

MCC looks to future

MCC board members attended a day-long “retreat” on Saturday, May 14, at the Douglas Center on Lake Street, to discuss how the organization can communicate to its members and to the Miller community during the next 40 years.

First of all, the MCC plans to make greater use of the internet for disseminating information and collecting feed-back. Already, the MCC website www.millercitizenscorp.org displays information about current activities, including the monthly newsletter, the Miller Message. Future plans include a Facebook page, use of e-mail for sending out the newsletter and other communications, and the addition of PayPal for collecting membership dues and selling tickets to events.

The MCC will also establish a “Branding Team”, to develop a Mission Statement with related logos and motifs which relate to our current interests.

Finally, the MCC will address problems of attendance and committee participation by board members.

Duly noted . . .

BEACH CAFÉ REOPENS. The historic **Beach Café on Shelby Street** has reopened under new management, starting at 10:00 am on **Sunday, May 29**. The initial reviews by local residents, who rushed to sample the fare, have been favorable. **Check the place out!**

CAFÉ 444 OPEN WEEKENDS. Café 444 on Lake Street is open weekends – Friday and Saturday evenings – from 6:00 pm to midnight, with an offering of jerk chicken and other Jamaican cooking from the head chef at the Gary Jerk Yard. Jerk wings and tacos have been warmly received. Options include dine-in and take-out.

GARDEN WALK JULY 9 AND 10. The Miller Garden Club will sponsor its twelfth annual **Secret Garden Walk the weekend of July 9 and 10 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm**. This year’s tour, on the theme “Flora and Hardy” will include five outstanding gardens. Tours begin at the Aquatorium in Marquette Park, where gardening vendors will have goods for sale and box lunches will be available. Shuttle bus service to the gardens will run between 10:00 am and 2:30 pm. Tickets are \$8 and are available in advance at Ayers Realty and the Marquette Perk, or during the tour at the Aquatorium

and each of the gardens. As an added feature, a bicycle tour will set out from the Aquatorium on Saturday, July 9 at 10:30 am.

FARMERS' MARKET IS BACK. Market Manager Sandy Rodriguez has announced that the Miller Beach Farmers Market will be back, on the first and third Sunday of each month, beginning June 5 and continuing through October. The market is located at the Marquette Park United Methodist Church on Grand Blvd, and is in operation from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm. For 2011, the market is expanding to include a flea market, to promote the reuse of gently-used items. Vendors include Nana's Tidbits, Pepe's, Tarimoro, the Sisterhood of Temple Israel, Pop's Corn, and the Bagel Bandit. New vendors will be offering New Orleans Snoballs, beignets, and other food items. Spaces at each market are available for \$5, either in advance or on market day. For more information, contact Sandy Rodriguez at 219-938-7720 or 773-459-2058 or e-mail millerbeachfarmersmkt@gmail.com.

"THIS AND THAT SHOPPE" OFFERS HIDDEN TREASURES. It looks small from the front, but the This-and-That Shoppe goes on for room after room of bargain merchandise, including tools, toys, china, paintings, baby clothes, furniture and air conditioners to keep cool this summer, and everything is 50% off during June. Summer hours are 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Tuesday through Saturday. The location is 6039 Miller Avenue, across from St. Mary of the Lake Church. A feast for shopping addicts.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 13, AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD. Members are invited to attend and participate.

Contact the MCC between meetings at P.O.Box 2645, Gary, IN 46403, or call 938-8831 or e-mail mceaton@aol.com. You can also visit the MCC website at www.millercitizenscorp.org.

MCC SUPPORTS SIDEWALK GRANT REQUEST. The MCC has written in support of a federal grant request by Banneker and Marquette schools, which would finance the construction of sidewalks in the

areas leading to the schools. This would assure the safety of students in the school zones and would provide a conduit to state, city and federal parks for all citizens.

ZUMBA IS BACK. Curves of Miller, 567 S. Lake Street, announces that Curves Circuit with Zumba has resumed, with sessions Monday and Wednesday, 4:30 to 5:00 pm and Tuesday and Thursday at 7:30 to 8:00.

MILLER NIGHT AT THE RAILCATS. The MCC will again sponsor Miller Night at the Railcats game on **Friday, July 22**. The ticket price of \$12 will include admission and a meal package. More information on obtaining tickets will be available as the date approaches, or you can call 219-951-0151 now. **Save the date – July 22 – to enjoy a ball game with friends and neighbors.**

CLEANUP DRAWS MORE WORKERS. The annual Miller cleanup, sponsored by the MCC and the Miller Business Association (MBA) drew 33 workers this year, a significant increase from 2010. The participants picked up trash from Old Hobart Road, Grand Blvd., Lake Street, and the three streets – Miller Avenue, Rt. 12, and Rt 20 -- which link Lake Street with Clay Street. A group from the Lutheran Church also helped with the Lake to Clay area. **THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED.** Without this community effort, trash would accumulate forever on the roadsides which do not abut occupied residences.

CORRECTION! The Lake Street Gallery is NOT moving away

The May issue of the Miller Message announced, prematurely, that the Lake Street Gallery was closing up shop and moving to Chesterton. However, Gallery owner Joyce Davis got an offer of better terms from her Gary land-lord (Greg Reising) and had second thoughts about the deal she was preparing to sign in Chesterton. She was also advised that the decline in sales she has experienced is about average for the past year, which has been bad for business everywhere. As a result, Joyce has decided to stay around for another year, hoping that business will improve. If it doesn't, she will just close up shop and retire. **This gives Miller residents another chance, to retain a valuable local business by stopping in more often and buying more.**

The **2011 Gallery Gallop** took place on a cold afternoon with steady 30 mph winds out of the north and heavy rainfall, which continued until the minute the race started. In spite of these daunting conditions, 107 runners

completed the race. Now that the Gallery is staying in Miller, we can hope that better business conditions will be accompanied by better race conditions in 2012.

Gary air show set for July 16/17

Once again, the Gary Air-show will be sponsored by the Lake County Visitor's Bureau, headed by Speros Batistatos, who appeared at the May MCC board meeting to describe the arrangements for this year's event. The highlight of the show will be the appearance of the **F22 Rafter**, which is only on display at 20 shows per year. **The air-show will take place from noon to 4:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday, July 16 and 17, with a preview reception on Friday evening, July 15.** All the events will be at Miller Beach, centered at the Aquatorium.

This year, there will be no off-site parking on Rt. 20, and no buses from remote locations to the beach. **Visitors will be expected to park (and pay) at Marquette Park.** As a result, we can expect more pressure than usual for parking spaces on residential streets in Miller. The budget for the event is about \$400,000, and about 60% of the funds come from private sponsors.

Batistatos emphasized that the air-show is a safe, family-friendly event. In the past four years that the Visitor's Bureau has been in charge, there have been no arrests during the show. For those who haven't noticed, the show, the beach and the lake complement each other perfectly, giving children and adults multiple diversions to draw their interest.

Another property tax snafu

A coding error in the office of the Calumet Township Assessor has resulted in dramatically increased tax bills for hundreds of Miller properties.

Properties near the beach are identified by three "neighborhood" codes for land values. Code 2513, for the area south of Oak Avenue, generates a land value of \$432 per front foot. Code 2512 for beachfront property, carries a value of \$3,531 per front foot, while Code 2500, for property between Oak Avenue and the beachfront carries a value of \$1,500 per front foot. For unknown reasons, the Calumet Township Assessor's office changed the code for several hundred properties from 2500 to 2512, making them "beachfront" property. This more than doubled the land value for these properties.

This coding error was discovered and pointed out to the assessor's office more than a month ago, and Miller resident Jim Cooper has been working with the assessor, Jackie Collins, to correct the records. The township

assessor must make the correction, then send a notice to the Lake County Auditor, who must change his records and then issue corrected tax bills. Everyone is in agreement that the coding is wrong, but records have not been changed prior to sending out the bills for 2010 taxes, payable in 2011.

About 70 property records were corrected after the tax bills were sent out. These properties are slated to receive new tax bills, which may or may not arrive prior to the June 10 tax deadline. The records for several hundred other affected properties remain to be corrected later.

For properties whose taxes are paid from escrow accounts, this error will not have an immediate effect, but it will greatly increase monthly mortgage payments if corrected tax bills are not issued promptly. We can only hope that all the erroneous codes will be corrected before the second tax installment is due in November.

Judge upholds garbage fee

Following Judge Webber's previous decision upholding Gary's garbage collection fee, the plaintiffs in the case filed a "motion to correct errors", along with a typed transcript of the City Council meeting at which the fee was reconsidered. The MCC parties contended that the council voted to add the subject to the agenda and to reconsider their previous vote, but never voted to adopt the fee. In his ruling of May 13, Judge Webber reaffirmed his previous decision. Regardless of the questions of parliamentary procedure, he argued that the Council president announced that the fee had been adopted and no one raised a point of order. Then, the minutes of the meeting were published stating the fee was adopted and again, no member objected.

However, Judge Webber did award Attorney's fees of \$29,146 to the plaintiff's lawyer, John Reed. The judge ruled that the original suit was necessitated by the failure of the city to follow the law by seeking bids for the trash collection function and by properly adopting the garbage collection fee. This award fully compensates Reed for his work on the case, and will enable him to refund the partial fee which was previously paid by the MCC Defense Fund.

Most of the people involved in the case have chosen not to appeal the decision any further, since they think there is little chance Judge Webber's decision would be overruled.