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*Proud Neighbors of Collingswood*

**E-mail to:** [Info@ProudNeighborsofCollingswood.org](mailto:Info@ProudNeighborsofCollingswood.org)

Established in 1983 as a not-for-profit, non-political, civic organization. Promotes awareness about historic preservation in the Collingswood Community. Proud Neighbors of Collingswood, Inc. strives to educate and share ideas about restoration by working with citizens, business, and government, to maintain the historic character of the Collingswood Community.

**Proud Neighbors of Collingswood Projects:**

- ▶ *Porch Brunch and House Tour* showcases the charm of our homes and tranquil gardens. Brunch offers culinary delights on vintage porches in May on the Sunday after Mother's Day. The event is a tribute to our historic architecture & neighborhood restoration. It coincides with National Historic Preservation Month.
- ▶ *Town-wide Yard Sale.*
- ▶ *Fourth of July House Decorating Contest.*
- ▶ *Welcome New Neighbors* – gift bag delivered to new residents with an energy saving light bulb & community information.
- ▶ *A Gala On the Avenue*, a black-tie outdoor affair, is a splendid evening of fine food and dancing under the stars on Haddon Avenue.
- ▶ *Old House Workshops* offer insight on old home repairs & restoration with full-day education session taught by professional instructors. Popular workshops are *Wood Window Repair, Porch Maintenance & Exterior Wood Repairs* to help you retain the historic architectural integrity of your property.

**Officers:**

Marlene E. Granitz, President

Barbara Hart, Vice President

Frank Vita, Treasurer

Karen Haberern, Secretary

**Phone:** 856-858-1766

**Meetings:** 7:30pm on the fourth Thursday of the month: September-October, January-March at the Collingswood Library. Meetings are free and open to the public. Send us your us your e-mail so we can keep you informed about upcoming events

### **Volunteers Encouraged to Participate**

Bring your ideas, talents and consider volunteering to make a difference in our town with Proud Neighbors of Collingswood. We aim to promote awareness about restoration and historic preservation in the Collingswood Community. Proud Neighbors of Collingswood, Inc. strives to educate and share ideas about restoration by working with citizens, business, and government, to maintain the historic character of our town.

Proud Neighbors most noted events include the Porch Brunch and House Tour, founding of the Collingswood Farmers Market, Old House training Workshops, which help homeowners retain the architectural integrity their homes, the black-tie Gala of the Avenue, and a July 4th House Decorating Contest,. All funds raised at events are donated back to our town for community preservation education and projects. These projects and your new ideas are an asset to our community; however, they do require a lot of volunteer effort. Proud Neighbors has fun and get thing done!

Want to get involved? Want to hear more about opening your home for Proud Neighbors annual house tour fundraiser? Come and talk with past participants to share their enthusiasm. Homeowners whom we ask to open their homes to guests on a tour are naturally nervous, but we not searching for magazine photo shoots. Homes on the tour reflect a variety of housing styles, architecture and neighborhood locations. Some homes feature historic architectural features while others have a decorator's flair or a cozy, colorful ambiance. Tranquil gardens are welcome too! Proud Neighbors annual event coincides with National Preservation Month.

Not ready for a tour? Consider hosting brunch on your porch. Proud Neighbors provides the food and supplies. It is not too early to make your commitment to open your home, host brunch or volunteer in another way. Why not chair a committee or just offer a few hours of your time to make a difference on our town. Only have a few hours? Why not bake a dessert, staff a brunch site, help solicit advertising for our tour booklet or welcome new neighbors to our town by delivering a Proud Neighbors gift and literature. Come and share your ideas, while you make new friends.

## ***Proud Neighbors of Collingswood Donations & Accomplishments***

- \$2,617 Bike Share program in Collingswood for bike rack, parts & sign, 2008-09
- Won prestigious *Community Action Award for advocacy leadership by a Community Organization*, presented by Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. Award is given to grassroots organizations that are doing interesting work in historic preservation, 2007.
- \$7,900 Knight Park for historically appropriate wood-painted signs, 2006-08.
- \$5,600 Knight Park Pavilion for wood column repairs and painting, 2007-08.
- \$100 Student Architectural Scavenger Hunt; proposed
- \$ 65 Collingswood Public Library for Practical Restoration Reports-  
[www.historichomeworks.com](http://www.historichomeworks.com), 2008
- \$ 550 Knight Park for "Tregators," Tree watering devices for 30 newly planted trees, 2007
- \$8,000 Window Restoration Grant allocated to encourage original wood window restoration; ongoing.
- \$5,000 for three educational full-day, low-cost workshops about home restoration, 2007.
- \$ 500 Page Protectors for preservation storage of Historic Site Surveys at our Library, 2007.
- \$1,000 for Main Street painting supplies to encourage maintenance of historic character of downtown, 2007.
- \$1,400 to Collings Knight House for marble stepping stone resetting at walkway, 2007.
- \$ 5,000 for Knight Park bridge repair, 2006
- \$13,000 for Knight Park tree preservation, Gala 2006.
- \$12,000 for restoration of stage lighting at Collingswood Theatre on White Horse Pike, Gala 2005.
- \$11,500 to "Light up Haddon Avenue" with antique-style lighting & pole planters at the first ever black-tie fundraiser on Haddon Avenue, 2001.
- \$11,877 donated to our town, Gala 2002
- Raised funds & continued our tradition of giving back to our town, Gala 2003.
- \$10,700 for painting the Knight Park Pavilion, refurbishment of safety cart for Fire Department, facade painting & repairs in our business districts by working with volunteers of Main Street, 2004
- Funded and organized seven educational full-day "Old House Workshops" on restoration of porches, wood windows and exterior wood repairs in 2003, 2004 & 2007. Training programs won acclaim from the state of New Jersey.
- Founded the *Collingswood Farmers' Market* ,2000. Volunteers organized, operated, managed and financed the market for three years, 2000-2002. Now, the Farmers' Market continues & is run by the Borough.
- \$1,900 banner donors to continue our support of the Farmers Market, 2004-2009
- \$3,000 for electrical infrastructure, bike rack and trashcans at Collingswood Farmers' Market,2003.
- \$6,000 over two years to assisted with façade restoration along our business district on Collings & Haddon Avenue.

- ❑ \$8,000 for the purchase street banner poles installed at focal points on main streets. Colorful banners can now be displayed by businesses, government & groups throughout our town,2003
- ❑ \$1,000 to the millennium clock installation.
- ❑ Library donations of books on historic preservation and announcement display cases.
- ❑ Funded initial survey of historic properties in Collingswood and worked to obtain state grants.
- ❑ Volunteers served on Collingswood's revitalization committee leading to our historic site surveys & historic district designation.
- ❑ Raised awareness about preservation by saving a historic home from demolition, volunteers removed 6 dumpsters of debris from the property and found investors for its restoration.
- ❑ Host speakers who offer insights to homeowners on old house issues.

### ***History of Proud Neighbors of Collingswood***

Twenty-five years ago a group of Collingswood residents sought to raise awareness about historic preservation by encouraging better maintenance of our downtown and increasing public interest in our town's historic architecture. To launch this group, Frank Vita was elected President, Sue Yoder, Vice President, Bill Harrison, Treasurer, Sue Jones, Secretary and they incorporated the civic organization as "Proud Neighbors of Collingswood." Through the hard work of the officers and dedicated members Judy Everts, Jean Cogan, Carol Vita, Betty Harrison, Skip and Barbara Meekins, and Voni Potts, the group quickly grew and focused on educating and sharing ideas about restoration by working with citizens, business, and government, to maintain the historic character of the Collingswood Community.

Early concerned neighbors met in 1983 to discuss issues about their small town. All concurred with the sentiment of the "downgrading of Collingswood." They initiated a survey of Collingswood properties and learned that Collingswood had a significant number of historic assets.

Armed with photographs of the downtown, the group encouraged businesses on the Avenue to improve the appearance of their store window displays, focusing on historic architectural features. In neighborhood homes, front porches were a prominent feature, so Proud Neighbors designed a Spring event (*The Porch Brunch and House Tour*) to generate interest in its mission and to coincide with National Preservation Week (now a national month long celebration).

This devoted group recognized that through the years some well-meaning fixes on properties often stripped away the character of turn-of-the-century home's decorative exterior porches, original wood soffits, thickly-turned balustrades, finials, detailed wooden moldings, foundation lattice, wood cornices, proportionately-placed columns and irreplaceable chestnut interior molding and

windows. All these significant architectural elements of the town's distinctive character were at risk.

Proud Neighbors' members hoped to create an awareness that historic porches and wood windows are important architectural elements and removing them, as was the trend at that time, or repairing with inconsistent materials, only succeeded in diminishing the home's character and craftsmanship.

Along with a tour to highlight the interior of homes, the Proud Neighbors conceived a plan to host brunch on gracious porches, thereby bringing attention to historic architectural details and their preservation. Our brunch sites were originally focused on traditional wrap-around front porches of four-square and other period homes built before 1907. Proud Neighbors sought to bring notice to original front porches by having table decorations, bows, wooden signs and guests enjoying homemade brunch, which would generate curiosity and excitement about Proud Neighbors annual festivities.

Always, brunch food is homemade. Volunteers created menus in advance, purchased food on Friday, then gathered in a homeowner's kitchen on Saturday to assemble the ingredients and quickly deliver to brunch homes for overnight refrigeration. On Sunday morning, volunteers worked in the kitchen of brunch homes to present guests with a delicious homemade brunch. Now that the number of brunch servings has significantly increased, volunteers meet in a church or ballroom kitchen to assemble the brunch food; however the project is still limited by porch availability and volunteers.

Proud Neighbors Porch Brunch and House Tour, Collingswood celebrated its centennial. During our town's centennial, Proud Neighbors chose a Victorian theme for its annual Porch Brunch and House Tour. One volunteer sewed six Victorian-style dresses. That year, "Tour Captains" wore this Victorian attire to greet guests at six tour homes. Since then, Proud Neighbors annual event has grown and nearly 800 people toured homes last year.

Proud Neighbors dedicated founding volunteers, together with government, worked to achieve Collingswood's status on the local, state and national historic register, with recognition for turn of the century-to-1920's significant architecture. Proud Neighbors continues its tradition of advocating Collingswood's historic heritage and planted the seeds for the success of the town.

In 2007 Proud Neighbors of Collingswood received the *Community Action Award for advocacy leadership by a Community Organization*, presented by the *Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia*, an award given to grassroots organizations that are doing interesting work in historic preservation. Based on Preservation Alliance's review of Proud Neighbors' programs the Alliance concluded that since 1983, Proud Neighbors of Collingswood has been an outstanding advocate for preservation of the historic character of Collingswood.

Founded by volunteers who shared an interest in the restoration of their community and working with committed new residents, Proud Neighbors of Collingswood offers full-day educational workshops on wood window, porch and exterior restoration to inspire residents to appreciate and preserve the community's historic character.

Proud Neighbors of Collingswood has demonstrated how dedicated volunteers can enhance and preserve the historic character of their community. We invite you to join us in this effort. E-mail: [info@ProudNeighborsOfCollingswood.org](mailto:info@ProudNeighborsOfCollingswood.org) or call 856-858-1766 for more information.