



NEWSLETTER

HISTORY * DIVERSITY * COMMUNITY

CHALK WALK...IN THE ALLEY!

The next association meeting is Tuesday July 28th at 7pm. We will plan on meeting in the recently paved alley behind the 2400 block of Webster. Bring a chair if you wish and your creative brain. Let's spend some time being social and making art! We will supply freezer pops to keep everyone cool. We will be joining in the Fort Wayne Museum of Art event: Chalk Walk at Home! WWPNA will supply the chalk, just come with your best ideas and let's make the alley an activated part of our neighborhood!



THANK YOU By Paul McComas

I don't know where it was for you when it hit you, but for me I was sitting having lunch when it hit me. I was eating and thinking about upcoming parent teacher conferences that afternoon for my daughters, when I looked up and saw across the TV that the NBA had just cancelled all remaining games. Things changed fast. Soon everything that could be cancelled was, and our very ability to adapt as a community was about to be pushed to its limits. As we all began seeking a new normal, we quickly found that there was no new normal. Normal had been cancelled. And we still haven't all agreed on who is supposed to tell us when we can stop, or at least when it is safe to bring in that last case of toilet paper from the trunk. In the days and weeks ahead we began looking for the helpers. These are people who simply show up unafraid to do their job in the face of massive confusion and risk. There emerged from this confusion an entire community of people who got up each morning armed with hand sanitizer, masks, and grit, who made sure that we were fed and safe, that our hospitals were staffed and ready, that our most vulnerable would continue to get help, that our kids would stay connected to their learning communities and that us parents would be guided into the abyss of homeschooling as best they could, and that our faith communities would be guided through the stress and loneliness and questions of these days as well. We live in an amazing neighborhood. By design we connect and interact with our neighbors

on porches and sidewalks on a daily basis (6' apart now please!). It is a unique place full of these very kinds of heroes we all began to see, and we celebrate our neighborhood heroes today and every day. To our teachers, doctors, first responders, therapists, grocery store workers, social workers, business owners, and all our parent homeschoolers who Zoomed your way into keeping our kids educated, to all of our essential workers, and to those of you who were deemed non-essential and have had to be brave as your work and income became questionable over this time, we want to say THANK YOU! We see you, and we are proud of you, and we are proud of all the ways our community has come together to provide for and protect each other during these difficult days. WWPNA continues to show over and over that it is a place that celebrates its strong sense of community every single day but especially the hard ones.

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The History of Pontiac

By Ann Schlagenhauf

Just as three corridors connect the 02 with the 07, there are three corridors—Creighton, Pontiac and Rudisill—that connect the historic communities of the 03 and 06 with the 07. Each has its own story. But Pontiac Street has its own unique flavor and plays its own special part in Fort Wayne history. Pontiac, which runs from Fairfield to Coliseum, was developed prior to 1875. It appears to be named for Chief Pontiac, a leader of the Ottawa tribe, who led a siege against the British in 1763 at what is now Detroit. The street, like many of the main corridors, has had a changing mixture of rural, residential, business, and industrial areas throughout its history. Like the 07, it had planned subdivisions, businesses, churches and social organizations, and large employers like International Harvester and Fruehauf Trailers. Post World War II brought important changes to the area. Many left the rural south and moved to industrial cities like Fort Wayne for employment opportunities. By the 1960s, the area around Pontiac had become an important part of the African-American community and a local part of the civil rights movement that was sweeping the nation. In 1969, the James H. Smart School, located at the corner of Smith and Pontiac, was the site of an important part of Fort Wayne's Civil Rights movement. That summer, community leaders marched to end the segregation of the Smart school, along with several others. When the school board failed to respond, the community staged a boycott of the schools and started Freedom Schools in the nearby neighborhoods. After nine days, the board gave in, and agreed to present a plan to desegregate the Fort Wayne school district. Employees of the Smart School were groundbreakers in other ways, also. Teacher's Assistant Thelma Lee Russell noticed how many students were missing school to care for their pre-school siblings, and started the Gingerbread House, the first African American owned educational and developmental child care center in Fort Wayne. Pontiac was also the home of several excellent restaurants: Rib Cage Restaurant, Hawkin's Famous Fish, and Big Al's Burgers brought good food and community to the area. Pharmacist Clarence Haynes, served the neighborhood from the Haynes



Pharmacy, located at the corner of Pontiac and Hanna. And Dr. Alfred Stovall founded the Lafayette Medical Center, located at the corner of Lafayette and Pontiac. The Center would later include the Community Care Pharmacy, founded by Dr. Victor Eugene Butler. The Pontiac library branch, located at 1023 E. Pontiac, was also an innovative part of building the community. It was the probably the first library in Fort Wayne to hold Kwanzaa and Juneteenth celebrations, and specialized in African-American history, bringing speakers such as a ground crewmember of the Tuskegee Airmen to speak and sign books. Other organizations that were part of the Pontiac corridor include the Pontiac Youth Center, and the Fort Wayne Community Fishing Club, which hosts the annual fishing derby at Reservoir Park. Every city has a street that residents regard as "notorious," a label and generalization that persist regardless of the large and small triumphs and experiences of those who live there. Frequently, this label is racially tinged, and obscures the real story of the street and the lives of those who live and work there. I personally, am proud that our neighborhood anchors one end of a street that is an important part of the rich, diverse history of Fort Wayne.

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