



# Spruce Hill Community Association

Winter 2009

257 S. 45th St., Phila. PA 19104

www.sprucehillca.org

215-349-7825

## Community Calendar



### Arts League

**What:** Paintings by Zongzhou Wang  
**When:** Through February 8, 2009.  
Gallery open Mon-Thurs, noon-8 pm;  
Fri, noon-7 pm; Sat, 11 am-1:30 pm  
**Where:** 4226 Spruce Street  
**Also:** Check out classes for adults,  
teens and tots running Jan 20-  
March 15.  
Info: (215) 382-7811 or  
www.ucartsleague.org

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### Winter Coat Drive

**What:** Greater Philadelphia Care's 13th annual  
collection of clean, warm  
winter clothes  
**When:** Dec. 16 - Jan. 10  
**Where:** Bring clothes to  
Studio 34, 4522 Balti-  
more Ave.  
**Info:** 215.387.3434  
www.studio34yoga.com



(continued on page 2)

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead

When this edition of our newsletter arrives we will be in the early days of a New Year. While 2008 was tumultuous in many ways, it was also a year with great hope and optimism for the future. Every other day seemed to reveal a new financial or political scandal, but on the other hand, our Phillies won the World Series and we elected a new leader who may be the best hope for the future of our country and the world.

In our own small portion of that world, I think we can all agree that Spruce Hill continues to be a special neighborhood. Whether it's the renewal of spring at the May Fair, organizing a street clean-up, or the pure joy of the Halloween Tot parade, it's a wonderful place to be. On behalf of the other officers and the Board of Directors, I'd like to thank everyone who made those events possible.

Let's continue our work in 2009. To make that possible, we look forward to your commitment and valued mem-

bership in the association. In the next couple of weeks, we will be contacting you for your support. We know the economy and household budgets are stressed, but we also know that maintaining an active association is vital to the continuing growth of our neighborhood.



President's Corner

I'd also like to thank the Association's outgoing directors from 2008, especially Fran Byers, Cindy Roberts and Amanda Benner, who served in the association for so many years. And, of course, we welcome the new directors who were elected at our membership meeting in November. An article in this newsletter will provide more information on the election.

I hope you and yours enjoy a happy and healthy New Year.

Ed Halligan  
SHCA President  
ehalligan@sprucehillca.org

## SHCA Board Says Bye Bye, Fran Byers

Being a community volunteer is endlessly gratifying and fun. Not.

In fact, it can be such a thankless job that we are in mild awe of Frances Byers, who for decades has donated her time, talents, and legal tender to the betterment of Spruce Hill.

Fran is stepping off the SHCA board, having served over the years as the association's president, an executive committee member, and head of the membership committee. (Who will take over her annual membership renewal phonathon?) We couldn't let her go without a special thank you and a recap of contributions she is too humble to brag about.

Fran (actually, Doctor Byers is a Ph.D) has deep roots in Spruce Hill. She remembers her father working on the inaugural May Fairs at Clark Park

in the 1960s. He organized an event called "Beat the Chess Master," in which a chess master simultaneously played lots of challengers. "If any of them happened to win, the game was free, but I don't think that happened very often. It was quite exciting to watch," Fran recalled last spring.

Fran has worked at countless May Fairs, and is known for selling an annual treat: lemon sticks. As a founder and past president of Friends of Clark Park (the green space is across Baltimore Ave. from her home) she has been part of the park's transformation from a sketchy, scraggly place to a vital community resource. Fran is a perennial organizer of the "Bark in the Park" dog party, the Veterans Day Commemoration, and the Dickens' Birthday Celebration at the park.



Fran and friends at a recent Bark in the Park

She is also secretary of the 18<sup>th</sup> Police District Advisory Council, active at St. Francis de Sales Church, and a block representative.

Even though she is shedding her role as an SHCA board member, we know she will continue to be a pillar of Spruce Hill. And all of us will be the beneficiaries.

## Community Calendar



### Yoga

**What:** Yoga pioneer Ana Forrest  
**When:** Tues, March 17, 6-9 p.m. and Wed., March 18, 6-9 p.m.  
**Where:** Studio 34, 4522 Baltimore Ave.  
**Info:** 215.387.3434 or www.studio34yoga.com



### Block Grants

**What:** Next round of Spruce Hill Block Improvement Grants. Up to \$500 per block for tree-planting or garden projects  
**When:** Application deadline is Mon, Jan 18.  
**Info:** sprucehillca.org/activities.html  
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### Martin Luther King Celebration

**What:** An interfaith celebration of song featuring Philadelphia Boys Choir, Common Ground Interfaith Fellowship Choir, the choir of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and more.  
**When:** Thurs, Jan 15 at 7 p.m.  
**Where:** Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, 3723 Chestnut St.  
**Info:** 215-386-0234 ext. 104  
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### Documentary Film

**What:** Producer-director Katrina Browne will screen and discuss her film, *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, about her New England ancestors' slave trading.  
**When:** Sat, Jan 24 at 2 p.m.  
**Where:** Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, 3723 Chestnut St.  
**Info:** 215-386-0234, ext. 104, or www.tracesofthetrade.org

# SHCA News Emerges from Obscurity

This homely newsletter (circulation 278 or so) may be small, but it's not obscure. Not anymore.

Erin Davis, our new SHCA webmaster (webmistress?) has been updating sprucehillca.org -- including posting the quarterly newsletters. I assume that's why I'm suddenly getting some intriguing emails.

Last month, I received one informing me that SHCA "has been selected for the 2008 Best of Philadelphia Award in the Social Services category by the U.S. Local Business Association (USLBA)."

For about a nanosecond, I felt proud and eager to share the news with my fellow SHCA volunteers. Then I realized it had to be a scam.

The award program, which recognizes "outstanding local businesses" that have "achieved exceptional marketing success," seems designed to get gullible -- not to mention conceited -- folks to buy an award plaque.

The USLBA website doesn't say how much it charges for the plaque (or shipping); those details come after you submit your order. But I googled "USLBA" and "scam" and found out it costs \$80.

Such "vanity scams" seem to be proliferating, but fortunately, people also seem to be getting savvier. On one blog I ran across, the writer wryly noted that after the "American Biographical Institute" failed to entice him to buy a \$195 plaque decreeing him a "Great Mind of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," it upped the ante. Now, it is nominating him for "Man of the Year."

Another email I recently received -- this one from Turner Publishing -- asked about ad rates and submission deadlines for this newsletter. The company wanted to advertise "a book about your area" titled *Historic Photos of Philadelphia*. It offered to send me a review copy.

I explained that we don't have ad rates or, for that matter, firm deadlines (as if!), but that I'd be happy to put a blurb in the newsletter if the book included photos or information about the University City area of Philadelphia.

Well, it really doesn't, except for a few photos of the University of Pennsylvania's football field and another of its medical college. But since the publisher sent me a free copy of the \$40 tome, here's a blurb that clearly isn't a plug:

*Historic Photos of Philadelphia* is a great coffee-table book if you want archival (black and white) photos, with practically no text or context, that focus mainly on Center City from the 1840s through the 1940s. The author-editor, Laura Beardsley, was formerly director of graphics and research services for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The book is on amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, etc.

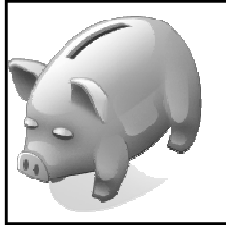
Marie McCullough  
SHCA News Editor  
mmccullough@sprucehillca.org



*This great award could be ours—for a mere \$80*

# Thanks for Your Support of SHCA

A unique aspect of SHCA is its financial set up. On the advice of tax law experts, SHCA applied for non-profit status as an organization that can receive membership dues – but cannot receive tax-deductible contributions. (In IRS lingo, this is a 501(c)4 organization). A separate, related organization, the Spruce Hill Trust, was established to accept donations that contributors could declare as tax deductions. (The Trust is a 501(c)3.) Whenever the Association needs money to cover operating costs or a special project, it receives a grant from the Trust.



**Treasurer's Report**

The distinction between these two legal entities is important to remember when talking about budgets and

bottom lines.

For the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2008, SHCA had a small deficit of about \$2,700, just as it did the previous fiscal year. But the Spruce Hill Trust received tax-deductible contributions of \$11,160 – more than enough to keep both organizations financially healthy.

This past fiscal year, the Association did not seek a grant from the Trust, despite spending money for much-needed upgrades and repairs to the Association's building, including a new furnace. In the current fiscal year, a grant will probably be needed because more building repairs and maintenance are planned.

As usual, the May Fair was the primary fundraiser for SHCA. The 2008 fair netted more than \$8,400, which should be enough to cover routine operating expenses in the current fiscal year.

Judy Powers  
SHCA Treasurer  
jpowers@sprucehillca.org

## SHCA 2008 Elections

Association President Ed Halligan was unanimously reelected to a second one-year term at the SHCA annual membership meeting on Nov. 11, along with the other four officers on the Executive Committee. The four, all of them unopposed, are: Monica Ferguson, executive vice president; Mark Wagenveld, vice president for operations; Judy Powers, treasurer; and Kathleen White, secretary.

For the Board of Directors, there were 12 candidates for the 10 open seats. Former SHCA president and board incumbent Barry Grossbach was the leading vote getter with 51 votes. All the other incumbents – Pauline Borkon (42 votes), Brett Feldman (32), Richard King (40), Stephen McCoubrey (46), Elaine Nelson (39) and Jackie Waiters (42) were also reelected to two-year terms.

Also elected were three newcomers recruited by the Nominating Committee: Ben Chesluk (47 votes),

Justin Kaplan (39) and Al Madrid (47). (For their bios and the bios of other board members, go to the SHCA Web site.) They replaced three board members who did not seek reelection: Amanda Benner, Fran Byers and Bridget Lessner.

Running unsuccessfully were challengers Chris O'Donnell and Matt Wolfe, who filed petitions to get on the ballot. O'Donnell finished with 30 votes and Wolfe with 27.

Meanwhile, two board members – Cindy Roberts and Bernadine Abad – have resigned, saying they cannot serve out their terms. Under the SHCA bylaws, unexpired terms are filled by the board.

The board will receive nominations for those seats at the January meeting; the actual voting will follow at the February meeting.

Mark Wagenveld  
Chair, SHCA Nominating Committee  
mwagenveld@sprucehillca.org

## Recycling Tips

Hip, hip, hooray! Weekly single-stream recycling is here!

True to his promise, Mayor Nutter has made it possible for you to combine all your recyclables – glass, cans, plastic, paper, cardboard – in a single container and put it on the curb each week. No more marking the calendar or forgetting when to haul out the recycling bin.

Philadelphia is the largest city on the East Coast to accept all recyclables in a single container. Last year, recycling even made money for the city. While that's no longer true, the recycling program is cheaper than the cost of landfilling all those reusable materials – and the simplicity of the single stream approach has led more residents to get with the program.

You can put out more than one recycling container, each up to 25 gallons. You can label an ordinary trash can for the purpose or, if you want another of the city's large blue bins, call University City District at 215-243-0555.

Here are some other helpful recycling tips, courtesy of SHCA board member Rich Guffanti: Don't throw away your old holiday lights. Here's a link to a program that will recycle them: [www.christmas-light-source.com](http://www.christmas-light-source.com)

With the digital TV conversion coming in February many people are opting to get a new TV. (Visit [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) for more information about conversion and to get your \$40 coupon for a converter box.)

TVs contain hazardous materials like lead and mercury and should never be thrown in a landfill! To recycle your old

TV, take it to the Streets Department Sanitation Convenience Centers located at Domino Lane and Umbria St. or State Rd. and Ashburner St., Mon. through Sat., from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.





# Spotlights On...



## Cream & Sugar

As a kid in Brooklyn, Blythe Dim loved visiting her grandfather's sweet shop, where everyone in the neighborhood went for the best candy, malted milk shakes and coffee.

In August, Blythe opened her own version of that delicious childhood hangout: Cream & Sugar, a custom-order bakery / candy shop / coffee spot at 4004 Spruce St.

It's impossible to read the menu or stand in front of the glass showcases without salivating. Amaretto cheesecake. Bavarian apple tart. Pumpkin bread pudding. Chocolate-covered pretzels. Cupcakes. Cookies. Fudge. Bagels with fresh cream cheese "schmears."

And don't forget La Colombe coffee and espresso.

Cream & Sugar offers gift baskets, seasonal deserts, and trays for meetings or offices. Deliveries to hospitals in University City are no problem.

As a University City resident, Blythe also wants to be supportive of her community. She sells cookies at cost to student groups who then sell the goodies to raise funds for worthy causes.



**Blythe Dim with some of her mouth-watering confections**

**Cream & Sugar, 4004 Spruce St.**

**Hours: 7am to 11pm, 7 days a week.**

**Orders or questions: Call 215.243.9973**

## New Apartments and Shops at 45th and Sansom

This is the second time in the spotlight for Hysni "Sam" Sylva, 48, president of United General Contractors LLC, 4650 Paul St.

A year ago, the company was featured for rehabilitating hulking, abandoned properties at 45<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut Streets. More than a million square feet of residential/commercial space was returned to the city's tax rolls.

Now, Sam and his partner, Salih Gashi, have completed a similarly remarkable transformation a block away, at 45<sup>th</sup> and Sansom Streets. Before Sam bought the property – which spans 126 to 136 South 45<sup>th</sup> St. – it was a tax-delinquent blight on the neighborhood.

Fourteen apartments -- with hardwood floors, tile baths, granite kitchen counters and air conditioning -- were constructed on the upper floors. Six stores, each about 1,000 square feet, were created on the first floor. The tab

for gutting and renovation was more than \$850,000.

Five of the stores are now rented. Welcome to Madrid Café, Jus Roz hair stylist, Gamin' Cutz barbershop, Door of Damascus clothing, and As-Salam Market.

Sam is a rather unusual developer. A former high school teacher, he is an ethnic Albanian who was born and grew up in Kosovo. He emigrated to the U.S. with his wife and children in 1996. In 1998, he returned to his homeland to serve as a commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army, leading other Albanian emigres in the fight for Kosovo's independence.

Sam regularly returns to Kosovo, but he turned down an offer to become defense minister there. These days, he's focused on another fight — against urban decay.

Last fall, Sam wanted to buy and rehab a condemned rowhouse a few doors away from the just-completed project.

The rowhouse, ruined by a fire, is owned by the city's Redevelopment Authority. But West Philly's City Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell would have to write a letter to the authority in support of United GC. Members of her staff have disregarded Sam's many requests for such a letter, without explanation.

**For information about renting an apartment or store, call Sam Sylva: 917-202-2999.**



**A remarkable transformation: Before, and after**

# Zoning Committee is as Conflicted as Community



*This proposed hotel at 40th and Pine Streets continues to be hotly contested*

The Spruce Hill Zoning Committee has dealt with a variety of items since issuing its last report, including outdoor dining permits, signage issues, take-out certificates for food establishments, applications for new restaurants, and final drawings for HUB 3 on the 3900 block of Chestnut Street. The committee has a bunch of ongoing items that are in various stages of “continuance” before the city’s Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Of course, the issue that has generated the most discussion and controversy over the past year has been the proposed hotel project at 40th and Pine Street. The committee digested reams of material from opponents and proponents of the project, held two public meetings to assess community reaction, and considered the varying opinions rendered by the city’s Planning Commission and its Historical Commission.

In December, at its monthly meeting, the Historical Commission gave approval to the project after having denied final approval just a month earlier. For a detailed account, see the Dec. 17 issue of UC Review at [ucreview.com](http://ucreview.com).

In the end, the SHCA zoning committee’s members reflected the conflicted feelings expressed by the broader community. The committee

was divided equally between supporters and opponents (3 in favor, 3 opposed). As chair, I decided to abstain from the vote. The committee reported its findings to the Spruce Hill board with a list of the views on both sides of the question.

The Spruce Hill board of directors voted narrowly to adopt the divided report as the association’s official position and send it to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Not surprisingly, this did not quell the controversy. As SHCA President Ed Halligan wrote in an online letter to SHCA members, some people “are convinced the association abandoned its responsibility to represent the interests of its members. However, a majority [of the board] did ultimately conclude that by forwarding our zoning committee’s divided sentiments to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, we did represent the prevailing neighborhood sentiment.”

Anyone wishing a copy of the committee’s report should contact the association office at 215-349-7825. Or you can read the report online by going to [www.sprucehillca.org](http://www.sprucehillca.org).

The Zoning Board of Adjustment

was scheduled to hear the hotel case on Jan. 8. We will update the community when, and if, there is a final decision on the hotel project -- in our lifetime.

Barry Grossbach  
Chair, Zoning Committee  
[bgrossbach@sprucehillca.org](mailto:bgrossbach@sprucehillca.org)

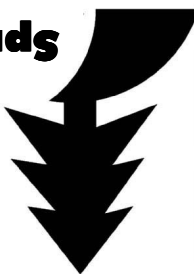


We’d like to call your attention to the email addresses in this issue. Thanks to Erin Davis, our new website manager, each SHCA board member now has an email account dedicated to Spruce Hill communication. There’s a uniform protocol for our email addresses – first initial, last name @ [sprucehillca.org](mailto:sprucehillca.org) – that should be easy for everyone (especially me!) to remember. Messages sent to these Spruce Hill email addresses will automatically be forwarded to the email addresses that board members regularly use through gmail, yahoo, verizon, etc.

We love to hear from Spruce Hill members, so please email your thoughts, suggestions – and complaints – about the newsletter, neighborhood concerns, upcoming events for the calendar, or anything else.

**Spruce Hill Community Association News**

**Winter 2009**



**Spruce Hill Community Association  
257 South 45th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104**



## **Spruce Hill Community Association News**

**Clip N' Mail Clip N' Mail Clip N' Mail Clip N' Mail Clip N' Mail Clip N' Mail**

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Check the mailing label for your membership expiration date.

**Membership (2 year membership--deduct \$5)**

Individual/Family \$20

Senior/Student \$10

Business \$35

Sponsor \$50

Patron \$100

Lifetime \$300



Make checks payable to SHCA and mail to:  
SHCA, 257 S.45<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104