

# Highlights

A Quarterly Publication of the Village Green Owners' Association

Fall 2009

## Four Generations at the Village Green

By Rob and Heidi Creighton, Court 1

Our names are Rob and Heidi Creighton. We have a daughter, Samantha, who was one of the many "babies born in the Green" in 2008. We chose to move closer to the West side from Los Feliz last year for Heidi's work commute to Santa Monica.

We had first seen the Village Green while visiting our friends Jen and Vin who live here. It seemed like a good community and offered a lifestyle that is rare in an urban environment, with the wonderful architecture, the mix of people, and the amazing grounds unlike anything else in L.A. We were able to picture Samantha growing up here.



**First and second generations:** Lucille Deasy, with her one-year old daughter Diana, at their VG unit, circa 1943

The unit (5126) that we put an offer on had a lemon tree in the back and a perfect spot for a vegetable garden. You could see the original tiles in both bathrooms under the vinyl, and the wood floors had been protected by carpet for decades. There is a lovely simplicity to the bones of these buildings that we truly appreciate. We described the Village Green to Rob's mom, Diana. She said it sounded like Baldwin Hills Village, where she had been told she lived with her parents in the 1940s. We talked with her father, Neil Deasy (Rob's grandfather), and he confirmed that, indeed, they had lived here. He, his wife Lucille, and their first child, Diana, moved here in the spring of 1943, when Diana was less than one year old.

The war had begun and Neil found a job working as an architect

*(Generations continued on page 2)*

## Town Hall Meeting

By Jean Gaignard

On Saturday, September 19, 2009, the Court Council hosted a Town Hall Meeting. Court Council volunteers greeted homeowners with pastries, fruit, juice and coffee and the Mural Room was filled to capacity. Barbara McCully, the Chair of Court Council, moderated the meeting and introduced the Court Council Representatives. Seven of the nine directors and the manager, Robert Bonfiglio, were present.

Directors answered questions submitted in advance by homeowners and then the floor was opened for questions. Below is a summary of the answers to questions, which the Board organized into categories.

### General Questions

What are the priorities of the Board for the remainder of the year? The Board

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## Rare Bird Sighting

By Susan Edwards, East Circle

This summer, you may have noticed many people with binoculars walking around the Green, looking up into the trees. A very rare bird, the northern parula, was sighted in the VG in July, and avid birders were drawn to the Green in search of it. It's remarkable because it's an East Coast/Midwestern bird that somehow made its way all the way to California!

The Los Angeles Audubon Society mentioned it on the Rare Bird Alert on their Web site [www.losangelesaudubon.org](http://www.losangelesaudubon.org):

"The male northern parula at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles was reported through July 12. The female is also likely still present, but was not reported last week. The birds move around...the flowering bottlebrush around the coral tree (N. side of the central lawn) and...east of the coral tree...."

On August 4, the Rare Bird Alert was updated with sad news: "...the northern Parula nest at the Village Green...apparently disturbed by a predator and the nestlings had vanished. The female parula was seen the following day near the nest tree." The Society did include a note asking birders to be considerate of residents.



*This rare bird, the northern parula, was sighted in the Green this summer.*

*Photo: Siobhan Basile*

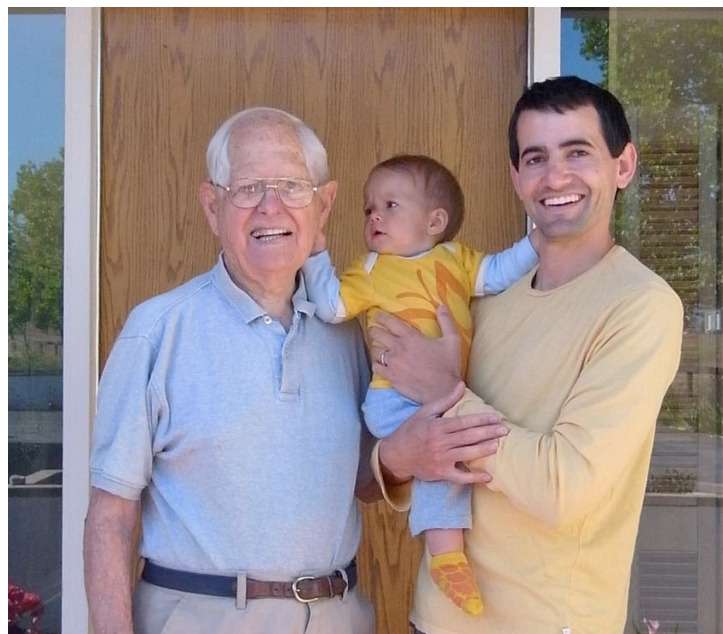
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for a naval base being constructed in Long Beach. They were living in the Valley and needed to move closer to the base. Neil knew the architects of Baldwin Hills Village and had heard what a wonderful place it was. Diana was too young to remember, but Neil has fond memories of living here. He said it was a "unique project at the time" and a wonderful space, "affording a great lifestyle." He remembers the tennis courts, and a store and barber shop in the community building. During the year they lived here they helped plant a Victory garden in the commercial property across Sycamore, which at the time was mostly empty.

We recently went through Neil and Lucille's photographs taken at the time. Some show the community building and even their unit, 5320. They were sorry to leave in March of 1944 as Neil went off to war. Lucille and Diana moved back to Arizona to be closer to family.

Once we heard all of this, we knew that we were meant to live at the Village Green. We moved here in April 2008; Samantha was born in August. We welcomed her home to the Green and look forward to many memories with all the new babies at the Green. She is a fourth generation Village Green-er!



**Second, third, and fourth generations:** Neil Creighton (left) is husband of Diana, the small girl in the photo on page 1 who lived on the Green in the 40s. Their son Rob (right) moved to the Green in April 2008 where Samantha (center) was born in August 2008, the fourth generation to live in the Village Green.



# Reunion of Village Green Landscape Architect's Family

By Steven Keylon, Court 4

On April 15, 1942, the original Baldwin Hills Village Landscape Architect Fred Barlow, Jr, his wife Teddy, and their daughter Marilyn moved into an apartment at 5218 Village Green, in Court 3. Like the other architects responsible for planning and creating this unique new development, Barlow was interested in experiencing firsthand this groundbreaking new community. Most of the architects remained in the Village through the 1940's – the Barlow family lived in Baldwin Hills Village until 1948. They moved to Court 11 after their family grew – daughters Patricia and Lee, and son Frederick III were all born while living at Baldwin Hills Village. Fred Barlow's mother Mabel also lived at the Village.



Recently, those four children reunited here for the first time since the death of their grandmother, Mabel, in 1963. The Barlow children (and some other Barlow relatives) spent two days sharing memories and family photographs, touring the grounds, and meeting some of the committee members who are responsible for preserving and protecting the important elements of their father's landscape plan. We learned a lot more about their father, and his life and work; the Barlow children also learned some things in the process too, and came away with a better understanding of and appreciation for their father's legacy.



The three daughters of Village Green landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. around 1947, and in the same location in 2009. They remember this apartment being destroyed by a house fire in the mid 1940s, and the smell of charred wood always triggers that memory. even today.

I had been looking for any information on the possibility of a Fred Barlow, Jr archive somewhere, and had searched for any heirs who might have more information. I was recently given an obituary for Mr. Barlow, which had quite a bit more biographical information than I had had before. Using some of those clues, I was able to find one of his daughters. She put me in touch with the rest of her siblings, and we established a date for this reunion. I don't know who was more excited about this meeting, me or the Barlows, but we all hit it off immediately, and had a fantastic time. All of the Barlows are warm, creative and interesting people, with great senses of humor, and they were eager to find out more about their father's work, and to visit the Village once more; to see how the place had evolved, and how the landscape had matured. They were fascinated by our Cultural Landscape Report committee's process, and how our persistent volunteers had spent the last five years taking inventory of every single element of our 68 acre property.

We discussed the original Barlow designed landscape from 1941, and how the elements of that design were so ahead of their time, in terms of their emphasis on drought tolerant trees and plant species, and his use of native plants. The family is interested in keeping up with this project, and we even discussed the idea of their designing a Fred Barlow, Jr. Memorial Bench, using wood from one of the original trees that may need to be cut down.

Fred Barlow, Jr died in 1953, and his archives were disposed of after his death. Many of his landscapes have disappeared – one of his largest commissions, Hollywood Park Race Track in Inglewood, will soon be lost as well. Fortunately, we are the stewards of his greatest achievement in landscape design, and are lucky to live in this Utopian Community of which he was proud to have been a part.

*(Town Hall, continued from page 1)*

will continue with their working groups, collections on delinquent accounts,

upgrading the property within the limits set by budgetary constraints, preventing the need to increase association fees, and continuing with painting, re-plumbing, buildings that are settling and soil subsidence, improving the office functions, and applying for the Mills Act.

In response to a question about the timeliness of the mailing of the Board minutes and the failure of committees to report activities in their minutes, the Board responded that the California Civil Code requires only that minutes be available in the office within 30 days of the Board meeting. The issue of committee minutes is being addressed.

The circumstances leading up to the resignations of Reba Glover and Nat Hutton were explained. This was related to the Board President making a decision to have a computer program installed on his home computer at the suggestion of Ross Morgan. It is the same program that is available to staff in the Village Green Office or through Ross Morgan and used by a number of other association presidents. The action was taken without apprising other board members of the need for this action or getting Board approval for it. One hundred dollars of association funds were used for the installation.

A finding of facts related to this action was subsequently conducted by the Board Vice President Drew Furedi, who is in the process of completing his report. Homeowners were assured by Mr. Furedi that no financial information was available on the president's computer other than as they relate to the payment of their homeowner's fees.

Joseph Khoury and Steven Keylon have been working diligently with the City of Los Angeles to position the Village Green for participation in the Mills Act. Detailed and tediously obtained statistics were required.

Homeowners were encouraged to minimize gossip and back biting, join a committee, and get to know their neighbors in order to improve the quality of life in the community.

#### Maintenance

Questions addressed in this category related to resurfacing of the garage courts, the janitorial service, and preventative maintenance. The janitorial company, Viking is being monitored closely by Robert Bonfiglio, who is generally pleased with the quality of the performance of their duties. The manager has also developed a Preventive Maintenance Calendar, which covers a wide range of tasks related to the buildings, grounds and equipment. Many of these issues are being addressed in the 2010 budget allocations.

#### Infrastructure

While concerns were expressed that some of the infrastructure projects have been discontinued indefinitely, such as

the re-piping and the sewer projects, assurances were given that delays in the receipt of needed materials and consultation with experts to develop plans that provide a detailed scope of the work, carefully drawn plans and specifications have served only to temporarily delay progress. The re-piping project will resume in buildings 25, 26 and 27 in October as the tiles needed for the work are scheduled to arrive shortly. Gafcon has completed a 300-page report with its findings regarding the current condition of the Village Green's infrastructure. Gafcon's report has arrived and now has to be reviewed before the process can proceed to the next step. The sewer replacement project will resume shortly in Courts 8 and 9. The progress of efforts to get earthquake insurance is currently at a standstill after an investigation revealed that the cost is high (\$300,000) as are the deductibles and it does not appear to be a good value. Also, getting a company to issue such a policy at this time when many companies are risk averse is not likely.

#### Pet Policy

The Board of Directors has been working toward implementing its goal of developing a pet enforcement policy. Enforcement procedures developed by three of the directors was on the agenda for the September 22<sup>nd</sup> Board Meeting. Some features of the proposed policies include pet registration, a registration fee of \$25.00, a photo of the pet, use of a mandatory Village Green tag, citation forms for use by Platt Security, enforcement by Platt Security with voluntary compliance by the homeowner, complaint forms for homeowners who witness violations and more stringent penalties when pet owners fail to comply after several letters of notification. The pet rules apply equally to cats as well as dogs.

#### Safety

The Board of Directors is pleased with the performance of Platt Security. Platt Security trains its officers regarding the rules and regulations governing the Village Green when they are hired. They are also given a VG Handbook. Platt Security will be hosting a Pancake Breakfast this Fall. Any concerns about the security personnel's failure to enforce regulations should be addressed to Sherri Giles, the assistant manager. Marc Platt is not required contractually to attend Board meetings nor does the Board consider his attendance the most effective means of communicating its concerns. Mr. Platt has attended Board meetings when he has been requested to do so to address a specific security concern and continues to be willing to do so in the future when asked.

#### Use of the Common Areas

It was suggested that enforcement of policies concerning the use of the common areas is enhanced if residents report activities considered violations to Platt Security quickly with as much detail as possible. Bicycling, skateboarding, roller skating and scooter riding are permitted during daylight hours. The value of parental guidance, polite reminders and the use of Platt Security to encourage adherence to

*(Town Hall continued on next page)*

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Village Green policies was underscored. The manager, Robert Bonfiglio, is addressing the issues of TV cables and satellite dishes on a building-by-building basis as buildings are painted.

#### Use of Units

The CC&Rs specify how many adults may live in a unit but does not specify the number of children, since children were not allowed to live in the Village Green at the time they were written. Additionally, this rule has been superseded by Los Angeles City ordinances governing occupancy and cannot be enforced as they are currently written. Observed violations of architectural guidelines should be reported with specific details of their nature and reported to the manager in the form of a letter. Interior construction that intrudes into the common areas (i.e. inside the walls, such as plumbing and electrical work) must be submitted to the Design Review Committee for approval. There are guidelines neither for how long construction may continue in a homeowner's unit nor for the hours of the day in which construction work is done. However, consideration should be shown for one's neighbors. Noise violations can be reported to Platt Security.

#### Assessments and Budget

Special assessments for infrastructure projects cannot be determined until the Gafcon report is studied and priorities are established. The Board will give careful consideration to this issue once the information that has just become available has been studied and discussed. It was reiterated that no special assessment can be levied without approval by a majority of homeowners. In answer to a question regarding the disparity of fees assessed to homeowners because of different phases of the development they reside

in, it was indicated that the difference is small, amounting to a few dollars, and that any change has to be approved by a majority of homeowners, not by the Board of Directors.

The Board is in the process of developing a budget and setting priorities for 2010. Several costly and critical projects, such as the repair of the two buildings that are settling, and sewer repair and re-piping, must be addressed in addition to the regular maintenance schedule. The Board will assess the possibility of an increase in association dues when the budget process is completed. The use of Ross Morgan and the lien company to address delinquencies, rather than the Board addressing these directly was addressed as a privacy issue. The responsibility for delinquencies is the responsibility of the Board not our contractors. The process is being handled sensitively and with flexibility to assist homeowners to fulfill their responsibility to pay association fees according to their means. There are no rigid guidelines or criteria. Thus far, the process has been very successful in recovering unpaid fees.

#### Residents' Questions

There was a short question-and-answer period, which consisted of a couple of questions that had generally been answered in the previous period. For example, there were questions about the perception of a violation of a homeowner's privacy when the Board addresses delinquencies instead of an outside party such as Ross Morgan, and questions regarding the Mills Act. One question involved the right of a homeowner to install chicken wire under her gate to block access to her patio by a cat that uses her patio as a litter box. One resident asked about volunteering for a committee which addresses the issue of water sustainability and the landscape.

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## Board of Directors Meets with Gafcon Consultants

By Diann Dumas

In the first joint meeting since the receipt of the Gafcon report, the Board of Directors met in open session on September 23rd with the Gafcon consultants to ask questions about the newly released comprehensive Property Condition Assessment (PCA) report. Directors present (Steve Haggerty, Dan Frank, Joe Khoury, Steven Keylon, Diann Dumas and Robert Nicolais), along with Manager Robert Bonfiglio, asked numerous questions of the Gafcon consultants Larry Reddel and James Webber.

The voluminous report gave detailed descriptions of the infrastructure conditions and the cost of short-term and long-term repairs. It discusses the condition of many components, such as the roofs, sewers, irrigation, electrical wiring and plumbing.

Questions included those about terminology used in the report, such as Gafcon's use of the categories like "short term" and "long term." "Short term," as used in the report, refers to what the consultants called "band-aid-type repairs" on the infrastructure (immediate repairs, such as replacing a pipe that may burst), whereas "long-term" repairs refers to total replacement of the components, such as the entire sewer system.

Directors also questioned the costs stated by Gafcon in the report, asking consultants if they had deducted the costs of some of the repairs and replacements already done or currently in progress, such as buildings already re-piped, water supply lines replaced, and sewer replacements, in which two courts are slated to be completed within the next few months. The consultants referred to the fact that most of our components

*(Gafcon continued on page 6)*

# Village Green 50+ Travel Club

September 3, 2009 begins the 11th year of "Seniors On The Move" and the opening of trips and tours for the year 2010. Stop by the clubhouse on any Thursday, unless otherwise specified, between 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m. for information or payment of travel. The itinerary of all trips and tours is posted on the rear bulletin board of the clubhouse. The annual membership fee of \$10.00 pays for the publication and membership mailing of the Bi-Monthly Newsletter (club receives no funding from VGOA). The following are a few confirmed trips. All motor coaches leave from Village Green and return to the Green.

## Day Trips

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| January   | Mystery Trip with BBQ Lunch (includes wit and wizardry)     |
| February  | TV Taping, Wheel of Fortune with Wolf Gang Puck boxed lunch |
| March     | Palm Springs Follies  |
| May       | San Diego's Little Italy with Lunch                         |
| September | Fillmore and Western Scenic Train with lunch on the train   |
| October   | Glendale Theatre  |
| October   | Santa Barbara Culinary School                               |

## Overnight Trips

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| April     | Grand Canyon Train Adventure, 3 days/2 nights |
| May       | Bermuda/Bahamas Cruise, 9 days/8 nights       |
| September | Islands of New England, 9 days/8 nights       |
| November  | Laughlin, Nevada, 3 days/2 nights             |

Additional trips are to be added.

## **Social Recreation Holiday Bazaar**

The Social Recreation Committee will hold its second annual Holiday Bazaar on Thursday, November 19, 2009, 12:00–3:00 p.m. Stop by and holiday-shop for family and friends. Items will include jewelry, knick knacks, Christmas items, clothing, and much, much more at reasonable prices.

**Correction** to the Summer 2009 *Highlights*: The meeting time for the Social Recreation Committee was incorrectly printed as Thursdays, 1:00–4:00 p.m. The correct time is Thursdays, 11:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

## ***Passages***

**Harold Boardley, Jr.**, resided in the Village Green with his daughter Christine Boardley in Court 2. They were both formerly of Cambridge Mass. Harold passed away on Aug. 8, 2009. He was an avid birder, and could identify all their calls. His family celebrates his life through the beauty here at Village Green. Christine came to the Village Green in 2002, Harold joined her in 2007.

**Charles Pitman**, a 30-year resident of the Village Green, Court 6, died on July 8 at age 94. He is survived by his wife Pauline, 96, who resides in an assisted living facility. They were married 69 years. The couple was very active in the Green's community, and were disappointed when declining health caused them to move a few years ago. They really loved living here at the beautiful Village Green.

*(Gafcon, continued from page 5)*

have already exceeded their lifetime use, and therefore most need to be replaced.

Mr. Reddel said that given the age of Village Green, he was impressed by our present condition and ongoing maintenance program—something he does not see often in newer homeowners associations.

However, given the down economy, Gafcon conceded to consideration of owners' economic circumstances and allowed for a gradual, incremental program of infrastructure replacements, as opposed to the one-time repair of all components at once, which had formerly been the thrust of its anticipated recommendations two years ago.

Gafcon will incorporate the Board of Directors' requests for improved presentation of the cost figures and clarification of other points raised in the meeting. Thereafter, future meetings will be scheduled for the consultants to meet with homeowners and explain their report and its findings.

# Volunteer for the SurveyLA Program

By Robert Nicolais, Court 8

The Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources (OHR) is the city agency that oversees the handling of all the historic properties in L.A. They are now launching a program called SurveyLA, which will locate and document all sorts of properties in the city that reflect important parts of the city's history and development. The office is a part of the Department of City Planning and is currently headed by Ken Bernstein who spent many years working with the LA Conservancy. The Getty Conservation Institute recently completed a five-year study, which determined that only about 15 percent of Los Angeles has been surveyed to identify historic resources, so SurveyLA is intended to fill in important gaps in the record of historic sites.

Village Green is part of that history so we will be in the database of the survey. Since we are already a National Historic Landmark and in the National Park Service database, we don't need to do anything in the way of describing and documenting our site, but there are other places around Village Green that can be suggested for the survey. The survey has an important volunteer component since people all over the city are being asked to suggest possible historic sites and send them into the survey at [www.SurveyLA.org](http://www.SurveyLA.org). An important job will be conducting oral history interviews with longtime residents so that pictures and recollections of events like the Baldwin Hills Dam collapse can be captured and incorporated into the city database. The web site also lists other volunteer opportunities including speaking and spreading word about SurveyLA throughout the city, providing historic photos, assisting professional survey teams, being a neighborhood coordinator, and helping research our neighborhood to uncover overlooked resources.

I've looked around our neighborhood and I can think of several things to suggest for the survey. There are two buildings designed by Robert Alexander that should be noted: the elementary school at Hauser and Rodeo Road and the First Presbyterian Church at the corner of La Brea and Coliseum. Additionally, the old Thrifty sign—that big steel structure with the sweeping curves at the corner of La Brea and Rodeo—is a good example of a futuristic style for signage, which was a part of mid-century modernism.



*The Rite-Aid sign on La Brea and Rodeo, originally a sign for Thrifty Drug Store, may be an historic landmark.*

These are examples of sites that can be suggested. The staff and workers at SurveyLA will then evaluate the suggestions and decide whether to include them in the database.

If you have favorite buildings or places you think might be incorporated into a historic survey, consider volunteering to help. Visit the web-site at

[www.SurveyLA.org](http://www.SurveyLA.org) and see if there are volunteer opportunities that interest you. If you have questions, contact me at (323) 294-0892. Robert Nicolais, 5506 Village Green

Bernie Altman (Court 6) is coordinating the SurveyLA effort for our neighborhood. To get involved, you can contact him at (323) 294-4476 or [berniealtman \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:berniealtman[at]gmail[dot]com).

## Need an editor or a tutor?

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# Native Trees for Our Patios

By Lili Singer of the Theodore Payne Foundation,  
with help from Laurie Liles, Court 4

There are many small to medium trees native to our region that can grow well in small spaces, perfect for Village Green patios.

This list is excerpted from the article "Native Trees, Please," by Lili Singer, published in the Winter 2009 issue of *The Poppy Print*, the quarterly newsletter of the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers & Native Plants. Reprinted with permission.

## *Brahea armata*, Mexican Blue Palm

A Baja California native with chalky silver-blue leaves and arching masses of creamy white flowers. Slow-growing to 40 feet tall. Tolerates heat and wind; thrives in coastal, inland and desert locations. Excellent container plant.

## *Cercidium floridum*, Blue Palo Verde

This popular desert species offers abundant, fragrant, yellow spring flowers, plus blue-green leaflets, thorny limbs and blue-green bark. Single or multi-trunked trees grow quickly to 25 feet with equal spread. Good drainage preferred; requires periodic deep watering; drought deciduous.

## *Cercis occidentalis*, Western Redbud

This charmer, usually grown as a multi-trunk specimen, reaches 15–20 feet high and nearly as wide. Brilliant pink, pea-like, early spring blossoms on leafless gray branches are followed by heart-shaped leaves and red-purple seedpods. Sun and drought tolerant, but best with light shade and monthly irrigation when grown inland. Accepts most soils; resistant to oak root fungus. Flowers most heavily where winter temperatures drop below 28 degrees Fahrenheit.

## *Chilopsis linearis*, Desert Willow

This hummingbird magnet sports graceful, arching branches of willow-like foliage, with summer displays of trumpet-shaped flowers in shades of white, pink, rose or purple with darker markings. Moderate growth to 15–20 feet high and half as wide; prune

when young for good form. Winter deciduous; accepts sun, heat and drought.

## *Fraxinus dipetala*, California or Flowering Ash

Diminutive and too rarely planted! Slow to moderate growth to 15 feet tall and 10 feet wide with multiple trunks, gray bark, dark green compound leaves and showy clusters of small, fragrant white flowers that appear before leaves in April. Yellow, coppery or purplish fall color precedes winter leaf drop. Drought tolerant, once established.

Look for a follow-up article from the Tree Committee with ideas for growing these trees in containers.

## Screening Room under the Stars

By Susan Edwards, East Circle

What a treat to grab a blanket and some snacks, walk out my back door and sit down on the main green with friends and neighbors to watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Neighbors of all ages came out to socialize before the movie and then lounge on the grass watching under the stars.

Twice this summer, residents were treated to the free movies—and free popcorn! A HUGE Thank You goes to Raul Campos and Yosef Chason who donated use of audio and video equipment, plus the ever-popular popcorn machine. About 100 people showed up in July to watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and in August to watch *Ghostbusters*. I certainly hope to see even more movies on the Green!



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