

ELGIN, IL  
FALL 2020



NORTHEAST  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION

# NENA NEWS

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

Hello from your prior Resident Officer Heather Farrell from Elgin Police Department's R.O.P.E. (Resident Officer Program of Elgin) Division at 310 N. Spring St.

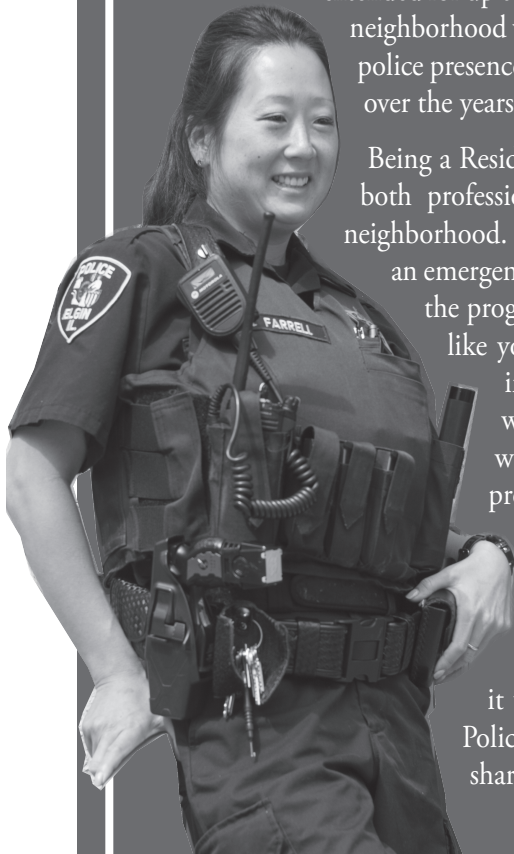
My term has ended and it's time to introduce your new ROPE Officer, Ofc. Edwin Alva, as my replacement. I was fortunate to have this opportunity for 7 years. I will be going to Dayshift Patrol so I plan to see you out and about. Know that I will miss seeing you all around in your daily routines.

The ROPE program has been implemented since 1991 in Elgin. We currently have 4 ROPE houses (310 N. Spring, 326 E. Chicago, 429 Jay, 110 N. Union). It is a special division with the Elgin Police Department that places officers into neighborhoods. They live and work in marked Police housing rent free for a 5 year term. The term can also be extended for up to 2 years by approval. Their families move with them. They are assigned to a particular neighborhood where crime is higher, quality of life is lower, neighborhood ownership is lacking, and police presence acts as a preventative measure. This form of community policing has been successful over the years in bridging the gap between residents and the Elgin Police Department.

Being a Resident Officer was a special privilege for me. It is a humbling experience to be part of, both professionally and personally. I have met so many people living and working in the neighborhood. While it is a long term, it has gone by fast. I enjoyed helping others, whether it was an emergency or a problem that needed a long term solution. One of the parts I liked most about the program was that officers can show the community that we are more than a cop. We are like you and have lives and families and experience the same neighborhood problems. I impacted many young lives during my time. Some of the kids that I helped came and went. Others I saw grow up right before my eyes. Starting things off on the right foot was imperative to getting our youth involved in healthy, safe relationships. My summer program at my ROPE house went 7 years straight and it was so much fun allowing kids to be free of judgment and learn something new.

National Night Out is an annual, nationwide night out against crime. I had the largest residential block party in Elgin for 6 years. That speaks volumes about my fantastic neighbors who attended through the years. I saw firsthand how important it was to drop your baggage at the corner and just come out and have fun with the Police. The Salvation Army's partnership with my block party was largely successful as we share a lot of the same goals.

*Continued On Back Page...*



# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Neighbors,

What does it mean to be a good neighbor, and why does it matter? I've thought about that a lot during the COVID pandemic. I have heard from many folks who don't live in our neighborhood that they felt isolated and have been missing the normal interaction with their neighbors.

Yes, it's been different. But I've seen folks adjust, rather than abandon, the idea of keeping in touch and being neighborly. More conversations are had across the street or alley. Having a few friends over looks a lot different when you're wearing masks and sitting 8 ft apart. But it still looks fun.

We still keep up on what's happening, and know whose kids are home and whose are away at college. Neighbors still help clear fallen branches from the yard next door as if it was their own. We still care and share... while that always matters, it matters ever more these days.

A recent interaction with another neighbor gave me another perspective on that as well.

While not everyone agrees, most of you are familiar with the groundswell of grassroots support for avoiding demolition of D.C. Cook's former office building. Since we learned last fall of the company's plans to demolish the building in November 2019, we've worked hard creating an opportunity for long term preservation of what has been a highly visible architectural icon.

We could have just considered each other "the opposition" and let the process work itself out. We might have won. We might have lost. But, by talking with D.C. Cook as "neighbors" we have gotten to the point where we are today. In large part due to our efforts on behalf of the neighborhood, the CEO of D.C. Cook has in early November committed to NENA and to the City Council that they would:

- Put off any demolition for at least six months
- Work with other local non-profit organizations, NENA & the city to explore alternative redevelopment plans
- Invest financially in short term repairs of the roof, so it doesn't deteriorate further during that time

As promised as of this week, D.C. Cook has crews making repairs on the roof of the historic building.

Please, look for ways you can engaged in the community, whether it's pulling weeds in our community Butterfly Garden or learning about and getting involved in efforts like our work to preserve the D.C. Cook Building.

Best Regards,

*K. Eric Larson,*

President

*Thank you  
for making  
NENA a great  
place to live!*



## NENA BOARD & OFFICERS

### President

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Alan Scimeca      [ascimeca@nenaofelgin.org](mailto:ascimeca@nenaofelgin.org)

### Resident Officer

Edwin Alva      [alva\\_e@cityofelgin.org](mailto:alva_e@cityofelgin.org)



WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF NENA:

- Visit [www.nenaofelgin.org](http://www.nenaofelgin.org) and subscribe to our FREE email newsletter and alerts
- Support NENA financially (every dollar counts!)
- Volunteer in planning and hosting NENA programs throughout the year
- Attend our monthly Zoom meetings the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM
- Contact us at [info@nenaofelgin.org](mailto:info@nenaofelgin.org) or 847.220.4407 or via mail at P.O. Box 1446, Elgin, IL 60121 with questions or comments

# D.C. COOK--STILL HERE AFTER 119 YEARS!



Truly, this beauty is quite the youngster compared to her classical counterparts:

- The Acropolis in Athens still rocks at 2,500 years
- The Pantheon in Rome attracts lovers at 2,000 years young
- St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City still dazzles at 400 years
- Oh la la the Palace of Versailles after 340 years
- St. Martin in the Fields in London charming music-lovers for 300 years
- The Rotunda at the University of Virginia still classy after 200 years
- Illinois' Old State Capitol building in Springfield welcoming Presidents from Lincoln to Obama for 180 years.

Classical architecture inspires awe and respect: let's give DC Cook the R-E-S-P-E-C-T she deserves!! She is worthy of both local (Elgin Heritage Commission 2020) and National Historic Landmark status (Landmarks Illinois 2008-09). She is unique in Illinois and the whole USA for her authenticity, beauty, and history.

## *Do we want to demolish her?*

Thankfully, she has been given a reprieve from the wrecking ball... for at least six months. Her owner has promised to sincerely explore an adaptive reuse that could extend her life another 100-plus years. We can let someone else deal with her awkward teenage years!

NENA is grateful to the whole community which came together to support DC Cook:

- NENA neighbors who took time to attend the info meeting in October 2019 and send emails to City of Elgin officials

- Current and former Elgin residents, including DC Cook descendants, who voiced their love and concern for the building
  - Public officials who listened at the NENA, City Council, and Heritage Commission meetings and who read our emails and letters
  - Christen Sundquist and the Elgin Heritage Commission for their combined hundreds of hours of work and unanimous vote to recommend landmark status
  - City Council members who voted in favor of local landmark status: Baldemar Lopez, Corey Dixon, Carol Rauschenberger and John Steffen
  - Landmarks Illinois for their guidance and support
  - NENA's Property Development Work Group which spent countless hours meeting and planning with each other, officials, experts, developers, and DC Cook (5 out of 6 developers contacted expressed interest, 1 invested significant time and money in plans but withdrew one week before the final council meeting, 1 remains interested in part of the property)
- and, importantly,
- DC Cook CEO, Cris Doornbos, and other employees who have given the building several reprieves, and who have committed to finding an adaptive reuse.

If you would like to be added to the DC Cook supporters email list, send your request to [info@nenaofelgin.org](mailto:info@nenaofelgin.org)

DC Cook would like to join her Elgin brethren who are respected, protected, and recognized nationally: the Elgin Tower Building, Old Main at Elgin Academy, and the First Universalist Church.

*Here's to the next 100 years of DC Cook!*

## ARTS & NATURE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!

A butterfly with a six-foot wingspan landed in NENA's Butterfly Garden! He was properly welcomed by Elgin Mayor David Kaptain and NENA neighbors at the NENA Butterfly Garden Arts and Nature Celebration. NENA resident and renowned lepidoptera (aka butterflies and moths) expert, Dr. Doug Taron\*, shared that the NENA neighborhood is a wonderful place for butterflies and fireflies! He has documented 30 lepidoptera species in his yard.

His ADVICE:

- Get started with a butterfly and firefly friendly garden NOW!
- Keep it simple--more of one plant is better than a few of many plants
- #1 recommended plant is PURPLE CONEFLOWER (*Echinacea purpurea*)
- Recommended annuals (nectar for whole summer):  
*Verbena bonariensis* and asters
- Leave some leaves and plant stalks this fall and winter
  - Pollinators overwinter in plant stalks and leaf litter
  - Leaf litter is key for the food web that feeds fireflies

You can see all of these tips in practice at the NENA Butterfly Garden. Stop by to see nature in action!

NENA also recommends:

- No pesticides or herbicides! Make sure that your plants have not been treated with neonicotinoids, RoundUp, or Dicamba
- Plant native plants--especially milkweed (*Asclepias spp*) and oak trees
- In summer, use motion activated lights or yellow bulbs
- Join us whenever you can on Saturday mornings anytime between 8-11 a.m.

See if you can find the wagon wheels and springs that the butterfly's creator, artist BLAIR MOTL, incorporated into his creation. Blair donated the Rusty-Tipped butterfly and the beautiful entryway arch, which really give the garden a strong sense of place and value.

**THANK YOU BLAIR!**

The garden event also celebrated some of its past and present heroes. Thanks to the generosity of supporters, we have



Dr. Doug Taron opined that this lovely pollinator must be related to the *Siproeta epaphus*, commonly known as the Rusty-tipped Page

installed two bluestone benches in memory of Medina Gross and Judy Cheetham, two friends who enjoyed helping at this very garden. The benches are in a quiet spot together for all future friends to enjoy each others' company and the nature surrounding them.

Our event raised enough money to add WINTERLIGHTS to the garden thanks to State Senator Cristina Castro's generous sponsorship of \$500!

**THANK YOU SENATOR CASTRO!**

Also, donations from neighbors will help make this possible along with the purchase of much needed garden tools such as hoses, wheelbarrows, and shovels.

**THANKS EVERYONE!**

We are still raising money to dedicate a garden to Medina Gross. If you can contribute, please send a check to NENA at PO Box 1446, Elgin, 60121, and indicate that it is for Medina's garden.

The Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra provided lovely music that really completed our Event. Hopefully, more collaboration is in the future! *Summer concerts anyone?*

Upcoming events: Take an evening stroll to see the Garden's Winterlights! Join our Butterfly Garden Group--in any capacity--for planning, learning, and socializing. Email [info@nenaofelgin.org](mailto:info@nenaofelgin.org) if you're interested.

*\*Doug Taron PhD is the Curator of Biology and Vice President of Research and Conservation at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago.*

**VISIT US AT [WWW.NENAOFELGIN.ORG](http://WWW.NENAOFELGIN.ORG)**

# JOHN K. LANGUM & THE FOX PATH ASSOCIATION

## BIRTH OF A TRAIL

BY TOM ARMSTRONG

*"The Fox Path, a meadow-woods trail, will bring the beauty and solitude of nature to persons who walk or bike in the open space along the Fox River."*

Fox Path Association, 1970

Some cyclists call the 44 miles of the Fox River Trail system Chicagoland's best pedal. Trail users enjoy impressive scenery and attractions along its length. Today, most people associate development of the trail system with Phil Elfstrom and the Kane County Forest Preserve District. But did you know that the trail system got its start in Elgin? NENA resident, John K. Langum, and friends hatched an idea to build a nature trail between Elgin and Algonquin along an abandoned section of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway in 1969. The group formed the Fox Path Association in 1970 and received permission from the C&NW Railway to build the 10-mile long public trail. It was the Fox Path Association's success in recruiting hundreds of volunteers to build the trail and their plan to add a 5-mile long extension that caught the attention of the Kane County Forest Preserve District. The District adopted the project and completed the development of the Fox River Trail system as we know it today, in cooperation with park districts and municipalities along the route.

John K. Langum was an economist with national and international acclaim, a devoted environmentalist, and an active community leader. He was an economics lecturer and an instructor in banking at several universities. He became Vice-President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and



served as chairman of the board of a number of mutual fund corporations. He also served on the boards of a number of environmental advocacy organizations and was a founding member of the Friends of the Fox River. In addition, he served as chair of the Elgin Planning Commission for twenty-five years.

The next time you are enjoying the beauty of the Fox River and the Fox River Trail, remember to thank John K. Langum and the Fox Path Association for their vision.



## FOX RIVER TRAIL IMPROVEMENT

NENA residents continue to influence improvements along the Fox River Trail in Elgin. A few years ago, NENA residents approached the City of Elgin with an idea to reroute a section of the trail through Slade Avenue Park. The rerouted trail would allow cyclists and other trail users to bypass the parking lot area in the park and avoid potential mishaps with vehicular traffic. This year, the City of Elgin completed the project as a part of a larger resurfacing project of the roads and parking areas serving the Slade Avenue Water Plant. We hope you enjoy the new trail section. Thank you, City of Elgin.



## FACES OF NENA BY HEIKE SPAYNE

### ***Monica, tell us about yourself:***

Hello neighbors of NENA. My name is Monica Montoya. I am a homeowner in this wonderful community alongside my husband and our two rescue doggy daughters. I am honored to have recently been appointed a board member of NENA. I am a volunteer at the Elgin History Museum serving as Educational Programming Docent and Spanish Language Tour Guide. Whether you live in NENA or any other part of Elgin, I highly encourage you to visit the Elgin History Museum. It is important to take part in preserving the beautiful architectural history of Elgin while you get to know the history of the neighborhood and city you call home.

### ***How long have you lived in the Northeast Neighborhood?***

I moved to the Spring/Douglas Historic District three years ago from Downtown Chicago while also living part time in Uruguay. When I first arrived in this neighborhood to view home listings, I couldn't believe my eyes! Driving down Douglas Ave and passing by the historic DC Cook Building during Christmas holidays felt like I was driving through a movie set.

I've always envisioned living in an historic, artsy and multicultural community, where one could take part in its vibrant potential; where the thing that binds us is our vision to be kind and caring. Synchronicity played its part in moving to Elgin. Sometimes in life, our plan is only an intention while the Universe takes the lead to place you where you are meant to be. I have traveled to many parts of the country and the world. It is here, in NENA of Elgin, where my husband and I chose to live.

### ***What do you love about living in this neighborhood?***

I absolutely love the many opportunities available to take part in our community at NENA. I met many of my neighbors at the annual NENA yard sale which fundraises to support local youth programs. I love that many of our neighbors have lived in Elgin by choice and that many that decide to move out of

their current home, mostly make the move to another residence in the same neighborhood! I love that our neighbors volunteer for many of the programs and events held here. I love that NENA offers a free newsletter that allows our neighbors the opportunity to get to know one another and be part of something that creates what many of us long for: Community.

### ***Do you have a favorite NENA event or moment?***

I'm a city girl. I never learned much about gardening. I didn't know the difference between a weed and a wildflower.

I now actively volunteer at the NENA Butterfly Garden located on the NE corner of Douglas and Ann Street every Saturday morning from Spring thru Fall. The decision to participate allowed me to understand our important role in protecting the delicate balance of nature. I learned how the Milkweed plant was vital to the Monarch Butterflies' survival.

Watching the garden rise with splendor and strength while it nourished them in preparation for their arduous journey south, allowed me to realize that we too can be inspired by nature, to flourish in courage, to move forward with hope, especially during this pandemic. I look forward to having you join us next year, so you too can see the Butterflies soar with happiness in their endearing vitality!

### ***What is your favorite baseball team?***

I am a native of Los Angeles, CA and grew up going to Dodger Stadium. Chicago became a city dear to my heart since I had lived there for many years and can't deny the Cubs became my adopted baseball team. My most memorable experience was sitting in the bleachers near the old-school scoreboard with all my new Chicago friends. My favorite game I attended was when the Dodgers came to play against the Cubs at Wrigley Stadium and we saw Tommy Lasorda, the legendary manager of the Dodgers, sitting several feet away from us!



# MUSIC IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

BY PATTY HARKIN

*“Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,  
To soften rocks, or bend the knotted oak.”*



For many NENA neighbors, the hardest aspect of pandemic loneliness, fear and anxiety has been the absence of live music. BUT... This summer, through a remarkable partnership with the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Music on the Fox, the Gail Borden Public Library District, and the Elgin Symphony League, NENA helped to organize, sponsor and host a series of concerts that brought the healing power of music to the Northeast Neighborhood.

NENA neighbor Sara Sitzer (Elgin Symphony Orchestra cellist and Co-Director of Chamber Music on the Fox) arranged a series of 17 online miniconcerts in which members of the ESO played live on Facebook from their own homes. These 30 minute concerts provided an informal visit with musicians we usually only see onstage at the Hemmens. They spoke informally about their instruments and explained why



they had chosen the music they were about to play. We got to see what their practice rooms look like and even say hello to their pets. The concerts captured more than 16,000 views and more than 350 individual donors contributed online to the artists whose income declined when coronavirus hit. Perhaps more important, though, was that these musicians had a chance to do what they love to do while serving our community.

In July, ESO Board member and NENA neighbor Martin Nobs, along with ESO's Chief Executive Officer Erik Malmquist, arranged two free outdoor concerts in the NENA Neighborhood. On July 28, Scott Metlicka (ESO flute and Northern Illinois University faculty member), Erik Andrusyak (ESO oboe) and Sara Sitzer played in the garden of Scott's Brook Street home. A few days later, Scott and Sharon Jones

(ESO French horn) played in the side yard of the house on Douglas Avenue that Jean and Paul Bednar recently rehabbed. Neighbors walking their dogs stopped to listen, no one was deterred by a sudden shower and the audience also got to look through the lighted windows at the Mayor's Award-winning restoration.

On July 30, Sara and Scott offered Gailvinia, Elgin's own Ravinia, at Gail Borden Library's main branch. Patrons brought their own chairs and refreshments and sat socially distanced on the Library lawn. Entitled "The Jet Whistle," the concert focused on travel, as flute and cello transported the audience around the world with music. Metra Rail contributed several long, loud whistles.

The Elgin Symphony Orchestra also offered online programs from both the ESO Facebook page and its website. As Maestro Andrew Grams tuned in to chat with various sections of the orchestra, we learned how the artists had spent the quarantine, what they practiced, what they listened to (Mozart's Requiem, blues and 80's rock) and how they were coping. (How does a cellist home-school three kids under 10? "With great difficulty," says Matthew Agnew.) Musicologist and composer, Jim Kendros, offered several informative Listeners' Club presentations online through the ESO website, and Concertmaster Isabella Lippi delivered a breathtaking solo violin concert, with Gershwin's *Summertime* as its finale.

Cellist Yo Yo Ma writes:

**“you can't touch, you can't hug, you can't shake hands. But . . . music[s] sound moves air molecules. So when air floats across your skin and touches the hairs of your skin, that's touch. That's the closest thing to someone actually touching you.”**

More events are scheduled for the autumn by both Chamber Music on the Fox and the Elgin Symphony Orchestra. Visit their websites:

[www.elginsymphony.org](http://www.elginsymphony.org)

[www.chambermusiconthefox.org](http://www.chambermusiconthefox.org)

**JOIN NENA ONLINE AT [WWW.NENAOFELGIN.ORG](http://WWW.NENAOFELGIN.ORG)**

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER *Continued...*

ROPE camp is one of our many annual summer programs where ROPE Officers take selected kids from their respective neighborhoods to a 3 day camp paid by the Police Department. Building positive police relationships with these kids has no price tag. Those that have participated will remember it forever. NENA was generous to sponsor our neighborhood kids to attend again this year.

Special thanks go to so many community partnerships that I worked with. Know that I couldn't do it without you: Northeast Neighborhood Association/NENA, Salvation Army Elgin Corps, Gail Borden Library, McKinley Elementary School, Senior Services, Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association, Women of the Moose, U-46 staff and many more. Having the support of my Police Department and all the different work units was part of the well-oiled machine as well: Community Relations/Crime Prevention, Building Maintenance, 311, and all our patrol and special division officers who we work closely with. My supervisors never said no to helping with a neighborhood need. I received continued support from many neighbors that wanted to give back. They

donated their time, money, toys, clothing, supplies, ideas and hearts. Thank you!

I will have the same phone number so please stay in touch. For all area concerns, direct your inquiries to our new NENA Resident Officer Edwin Alva at (224) 523-4438.

In a time like today, I wish you and your families only the best going forward. It has been my absolute pleasure serving you.



*Crime prevention can be improved one day at a time, so help us make our neighborhood safer.*

## NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER & MEMBERSHIP FORM

PO Box 1446  
Elgin, IL 60121  
Email: [info@nenaofelgin.org](mailto:info@nenaofelgin.org)  
Web: [www.nenaofelgin.org](http://www.nenaofelgin.org)



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in:      \_\_\_ Holiday Event      \_\_\_ Newsletter  
 \_\_\_ Fundraising      \_\_\_ Neighborhood Safety      \_\_\_ Garage Sale  
 \_\_\_ Butterfly Garden      \_\_\_ 4th of July Parade      \_\_\_ Neighborhood Beautification  
 \_\_\_ Special Events      \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Memberships: \$20 Household or Business / \$10 Senior Citizens Household  
 Make check to NENA & mail to the PO box above. Thanks and welcome to NENA!**

General membership in NENA is free to anyone who lives or works in the neighborhood. Paid household or business memberships gives everyone over the age of 18 in that household or business the right to vote for directors and other issues at the annual membership meeting. Membership also helps cover the cost of our activities.