

Mount Vernon Belvedere Clarion

December 2008

Volume 23, Number 12

There is no general membership meeting in December. The next general meeting will be January 20, 2009.

We would like to wish everyone to have a safe and happy holiday season and a prosperous new year.

Homeless Shelter Decision: Please pencil in January 6, 7:30 p.m. for a special MVBA meeting to hear from the city and decide the community position on the proposed homeless shelter at Centre and the Fallsway. *This will take the place of the December 16 meeting previously mentioned in MVBA communications.* (If you're not getting regular email notices – please send an email to webmaster@mvba.org subject: Subscribe). In addition to the city's presentation, we expect a presentation of the Morgan State Community Impact study along with details of the city's proposed Memorandum of Understanding. This is an important issue that could impact Mount Vernon for decades to come, so be sure to attend on January 6.

MVBA Holiday Party: Because of the above and other constraints, the MVBA Holiday Party is being postponed until Tuesday, January 13th – details coming soon.

Shop and Dine in Mount Vernon for the Holidays

Want to do something good for the local economy and the environment at the same time? Leave your car at home and shop Mount Vernon! All of our restaurants and retail shops could use your help right now and each can provide you with gift certificates for your holiday giving - just stop in and inquire. Don't forget Antique Row "the Greenest Block in Baltimore" where everything is recycled! You can also purchase gift certificates, memberships, or tickets for your favorite shows by contacting or visiting The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, The Lyric Opera, Center Stage, The Walters, the Theatre Project, Spotlighters.

Want to do some tax-deductible online giving? Now is a great time to support the MVBA in one or more of our key initiatives: Help raise our profile with Mount Vernon Historic District signs – the very first historic district signs in the city -- or fund police overtime safety patrols this season. Tax-deductible donations can be made out to the [Midtown Community Fund](#) - be sure to not if the contribution is for "Historic Signs", "Safety Patrol" or both.

Mount Vernon in the News

In addition to the hubbub about the proposed 7-11 at Charles and Centre Streets and several incidents of crime, there has been good news about Mount Vernon in the press recently. First, congratulations to FEAST, the new restaurant at the 4 East Madison Inn. In a rave review by the Sun, FEAST was awarded three stars across the board for its service, food and ambiance. Make a point of visiting FEAST for their homecooked dishes focusing on seasonal, local ingredients with a Mediterranean flair. As a special plus, diners in January will receive a complimentary glass of champagne, and, in keeping with dark winter evenings, there will be lots of chocolate on the dessert menu.

And, score another one for wonderful Mount Vernon dining with an outstanding review for Eden's Lounge as well. "There really is a kitchen here, and a pretty talented one, too," noted



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the reviewer who liked the “zesty, Ethiopian food with an upscale twist.”

And in a large feature article, the *Sun* profiled MVBA Board Member Philippa Strydom and her starring role in the new film *Parting Ways*. The film had its U.S. debut at the Landmark Theater in October.

BSO’s Marin Alsop was named “Conductor of the Year 2009” by *Musical America*. And, this is incredible, but you actually can see our multi-award-winning maestro for only \$ 20 at just about every performance.

New Business Members

Wow – we keep on growing and we are pleased to welcome the following new members: Kyro Pizza (formerly Al Pacino Pizza and Café Isis) at Cathedral and Read. With new décor and updated menu but the same rock bottom prices for savory wood fired pizzas and Middle Eastern specialties, this has always been a neighborhood favorite and we are delighted to have them on board. And on those cold winter nights, remember this: they deliver!

Blakeslee Lane at 916 N. Charles Street has provided advertising, marketing and public relations services to major clients including Bill Blass, Citi Financial and Fila. They are well known in their industry and highly regarded by all. We are happy to welcome them to the MVBA.

And there is no better time than chilly winter months for the warm and filling Southern cuisine of another new member, Night of the Cookers at 885 N. Howard Street. The bar is friendly, the food fantastic and the Sunday brunch out of this world. When planning a night out or a Sunday get together, remember this culinary super star on Howard Street!

And new member Read Street Books is like no other place in the city – part performance space, part book store, part coffee, smoothie and dessert shop --- but it is fast becoming a neighborhood gathering place. Expect a big welcome from Lizette and Christina, the proprietors, and settle in for live performances by local musicians on Fridays and Saturdays from 8:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Right down the street, Jay’s on Read is still the classiest piano bar anywhere and another new member of the association. Live pianists play Wednesday thru Saturday 8:00 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. This is THE ideal after dinner or after show place to get a cocktail and to linger over jazz, standards, Broadway tunes and more. Friday and Saturday nights the music starts at 5:30 p.m. making Jay’s perfect for after work and before dinner get togethers. Jay’s has won numerous “Best of” awards, and for good reason. How lucky we are to have them in Mount Vernon!

MVBA in 2008

2008 has been a great year for Mount Vernon and the MVBA. We are grateful for the strong support of our members this year. Our membership has actually doubled in 2008 and we thank you as more of you want to be a part of the association of businesses, residents, institutions and non-profits that are making tremendous strides in the revitalization of Mount Vernon. Among our accomplishments

this year:

Establishment of Baltimore’s First Public/Private Park Conservancy – Mayor Dixon formally announced the formation of a high level board to raise the approximately \$ 8 million needed to fully restore the Mount Vernon Place Parks, which are the center of a National Historic Landmark District. MVBA and Friends of Mount Vernon Place worked in close partnership on this critical in this effort, bringing political weight and connections, grant commitments, as well as historical expertise, to the two years of negotiations that went into this initiative. Our thanks go to former MVBA president Jack Danna who continued to stay involved in this effort even after he relocated to New York, to Dr. Lance Humphries, MVBA’s resident historian and the country’s top expert on Mount Vernon Place, Jane McConnell, President of Friends of Mount Vernon Place, and Karen Footner, also of Friends of Mount Vernon Place and Brian Coleman of MVBA. The next step for the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy is the creation of a national, museum-quality board. Board creation is being led by consultant Claire Segal who has been involved in both the Hippodrome restoration and the School for the Arts expansion and restoration.

Creating and Publishing Mount Vernon’s First Full Color, User Friendly Visitor’s Map – With 100,000 maps already in the hands of visitors and residents alike, this project has been widely praised by everyone and has had a good number of other neighborhoods calling to find out how they could get a map just like ours. The Mount Vernon Map, a “commercial spin out” of an MVBA proposal, features all of our cultural institutions, lots of transportation options, proximity to the Inner Harbor, a fun walking tour and scores of restaurants and shops, and has helped to put Mount Vernon at the top of the city’s list for tourism development.

Representing Mount Vernon at Major Housing Fairs -- Working with Live Baltimore, MVBA has represented Mount Vernon at several fairs with potential homeowners in attendance, including several specifically focused on employees moving to the Baltimore area as part of the BRAC initiative.

Reviewing Hundreds of Renovation and Development Projects – Our Architectural Review Committee is now working on a daily basis to keep up with the enormous demand for review of exterior work and new development. Not only are they busy, but, under the leadership of Chair Steven Shen, they continue to be highly regarded by the city, developers, and our own residents and businesses. As always, we thank them the ARC for their dedication and expertise.

Bringing Better Public Safety to the Community – In rapid response to an uptick in criminal activity, MVBA’s reconstituted Public Safety Committee has formulated and put into play a full scale strategy to combat crime in the community. This includes fundraising to hire off-duty police officers for additional patrols, organizing a citizens on patrol program, and working closely with police and the Midtown Community Benefits District to improve patrols and communications on crimes, potential suspects and resolution of cases.

Closing Nuisance Businesses – MVBA worked with the police, liquor board and City Councilmember Bill Cole to close the unlicensed and unpermitted Rock Star Showroom on Cathedral Street. This operation had been a nuisance to the residents of this almost entirely residential block. MVBA also secured legal representation, provided evidence, developed strategy and helped turn out a huge crowd to have the bottle club in the Belvedere building closed. The Liquor Board supported the community’s position although the club remains open for a 30 day appeal window. The club should be closed permanently in early 2009.

Pre-empting the Establishment of a 7-11 at Charles and Centre Street – MVBA created a coalition that included the community, the city and the Walters Art Museum, and raised almost to \$ 300,000 in equity in three weeks to make a purchase offer of \$ 450,000 on the ground floor condo unit where 7-11 planned to locate. That offer was unfortunately rejected, but new legislation introduced by Councilman Bill Cole to prohibit 24 hour operations in our National Landmark District holds out hope for a successful resolution of this situation.

Working with the City on Proposed Homeless Shelter -- MVBA Member and homeless expert Shawn Terrell has provided invaluable guidance and negotiating muscle on this difficult issue. Shawn and his larger committee will continue to represent the community with skill and immense depth in the homeless arena. [Community attendance at the tentative January 6th 7:30 p.m. meeting is critical to deciding Mount Vernon's position on this proposal.](#)

UB Set to Demolish Approved Buildings

The dilapidated garage and fire-damaged buildings at the corner of Biddle and Maryland are set for demolition within the month by their owner, the University of Baltimore. The University will use the property for temporary parking while the Fitzgerald project is under construction just north of the Opera House. The demolition of the former hardware store buildings was approved several years ago by the MVBA in conjunction with a specific development proposal. MVBA's Development Committee has negotiated with UB to ensure that the use as a parking lot will not last longer than a period of 18 months, after which the property will be made into a green space until development of the parcel for residential units occurs.

Take Time to Enjoy Our Cultural Institutions, Large and Small. **The Walters** antique jewelry exhibit, Beadazzled: 5,000 years of jewelry closes on January 4. Don't miss this stunning collection of crowns, rings, necklaces and much, much more.

Spotlighters Theater is an amazing little space. If you have not been for one of their shows, go! Now until December 21, catch the Pulitzer Prize-winning play PICNIC. It's Labor Day weekend, 1953, in a small Kansas town and options are few for the stunningly beautiful Madge and her independent younger sister, Millie, who yearn for more than the life of staid domesticity awaiting them. Then, fresh off a freight train comes drifter, Hal Carter, a robust, handsome, but troubled show-off who impacts the lives of everyone he encounters. The sexual magnetism with Madge is instant, but can she reject all she's been taught to follow her heart?

Center Stage has two productions on stage now: Caroline or Change until January 18. This thrilling, award-winning musical takes on race, faith, money, latkes, and change -- powerful, terrifying, and loose. And the washing machine sings a mean Motown, too. And check out the One Man Star Wars Trilogy until December 21.

The Theatre Project would love to see more neighborhood faces in the audience. Check out Alice in Wonderland by danceRINK December 17 – 21. Based on a 1950 radio play starring Dinah Shore but in a swirl of dance, movement and unique images. December 16 – January 4 brings the magical British pantomime Puss in Boots to the Theatre Project.

No one tells Maryland's story like the Maryland Historical Society (201 W. Monument). See these special exhibits today from 10 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.:

- “Tell Us Your Stories”: People and Events that shaped the Vietnam Era in Maryland**
- The Legacy of Enoch Pratt**
- Work and Play on the Bay**
- Maryland Veterans of World War II, Our Arsenal of Democracy**
- Mason and Dixon and the Defining of America: Treasures from the Maryland Historical Society and Independence Hall**

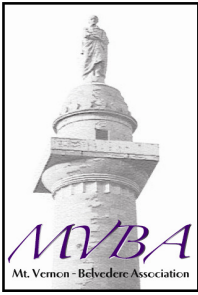
The BSO's schedule is filed with great performances and holiday specials. Go to bsomusic.org.

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1221 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Md 21202

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Historic Mt. Vernon/Belvedere

January 6, 7:30 p.m. A special MVBA meeting. See Page 1

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