

Published by the Forest Hill Neighborhood Association

Fall/Winter 2022 Issue

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Fairy Gardens

Everything you need to know about the tiny neighbors who live in our front yards.

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Welcome

FHNA meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church and on Zoom. See you there!

www.foresthillneighborhood.com

Exit interview with the FHNA president

Whit Clements: "Built To Be Together"



Whit Clements, Outgoing FHNA President

Whit Clements has been President of the Forest Hill Neighborhood Association since 2016. He has decided to step down from the position at the end of the year. We sat down with Whit to ask him about his experience serving the neighborhood.

How long have you lived in Forest Hill?

We moved here in June 2010. After a long, arduous search for different neighborhoods, we found this great place on 47th Street that had just been renovated. We were there until 2018 and then we moved to the house where we are now on 42nd Street.

What attracted you to the neighborhood in the first place?

It was the idea of a small neighborhood with lots of trees and lots of walkability. Proximity to the river, the park. The fact that you had areas with sidewalks and areas without sidewalks. You had houses that were built in the early 1900s to the mid-1950s with a couple of more modern houses scattered in between.

How has Forest Hill changed in the 12 years since you arrived?

When we first moved in here, we joked that as soon as someone had a kid, you could start a countdown. Within two to three years they were going to move and they were usually moving to the counties. Now we live on a street where there are eight or ten kids under the age of 12. You see groups of kids playing together and wandering around the neighborhood together. That's a really good sign of a healthy neighborhood. Families aren't moving out.

There are a lot of people in Forest Hill who move within the neighborhood. I think of them as hermit crabs. Once they outgrow one shell, they find another shell that's going to fit. As families get bigger, they move to a bigger house. As they get smaller, they downsize. They stay because they like Forest Hill so much.

You have served for over 6 years as FHNA President. That's a long time! Have there been any particular highlights? Any particularly rough patches?

Getting to be part of the process of improving the neighborhood has been a highlight, even though it's slow and frustrating at times. We're still waiting for traffic improvements on Forest Hill Avenue – it may take a decade for some simple changes that would help reduce speed and make it safer for pedestrians to cross. But the process has shown me how the city government works, how the city offices work, how the city departments work. There are a lot of great, talented, caring people who work within the city.

Another highlight has been getting to know everybody in the community and trying to solve problems. It's a small neighborhood of 600+ houses but every little area has different needs and concerns. People between Westover Hills and Taylor Avenue have different situations than people between Taylor and Roanoke. You may think it's all Forest Hill, but there are subtleties within the neighborhood.

I have loved seeing people come out and volunteer for the 5K and for stream cleanups. When RVA 311 first came out, we would get groups of neighbors and walk the different sections of the neighborhood and note the sidewalks and potholes that needed to be repaired. Eventually you started seeing things happen. Potholes got fixed, sidewalks eventually got repaired, street signs got replaced.

The pandemic was hard because it forced everybody apart, which is not something this neighborhood handles well. It's just not the way we're built. We're built to be together.

A lot of neighbors have never come to an FHNA meeting. Can you pull back the curtain and tell us all the exciting things that happen at a monthly FHNA meeting and why everyone should come?

Everyone comes into these meetings for a different reason, but it's usually because of a problem. They want to find people who can help them solve that problem, whether someone who sits on the FHNA Board or who knows someone in the city government. That's what got me involved.

Very few times in your life will you have direct access to your representatives, whether that be a City Council member, Congressperson, Sheriff, or Senator. We bring them all in and they talk to you.

If you want to find out what's going on or get help with a problem, the monthly FHNA meeting is a really good place to go. It's also a great place to get involved and meet your neighbors.

You mentioned in the last newsletter that you plan to step down at the end of the year. Why?

It's a little weird. Every other former president that I know of has stopped for a very specific reason, such as a job change or growing family. One said clearly at the outset, "I'm only doing it for a year, and I'm done." I never set such boundaries.

But I honestly feel it's a role that no one should have for more than three years: a year to learn it, a year to run it, and a year to make changes and then move on. The neighborhood is dynamic. And that can't be easily reflected if you have the same person there, no matter how open they are to ideas.

I was talking to a neighbor who said, "Why don't you just stop? What's the worst that's going to happen?" I said I didn't know. They said, "Well, either someone will step up and do it or it will cease to be. Either way, that's what supposed to happen...." I think that there is someone out there now who just needs this opportunity to step into the role.

I suspect that most of our neighbors would be totally intimidated by the thought of serving as President of the FHNA. Can you tell us what's required of this job?

Probably the biggest thing is the ability to listen. You're not issuing edicts or setting direction. This is a neighborhood association, not an HOA. You're simply listening to concerns that people have and figuring out ways to connect them with the right resources.

You are also helping to facilitate fun events like "Music in the Park" or the Forest Hill 5K. It's setting up the tent at the 43rd Street Festival of the Arts. It's having neighbors say, "Hey, I want to do a scavenger hunt!" or "We want to do a boat race in Forest Hill



Whit's family at a Richmond Flying Squirrels game.

Park!" And you say, "Awesome! Let's figure out how to do it!"

Every once in a while a problem shows up and you address it with the community. But for the most part it's planning out fun things that help make the neighborhood an enjoyable place to live.

What kind of person would you be looking for to serve as the next President?

Someone who has a love of place, who wants to bring in as many people as possible so that they can share that love of place.

Whit, no one is irreplaceable. But I would be remiss if I didn't express, on behalf of all your neighbors, our appreciation for the work you have done over the past 6 years. It's no surprise that in a recent survey, at least two of your neighbors identified you as the one they would nominate for "Neighbor of the Year." Well done, Mr. President!

Editor's Note: If this interview has given you a fresh love for this special place called Forest Hill...if you are a listener and a problem-solver...if you like to facilitate fun neighborhood events...contact Whit at **clements.whit@gmail.com** or **(703) 862-7731**. He may have some ideas for you!



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Neighborhood show celebrates 31 years of art and fine crafts by Robin Cage

The 43rd Street Festival of the Arts is returning to the Forest Hill neighborhood this month for its 31st annual event. 70 selected regional artists and craftsmen will show and sell their work. There will also be local food, music and street art and activities for kids.

This RVA festival is intended to put a spotlight on the fine arts and crafts available in the area and to promote sales of local artisans. The show is a true community effort benefiting CARITAS, which works to transform lives and restore dignity to those in need. Artisans donate work for a raffle and proceeds of the artist-designed T-shirt help raise money for the event. The show is free to the public. However, donations can be made at each of the four entrances to the show. Over \$100,000 dollars has been raised and gone back to the community supporting CARITAS and those in need.

Many of the artisans have been with the show since the beginning. However, new artists come on board each year to provide variety and fine craftsmanship in many media. This year's juried outdoor show will include paintings, prints, pottery, sculpture, jewelry, glasswork, and more. Original works of art will be available for purchase and exhibitors will be on hand to discuss and sell their work.

We are delighted to have live music again this year at the show, starting with the duo Mr. Chubby & Sugarfoot, followed by Tin Can Fish Band, with a closing performance by The Grateful Dads.

We hope folks will come out in droves to buy art, support CARITAS, and enjoy being out and about again with friends and neighbors.



- **11am** Mr. Chubby & Sugarfoot
 - **1pm** Tin Can Fish Band
- 3pm The Grateful Dads



Tents lining 43rd Street at a previous festival.

43RD STREET FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS Saturday, September 10th • 10am-4pm

43rd Street and Forest Hill Avenue • 804.233.1758



JORDON

From street art to fine art, the 31st annual 43rd Street Festival of the Arts has something for everyone. It is a juried show of fine crafts and art featuring local and regional artisans. This RVA neighborhood festival, which is a fundraiser for CARITAS, showcases a unique selection of contemporary art, great music and food. Free and open to the public.



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South of the James Farmers Market is here to stay "Rebuilding a Richmond Tradition" by Riley D. Champine

Like many traditions that were taken for granted, COVID-19 interrupted a quintessential neighborhood ritual, the weekly South of the James Farmers Market. The pandemic prompted the market to move north of the river, leaving Forest Hill Park—the 14-year home of Richmond's top destination for buying local goods temporarily market-less.

In 2021, a much smaller version of the market was attempted on Thursdays evenings, but it fizzled out. This year brought a second attempt at reestablishing a market at the park—and that has stuck. The South of the James Market is now operating every Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm—and will be staying there year-round.

The Northside event, rebranded as "RVA Big Market," is held Saturdays from 8 am to 11 am in Bryan Park and is indeed huge—hosting over a hundred vendors. South of the James is currently averaging about 40. Karen Grisevich, owner and operator of GrowRVA (which runs both markets), reports that Forest Hill's market has "room to grow and expand" and is accepting applications for the next market season. This fits the slogan chosen by Grisevich for this new iteration of the market, "Rebuilding a Richmond Tradition".

For neighbors looking to support the return of our local market, Grisivich says, "Please get the word out that we are back! Like and share social media posts! Shop weekly, even if the weather is yucky! Sustainability is the key to the market's success."



Old friends pick out blackberries at the King's Produce tent.

SUNDAYS SOUTH OF THE JAMES FAMERS MARKET

10am–1pm in Forest Hill Park at the 42nd Street Entrance More info at GrowRVA.com



Folks line up for breakfast sandwiches, oyster mushrooms, crab cakes, and fresh-cut flowers on a sunny Sunday morning. The new version of the South of the James is smaller in size, but still hosts a wide variety of foods from local farmers and crafts from local artisans.

Cover story

Fairy Gardens of Forest Hill by Greg Somerville

The fairies that flitted through my childhood played a limited role. Each time I lost a tooth, they were obligated to retrieve it from beneath my pillow and replace it with two shiny quarters. Unless they overslept or forgot, I didn't give them much thought.

While walking the streets of Forest Hill, however, I have discovered a rich vein of fairy lore and culture that I never knew existed. In flower beds and beside curbs, fairy gardens sprout all over our neighborhood. And like pixie dust, they create a magic sparkle in and among neighbors.



Carmen and Claire's fairy garden

"We started that little fairy garden when Carmen and Claire were itty bitty," says Joanna. "And they loved it! They started it with some things from the craft store and around the house. Their grandparents would give them little things. Over the years, people from the neighborhood would add to it anonymously, which we thought was so cool."

"They gave us this dove thing that had little crystals on it," interjects Carmen. "They also sprinkled glitter over the fairy garden." (Or was that the fairies?)

"Then they got older," continues Joanna, "and they sort of figured things out. But they kept it going! In the fall, if it got covered up with leaves, they were on top of it. We started realizing that other people were enjoying this, too. My girls were the big kids now and it became something they decided to pass down to the little ones in the neighborhood. We love peeking out the window and watching the little kids getting a kick out of it." All ages enjoy the magic. "The woman on the corner next to us is an older woman," says Joanna, "probably in her 70s. She has a fairy garden!"

Mariel, who turned 7 a couple of months ago, lives a few blocks away. She rearranges her fairy garden "every five months or so" to make it look better. It was originally her mother's idea, though Mariel did most of the work. Her dad encircled the most recent version with plants.

When I admitted my ignorance of fairies, Mariel explained that "they are little miniature people with wings that disguise as butterflies. They just fly around and hide places and have tree homes and things like that."

Claire and Carmen think fairies are probably attracted by stuff that they can do. Their garden includes a tent, a boat, and a lot of little swings. Theirs may be the only one in the neighborhood that offers both a mushroom area and a lounging area, complete with fairy-sized hammock.

The fathers of these fairy fans highlight something in these gardens that's much bigger than childish amusement. "From our porch," says Rob, "we see kids come running over to the gnome garden or the fairy garden. They like to move stuff around and explore. It's been a great way for everybody to interact and build community." "It's all about sharing," adds Will. "We can do things that make the neighborhood happy."



Mariel tends her fairy garden with support from Mom and Dad





Left: Darby explains her fairy garden, which includes a camper where the fairies hide from humans.

Above: Darby's fairy dictionary visually catalogs things that she has seen in fairy gardens around the neighborhood.

Questions about fairies? Look no further...

If you're in need of an authoritative source on fairies and their way of life, ask Darby (8). She patiently answered my many questions.

What is a fairy garden?

A fairy garden is a place where fairies come to live. It's like a fairy hotel.

Tell us about some of the things here in your fairy garden.

Some of these are my favorite things, like this unicorn or adventure owl with his tiny house. I used to build a little border around, but I didn't build it this time.

What kinds of things do fairies like?

I don't really know, but I know they don't like gnomes. That's why the gnome garden is all the way over there.

Why do they not like gnomes?

Gnomes are mean. They take some of their stuff.

Have you ever seen fairies visiting your garden? No. Usually when humans come they hide out in that camper, or in that house, or sometimes under a shell.

Have you ever tried to sneak up and catch them off guard so you could see them? No, I mostly let them live their lives.

Where do fairies go in the winter time?

In the winter time I think that they probably see places where they can hide from the snow. Like in the bushes.

What is this little book you're holding?

This is my fairy dictionary. It's a picture dictionary and it has little things that you might find in specific fairy gardens. This is a town hall. The fairies have a little door right there, a little roof to hide from the rain. On this hammock they can enjoy the warm weather. And there's a swing where they can play.

When other kids come and play around with your things, do you ever get worried that they are going to take stuff away or mess it up? I would! No.

Do you just understand that everyone plays with other people's fairy gardens? Yes. Because I play with other people's fairy gardens.

That's kind of the idea, right? That you're making it to share with others in the neighborhood? Yes.

Would you encourage others to make fairy gardens? Yes, I would. It's very fun. If you have friends you can ask them to come and play with you.

Catching up with neighbors

"Music in the Park" — A Forest Hill Survey

Each year, Forest Hill's "Music In The Park" series attracts music lovers from all over Richmond. One Sunday evening per month they bring their camp chairs, kids, dogs, and picnic blankets for two hours of tunes under the trees.

At the first concert of the season, your intrepid Forest Hill newsletter staff collected surveys from 22 neighborhood residents. Here's what we learned...

How long have you lived in Forest Hill?



What is one thing that attracted you to this neighborhood?

It's no surprise that over half of the responses highlighted the park, river, green space, natural beauty, and trees. Other Forest Hill attractions included: good food, architecture, centrality to city and region, and great neighborliness. A few responses were worth quoting in full:

"Living in the city limits but having the suburban vibe"

"My parents built the house on 47th and Reedy where I was born!"

"As we were growing up, I lived in Westover Hills and my husband lived in Forest Hill. Our first house was in Westover Hills. Our second was in Stratford Hills. Now we're in Forest Hill – this is the best!"

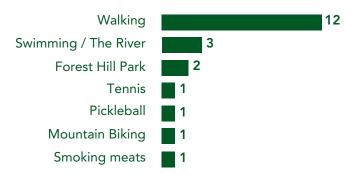
What's your favorite local spot (within walking distance) for food or drink?

1st Place (*Three-way tie, each with 7 votes*) Crossroads, Laura's Lee's, Little Nickel

2nd Place (4 votes) O'Toole's **3rd Place** (*tie with 3*) Stella's, WPA

Honorable mentions: Maldini's, The Veil, Thirsty's, Galley

What's your favorite outdoor activity in the neighborhod?



If FHNA gave a "Neighbor of the Year" award, who would you nominate?

Most respondents struggled to pick one neighbor, but here are some names that rose to the top...

> Mike and Penny Kucera Wendy and Sam Padgett Harold and Cathy Kreutz Whit Clements Sue Williams Bo Williams

Music In The Park has three more Sunday dates (4 to 6pm)

Sept. 11 Lighthouse Rodeo Sept. 18 (rescheduled) Mother's Little Helpers **Oct. 2** Afro-Zen Allstars

Volunteers are needed — go to www.foresthillneighborhood.com/volunteer-opportunities





Top Left: A young tree-climber captured this shot of the crowd gathered for The Boulevardiers on July 17 Top Right: A very large four-legged friend enjoying the show.
Below: The view Unity Sound Reggae Band had from the stage on August 7.



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City Council Update

Adjusting Noise Laws / New River Accessibility

Dear Friends and Neighbors of Forest Hill Neighborhood,

I hope everyone is healthy and well and had a great summer. Thank you to everyone who took the time to stop in to my ice cream social in June. It was great to see so many familiar faces and meet some new neighbors. I hope to hold an in-person district meeting in September so please look for those details via my e-newsletter or Facebook page.

In legislative news, City Council has been working with Richmond Police Department to update the city's noise ordinance. The way our existing law is written, it's extremely hard to enforce and our police officers have struggled over the years with using it as an effective tool. After many months of work, a new piece of legislation has come forward for City Council's consideration. At our last Government Operations meeting, I asked if the new proposed law would give police officers the ability to enforce noise violations at our city parks. Over the years my office has received multiple calls related to loud music and cars in our 4th district city parks. The city administration will be coming back to our September 28th Government Operations meeting with possible amendments/information related to public park noise violations. Public comment is welcome at this meeting (virtually or in-person). Please contact my office for more details.

I have exciting news that the Huguenot Flatwater universal access construction project is complete and formally reopened in late July. The project was spearheaded by non-profit James River Outdoor Coalition (JROC) in collaboration with the city. JROC sought out several private grants and the city contributed tax-payer funds to help fully fund the project. I am so grateful for the hard work of JROC members and Richmond's Department of Parks & Recreation. This new access ramp will add a second ADA compliant access point for paddlers with disabilities. The other one is located in the middle at Reedv Creek. The new universal access ramp at Flatwater will connect the upper 4 miles of James River with ADA compliant access at both ends. Paddlers of all abilities will have access to a calmer section of the James and be able to paddle downriver

to Reedy Creek with its accessible takeout. Hope to see you there soon!

Please continue to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by vaccinating when eligible and taking the proper safety precautions. Information on vaccination and testing appointments is easily accessible on



Kristen Nye, City Coucil

the Richmond City Health District's COVID-19 webpage(vax.rchd.com).

As always, you can stay up-to-date on 4th district meetings, announcements, and events, by subscribing to my e-newsletter. Congratulations to former fourth district liaison Aaron Bond on his new job with the City of Richmond in the planning department. I have not hired a new liaison yet, so if you need support, please email me directly.

Kristen M. Nye represents the Richmond Southwest 4th Voter District. She can be reached on her cell phone at (804) 503-1313 or by email at kristen.nye@rva.gov.

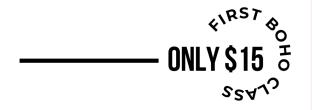




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School Board Update "Things Aren't Well"

In a previous issue of *The Forest Hill Flyer*, I defined success in Richmond Public Schools analogous to teacher retention. I argued then and I contend now that the surest way to retain families in the City of Richmond is to first retain our teachers. Regarding the former, fewer than 3 in 4 babies born in the City of Richmond will enroll in Richmond Public Schools. As it relates to the latter, the same statistic was true for the preceding school year. My point is to say that 25.6% of all of our teachers decided against coming back to RPS for the 2022-2023 school year. That kind of attrition is unsustainable. No school district should expect success relevant to arguably anything when 1 in 4 teachers call it quits. And, why is it that teachers are leaving? To be clear, the problem is not limited to Richmond. The truth is that the profession has become increasingly difficult for reasons there isn't enough space on this page to detail. Yet, in RPS we experience a higher percentage loss of teachers than either our neighbors or the statewide average.

I have herein enclosed my seven point plan to reverse our fortune. I will push to:

- 1. Prioritize teacher retention relevant to Principal and Assistant Principal evaluations replacing other metrics.
- 2. Devolve decision-making including budget to schools.
- 3. Undo curriculum changes and adopt deference for teacher choice pertinent to curriculum.
- 4. Deemphasize lesson plans.
- 5. Celebrate rule breaking pertinent to teachers when in favor of remedying problems favorable to students.
- 6. End student access to cell phones in secondary schools.
- 7. Diminish prioritization of incessant data collection.

My colleagues and I along with the Superintendent have done outstanding work the last several years pertinent to compensation, raising pay for teachers. To be sure, teachers are still not compensated commensurate with either their worth or what they do for our students but the truth is that our teachers are not leaving because of pay. Instead, teachers depart because too infrequently are they treated like the professionals they are. An old adage regards folks



Jonathan Young, School Board

don't quit jobs but instead quit managers and I cannot think of a place where that's more true than RPS. We need to provide teachers autonomy in the classroom and end the second-guessing that plagues our school district. Instructors know their students and how to motivate and inspire them; it's long past time to respect them for it! It is time to defer to teachers, acknowledge that one size fits all approaches are sure to fail, afford teachers agency in decision-making relevant to all things schools, and cease the micromanagement. Look, lesson plans are an invaluable tool for any teacher but the truth is that too frequently they have been used to force teachers to teach to a prescribed curriculum, to teach to a test. Tragically, process has become more important than product. Oh, and data, data, data! If data could ever solve the problem we would have the highest achieving school district on the planet! We have more data than we know what to do with it. And for what! We are missing the forest for the trees.

Lastly, culture and climate of course cannot be adequately addressed minus revisiting what we expect relevant to students' ready-access to cell phones. If you ask many a teacher what constitutes the single largest threat to a student's welfare, all too frequently the answer regards what has arguably done more to change the teaching profession than any other advent the last two decades and not for the better.

Jonathan Young represents the 4th District on the School Board. You can reach him at **804-929-7006** or jyoung7@rvaschools.net.

The Forest Hill Flyer Needs You!

This year marked a big transition for *The Flyer* as Linda Mills and Bo Williams, longtime stewards of the publication, decided to step away from the endeavor. We thank them whole-heartedly for their incredible stewardship of *The Flyer*, and their willingness to help new volunteers!

Your neighborhood newsletter is now being run by two newbies, Greg Somerville and Riley Champine. We're excited to take on this challenge, but we need your help! We believe *The Forest Hill Flyer* is better with a diverse group of contributors and input from the neighborhood. Here are 4 ways to support *The Flyer:*

1. Send us your ideas of stories, or better yet, write a story yourself.

We are looking for new ideas about how to report on the neighborhood. Send a pitch!

2. Help us take pictures and capture the neighborhood in action.

Got a nice camera and/or photo skills? We especially need help covering events.

3. Advertise! Or ask a small-businessowner if they'd like to support.

Ads make it possible to print the flyer and highlight local businesses. Reach out!

4. Help us distribute The Flyer.

An intrepid volunteer group delivers copies to each door. Thank them if you see them!

Email us at FHNAFlyer@gmail.com

Forest Hill Neighborhood Association 2022

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Join the FHNA and become part of a friendly and active group that works for the good of the neighborhood.

Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church and on Zoom. See you there!

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