

President's Report, 12th AGM

John Wigle

The board of directors chose a different venue for the annual general meeting for three reasons: We wanted to “show the flag” in Ainslie Wood; we wanted the AGM to be more accessible to our members in Ainslie Wood; and, in place of the rock-hard seats of the often-sweltering Dalewood Middle School auditorium, we thought the cushioned seats of the air-conditioned sanctuary of Westside Baptist Church would be a pleasant change.

I thanked **Reverend Dave Stimers** and his congregation for being our gracious hosts; **Andrew Hall** of **Water Solutions** for donating cool water and for his assistance; **Angela Tirone**, our recording secretary, for co-ordinating donations of food this year to the Salvation Army food bank; and **Reverend John Smith** and his congregation at St. George's Anglican Church (Reformed Episcopal) for permitting the board to hold monthly meetings in their church hall.

Our invited guests were the new president of McMaster University, **Dr. Patrick Deane**; McMaster's associate director, public relations, **Gord Arbeau**; president of McMaster Students Union **Mary Koziol**; director of the MSU's Community Support Network **Laura Stevens**; **Councillor Brian McHattie**; and representatives from the Hamilton Police Service, municipal law enforcement, and fire prevention.

In her classic book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the late Jane Jacobs emphasized the importance of “eyes on the street.” She was referring to the need for ongoing activity in urban areas and for engaged stakeholders to develop and preserve safe and vibrant residential communities and merchant districts. As I start my fourth year as president I believe that the association and its community partners are these valuable eyes on the street. The excellent autumn 2009 and spring 2010 issues of *Neighbourhood News & Views* reveal the amazing scope and depth of the board's and members' volunteer activities. These include:

1. The Adopt-Your-Block program—42 neighbourhood blocks now have sponsors;
2. The Adopt-A-Box graffiti-cleanup program;
3. Creation of the memory garden on Emerson Street;
4. Compelling Jimmy Gringo's Burrito Factory on Marion Avenue North to comply with bylaws on seating and parking;
5. Formal presentations to Hamilton Health Sciences on its Access to the Best Care plan and to the Ontario Ombudsman regarding the Local Health Integration Network's lack of public consultation;
6. Participation in the Neighbourhood Residential Housing Community Liaison Committee, whose report has been tabled with city council;
7. Planning and participation in the MSU annual pajama parade;
8. The AWWCA's ninth annual community cleanup;
9. Participation in Earth Day 2010 activities, which included planting 2,400 trees in Churchill Park;
10. Helping to build a boardwalk on Caleb's Walk on the Royal Botanical Gardens' trail, all in one day; and

11. Supporting a community garden in Alexander Park and rehabilitating the herb garden at the Teaching Garden in Churchill Park

These good works send a clear message to residents and to visitors to our near-campus community that all are welcome, that we care, and that we are ever vigilant.

I have two short anecdotes, both involving the annual community cleanup on April 17. In Ainslie Wood East I met two gentlemen, one in his early to mid-70s. They casually mentioned that every second week they walk through their immediate neighbourhood picking up garbage. Then my route took me to the intersection of Emerson Street and the Rail Trail. There I met **Adela Antonow**, a retired Polish lady of short stature and a big heart. Every week, no matter the weather, she cheerfully patrols a section of the Rail Trail, picking up garbage. These three people do this “grunt work” without expectation of public praise or recognition, but simply because they care—another example of eyes on the street.

I end with the same request that I made during my report at the 2009 AGM, but with a greater sense of urgency. Since some of our directors may be stepping down altogether or reducing their duties because of personal commitments, the board needs new energetic members. Since each director has a particular “portfolio,” the time commitment is certainly manageable. Please give our request your serious consideration, call me at 905-528-8411, and enjoy a sense of fulfillment in helping to maintain our community’s livability.