

SUNNYSIDE

Neighborhood News

February 2026

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
SunnysidePortland.org board@sunnysideportland.org

News from the President

By Chris Waldmann, SNA President

Hi Sunnyside and welcome to February! This always feels like a month where I want to hunker down and ride out the winter. The big events of the holiday season are long past and the warmth of spring still feels so far out on the horizon. It's a good time to find a cozy haunt in the neighborhood and settle in with a good book. Might I recommend one of my favorites, which I read last year, *So Far Gone* by PNW author Jess Walter? It's a great (and funny!) story of rediscovering your family in these times that are trying to tear us apart. I think Sunnyside's own Bar Mame on Hawthorne would be a lovely location for reading, but there are so many great places to hang out in our neighborhood. We all have our nooks.

At the January General Meeting, we focused on this little newsletter you are now reading. I would like to extend a special THANK YOU to all the volunteers who make the Sunnyside News happen and those who donated to keep it going!

The Board will be back at work in February when we will dive into our by-laws to see where we can modernize (like allowing online voting during our annual elections). In the coming months we hope to hear from our local state representative, Rob Nosse, about the legislative short session and to engage with our city councilors about their second crack at the city budget. If you have any issues or concerns you'd like to raise, please reach out to us via email or our Facebook group.

Despite the grey, dark times, there's a lot to look forward to in Sunnyside in the coming months. Stay tuned for more information and stay warm out there!

Thank you for giving to the SNA Newsletter!

Thanks to all of you who donated to keep the SNA Newsletter chugging along in its current format. As of mid-January, we raised over \$2,000—surpassing our goal. We had nearly 50 individuals donate an average of \$40 each. This is fantastic! It shows us that a lot of you Sunnysiders are readers who want, and support, hyper-local news. As a result of your generosity, we'll be able to continue publishing a monthly print newsletter through 2026.

At our January General Meeting we discussed some of the challenges of delivering a newsletter to 3,000+ members of the community. It takes a lot of volunteer hours by dozens of people! If you have interest in delivering to one or two blocks near your house, please reach out to Carrie at fergex@gmail.com. It's a great way to get exercise, get to know your neighbors, and do something valuable for your community. It can take less than an hour per month. Stay tuned for a reader survey in our next issue. We want to find out whether you prefer a print to online newsletter and what you'd like to see more (or less) of in the coming months. Thanks, as always, for reading—and for keeping the most local kind of news in business.

Tech Tip: Lower The Ratio

By Megan Orton, Member-at-large

Parents can make healthier decisions when it comes to kids, screens and socializing. In-person hangout time has dropped 50 percent for kids/teens since the year 2000 and it's easy to assume that on-screen socializing (rather than in-person) is just "how kids are today." But the latest research shows that there's a big developmental benefit to hanging out

Upcoming Meetings

Location details and agendas are on Sunnysideportland.org.

February

Feb. 11th: Board Meeting, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Feb. 18th: LUTC, 7:00 p.m.

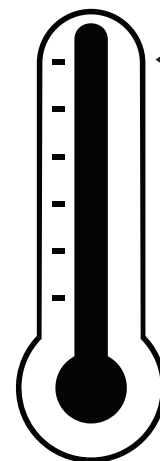
March

Mar. 11th: General Meeting, 7:00-8:30 p.m.,

Board Meeting, 8:30-9:00 p.m.

March 18th: LUTC, 7:00 p.m.

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Goal: \$2,000
Raised: \$2,000!

Our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed!



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in-person. Kids and teens are missing out on crucial growing experiences when they spend hours on a screen. 50 percent less time in-person means 50 percent less practice reading body language, looking people in the eye, and mastering the social skills necessary to thrive in relationships and careers. It also means 50 percent less of the positive mental health benefits that in-person friendships bring. With all the technology choices parents have to make today, we will always be making a healthier choice if we “Lower The Ratio” between the number of kids vs. the number of houses and screens.

Let’s imagine the common scenario of our kid or teen coming home from school and spending the afternoon and evening gaming with five friends on Discord. Here, we have six kids, six separate houses and six different screens. Aside from the opportunity cost of fewer hours practicing social skills, socializing over a screen also wraps a child in a perfect cocoon of ease and comfort for many hours at a time.

It turns out that kids actually need a steady dose of small hardships, difficulties, and awkwardnesses to develop resilience and the ability to manage in the world. Think back to being at a friend’s house as a kid or teen. Remember how much fun it was AND remember all the small discomforts? Talking to your friend’s parents, dealing with annoying younger siblings or intimidating older ones, coping with different pets, eating unfamiliar food, and adjusting to another family’s rules and parenting styles—not to mention the challenge of getting yourself there, often on foot, bike or public transportation. It is exactly this kind of constant, low-level challenge that protects kids and teens against anxiety. Excessive screen time can keep kids from getting enough of these small in-person discomforts. In this way, on-screen socializing is a lot like the empty calories of highly processed food; it’s missing lots of necessary and important nutrients but still fills you up, leaving no appetite for more “nutritious” socializing.

Imagine instead that our kid invites five fellow gamers to the house for a big gaming session in the living room. It’s still six kids and six different screens, but only one house. Now the kids are gaming AND practicing their social skills. Want to go one step healthier? Lower The Ratio even further. What if these six kids decide to watch a movie instead? Now we’ve got six kids, one house, and only one screen. Movies and TV shows are healthier screen choices for kids because in 2007, tech

companies started adding lots of addictive elements like push notifications or the “like” or “comment” features (called Persuasive Technology) to social media. (At the same time, they added similar features to gaming.) In fact, most of the social media and games our kids use today have the same behaviorally addictive elements that casinos use in their slot machines. Movies and TV shows don’t have them. When the movie ends and the kids are in the living room talking and eating snacks, you’ve now got six kids, one house, and zero screens, which is the healthiest option of all!

Hint: You can also Lower The Ratio in your house with your family. Just think of lowering the ratio between the number of people vs. the number of rooms and screens. A family movie night is much healthier than everyone in different rooms on separate screens.

Megan Orton founded mindful-media.net in 2020 to help parents create healthy technology habits with their families.

The Summer Tanager Stakeout *By Hannah Wallace,* *SNA Vice President*

If you walked or biked past Salmon and 32nd this winter, you would’ve seen a small group of Portlanders gathered on the street corner, binoculars in hand, peering up at the sky. Curious what they were all looking at, I stopped and asked them. Someone told me: there was a summer tanager (piranga rubra) hanging out in the treetops.

This is a rare sighting in winter. Typically, summer tanagers, who are mostly insectivores, head south as soon as the weather starts to turn.

“They’re usually far south by now,” life-long birder Tony DeFalco tells me. “Just because of the traditional migration patterns, food availability, and habitat, they like to be in the leafy canopy. They’re like, ‘We’re outta here.’ So to have that bird here now is exciting!”

On Ebird, a biodiversity-focused science project and online birding community, a subgroup emerged called “Stakeout Summer Tanager, SE Portland.” There you can find photos of the creature, along with audio of his songs and calls.

One of the birders who spoke to me in late December said he thought the tanager was hanging out in Sunnyside because one of the gracious neighbors was putting out citrus fruit for him and other birds.



A summer tanager. Photo: Jay Parasco

(Tanagers are known to eat fruit, especially in the fall. And I guess, if they’re stuck in Portland, winter.)

Because of its plumage, DeFalco surmises that it’s a first year male bird. “The coloration is not just the light-colored but the darker red as well. I’m not an expert on bird physiology but my read was that this is a first-year bird that got swept off course.”

News From Sunnyside Environmental School (SES)

By Sarah Centerwall
Member-at-large and SES parent

As I write, February is upon us and everyone is wondering—is winter here yet?! This year it has been difficult to tell. Each day we get a couple more minutes of light reminding us that soon enough there will also be warmer days to come. Yet, there is always the chance of one of those yearly Portland snow chaos winter wonderlands that thankfully only lasts a few days.

Thank you to those who joined us for the fantastic Riparian Festival. Every year I am astounded by the thought and creativity that goes into each project. The classrooms and hallways are transformed by the students’ ideas and knowledge. We have some fun events coming up at SES this month. We look forward to seeing you there!

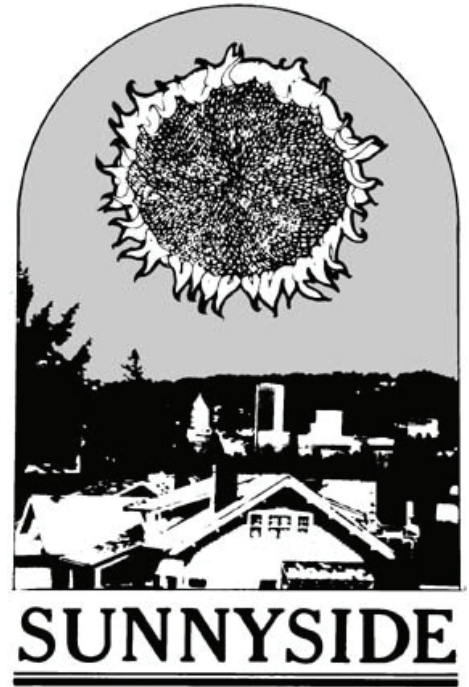
February 4–Winter Walk and Roll to School Day

PBOT Safe Routes to School is hosting the Winter Walk and Roll to School Day on February 4th. Check the weather before you go and make sure you’ve got the right gear.

Sunnyside Neighborhood 'Gap Map'

Live near any of the blocks marked in black below? We need your help!
Contact fergex@gmail.com to volunteer for our delivery service.

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As the old Swedish saying goes, "There is no bad weather, only bad clothes." It is a day to celebrate the environment which is so important to us at SES and to remind our students of one of the many ways we can take care of our planet—like skipping the car for a day.

February 17– Last day of Read-A-Thon

Every year the entire school participates in the Read-A-Thon. This event lasts for three weeks. Students have the opportunity to read, read, read in order to earn money for the school. There are many different reading competitions within the school that make the event a blast, and with the hard work of the PTSA the student prizes are phenomenal. Why does it matter? It encourages the love of books and all students get to immerse themselves in reading. For every line they read, they earn funds for the school. To build a buzz, the school invites local authors to speak to the students about their books. This year eight authors will visit our halls and spread the love of books. You can buy a signed copy of books from the visiting authors online. Check this link at give.mybooster.com/sunnyside-environmental-school-2 for more information. If you know a Sunnyside student be sure to ask them if they need more pledges. You can sponsor them with a flat donation or pay by the amount of minutes they have read. They can read anything including articles, graphic novels, magazines, newspapers; they can even listen to audio books.

February 17– K-5 open house 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Are you interested in sending your child to our beloved Sunnyside Environmental School? Join Principal Eryn Berg and others on February 17th to learn about the SES experience. As a Sunnyside parent I can tell you that the school lives up to the hype. If you are looking for an experience for your child that is outside of the humdrum of the usual public school experience, if you are looking for a school that puts community building at the forefront of everything it does, if you and your child are interested in the environment and learning more about it, this is the right place for you. Come to the open house to learn more. We hope to see you there!

Have questions about SES? Email sunnysideenvironmentalnews@gmail.com and maybe I'll answer them in a future column!



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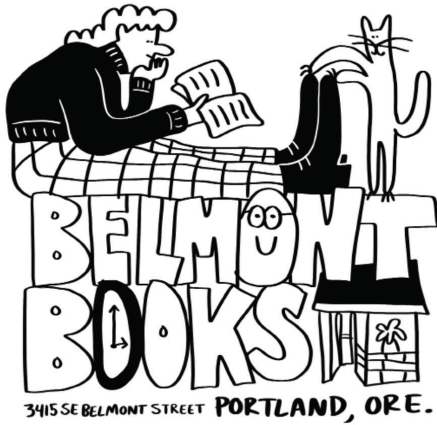
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Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing newsletter@sunnysideportland.org.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



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