

# The Corner Forum

for the 1200 and 1300 blocks of E, the 400 and 500 blocks of 13th,  
Duncan Place and Emerald Street NE

Issue #40  
Saturday, July 26, 2003  
37¢ + 2¢ D.C. sales tax  
<http://www.thecornerforum.org>

## We Have to Get to Know Their Story

*Orlando Bego was born and raised at 1308 Emerald St. NE, where he lived until about six months ago. On Thursday, he spoke with Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE, about his upcoming ordination, about the period in his life when he engaged in illegal activities, and about how we might start building bridges with youth in our community who are selling drugs.*

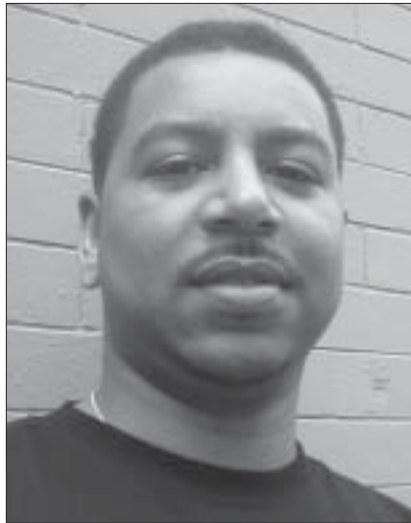
**The big thing in your life right now is gonna be in — what — two weeks?**

Yeah. A week and a half, on August 2nd.

**Can you tell people what's happening then?**

That's my ordination to the gospel ministry of Christ. It's the second step of a minister, following the licensing, and that's taking place August 2nd, at Upper Room Baptist Church.

**For people that don't know a lot, like me, you said it's the second step — what does that really mean? Licensing means that you're already a minister?**



**The Rev. Orlando Bego**

A licensed minister is one who has professed his calling and has done his initial sermon, proclaiming Christ as Lord. The step of ordination gives one the added responsibility of conducting marriages, funerals — more responsibility has been added to them in ministry.

**Does that mean that someone has to say that you're ready for it?**

Yes. There's something called a catechism, where you have to go and train under the ordinances of the Baptist doctrine — I am a Baptist. So there are 18 articles of the Baptists, and you have to go through training to familiarize yourself with that. After that, the ordination service itself: a council of other ordained ministers and pastors then have to vote

and agree that you have met the requirements to become an ordained minister.

**And they've already done that, or that's gonna happen?**

That happens August 2nd. The council meets August 2nd, from all over the area. They get together and they decide whether or not I'm qualified.

**And they do that based on what?**

They do that based upon my testimony, my statement of faith of how my life has been transformed. They do it based upon my academic studies — also on my spiritual studies.

**And you're gonna say that all on the 2nd?**

All of that takes place on August 2nd.

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## Arboretum Staying Open Late, Next Three Fridays

BY LIBO LIU, 500 BLOCK OF 14TH ST. NE

The U.S. National Arboretum, located just a mile up Bladensburg from our neighborhood, is no doubt one of the best secrets this great city has. When I moved to D.C. more than five years ago, I discovered by chance this vast piece of land filled with exotic plants and fragrant flowers, laced with winding trails and beautiful ponds.

I have been going back there ever since. Though many Washingtonians think of Rock Creek Park first when they think of natural places in the city, it is the Arboretum that offers the bio-diversities, the quiet atmosphere and the easy access that I look for.

The only problem is that the hours of operation are more restricted at the Arboretum.

I often see the disappointment written all over visitors' faces when security guards have to chase them off just before the regular 5 p.m. closing time. I also notice the regret felt by staff members such as Mary Ann Jarvis, program coordinator at the National Arboretum.

"It is summertime now. It would be nice if they could linger a little longer to enjoy the gardens and the walks," said Ms. Jarvis, who has been working at the Arboretum since she was 17, some 37 years ago.

Now the visitors can — at least on Fridays, and at least through mid-August.

For the first time ever, the National Arboretum has started an experimental schedule of operation this summer. Through Aug. 15, the Arboretum will be open until 7:30 p.m. every Friday — thanks to additional funding that is available this year, according to Thomas S. Elias, director of the National Arboretum.

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## Arboretum to Stay Open Fridays

(continued from page 1)

Explaining why the Arboretum has chosen to extend the hours on Fridays, Mr. Elias said the extended operation would allow commuters to spend a couple of pleasant hours enjoying nature here, rather than fighting the Friday afternoon traffic. "It is a good way to reduce stress accumulated at work," he said.

Depending on the funding situation, the Arboretum may run the extended hours again next year, and may consider extending operation hours on Saturday rather than on Friday, according to the officials here. A key determining factor is how visitors respond to the extended hours.

Mr. Elias said many people don't know about the new hours on Friday, partly because the Arboretum by law cannot advertise the change in a conventional and commercial way. He urges people to come out in the cooler time of the day, enjoying the daylilies at the Perennial Collection, the 900 kinds of herbs at the National Herb Garden and the dwarf pines at the Gotelli Collection. "You are also more likely to spot foxes and white-tail deer in the after-5 p.m. hours," said Mr. Elias, a botanist by profession.

"It is an urban oasis," added Ms. Jarvis, the program coordinator. "You've also got the great lighting for photography."

The R Street entrance gate off Bladensburg Road is open for the extended hours at the Arboretum. Admission and parking are free. Metrobus line B2 heads north on 15th Street, up Bladensburg Road, stopping at R Street, just two blocks from the entrance gate. On weekends, Metrobus line X6 goes up Maryland Avenue and then Bladensburg Road, directly into the Arboretum.

For more information on the National Arboretum, call 245-4523 or visit <http://www.usna.usda.gov>. §

## Tips

### Free: Much Mulch

The King's Court Community Garden at the east end of Capitol Hill has a HUGE supply of garden mulch and hopes you will come take some of it away. Take as much as you like. Please take from the south end of the mulch pile.

It's a combination of wood chips and chopped leaves — remains of a recently cut tree. It is excellent for mulching gardens, especially where the mulch appearance is not of great importance. It will decompose over the summer, adding organic enrichment to your garden beds. If you have an area with little or no grass, you could cover it with this mulch. In the community garden, we use it to cover the pathways between garden beds. This keeps down the weeds.

WHERE: King's Court Alley. This alleyway runs between the 200 blocks of 14th and 15th Streets SE. Just south of South Carolina, and north of C St. SE. Info, Pat Taylor at [dc.greenthumb@verizon.net](mailto:dc.greenthumb@verizon.net). §

## Problems / Solutions

### Trash Flows Over, on 1200 Block of E

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

On Monday, trash was overflowing again from the trash bin next to 501 12th St. NE, on the 1200 block of E Street. The trash was gone by Tuesday, though bulk items, including a mattress, remained.

The Corner Forum first started documenting the state of the trash bin in the Dec. 9 issue. It's my intention to keep documenting overflows, and, with a few more pictures, take the documentation to the city or to the courts, for help resolving the situation. If you are also bothered by the trash situation, please let me know when you see an overflow and I will come take a picture.

Dale Lipscomb (301-779-4208), vice president of operations for Goode Trash Removal, based in Hyattsville, said Wednesday that his drivers had reported the overflowing trash to him. His company was recently hired to haul the trash.

Mr. Lipscomb said he had called Independence Management Company, the owner and manager of 501 12th St. NE, on Tuesday and had suggested either increasing the number of trash pickups to three per week, from the current two, or building a fence around the trash bin to make it less inviting for

neighbors not living at 501 12th to illegally dump their waste in.

He said Independence Management did not express interest in either of those ideas.



Monday

According to the D.C. municipal regulations, (707.3) "If containers are used for the storage of rubbish, or a combination of rubbish and food waste (garbage), a sufficient number shall be provided to store such solid wastes which may accumulate on the premises during the usual interval between collections" and (708.9) "When stored in the open, metal or fiberglass containers or receptacles must be kept securely fastened at all times."

According to the online D.C. Real Property database, Independence Management owed the city \$55,283.80 in property taxes as of Wednesday and owed the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority \$30,737.03 as of Thursday — both for 501 12th St. NE. I reported the overflowing trash to the mayor's call center (727-1000) on Monday and was given confirmation number 19053. §

# Updates

**EXCELLO:** Charles Burger, the chairman of the five-member Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, ordered on Wednesday that Excello Liquors (419 13th St. NE) and representatives of those residents who are protesting the renewal of Excello's liquor license meet for formal mediation, with Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration mediator Laverne Fletcher. Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Michael Musante (6A05), who is officially representing about half of the protestants as well as the ANC itself, told Mr. Burger that he and I met the previous week with Sung Bang, the owner of Excello, Simon Osnos, Mr. Bang's attorney, and a translator, to discuss the possibility of settling the protest with a new voluntary agreement. At the meeting, Mr. Bang and Mr. Osnos expressed their willingness to try to address protestants' concerns. From at least some protestants' perspective, however, it seems unlikely that a new voluntary agreement would resolve the problems. Mr. Burger, the ABC Board chairman, strongly urged that a new voluntary agreement be reached. The Board scheduled a second status hearing for Sept. 24 at 9:30 a.m., at which time it will again hear an update from both parties on any progress made toward a negotiated settlement. If the parties are unable to reach agreement, a formal protest hearing, which is structured like a trial, with witnesses and cross-examination, will be scheduled.

**KINGSMAN:** Michelle Gelsino, vice president of the Charter Schools Development Corporation, which is the new owner of Kingsman School, said yesterday that construction at the site is on schedule. Sasha Bruce charter school "plans to take occupancy in mid-August and start classes the day after Labor Day," she said. The charter school will be housed in the smaller, annex part of the building, on the west side of Kingsman. "And then, throughout next year, we'll be renovating the main building. Everything's going according to plan." Options Charter School is scheduled to move in, in time for the following school year.

**LAKE FORT FISHER:** Tawanna Shuford (724-8072 or tshuford@dccouncil.washington.dc.us), director of constituent services in Council member Sharon Ambrose's (Ward 6) office, said in an e-mail on Monday that she had contacted the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority's office of public relations, at 787-2200, and requested that WASA visit the location, and check and repair the drainage. She said if there is no drainage, she will contact the Mayor's Citywide Call Center and request an alley repair.

**LINCOLN PARK:** Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Nicholas Alberti (6A04) said at the Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting on July 10 that he had spoken with John Hale, the superintendent of National Capitol Parks, East, about the closure of Lincoln Park at dusk. Mr. Alberti reported that Mr. Hale said the Parks Service is looking into extending the hours of operation. According to the August issue of *The Buzz*, Mr. Hale will attend the next North Lincoln Park Neighbor-

hood Association meeting, on Sept. 2, to address Lincoln Park issues. Mr. Alberti can be reached at 543-3512.

**WASA RATES, METRO FARES:** The D.C. Water and Sewer Authority has voted to approve a 2.5 percent increase in water and sewer rates, beginning Oct. 1. For a typical residential customer, WASA said in a press release, the monthly bill will increase approximately \$0.92, from \$41.08 to \$42.00 per month. For more information call WASA's office of public affairs, at 787-2200. See <http://www.dcwasa.com>. New Metro rates and hours took effect June 29. Among the changes: the regular bus and base rail fare was increased to \$1.20, from \$1.10. The senior/disabled fare was increased to \$0.60 for bus and to one-half the regular fare for rail. Bus transfer fares increased to \$0.35, from \$0.25. For more information, call Metro Customer Assistance (8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.) at 637-1328. See <http://www.wmata.com>.

**COMINGS AND GOINGS:** If you have met one of the area's new residents or know someone about to move out, please ask them if they'd like to introduce themselves or say goodbye. According to the Long & Foster Web site, <http://www.longandfoster.com>, viewed yesterday, the real estate listings for the Corner Forum area have changed from July 5 as follows: 540 13th St. NE (\$228,000) is newly listed. 1226 Duncan Pl. NE (\$345,000) is listed again (it was listed for \$335,000 on Dec. 13 but was no longer listed in February). 1242 Duncan Pl. NE (\$324,990) was listed last week but was no longer listed yesterday. 1232 Duncan Pl. NE, 1320 Emerald St. NE and 1239 Duncan Pl. NE are no longer listed. The listing for 408 13th St. NE (\$349,990) is unchanged.

**CORNER FORUM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** The following people helped produce or distribute the July 18 issue of the Corner Forum: Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE (editing, folding, distributing); Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE (folding).

— Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE §

## Tidbits

**CAFE ON H STREET:** The ANC voted 5-0, with Commissioner Wanda Stevens-Harris (6A01) abstaining, to send a letter to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to "not object" to the issuance of a temporary restaurant liquor license to Andrew Harris for a Phish Tea cafe, to be located at 1335 H St. NE. Jeff Coulter, secretary of the ANC's alcoholic beverage licensing committee, had told the ANC that the temporary license would be valid for only a month or two, after which the establishment would have to apply for a full license, which the ANC could then support or oppose. He said Phish Tea had presented its business plan to the committee, and that Phish Tea would be a cafe-style restaurant, with Caribbean-style food.

— Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE §

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Contact the Corner Forum: by phone (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128);  
e-mail ([news@thecornerforum.org](mailto:news@thecornerforum.org)); or mail (536 13th St. NE).

# Goods and Services

## Seeking Volunteers to Work in Computer Lab for the Homeless

BY CASSANDRA HETHERINGTON  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Community of Hope  
1413 Girard St. NW

I recently did an Internet search for Cafe Mawonaj and came across the Corner Forum, which mentioned them in a past edition, and I started snooping around your newsletter.

Approximately 20 minutes drive or just a few Metro stops from your corner lies Community of Hope, an emergency housing facility for homeless families in D.C.

Community of Hope provides the tools and resources to help low-income homeless and underserved families and individuals in the District of Columbia move toward self-sufficiency.

Currently we have 20 families living with us, which means an average of 70 people under the age of 18 in the building.

We currently need people to volunteer with us in our computer lab. We have a computer lab with 10 brand new computers and need volunteers to commit two hours weekly to be in the lab to assist in whatever ways the adults or kids might need.

We have educational software that the kids love — it's just a matter of directing them to the appropriate software. Our adults are learning job searching skills, resume writing, and apartment searching skills in life skills classes and would like to be able to put those skills to use.

Working to improve the lives of anyone living in the District of Columbia improves life for us all. The lack of affordable housing citywide is the single greatest factor in the alarming rates of homelessness in our area.

There is also a sense of satisfaction that comes from helping those who need it most, which in turn helps to create a greater appreciation for our own lives.

From getting to know the families that live in Community of Hope, I've also come to admire the inner strength so many of them possess and have had to summon in order to get their lives together for their families.

Hours of operation are 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., seven days a week. Very flexible schedule.

We are located three blocks from the Columbia Heights Metro.

Call me at 232-7356, ext. 319, or visit <http://www.communityofhopedc.org>. §

# Questions / Answers

## 3 Stories, 40 Ft. Allowed in R-4 Areas

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

In last week's issue, Cynthia Garner, 1327 E St. NE, asked about the city regulations that pertain to the maximum height that houses are allowed to be.

Her question was sparked by the third-floor addition being built at 300 Tennessee Ave. NE. Cody Rice, the chairman of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission's economic development and zoning committee, referred us to the zoning regulations, which are posted on the D.C. Office of Zoning's Web site, at <http://www.dcoz.dcgov.org/info/reg/reg.shtm> (they are also kept at the library).

The first thing to do to figure out what zoning regulations apply is to look at the city's zoning map, which shows the various zoning districts around the city. In the Corner Forum area, all the houses except those on the east (odd) side of the 400 block of 13th Street are zoned R-4 (residential-4). The houses on the east side of the 400 block of 13th Street are zoned C-2-A. The house at 300 Tennessee Ave. NE is also in an R-4 area.



According to regulation 400.1, the height of a building in an area zoned R-4 may not in general exceed three stories and may not exceed 40 feet. According to regulation 770.1, the height of a building in an area zoned C-2-A may, in general, not exceed 50 feet (there is no limit on the number of stories).

There are some exceptions to these rules, and the Board of Zoning Adjustment can also grant variances, if their strict application would result in "exceptional practical difficulties or exceptional and undue hardship" upon a property owner.

According to the Board of Zoning Adjustment's Web site (<http://www.dcoz.dcgov.org/services/bza/bza.shtm>), "to approve an application for a variance, the Board would have to find that granting the request would not cause substantial detriment to the public good and would not be inconsistent with the general intent and purpose of the Zoning Regulations." §

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**And do they ever say no, or is it pretty much a formality?**

In some instances, there are recommendations given to the pastor — my pastor. There have been instances where people were not ordained, because the council did not feel as though they met those requirements. Then you have to redo everything — you have to go back through a catechism, training again, and then set up another date for the council to meet.

**How long does that take — the training?**

The training can take anywhere from six months to a year to two years. It depends on the person who does the catechism.

**So you're hoping.**

Yeah, I'm hoping! (laughs)

**Your mom is a minister. Can you tell us a little bit about how religion came into your life, or were you always —**

Religion has always been a part of our family, stemming back to my grandmother, Pearl Boddie, who was a very religious woman. She taught us about the Bible. She set a proper example of how Christians should live, and then that just transcended throughout the generations, and I guess you would say, in everyone's life, someone has to make a choice.

And my choice, in my early stages of life, was not to accept those teachings. My choices were to give in, to try those things that were out there in the world.

But there took a turn in my life where I decided to give it a try. By doing that, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. Since then, my life has been different. I had to recognize, first and foremost, that there was something more beautiful and perfect that God wanted for me — that He wanted this blissful union with us. Once I began to recognize that, I had to ask myself, why didn't I have it? There was something that was missing. And once I discovered that it was that relationship with God, with Christ, I had to make a choice, and that choice was to begin to follow Him.

**How old are you now?**

I'm 27.

**And so there was a period where you were kind of living in the world — what ages?**

Well, when I was 12, that was back in the mid, late '80s, crime in D.C. was at its all-time peak. Crack cocaine had hit the streets. There were gangs all over this neighborhood in particular, and all over the metropolitan area. And so my parents had made a choice to send me away to military school, so that I would not come up in that type of environment. And I returned home from military school after graduating in 1993 — I was about 16, 17 years old. During that five-year tenure of being away in school, I was not under the heavy influence of my grandmother or my family's teaching. And because of that, I drifted away from the gospel.

And so when I returned home, I began to associate with those things that my parents wanted to remove me from. It's somewhat ironic — you're sent away so you don't have to deal

with those things, only to return and find yourself engulfed in them.

My circles became more than just D.C. I hung with circles in New York, and Florida, and Baltimore. And so a lot of my dealings with the streets were all around this area. I found myself in and out of incarceration. Not for long stretches of time, but the type of activities I was involved in always landed me in front of a judge. But for some reason, I never found myself doing more than a day. The cases never went to trial — they were dismissed, they were put on a back-burner — and I just couldn't understand why.

And then it was just something inside of me that was not right. I was feeling empty, I was feeling void. I guess that was about four years ago. I decided that I needed to search for something else. I found myself once again attending church on a regular basis. I discovered that as much as I wanted to do good, there was always something greater that was pulling me to do that which was wrong. And it wasn't a matter of if I liked it or not. Because some of the things that I was involved in I hated. But I always found myself doing them. No matter how many times I told myself that I was gonna stop, no matter how many times I removed myself from that environment, I always found myself back there. And I didn't know why.

And so then once I began attending church and getting to know of this union that God had wanted for my life, I began to recognize that that thing I did not want to do was bigger than me, and so it was able to control and manipulate me into doing some horrible and treacherous things. But once I found out that there was a way for me to overcome those things, then I jumped at the opportunity. I accepted Christ as my personal Savior, and I could no longer ride on the coat-tails of my grandmother's prayers. I could never depend on my mother or my father taking me to church. I had to make that decision for myself — that I needed something bigger than me and those circumstances, to pull me out of. And that's when I accepted Christ as my Savior.

**I'm thinking drugs —?**

There were drugs. There were different types of scams that I was associated with. It wasn't all just drugs. It was just corrupt activity. It was whatever could make us the most money at that time — that's what we were involved in. And it was just ironic, because whenever someone got locked up, it was me (laughs). No one else — it was just me. And so that was the irony behind it. As if the whole time that I was out there, God was showing there was a different way, and all you have to do is try.

**Your daughter is 11, right? What was that like? You had a daughter during that period —**

Yeah. When I had Alexis, I was 15, turning on 16. And so that was a period in my time where there too I was away from home, returning home on the weekends, and really wasn't under that firmness. So when her mother had her, I was away at school, and being 15, 16, you're really not responsible to take care of yourself, and so I didn't have any involvement in Alexis's life for about the first two years. Because I was still young and immature myself. I regret it. You do have to deal

with the consequences of your action. That's two years of her life that I can never speak about. But I have to spend the rest of my life making it up to her — that I was not there for her. She is living with my wife and I now. We just have a happy family.

**Your wife — that's her mother?**

No, my wife is Chauntia. We got married on December 15, 2001. And it's funny how the Lord moves, because our stories are somewhat similar. My wife, Chauntia, was brought up in a religious home, a Christian home, and made some of the same choices.

**Let me ask you a little about this neighborhood here. There are still kids out there on the streets. What are your thoughts, now, when you see other people doing some of what you were doing?**

My thoughts are: with them selling drugs, if they were just provided with another opportunity. I mentor about 30 kids in a local middle school, over in Southeast Washington. Kids 12, 11 years old, selling drugs. Having to take care of themselves. Not to say that's the reason why these kids on these corners are selling drugs.

But we have to look at reasons why they're out there. It's so easy for us to rid them off. So easy for us to lock 'em up. It's so easy for us to say that they're the problem in our community — but we first have to ask the question "Why are they even out there?" Are they out there because that is their only source of income? Are they out there because they're taking care of their parents — the ones who are providing food? Are they the ones who are keeping the lights on? Those are the types of questions I ask myself every time I come back home.

And I think as a community, it does us no justice to try to rid the individuals from this neighborhood. Because all they're gonna do is be placed in another neighborhood, and they're gonna continue in the same activity. We have to get to the root of the problem of why they're out there. And then, after we find out the reasons why they're out there, we have to begin to give viable solutions. What will it take for us as individuals, as a community, as a church, as a government — what will it take in order to give them another choice than to be out on the street?

**Are there any lessons that you feel could be learned from your story, in terms of the reasons that you were out there?**

My advice would be to look three steps ahead. When I look at my life, I see that I was so focused on the next step that I never planned for the second or the third. And so in not looking further than what was directly in front of me, I was never prepared when I got there.

And so, case in point, it's like an individual who's in high school — all they look towards is graduating. They look at that as completion, but not the starting of another journey. They make no preparation for college.

And so if I had to tell anyone anything, it's "Always plan three steps ahead." Always do that, because anything can happen, but at least I have a goal that I'm working towards.

**Is that what led you that way — that you weren't looking far enough ahead?**

That was a problem for me. I was 12 years old when I left home. I was away. I was away in boarding school. And so my next step, when I was away in military school, was to just get out of there — to graduate. I had no desire, no aspiration to attending college. Because when I thought about college, I thought about going away, again. And so that was something that I did not want to do. But in telling myself that I was not going to college, I never prepared myself for a career, and so when opportunities would present themselves, one of the first criteria was "What is your academic experience? How many years of college? What degrees do you have?"

And so I never prepared myself, because I never thought three steps ahead. I never thought, well what am I gonna do after I graduate from high school? What's gonna happen if I don't go to college? What are my alternatives? I never thought that way. And so, now at 27, even though I'm still young, a lot of things that I could be doing, I now have to set aside, that I might finish my education.

**Tell us some more about our neighborhood a little bit. You've been here now for a long time — what's important about the neighborhood? What are some of its strengths? What are some of its needs?**

When I think about this neighborhood, I think about the fact that this is a family. The old African adage says that it takes a village to raise a child. And I can think back to my childhood and I can think about the fact that if I was outside, and my parents were inside, there were still several adults on the outside, watching us. And if anyone did anything wrong on the outside, then you'd best believe that your parents were gonna find out about it. And so it was because of that type of structure that you have so many productive persons come out of this neighborhood. It transcended what your religious beliefs were, it transcended your political points of view. It was greater than your income bracket. It was about caring for the people that you lived with.

You might not have shared the same home with people, but you shared this community. And so those who were upper class all the way down to those who were bums in the neighborhood — they are a part of your family, and you would show the same type of respect to that wino that you would to your own family, because that's how much you love and cherish your community.

When I think about community, I think back to my grandmother, who used to sit on the porch in the sunlight, and no matter who walked past, there was conversation. When I look at the community now, I don't see too much of people on the front porch. The community has moved to their back porches. And on your back porch, it's just you and your individual family. And so there's no sharing information of what's going on, on your street. There's no sharing of information of how your neighbors are doing. There's no sharing of information, there's no eating dinner at your neighbor's house. There's no more of your children playing together, because society, for some reason, has lost or distorted the view of true community. And so that's why it brings me joy, when I do visit my mother, and I come back on this block, and I can pull up and I can see people outside washing their cars. That brings joy, because it brings

back a sense of community that we so much need.

**Your daughter — was she living with you for any part of the last 11 years here?**

No. My daughter just came to live with me in the fall of 2001. She didn't come to live with me full-time until 2001, but weekends, holidays, summertime, she was here.

**Let me ask you about the kids again, by the stores. There's kind of a divide in the neighborhood, between the kids and the people who live around here — and there's not much communication between those two groups. Having been a kid around here, and maybe having some insight into what leads somebody to be selling, do you have any suggestions for how the community could reach out and build some bridges, and communicate better?**

You have to get to know their story. Oftentimes, the only thing that we bring to the story is our story — our viewpoint, our perception, our intellect. And that leaves no room for the other individual to express themselves.

We, as adults, as individuals, as people — have to get out of the habit of prejudging or walking into an environment with these already-formulated ideas of what it should be, what it isn't, and how do we go about doing it. We have to get to know their story.

We have to begin to first appreciate them for simply being who they are. I oftentimes tell people that if my father was a drug dealer, and my uncle was a drug dealer, and my brothers and my cousins were all drug dealers, and they raised me to be a drug dealer, because that's how they provided food, that's how they got clothes, that's how they got the cars, that's how they got the women — who are you to tell me that I'm wrong for being a drug dealer? That's all I know. But until you can come to me and accept me for what I am, and then walk with me and provide another opportunity by showing me that there's more out there than being a drug dealer, you don't have a position to talk. Because all you're doing is now shutting off the communication, because you're judging me for who I was already brought up to be. That's what we have to stop doing.

When you look at urban city youth — particularly African-American youth — we must understand that their choices are very limited. Case in point, look at the controversy in the D.C. Public Schools, laying off 400-plus faculty and staff. Look at the decrease in the school budget. Look at the increase in classroom size. All that plays into the limited choices that we as a society provide. If you're telling me I have to go to school, but you don't provide the textbooks, what's the point of me being there? If you're telling me I have to go to school to get an education, but there's no teacher to fill the spot, what is the point of me being there? So my only alternative is to do what? It's to go to an environment where I know that I can make money. And when we look at it, it's not their fault that they're selling drugs. It's the system's fault.

**You mentioned that in the last few years, you're pursuing an education — so it's not just the ministry?**

I recently transferred from UDC, which is an excellent university. I was there studying business economics. But once I accepted my calling in the ministry, I had to make a choice,

and that choice was to start attending Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. And it's there I'm going after a degree in business and religion, at the same time. I'll be done with that in the spring of '04. And then my hope is to go get my masters in divinity. My hopes are to go into Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Virginia, in Richmond.

**And your ultimate, long-term hopes and dreams?**

My ultimate hopes and dreams is to be available. I find myself working in so many different areas in ministry — I oversee a mentoring program at Sousa Middle School in Southeast Washington. I'm over at Youth and Young Adult ministry at a local Baptist church. I conduct workshops in HIV/AIDS, urban culture, hip-hop, and so I just want to keep myself available.

**I don't know if there's any other community interest in this, but if there was an effort to try to learn the stories of the kids would you be interested or available or willing to be part of any effort like that?**

Absolutely. I think it's necessary in order for us to get along as people. What benefit does it provide for me to talk about an individual who hangs out on the street, selling drugs, drinking and whatever, and I have in my position the resources for employment? And I never make an attempt to provide for that individual? There's no benefit. Maybe it's because I don't know how to talk. Maybe it's because I feel as though I might be rejected. And so what I do is I put myself in a position to be the conduit — to be the go-between. Even though both parties are speaking English, they're not speaking the same words, with the same meaning.

**Is there anything else you'd like to say to readers about your story, or about anything?**

If I could say anything, it would be simply that God has a purpose and a design for your life, even before you knew it, before your parents knew it. The reason why you're living, the reason why you're here, is because that was God's purpose. It is not our fault that conditions in our neighborhood are what they are. It is not our fault that we are plagued with drugs, killing all over this world. That is the reality in which we live. But God was so great and so loving that he decided to give his son, Christ Jesus, to die on the cross so that we might have a right to a free life. In other words, what Christ did was he provided a way for us to get those good things that God had intended for us in the beginning — good things like love and joy and peace, good things as in no more heartache, no more pain, no more suffering, no more worrying, no more anxiety. But in order to receive those type of things, you have to make an individual choice to accept Christ as your Lord and personal Savior.

What does that mean? That means that just like me, when I always found myself doing the bad things, I had to make a choice to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to take control, to help me stop doing those things that I did not want to do. Once you make that decision, you'll find that your life will be a whole lot better off.

**Thank you very much.**

OK. §

# Calendar of Upcoming Events

*If you attend any of these events, please send in anything from a few lines to a long article about what happened.*

*And if you know of any upcoming events that other readers might be interested in, send them in!*

*Events are free, unless otherwise noted, and open to all.*

*Thanks to those people who submitted events for this calendar!*

— COMPILED BY MARC BORBELY  
536 13th St. NE

## **Monday, July 28**

5:30-9 p.m. PSA 511 Annual Community Day. (The Corner Forum area is in PSA 511.) By PSA 511 and the Metropolitan Police Department Special Operations Division. On the 300 block of 12th Street NE. “There will be food, entertainment, informational booths, games, and assorted activities. There will be a grill and regulation-sized ping-pong table. The police and fire departments will be there to meet and greet the neighbors. The PSA is looking for contributions of food and good will from community members and businesses to make this event a success.” Info, Officer Templeton, 253-1652.

Sunset. “Mutiny on the Bounty.” (1935) 135 minutes. Screen on the Green. “Clark Gable and Charles Laughton, as noble Fletcher Christian and loathsome Captain Bligh, do fierce battle on a cruise to Tahiti.” By HBO and America Online. Between 4th and 7th Streets, at Constitution Avenue NW, on the National Mall. <http://www.digitalcity.com/washington/screenonthegreen>.

## **Tuesday, July 29**

9:30 a.m. Board of Zoning Adjustment. Hearing on case number 17045, the application of Neavelle A. Coles, owner of 1215 E St. NE, to construct a two-story addition to an existing single-family dwelling. At One Judiciary Square in Room 220 South. Info, 727-6311. <http://www.dcoz.dcgov.org/services/bza/schedule/2003/07.shtm>.

6-9 p.m. PSA 512 Annual Community Day. (PSA 512 is on the other side of 14th Street from the Corner Forum area.) By PSA 511 and the Metropolitan Police Department Special Operations Division. “Food & Entertainment, Games & Activities, Informational Booths.” On 1600 block of Kramer Street NE.

6-7:30 p.m. Ward 6 Focus Group Meeting on D.C. Light Rail Plans. “To present the light rail study to ... individuals with special interest in the subject ... and to elicit their feedback on special issues to be considered in the study.” At D.C. Public Library, Southeast Branch, 403 7th St. SE. Info, Alex Eckmann, Mass Transit Administrator, DDOT, 671-0537. <http://publicspace.justicesustainability.com/DCTransit/news/index.shtml>.

## **Wednesday, July 30**

6-7:30 p.m. Ward 6 Focus Group Meeting on D.C. Light Rail Plans. “To present the light rail study to ... individuals with special interest in the subject ... and to elicit their feedback on special issues to be considered in the study.” At D.C. Public Library, Southwest Branch, 900 Wesley Pl. SW. Info, Alex Eckmann, Mass Transit Administrator, DDOT, 671-0537. <http://publicspace.justicesustainability.com/DCTransit/news/index.shtml>.

## **Thursday, July 31**

5:30-7 p.m. Walter Bell’s Latin Jazz Unit. “Enjoy Afro-Brazilian, ‘straight-ahead,’ and Latin jazz.” At Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, plaza, 7th Street and Independence Avenue SW. 633-4674. <http://hirshhorn.si.edu/programs/events.asp>.

## **Saturday, August 2**

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Special Education Transition Fair. “The fair focuses on empowering families and caretakers who care for children with disabilities. Special education service providers from throughout the Washington metro area will share their expertise and assist students and caretakers in becoming knowledgeable self-advocates.” At For Love of Children, 1816 12th St. NW. Info, Jacqueline Grimboll, transition coordinator, 249-3515, or Iris Lewis, program director, 349-3569.

10 a.m. Corner Forum meeting. “Help assemble the current issue and plan future ones.” At the home of Marc Borbely and Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE, 544-2447.

2 p.m. The Ordination Service of the Rev. Orlando J. Bego (1308 Emerald St. NE). At the Upper Room Baptist Church, 60 Burns St. NE. (Near the 3700 block of Minnesota Avenue and Blaine Street NE). Reception following service. Info, 397-5826. §

## InForum

Just wanted you to know I will be renewing my subscription this week. Thanks for all your hard work. Also, I would like to thank Eric Bernard for sharing his research on the neighborhood. He is on his way to becoming the local historian.

— RICHARD SUNDBERG, 1200 BLOCK OF DUNCAN PL. NE

I enjoy reading each week and keeping up with the happenings in our community. Keep up the good work!

— PAULA DOZIER, FORMERLY AT 412 13TH ST. NE §

Contact the Corner Forum: by phone (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128);  
e-mail ([news@thecornerforum.org](mailto:news@thecornerforum.org)); or mail (536 13th St. NE).