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Noyes Children's Library

"Once you find a place that's perfect for your special child, it's worth fighting for."

by Jan Jablonski

About 25 years ago, my four-year-old son and I discovered the Noyes Children's Library. We did not live in Kensington yet, but quickly became regular visitors.

The librarians at Noyes welcomed Matthew, nurtured his interests, and provided a safe haven. In a child's world, where books are magic and children's librarians are magicians, Noyes librarian Irene Briggs was our Dumbledore. Librarians Joan Nelson, Saroj Ghoting, and Elizabeth Thornton—McGonagalls all.

On a twelve-member board in the early 90s, three of us had children with seizures, and we didn't know each other at all beforehand. Statistically improbable indeed, except that Noyes is a magnet for children and families who need a safe haven. Once you find a place that's perfect for your special child, it's worth fighting for.

But Noyes is perfect for typical children, too, which is how I ended up going there with 10 years of classes of four-year-olds from the Outdoor Nursery School. We went for story time with the librarian, and stayed to decorate the exterior with cornstalks, mums, and a scarecrow in the fall, or to plant annuals in the spring, as well as to play games and have snacks on the grounds of the Warner Mansion. Each child chose and checked out a book during the visit, and for many this was when they got their first library card.

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- Noyes Children's Library—Continued

My trips to Noyes with my own children were how we got to know Kensington. We would park at Noyes and have our relaxed visit to the library, running outside periodically to watch trains pass when my railroad-loving son heard their whistles. Then maybe we'd walk to a nearby store for snacks that we would eat in one of the parks.

We became regulars at Johnson's, Café Monet, and several Howard Avenue businesses. We crossed the tracks and went to Hudson Trail, and to that wonderful women's, children's, housewares store, Catch Can. When my second son came along ten years later, there were new eateries and businesses to explore. I wonder whether Kensingtonians know how much having the Noyes Library in its midst draws people to other parts of the town.

I volunteer for the Noyes Foundation because I want other children and families to have a chance to find the same comfort and happiness at Noyes that my sons had.



In an old Noyes scrapbook there is a letter from Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Gilbert Melville Grosvenor [editor of National Geographic Magazine] in which he wrote about still being able to feel the warmth of the Noyes Library's wood floors when he read a book.

My sons are part of a line of children, almost 125 years long, who have been introduced to books at the Noyes Library. I hope the line of children will extend for another 125 years, and that this historic building will soon be fully accessible to all.

I grew up in a small town in south Georgia, near Tallahassee, Florida, as did my parents. My husband is local and a proud graduate of Walter Johnson High School. Both of my parents were very involved in their community, but I think the passion for service was probably in my father, a family physician in sole practice who spent a lot of time, over decades, traveling to Atlanta to work with colleagues and legislators to make changes that he felt were important to his profession.

The early years when I got involved with Noyes coincided with the publication of a book by Children's Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman. In the book, *The Measure of Our Success*, Edelman talks about people who would question why she worked on behalf of children other than her own. She said that she took her children along and got them involved in things related to her work. I tried it, and both of my sons have been happy Noyes volunteers.

Both began performing Penny Theater when they were in early elementary school. My older son still does photography, graphic design, and other work for the Noyes Foundation, and until my younger son went off to college, he took care of most of the Foundation's computer and Internet needs. They both were able to develop and pursue what interested them.

As I have said many times, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work on behalf of Noyes. I have made lifetime friends. One of them, the late Barbara Hutchinson, was a Kensington resident and early childhood educator of uncommon ability. This led me eventually to work at the Outdoor Nursery School, which I loved. My children grew up doing meaningful volunteer work.

And the Noyes Library is carpeted with children, thriving.



Jan Jablonski (center) and members of the Noyes Children's Library Foundation Board at a fundraising event.

Congratulations to Jan Jablonski Winner of the 2016 Individual Montgomery Serves Awards

Jan Jablonski, co-president of the Noyes Foundation, was named individual Montgomery Serves Award winner for her inspiring dedication to Noyes Library and its early literacy mission. The Montgomery Serves awards recognize those who have given extraordinary community service or volunteerism.

Jan finds it beyond comprehension "to have been nominated and selected in a county where so many do so much," but many in the community know how well-deserved this recognition is.

Jan Jablonski has long advocated on behalf of libraries, early childhood literacy, and special needs children. She co-founded the Noyes Children's Library Foundation in 1991 and was a distinguished early childhood educator at the Outdoor Nursery School until 2012.

Throughout the 1990's, Jan led a group of county residents in raising private funds to help pay for the library's operating costs and initiated a public-private partnership with the Montgomery County Council.

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Congratulations to Jan Jablonski—Continued

During a County budget crisis in 2010, she reignited the Foundation, recruited a new generation of volunteers, and raised the necessary funds from private donors to keep Noyes open. During Jan's leadership, the Foundation has raised over \$750,000 to support Noyes' operating budget, and to supplement the County's early literacy programming.

In 2010, when the Noyes Library became required to comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Jan began thinking outside of the box. She understood that the requirement to make Noyes accessible to people with physical disabilities created an opportune moment to work with the County to expand the usable space within Noyes, while going beyond the minimum ADA standards and incorporating universal design principles to make the 123-year old library a model of true inclusion and accessibility.

In 2015, Jan spearheaded the official launch of the Foundation's Make More Noyes Campaign, which seeks to raise more than half the funds for this renovation. The number of hours that Jan has contributed is countless, all while coping with ALS.

In addition to the campaign, she continues to assist with the library's early literacy initiatives. Whether it is tapping into her years of experience as an early childhood educator to create engaging crafts for community events; helping develop unique "Penny Theater" shows that are part of the Noyes tradition; establishing a memorandum of understanding with County personnel; or writing grant proposals to secure funding, no task is too herculean or menial for Jan.

After experiencing symptoms of something vaguely amiss in 2010, Jan was diagnosed with ALS in the summer of 2011 and retired from teaching May 2012. Since losing her ability to walk in November 2013, Jan uses a custom power chair. Speaking has become difficult, but she writes beautifully and graciously offered her experiences and answered questions in her article.

At the Montgomery Serves award celebration held May 2nd at Imagination Stage, Jan concluded her remarks this way: "With a nod to a New York Times essay, my message is this: If you ever fall off a tall building in slow motion, which is sort of what ALS is like, don't give up. You can get a lot done on the way down, and the view is truly beautiful."

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For dates and news of more events, be sure to visit the Community Activities Calendar on the web site:
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Gary and Diana Ditto's Newsletter welcomes ideas and news items from community members. Many thanks to Jan Jablonski and the Noyes Children's Library Foundation. The editor is Antoinette Kranenburg of Kensington, assisted by Cherry Wunderlich.



The Noyes Children's Library has survived and thrived because of wide, deep community support and the support of visionary elected officials and their staffs. Noyes was there for my children largely because of the efforts of former Kensington mayor Jane Plank.

Since the 1990s, advocates have included former County Councilmembers Bruce Adams, Marilyn Praisner, Betty Ann Krahnke, Ike Leggett, former county executive Doug Duncan, and former MD state delegate and US Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

From more recently, Councilmember George Leventhal, Councilmembers Craig Rice and Roger Berliner, Mayor Pete Fosselman of Kensington, and the district 18 team: Delegates Al Carr, Jeff Waldstreicher, and Ana Sol Gutierrez, and Senator Richard Madaleno.

A special thank you too to Parker Hamilton, director of Montgomery County Public Libraries.

—Jan Jablonski

Learn more about Noyes Children's Library events, plans, and how to volunteer and donate at

www.noyeslibraryfoundation.org

The British Players present:

The New Old Time Music Hall

June 10-26, 2016,

Kensington Town Hall, 3710 Mitchell Street

An evening of cabaret-style entertainment bursting with music and laughter, accompanied by a live orchestra, and all kept moving along by Mr. Chairman!

This year we celebrate her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday with a new look and new acts, but the same infectious Music Hall spirit. A glorious tribute to Queen and country.

Performances are: 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday, & Saturday, June 10 through 25, and 2 p.m. Sunday, June 12, and Saturday, June 18.

For tickets call the Box Office at 240-447-9863 or buy them online at www.britishplayers.org.

Fourth of July Bike Parade

Polish up and decorate your bike, scooter, wagon, or stroller for the 20th Annual Bike Parade on Saturday, July 4th. All kids and the young at heart are invited to participate and line up by 9:45 a.m. at St. Paul Park. The Bike Parade starts at 10 a.m. and follows a Kensington Volunteer Fire Department truck through the streets of Kensington.





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4504 Puller Drive
 Kensington/Kens Estates
 SOLD - MAY 2016
 \$ 920,000



UNDER CONTRACT

3534 Raymoor Road
 Kensington/Rock Creek Hills
 List Price - \$ 925,000



UNDER CONTRACT

3604 Littledale Road
 Kensington/Rock Creek Hills
 List Price - \$ 879,000



UNDER CONTRACT

3603 Dundee Driveway
 Chevy Chase/N Ch Ch-Kenilworth
 List Price - \$ 775,000



4619 Rosedale Avenue
 Bethesda/Rosedale Park
 SOLD - APRIL 2016
 \$ 744,000



3902 Spruell Court
 Kensington/Rock Cr Palisades
 SOLD - MAY 2016
 \$ 429,000



WORKED WITH BUYER

606 Edmonston Drive
 Rockville/Burgundy Estates
 SOLD - APRIL 2016
 \$ 417,500



4104 Mitscher Court
 Kensington/Rock Cr Palisades
 SOLD - MAY 2016
 \$ 400,000

3333 University Blvd # 902
 Kensington/The Waterford
 FOR SALE - \$ 249,000



522 21st Street, NW # 502
 Washington/Foggy Bottom
 SOLD - MAY 2016
 \$ 200,000