

The Corner Forum

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

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37¢ + 2¢ D.C. sales tax
<http://www.thecornerforum.org>

Md. Ave. Car Dealer Raided During Investigation

BY LIBO LIU, 500 BLOCK OF 14TH STREET NE

On any given day, Walter Anderson is an amiable and happy person.

Having worked as a mechanic for over 10 years and for quite some time at the Chandler's II Car Repair Shop at 628 14th St. NE, Mr. Anderson knows the auto trade well and has the skill to be a good mechanic.

Lately, though, he hasn't been that happy.

It all started about two months ago, when Mr. Anderson and his wife were shopping for a used car for her at QX Cars and Trucks, 1400 Maryland Ave. NE. They found a good looking one with sound mechanics. The price of \$3,700 wasn't too bad for what it was, though they could not come up with the whole amount. Nevertheless, they liked the car so much that they paid a big portion of the bill and took the car without the title. The Andersons understood that they had to pay off the balance before the dealer would turn over the title to them.

Over the last two months, the Andersons worked hard and paid down a total of \$3,500 towards the purchase. Last week, when they gathered \$200 and went to the

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YSA Group Home Being Built on Kramer Street NE

Here are excerpts of a report by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A Economic Development and Zoning Committee, from its meeting on Tuesday.

BY ANC COMMISSIONER CODY RICE (6A03), 310 9TH ST. NE

The committee heard a presentation by Leticia Lacomba, acting administrator of the Youth Services Administration (YSA), on the construction of a group home at 1626 Kramer St. NE. Ms. Lacomba was accompanied by three other DHS employees.

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City Drains "Lake Fort Fisher" and Plans Repairs

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

A truck sent by the D.C. Department of Transportation on Friday drained "Lake Fort Fisher," the large pool of water that had been present all summer behind the stores on the 400 block of 13th Street NE.



A hose drains water on Friday.
(Photo by Amy Fisher.)

The city's action came after numerous calls and e-mails by Amy Fisher, 427 13th St. NE, to various city agencies — and after a request that the transportation department's spokesperson provide a response for this story.

Over the past few weeks, Ms. Fisher repeatedly called the mayor's call center and Department of Transportation officials to whom the call center had referred her. Ms.

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Excello Agreement Was Neighborhood in Action

BY RICHARD SUNDBERG
1200 block of Duncan Place NE

Mr. Sundberg wrote the following after the Aug. 17 issue of the Corner Forum.

Thanks for the last issue Marc.

After reading your interview with Mr. Whitfield [1323 E St. NE], I thought a brief synopsis of events concerning Excello licensing might help clarify things.

As you know, when I arrived in the neighborhood 13-14 years ago, things were pretty busy on the 400 block of 13th Street and the surrounding alleys. Much of the activity included excessive drinking, inappropriate behavior and trash.

Excello appeared to be an agent for much of this, as we observed the consumption of, and were constantly picking up, small bottles of "hard" liquor (as opposed to beer and wine).

Neighbors in the area attempted to improve the situation by forcing the police to address the situation and by protesting the renewing of Excello's license so a neighborhood agreement could be entered into.

In approximately 1995, we were successful in formulating a community agreement with the store. Why didn't we attempt to do the same with N-A Minit? When these efforts were made, N-A Minit was perceived as doing its best to be a good neighbor.

There was an effort last year to protest the renewal of N-A-Minit's license so an agreement could be formulated. But the protest was not filed in a timely fashion, so it was dismissed by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

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dealer to pay off the balance and get the title, something unexpected happened. The dealer told the Andersons that all titles for the cars the dealer had been taken away by the police.

According to a press release by D.C. Police, QX Cars and Trucks was raided on Tuesday, Aug. 19, by the Focused Mission Team of the D.C. Police, assisted by several federal agencies, in connection with an ongoing investigation into the sale and transfer of fraudulently issued and altered temporary registration tags. Search warrants on five other car dealers in Northeast were also executed by the police task force.

These car dealers were allegedly profiting from illegally issuing the 30-day temporary registration tags to cars that were stolen, could not pass inspection or did not have insurance.

According to Mr. White at the call center of the D.C. Department of Motor Vehicles, a 30-day temporary tag can only be issued to a car that has just been bought or to a car that has just passed the expiration date of regular registration but failed an inspection. The 30-day temporary tag can only be issued once to the same car and cannot be renewed. Also, an owner must present the title, driver license and proof of valid insurance to have such a temporary title issued.

The DMV, besides issuing the temporary tags to car owners directly, also sends a licensed car dealer up to 10 such paper tags at a time, so the dealer can issue a temporary tag to a car that has just been sold there. The dealer is required to send the paperwork of a sales transaction to the DMV for processing and within five to 10 days receive a regular hard plate from the DMV for its customer.

But Regina Williams, spokeswoman for the DMV, told the Corner Forum that some of the dealers that are under investigation allegedly issued such paper tags without sending the required paperwork to the DMV. She said some dealers have deliberately sent in fraudulent information to cover up their dealings. She also said some of paper tags were counterfeited, perhaps being printed out by laser printers. Ms. Williams said the DMV is working on how to make paper tags more difficult to counterfeit and also working more closely with the police and the Department of Public Works. She called on citizens to help deal with the problem as well.

I visited QX Cars and Trucks on Thursday and Friday. The managers declined to be interviewed for this story.

The Focused Mission Team of D.C. Police also declined a request from the Corner Forum to provide detailed information on the current investigation but said, "It is up to the district attorney's office to decide whether any charges will be filed against those car dealers."

Meanwhile, Mr. Anderson was told by the dealer that the title of his wife's car could be available by next Wednesday or Thursday.

"If we can't get the title, we may have to file a suit with the small claim's court to get our money back," Mr. Anderson said reluctantly.

It could be a while before he becomes a happy guy again. §

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According to Ms. Lacomba, construction is under way on a three-bedroom group home at 1626 Kramer St. NE for up to six girls ages 13 to 17. The girls would be committed to the supervision of YSA by the court system and would be supervised by on-site staff.

YSA will write a Request for Proposals to obtain bids from a company or nonprofit to operate the facility, with a target date for selection in early 2004. (Toward the end of the meeting, Ms. Lacomba also offered that one or two residents of the area could participate in the RFP review process to choose the facility operator.)

Approximately 15 residents of the area near the YSA facility attended the meeting. These residents expressed concerns about the facility based on 1) the number of other group homes and treatment facilities in the immediate area, 2) the proximity of the group home to Miner Elementary School, the Rosedale swimming pool and other facilities used by young children, 3) the placement of a facility for rehabilitation in an area with ongoing crime problems, 4) sending additional YSA-supervised youths to Eliot JHS which already serves YSA-supervised youths from Oak Hill Detention Facility, 5) the effect of the facility on surrounding property values, and 6) the lack of effective public outreach and communication to inform community members and the police of the placement of the facility. A concern was also expressed about entrusting the facility to a "for-profit" operator given the past poor performance of certain for-profit operators.

Residents asked about the site selection process for this facility. Bill Stewart of DHS responded that YSA works from a list of distressed properties and attempts to improve these properties by building new facilities. Residents pointed out that this was previously a vacant lot, and that they were hoping to see new residential development.

When asked about what steps had been taken to inform the community about this project prior to construction, Robert Warren of DHS stated that there had been a meeting with unspecified Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners on March 14, 2001, in the Deputy Mayor's Office. Mr. Warren was unable to provide further details or cite other outreach and communication.

The committee asked for YSA to provide the following information prior to the Sept. 11 ANC 6A meeting: 1) copies of the building permits, 2) a clarification on whether the facility can be built as a matter-of-right or requires a special exception, 3) a list of community based residential facilities in the surrounding area, including any YSA facilities that are planned for construction, and 4) details on how the community was notified of the placement and construction of this facility.

The committee recommends that ANC 6A take the following steps: 1) request any information from YSA that is still missing by September 11, 2003; 2) request a determination from the Zoning Administrator on whether the facility requires a special exception; and 3) request that YSA form a community advisory panel to be involved in the selection of the facility operator and ongoing facility oversight. §

Fisher also spoke this week and last week to the Health Department, which, due to West Nile Virus concerns, had advised residents to eliminate any standing water that could be good breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Tawanna Shuford, director of constituent services for Council member Sharon Ambrose's (Ward 6) office, had also called the mayor's call center to find out when the city would respond to the initial Aug. 5 report to the call center.

Ms. Fisher first published a letter she had sent to Ms. Ambrose about the problem in the June 21 issue of the Corner Forum, in the form of a humorous press release announcing that the site was selected as a finalist for the annual convention of the National Mosquito Growers Association.

"As long as I have lived here (since 1974), our alley (behind the stores) has formed a lake in heavy rains," Ms. Fisher said in the introduction to that article. "I refer to it fondly as Lake Fort Fisher. This year, in the heavy rains we have had, it has not dried up once since April."

Ms. Fisher said she has been told that the Transportation Department will begin examining long-term drainage options for the site.

"We would like to pump the large body of water first and [then] solve the problem permanently," Transportation Department official Said Cherifi said in an e-mail Friday morning.

Here is Ms. Fisher's most recent letter to DDOT Deputy Director John Deatruck, in which she offers a suggestion for finding an old drainage system that might still be buried below the site...

Thank you for sending in a truck to drain "Lake Fort Fisher," which I understand is the first step in the process of determining the problem.

My neighbor, Mr. Jackson, told us last evening that in the 1950s there was an alley that ran behind what was then the Safeway on D Street. It would have run approximately from what is now the deepest part of "Lake Fort Fisher" eastward across what is now the field to join the north south alley that runs upside the field next to the even-numbered houses in the 1300 block of D Street NE.

Mr. Jackson said at one time there was a drive-over drainage grate at the point where our alley and that alley joined. That alley would have intersected our alley at approximately the location of the deepest point of "Lake Fort Fisher."

If my memory serves me correctly, there is still a similar type grate on far side of the field under the mulberry tree near the school yard retaining wall.

Perhaps the north/south alley that enters from both D and E streets and dead ends at the field from both ends once went through from D Street to E Street and the grate I am describing was in that alley.

I would guess that if an old map of the site could be unearthed the location of the now missing east-west alley might be found and the drainage system might again be located. Thank you for your efforts so far. §

Pinson: Work to Be Done in 3 Weeks

BY MICHAEL E. HERMAN, 1300 BLOCK OF D STREET NE

Good news for those neighbors worried about West Nile Virus and at the same time wondering where our tax dollars are going...

I received the following message from Leo Pinson, the Ward 6 Neighborhood Services Coordinator regarding the perpetual lake in the alley behind the 400 block of 13th Street NE. I have often made attempts in the past months and years to have something done about the standing water. In past years of near drought, it was difficult to generate any interest, but this year's rainy weather has certainly pushed the envelope.

Mr. Pinson (609 H Street NE, Suite 117, 698-5620, leo.pinson@dc.gov) writes:

"I know there has been concern about the alley behind the convenience stores for some time. Yesterday I made rounds with a DDOT engineer and this alley will be leveled and re-constructed so that no more standing water pools are created. Work should be completed within the next three weeks."

The Neighborhood Services Coordinator's Office under Mr. Pinson and his assistant Francine Edmonds has been an excellent resource for our neighborhood. The purpose of the office is to coordinate city services from multiple agencies that do not always work together as well as one might expect.

It is always preferable to get a call number from the Mayor's Call Center at 727-1000 before contacting the NSCO. Once that is done, if a problem cannot be solved in a reasonable amount of time, the NSCO is the next step. §

Updates

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 today, the real estate listings for the Corner Forum area have changed from Aug. 16 as follows: 1217 Duncan Pl. NE is no longer listed. 408 13th St. NE is still listed but at a lower price (it was \$349,990 and is now \$329,990).

PRICE CORRECTION: The price for outside-the-area subscriptions to the Corner Forum was listed incorrectly last week. The price is 12 (not 22) cents per issue, plus tax. The price for inside-the-area subscriptions was listed correctly, at 37 cents per issue plus tax.

CORNER FORUM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The following people helped produce or distribute the Aug. 24 issue of the Corner Forum: Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE (editing, folding, distributing); Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE (proof-reading, folding); Sharon Cochran, 1300 block of Emerald Street NE (distributing); and Stephen Smith, 1300 block of E Street NE (distributing). There are 71 households in the Corner Forum area that are subscribed to the newsletter (27 on E Street, 22 on Emerald Street, 16 on 13th Street, and 6 on Duncan Place). §

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.

— COMPILED BY SHARON COCHRAN
1300 BLOCK OF EMERALD STREET NE

Sunday, August 31

8 p.m. National Symphony Orchestra Labor Day Concert. "Joining the orchestra will be the Soldier's Chorus of the United States Army Field Band." At the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

Monday, September 1

All day. Labor Day. Federal holiday.

10 a.m. Walking Tour of the Exterior of the U.S. Capitol Grounds. "The tour includes the Senate Park, the new Visitor Center construction site, the spectacular view from the Capitol's West Front, and the surrounding buildings." Admission is free for U.S. Capitol Historical Society members or \$10 per person for nonmembers; discounts for seniors and children. Meet at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 200 Maryland Ave. NE. Info, 543-8919, ext. 17 or tours@uschs.org. <http://www.uschs.org>.

12:30-5:45 p.m. Anacostia Pilgrimage: The River and the Community. "Join the InterFaith Conference as we journey as pilgrims on a river and to a neighborhood not often visited in our nation's capital, and offer an interfaith blessing on the waters of the Anacostia River!" \$20 for adults, \$10 for students, interns, seniors and those with limited income. Pre-registration highly encouraged. Event registration is at 12:30 p.m. at St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church, 320 21st St. NE. Call Stacy Smith at the InterFaith Conference, 234-6300.

Tuesday, September 2

All Day. The first day of school, for D.C. Public Schools.

6:30-8 p.m. The Lesbian & Gay Chorus of Washington, D.C. (LGCW) — Open House for Prospective Members. "All are welcome. There are no auditions." St. James Episcopal Church, 222 8th St. NE. To RSVP, for directions, and for more information, call 546-1549. <http://www.lgcw.org>.

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When community agreements are entered into, they become a condition for licensing. If a business violates the terms of the agreement, it can be fined or in extreme cases have its license pulled. In the case of Excello, the agreement was not adhered to. Still, it was part of Excello's license when the business was sold to the current owner. During the last licensing cycle, the agreement was modified by our then ANC commissioner, Ronald Nelson, and accepted by the owner. The terminating of single sales was one of the terms of that agreement. Unfortunately, this and other terms of the current agreement were not adhered to. That is the reason for the current license

7:30 p.m. North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association meeting. "Election of Officers. Superintendent Hale, National Capitol Parks East, will discuss Lincoln Park issues. The Capitol Park Police have also been invited." At Lane Memorial CME Church, 14th & C Streets NE.

Thursday, September 4

6 p.m. The National Football League will be sponsoring the "NFL Kickoff Live from the National Mall" to celebrate the opening of the NFL's 2003 season and recognize the Department of Defense's "Operation Tribute to Freedom."

6-8 p.m. Near Northeast Citizens Against Crime and Drugs Monthly Meeting. At J.O. Wilson Elementary School, cafeteria, 7th & K Streets NE.

8-9:30 p.m. Democratic Presidential Candidates Debate. WETA TV 26. "A debate among the Democratic Party presidential candidates from Albuquerque, N.M." <http://www.weta.org/tv>.

Friday, September 5

4:30 p.m. Opening/Renaming of the Capitol East Natatorium (William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center) 635 North Carolina. Info, 673-7660.

Saturday, September 6

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.

10 a.m. Hill Tots Storytime. "A weekend program that includes art and music activities geared for kids 16 months to 3 years. All are welcome, so please join in the fun!" At the Northeast Public Library, 330 7th St. NE. Info, 546-0565.

10 a.m. Name that Row House Near Northeast Tour. "In this slide show and lecture, architectural historian Kate Farnham will explain how architectural details help define a row house's historic period, and help you identify your home's style. Following the lecture, architectural historian Nancy Schwartz, principal author of the ongoing Capitol Hill North/Near Northeast Study, will lead participants on a walking tour illustrating the history and development of Near Northeast." At Capital Children's Museum, 800 3rd St. NE. Reservations suggested, 783-5144. <http://www.dcpreservation.org/calendar.html>. §

protest with Excello. Since there is no community agreement in force with N-A-Minit, it would be rather arbitrary to suddenly demand they stop selling singles.

In the meantime, the economic environment in the neighborhood has changed. Revenue derived from alcoholic beverages is down considerably, and that may be why the owner of Excello is attempting to sell his business — to move on to something more economically rewarding.

I hope this brief synopsis makes clear how events have evolved over the years. §