



# Regent Neighborhood

May 2023 Newsletter | [regentneighborhood.org](http://regentneighborhood.org)

ASSOCIATION

Please join us for the  
**Spring Membership Meeting**  
Tuesday, May 23, 7 p.m.

at the InnTowner  
2424 University Avenue

## Special UW Guest Speakers on the UW's West Campus District Plan:

**Aaron Williams**  
Interim Director, Campus Planning &  
Landscape Architecture

**Brenda González**  
Director, Community Relations

**Paul Seitz**  
Director, Strategic Initiatives

## RNA Fourth of July Festival Returns!

*[Ed: After three years of COVID lockdown as well as difficulties finding a neighbor willing to take on the organizational demands of the picnic, we have a volunteer. Thank you, Tehya Bersch. And others, please volunteer to help.]*



*Tehya Bersch is the chair of this year's RNA Fourth of July Festival.*

Hello! My name is Tehya Bersch, I am 15 years old, almost 16. I volunteered to organize the Regent Neighborhood Fourth of July party because I remember how much I enjoyed it as a child. I wanted to make sure that the picnic was shared with a new generation.

I feel like keeping with tradition is important so expect to find the usual activities like the parade, cake walk, box maze and egg toss. As for food, the brat tent will be available. I will need volunteers to help—baking treats for the cake walk, running games (you can keep half the profits), and other aspects of the party, and staffing the brat tent.

*(continued on page 3)*

**Renew your membership & donate to the scholarship—form enclosed.**



## Regent Neighborhood ASSOCIATION

**Regent Neighborhood Association**  
**P.O. Box 5655**  
**Madison, WI 53705**

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*Graphic Design by Mary Sarnowski*

## A Note from the President

Dear Neighbors,

On March 20, I joyfully celebrated the Nowruz, the Persian New Year. With roots going back some 3,000 years, the occasion marks the beginning of spring. Despite the persistent wintry weather here, light has once again won over darkness and the longer days are so welcome after winter nights.

Throughout January and February, the RNA Board was very engaged in conversations with our surrounding neighborhood associations and Alders Vidaver and Evers. Our goal was to understand and analyze the potential impacts of the proposed changes in zoning. These were drafted by the City to increase the number of “unrelated” individuals residing in single family homes. On February 28, the City Council approved the changes as originally proposed.

At our March meeting we welcomed Megan Pohl to the Board as our school relations liaison. We are thrilled to have Megan on the Board! We still have several openings on the Board.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact John Schlaefer, our membership chair, at schlaeferjw@gmail.com

We are looking forward to our annual membership meeting on May 23 at 7 p.m. at the Best Western InnTowner. We will have an opportunity to hear from UW Madison representatives about the West Campus District Plan and provide input. I hope you will join us and take advantage of this opportunity to shape the future of the West campus.

Wishing you all a wonderful spring,

—Shiva



*RNA Board President  
Shiva Bidar*

## Upcoming RNA Board Meetings

• **May 23, 2023 (see page 1)**

• **June 27, 2023**

The Regent Neighborhood Association Board typically meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Best Western InnTowner at 2424 University Avenue. Please check **regentneighborhood.org** for any changes. These meetings are open to the general public and agenda items are solicited through the RNA listserv or can be emailed to shivabidar@tds.net

## Join the RNA Google Group—

For latest in the Regent Neighborhood news and conversations, join our Google Group by going to

**[groups.google.com/group/regentneighborhoodassn](https://groups.google.com/group/regentneighborhoodassn)**

## Alder Report—District 5

### What is the Building Energy Savings Program, and Why Should You Care?

Earlier this spring, the Common Council adopted the Building Energy Savings Program to reduce carbon pollution from large commercial buildings. After transportation, buildings contribute the most to climate change, and in Madison, commercial buildings are estimated to contribute to up to 30% of the city's carbon pollution.

The Building Energy Savings Program requires owners of large (over 25,000 square feet) nonresidential commercial buildings to annually track their energy use through "energy benchmarking" and to tune-up their building's energy systems every four years.

Energy benchmarking involves assessing and analyzing a building's annual energy use, just like you do at home when you review your MG&E and water utility bills. Energy benchmarking enables building owners and operators to understand current energy use patterns, identify opportunities to save energy and money, and track changes over time. While energy savings can vary from building to building, research by the U.S. EPA shows that buildings that benchmark their energy use see an average annual energy savings of 2.4% per year, which compounds year over year.

Like tuning up a car or bike, building tune-ups check and adjust a building's existing systems, like



Alder Regina Vidaver  
Photo: Jeanine Schneider

lighting and HVAC, to make sure they are operating at their best and not wasting energy. Adjustments might include simple things like updating heating and cooling schedules, adjusting water heating settings, etc. The program is focused on optimizing building operations and does not require installing new systems or replacing any functioning equipment. A meta-analysis by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory shows that tune-ups result in a median annual energy savings of 12% and a median annual cost savings of \$0.16 per square foot for a building.

The Building Energy Savings Program is an important step forward in reducing climate pollution and meeting Madison's goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions community-wide by 2050.

Benchmarking and tune-ups have proven track records of saving businesses both energy and money. It is estimated Madison's Building Energy Savings Program could cut carbon pollution by more than 91,000 tons per year. That's the same impact as taking 18,000 cars off the road.

I was a proud sponsor of this legislation and hope to continue contributing to improvements that help Madison reach our 2050 goals to reduce carbon emissions in my next term. To learn more, please see [cityofmadison.com/sustainability/climate](http://cityofmadison.com/sustainability/climate)

—Regina Vidaver  
Alder, District 5  
Madison Common Council  
[District5@cityofmadison.com](mailto:District5@cityofmadison.com)  
(608) 616-0669 ■

## Fourth of July *(continued from page 1)*

One thing that I would like to add this year are prizes. To make things more environmentally friendly, I would like to collect prizes from the neighborhood that people could recycle, items that are unused or have been discarded, but in good condition. If you have any possible items, you can contact me to know where to drop them off.

I look forward to working with those who would like to participate. I can be reached by email at [tehya.helen@gmail.com](mailto:tehya.helen@gmail.com) ■



Start gathering your "previously loved" toys and trinkets to donate as prizes for this year's Fourth of July festival games.



## Dane County Board Report—District 13

Happy Spring! I hope this edition finds you and your family well. In this issue, I am delighted to highlight the amazing Dane Arts Commission.

The Dane Arts Commission provides grants for Dane County-based activities which directly serve Dane County residents and allow universal public access to the project or program. This process is done twice a year, with the first cycle of grants being completed in the spring, the second cycle completed in the fall. The process begins with an application submission, which is then vetted for eligibility. The project or program is then reviewed by a panel of citizen advisors, where the application receives a preliminary score from the panel. The score comes before the Commission for ultimate determination of funding.

If you know of a worthy project or program, I encourage you to apply through WebGrants at



*Supervisor  
Olivia Xistris-Songpanya*

danearts.com. The deadline for the 2023 Cycle 2 Grants applications is August 1st, with the review process beginning in the fall. As always, please contact me or Augusta Brulla, Cultural Affairs Specialist, [brulla.augusta@countyofdane.com](mailto:brulla.augusta@countyofdane.com), for any help or inquiries.

Each year Dane Arts showcases a talented local artist through an annual art poster. This year's poster was created by Richie Morales. The annual poster is available at no cost, though voluntary donations are appreciated, at locations throughout Dane County. Douglas Art & Frame, on University Avenue, partners with Dane Arts as a distribution site and offers a discount for custom framing for this year's art poster. Please visit [danearts.com/support-dane-arts-/poster](https://danearts.com/support-dane-arts-/poster) for more information and to read Richie Morales' artist statement!

Please do not hesitate to contact me. I value my constituents' thoughts. I wish you and your families a happy transition from spring to summer.

—Olivia Xistris-Songpanya

Supervisor, District 13

[xistris-songpanya.olivia@countyofdane.com](mailto:xistris-songpanya.olivia@countyofdane.com) ■

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## Dane County Board Report—District 11

Feels like it's been a long winter, don't you think? I hope that, like me, you're ready to shake off the winter blues and get outside for a long walk as the world around us thaws. Today, I'm providing a few updates on County work that you may be interested in, including housing strategy, food systems, the county jail, and upcoming events in Dane County Parks.



*Supervisor  
Richelle Andrae*

Dane County is engaged in the development of a Regional Housing Strategy, which is exciting work. This initiative includes input from many jurisdictions within Dane County, from business and non-profit leaders, and more. As part of the Regional Housing Strategy work, there are many educational opportunities available, such as a webinar on sustainable housing featuring the intersection of climate resiliency and the environmental burden of development. For more information, visit [danecountyplanning.com/RHS](http://danecountyplanning.com/RHS).

In my role as a Supervisor, I am privileged to serve on the Dane County Food Policy Council. I was pleased to support an amendment in the budget last year to authorize a Pandemic Food System Study. A final report from the study is now available at [foodcouncil.countyofdane.com/](http://foodcouncil.countyofdane.com/). There are many individuals in our community who struggle with food insecurity, and there are systems approaches recommended in the report that we should be pursuing to address this problem. Dane County used a significant portion of pandemic-related aid to combat lack of access to affordable, healthy food, and now we need to plan for the future.

As to the Dane County Jail debate, we have an updated cost estimate to move forward with the six-story project. A proposal to fund the jail and move to bidding will be debated throughout April. If you'd like more details, let me know. In somewhat related news, the County Executive and Sheriff released a plan to house the proposed Crisis Triage Center, which is a time-limited, safe location for people experiencing mental health crises, to be sited at the previous Huber building which was a jail facility for individuals with work release privileges. I have a lot of questions regarding how this location was selected, including whether and how community stakeholders were consulted, and what other sites were considered. More to come on that, I'm sure.

Events with Dane County Parks! With spring-like weather right around the corner (supposedly), there are a lot of great events, mostly free, coming up in County Parks. Check out dog park clean-up day, Earth Day events, chain saw training and more: [danecountyparks.com/Events?id=12](http://danecountyparks.com/Events?id=12).

As always, please reach out if I can help, direct you to resources, or answer questions.

—Richelle Andrae

Dane County Board Supervisor District 11  
[andrae.richelle@countyofdane.com](mailto:andrae.richelle@countyofdane.com) ■





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## From Representative Shelia Stubbs—Wisconsin, Assembly District 77

Hello, Neighbors!

February and March were busy months for me. To kick off Black History Month, I visited the Milton House National Historical site in Milton, Wisconsin. The museum offers visitors an opportunity to enter the space where enslaved people found refuge during their passage from the South to the North on the Underground Railroad.

I celebrated the triumphs of these freedom-seekers who completed the arduous journey. As the first Black woman elected to the State Legislature from Dane County, I know that they paved the way for future generations of Black people to determine their own destiny. For more information, please see [miltonhouse.org/](http://miltonhouse.org/).

Also, for Black History Month, I read books to children at Milele Chikasa Anana Elementary and Nuestro Mundo Community Schools. The books by Black authors were a starting point for discussions about the countless contributions of African Americans to our nation.

I participated in a panel on Channel 3000 speaking about the death of Tyre Nichols and our efforts to prevent similar tragic outcomes in Wisconsin. We must constantly bring awareness to issues of racial injustice. Our work will never be done until every person feels safe and supported in their communities.

As a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., I hosted “Delta Days at the Wisconsin State Capitol 2023” on March 16. It is always an honor to host a group of determined women and work together on the issues that most deeply affect our state.

Finally, I had the opportunity to be the keynote speaker at the 100th anniversary of the W.B. Kennedy Lodge in Beloit, Wisconsin. At this event, I was surrounded by folks dedicated to public service and the betterment of their communities. I emphasized my commitment to ongoing efforts to enhance and protect the lives and liberties of all Wisconsinites.



*State Rep. Shelia Stubbs (first row) hosts women from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at the State Capitol.*

As always, you are welcome to stop in my office at 7 North in the State Capitol or call my office at 608-266-3784. For regular updates, follow me on Facebook at [facebook.com/repstubbs](https://facebook.com/repstubbs) or Twitter at [twitter.com/RepStubbs](https://twitter.com/RepStubbs) or email me at [Rep.Stubbs@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Stubbs@legis.wisconsin.gov) and I will put you on my e-newsletter list.

—Shelia Stubbs

State Assembly, District 77 ■

## Off the Cuff

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INFO: [bachdancing.org](https://bachdancing.org)





## Greetings from Randall

I recently came across a brass figurine that once lay on a hallway table in my childhood home. I've no doubt that you've seen similar ones. Three wise monkeys, one covering its eyes, one covering its ears, and one covering its mouth. My father would point to the cast and present the maxim, "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." I would knowingly nod, deeming the message to be his charge to me.

While playing peek-a-boo with my granddaughter not long ago, I was strangely brought back to the monkey covering its eyes and wondered, "Why monkeys?" I looked into the matter and discovered that the depiction of the three simians is actually a play on words. This may be more than you really want to know, but the original teaching had nothing to do with monkeys. The connection is linked to a pun of sorts.

In Japanese, Mizaru means *see not*; Kikazaru, *hear not*; and Iwazaru, *speak not*. Embedded in the spelling of each of the principles is the Japanese word for monkey—*saru*. So, the three tenets were thus personified, or perhaps *primatified*, and each monkey was dubbed accordingly.

While the three wise monkeys seemingly represent a call to good character and self-restraint, other takes have been offered. Some believe that the inherent message is to deny that evil exists, "turning a blind eye" to a matter of concern. Ignorance is bliss. Ostriches, unite!

As I come to know and love our students, I clearly see their eyes and ears are no strangers to evil, leading me to the consideration of another Japanese word: *Toruma*—trauma. For all that we humans have learned since the origin of our species, we continue to fashion a world all too fraught with things evil, and so many of our children are its innocent victims.

My father also espoused the proverb, "Children should be seen and not heard." At Randall, we hold children being seen *and* heard as essential to their well-being. Our youngsters' shared personal stories often convey traumatic events they and others have known. These accounts include their unsettling view of the world at large. Our consolation begins with ensuring that Randall is a safe haven for all.

We have only a handful of rules, e.g., No Throw Snow. Rather than regulations, we care for one another through our commitment to a culture of kindness and our expectations of one another to that end. We seize every opportunity to have our students closely evaluate what they choose to see, hear, say—and do. As adults, we strive to walk our talk as their role



Randall Principal John Wallace and company engage in some monkeyshines.


models. Monkey see, monkey do. And when we realize their need for guidance and support, we do not turn away from the children, but rather toward them. We recognize our privilege in being able to do so.

Go Raccoons!

John ■



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- Carolyn (Fox Ave.)

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## Happy Spring from Blessed Sacrament School!

We've been more than ready to say goodbye to the giant snowbanks on our playground (although all those snow days were kind of fun!) and get our school garden ready for planting. Students will plant seeds and seedlings when the time is right, and families will sign up to tend the garden together during the summer vacation months.

It's been a busy late winter and spring at BSS. From our diaper drive (held by the parish and supported by the school) which collected more than 30,000 diapers for families in need, to our Cub Scout pancake breakfast and our school Spaghetti Dinner, our students and families have been busy serving the greater community. Excellence in academics is always expected, but extracurriculars are also a big draw in late winter. Students in grades 5-8 played basketball in the independent school league and many participated in Battle of the Books, Forensics/Drama, Math 24, and the Spelling Bee. Students also put on a talent show for their peers and parents.

Aiden Wijeyakulasuriya won the BSS bee and went on to win the All-City Bee. In March, Aiden won the Wisconsin State Bee, and will travel to Washington, D.C. in late May to represent our state at the Scripps National Spelling Bee! Aiden has been our school champion every year since third grade (he was in fourth-grade spelling as a third grader), has won the All-City Bee twice and is now the state champion. We are P-R-O-U-D of him! [Ed: See related story on p. 14.]

We organized a program on Internet Safety this spring as well. With a target audience of parents and staff, this session featured Jessica Cattaneo of the Wisconsin Department of Justice-Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force talking about internet safety, cyber bullying and more. She provides investigative support to law enforcement and takes part in community outreach efforts to raise awareness about internet safety, providing resources to kids, parents/caregivers, and the community to help keep children safe.



*Blessed Sacrament School students enjoy indoor games at recess but look forward to going outdoors.*

For more information on Blessed Sacrament School, please visit [school.blsacrament.org](http://school.blsacrament.org) or call the school office at 608-233-6155.

—Elizabeth First,  
[efirst@school.blsacrament.org](mailto:efirst@school.blsacrament.org) ■

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## Greetings from Franklin

I hope this spring newsletter finds you, your family, and friends enjoying some sunshine and more springlike weather. I don't know about you, but this winter felt like an eternity, so I'm very excited to welcome warmer days.

During the months of February and March our Franklin Falcons were busy! In early March, our Franklin Randall PTO hosted the return of the "GlowBall" at Franklin, and Whoa! was it a popular event. It was a great opportunity for our communities to come together and enjoy music and dance. There was something for everyone—great music and dancing in the gym, and some coloring activities in the library. Everywhere you turned, there were smiles and laughter. It was a special night.

In the middle of March, with yet another snowstorm, our Madison Metropolitan School District community had to pivot to a day of virtual learning again for our students. (Enough already, am I right?) I'm so grateful to each of the educators at Franklin School for making a seamless transition possible for families and students. It was a quick turnaround, but our staff pulled together and made it a success.

The final week leading up to Spring Break was busy, but fun. We had a "March Madness" pep rally that featured many of our staff members playing basketball games. The students cheered on all the staff and practiced celebrating, even in defeat.

Finally, we celebrated our "Read Your Heart Out Day" just before break. The joy was palpable throughout the day and was an amazing way to send everyone off on vacation.



*On the last day before Spring Break, "Read Your Heart Out Day" was riveting.*

We are looking forward to an exciting final quarter of our school year together, full of celebration and continued growth. Thank you for your continued support of our students and staff.

Take care and be well!

—Emily Powers

Principal, Franklin Elementary School ■



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## West High News

At West, we're looking forward to having a solid finish to the school year. That's correct; in a few short weeks, 10 to be exact, another school year will come to an end. For me, it has been a fantastic journey, and I am so glad I made the move to West.

At West, we have been experiencing some very positive news. In the past few weeks, West has had some inspiring events. Our spring musical, "The Prom," was a huge success, as was the spring music festival, with a lot of our Regent community residents in attendance.

In other great news, I can report that our students are experiencing achievement in the classroom that's translating into scholarships. One perk of being head principal is I get copied on some of the student scholarships that are awarded to our future grads. Lately, my inbox has been inundated with awards notices. As the spring continues to blossom, I know even more awards will be given to our students.

Some upcoming events for us include prom and our 8th- to 9th-grade transition program, commonly referred to as "Movin' on West." The latter includes an opportunity for our feeder school students and families to join us at West for an early introduction to high school life. These are only two of many opportunities and events that will be happening this spring.

In construction news, the school building continues to take shape. By next fall, another 72,000 square feet of new classrooms and athletic facilities will open for students and staff. In case you forgot, we still have another year of referendum construction. Continue to check your mailbox for updates on all of West's construction news. If you're not getting regular updates, please get in touch with us and we'll connect you to both the school district and construction company notices.

Lastly, some disturbing news—recently, on our property (storage containers behind the tennis court), we experienced some anti-Semitic graffiti. I, along with our students and staff, find this behavior to be hateful because it contradicts our core values and beliefs as a school community. I am working with the local police and school district to identify those involved. We are also taking steps to improve our supervision of that back corner of the property. At this time, I can't say definitively that the individuals responsible are West students. Nonetheless, I am treating this matter seriously, as many of our students and staff were impacted.

As part of a broad and comprehensive response to this behavior, we will look to our school-wide Regent



*West High School's spring music festival was a huge success.*

Pride lessons as one opportunity to discuss hate speech and how we can combat it as a community. While we engage in these efforts, don't hesitate to get in touch with us so we can collaborate and support one another. It is through combined efforts that we must fight back against this hateful behavior to send the message that there's no place for it at West High School. Thank you, and Onwards!

Sincerely,

—Daniel Kigeya,  
Principal ■

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# Zoning Ordinance Changes Update

by Ron Rosner and Mike Varda\*

On Tuesday, February 28, 2023, the City Council voted 13 to 6 to approve a proposal to allow up to five unrelated people to legally occupy a single-family home in Madison, whether owner-occupied or held for rental. The proposal was one component of the City's campaign to use all the levers of government to increase the housing stock, and, as well, to gain more housing from the existing stock by increasing density.

Despite a preponderance of public testimony opposing the change, the measure was enacted with the precise language developed by the City's Planning Department last fall. Had this been a more open process, moderate alternatives could have been considered, such as accepting three or four unrelated individuals, rather than five, as the common denominator for all single-family homes, and acknowledging the fragility of near-campus neighborhoods.

Several alders were passionate in their defense of the City's proposal, citing the racism and inequity embedded in a law enacted over 50 years ago. (Alder Regina Vidaver voted against the proposal.) What has not been evident from the start of this debate, however, is who's helped, who's hurt, and how.

Those most likely to benefit from the change are owners of residential rental property. Those most likely to lose out are first-time home buyers.

Immediately, the number of unrelated roomers an owner of rental property can legally rent to now is increased from two to five or by 150%, thus enabling that owner to offer more for a given property than under prior law, and making it more costly, perhaps prohibitively so, for first-time home buyers to compete. In a report released just hours before the Council voted to approve the change, the City acknowledged this reality:

*"...it can generally be assumed that areas of the city that have single family homes that are lower cost but can still command strong rents are at greater risk for real estate speculation."*

As for near campus neighborhoods in which conversion to rental has occurred to the limits allowed under prior law, the trend toward conversion will be newly energized under the law change. For the time being, however, the high price of single-



*Much of Lathrop Street is rental property.*

family homes acts as a market-based deterrent to conversion but changes in rents, interest rates, and home prices could affect this balance.

For the vast majority of the 50,000 single-family homeowners in the city though, the new law is likely to be seen as a change happening in someone else's neighborhood, despite the broad sweep of the ordinance as enacted.

---

*\*Ron Rosner and Mike Varda are past Chairs of the RNA Zoning Committee. They wrote about the zoning ordinance changes in the last issue of the newsletter.*

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## Poetry Corner—Madeleine Bohn, Madison Youth Poet Laureate

*[Ed: Madeleine Bohn is Madison's first Youth Poet Laureate, appointed July 30, 2022, at a ceremony at the city's Central Library. The one-year position was created by the City of Madison and the Madison Arts Commission. Bohn is finishing her freshman year*

*at West High School. Her poem, Teakettle, was first published through Urban Word's Youth Poet Laureate Program for the City of Madison, Wisconsin and is reprinted with permission of the author. Following the poem, there's an interview with the poet.]*

### Teakettle

Standing at the marble slab of counter  
Her outstretched fingertips reach  
From fridge to faucet; everything around her  
Basks in sunlight, faded shades of peach

She collects the aged, well-loved kettle  
Passed through hand after hand, gifted as greetings and goodbyes,  
Fills with water, lets it settle  
On the rusty little stovetop, heat turned to high.

As the whistling begins,  
Reminiscent of train journeys, dissipating wisps of memories,  
The tea-mistress grins,  
Mind galloping backwards in time through decennaries.

Dashing through sunlit fields of lavender,  
Laughing, laughing for countless hours  
Friends and family gather  
For weddings, funerals, baby showers.

She pulls two chipped cups from their teetering stack  
Carefully fills them, a sugar lump each  
One in her hands, the other set opposite with a gentle clack  
Waiting for a ghost, sitting just out of reach.

—Madeleine Bohn ■

## Meet Madeleine Bohn— An Interview with Madison's First Youth Poet Laureate

### **Regent Neighborhood Association Newsletter:**

How did you get to be Madison's first Youth Poet Laureate? What does this involve?

**Bohn:** The city put out a call for poets ages 13–19, which I discovered thanks to my English teacher. When I applied, submitting five sample poems and a short essay, I was not at all expecting to be chosen. I almost didn't apply, but then decided that there was no harm in trying for the position. I was very surprised (and grateful!) when I found out I had been selected as Madison's first Youth Poet Laureate!

**RNA:** When did you start writing poetry? Can you tell us why and what poetry means to you?

**Bohn:** I've been writing since I could hold a crayon, and, before that, I would tell stories aloud to anyone who would listen. When I started, I didn't call my writing poetry; it was just scattered thoughts and metaphors scribbled on post-it notes. Over time, I realized this could be an intentional form of writing—disjointed prose became poetry. I see poetry as a way to break down barriers in a polarized world, to connect through our shared humanity, but also to raise awareness of important issues in a way people won't close their ears to.

**RNA:** What books are on your "to read" list? And what have been some of your favorites?

**Bohn:** My list of to-read books could likely fill a small library, but at the top are *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* (V.E. Schwab), *The Bell Jar* (Sylvia Plath) and *Everything is Illuminated* (Jonathan Safran Foer). I'm in the middle of *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley), which I'm really enjoying so far, and my all-time favorite book is *All the Light We Cannot See* (Anthony Doerr).

**RNA:** What class are you in at West High, and what subjects are among your favorites?



Madeleine Bohn

**Bohn:** I'm in the class of 2026. As far as core classes go, I've enjoyed all of them! English is a favorite, of course, but I'm also very interested in STEM and history. I've also enjoyed the business courses West offers. A class's teacher really dictates how much I like the course, and this year, all my teachers are engaging. ■

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# Neighborhood Spelling Bee Champ—Meet Me, Aiden Wijeyakulasuriya

*[Ed: Aiden won the Wisconsin State Bee in March and will represent Wisconsin at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. in May. He has won the All-City Bee twice and is the current state champion. He attends Blessed Sacrament School.]*

My name is Aiden Wijeyakulasuriya, and I am in 7th grade. I enjoy math, science, and reading in school. In my spare time, I do many things. I have many activities and commitments, such as piano, tennis, Boy Scouts, and more. Additionally, I love reading books, and I integrate the knowledge I find from them into my spelling.

In 3rd grade I became interested in spelling when my reading teacher, Mrs. Leland, asked me if I would like to participate in the classroom spelling bee, since I was in 4th grade spelling. I tried it out, and to my surprise, I won. A little bit later, I miraculously won my school spelling bee. Voracious for more heights to reach, I went on to the Madison All-City Spelling Bee, and finished in 11th place. Though that should have been the end of it, through pure luck I had been selected through a now nonexistent program called RSVBee and got to go straight to the national spelling bee. I finished in a respectable 51st place, but after I returned home, I always had an urge to return to Washington D.C. once more and make a difference. I would have never expected to come this far, especially considering that in 3rd grade, getting into the school bee was amazing for me.

Becoming a champion speller is something that requires deep commitment and effort. No one strategy will ever yield a better result than another, which is the whole charisma of the National Spelling Bee. Reading books definitely helps, but in the end, finding new words is more efficient. Not to say that reading is egregious and slow, but people have different opinions on the best way to study. The other thing about spelling bees is that there is an undeniable need for luck to win. For example, when I was competing in this recent spelling bee, I got out, came back in, spelled multiple words wrong, and still won *[Ed: because the other competitors misspelled their words, too.]*

Being prepared is very difficult, but regardless, devotion is necessary. Each school day, I try to study for about an hour in the morning, and one to two hours in the afternoon. On weekends, I try to study for around two to four hours, and more if I know I must make up for another day.

Some of the most difficult words for me to learn have been very obscure words from very obscure origins. However, the most difficult, in my opinion, are words



*Spelling champion Aiden Wijeyakulasuriya with his trophy.*

from an unknown origin. These are very challenging if they haven't been heard before. In more specific terms, some of the words I misspelled were cabrito, chartaceous, and martenot.

Spelling words may not seem important since nowadays we can just use a search engine, but correct spelling is crucial to things in life. Everyone has experienced problems with AutoCorrect fixing the wrong words, but have you wondered why? It is simply because it does not recognize every single word ever known to humans. With writing being such an important part of modern life, good spelling skills are truly necessary. Some people have trouble spelling words because, like I said, it doesn't seem necessary because of modern technology. For the reasons above, the pursuit of knowledge of words is something great to take up, and I believe anyone can achieve the level of vocabulary to be on par with spelling champions.

Adults having spelling bees is a hilarious but frankly great idea. The National Spelling Bee has a grade limit of 8th grade but imagine a spelling bee for anyone of any knowledge level. And in my mind, it would be amazing to see past National Spelling Bee champions compete against each other in one big contest. Introducing a challenge of literacy to everyone would be beneficial globally. ■



## What I'm Reading—Joyce Knutson

[Ed: Raised in New Jersey, Joyce first came to Madison for graduate school in the UW–Madison biochemistry department. Following a professional career in pharmaceutical research, Joyce is now happily retired and “doing all those things I never had time to do.” She has lived in the Regent Neighborhood for over 40 years.]



Joyce Knutson

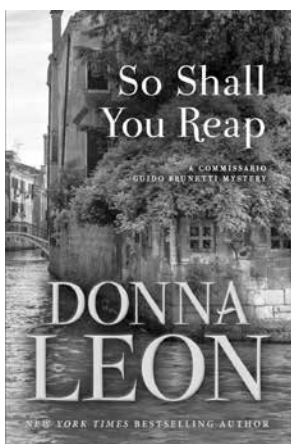
When I want escape, I reach for a mystery. For me, an enjoyable mystery has a well-crafted plot with a puzzle I can solve, unforgettable characters, and descriptions that can envelope me in another place or historical period.

Before I go further, I should confess that often I do not sit down to read a mystery, but rather, I pick up my cell phone and listen to a narrator reading the book to me.

I learned from a librarian at the Monroe Street Public Library that I could download audio books from the library through Libby, Wisconsin's Digital app for e-books and e-audiobooks. What was a “life-saver” during the pandemic has become a habit. I find that mysteries can engage my mind but not require too much concentration, while my hands are performing routine tasks. I will listen to audiobooks while doing household chores or an exercise routine. In the summer I will listen while working in the garden. If the story is engaging, I willingly do that extra bit of weeding to hear one more chapter.

I have many favorite authors, both current and past masters. I even have some favorite readers or narrators.

American crime writer Donna Leon takes you to modern day Venice, Italy, and into the escapades of Commissario Guido Brunetti. Brunetti comes from a working-class background, but has married into a venerable Venetian family, which affords him access to much of Venetian high society. His intelligence, firm moral compass, understated humor, and love for his family, fine Italian food, and classical literature make him an engaging personality. While he ferrets out the city's criminals,



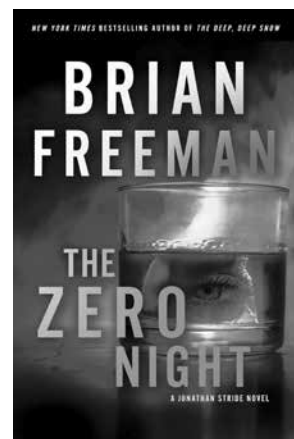
[regentneighborhood.org](http://regentneighborhood.org)

we lean back to learn about the challenges of daily life in Venice—corruption, the Acqua Alta or high water that can inundate the city, and the sometimes-difficult interactions between Venetians and their very different neighbors on the mainland.

Narrator David Colucci lets all the Italian vowels flow off his tongue in names, places, foods. He, too, transports me to Venice.

I'll often choose a book narrated by George Guidall. I started listening to him read mysteries by Dick Francis. Although Francis has no one protagonist, all his mysteries center on the world of horse racing, a sport about which I knew nothing. This lack of knowledge did not matter. Francis drops the reader into a lively plot peopled with colorful characters who are discovering who they are while navigating us through the racing world. He still finds time to solve a mystery.

I recently discovered author Brian Freeman, whose main protagonist is a lieutenant in the Duluth, MN, police department. Descriptions of Lake Superior and a Midwestern sensibility will be familiar to Wisconsin readers. These mysteries aren't over until they are really over. The reader may think all is solved, but Freeman often has one last surprising chapter that makes you gasp, “Oh, yes!”



Other favorite authors (and their geographic/time settings) include Louise Penny (Quebec), Jacqueline Winspear (WWI), Dana Stabenow (Alaskan backcountry), Anne Perry (Victorian London), Lindsey Davis (1st-century Rome), Nevada Barr (US National Parks), and Peter Robinson (Yorkshire, England).

I refer any mystery enthusiasts to StopYoureKillingMe.com. This web site allows you to search by author, character, and awards. Series are listed in chronological order; awards received are noted; non-series noted and much more.

This spring, escape to a written or spoken mystery!





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## Recipe Corner—Anu Ebbe\*

### ***Tirumalar* or Indian Stir Fry**

As a child, I took for granted all the mouth-watering home-cooked meals Amma (mother) used to make with fresh vegetables and secret family spice blends. Now, I have so much gratitude for the long hours she spent in the kitchen, cooking amazing meals for her family from scratch and with love. Amma never used a recipe. Her style is what I'd call mindful cooking, using her senses to determine how much of an ingredient is needed. Much of what I learned about cooking comes from watching her in the kitchen.

I, too, have the habit of cooking mindfully. Hence, I am a terrible baker. However, to be able to share my version of *tirumalar* or Indian stir fry, I measured out each ingredient so I could record it in this recipe. It is a staple in our household because we can make it with any vegetable. Our favorites are cauliflower and carrots. I have all my ingredients in an *anjali potti* (a spice box), and as in most Indian households, we have our own curry leaf plant.

#### **Instructions**

*[Ed: Some of the ingredients in this recipe can be found in Asian specialty stores.]*

3 tablespoons vegetable or avocado oil  
1 teaspoon ghee (clarified butter, optional)  
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds  
3–4 curry leaves  
1–2 Indian fresh green chili, cut in half, seeds removed, and diced (or other green chile)  
½ or 1 dried red pepper, seeds removed  
2–3 teaspoons freshly grated ginger  
1 teaspoon chana dal (Bengali gram or split chickpeas)  
1 tablespoon urad dal (black gram or split black lentils)  
1 teaspoon turmeric powder  
⅛ teaspoon chili powder  
2 teaspoons cumin seeds  
Fenugreek seeds, about 6  
1 cup peeled, chopped red onion  
4–6 cloves garlic, peeled, chopped  
1 large tomato cut into about 1/8 pieces; seeds removed  
1½ teaspoons garam masala (optional)  
2 cups cut-up cauliflower florets  
2–3 tablespoons water, or as needed  
2 cups peeled, grated carrots  
½ cup diced red peppers; seeds removed  
½ cup green peas, fresh or frozen and thawed  
1 teaspoon freshly-grated lemon zest



Anu Ebbe

1–2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (or to taste)  
Pinch of paprika  
Salt and pepper to taste

Pour the oil (and ghee if you are using it) into a large pan or iron wok. Turn heat to medium-high and add the mustard seeds. When they begin popping, add the curry leaves, green chili, dried red chili, and ginger. Be careful as the mustard seeds may pop out of the pan. Use a splatter screen if you have one.

Add the Bengali gram, wait approximately 1 minute, then add the urad dal. When urad dal is golden brown, turn down the heat to medium, add turmeric powder, chili powder, and cumin. Don't let the dal burn.

Add the chopped onions and let them caramelize. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.

Add garam masala and tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes uncovered. Add cauliflower and water (if vegetables begin to stick) and cook for 2–3 minutes on medium heat. Cover the pan if you like your veggies softer. Add remaining vegetables and cook, covered, on medium heat. Remove the cover and let any remaining liquid evaporate. Cook until vegetables are to your liking.

Add lemon juice, lemon zest, paprika, salt, and pepper. Serve with basmati or any long-grained rice.

*\*Born in India, Regent neighborhood resident and educator Anuradha (Anu) Ebbe (continued on page 18)*



## Anu Ebbe (continued from page 17)

(Ed.D.) has been fighting inequities in education for more than 20 years. Prior to becoming Madison Metropolitan School District's Deputy Associate Superintendent of Middle Schools, she was the Principal at Cherokee Heights. Her commitment to MMSD's scholars and staff has earned her numerous

awards including Wisconsin's 2022 Secondary School Principal of the Year, 2022 Herb Kohl Foundation Award recipient. Under her leadership, Shorewood Hills Elementary was designated a National Blue Ribbon School in 2017. (Source: MMSD) ■

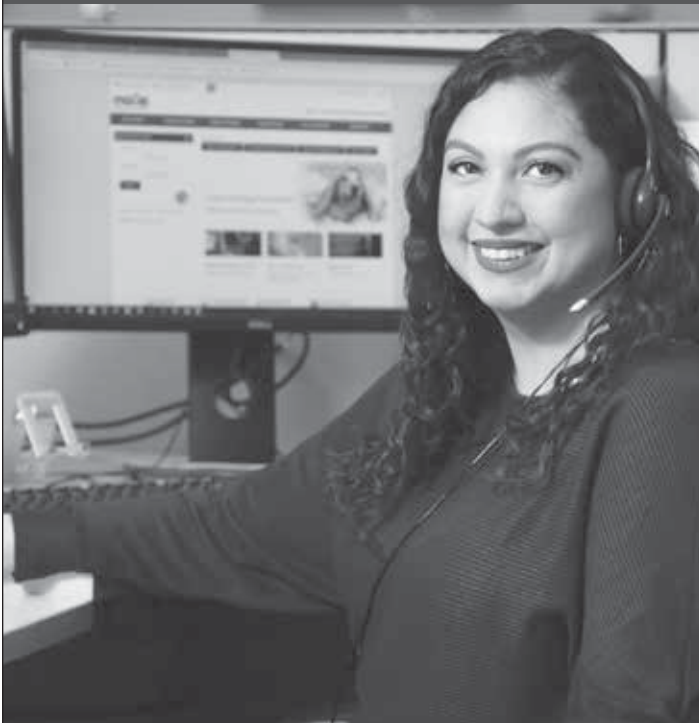


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# This New House—Chuck Bauer and Chuck Beckwith

**“The Soap Opera House” (1985–1989) • 1833 Van Hise Avenue.**

**Architect—Valdis Dunis, American Institute of Architects (1942–2022)**

*[Ed: In past editions of the newsletter, we’ve focused on architectural history and historic preservation in the Regent neighborhood. In this issue, we shift our attention to new houses, the results of what is sometimes called infill, the process of using land within a built-up environment for additional construction. What place does artful, modern design have in an existing, even historic, neighborhood? Can it become part of that architectural history? Here is one story from Chuck Bauer and Chuck Beckwith. In 1972, they founded The Soap Opera on State Street, a store which specializes in natural, luxury bath and grooming products. They sold their business in 2016.]*

“You live in THAT house?” Yes, after thirty-five years we still hear it. Architects would say, “A high-profile house,” or, more concisely, “A house of record.” Yes, since we moved in, the neighborhood reaction has been 100% positive. In fact, after almost four decades, opinion has expanded to include pride and admiration.

Obviously building anything is a heady experience. For us it lasted four years—one to design, one to obtain City approval, one to find a builder, and one to build. The first and last were the easiest. But in between was a challenge.

The zoning and Landmark District codes in the 1980s were both open to interpretation. Zoning had no specific standards for a lot such as ours which fronts on two non-parallel streets. Landmarks gave limited guidelines (mainly concerning materials) but, critically, implied free contemporary architectural expression was appropriate. Nevertheless, some neighbors objected.

The chief neighborhood objections we encountered revolved around, “no change is good,” “the plans are bewildering,” and “modern design is not for me.” Since we were planning a legal house and requesting no variance, personal objections carried no weight, and did not stop approval.

But neighborhood controversy did mean we needed to design the house so no variance under multiple interpretations of both zoning and Landmarks Commission codes and ordinances would be needed. In other words, our design needed to satisfy zoning criteria required for both a “regular lot” and a “through-lot” since these were the only options, and our lot configuration was unaddressed by the



*The “Soap Opera” House was one of the first modern houses to be built in the historic part of the neighborhood. A majestic structure, it was designed by architect Valdis Dunis.*

zoning code. Additionally, at the worst possible time, a minor error in total square footage of the lot in the official property survey arose, but it was easily corrected without doing severe damage to our plans, or their legality. Our architect pulled it off, and we had a beautiful design to share with the world.

However, despite a very complete and detailed set of plans, finding a builder was not easy. Fortunately, we had a prior relationship with a small firm, now one of Madison's largest, Bauer Builders (no relation). They were willing to step up and did an excellent job. (I heard midstream that their approach was, “Not building a house, but building a small office building.”) That is another way of saying costs were exploding.

Later, viewing myself as a bruised but wiser citizen, I wrote to Mayor Soglin explaining that if I were appointed to The Madison Landmarks Commission I would bring vital petitioner-perspective experience. He agreed and I served for ten years, most of the time as Chair.

In summary, it's really a wonder that anything anywhere gets built at all. Worth considering the next time you see something new going up. The complexities are daunting, the cooperation required is herculean, and the details arising everyday are a blizzard.

It's easy to point out change, to wish there was not so much so fast, but, in the end, cities are built by the creative and ambitious *(continued on page 20)*



# Little People Villages Popping Up in the Regent Neighborhood

As the snow disappeared, you may have noticed some miniature villages in our neighborhood. They've been here for some time. Although no for sale or rent signs have ever been attached to them, these properties are available, for a song and a dance, especially if you are a wee creature, like a leprechaun, fairy, or sprite.

Over the last several years, Little People Villages have gained in popularity, not just in the U.S. but in Europe. The creation mostly of children, but also parents, artists and gardeners, these eccentric, whimsical places feature diminutive tables, beds, and chairs. They are places where spirits can find shelter for however long they choose. Some local communities take the artistry of these villages seriously. For example, Sunday, June 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts in Mineral Point will feature its annual Tour of Fairy Homes. Admission: adults (12 and above) \$5, children (11 and under) free. ■



*Little villages for wee people in the Regent Neighborhood*



## This New House *(continued from page 19)*

among us, together with those who administer our shared public-sector guardrails, and we are all to one degree or another in their debt. That said, obviously any neighborhood, but especially an historically significant one, needs to be vigilant that design, massing, and material standards are maintained, and that not just any building is

appropriate or suitable irrespective of what other issues, e.g., pursuit of increased density, it might seek to address.

For more history on the house, including minutes from the Landmarks Commission (1986–88): [bauerbeckwithresidence.com/index.php](http://bauerbeckwithresidence.com/index.php) ■



# Letting Go of Prospect Gardens—Experiences and Reflections

**Jacob (Jake) Blasczyk, Prospect Gardens Crew Chief**

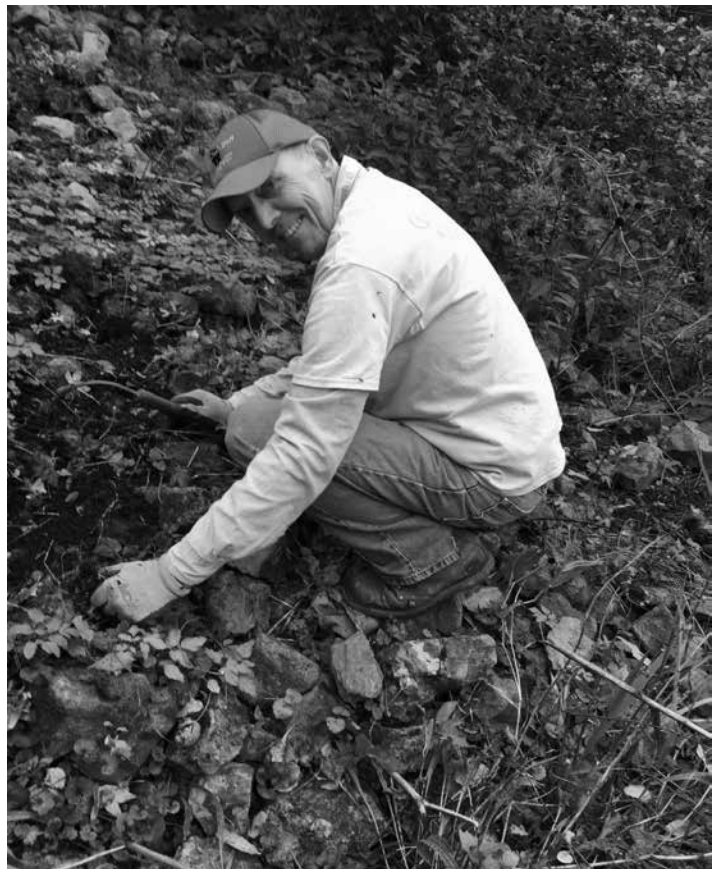
*[Ed—Jake Blasczyk has been the force behind a neighborhood beautification project along portions of the Southwest Commuter Path, centered at the Prospect Street crossing, for nearly 15 years. The following article is excerpted from Jake's recent blog post giving reasons for his retirement from the project in October 2023. The Regent and Dudgeon Monroe Neighborhood Associations jointly have provided volunteers and funding for watering, plants, and equipment. We need your help to sustain Prospect Gardens. Gardeners and prospective workers are invited to contact Jake at [jblasczyk13@gmail.com](mailto:jblasczyk13@gmail.com)]*

Since Prospect Gardens began in 2010, I have enjoyed connections with numerous volunteers. Some have volunteered for only a few days while others have given extended service over the years. Thank you all for contributing to my well-being.

These days I am aware that letting go increases the resilience needed to navigate aging. Poet Danna Faulds' poem, "Allow," makes the point about giving up control, the opposite of letting go. *"There is no controlling life. / Try corralling a lightning bolt, / containing a tornado."* Tara Brach, an internationally-known meditation teacher, stresses "radical acceptance," another form of letting go.

My current situation with Prospect Gardens is one small (and less dramatic) example of allowing, accepting, and letting go as I age. I have been the only crew chief since the initial development of the Gardens, responsible for recruiting volunteers, working with them on site, and for making decisions affecting the Gardens. I want to step back as crew chief after this season. I am now searching for a replacement while considering an option for a small team that takes on the crew chief's tasks rather than leaving it to one individual. [See related job description.]

Letting go of Prospect Gardens is not easy for me. I just can't walk away and see what happens. I try not to think about this beautiful site with its many environmental benefits disappearing into invasive plants and weeds. Maddie Dumas, City Engineering's Greenway Vegetation Coordinator, assures me that she will do her best to ensure that this will not happen if the Dudgeon Monroe and Regent Neighborhood Associations cannot maintain the Gardens. Maddie has been so helpful over the years, offering advice and an Operation Fresh Start Team to help maintain the Gardens.



*Jake Blasczyk is retiring. Help him find a successor at the Prospect Gardens.*

A potential future volunteer and friend of mine has reminded me that the Gardens after 13 years are also resilient—prairie plants will survive. The best strategy may be to support them. I am comforted by my friend's suggestion and Maddie's assurances.

I write this in the present moment with the sun melting the snow and with, at least for today, a hint of spring in the air. The sun is higher in the sky, so the crystal orb in my office is no longer casting its spell of refracted colors on the ceiling and walls. May you be well and enjoy the onset of spring. ■

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## Wanted—Volunteer Prospect Prairie Gardens Crew Chief(s)

Jake Blasczyk, crew chief for nearly 14 years, will be retiring in October 2023. Needed is a new crew chief or two people willing to share the role. Ideally, during the 2023 season, Jake will mentor the new crew chief or chiefs who fully take over in 2024.

The Gardens are at the Prospect Avenue crossing to the Southwest Path and a block east of Blessed Sacrament School. The Regent and Dudgeon Monroe Neighborhood Associations jointly provide funding for plants, mulch, and equipment.

Besides working with volunteers onsite, other major crew chief responsibilities are:

- recruiting and supporting volunteers using established lists;
- scheduling work sessions;
- emailing periodic updates to relevant association board committees or individuals;
- writing articles for association newsletters;
- purchasing needed plants, mulch, etc. and processing reimbursement;
- And, making any decisions involving restoration, depending on what happens ecologically and, if needed, consulting with knowledgeable others.



Major restoration not anticipated because the Gardens are well established.

Jake, from April to November 2022, worked onsite for 70 hours with his wife Ann and volunteers. During the off season, Jake estimates spending another 40 hours recruiting volunteers, supporting them, and writing articles. Most years, Jake and his wife hosted an annual gathering for volunteers to celebrate and consider the upcoming season. These were usually about three hours in length.

Primary requirements are curiosity, physical ability to garden, and the desire to help maintain a green space. Prior knowledge of native plants and gardening may be helpful but not necessary.

Please email Jake at [jblasczyk13@gmail.com](mailto:jblasczyk13@gmail.com). Please tell a little about yourself, why you are interested in being a crew chief, and a phone number. Jake will follow-up. ■



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## New Mural for Highland Avenue—Christy McKenzie, Pasture and Plenty

Have you ever looked at that giant blank wall of ours at Highland and University Avenues and thought, “Gee, wouldn’t that wall look better with a mural?” Yep, us too! In fact, we’ve been planning one for that space since 2018. Finally, our plans are ready to be launched this summer in collaboration with local artist Natalie Hinahara.

From the outset, we wanted the mural to be public art and to reflect themes of food justice, resilience, and agency. As we moved ahead, Natalie and I considered the work Pasture and Plenty has been doing with Ho-Chunk Chef Elena Terry, of Wild Bearies. We wanted to design a mural that would explore the Native and Indigenous plants that have been a part of this landscape since before White settlement. It was also important to us that the art installation engage the community and neighborhood in conversations and action, beyond land acknowledgement, to explore what education and reparation might look like.

Dejope, the land of the Four Lakes, held a significant role in this area’s Indigenous history, and the property where the mural will be installed is in the heart of this space, between ancient sites on the lakeshore and a constellation of burial mounds at Forest Hill Cemetery.

We are grateful for the Regent Neighborhood Association’s grant for the first \$2,500. We planned a local fundraiser for mid-April 2023. But we will need \$8,500 more to pay for design, supplies, and labor for installation, as well as for stipends for West High School art students to be involved in the work in June. We continue to look for other funding sources. For more information about the project, email Christy at [hello@pastureandplenty.com](mailto:hello@pastureandplenty.com)

Finally, a word about Natalia Hinahara. She is a printmaker, painter, muralist, and graphic designer



*The artist, Natalie Hinahara, in front of her native plant mural in La Crosse. Photo: Tom Monson*

born and raised in Madison. Her work is informed by the landscapes and ecosystems of the Great Lakes and Driftless Regions of the Midwest. In her murals, she paints vibrant plants and insects that climb and soar above the viewer. She has painted interior and exterior murals in La Crosse, Viroqua, and Madison, and Minas Gerais, Brazil. Learn more at [nataliehinahara.com/](http://nataliehinahara.com/)

Watch the wall as it unfolds! ■

