

Kennedy Heights Community Council

*The 25th Progressive Dinner**

Welcome to the 25th Kennedy Heights Progressive Dinner. The dinner has been an important grassroots activity in the neighborhood's history. It has been a great way for newer residents to meet their neighbors and for old friends to get together. In addition, the dinner introduces the neighborhood to people from around the city. In the process, the dinner helps to build and strengthen community ties.

During the 1970s, various Kennedy Heights neighbors held summertime block parties. In 1983, Pat Massey, the president of the Kennedy Heights Community Council (KHCC), suggested starting a neighborhood progressive dinner as a way bring people together and to raise money. A former staff person for the Clifton Neighborhood Association, Pat helped organize a similar dinner in that neighborhood. So in the spring of 1983, a new Kennedy Heights neighborhood tradition began. Since 1983 more than 1,300 volunteers have been involved, including 250 neighborhood families that have hosted a dinner for more than 2,500 persons.

As with any successful event, a number of volunteers worked hard to make it happen. Jody Barkley coordinated efforts to get host families to open their homes and to cook gourmet dinners for their neighbors. Lydia Morgan, Bill Hamilton, and others worked with Ernestine Engstrand, the KHCC staff person, to get volunteers to make desserts and to get donations for the silent auction.

The first dinner started with a block party on Davenant Avenue. Participants gathered there for drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and fellowship before heading to their hosts' homes for dinner for about 115 people that year. After dinner, the participants moved on to the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church for desserts and to bid on items donated by community residents, local merchants, and politicians.

Over the years, the dinner evolved. The meet-and-greet "block party" moved to various peoples' yards and homes. During the past few years, the Geier Apartments on Montgomery Road has hosted the registration and hors d'oeuvres.

In 1986, organizing and coordinating the dinner fell into the very capable hands of Bob Kamp, the neighborhood's indefatigable fund-raiser. With the help of Kay Briggs, the neighborhood staff person, Bob coordinated the dinner until 2003. Over the past few years, Donna Faulk (2003-2005) and Natalie Boyer, as KHCC's Vice-President for Administration (2006-2008) took over the responsibility of coordinating the dinner. In all, 50 to 70 volunteers will put in a lot of hours to make the 25th Progressive Dinner a success.

The Progressive Dinner's revenue will be part of the KHCC's budget for expenses related to our monthly newsletter, beautification, landscape awards, Ken-Sil sports, Winterfest, and other neighborhood activities.

Bon appetit!

*Researched and written by Jim Cebula, Professor of History, Raymond Walters College, University of Cincinnati. Jim is a long time resident of Kennedy Heights
August, 2008