

# SUNNYSIDE

## *Neighborhood News*

### July 2025

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org

board@sunnysideportland.org

#### News from the President

*By Chris Waldmann, SNA President*

Hi Friends. Thanks for taking the time to read the SNA newsletter, despite what I'm sure (using my magic predictive powers) is a beautiful July day! In the spirit of the long summer evenings with the kids out of school and perfect weather for picnicking in the park, I thought I'd use this space to share some free, fun summer events happening in and around the neighborhood. These are just a handful of all that is going on around town. Check out [portland.gov/parks/arts-culture/summer-free-all/cultural-events](http://portland.gov/parks/arts-culture/summer-free-all/cultural-events) for more events.

#### Lights! Camera! It's Movie in the Park!

The Buckman Community Association will have a viewing of *Galaxy Quest* on July 17th at 7:30 p.m. at Colonel Summers Park. Truly one of the great sci-fi comedies of all time!

The SNA, in partnership with the Richmond and the Hosford-Abernathy NAs, will host an Oregon classic with *The Goonies* on August 16th at 7:30 p.m. in Sewallcrest Park.

#### Music to Fill the Night!

Get your dancing shoes on for an evening of salsa, cumbia, merengue and more with Sons de Cuba at the Mt. Tabor Amphitheater on July 10th at 6:30 p.m.

In the mood for roots and a bit of country to while away the dog days? Hear Rogue Moon perform the acoustic, folk and bluegrass sounds of the Pacific Northwest at Hoyt Arboretum Stevens Pavilion on August 28th at 6:30 p.m..

#### Theater and Comedy to Beat the Heat!

Last summer I stumbled upon the Original Practice Shakespeare Company. They bring the Bard's words to new life in riotous performances that mix the original plays with a dose of comic improv that helps you understand everything that's happening. The result is magical. They have three performances in Laurelhurst Park. On July 11th is *Hamlet* at 7 p.m. The next day, July 12th, they perform two additional plays — *Twelfth Night* at 2 p.m. and *Love's Labour's Lost* at 7 p.m. Find the full calendar at [opsfest.org](http://opsfest.org).

Kickstand Comedy is back for another hilarious season of stand up comedy in Laurelhurst Park. Shows start at 6:30 p.m. on Fridays all summer, except July 11th and 25th.

#### Street Fairs!

The beloved Portland tradition of closing our commercial corridors to traffic in the name of family fun returns with the Hawthorne Street Fair on August 24th from 12-5 p.m. and the Belmont Street Fair on September 13th from 12-5 p.m. The SNA will be at both, so come say Hi!

One more event to share with you and we will need YOUR help to make it happen! We'll be repainting the Sunnyside Piazza at 33rd and Yamhill on August 16th. We'll have more details on the event and how you can volunteer to make it a success coming soon, so keep an eye on the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association's Facebook group (Sunnyside Neighborhood Association) and our Instagram feed (@sunnysidepdna), for ongoing updates!

That's it for now. Get out there and enjoy the summer!

#### Upcoming Meetings

**Location details and agendas are on [Sunnysideportland.org](http://Sunnysideportland.org).**

##### July

No General or Board Meeting  
No LUTC Meeting

##### August

August 13th: SNA Board Meeting  
7:00-8:30 p.m.

#### Thank You, SSP Community!

*By Lindsay Sant, Sunnyside Shower Project Director*

We are still riding the wave of love and support from the Wild Heart: Sunnyside Shower Project Fundraiser held on June 18th — and I am deeply, endlessly grateful.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of this community, we were able to raise nearly \$6,000. That's not just a number — it's a transformative gift that will have a lasting impact on our ability to provide consistency in the gear, supplies, and support we offer to our most vulnerable neighbors. In a world that so often feels unpredictable and unstable, consistency is a big deal. It's comfort. It's dignity. It's care.

This fundraiser also makes it possible for us to start outfitting our office — turning it from a bare-bones room into a warm, welcoming space where people can feel safe, seen, and respected. Vulnerability deserves softness, and now we can begin to create that environment.

To the 30+ artists and businesses who generously contributed to our silent auction and raffle – this simply would not have been possible without you. Your creativity, your energy, and your belief in this mission lifted this fundraiser beyond our hopes.

To everyone who came, shared, donated, or cheered us on — thank you. Your support is not only felt, it is deeply valued!

## Getting to Know Your Neighbors

*By Dresden de Vera,  
SNA Director-at-Large*

### Q&A with Denis Behrens, our new Treasurer!

Dennis Behrens was born in Los Angeles but spent his childhood in the Portland Metro area. He married his high school sweetheart, Phyllis Gerstenfeld, and they moved to Lincoln, Nebraska so she could attend grad school at the University of Nebraska. Under the pen name Kim Fielding, she writes best-selling fantasy and romance novels, novellas, and short stories. After living in Turlock, California for 31 years, the couple and their daughter, Quinn, moved back to Portland last summer, settling in Sunnyside. Behrens, a long-time accountant, recently joined the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association Board as our Treasurer.

#### What's the feeling of Portland now?

**Dennis:** A lot better. It seemed grittier when we left in 1989. A lot of gang violence. I worked for Portland Bottling Company delivering 7Up all over the city—from Gresham to Forest Grove. It's all gentrified now. There are five-story apartment buildings and lots of restaurants and people out.

#### Do you feel like part of why it's better is because there's new money here?

**Dennis:** That's part of it, sure. But I always felt like, certainly with my mom and my family, it seemed like there were good people here trying to make things better. It just took 36 years. I think there seems to be a lot more people in tune with the community. There seems to be a lot of sole proprietors, so tons of small mom and pop shops. I hope that means that they care more about the community they live in.



*Dennis and his wife Phyllis at Predjama Castle in Slovenia in 2023.*

#### Would you say that small businesses are the backbone of the communal nature of the city?

**Dennis:** I think so. Depending on what neighborhood you're in, each neighborhood has its own special vibe and quirks that make it unique and enjoyable.

#### Are you a businessman?

**Dennis:** I have a business degree. My concentration was finance and accounting.

#### And now, you're taking those accounting skills and applying them to the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association! What is it you enjoy about accounting?

**Dennis:** It makes sense. It's all logical. You know, there's a box for everything. So everything goes where it's supposed to go. Numbers don't lie.

#### Would you say that accounting is your passion?

**Dennis:** Yes. A lot of people find the numbers very dry and boring, but I always find a story in the numbers. I'll give you an example. I was a senior accountant at a fire station for five years. We found out that the fire guys were turning the air conditioning down to around 65 degrees, including when they were out on runs and nobody was in the firehouse. That spiked our electricity costs. That was kind of funny. The chief was not happy. What we did was put in Spark thermostats that controlled

the temperature at a central location. The accounting tells a story.

#### What story are you hoping to tell with Sunnyside?

**Dennis:** I'm hoping that we can foster cooperation in the community. I'm hoping that the story here is a positive one that makes Sunnyside attractive to visitors and businesses alike, and that it fosters a good community.

#### Where does this desire to foster a good community come from?

**Dennis:** I always thought it was important to reach out, make friends, and be a part of something bigger than just yourself. We were in California raising kids in a very suburban environment, and it was really all about the kids. You're fostering relationships with your kids' friends, their parents, trying to make sure they develop well in school and do extracurricular activities and stuff like that. There's a void now that my youngest has graduated college.

#### Through wanting what's best for your family, you've learned that branching out and creating a community has been an invaluable resource. What are you discovering so far about the Sunnyside community?

**Dennis:** I love the neighborhood. When we were looking for a house, we felt the vibe of this area fit us the best. It's eclectic cool. Like the Bagdad Theater—

this beautiful historic building that they've obviously restored. And then all of the little restaurants, coffee shops, bars—there's something fun and different in each one. Just the sheer volume of restaurants; you can eat out some place different every night! That's the eclectic part.

**Now that you're part of the Sunnyside Board, are there any projects that you're hoping to dip your toe in?**

**Dennis:** There's a building at 30th and Stark [owned by Laurelhurst Village]—the one that has been boarded up for 10 years. That could be an interesting project. Maybe we could work with the city and do something with it.

**Would you say that of the different issues affecting the community, you're most interested in land use?**

**Dennis:** I've always had a passion for real estate. My mom had rentals; she owned a house at 37th and Belmont. This was when I was living here as a child, and I would help her with the rentals. I think that sparked my love for real estate.

**What are some potential things we could do with neglected real estate?**

**Dennis:** I'm sure there's opportunities to do low-income rentals if you partner with the city. But just improving a building brings up the values for everybody in the neighborhood. If you have a giant eyesore at the corner, that brings down everybody's real estate values. So every time you can improve a particular parcel, you are helping elevate everybody in the neighborhood.

**What's your impression of being on the Sunnyside Board so far?**

**Dennis:** What I expected — a group of passionate people who live in the neighborhood, who want to do fun things and promote the neighborhood.

**Circling back to how you originally found your community values, you found that in promoting the well-being of your family, you could promote the well-being of the world around you?**

**Dennis:** Yeah. My little way to contribute is to start at home and try to make connections with people. I like to think that it's an opportunity for me to contribute something back to the community I live in.

**How do we spread that? The desire to give back to the community.**

**Dennis:** Well, I think it's like, pay it forward. If you can do a good deed for somebody, then hopefully they can take that and do a good deed for somebody else, and hopefully, it snowballs.

**Have you been the recipient of many good deeds?**

**Dennis:** Yes, I've been really lucky to have a really good support structure from my family, and especially my mom. As a single mom, it's tough to raise a kid all alone in Portland, and she was able to help me with college costs and things like that.

**So in being lucky, you now want to be other people's luck.**

**Dennis:** Absolutely. I always feel like if you can put positive energy out into the world that it will help create more positive energy.

## **News From Sunnyside Environmental School (SES)**

*By Valerie Kahn and Steph Barnhart members-at-large and SES parents*

Hello neighbors!

Kids are out of school, which means our campus is a city park full-time until the fall semester begins. Come play on our play structure, start a pickup game of soccer with our new soccer goals, or sit at our picnic tables. Feel free to admire our garden and have a taste of anything ripe you see growing.

SES has no events planned until August so I thought I'd share a little information about one of the things that makes our school stand out from the others: our middle school marine biology program.

The middle school experience for SES's sixth, seventh, and eighth graders is unlike that of any other public school student's in the district. We use a thematic curriculum for all grades; in middle school the themes are mountain, forest, river, and ocean. In the fall and spring, all middle schoolers spend their Thursdays on field trips in the community to places that correspond with the theme they are studying. This culminates in each grade taking a week-long, overnight marine biology excursion in May, a true capstone experience for each middle school year.

Each middle school class goes to a different location. In sixth grade, students spend three days in Newport, Oregon. They stay in yurts at South Beach State Park, dissect squid, take a crabbing boat into Yaquina Bay, and visit the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

Seventh graders spend a week at Olympic National Park in Washington. They attend NatureBridge camp and spend a week immersed in river ecology, hiking, and canoeing on Lake Crescent.

Eighth graders spend a week at the Catalina Environmental Leadership Program on Santa Catalina Island, off the coast of California, southwest of Los Angeles. Here they kayak and snorkel in the ocean, hike, and complete community service projects.

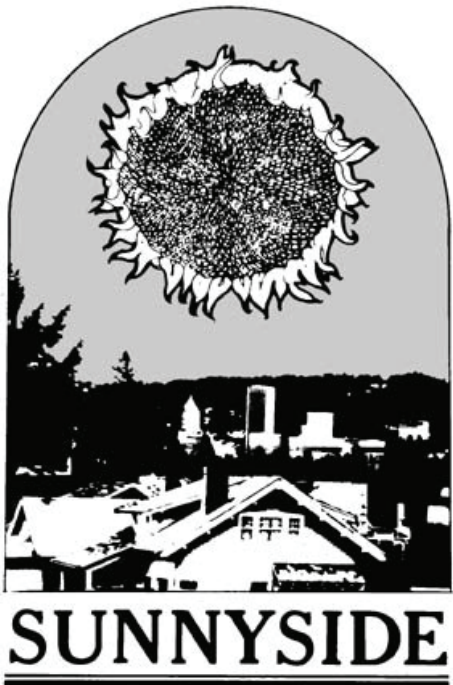
In addition to being amazing educational experiences, these middle school trips help our students bond, learn about themselves and one another, and see kids they've been in class with for years in a new light. These trips contribute to making SES the wonderful community it is, and provide the support middle schoolers need as they slowly transition from elementary to high school.

Finally, all of our middle school students go on these marine biology trips regardless of their ability to pay. While parents are asked to make a financial contribution, the school community raises money for those who are unable to do so through the PTSA Go Fund. Many of the fundraisers you have seen advertised in this column support the PTSA Go Fund, so for anyone who has contributed, thank you for helping make these amazing trips accessible to all our students, regardless of their family's financial situation.

Have questions about SES? Email [sunnysideenvironmentalnews@gmail.com](mailto:sunnysideenvironmentalnews@gmail.com) and maybe I'll answer them in a future column!

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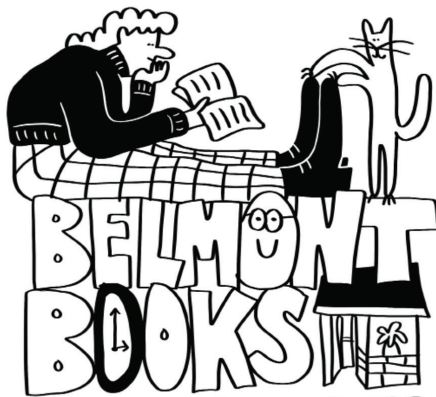
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