

WEST MIDWOOD NEWS

Special Viral Edition



Volume 1

Number 2

April 1, 2020

To Forsythia

The forsythia in my backyard has no fear.
She reaches out to the daffodils, oh so near.
Her leafy fingers softly stroke a visiting cat.
It doesn't get sick. How about that!
Her delicate breath is carried by a gentle breeze.
It doesn't make the periwinkles sneeze.
Oh, forsythia, like the sun so yellow,
you make me feel so calm and mellow!

— Laura Givner



President's Message

Eric Goldberg

Wow. One minute we are shaking hands, hugging and kissing at the WM Progressive Dinner, and the next we can't even pass each other on the sidewalk without a suspicious thought of "is he sick?" or "am I too close?" Wow again!

One silver lining in this madness, one way to keep from going bonkers with no sports, no outings, no religious gatherings and no socializing are these Viral Editions of the West Midwood News. We've also seen and heard about so many individuals and businesses stepping up in this time of need—supporting each other, our first responders, medical care professionals and others. Perhaps some of us are enjoying more time at home, more time on little projects around the house, more time with our families and even home-schooling our children (and in turn being home-schooled ourselves by their lessons).

I did a science lesson with my children recently, and we got to discussing evolution and natural selection as it applies to viruses. We were puzzled by the question: If the point of all life is to succeed and reproduce, then why do viruses kill their hosts? We applied the same lesson to humans: Why do we make war if it leads to our death? Couldn't we evolve to lose this self-destructive behavior? These questions were actually posed in *Galapagos* by Kurt Vonnegut and have always fascinated me.

Ponder these nature-related themes as you enjoy the sights and sounds of springtime in West Midwood, which for many of us will be taken in through glass windows (and short walks outside). Things are a little quieter now, but by next spring — we hope — they may not be.

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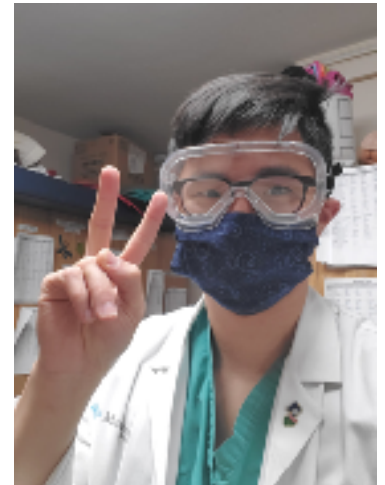
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West Midwood Quilters Use Their Skills To Help Out in the Covid 19 Crisis

West Midwood neighbors **Aggie Smith** and **Maddie Appel** are longtime members of the Brooklyn Quilters Guild. So when it became clear that there was a critical shortage of the masks that help keep our healthcare workers safe, it was only natural that they pick up their scissors and thread and get to work making masks. Along with other members, including Merrie Handfinger of nearby Rugby Road, they have been making reusable, washable cloth masks that have a pocket for inserting a filter, and delivering them to Aggie, who makes sure they get to the Brooklyn hospitals that need them, including Brooklyn Hospital, Maimonides Hospital.



Aggie says, "This is providing me some sanity, but I will be glad when there is no longer a need. The guild has been in touch with several other area hospitals, who have not yet needed additional masks, but they are happy to provide them if need arises. If you know of anyone who needs masks, please let Aggie know.



*Top: Some of the masks made by members of the Brooklyn Quilters Guild.
Bottom row: Cloe and Kyle in Neurosurgery at Maimonides Hospital, wearing masks that Aggie made.*

Mark Your Calendars Neighborhood Events West Midwood Yard Sale

~~April 26, 2020~~

Rain date: May 3, 2020

POSTPONED

*So now you have lots of time
on your hands to REALLY
clean out the garage or the
basement and be ready for*

West Midwood News Special Edition
Vol 1, No. 2 April 2, 2020
© 2020 West Midwood Community Association
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Copyeditors: Ellen Bilofsky, Kathy McDonald

Fill Out Your 2020 Census Form

It's important to be counted! Our legislative representation, and a lot of other important things depend on accurately counting how many people live in our area. It only takes a couple of minutes to fill out the form online. Now that we are all staying home, and in-person interviews are difficult or impossible, it's even more important to fill out the census online. It should take you less than ten minutes to answer the questions. Go to <https://2020census.gov/>

According to the map linked below, only about 20-35% of households in our general area have responded thus far.

<https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/>

How are you doing, West Midwood? What are you doing, West Midwood?

Send us your drawings, pictures, doodles, ideas, stories or poems. We'll publish this every week or so, so that we can stay a bit more connected. Let us know about new babies, great recipes you've tried, good video games, bad jokes, naughty puppies, or goldfish that jumped out of their bowl — whatever is happening at your house while we are waiting out this awful pandemic.

The Mad Gardener *by Robert Brennan*

While New Yorkers huddle indoors, fine magnolias are blooming...

Of all the fine magnolias, my personal favorite is 'Pristine.' The blossoms always point upward, like *Denudata*, but with twice as many petals, on a much smaller tree.



This small young tree, near the corner of Rugby and DeKoven, is a showstopper this spring.

Deeper wine reds, such as *Lilla Flora Nigra*, are beginning to open.



Magnolia stellata rubra is not a rare tree. . . but the variety that the Gossler Family nursery found in the garden of the late Jane Platt in Portland, has a special elegance and delicacy.



These are only the earliest, with many other fine magnolias soon to bloom. Nature can be a comfort and joy, in these somewhat despairing and grim times.

Let us know what's happening
in your garden!

Take some pictures and
share them here with your neighbors.

Send them to
editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com



West Midwood Cooks (and Bakes!) *by Allidah Muller*

Mushroom Bourguignon - serves 4

This week's recipe column is a tribute to Deb Perelman of Smitten Kitchen fame. Her Mushroom Bourguignon recipe (a vegetarian riff of Julia Child's classic beef version) claims that it is a weeknight dinner, but I rarely have time on a weeknight to make it. If you double the recipe (and I always do), you must brown the mushrooms in batches which definitely takes time but is definitely worth it. And even if you don't double the recipe, browning the mushrooms in batches builds up a nice layer of umami-rich goodness to deglaze later.

2 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp butter, softened
2 lbs portobello or cremini mushrooms, sliced ¼-inch thick
1 cup pearl onions (thawed if frozen - and it is SO worth it to buy the frozen ones)
½ carrot, finely diced
1 small yellow onion, finely diced
1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup full-bodied red wine
2 Tbsp tomato paste
2 cups beef or vegetable broth (beef broth is traditional, but use vegetable to make it vegetarian; the dish works with either)
1½ Tbsp all-purpose flour
Egg noodles, for serving (buttered potatoes, farro, or polenta work well, too)
Sour cream and chopped fresh chives for garnish (optional, but the sour cream is a nice touch)

1. Heat 1 Tbsp of the olive oil and 1 Tbsp of the butter in a large Dutch oven or heavy saucepan over high heat. Sear the mushrooms and pearl onions until they begin to take on a little color, but the mushrooms do not yet release any liquid, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove them from the pan and set aside. Lower the flame to medium and add the second Tbsp of olive oil. Toss the carrot, diced onion, thyme, and a few good pinches of salt, and several grinds of black pepper into the pan and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are slightly browned. Add the garlic and cook for just 1 more minute.

2. Add the wine to the pot, scraping any stuck bits off the bottom, then turn the heat all the way up and reduce it by half. Stir in the tomato paste and the broth. Add back the mushrooms and pearl onions with any juices that have collected and bring to a boil. Then decrease the heat so the mixture simmers for 20 minutes, or until the mushrooms are very tender.

3. Thoroughly combine the remaining Tbsp of butter and the flour with a fork; stir it into the stew. Lower the heat

and simmer for 10 more minutes. If the sauce is too thin, boil it down to reduce to the right consistency. Season to taste.

4. To serve, spoon the stew over a bowl of egg noodles (or buttered potatoes, farro or polenta), dollop with sour cream, and sprinkle with chives and/or parsley.

Salted Chocolate Chunk Cookies - yields 18 to 24

These cookies are SO good and SO easy. You do not have to refrigerate the dough, you can add as much (or as little) salt on top as you want, and the dough freezes well. Every time I bring these to a party, people rave over them.

½ cup (4 oz.) unsalted butter at room temp
2 Tbsp granulated sugar
2 Tbsp turbinado sugar (aka Sugar in the Raw; you can use more brown or white if you don't have this, but the subtle crunch it adds is delightful)
¾ cup plus 2 Tbsp packed light OR dark brown sugar
1 large egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
¾ tsp baking soda

Heaped ¼ tsp (or technically ¼ + ⅛ tsp) fine sea or table salt
1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour

½ lb semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate roughly cut into ½-inch chunks with a serrated knife

Flaky sea salt (aka Maldon), to finish

Heat oven to 360°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicon baking mat.

In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugars together with an electric mixer until very light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add egg and vanilla, beating until incorporated, and scraping down the bowl as needed. Beat in salt (fine sea or table salt) and baking soda until combined, then the flour on a low speed until just mixed. The dough will look crumbly at this point. With a spatula, fold/stir in the chocolate chunks.

Scoop cookies into 1½ Tbsp mounds (I used a #40 scoop), spacing them apart on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle each with a few (or more) flakes of sea salt. Bake for 11 to 12 minutes, until golden on the outside but still very gooey and soft inside. Out of the oven, let rest on the baking sheet out of the oven for 5 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.

A note from Deb: Extra dough can be formed into scoops and frozen on a sheet until solid, then transferred to a freezer bag. I've baked these right from the freezer; they need, at most, 1 minute more baking time. You could also form them into a 2-inch log, freeze it, and slice and bake the cookies off as desired. The only difference I've noted between the cookies baked right away and those baked a day or more later is that the older cookie dough is less puffy when baked.



Brooklyn Sports

By Argyle Art Rhine

Ten Sports Books for a Rainy Afternoon

(or perhaps there is another reason one might have to stay indoors)

The Boys of Summer, by Roger Kahn: The Brooklyn Dodgers in the early '50's; reason to celebrate, reason to mourn, unforgettable

The Glory of Their Times, by Lawrence Ritter: The great heroes from the early 20th century tell their stories to Ritter who, like Alan Lomax with folk/blues musicians, searched the country to hear their tales. Oh, indeed there is glory here, but the enduring feeling is elegiac to me.

I Never Had it Made, by Jackie Robinson: There are several notable books about Robinson, especially by Arthur Mann and Jules Tygiel, but this autobiography (not his only one) deserves top billing. Spike Lee has written a 160-page screenplay based on this book, but so far no film.

Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, by Thomas Hauser: Whoa, it's tough to choose just one Ali book, but this is the greatest.

Ball Four, by Jim Bouton: By 2020, we have learned what fallible humans these baseball stars be, but 50 years ago, Bouton's revelation of what really went on in the clubhouse tore the cover off the ball. Commissioner

Bowie Kuhn, straight from *The Crucible*, tried to get Bouton to recant!

Billy Phelan's Greatest Game, by William Kennedy: Kennedy is famous for *Ironweed* which was preceded by this masterpiece, introducing his obsession with Albany's seedy politics, and anyway, I want to recommend at least one book which you've never heard of.

The Last Good Season, by Michael Shapiro: The Brooklyn Dodgers in 1956, the year before they broke our hearts. Shapiro argues that mega-villain Walter O'Malley did everything in his power to stay in Brooklyn, but power-broker Robert Moses evicted him (and us).

Bowlaway, by Elizabeth McCracken: A list of best sports books without one on bowling is not a complete list in my book. And McCracken (no relation to *Kingpin's* arch-villain Big Ed McCracken) is a truly great writer, as she shows again in this novel, which just came out last year.

The Amazing Mets, by Jerry Mitchell: Amazing is right. Gotta have at least one book about the early Mets; this one recounts their first two years. I have no trouble if you choose Jimmy Breslin's **Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?**, which deals with 1962 only (and has a better title).

Rabbit, Run, by John Updike: "Rabbit" Angstrom is a former high-school basketball player who graduates to golf and ennui. One of the great novels of all time by one of our great writers; also a must read is Updike's short story, "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu," about Ted Williams' last game.

The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop., by Robert Coover: Another great American writer captures a young man's fascination with fantasy baseball (before the internet) and fantasy life.

Okay, okay, so I threw an extra pitch! Whaddaya gonna do? Penalize me 15 yards? My difficulty is that I don't want to stop, What about Malamud, Halberstam, OMG, just starting with "A," we have Aaron, Angell, Ashe! So, I guess we go to extra innings next issue.

Keep Strong! Wash your hands!



Utah in October 2019 - Arches and Bryce National Parks. If you haven't been there, put it on your post-virus travel list.

These photos are hanging in Coffee 7.

Jeff Ewing

How to Use Your Time at Home

There are lots of suggestions, lists, websites making the rounds with great ideas for how to stay connected, engaged, entertained or simply distracted. There's almost too much information! So in each issue of the *Special Viral Edition of West Midwood News*, we'll suggest just a few of them. If you have good additions to these, let us know, and we'll include them in the next issue.

Go To A Museum

**Gerhardt Richter at
The Met**

[https://www.metmuseum.org/primer/
gerhard-richter#intro-why-paint](https://www.metmuseum.org/primer/gerhard-richter#intro-why-paint)

Attend a Concert

[https://www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/kc/
article/kmc-online-encores/?
utm_source=wordfly&utm_medium=email&
utm_campaign=EMAIL-
KMCUpdatefromKate-3%02F27%02F20&utm
_content=version_A&sourceNumber=45038](https://www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/kc/article/kmc-online-encores/?utm_source=wordfly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EMAIL-KMCUpdatefromKate-3%02F27%02F20&utm_content=version_A&sourceNumber=45038)

See a Dance Performance

Alvin Ailey — Resurrection
[https://m.youtube.com/watch?
v=RrPJ4kt3a64](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=RrPJ4kt3a64)

See a Play

[https://www.timeout.com/london/news/the-
national-theatre-is-going-to-stream-a-free-play-
every-thursday-night-032620?
fbclid=IwAR3Buj6ny2X4rJh3xrP6AKLL14JquB
qfHWy6092EKV6_G43xeym-rzvOZXg](https://www.timeout.com/london/news/the-national-theatre-is-going-to-stream-a-free-play-every-thursday-night-032620?fbclid=IwAR3Buj6ny2X4rJh3xrP6AKLL14JquBqfHWy6092EKV6_G43xeym-rzvOZXg)

Attend A Lecture

**There are lots of courses you can sit in on
for free. Here are the ones from Yale:**

<https://oyc.yale.edu/>

Receive a Poem A Day

The Academy of American Poets will send you
an email every day with a poem.

Or subscribe to Poem-a-Day Podcast

poets.org

Learn to Doodle

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the
Performing Arts — Lunch Doodles
with Mo Willems! (free video series)**

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/>

Take a Nature Walk

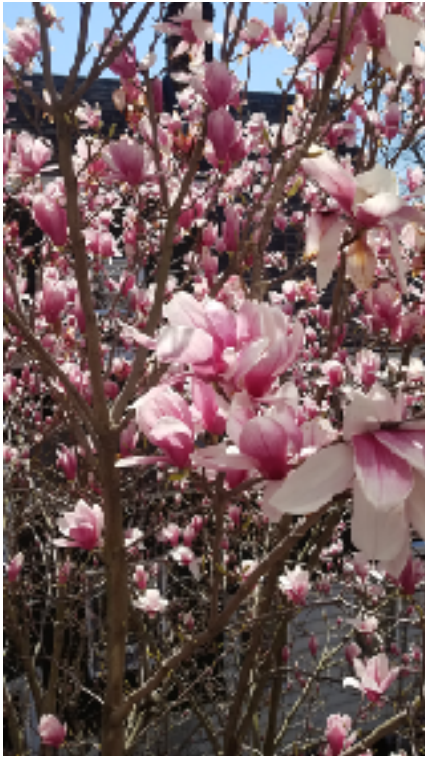
Nature Tours — Daily!

[https://go.nathab.com/index.php/email/
emailWebview?utm_source=webinar-
invite&utm_medium=email&utm_content=mar29dai
lydose&utm_campaign=enews2020onha_mar29_daily
dose](https://go.nathab.com/index.php/email/emailWebview?utm_source=webinar-invite&utm_medium=email&utm_content=mar29dailydose&utm_campaign=enews2020onha_mar29_dailydose)

Have an idea for this newsletter? Let us know! Email us at Editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com

What's Happening in Your Back Yard?

Arthur Rhine sent us these pictures of spring flowers in his yard. Clockwise from left: Magnolia blossoms, "Daffy Dills", Quince blossoms, and "Hiya, Cynthia," *Photos by A. Rhine*



Peter Pan continued his exploration of **Tori, David** and **Sarah Rosen's** backyard. This week he was spotted climbing around in the forsythia. Where will he go next?



Allidah Muller, Nate Rogers and their nearly-three year old son **Caleb** Have been watching the birds at their bird feeder on Argyle Road. They've seen lots of cardinals, several blue jays, and a woodpecker over the last week. And hopefully you can tell there is a dove eating on the ground. Allidah took this picture from Caleb's window, because every time she opened the back door to get a clearer shot, the birds scattered!



What do you see in your yard? Send your pictures, poems, essays and descriptions to editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com and we'll publish them in future issues.

Sous Vide Cooking

By Lance Tukell

Many of you have eaten delicious steaks, ribs, and roasts either in fine restaurants or on cruises (when those things were allowed), not knowing that they were prepared using the sous-vide style of cooking. Did you really think that an army of chefs were preparing food for hundreds of people as they order it from a menu?

Here is a quote from Anova, a manufacturer of sous-vide cooking devices: “Sous vide, which means “under vacuum” in French, refers to the process of vacuum-sealing food in a bag, then cooking it to a very precise temperature in a water bath. This technique produces results that are impossible to achieve through any other cooking method. ... The technique recently became popular for home cooks with the availability of affordable and easy-to-use sous vide precision cooking equipment like the Anova Precision® Cooker.”

I have been using this method for years, creating ribs and roasts that are better than anything

you could find at a restaurant – and for a fraction of the price.

I have found the advantages of sous vide cooking to be:

1. Cook hard-to-get-right meats to perfection (especially ribs and roasts). Ribs will fall off the bone, and roasts will be moist. All will be bursting with flavor because it's sealed. This is not crock-pot cooking.
2. Avoid the hours of “low and slow” grilling, which is labor-intensive and not guaranteed.
3. Cook large quantities that you can freeze in the vacuum bag, ready for high-end entertaining, or everyday dining.
4. Clean and simple to use. Prepare meat in a dry rub, vacuum pack, immerse in the hot water bath for several hours according to the recipe, eat or freeze.

I've created a little graphic below for you to get the idea. Recipes are available at <https://recipes.anovaculinary.com/>



Vacuum Pack the Food

Prepare meats with a dry rub according to recipe, and use a FoodSaver to seal it in a vacuum bag, or use a large Ziplock freezer bag if you don't have a



The perfect finish.

After cooking to the perfect level of doneness with Anova Precision® Cooker, sear your protein in a cast-iron pan or on the grill for a perfectly crispy exterior.



Add your food in a sealed bag.

Submerge the bag in the water and clip the bag to the side of your pot.



Cook with the manual controls or the app.

Set the time and temperature in the Anova App or with the Anova Precision® Cooker manual interface.



Or – Freeze it for Later

Frozen cooked sous vide will keep for months. Just defrost, dry it out a bit, and finish on grill or broiler.

I took a photo of cooked, sealed ribs I made a while back.

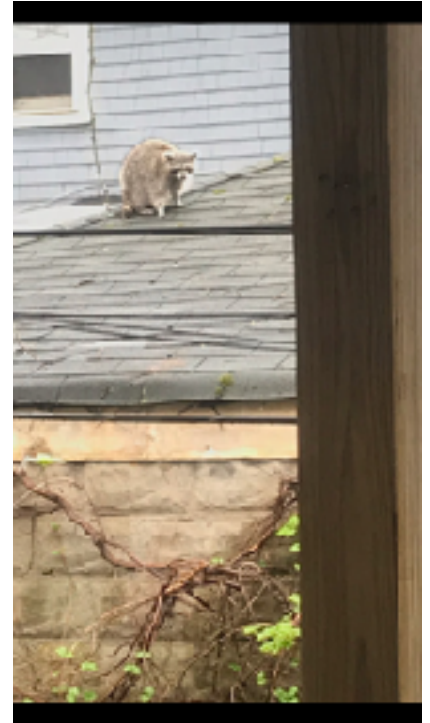
Neighborhood News — What's Happening in Your Life?



Social Distancing and Socializing

Several West Midwood neighbors gathered apart last week, to check in on each other and catch up, while keeping a safe distance from each other.

This raccoon doesn't seem to have gotten the social distancing memo! He was spotted by **Susan Lehrer** and **Andrew Chertoff** cavorting around on DeKoven place. After a (very short) online discussion, he was unanimously named Shloimi. (Except we don't really know whether he is a he or a she, and what his actual Raccoon name might be.



Sarah Rosen, who grew up on Argyle Road and now lives in northern England, reports that across the country, children are putting rainbows in their windows as signs of hope in this time of the coronavirus pandemic, so that other children will see them when they go out for their once-a-day walk in the fresh air. Here are some pictures of those rainbows in the windows of English Houses.



Photos by Sarah Rosen



Photos by Polly Corbishly

Who You Gonna Call?

When you need help, it's important to call the right number. Here's a list of useful phone numbers with an explanation of when to call which number. It's not a bad idea to cut out this list and stick in on your refrigerator or by your phone.

911— The number to call for emergencies, such as fire, medical emergencies, accidents of any type, a crime in progress, violent behavior, or a person in trouble. Remember to stay on the line until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up. The operator will also ask you your location, so note the nearest house number and street address.

311—Call this number for non-emergencies such as noise complaints, animal control, air quality, blocked driveway, dangerous tree situation, or to find out where to get other information. For a complete list, see www.nyc.gov/311.

If you're unsure, call 911. The operator will either take your information or redirect you to 311. Remember to get a complaint number and write it down.

Our Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs):

P.O. Konstantin Rakmonov, **929-294-5260** Email is: konstantin.rakhmanov@nypd.org

P.O. David Yegros, **929-284-0625** Email is: david.yegros@nypd.org

The NCOs are usually on duty Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon to 6:30 p.m. (Sometimes they are unavailable because they have been pulled for training or special duty.) Former West Midwood president Linda Howell reports that she relies on the NCOs for quality-of-life issues, especially situations "where I do not have complete details, only secondhand reports of events. I feel comfortable giving them as much information as I can and asking them to check into the potential problem." Examples include gatherings at the dead ends, abandoned cars, chronic parking violations, and patterns of package theft from porches. You can also contact them if you feel a 911 or 311 call was not handled correctly. Note that while they will make every effort to assist, they may also be handling other more time-critical issues.

Community Board 14 (CB14), 718-859-6357

This office and its staff are a valuable resource that can be contacted for a myriad of situations. Call them to find out the status of a 311 complaint, why your recycling wasn't picked up, how you can get a tree planted in front of your home or a dead one removed, or what's going on with construction (or lack of it) at a specific location. They can also help you get in touch with the local representative for a specific city agency. This is by no means a complete list. If you're unsure of how to handle an issue, call them and ask. They are there to help.

Coronavirus Symptoms

Here are the CDC recommendations for what to do if you are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Call your doctor first, who will advise you as to what to do next. Most cases are mild, and can be treated at home. Do not go into your doctor's office without calling first, so that they can assure you get appropriate care without putting yourself or others at risk. If your symptoms are severe or you have difficulty breathing, call 911.

Artist's Notebook
Spring Flowers by Florence Manglani



Did You Know?
West Midwood Trivia
By Joe Enright

Who was Newkirk Ave named after?

Answer: There was a farmer named Newkirk up where Newkirk Ave begins at what is now Brooklyn Avenue. His little lane became much used when Vanderveer Park was developed and got called Newkirk Ave. But west of Ocean Ave, Newkirk was called White Street for most of the 19th Century after a big property owner in Parkville named John White who didn't even live there for most of his life. But eventually Newkirk became predominant maybe because folks liked a simple Dutch farmer's name rather than a big Anglo land-owner's name?

How come south of Avenue H, Westminster Rd is E 12th, Argyle is E 13th, Rugby is E 14th???

Answer: Political clout. West Midwood was developed by Germania Real Estate & Improvement Co. Its President was Henry Meyer. Henry ran for Mayor of Brooklyn in the years before the "Mistake of '98" when the outer boroughs were joined to Manhattan to form the City of NY. Henry lived on Newkirk Ave, west of Ocean Ave. He was wired into the political soul of Brooklyn. He got the Aldermen to change the names of the streets here. But he did not develop the area south of Ave H. That was Oak Crest. It was developed in a hodge-podge fashion by OUT-OF-TOWN CAPITALISTS (long story - see my monograph at <https://argyleheights.blogspot.com/2016/03/from-t.html>)

Was Avenue H once called Hiawatha Road?

Answer: YES! For about 15 years until some assholes in other neighborhoods demanded an end to people calling streets by different names. I have much research on this I have yet to publish. Make me an offer!



What Is West Midwood Online?

Want to ask folks in the neighborhood whether they have any recommendations for a plumber or roofer or such? Or maybe what local eateries or merchants they like? Perhaps you'd like to be in the know about issues affecting our area? Then join the West Midwood Online email discussion group, aka the listserv.

Send an email to joe@enright.com with your street address, name, and the email address that you want to use to post and receive messages. He will add you to the group and send you the simple instructions. There are presently over 200 email subscribers representing about 125 households.

To join you must be a permanent resident of West Midwood and agree not to post messages of a religious, political, or spam nature. Insulting or crude language can also lead to revocation of the ability to post. Finally, new and existing members can also request a daily recap

For NYC Updates on Coronavirus

Social media and your best friend's brother-in-law who knows an epidemiologist are probably not the best sources of reliable information. Try these instead:

- Text COVID to 692-692 for alerts sent to your phone
- The CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- The NYC Department of Health: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

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