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# RIVER PARK FRIENDS

Annual Report, 1998-1999

The River Park Friends and its Board of Directors are pleased to issue this first annual report, describing the organization's formation and its initial year of activities. The Friends' mission, to enhance, promote, support and supplement community development, and educational and charitable activities in Southwest Washington, D.C. has proven to be sound and potentially within our reach. It is a great pleasure to report, in summarizing this narrative, that the Friends' first year has seen a firm establishment of the group's presence in the Southwest neighborhood. With gratitude to its advocates and appreciation for the innumerable generous signals of community support, the River Park Friends here describes the organization's background, formation, first neighborhood projects, and financial condition in 1998-99.

## Background and Formation of the Friends

The River Park Friends can trace its beginnings to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebration of River Park Mutual Homes, held in 1988. Several events during the anniversary, including a reunion of many present and former members of River Park, demonstrated a continuing interest in our cooperative and its neighborhood among River Parkers. Events such as those of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary suggested that past and present members of the co-op might be happy to join together with neighborhood residents in offering financial assistance to Southwest Washington institutions and projects.

In 1996, urged on by the late Marguerite Gilstrap and others, several co-op members conducted a River Park Southwest Heritage project that recorded oral histories of old-time River Parkers and culminated in a brief historical narrative of River Park Mutual Homes and the results of urban renewal in our neighborhood. Observing the benefits that might be realized from organizing a voluntary non-profit activity of this kind, project participants, including Coralie Farlee, Keith Melder, and Robert Zigler, proposed establishing a tax exempt group based at River Park to aid Southwest Washington. In 1997, Farlee and Melder, then members of the River Park Board of Directors, urged that Board to explore the possibilities and likely success of a non-profit River Park foundation to receive and distribute tax-deductible contributions to benefit the Southwest. We hoped among other things to encourage persons to remember neighborhood needs through bequests.



In early 1998, River Park's Board of Directors passed a resolution which established an ad hoc committee consisting of Directors Coralie Farlee, Martin Forrester, Keith Melder, and River Park member Robert Zigler to study the feasibility of organizing a non-profit friends group to be established at River Park Mutual Homes. After holding more than 27 meetings; discussing the subject with lawyers, experts on tax-exempt groups, local residents and leaders; surveying and meeting with other River Park members; studying the options of becoming a task force under an existing tax-exempt community organization versus establishment of an autonomous organization; and learning about the possibilities and pitfalls of non-profit community organizations, the ad hoc committee decided to move ahead and form a group to be called the River Park Friends. Following the preparation of by-laws and articles of incorporation for the new group the Friends was incorporated under District of Columbia laws on August 27, 1998, and applied for tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the federal income tax code.

After completing this preliminary work, the ad hoc committee's connection with the River Park corporation was dissolved on August 31, 1998, and with agreement from the corporation Board, River Park Friends became a private, non-profit independent organization not affiliated with River Park Mutual Homes, Inc. In late December, 1998, the Friends received its federal tax exempt status, effective on the date of incorporation (August 27, 1998). The Friends Board chose its officers: Coralie Farlee president, Martin Forrester vice president, Robert Zigler treasurer, Keith Melder secretary. Margaret Feldman joined the Board in September 1998 as a representative of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly and a neighborhood specialist.

### Early Friends Activities and Projects

The Friends Board met monthly and sometimes more frequently through late 1998 and 1999. One of its early policy decisions was that it would offer financial support to neighborhood projects conducted by other organizations which have established review procedures, but not to design or operate its own programs. The Board spent much time on start-up tasks such as preparing a letterhead, securing a mailing address, adding members to our Board, disseminating publicity and similar administrative functions. The most important business of the early months was to develop a fund raising strategy and devise means for attracting members and contributors who would faithfully support our goals. The Board prepared a "fact sheet" presenting the Friends plans in attractive terms, and sent invitations to all River Park residents, urging them to become founding members of the River Park Friends by donating a minimum of \$25 annually.

In September 1998, the Friends sponsored its first



neighborhood project with a grant of \$250 for The Washington Post "Pigskin Geography" newspaper program at the Anthony Bowen Elementary School. The grant paid for copies of the newspaper to be delivered to every student in grades 3-6 on each Monday for thirteen weeks during the football season. Along with a copy of the Post for each student, the newspaper provides teachers' guides, maps, and other materials to help teachers use the newspapers in their classrooms. Emphasizing football teams and games, "Pigskin Geography" dramatizes geographical study by showing students where teams are located and where they must travel during the football season to play. The teachers were able to use other sections of the paper to discuss current topics such as weather and employment opportunities with students. In general, students seem to have reacted well to the project, gaining new interests in geography and increased pride in having their own papers to read, study, and carry home. Many students unfamiliar with newspapers were eager to take them home to share with their families.

Between January and August 1999 the Friends Board decided to offer grants to two additional educational projects. The Board contributed \$800 to the Scholarship Committee of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, providing a scholarship for the support of one student. Given in the name of the River Park Friends during the year 1999-2000, the scholarship assists a long-term Southwest educational project and confirms the Friends' commitment to a traditional neighborhood program. The Friends also provided a grant of \$200 to aid the "Dollars for Scholars" program at the Southwest Community House Association, Inc. "Dollars for Scholars" is an incentive program which pays near-Southwest school students cash rewards for excellence in their school performance. As with the scholarship program, the grant from River Park Friends for "Dollars for Scholars" supports an ongoing Southwest educational activity.

Another Friends project, in the field of community development, helps sponsor a neighborhood directory of services. Since its initial formation, the Board has observed that among the several published directories of social and cultural agencies in the Southwest neighborhood, there appeared to be no systematic means of keeping the information in these inventories current or consistent. At least three directories are now available, each containing slightly different data. With a small grant from the Friends, a new directory was developed and is being used to update existing directories.

### Growth of the Friends Organization

Over the course of its initial year the Friends Board grew and changed. One of its founding members, Martin Forrester, who served as vice president of the Board and helped develop the Friends' structure and mission, resigned in May 1999. In



September of that year, long-time River Park Betsy Hobby joined the Board, and has begun playing an active role in its work.

During the year, the Board realized that it could greatly benefit from advisory guidance from the community, and it considered different ways to obtain neighborhood representation. Early in 1999, the decision was made to form an Advisory Committee which will provide advice regarding broad needs in the Southwest neighborhood. Seeking a variety of viewpoints representing community interests, the Board found nine individuals willing to serve: Rick Bardash of the Youth Activities Task Force, Sidney Bresler of Bresler and Reiner at Waterside Mall, community activist June McCarron, C. W. Hargrave of ANC6B, Dale MacIver of the Southwester, neighborhood podiatrist Dr. Vesta McDowell, Alvin Hudgens, Director of Metropolitan Police Boys and Girls Club No. 4, William H. Jones, Director of the Southwest Community Health Center, and Director Peter Jones of Southwest Community House.

The Advisory Committee has met twice since its formation. On May 20, the committee organized itself with Rick Bardash as chairman, and began discussing various neighborhood needs. The group considered the several directories of Southwest community services and identified the need to create a consolidated directory. Dr. McDowell offered to work on a Friends mission statement and provided access to students of the Techworld Public Charter School, Inc., at Southwest Mall who developed a brochure based on the initial "Fact Sheet." The Advisory Committee urged that a target amount be named as a fund-raising goal, that support again be provided to the "Pigskin Geography" project at Bowen School, and that the school be adopted as a major recipient of assistance. The Advisory Committee met again on September 16 and gave suggestions for funds distribution. Thus far, the interest and advice received from the Advisory Committee demonstrate the wisdom of forming this Committee, and show potential for increasing the Friends' outreach and community usefulness.

The Board has made numerous efforts to publicize its work, including press releases concerning major grants, articles in the River Park Newsletter and the Southwester, brochures for distribution (prepared with help from the students of Techworld Public Charter School), and mailings to members of River Park Mutual Homes, Inc. As the Friends programs and fund raising campaigns expand, a higher level of publicity effort will be needed.

#### The Year: An Assessment

Looking back over its first year of activities, the Friends can observe a solid record of achievement. The organization received more than \$3,000 in contributions and disbursed more



than \$1,200 in grants. By modifying by-laws and articles of incorporation developed for other tax-exempt organizations, by obtaining only limited legal advice, and by utilizing volunteer efforts largely of the Board of Directors, the administrative start-up expenses have been very minimal. The Friends began at least one ongoing activity -- support of the Anthony Bowen Elementary School -- that is expected to not only continue, but also to expand to include additional types of assistance to the school. Other neighborhood programs and agencies, including the Southwest Scholarship Fund and the Southwest Community House, will probably receive additional support.

The Board has confirmed and reinforced its stated goals, "to enhance, promote, support, and supplement" Southwest Washington's needs in three areas of primary concern:

\*Community Development: to enhance the neighborhood's physical environment, beauty, and public safety;

\*Educational: including scholarships for deserving youth, education and information about the cooperative housing movement, and support for studies of and education about the Southwest Washington, D.C. neighborhood and its history;

\*Charitable: support for senior residents, such as home health care, homemaker and shopping services.

While the Friends has made solid beginnings in the educational field, the organization needs to expand its support of community development and charitable work.

The area of fund raising also requires much attention. Although the River Park Friends has begun to tap a variety of sources of funds, principally residents of River Park Mutual Homes, little fund raising has taken place in the wider community. The group needs to increase its base of financial support with more individual gifts, and other donations. One of the largest potential resource is that of bequests. At least one member of the Board of Directors has written a will that includes a bequest to the Friends. Bequests are long range assets to the group that should be publicized and encouraged. Additional productive strategies for fund raising are essential. The organization also needs to engage more of its neighbors as officers and members.

Summing up, the Friends' first year has been one of genuine accomplishment. Its commitment to the neighborhood has been reaffirmed by offering funds to support projects and programs operated by local public service agencies, not by engaging in projects of its own design. The Friends here expresses its thanks to River Park Mutual Homes, Inc. for offering its facilities and its support of the work. The group owes a



powerful debt to Friends members for their contributions and their faith in the Southwest community. Thank you all, so very much. Best wishes for a fine New Year in 2000 -- and a grand New Millennium!

RIVER PARK FRIENDS

Statement of Income and Expenses (as of September 30, 1999)

<u>Income</u>		
Contributions		\$2,795.00
Donated costs (not reimbursed)		562.71
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		\$3,357.71
<u>Expenses</u>		
Administrative:		
Incorporation	\$	504.53
Advisory Committee		8.58
River Park Fund Raising		94.29
Letterhead		23.55
Bank charges		82.00
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	\$	712.95
Grants:		
Education-		
SW Scholarship	\$	800.00
SW Community House		200.00
Community Development-		
Directory		50.00
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	\$	1,050.00
		<hr/>
		\$1762.95
<u>Net</u>		<hr/>
		\$1594.76



RIVER PARK FRIENDS

Balance Sheet (as of 9/30/99)

<u>Assets</u>	
Bank Balance	\$1,594.76
<u>Liabilities</u> (estimated)	
Grants:	
"Pigskin Geography" <u>The Washington Post</u> (est.)	150.00
Administrative costs:	
Actual:	
Invitation to annual meeting (postage etc.)	34.18
Creation of Wordperfect disk from typed page	16.00
Estimates:	
Photocopy of annual report (estimated)	25.00
Revision of brochure and printing	40.00
Photocopying of fund raising letter	50.00
Mailing fund raising letter and brochures	20.00
Use of River Park Meeting room	45.00
	<u>\$ 380.18</u>
<u>Net Assets</u>	<u>\$1,214.58</u>



Coralie Farlee, president  
Margaret Feldman, member of the Board  
Martin Forrester, vice president, August 1998-May 1999  
Betsy Hobby, member of the Board, beginning September 1999  
Keith Melder, secretary  
Robert Zigler, treasurer

November 4, 1999

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