

**Joslyn Castle
Neighborhood Association**

May 2026
www.jcnaomaha.org

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JCNA President's Column

By Amy Wagenknecht

One of the many tasks that JCNA board members perform each spring is feverishly writing and submitting grant applications that all seem to be due within a few weeks of each other. Grant funding allows us to host summer activities including picnics at the castle, kids' art camps, and also to complete small improvement projects around the neighborhood.

We have been fortunate to receive the Mayor's Neighborhood Grant for several years. This year we were awarded funds to upgrade the Little Free Pantry next to Cali Commons. Remaining funds from last year's Mayor's Grant allowed us to plant a new Tulip tree, purchased from Indian Creek Nursery, at Clarkson Park.

We are also receiving grant funding from Big Grove Brewery and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance to put toward summer events and activities such as picnics at the castle and National Night Out. The Nebraska Arts Council has awarded JCNA and Cali Commons funding to offer a free kids' summer mural camp, including payment for instruction, supplies and student transportation. *(See specifics in story below.)*

We're thrilled to be able to offer so many community-building events through local grant funding opportunities, and we hope to see you around the neighborhood this summer!

Grants Fund Summer Fun: Picnics and Kids Mural Camp

A micro grant from **Big Grove Brewery** will help fund our **First Tuesday Picnics at the Castle** for June 2, July 7 and August 4. Bring camp chairs or blankets and enjoy music, play the corn hole game, or sample food truck fare. August also celebrates **National Night Out** with the band Wooden Music.

Funds from the Nebraska Arts Council, through a School Bus Grant and Castle & Cathedral Creative District funds, will help pay for a tour of Omaha murals before the beginning of **Kids Mural Camp**. That event runs for three weeks beginning June 1, on Mondays and Wednesdays. Sarah Rowe, a renowned muralist, will be the artist teacher.

Mural camp is limited to 12 kids, grades 4 through 12, first come first served. See sign-up link below or find on Cali Commons Facebook page.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOZpm8ZxytXyeAG1KbcaQKJLiJ3-MTzbvIJxwsb7cVXI9d3A/viewform>

Former Nebraska State Poet Is New Artist in Residence at Castle

Hi, my name is Matt Mason and I'm the new Artist in Residence for the Castle and Cathedral Creative District, serving through September.

Previously, I was the Nebraska State Poet from 2019 to 2024, ran poetry programs for the state in four countries, presented poetry programs in all of Nebraska's 93 counties, published five books of poetry, and have had poems published in The New York Times and several hundred literary magazines and anthologies. I'm excited to have a space for writing and working in the Joslyn Castle and also look forward to holding some new events in the Creative District.

I'll be running a new Open Mic in the Castle and in the Carriage House, leading a Writing Workshop in the Cathedral's Cultural Center, and also holding Poetry Office Hours at Cali Commons, 518 N 40th St.

The first Office Hours will be on May 9th and June 27th from noon to 2pm at Cali Commons. Drop in to talk poetry, ask a question, or bring your laptop and submit poems to literary magazines with me and others. I hope to mostly hold these on the second Saturday of the month through September.

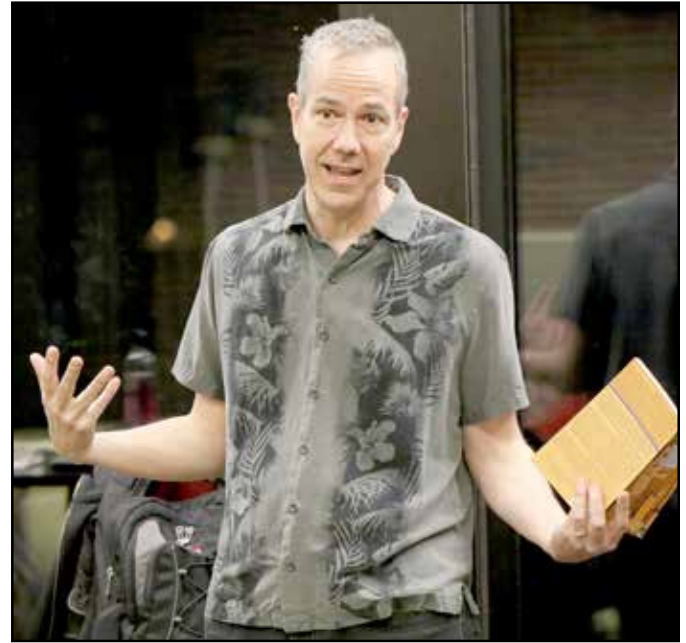
The first two Writing Workshops will be on May 12th and June 24th from 6:30-8pm in the Cathedral Cultural Center (behind St. Cecilia Cathedral, 3900 Webster St.) with workshops I call What's Your American Story, where we'll write about what brings you/your family to Omaha/Nebraska/USA.

The open mics will be on the 2nd Wednesdays of every month, starting May 13th, 7-9pm in the Joslyn Castle Music Room, 3902 Davenport St., and, afterward, in the Castle's Carriage House.

Poetry Class for Kids In July at Cali Commons

The JCNA is offering a kids poetry class on Monday, July 6th and Wednesday, July 8th at Cali Commons from 10 to 11:30 am.

This class will be led by Matt Mason, our former Nebraska State Poet. Check the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association Facebook page in June for the Google sign-up sheet!



Poet Matt Mason plans to engage the neighborhood

The event is called The No Gatekeepers Poetry Night and you're invited to bring 2 poems: one of your own, one by another poet (a friend, favorite song lyrics, etc. — a piece that inspired you from school, etc.).

Both poems should make us feel and/or understand some kind of experience, story, or idea. You have 5 minutes, after which a horn will sound. All of us have poems that reach us, though often we don't call them just poems, we call them song lyrics, rap lyrics, cowboy poetry, slam poetry, Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein. On this night, we give the gatekeeper the night off and welcome you to entertain us. It's just us. It continues June 10th, July 8th, August 12th, and September 9th in the Castle's Carriage House.

Poetry Events

"Office Hours"

May 9th and June 27th, noon to 2pm, Cali Commons

Writing Workshops

First 2 Writing Workshops, May 12th and June 24th, 6:30-8pm, Cathedral Cultural Center

Open Mic "No Gatekeepers Poetry Night"

2nd Wednesdays of every month, starting May 13th, 7-9pm, Joslyn Castle Music Room, 3902 Davenport St.

Then, June 10th, July 8th, August 12th, September 9th, Castle's Carriage House.

Sweet Summer Events



By Melissa McCarthy
Castle Communications Specialist

Wuthering Heights Garden Party Saturday, July 11th 7-10 pm

Frolic to the Joslyn Castle Gardens for a Wuthering Heights Garden Party featuring live music, DJ Harsh Realms and the fantastical Omaha Circus Arts performers!

OMATOPIA: Versions of Omaha Thursday, July 16th 5-8 pm

OMATOPIA: Versions of Omaha. Join us for the opening reception of the OMATOPIA group art show in the historic Joslyn Castle Carriage House Gallery during the July 16th Art Walk from 5-8pm. The Joslyn Castle & Gardens green space will host an Urbanism Summit, welcoming

local organizations to share information on sustainable living, alternative modes of transportation, historic preservation and beyond at our Art Walk vendor fair.

Joslyn Castle Summer Fete Saturday, August 15th 6-10 pm

Be a part of a beloved annual tradition, as we celebrate over a century as Omaha's castle. The Joslyn Castle Summer Fete invites you to join us for a magical evening in the gardens as we raise funds for our historic treasure. Dig out your best summer garden party attire and your most festive hat for an evening packed with live music, art, games, tarot, food, and more!

Summer Fete tickets and sponsorship opportunities are now live!

This and That — Cleanup Success; Poetry & Art, Yoga at the Castle

Successful Busy Dumpster Day

Our Dumpster Day at Duchesne Academy's parking lot on April 18 was busy from the get-go, what with it being the first Saturday of the City's Spring Clean-Up campaign. Jim Winston took the lead with assists from Amy Wagenknecht and a full deck of volunteers, including old hands and new recruits, all pitching in with enthusiasm. Their assistance helped to fill four refuse trucks with 60 tons. The electronic recycler filled his trailer, and the Thriftworld rep was happy that his trailer was half filled by noon. Slim pickings of only five bikes this time, but the City filled five to six containers with metal and appliances.

Omaha offers this service because neighborhood associations provide the labor to get 'er done. Proud to say that the JCNA has helped with Dumpster Day for 36 years. Membership dues go to providing the portable toilet and pizza for the volunteers and also for buying vests, gloves, water bottles, first-aid kit and replacing the reminder yards signs as needed. If you don't wish to join JCNA you can always donate to help. Or volunteer!

Poetry and Abstract Art at Cathedral

As part of the Castle & Cathedral Creative District Art Walk on June 18th, you can enjoy listening to Artist in Residence Matt Mason (*see article Page 2*) in the O'Donnell Lecture Hall, and also visit the Brandon Rial abstract art exhibit in the Sutherland Gallery.

Brandon's art pieces are like shimmering jewels. You

don't want to miss seeing them, or miss hearing Matt's poetry that can move your heart and make you laugh and think. Both in the Cultural Center behind Saint Cecilia Cathedral.

Free Summer Yoga Sessions at the Castle

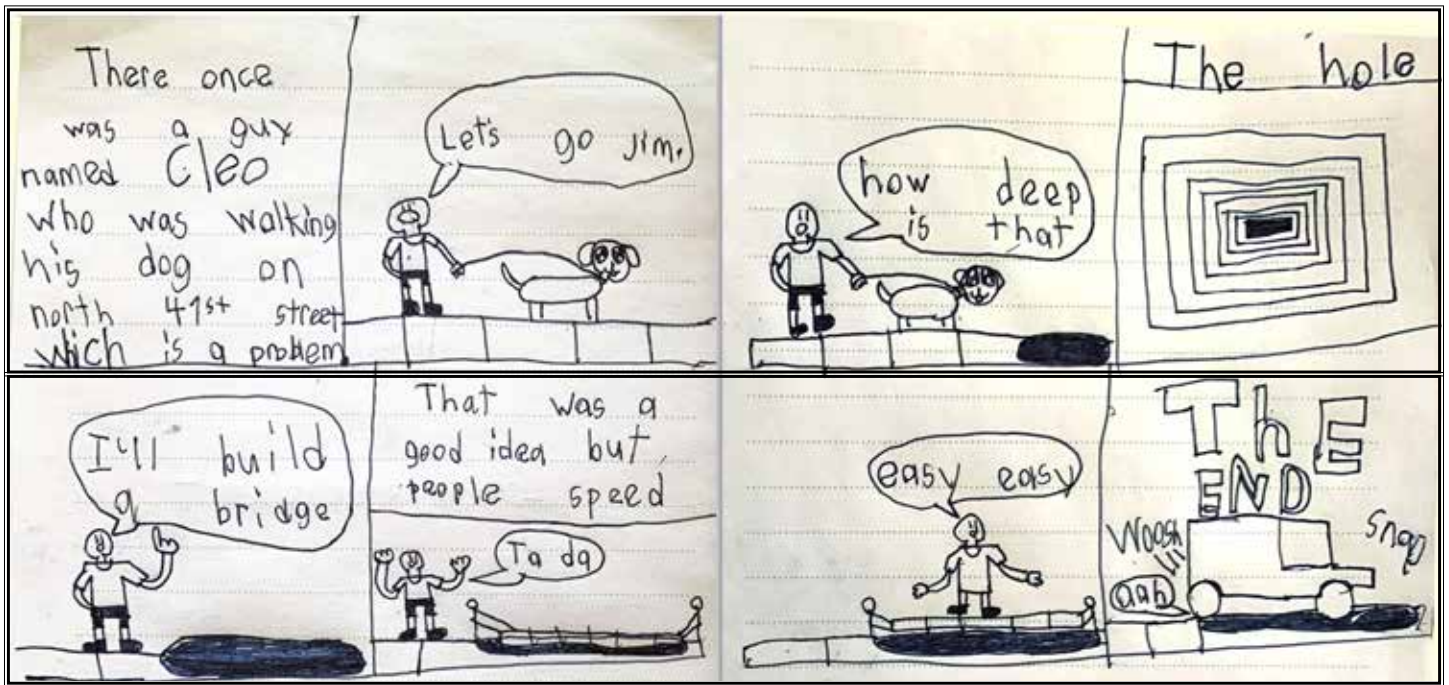
For the third year, the JCNA is providing free yoga sessions from 9-10 am Saturdays in June and July on the Castle grounds, led by Devashree Patel, Ph.D.

She lives near the Castle and loves to share her passion for yoga in such a beautiful outdoor setting. Dr. Patel has a Ph.D. in Yoga Therapy and Life Sciences, with 15 years of experience in teaching yoga. She taught in the Sivananda school of yoga before coming to work as a Yoga faculty at UNO's Department of Health and Kinesiology, and also as a yoga instructor at the Center for Healthy Living at UNMC.



Devashree Patel, Ph.D.

"Yoga is a gift that keeps giving," she explained. "It is a gift that was given to me by Sivananda yoga school and now it is a gift I want to pass on to others. I know for sure yoga helps people decrease their stress levels and if you have a less stressed society you have a happier society, and by teaching Yoga I will be making a contribution to my society and the world."



Pothole Cartoon by Liam Wagenknecht

An Updated Website for Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Is Coming Soon!

By NeEtta Gillespie

Our neighborhood is growing in all the right ways — and we're excited to announce that a brand-new website, designed to bring us all closer together, is expected soon.

This new hub will be your go-to source for everything happening in our community. From neighborhood events and seasonal celebrations to Summer Art Classes and relaxing Yoga in the Park, you'll always know what's coming up and how to join in. We're also proud to spotlight happenings in the Joslyn Castle and Cathedral Arts District, helping connect our neighborhood to the vibrant culture right around us.

But this website is intended to be more than a calendar — it's a way to get involved. Residents can explore volunteer opportunities like our Trash Mob and Dumpster Day initiatives, join us for Picnics at the Castle, or lend a hand in making our events even more special.

For those looking to support the neighborhood in a bigger way, the site will feature sponsorship opportunities tied to community events throughout the year.

And because community means supporting one another, we're also building a comprehensive resource list: connecting neighbors to helpful services, local organizations, and important information.

JCNA Citizen's Patrol Is Reactivated;

You Can Volunteer to Help Deter Crime

Living in the historic heart of Omaha is a privilege, and keeping our community safe starts with neighbors looking out for one another. By joining the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Citizen's Patrol, you become part of a dedicated team serving as the *extra eyes and ears of the Omaha Police Department*. Your presence helps identify

and report suspicious activity that might otherwise go unnoticed, providing vital support to local law enforcement. Together, we can deter crime and ensure our beautiful streets remain a secure and welcoming place for every resident.

During Covid the JCNA Citizen's Patrol had gone dormant, but now John

Davis is taking the lead to reactivate it. You can patrol the neighborhood walking, biking or in a car. You will need to have a background check and go to a training session to be given your Citizens Patrol ID badge.

Contact John for information:
yatz3000@gmail.com
or 531-210-6979

A Tale of Three Little Free Pantries

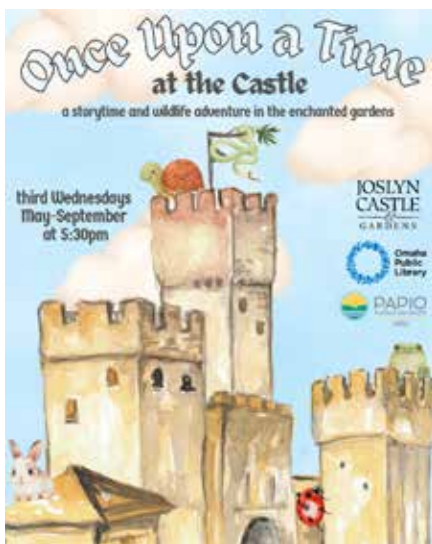
By Deirdre Evans

In 2020 the theme for the Mayor's Grant was Covid, so I applied to get a Little Free Pantry that could be stocked with face masks and sanitizer. And we got the grant.

The pantry was purchased from Etsy and installed in front of Cali Commons with permission of the owners, Luke Armstrong and Molly Nicklin. The door of the first pantry was always a problem. The hook and eye closure broke off, so Jim Winston added a magnetic one instead. Then the door itself tore away from the hinges. Jim fixed it again. The door fell completely off and was left in the Cali Commons doorway. Jim fixed it. Then the door disappeared altogether.

At this point Karl Kehm stepped in and made an entire new door and put it on, but while he was doing that Amy Wagenknecht wrote another Mayor's Grant app for a new, larger pantry to replace the first pantry with the door problem and whose roof was in need of repair, too. We were awarded the grant to get a second pantry!

In April another pantry appeared on the bench beside the Tardis. A kind soul had taken the broken door and, after strengthening it, put it on a new pantry box. Now we have gone from one pantry to three pantries! Although we certainly appreciated the love and care that went into the new pantry, we had one too many. The good folks at the Yates Illuminates, in Gifford Park neighborhood, said that they would love to take the mystery pantry but intend to use it as a Little Free Library. I hope the maker of the mystery pantry will find this an acceptable good use of their work.



Once Upon a Time at the Castle

Step into a world of literary wonder at Joslyn Castle & Gardens with friends from the Omaha Public Library and the Papio Missouri River NRD.

Once Upon a Time at the Castle is a story time adventure featuring a youth librarian who will transport you to a world of imaginary characters. After story time, learn about the real creatures we read about with live wildlife interactions and activities. Each month will be a new way to engage with storytelling and nature!

Third Wednesdays, May-September 5:30pm | Free



Happenings in the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood

Mark your calendar

FIRST SATURDAYS:

Trash Mob one hour neighborhood cleanup, 10 AM to Noon. Meet in front of Cali Commons, 518 N. 40th Street. Buckets, vests and pickers provided. Bring your own gloves. June 6, July 4, Aug. 1 & Sept. 5.

SECOND MONDAYS:

JCNA Meetings at Cali Commons, 518 N. 40th Street, from 6:30-8 PM. June 8, Aug. 10 & Sept. 14. NO Meeting in July.

FIRST TUESDAYS:

Picnics at the Castle, 39th & Davenport Streets, 5:30 to 8:00. June 2, July 7 & Aug. 4 (which is also NATIONAL NIGHT OUT).

THIRD THURSDAYS:

Art Walks, 5-8 PM Castle & Cathedral District. Stroll 40th Street from Joslyn Castle and Cali Commons to Sutherland Gallery, behind St. Cecilia, on June 18, July 16, Aug. 20 & Sept. 17. (The August Art Walk will include the annual Artist Invitational Exhibit at the Sutherland Gallery).

SATURDAY MORNINGS FOR JUNE & JULY:

Yoga at the Castle, one hour sessions led by Devashree Patel, Ph.D., on the Joslyn Castle grounds. Bring your own mat. From 9 to 10 AM. June 6, 13, 20 & 27, and July 4, 11, 18 & 25.



Appreciating the Generosity of JCNA Deca Boosters

The JCNA welcomes the generosity of our growing list of Deca Boosters. You can join them by paying for 12 years for the price of 10. (See back page for the Membership Form.) Thank you to these Deca Boosters:

John and Joyce Passarelli, Fergus and Orna Hoban, Aaron and NeEtta Gillespie, Michael and Kimberly Joyce, Jim Winston, Steven and Deirdre Evans, Natasha Kraft, Jerry and Millie Johnson, Ryan and Mandy Vandement, Paul Mileris and Robin Behlers, Thomas and Marcia Riley, Michael and Joy (Voltz) Doll, James DeVaney, Lori Reed and Jon Iversen, Jeanne DeMars, Mary Helen McDermott, John Campbell and Robyn Tait, Brad and Amy Schaap, Matt and Maggie Jones, Michael Berry. Bob Broom and Mary Clarkson, Alex and Lia Nester, Madison Haugland, Karl and Suzanne Kehm, Doug and Joyce Sasse, Michael and Katie Schill, Roger and Cathy Carroll, Ryan and Kim Isherwood, Patrick Murray and Jeanne Schuler, Adella Wacker, the Mental Health Association of Nebraska, Barb Bakhit, Joseph A. Ramirez, Razors and Blazers, Russell Bowie and Craig and Cathy Lyons.



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We also welcome the support of our Business Members and thank them:

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Right to left, new Poetry Post, Little Free Pantry, Mystery Little Free Pantry, and the Tardis, the JCNA Little Free Library. All in a row next to Cali Commons at 40th and California. Read the story of the Three Little Free Pantries inside on page 5.

JOSLYN CASTLE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Current JCNA members will receive postcard or email reminders of when they need to renew their membership. If you have a question about your status, please email Deirdre Evans at devans1950@gmail.com or call: 402-551-9005

If you received this newsletter then you live within the boundaries of the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association, which go from 37th Street to Saddle Creek Road and from Dodge Street to Cumming Street.

Dues for a year's JCNA Membership are \$15.00, \$30.00 for a Business Membership. A new category of JCNA Membership is DECA BOOSTER. You can now get 12 years of membership for \$150.00, saving \$30.00.

Send payment and this form to:

JCNA
PO Box 31764
Omaha NE 68131

Or use PayPal link on our website:
www.jcnaomaha.org



Thank you for joining us in making our neighborhood a great place to live!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ I would like to hear about volunteer opportunities