



# THE Forest Hill FLYER

Published by the Forest Hill Neighborhood Association

## Spring/Summer 2023 Issue

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## Our Little Free Libraries

*A new box in the park adds another place to share books*

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

[www.foresthillneighborhood.com](http://www.foresthillneighborhood.com)



# Goodbye 43rd Street Gallery... Hello 43rd Street Studios

by Judith Warrington

Neighborhoods evolve over time. Neighbors move out, new neighbors move in, additions are built, trees come down and new ones are planted. Now change is coming to a building that has had a presence in the Forest Hill neighborhood, feeding either body or soul for several generations.

This spring the 43rd Street Gallery, located at 1410 W. 43rd Street will take on a new life under the leadership of ceramic artist and teacher, Joanna Gragnani. Renovations are underway and the new ceramics studio, which will be renamed 43rd Street Studios, is expected to open sometime in early spring.

"We will have a few private studios in the back of the building and community studio space in the front," Gragnani said.

She explained that the community studio space will host clay classes and community events and that she envisions clay enthusiasts from all skill levels and backgrounds working together in the space. Monthly memberships and private studio space rental will be offered. In addition to the studios, a portion of the original gallery space is being leased and will sell fair trade items created by artists from around the world. The retail shop is expected to open in April.

A Richmond native, Gragnani said: "I am looking forward to being part of the neighborhood and seeing what we can create in the community. Clay has a unique way of bringing people together and my hope is that we can offer something for everyone."

While change is coming to the neighborhood, there is one thing that won't change, and that's the 43rd Street Festival of the Arts. Launched by Robin Cage in 1991, the annual festival draws thousands of people to the Forest Hill neighborhood each fall, supporting regional artists in a juried show, and providing much needed funding for the vital services of CARITAS in Richmond. More recently she also helped establish the semi-annual Art Walks which feature some of the community's many artisans. Gragnani is dedicated to carrying on the tradition of the 43rd Street Festival, as well as providing new opportunities for local artists to collaborate with the community.

This year's festival is scheduled for Saturday, September 9. Robin Cage wants everyone to know that

she is neither retiring nor leaving the neighborhood. She will have a studio space and continue to make her much-loved stoneware pottery. In the Spring 2015 issue of the Forest Hill Flyer she said, "I hope to one day bring in a potter to take over the gallery. At least that's what I'm putting out to the universe for the next 10 years." With the opening of the new studios, it appears that the universe was paying attention.

You can learn more about the new studios at their website: [43rdstreetstudios.com](http://43rdstreetstudios.com). For an in-depth look at the unique ties that brought both the 43rd Street Gallery and the new 43rd Street Studios into being, go to the December 19, 2022 edition of the Richmond Times-Dispatch for an article by Bill Lohmann. 🌲



Robin Cage (left) and Joanna Gragnani (right)

## A brief history lesson on the businesses of 43rd Street

Have you ever wondered why the building at 1410 W. 43rd Street has two front entrances? While the city's property records don't offer many clues to its history, long-time residents can tell you that from 1946 to 1969, the building housed **Gill's Market**. The left side was the grocery store, while at various times the right side was either a barber shop or an insurance agent's office. Following the closing of a succeeding business, **Uncle Earl's Trash and Treasure**, and several years of neglect, the building found a new life as a potter's studio and craft gallery.

In 1985 Robin Cage purchased the approximately 3,000 square foot ramshackle building and along with fellow ceramic artists, Lee Hazelwood and Diana Cole, constructed the property's formidable cone 10 (2,381° F) gas kiln. For 37 years the **43rd Street Gallery** has been a bright spot in the community. For more than 20 of those years, **Jan Hampton Violins** shared a rear portion of the building, and a third side door. The violin shop has since moved to 3807 Gaskins Road. The opening of the **43rd Street Studios** and accompanying retail space marks the next transition of a familiar neighborhood address that is filled with memories and ready to make new ones.



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# Reedy Creek Coalition removes invasive plants at Crooked Branch

by Suzette Lyon

Crooked Branch Ravine Park is a small, passive park between Crutchfield and Roanoke Streets with an entrance at the end of Northrop Street. There are no buildings, playgrounds, or picnic tables. It's just a small patch of woods with a few trails and two streams, Reedy Creek and Crooked Branch.

There are two contrasting environments in the park. Some areas have nonnative, invasive plants that have crept in from adjoining properties or occur along the stream; English ivy is the most common problem, threatening trees and understory life. There are more natural areas with large trees with understory plants, both predominately native species, and leaf litter covering the ground. We have identified 25 native tree species so far.

This small parcel is important because...

- Tree canopy slows rainfall allowing it to soak into the ground; this reduces some of the rain water that goes directly to the creek. This is the best way to improve water quality and every little bit helps.

- Native plants provide appropriate food sources and shelter for the critters that live there. If the invasion of non-natives continues this benefit will simply not exist in years to come.

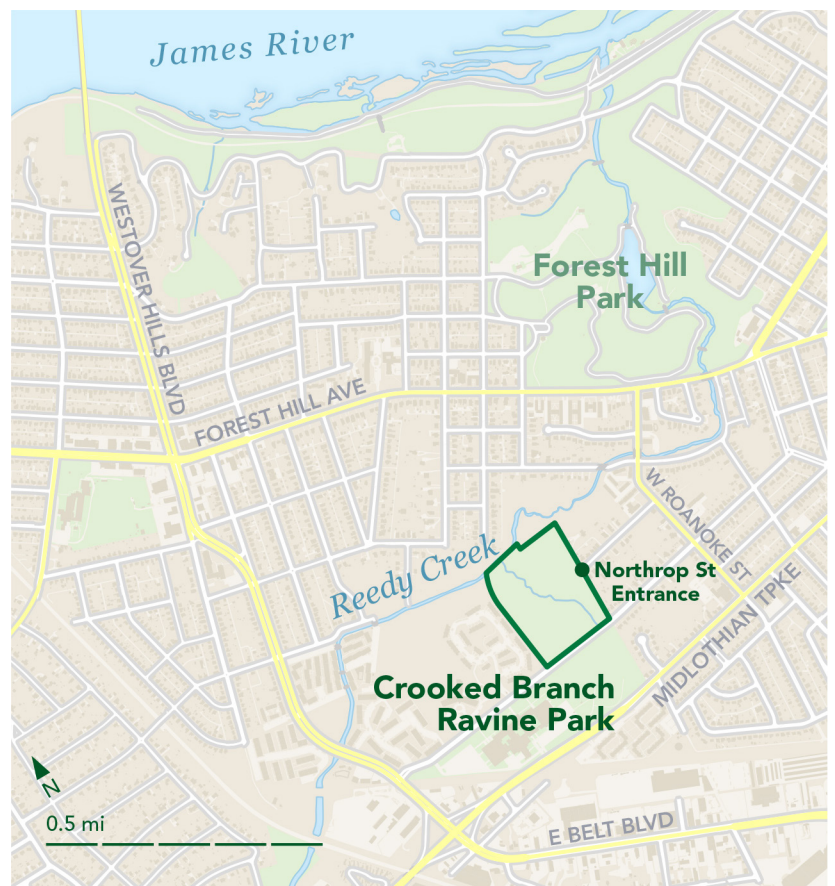
- The natural areas are wonderful places for quiet contemplation, birding and exploring nature with your family.

Reedy Creek Coalition (RCC) has been working for several years to remove English ivy, privet and other non-natives. We have made progress but there is much more work to be done. During our work we sometimes uncover native plants struggling under the ivy and have noticed that our work in cleared areas helps the plants that do belong there to have a better chance. We hope that you will consider joining us in that effort. 🌳

Find out more at [reedycreekcoalition.org](http://reedycreekcoalition.org)



Volunteers with a pile of invasive English ivy pulled out of the open space.



MAP BY RILEY D. CHAMPINE. SOURCE: CITY OF RICHMOND GIS



# Our Little Free Libraries *by Andrew Beckman, Editor*

If you've spent any time walking or biking around Forest Hill and the neighborhoods that surround it, you've no doubt noticed a Little Free Library or two. In fact, the latest bookcase just unveiled marks the 20th library right here in our backyard (well technically front yards). They are a great example of the tight-knit community that exists here on the southern bank of the James River—neighbors sharing their love of reading with neighbors and caring enough to build and maintain a space for readers of all ages to find their next book.

The phenomenon is the creation of the late Todd H. Bol who built the very first Little Free Library out of wood from his old garage door as a monument to his mother, a former school teacher. What started as a small neighborhood book exchange in Hudson, Wisconsin blossomed into a worldwide institution with over 100,000 Little Free Libraries in more than 100 countries around the world. The Friends of Forest Hill Park have just added another to the list—establishing a brand new Little Free Library near the Old Stone House at the end of 2022.

The new addition to the park began as a rescue mission but turned into a happy accident. Initially, the plan was to replace the children's Little Free Library near the playground, which had sustained some water damage over the years. Friends of Forest Hill Park



The ribbon-cutting at Forest Hill Park's new Little Free Library

had ordered a new kit to rebuild it but through a combination of good luck and a little bit of elbow grease, the children's library was determined to be salvageable, meaning the group now had an additional Little Free Library on their hands—all they needed now was the perfect location to set up shop.

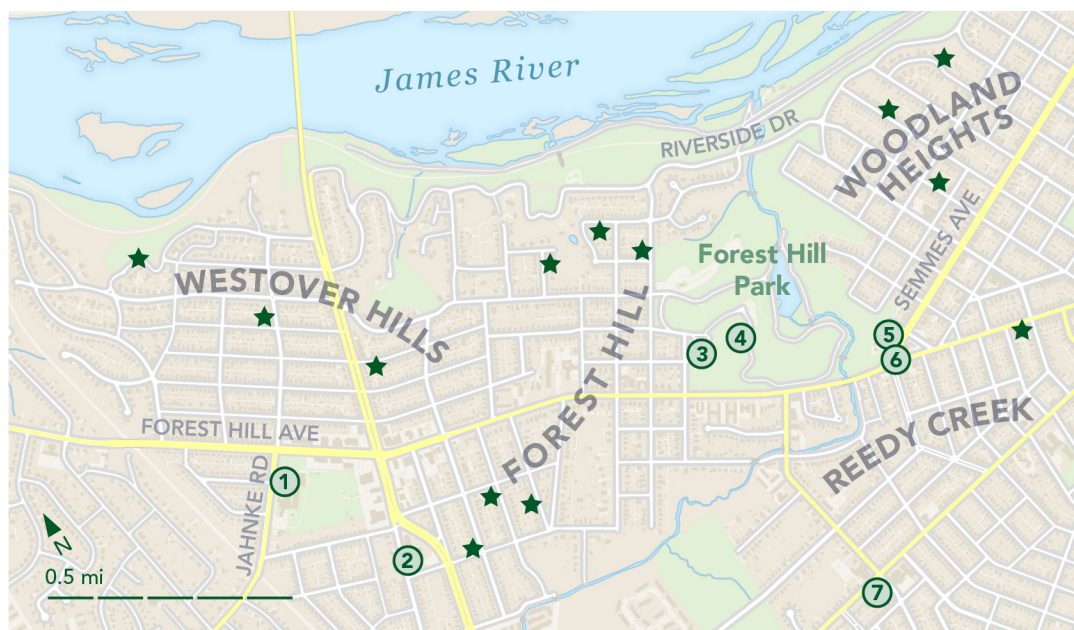
They landed on the Old Stone House—ideal for its central location and ample foot traffic. But this historic location also has a much more literal connection to the library world—its basement actually used to serve as a library before the Westover Hills Branch opened! 🌲

## ★ Little Free Libraries in the Forest Hill area

Forest Hill Flyer editors found 20 bookcases in our area, compiled by walking and biking the neighborhood and checking [littlefreelibrary.org/map](https://littlefreelibrary.org/map). Did we miss any? Email us at [fhnaflyer@gmail.com](mailto:fhnaflyer@gmail.com) if so!

### LFLs in public spaces:

1. Westover Hills Elementary School (in need of maintenance!)
2. Living Water Comm. Center
3. Stone House
4. Forest Hill Park Playground
5. Patrick Henry School
6. Coqui Cyclery / WPA Bakery
7. Swansboro Community Garden



MAP BY RILEY D. CHAMPINE. SOURCE: CITY OF RICHMOND GIS



## The backstory on three Little Free Libraries in our area:



**Location:** 45th St.  
**Librarian:** Denelle  
**Established:** 2014 (approximately)

### What was the inspiration/reason for building your LFL?

I hadn't seen one in the neighborhood when I first moved here. I was looking for a project, so I decided to build one myself. I had first heard about LFL's on CBS Sunday morning years prior and loved the idea. At first it matched the house. The colors have changed over time.

### Did you seed it with any books to get it started?

Yes! I also have an amazing friend in the neighborhood who actively grooms it. She helps organize and sort. Also, mixes genre between a few of the neighborhood boxes

### Any interesting finds in your LFL?

You learn a lot about your neighbors through what you find. My favorite book find was 'How to behave and why.' It is a cross behind a kid and adult book. I've kept it as a fun book in my office.

### What's a book that you would put in every LFL?

Good question. I have a few 'go to' books, but I just hope people find the books they want. I love when kids stop by to look inside the library (so does my dog who watches from the front window).



**Location:** 42nd St.  
**Librarians:** Laura and Brent  
**Established:** 2021

### What was your inspiration?

I just love to read a lot and thought it was a neat way to connect with the community and bring everyone to one spot. I love to see what everyone is reading.

### Did you seed it with any books?

Yeah I put out a Facebook post asking for books and I got a TON so now I have a little backup stash if it ever gets low.

### If you could put one book in every LFL what would it be?

That's a tough question. Harry Potter, because I think everyone could enjoy that.

### What's another little free stand you'd like to see if you could choose anything?

I would love to (and I still plan to) add a small community garden so people can grab vegetables. There's a woman in Woodland Heights that has a seed library where you can take seeds. And she propagates them herself which is really cool.



**Location:** Hillcrest Rd.  
**Librarian:** Sally  
**Established:** 2022

### What's the origin story of your LFL?

It was for my birthday. I picked it out and ordered it for myself and told my husband that would be my present. I was working on redoing my yard after taking some trees down and finally had space to put one up.

### Did you seed it with any books?

Yes. Among others, Major Pettigrew's Last Stand. It's a great book but it stayed in there for a while!

### Any books that you see a lot of?

Children's books and gardening books are very popular. A lot of people come looking for mysteries. I would love to have a book on native plants that has kind of a permanent home here.

### Does it get a lot of visitors?

Yes, definitely. And my neighbors kind of help me curate it. I come out and it's already organized which is great.

Looking to start your own Little Free Library? Go to [littlefreelibrary.org](https://littlefreelibrary.org) for library kits and blueprints. Or if you're feeling industrious, build your own. Register it through the same site to receive your charter.

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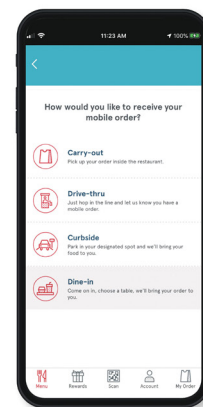
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## A letter from the community

# Parents seek to improve safety on Jahnke Road

*In October of 2022, a group of parents at Westover Hills Elementary School wrote this letter addressed to Richmond City Councilmembers Kristen Nye (4th District) and Stephanie Lynch (5th District) about traffic safety on Jahnke Road. They also sent the letter to the Forest Hill Flyer and requested its publication. The following has been lightly edited for length and formatting.*

The families at Westover Hills Elementary School need your help. As you know, the Jahnke Road Improvement Project has been pending for years. Planning began in May 2014, and in April 2018, the project was scheduled for completion by Winter 2020. Then it was delayed to Winter 2022, and delayed again to Spring 2023. Now, the improvement project is not scheduled for completion until 2025, eleven years after the city began this process.

In the interim, the students at Westover Hills Elementary School are endangered by excessive speeding and an extremely busy intersection at Jahnke Road and Forest Hill Avenue. There are no speed tables or flashing lights for student crossings. There are no traffic calming measures in place. Instead, there are large orange barrels placed on the road with caution tape in a desperate attempt to get motorists to pay attention and slow down.

The barrels are insufficient. The delays to the Jahnke Road Improvement Project are unacceptable. The lack of measures to protect our children are unconscionable. There have been too many accidents near the school and too many close calls with kids trying to cross the street to the playground, the park, or their classroom.

Additionally, a shooting in front of Westover Hills Elementary School on October 14, 2022, during which a woman was killed and a car sped away from the scene of the crime, further illustrates the urgent need for traffic calming measures on Jahnke Road.

We understand that Jahnke Road and Forest Hill Avenue are major traffic arteries that see a high volume of cars daily, and there is an emphasis to keep cars moving through that corridor. We also know that a short seven-day traffic study, conducted by DPW in 2013, clocked cars going as fast as 99 mph in front of the school. The reality of the situation is that an elementary



Traffic whizzes by the orange traffic barrels placed on Jahnke Rd.

school, playground, and community center sit at the intersection of two four lane roads. Even if the Jahnke Road Improvement Project is completed in the next three years, it does not appear to include any traffic calming measures at or near Westover Hills Elementary School. Because of this, we ask that you demand high visibility crosswalks, a pedestrian refuge island, automated speed enforcement/cameras, repositioned and improved signage, and a speed table in front of Westover Hills Elementary School. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that traffic calming measures help reduce crime, an important consideration as Richmond grapples with increasing crime rates and crime near its schools.

All of the residents and students who use Jahnke Road deserve better, and this corridor needs immediate attention. Please do not forget about Westover Hills Elementary School as part of the Jahnke Road Improvement Project. This is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed before another tragedy occurs.

Sincerely,  
Megan Scanlon and Chris Herrington  
Tiffany and Chris Clark  
Maggie and Alan Nicholas  
Jessica and Toby Schiffer  
Elena and Ben Hardy,  
Emilie Phillips, Will Chapman

For details on the Jahnke Road Improvement project go to [rva.gov/capital-improvement-projects/jahnke-road-improvements](https://rva.gov/capital-improvement-projects/jahnke-road-improvements)

# Pickled in the Park *by Greg Somerville*

**I**t's a gorgeous Saturday afternoon in January. I walk the block from my house to the park and cross the open field. People are flying kites, playing with dogs, chasing their kids, and stretching out on the grass with friends. But I keep walking – past the Stone House, past the tennis courts, past the playground. I've come with one objective in mind. This is serious.

I'm here to play Pickleball.

Forest Hill Park offers a cluster of six outdoor courts that attract Picklers (as they like to call themselves) from all over Richmond.

Soon after I arrived I met Courtney and Brian, who live in Church Hill. When I asked why they made the trek, Courtney said, "Because there are so many courts here! There's a lot of opportunity to play. I love it here at Forest Hill because it's welcoming and open to everybody of all ages and skill sets. And it's nice to have different people that we don't see all the time at our regular neighborhood courts."

In case you haven't noticed, Pickleball has been the fastest-growing sport in the United States for the past three years. What started as

a children's backyard game in 1965 now boasts 4.8 million players. Thousands of pickleball tournaments are held nationwide. Last April the World Pickleball Tour stopped in Richmond, drawing 95 registered players to Pouncey Tract Park in Glen Allen for the \$5K cash prize.

Jim Bennett lives in Swansboro, just five minutes from the park. He started playing six years ago, before the sport became popular. "Tennis people hated it," he said, "because we started taking over their courts. I can't tell you the number of times I've been here and the tennis courts are empty and the Pickleball courts are full."

When he first began to play, most of the people he met were retirees playing on indoor courts. "Then these outdoor courts went in," he says, "and I never looked back. If it's over freezing, in the high 30s or low 40s, I'll be out here. In the summer it gets really hard because it's so damn hot. But we'll come real early in the morning or go play somewhere at night where there are lights. It's just so much fun!"



With all the playing time, Courtney needs a breather.

## Beginners Welcome!

Though I dabbled in Pickleball a few years ago, I'm definitely a beginner. I've heard that Picklers can be exclusive and I'm a little nervous about navigating this new culture. Remember when you were the new kid in the Middle School lunchroom, holding your tray and looking for a seat? That's how I feel as I approach the courts.

I shouldn't have worried. Anthony, who is here with his wife and son, patiently answers my questions.

"If you want to play," he says, "just show up! You'll get games and



you'll realize how fun it is. The ice will break very quickly."

He acknowledges that skilled players often prefer to play with others at a similar level. "But when you get into games with more experienced players," he adds, "they will understand immediately that you're a beginner and will give you pointers. So just show up!"

The Forest Hill courts are open from dawn to dusk. You can show up any time, as an individual or with a group. Simply put your paddle in the "Next Up" rack and wait for a court to become available. If others are waiting, players will vacate a court after their game is finished.

It doesn't take much to play, says Anthony – just a paddle, a ball, and some tennis shoes with good support. But if you start to enjoy the sport, be forewarned. Picklers have a penchant for collecting multiple paddles, ranging from under \$20 to \$250 or more.

I asked Anthony how long it takes to crest the learning curve and start enjoying the game. "It's really an easy game to get into compared

to something like golf," he said, "where you could spend years getting used to it. You can literally come out and be having a blast the same day, the first time you played."

He also commented on the diversity of the players, one of Pickleball's best features: "What other sport brings four people onto a court that include a 16-year-old kid, a 70-year-old retiree, an account executive, and a mechanic?"

After I had finished grilling him with questions, he and his wife Corina invited me to play. I'll be honest – I was still nervous. But just as he had promised, Anthony – a very good player – encouraged my efforts and shared pointers. The ice broke quickly. And thanks to his consistent serves and net play, we even won our final game.

Before I left, a player from Midlothian waxed eloquent about why he drives by many other Pickleball courts to play here. "I love the beauty and the ambience of the Forest Hill Park area," he intoned, playing it up for his audience. "The lush green, the multitude of courts, and good people. And there's a brewery right down the road!" 🌲



Anthony's advice: "Just show up!"



Players rotate out after each game to give others a turn.

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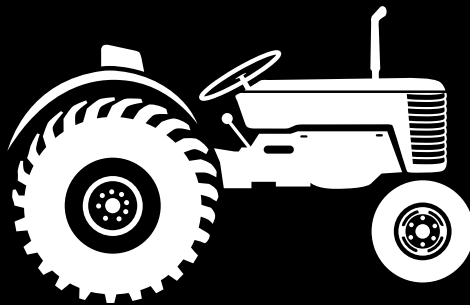


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# New leadership for neighborhood association

The Forest Hill Neighborhood Association is proud to introduce two brand new officers to its ranks this year. With Whit Clements recently stepping away, the immensely talented Greg Somerville will be taking over as FHNA President. Also, organizational and financial phenom Sarah Champine has volunteered her services to fill the vacancy at Treasurer. Both were approved by attendees at the February meeting. The association is thrilled to have the new arrivals and preemptively thanks them for their time and effort. Stay tuned to upcoming issues of The Flyer for more from Greg and Sarah.

Greg Somerville (left), new FHNA President  
and Sarah Champine (right), new Treasurer



# How to get involved in the neighborhood

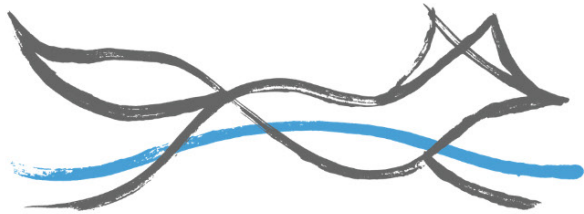
*Consider these ways to help out in Forest Hill:*

- Contribute an article, essay, photo, story idea to **The Forest Hill Flyer**
  - Attend **neighborhood meetings** each month
  - Volunteer at events such as **Music in the Park**, check [foresthillneighborhood.com](http://foresthillneighborhood.com) for opportunities
  - Volunteer for organizations that help improve local parks such as **Friends of Forest Hill Park**, **Reedy Creek Coalition**, or **Friends of the James**
  - Drop off non-perishable canned or boxed foods at the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church for their **Little Pantry**
- Email us at [fhnaflyer@gmail.com](mailto:fhnaflyer@gmail.com) with more ideas!

*We'd like to acknowledge the wonderful neighbors who help distribute the Forest Hill Flyer:*

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# Update from Councilmember Kristen Nye

*Kristen M. Nye represents the Richmond Southwest 4<sup>th</sup> Voter District. She can be reached on her cell phone at (804) 503-1313 or by email at [kristen.nye@rva.gov](mailto:kristen.nye@rva.gov) and/or [timmy.siverd@rva.gov](mailto:timmy.siverd@rva.gov) (Liaison Timmy Siverd)*

Happy Spring(ish)! I'm writing this update on a beautiful day in February and hoping that you're enjoying some even warmer temperatures by the time you're reading this! As always, I'm grateful for the opportunity to share a few pertinent updates from my office with you:

- As you hopefully know, City Council passed a one-time rebate valued at 5 cents per \$1,000 in appraised value at our December 2022 meeting – while I don't feel this rebate goes far enough, I supported it to offer at least some relief to residents. In mid-February, the Mayor's administration shared with me that they had begun sending checks and expected to be finished by early March. Therefore, I hope your check has arrived by the time you're reading this, but if you have not, please contact my office so we can assist in coordinating with City administration to ensure you receive it.

- Speaking of tax relief, I wanted to remind you all that the City was recently able to change the Senior Tax Relief Program to receive applications on a rolling basis. If you or a loved one may qualify, please visit [www.rva.gov/](http://www.rva.gov/)

assistance for full program and application details. Of course, please don't hesitate to reach out to my office for assistance.

- On Friday, April 28th, I am partnering with the City's Office of Aging & Disability Services to offer a 4th District Older Adults Fair right in Forest Hill Park! More details to come, but there will be many activities and resources geared toward our older residents, so please mark your calendars!



Kristen Nye, City Councilmember

On a more personal note, since our last meeting, I have been elected Vice President of City Council for the 2023-2024 term. While this is certainly a personal honor, I am most excited about the larger platform it affords me to advocate for and uplift the 4th District. Our communities are extraordinary and filled with talented, passionate residents who make Richmond a better place to live. It is a true honor to serve as your representative and look forward to continuing to being your voice at City Hall.



## Thank you Forest Hill!

We appreciate all the support you've given us over the years. To show our gratitude, when you sign up for weekly mowing or refer a neighbor, **your first (or next) cut is on us.**



[SteppingStoneVA.com](http://SteppingStoneVA.com)

# Forest Hill Historic District Plaque Order Form

Attention residents in the Forest Hill Historic District, we will be placing a new order for historic district house plaques on July 20, 2023. Please use this form to place your order:

PLEASE PRINT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of bronze plaques: \_\_\_\_\_

The cost is \$240.00 including delivery and the construction date for the individual house.

Mounting type: \_\_\_\_\_

Screw mount is recommended for wood or siding over wood. Invisible mount is recommended for brick and stucco.

Make checks payable to the Forest Hill Historic Designation Committee and deliver/mail to Carolyn Paulette, 4312 Forest Hill Ave., Richmond, VA 23225.

Turnaround should be 4 to 6 weeks. Contact Carolyn at (804) 232-6644 with any questions.

We would like to verify the construction date for your property with you before we have it cast on your plaque. We will use the date that the city tax records provide or the date our research provides unless you have other documentation.

## Forest Hill Neighborhood Association 2023

### OFFICERS

Greg Somerville, President  
Christine Waldron, Vice President  
Robley Jones, Secretary  
Sarah Champine, Treasurer

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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!

## Forest Hill Neighborhood Association Membership Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Household Membership \$15 ☐ 2 Years \$25 ☐ Corporate Annual Membership \$30

☐ **Yes**, I want to join the Neighborhood Watch and receive email updates about crime and safety in our neighborhood.

☐ **Yes**, please send me email updates on current neighborhood events.

☐ **No** emails please.

☐ **Yes**, I'm interested in volunteering with FHNA!

Pay online at [www.foresthillneighborhood.com](http://www.foresthillneighborhood.com)  
or by check made payable to Forest Hill Neighborhood Association  
ATTN: FHNA Treasurer  
P.O. Box 13201 • 1021 Hioaks Rd.  
Richmond, VA 23225-9995

**FREE  
Forest Hill  
Pint Glass and Decal  
when you join!**



For more information visit [www.foresthillneighborhood.com](http://www.foresthillneighborhood.com)