

THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PAC Highlight: 1
*Armstrong Park
Advisory Council*

PAC Resources: The 2
PAC Webpage

The FOTP Tree 2
*Says.....It's not too late
to start thinking about
organizing a fall themed
event this season*

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ARMSTRONG PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL: RELATIONSHIPS MAKE FOR GREAT PARKS!

**Armstrong Park, 4433 S. St Lawrence.
Article submitted by Shemeka and
Decoteau Irby of the Armstrong Park
Advisory Council.**

Nearly two years ago, we moved a short walk from Lillian H. Armstrong Park in the city's Grand Boulevard (Bronzeville) neighborhood. Although we and our two small children frequented the park, we often gravitated back to parks in our former Hyde Park neighborhood. For us, those parks had a vibrancy that Armstrong was missing. We talked often about how wonderful it would be to walk to the park to find lots of activities happening.

In summer 2018, we decided to run for the Armstrong Park Advisory Council. Since joining we've become fascinated with the inner workings of what makes for a great neighborhood park (we're new to Chicago). What we've learned is both daunting and exhilarating. Budget hearings, PAC meetings, elections, permits, fundraising, and the list goes on. It's a lot. It's almost enough to make us get into the car to drive to the great parks we already know. But we've also learned that great parks are made.

Armstrong Park Advisory Council was formed six years ago. Its founding members Bruce Sayre, Prentiss Byrd, John Ervin, Kimberly Edwards, Marjorie Edwards, Terry Ervin, Ruby Haughton-Pitts, and Debra Smith rolled up their sleeves to promote safety, beautify the park, and

reduce nuisance activities. Their accomplishments included securing new playground equipment, improving lighting and signage, planting 100 trees, and with the support of Alderman Pat Dowell, paving a running track. Their efforts created a beautiful green space that is described in one Google review as a "jewel."

Today's PAC is comprised of founding members Debra Smith (President), Terry Ervin (Co-secretary), and Marjorie Edwards (Co-secretary) who have influence in and a deep historical knowledge of the park and neighborhood. Other PAC members are new. Members-at-large Nicole Jackson and



Donnell Spencer, like us, are newer residents drawn to the park because it offers a place for children to be children and for adults to exercise, mingle, or

take a leisurely walk. We inherited a park where the playground, basketball courts, running track, two baseball diamonds, and a huge field are available for all to use. The more we involve ourselves in PAC affairs and the more time we spend at Armstrong, the more we see possibilities to create a park that people will not pass without thinking twice about stopping and taking a stroll - the kind of park children notice from their car seats and insist they have to get out to go play.

In September, we attended the Friends of the Parks "Getting Yes to Your Budget Request" (continued on page 2 ->)

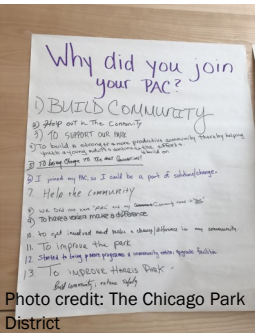
(continued from page 1) workshop and the CPD Budget Hearing meeting. We wanted to learn about how to fund programming. We thought people didn't frequent Armstrong because it lacked programming and events. As we watched group after group present their budget requests, we realized that creating a vibrant park is about more than just programming: it's about building relationships with people in the community through working to create a space that is accessible and available for all to enjoy. If we do the work of building relationships, the programming will follow.

This realization gave us a new appreciation for what we signed up to do – build community. As newly elected PAC members, that's exactly what we will strive to do. Although we still love and use Hyde Park parks, we have no doubt, that in time, the vibrancy we experienced there will exist a short walk from home.

Please join upcoming Armstrong PAC meetings: 3rd Saturdays in October, December, February, and April at 10:00 a.m. All meetings are open to the public and held at Kennicott Park Fieldhouse, located at 4434 S. Lake Park Avenue in Kenwood.



Pictures from page 1— Kite Festival, 2018. Pictures from page 2—Ribbon cutting of new Chicago Plays! playground with Armstrong PAC, Chicago Park District staff, and Alderwoman Dowell, 2015.



PAC & PPO RESOURCES: THE PARK DISTRICT'S PAC WEBPAGE

This Chicago Park District has a webpage on its website dedicated to information relevant to park advisory councils. From the PAC Codes of Conduct to information on upcoming PAC workshops, this is another resource for PACs. Either visit the home page at www.chicagoparkdistrict.com and click on the "Get Involved" tab and select "Advisory Councils," or enter this website into your browser: <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/get-involved/join-park-advisory-council>

THE
FOTP
TREE
SAYS...



...It's not too late to start thinking about organizing a fall themed event this season. From pumpkin patches to live music, all sorts of fall festivities are just a brainstorm away! If there aren't any planned events at your local park, think about creating your own! Here are some ideas:

- Pumpkin Carving/Painting in the Park: Everyone will enjoy this festivity, no matter the age! Get your neighbors together and start creating, you could even have a contest. Whoever's pumpkin is the scariest, wins!
- Face Painting: This one is perfect for the kids, and brave adults! Transform into your favorite animal or a mysterious creature.
- Story Telling (Spooky Edition): For those of you who can't wait for Halloween, why not having a scary story telling session in the park? Bring blankets and flashlights for some spooky tales.
- Movie Night: Pick a family friendly haunted movie such as Hotel Transylvania and bring the whole family to the park for the evening!
- Stewardship Day: Join your neighbors and help keep your park clean and healthy. This could include trash pick-up, tree mulching, and invasive plant removal. As the leaves begin to fall, you could also create one big leaf pile and jump into it after your hard work!



Picture of Burnside PAC's annual pumpkin carving, 2015.

Many of these ideas can be mixed and matched. What's your great idea on how to get your community involved in your park and outside this fall?