

SUNNYSIDE

Neighborhood News

July 2022

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org

board@sunnysideportland.org

Last Month's News.

This Month's Plans.

By Ash Hester, SNA President

The Sunnyside Neighborhood Association held its annual Board Elections at the June meeting and voted in three new members – Emily McCadden, Chris Waldmann, and Cole White. Congratulations to the newest members to represent and serve the Sunnyside community.

There will not be a SNA General and Board meeting for the month of July due to organizing officer roles and preparing for the August meeting.

I close with my complete gratitude for having had the opportunity to serve Sunnyside. My term is now complete and I will be stepping down from my role as the SNA President. There is much that I have learned through the process. I made many connections and got to see the organization develop a strong foundation. I'm excited to see the SNA continue this momentum and be the example within the city of Portland that local government does have a high impact.

Be well and stay involved.

Sunnyside Neighborhood Community Cares (SNACC) Committee Updates

By Emily McCadden, SNACC Co-Chair, SNA Board Member

The SNACC committee will hold its monthly meeting on July 21st from 6:30-8 p.m. Weather permitting, we hope to meet outside at Laurelhurst Park. Last month we discussed strategic planning for the Sunnyside Shower Project. We will be continuing this conversation and

picking up any new topics relevant to the community that emerge over the next few weeks. Check back on the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association website for details about the agenda and location of the meeting or email emmccadden@gmail.com for my information.

What if We Got it Right?

By Jan S Molinaro, Co-Chair, Sunnyside Prepared!

I was listening to a recent podcast from On Being with Krista Tippett. She was interviewing a marine biologist who asked a BIG QUESTION.... "What if we got it right?" She is referring to the fact that, we, as humans, know all the reasons that there is a climate crisis, and that, in fact, we already know many right actions that, taken soon and collaboratively, might put us on a better path.

Jumping to my favorite topic – emergency preparation. What if the BIG QUESTIONS questions shifted to something like this... What have I already done to be prepared for any type of emergency? What else

needs to be done? Who can I engage to help me be more prepared?

When it finally stops raining, I plan to write a chalk greeting on the public sidewalk in front of my home, something like... "Are you my neighbor?" I plan to invite friends on my block to write a similar greeting. It's a conversation starter and a way to build community. And then I can ask my neighbors the BIG QUESTIONS mentioned above. One conversation at a time.

What might you plan to do to build/expand your community and build resilience and safety?

Cheers for summer, and continue to reach out (jan@sunnysideprepared.com) if you need support with your questions about emergency preparedness.

Upcoming Meetings

Check sunnysideportland.org in advance for location details and agenda.

SNA Board and General Meeting

Second Thursday of the month
General Meeting: 7:00pm - 8:30pm
Board Meeting: 8:30pm - 9:00pm
(July 14, August 11)

SNACC Meeting

Third Thursday of the month
6:30pm - 7:30pm
(July 21, August 18)

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Sunnyside Neighborhood Getting to Know Your Neighbors

By Hannah Wallace, SNA Vice President

Q&A with Cole White

Cole White has been a steady presence at the Sunnyside Shower Project for over a year—first as a guest and then as both a guest and a volunteer. Always ready with an open mind and some witty banter, he is fun to do a shift with because you can swap book recommendations (most recently he had Italo Calvino's short stories in his back pocket) and discuss everything from punk rock to religion. In March, the SNACC committee applied for and won a grant to pay him a stipend, so now he's the only paid member of our team, stocking toiletries and other supplies at the Sunnyside Methodist Church and generally ensuring that things run smoothly. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, where he studied math and literature, White writes creative nonfiction including a newspaper called The Portland Interrupter. He recently landed his own apartment and he's also the most recently elected member of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association. Please join us in welcoming him to this new role.

You've been working for the Sunnyside Shower Project as a volunteer since October 2021 and as a paid staffer since January of this year. What do you love about the Shower Project?

Cole: It was a romantic idea in my mind because it was such an improbable outcome. I was approaching it from the angle of maybe selling more of my writing to volunteers like Marisa. She was awesome and bought my magazine and some of my short stories and The Portland Interrupter newspaper that I was trying to start. And then I heard about you. People said, "Oh, you're a writer? You should talk to Hannah. She's a writer." I was like, "Oh, this person is gonna get me published! Here we go. This is a success story!" But it ended up as a different kind of story—where success is more in the shower project.

How would you describe the type of nonfiction you write?

Cole: The last story I wrote was about my friend Ryan. He told me this story about how he thinks he met a demon, and so I wrote a fictionalized version of reality. So I guess I'd call it Magical Nonfiction.



Cole White

The one I read about Navigating Southeast Portland is what I would call "creative nonfiction." Wouldn't you agree?

Cole: Yeah, that's a more technical term, but very much so.

You also work at Street Books. What do you do there?

Cole: I sort books and on occasion make phone apps that no one asks for. I've been tasked with organizing the books in terms of genre, and I split them up into literary/more artistic fiction and then commercial fiction and then nonfiction, science fiction, children's book, and Spanish. It's weird when, like, the Bible comes up. What does it go? Nonfiction or commercial fiction? Or, there's a poetry section?

Don't you have a religious studies section?

Cole: It wasn't a section that had a high enough number of books to constitute a section.

What do you love about Sunnyside?

Cole: The amazing people that I've met and the opportunity of a lifetime that's helped pull me up out of a real bad situation. Again, all the people involved. I'm just so thankful and love spending time with them.

What is one thing you would change about Sunnyside, if you could?

Cole: Well, when we were at the Sunnyside Environmental school camping on the outside rim of the park there were these people, usually older men, that would drive by slowly and glare at us—very angry in their facial expressions. I would talk to those people. That's what I would change.

Explain to me what "sweeps" are like from the perspective of a person living outside.

Cole: It's a weird experience. It's the experience of moving which takes a day's preparation and then also to settle back into another place. And it's not like you have a car. You have to go someplace else. So that could be half-a-mile away, where you're carrying all your belongings, all your camping gear. Anything you would put in a car and take to go camping you would carry on you, somehow. You might get a cart, if you're lucky. If you don't, you make multiple trips and hopefully nobody steals your stuff. If you can't get everything, Rapid Response will take it and anything that's not on the "Must Keep" list, they will usually throw away.

So it's the experience being forcefully moved—kind of like refugee status—and having to leave possessions behind to keep light. It's traumatic.

Rapid Response came to Laurelhurst to clean up trash a lot of times. And the sweeps, they started calling them "clean ups." And they cleaned up the people. So it's the experience of feeling like trash. Being thrown in the garbage and displaced and no one giving a damn about where you are going to sleep that night. Camping by yourself is dangerous and so you might be mobile and sleeping in alcoves, storefronts, or in alleys for a couple nights.

One time, I was mobile with all my stuff on my back. It rained for two days straight. I draped my tarps over my sleeping bag and my bags so they wouldn't get wet. But I got soaked. For two days I slept wet and cold. And it's the feeling of not mattering at all—to anyone. All the people who want to help you, really can't do anything. Coupled with depression or any other traumatic experience people have, that's an added element.

So sweeps actually prevent so-called bootstrapping. You can't pull yourself out of your situation if you're constantly being held back.

What can we who live in Sunnyside do to help people feel more welcome, how can we help them?

Cole: Ask them what they need.

Before you found housing, you first went to the Navigation Center—a shelter down on Naito Parkway. How did you access that?

Cole: Sandy from Beacon helped me. She gave me a ride, when I moved out from behind McDonald's. That's when I spent two nights in the rain. I was so messed up—I wasn't doing well at all. Then she said she could possibly get me a place in a shelter and would I accept it? At the time, I was scared because I had accepted the fact that I would be homeless forever. It's so trying and hard, that at a certain point, you make good with it in order to deal with it. So you say it's forever and you accept it and you feel more at home with it. So the offer of getting into a shelter was opposed to that, so that was scary.

And then there are all those rumors of shelters being scary places.

Cole: Yeah. You hear horror stories of people's stuff getting stolen or living in a dorm with a bunch of different people. When you get there, you realize that it's a lot more human. You made it out to be a nightmare, but instead it's more complex and just as dramatic.

What's it like having your own place?

Cole: Sometimes I feel guilt that I got in and others didn't. When I saw the rain outside my window, instead of just being out in it, always outside, and I saw it from inside my apartment, I had to remind myself that to feel good is a good thing. And I enjoy it, obviously. I'm writing more. I'm able to sleep undisturbed. And all things I didn't really get access to before. But still there's the nagging fear that the person on the street that I saw earlier—who is twitching and possibly schizophrenic and smells like urine—has no hope of getting a house.

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Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing newsletter@sunnysideportland.org. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior.** Many wonderful volunteer Sunnyside residents distribute the Neighborhood News.



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