public lakefront parks. The District retained highly experienced waterfront planners JJR, LLC to develop a lakefront master plan.



Developing and realizing a vision for our lakefront parks is a true community-wide effort. Planning began with a Lakefront Summit in May where over 120 people shared their ideas in discussion groups facilitated by the League of Women Voters. Subsequently over 160 comments have been submitted through the mail and web site. Working from this input and guided by the Lakefront Planning Commission, JJR presented several options at a public meeting in September. Over 200 people attended and gave more input. A final draft master plan was presented on

November 15. Attendance grew to over 250 people who showed great interest and support and provided still more feedback. The Board of Park District Commissioners and the Lakefront Planning Commission accepted JJR's Lakefront Master plan on January 18, 2007.

Due to its location, Rosewood Park is of special interest to residents of the Ravinia neighborhood. The master plan envisions a community-focused, active recreation park that has a swimming focus. Proposed improvements include restoration of the historic Jens Jensen landscape, scenic overlooks, restored fishing pier, expanded parking, a new signature lakefront pavilion with classrooms, concessions and beach house, and environmentally restoring the ravine and bluff system within the park.

What's next? Working from the completed master plan more detailed planning will take place. During the schematic design phase specific amenities will be delineated allowing for more accurate budgeting, prioritization, and phasing. A financial plan for making the vision a reality will be worked out.

The continued involvement of a broad range of people with a diversity of ideas is essential to make the most of our magnificent lakefront. You can help create a special place that you, your family, the community, and future generations can enjoy. Please visit [www.pdhp.org/lakefront](http://www.pdhp.org/lakefront) to stay abreast of developments and share your ideas. If you would like to be added to the email distribution list for periodic updates and information, send an email to [www.lakefront@pdhp.org](mailto:www.lakefront@pdhp.org)



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## Taking Care of our Children



*Spring planting will be starting soon at Association child care homes.*

Jane Talesnick is welcoming inquiries from fellow Ravinia residents considering careers as licensed home child care providers.

Jane is coordinator of the Highland Park/Highwood Home Child Care Association, a not-for-profit organization that promotes quality home child care for parents who live and/or work in our community. Jane helps with the licensing process and provides continuing support for home child providers in the Association network. Jane also cares for infants, toddlers and preschoolers in her home in Ravinia.

“A home child care career is perfect if you enjoy children, want to stay home while your children are young and would like to have your own business,” Jane said.

The Association was established 11 years ago to meet the need for infant and toddler care in our community. The group’s 100 % Licensed Campaign educates families about the importance of choosing home child care that is licensed by the State of Illinois.

Call 847-604-2956 or visit the Association website at [www.hphhomechildcare.com](http://www.hphhomechildcare.com).

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Neighbor to Neighbor is a 501(c)(3) organization started by Laura Distelheim of Highland Park in 2003. The mission was to combat hunger among impoverished children living in Highland Park and Highwood by distributing grocery store gift certificates to their families. Since then it has expanded to include offering other forms of emergency assistance as well. In a number of cases the organization was called upon to pay rent for families who were in jeopardy of becoming homeless, to pay gasbills for families who couldn’t afford to heat their homes and to purchase medication and pay for medical tests for families in urgent need.

Despite the fact that this community is known for its affluence, there are more than 1,000 children in School Districts 112 and 113 who are determined eligible, based on parent income, to receive free lunch from the National School Lunch Program. There are an equal or greater number of infants and preschoolers who don’t have even



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### Neighbors helping Neighbors, continued

that lunch to count on. These children are referred to Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) by the social workers, educators and health care workers who interact with them daily at schools, day care and after school centers, and social service agencies throughout the community.

If you would like more information on N2N, please contact Laura Distelheim at [LauraSDist@aol.com](mailto:LauraSDist@aol.com) or 847.432.0716. In addition, all occasion cards designed by Highland Park residents Honey Bronson and Sue Sharken can be purchased at the Sunset Foods customer service desk for \$25.00 for a package of ten.

# Committee Reports

## Business District:

Carolyn Hersh is the Economic Development Assistant of the City of Highland Park and is keenly aware of the vacancies in the Ravinia business district. She updates the city's web site related to vacant retail spaces and believes that once the TIF is fully approved and monies become available for Ravinia's improvement more interest will be generated.

Currently there are store front retail spaces available east of the RR tracks: 2 spaces in the now vacated Custom Framers location owned by Joe Palminteri of State Farm (847.432.5570) and at 453 Roger Williams, previously occupied by the antique shop. This is owned by Bill Silverstein, 1700 sq. ft. (773.505.0807). There is also office space available above White Hen Pantry (847.736.4100) and in the Carli Building (847.384.9653). If any of our readers know of any business person wishing to operate out of Ravinia, he or she can call directly the numbers listed above or contact Carolyn Hersh at 847.926.1027.

Eve Tarm is chairperson of the business district committee and is working actively to bring attention to the needs there.

## Environment/Parks

Harold Rafson takes note that the environmental documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* won an academy award. It was a wake-up call regarding global warming. We all need to do our part, and some steps that each of us can take will contribute to energy conservation. Less energy used means less coal burned to make electricity, less gas used to heat a home and so on. Be conscious of small efforts you can take: turning off lights if not in room and changing to low-energy use light bulbs, shutting down computers when not in use for a long period, lowering thermostats in winter, raising in summer, walking instead of driving. When you purchase appliances and cars consider their energy efficiency. Plant a tree or two. Trees take carbon dioxide from the air and stores it in its trunk and branches. Check out these web sites for more good ideas to conserve: [www.climatecrisis.org](http://www.climatecrisis.org), [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org), [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).

On March 21st the City held a public meeting to describe plans for improvements to the infrastructure and more particularly concerns regarding the inflow and infiltration, (I&I), of storm water into the sanitary collection system. This has resulted in flooding in streets and abasements and is a great overload to the wastewater treatment system. The City has lined many sewer mains but this solves only a part of the problem. Most I&I comes from the homeowner's sanitary connections (laterals). The City is initiating a program to control this. They have identified target neighborhoods (Ravinia is one) and will identify homes that have serious I&I and laterals that need repair. A program has been established where the homeowner will save on the costs of repair by use of a master contractor, who will have a competitively bid contract with the City for multiple repairs, and the City will contribute 20% of repair cost undertaken by the homeowner. This program is being initiated



Photo by Donald Miller

Infrastructure work on Blackstone.

this spring. For further details go to [publicworks@cityhpil.com](mailto:publicworks@cityhpil.com) or call Public Works for information: 847.432.0807.

(For information on Parks please see articles by Steve Meyer and Rebecca Grill in this issue.)

## Jens Jensen Restoration

Dedication of the restored Jens Jensen Park across from the Ravinia Train Station will take place in June. The engraving of the stone benches will have been completed at that time.

## Membership

A vigorous membership drive is part of the May event and fundraiser sponsored by the Ravinia Neighbors that will take place at the former Becker/Segal Estate as noted in this issue.

## Railroad Station

The new Kiosk will open at the time of the June Jensen Park commemoration. Also Jeff Stern continues to lobby for upkeep and improvements in Ravinia Train Station.

## Farmers Market

Good news: the Market that for 28 years has been voluntarily managed by Joe Palminteri of State Farm Insurance now has a successor, Lydia Davis and her son, both Ravinia residents. Mr. Palminteri will assist in their tutelage until the farm wagons are in line. Thank you Lydia for stepping up so the farmers market will remain as a summertime fixture! Great appreciation to Joe for his 28 years of dedication.

# Ravinia: Cherishing Its Natural Heritage

Abstracts from article by Rebecca Grill, Natural Areas Coordinator, Park District

Highland Park's May T. Watts Nature Park is a designated natural area located near Ravinia Elementary School. Featuring one acre of Oak-Hickory Woodlands, it is an intimate park, but large enough to offer a nature trail providing a close look at the native plants and wildflowers that thrive there.

In 1980, three fifth graders from Ravinia School, with their principal Mrs. Falkoff, had the idea to rename the school's wooded area. They presented a petition to the Park District so the woods could be dedicated to May T. Watts. Ravinia School currently uses the park as an educational tool and is instrumental in restoring the park through stewardship programs and volunteering efforts. In the summer of 2005, Eagle Scout candidate Pete Roemer, a Ravinia neighbor, started an initiative to restore the species of native shrubs and trees mapped by Watts. Satellite mapping was used to approximate the locations of the original species which included wild plum with hazel, dogwood, sumac and wild roses. Unfortunately, 2005

presented one of the harshest summers in recent memory, with extended drought, and plantings suffered.

Additional plantings were made in 2006 to replace some of the materials that were lost. In March of this year further efforts were made for restoration.



Rebecca Grill and Friends

So who is May Watts? According to Lori Rotenberg, writing in the Winter, 1999 Chicago Wilderness, "Remembering May Watts, Theilgaard Watts" (1893 August, 1975) was the daughter of Danish-born parents. Her father, a landscape designer, taught her

respect for the land. She grew up in the Rasvenswood neighborhood of Chicago and later began teaching in a one room schoolhouse outside the city. May studied botany and ecology during the summer at the University of Chicago, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1918. She learned to produce beautiful sketches of plants and flowers through her studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. May married Raymond Watts and lived on Groveland Street in Ravinia from 1928 to 1940, where she joined Jens Jensen in urging residents in Highland Park to preserve the community's natural

character. Of particular note is her book Ravinia, Her Charms and Destiny, reprinted by the Ravinia Garden Club in 1980, and available at the Highland Park Library. The listing of small trees of Ravinia includes Witch Hazel. This is May's description of this once populous inhabitant of our ravine woodlands: the "last flowers of the fall are the aromatic moon-yellow curls of the witch hazel, lighting our October woods. The seed pods that these flowers form do not ripen until the following fall, when they open with such force that their seeds are distributed by the explosion. The leaves are borne in flat irregular sprays on small trees or shrubs". May T. Watts became the first Morton Arboretum naturalist and was widely recognized for her interpretative writings explaining the landscape. Other accomplishments followed, for example, inspiring the movement that would formalize into the Illinois Prairie Path.

A collection of her papers and drawings are archived in the Sterling Morton Library at the Morton Arboretum.

If anyone is interested in getting involved with the educational and restoration events at May Watts Park, email [rgrill@pdhp.org](mailto:rgrill@pdhp.org) or call 847.681.2189. Note also the May 19th Rosewood Workday, for planting work and bluff restoration.



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**Ravinia Garden Club**

The Ravinia Garden Club was begun in 1927 with the focus of learning how to garden well along the lake shore communities north of Chicago. Like artists and naturalists who lived in the community the members wanted to preserve native plantings. Now the club is celebrating its 80th birthday!

Our 80th annual perennial plant sale will be held on Saturday, May 19th from 8:30am to noon at Jens Jensen Park in Ravinia. Members offer locally grown plants from their gardens and accepts perennials brought in by anyone who wishes to donate. The plants are reasonably priced and include wildflowers, ferns, groundcovers and other favorites. Funds from the sale are used, in part, to beautify local areas.

Come and meet our members, consider joining the club and bring your questions for nationally accredited Gardening and Landscape Design Consultants. For more information contact Katie Bratton, president, Ravinia Garden Club at 847.816.7713.



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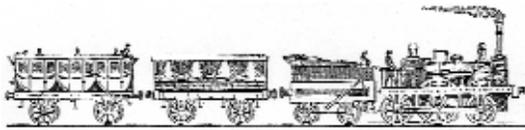
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## **Join your Neighbors — Add your Voice!**

The Ravinia Neighbors Association (RNA) is the only neighborhood organization on Chicago's North Shore. Over its 10 years of existence, the RNA activities have included:

- Keeping Ravinia and its improvement needs in front of City Council and its commissions.
- Initiating TIF project to improve street- scape in Roger Williams' business zone.
- Having interface with developers regarding design issues in business district.
- Encouraging store front beautification.
- Preventing the erection of antenna clusters and cell towers near Ravinia School and Brown Park.
- Helping to bring about Gateway Park
- Providing framework for Jens JensenPark restoration initiative.



### **Please become part of our ongoing endeavors!!**

Yes, I want to become a member or renew membership in the RNA. Mail in to join, renew or extend membership)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Enclosed: membership: \$20 one year; \$35 two years; \$50 three years

Mail check together with this form to:

Ravinia Neighbors Association, P.O. Box 804, Highland Park, Il. 60035

You can also join online at our Web site: [www.ravinianeighbors.org](http://www.ravinianeighbors.org) and make payment by credit card using Paypal.

If you have already renewed, we will credit you with another year.

Questions: Don Miller, [donaldjmiller@comcast.net](mailto:donaldjmiller@comcast.net) or

Doug Purington: [doug.purington@att.net](mailto:doug.purington@att.net).