

# SUNNYSIDE

## *Neighborhood News*

### June 2024

#### SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org

board@sunnysideportland.org

#### News from the President

*By Chris Waldmann, SNA President*

Hi Sunnyside! The SNA held its annual meeting in May to review what we worked on this year and to elect new Board members for 2024-25.

This past year saw a lot of action on pressing issues for the neighborhood and the city. We had a number of meetings focusing on environmental issues and voted to sign on to many letters regarding efforts to fight diesel emissions and the dangers of the CEI fuel storage facility on the banks of the Willamette. We learned about the upcoming rebuild of the Belmont Library. We also learned about a proposal to allow for increased density within the neighborhood. We continued to serve the less fortunate members of the community through the ongoing Sunnyside Shower Project and our annual Winter Gear Drive. We focused on public safety through re-engagement with our local police precincts and renewed advocacy for improved traffic safety on Cesar Chavez, following the tragic death of librarian Jeannie Diaz last summer. We had a couple of small victories on SE César Chávez, with PBOT installing a new diverter to prevent left hand turns at SE Taylor and changes to the pedestrian cross signals at Taylor and Main to allow increased time for pedestrians to cross. These were small improvements that will hopefully lead to bigger changes as the city embarks on a new initiative to improve safety on our high-crash corridors.

The main business of the annual meeting was our Board elections. I'm excited to welcome three new Board members to the team. Thank you Crystal, Tim and Dresden for stepping up to serve your community! There are so many ways to help the SNA and Sunnyside, whether on the Board,

volunteering at an event, or participating in our committees and General meetings. Come on out and join us however you can!

We will be back in September for our next General meeting, but the Board will continue to work through the summer, including keeping our eyes on the revisions to the city's Housing Production Master Plan, which is set to be released for public comment soon. In the fall, we look forward to the first elections under the new charter. It's going to be a big change for everyone and the SNA will be here to help educate everyone not only on the issues, but also on how the process will work.

Until then, we will see you around the neighborhood. Have a great summer!

#### Getting to Know Your Neighbors

*By Eric Miller, SNA Secretary*

#### Q&A with Dr. Bill Toepper

Together with a team of volunteers, Sunnyside resident Dr. Bill Toepper is making a difference on our streets. As a retired emergency physician and founder of Portland Street Medicine, Dr. Bill provides our houseless neighbors with basic medical care and tries to connect them to the complicated and difficult-to-navigate U.S. healthcare system.

#### Perhaps you could start with telling us about a success story regarding your work with Portland Street Medicine.

Let me share my "The day I knew I might be a good street doc" moment. To provide perspective, the reader should know that our work is measured in baby steps. It can take years to make a difference. Examples include the healing of a chronic infection or the partnering with an elderly man in accessing cataract surgery after

#### Upcoming Meetings

**Check [sunnysideportland.org](https://sunnysideportland.org) for location details and agenda.**

#### June

June 6th: 6:30 p.m. SNACC Meeting

June 13th: 7:00 p.m. SNA Board Meeting (No General Meeting)

June 27th: 7:00 p.m. LUTC Meeting

years of near blindness. Houseless folks and healthcare have had a complicated relationship. One cold January day in 2019, a distraught person approached us for help. They had spent the morning in an emergency department, trying to get help for an embarrassing medical emergency. It didn't go well and they left. They agreed to try again if we could accompany them. Our team took turns sitting with this person in the lobby but despite this, they started to escalate. When asked why, they said, "Every time I go to the ER I go to jail." We listened. We held their hand. They fell asleep. We departed feeling comfortable that the staff would take good care of them. Fast forward five days to the Hard Times Supper at the Sunnyside Community Center. We're doing outreach when I look up and see this patient. They looked good. Not certain of how the hospital encounter went, I sheepishly approached the patient. They stood up with a big grin and said from across the room, "Dr. Bill...I didn't go to jail!"

#### What do you wish more people understood about our homeless population?

Stories vary. No youth wakes up and says, "I want to live in a tent and get high all



*Dr. Bill Toepper, Founder of Portland Street Medicine.*

day for the rest of my life.” Many folks are victims of generational poverty, the foster care system or untreated mental illness.. But the stories are like a fingerprint, each is unique. When asked, houseless people state they feel invisible. We strive to rewrite that narrative using a stethoscope, a gauze pad and trust.

**What part of your life most influenced who you are today?**

I grew up in a loving family with teachers, social workers and nurses. Being limited to three hours of screen time (TV) per week, we were forced to play with our friends outside. Lessons learned included the importance of socialization, a reverence for the outdoors, and resourcefulness. I use these skills nearly every day of my adult life.

**What made you decide to study medicine?**

“What will you major in at college, Billy?” I hated that question. I had no clue. I read at a snail’s pace; English was out. I’m all thumbs; engineering was out. I couldn’t do the splits; professional gymnastics was out. While TV viewing at our house was limited, patterns emerged. My family

loved two genres: sitcom and medical shows. Emergency! with Julie London as Dixie McCall was the best. In the end, pre-med prevailed. And besides, incorporating humor into medicine makes more sense than incorporating CPR into a comedy show.

**How did Portland Street Medicine come about?**

I was 58 when I did my last ER shift. I was done. It’s a challenging profession. Most of us stop seeing patients before the age of 60. But I knew I wasn’t done professionally. I had heard of an emerging medical discipline called street medicine. After attending my first Street Medicine Symposium in 2017, I returned to Portland ready to join Portland’s street medicine community. But there was none. Impassioned, I recruited a team and we made our first rounds from my Subaru in February 2018, armed with Dollar Store supplies and a bag of tangerines. PSM was born.

**Where is home?**

I grew up in Chicago but realized something was missing: mountains, ocean, forests and desert. I moved to Portland in

2009. Portland was both urban and rural, and I’m aligned with the politics of the Pacific Northwest. After brief stints in the Alphabet District and Multnomah Village, I landed in Sunnyside. Simply stated, this neighborhood is reminiscent of Madison, Wisconsin, my favorite Midwest escape.

**How does the Sunnyside neighborhood fit into your story?**

Sunnyside has everything. It’s walkable. It’s weird. It’s central. And it’s, well...sunny. But it wasn’t until the folks at the Sunnyside Community Center welcomed me into their community, that I was able to appreciate the joy and the power of caring for one’s neighbor. It’s my kind of ‘hood.

**What do you like about Sunnyside? What are your favorite haunts here? What is one thing you would change about Sunnyside, if you could?**

As a foodie, I can walk to what I think is one of the most exciting food scenes in the world – Division Street. Division Wines will always make you feel at home. Closer to home, you may find me at Baby Doll, Huff, or Taqueria Los Puñales. Finally, how can you go wrong with an H Mart picnic in Laurelhurst Park? Studies





have demonstrated that congregation is essential for a happy life. Have you ever frowned when in Laurelhurst Park?

#### **What are your hopes for the Portland of the future?**

Every great city has had troubling times: New York in the '70s, LA in the '80s, San Francisco in recent times. I remember the Chicago riots of the '60s. Cities are like organisms. We experiment. We slip up. We learn. We grow. Portland is not unique. Our weirdness isn't going anywhere.

#### **How can someone help your cause?**

Take baby steps – they work! Make eye contact. Say hello. Listen to a story. Share your story. If you see someone with a medical need, call us at (503) 501-1231. We can't offer emergency or crisis services, but we can guide you on how to access these services. If you're in healthcare, consider volunteering with us. We are non-denominational and rely on government contracts, grants and Portland citizens. So far, people have been extremely generous. It's making a difference. To read more about Portland Street Medicine, go to [www.portlandstreetmedicine.org](http://www.portlandstreetmedicine.org)

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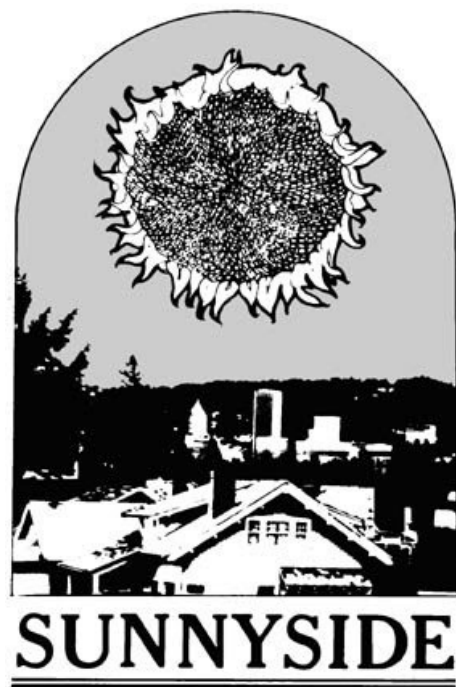
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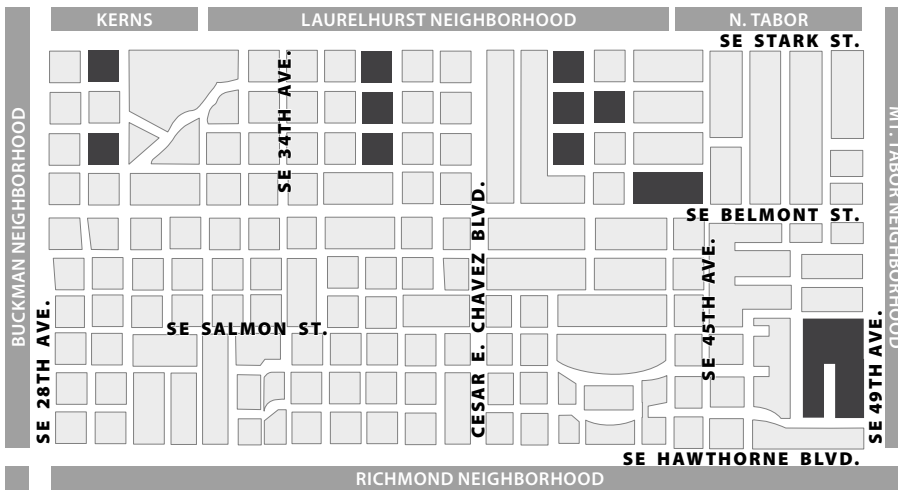
Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing [newsletter@sunnysideportland.org](mailto:newsletter@sunnysideportland.org).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



## Sunnyside Neighborhood 'Gap Map'

Live near any of the blocks marked in black below? We need your help!  
Contact [dianadeumling@gmail.com](mailto:dianadeumling@gmail.com) to volunteer for our delivery service.

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