

# BELLA VISTA NEWS

FALL/WINTER 2023

## BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

a Registered Community Organization

Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) serves residents of Bella Vista, which is bounded by 6th and 11th Streets, and South Street and Washington Avenue. BVNA encourages civic involvement, provides a neutral and public discussion forum, preserves and augments our institutions and character, supports the delivery of government services, and promotes dialog with elected officials. We are an independent and nonprofit registered community organization (RCO).

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## RECAP OF A SUMMER OF NEIGHBORHOOD FUN

By Eugene Desyatnik

Thanks to a grant facilitated by our dedicated Representative Ben Waxman, the summer of 2023 was filled with outdoor gatherings that brought neighbors together. With the support of this event grant, BVNA, as well as our friends at Da Vinci Art Alliance, Wash Square West Civic, friends of the South Street Mini Station, and the South Street Headhouse District, took part in the program, bringing neighbors together, improving neighborhood vibrancy and safety.

These memorable events not only reactivated our cherished community spaces but also supported local artists and businesses, improved public safety through increased foot traffic, and helped us fulfill our mission of fostering community bonds.

There were magical sunset concerts with swing dancing at Bardascino Park, a kid-friendly fall festival in Cianfrani Park, a celebration of the "Our Market" art and storytelling project on S 9th, Street and the second annual MINAS concert at local slow fashion brand Lobo Mau. We also continued the tradition of the annual National Night Out against crime—where we were able to distribute not only information about city programs, but this year also gave away personal safety items like porch lights and window locks. Neighbors also launched a new BVLicious meetup for members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies in Bella Vista, topping 160 in attendance. Our volunteers even designed and produced our first-ever limited-edition Bella Vista T-Shirt (made

**FUN RECAP** continued on page 2



Pictured above: BVLicious in the Piazza, Block Party in Cianfrani Park, Swing Dancing in Bardascino Park, MINAS Concert at Lobo Mau Block Party

## FUN RECAP continued from page 1

possible through the generous support of Triple Play Sports)! These memorable events brought generations together.

Disruptive behavior diminished, and our streets felt more vibrant. BVNA brought our neighbors closer, boosting local businesses and making Bella Vista an even more desirable place to live. And, of course, we ensured our neighborhood looked clean afterward, thanks to our continued partnership with ACAM, who scaled up their pick-up and cleaning after select events.

As 2023 draws to a close, we would like to thank Rep Ben Waxman, the Department of Community and Economic Development, and the Urban Affairs Coalition for their dedication to managing the program. But most importantly, thank you to every neighbor who joined us under the stars, savored the food options, or brought out their little ones to

enjoy face painting, balloon art, and a music and movement class. Let's continue to build on this momentum, embracing the spirit of unity, diversity, and positivity.



BVNA Members with Representative Ben Waxman at the October Block Party at Cianfrani Park

## EMPTY TREE PITS CALLING FOR TREES

By: Carla Puppini

This past August, sixteen volunteers with Bella Vista Tree Tenders surveyed the neighborhood to find out how many dead trees, empty tree pits, and empty pits with stumps there are in Bella Vista. The results are rather astounding: 39 dead (or nearly dead) trees, 71 empty tree pits (plus an additional 16 pits that had been covered over in concrete), and yet another 11 empty pits with stumps.

Bella Vista Tree Tenders want to help homeowners convert at least some of those 71 empty pits into pits with trees! Current city regulations regarding where trees can be planted on the sidewalk are strict regarding the placement of a tree in relation to other trees, utility poles, or corners. Taking into account that some of the existing empty pits are no longer suitable for a tree and that some people might not want a tree, that still leaves

a sizable number of empty pits in our neighborhood where a tree could be planted, benefitting the environment and our neighborhood overall.

If you are a property owner or homeowner with an empty pit in front of your house and you'd like to get a tree, there are three ways to do it: through TreePhilly, through PHS, or by hiring an arborist yourself. The TreePhilly website lists the three options: <https://treephilly.org/street-trees/>. To get a tree for free, you can apply either through TreePhilly or through the PHS Tree Program (this is the program that supports Tree Tender groups citywide). You cannot apply to both. With either of these programs, you cannot choose the species, but you can indicate your preferences.

If you are a property owner with a pit that has a stump, you are responsible for getting that stump and roots out

before you can get a tree either through TreePhilly or the PHS Tree program. There are contractors who remove stumps at a reasonable cost. Contact [cmpuppini@aol.com](mailto:cmpuppini@aol.com) for more information.

If you are a property owner with a dead tree in front of your house, you can submit a request form for removal. <https://www.phila.gov/services/trees-parks-the-environment/tree-related-services/report-a-dead-tree/>. The city has a backlog of dead tree work, so removal could take up to a year.




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# MORE BEAUTY IN BELLA VISTA AT PALUMBO PARK

By: Hope Scott

The Palumbo Park community is celebrating the arrival of a permanent sculpture, Bonsai, to the park.

By sculptor David Tothero, Bonsai is a six by six feet metal plantlike structure finished in Italian yellow. The piece is a beautiful and strong artistic and architectural enhancement of the park which aligns itself with the arts, being in the 700 Catherine Street neighborhood block consortium with Fleisher Art Memorial and the Da Vinci Art Alliance (DVAA).

The artist, originally from Lancaster County, has lived in Bella Vista since 1972. "Bella Vista always felt like a small town where everyone knew everyone, just like the small town I grew up in," he said. A graduate of York Academy of Arts, Tothero attended classes at Fleisher Art Memorial for the past several decades and was an instructor there for over 35 years, conducting a private figure drawing class. Mainly using metal in his work, Tothero began as a graphic artist and taught design at Moore College of Art & Design. He completed graphic designs for the Philadelphia Museum of Art and was an exhibition designer for the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History. In the early 1990s, Tothero began working in steel, creating large welded sculptures.

Neighbors and Friends of Palumbo Park (FOPP) coordinated with Tothero and installed the sculpture on September 9. There was a dedication in the park on October 7 at 10 a.m.



New Bonsai Sculpture Installed in Palumbo Park

In corresponding with FOPP, Tothero writes this lovely and salient message:

"Thank you for accepting my sculpture, Bonsai, for your beautiful park.

As more and more land becomes developed, the need for open space grows, and gardens like Palumbo Park become hidden gems for people and birds."

It was a busy summer at Palumbo Park.

The Friends group (FOPP) is installing a free library in the park, very kindly donated by Philly AIDS Thrift. Young students at

PALUMBO PARK continued on page 4

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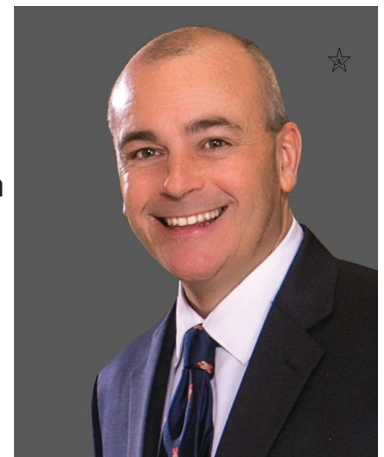
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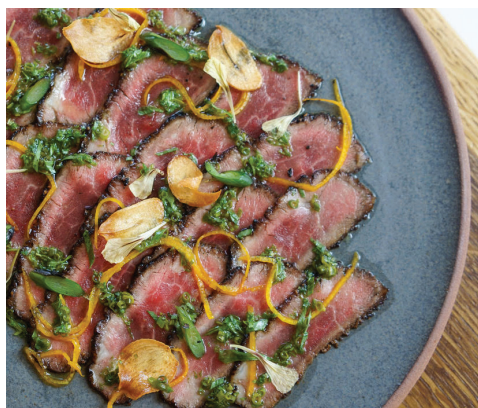
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## NEW RESTAURANT, ALICE, AT NINTH AND CHRISTIAN

By: Dennis Hallda

"Alice" has arrived! Welcome to the neighborhood Chef Dave. After a long search and difficult decision, Chef David Conn chose Bella Vista over Rittenhouse Square for his new restaurant, and we are very happy he did. He brings a new culinary concept to our neighborhood, where he has joined the Italian Market at 9th and Christian.

Inspired by his mother Alice and her love of cooking, Dave came to enjoy the kitchen experience at an early age. Raised in Baltimore, he moved to Philadelphia in 2002 to start working his way through our restaurant scene.



Iberico Carpaccio is on the menu at Alice

Spending time with both the Starr Group and Garces Group, his resume includes Village Whisky, JG Domestic, and, most recently, serving as executive chef at El Vez. This experience enabled him to focus on his future and "Alice."

It took 7 years of preparation to get to the finish line. Sarah, his wife, and 3 children supported him along the way. His experience and passion for food brought him to the next step, the opening of his own restaurant. Of course, the name to be "Alice", after his mother who started him on his culinary journey.

Strategic planning went into the design of the kitchen, showcasing a special charcoal oven. The dining area has been designed to include an open kitchen concept, bar seating, and a warm inviting interior. Windows all around provide a view of the market and passers-by.

When you visit Alice, it is always best to start off with a cocktail, and there are several originals with really creative ingredients. Hard to stop at one. King Vidi was favored in our group. There are

also craft beers, ciders, and an inclusive wine selection, curated by Chef Dave himself. He also has taken care to provide specially designed glasses for the specially designed cocktails.

If you enjoy exploring dishes that change seasonally, are locally sourced, and are prepared in a charcoal oven, Chef Dave and his team are on it. The current menu has an ample selection of fall dishes, including; Salmon, Shellfish, Organic Fried Chicken Lamb, and Stonyrun Wagyu Beef. I do have to say the Naan and Colorado Lamb were my favorites. There are Little Neck Clams with Jimmy Nardellos and a large number of other offerings. We will need many more visits to get to them all! You can find out who Jimmy Nardello is when you visit.

Stop by, and say hello to Manager Robert, who will greet you and wave to Chef Dave in the Kitchen. Enjoy a King Vidi and the best Naan ever. Reserve your table now: <https://www.alicephiladelphia.com/>.

### PALUMBO PARK continued from page 3

Fleisher Art Memorial will be painting the little library.

The bulletin board at the entrance to the park on Catherine Street is being remodeled by the Da Vinci Art Alliance

And this summer, the FOPP began Weeding Wednesdays biweekly in the park with a robust horticulture-loving volunteer crew.

David Tothoro's other outdoor sculptures and more can be seen on his website [davidtothoro.com](http://davidtothoro.com) or by visiting the Ironstone Sculpture Garden in Alloway, NJ. Please call ahead to Daniel Gantenbein, 856-275-3304. David is accepting inquiries from other neighborhood gardens and parks, that have the right location and funding to transport and install a donated sculpture. Contact: [davidtothoro@gmail.com](mailto:davidtothoro@gmail.com)

Hope Scott is a writer and editor who resides in Bella Vista.

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## THE NEBINGER PTA IS *BUSY* THIS SCHOOL YEAR AND WE HAVE EXCITING NEWS TO SHARE

We are launching a **Playground Revitalization Program** to update our beloved schoolyard. It is used for everything from free community events to gym class, and while we love our outdoor space, we want to make it more accessible and functional for all ages. As a K-8 school, we serve a wide age spectrum, and there isn't a ton of equipment for our older kids. Our Student Advisory Council has formed a committee of experts to transform our playground into something spectacular for kids of all ages. We are currently looking for donors for the multi-year project and cannot wait to share status updates as we go. *Our awesome schoolyard is about to get even more awesome!* Keep up to date and support us here: [www.nebingerpta.org/playground](http://www.nebingerpta.org/playground)

**Connecting with Government Leaders.** Our PTA President met with State Representative Ben Waxman in October to discuss Nebinger and ways his office could connect us with resources. There are state funds available for reading-readiness and social-emotional learning programs. He invited our middle schoolers to tour the state capitol building later this year.

(We know our Social Studies teacher and Student Council will be thrilled!) It is important for us to stay connected to our government representatives at both state and city levels for so many reasons. In October, the Nebinger PTA facilitated a campaign to get the crosswalks repainted on Carpenter Street, after the paving project. After an email and phone campaign to the Streets Department and Councilmember Mark Squilla, our crosswalks were repainted the next day. *Big thanks* to those who picked up the phone, and to Councilmember Squilla's office for taking our concerns seriously.

**Electrical Upgrades are coming!** If you've walked down 6th Street, you may have noticed that our 6th Street Garden became more of a mud-pit this past summer. Nebinger is undergoing a year-long electrical upgrade. Don't worry, we will replant the garden in the spring. So far, window AC units have been installed. We are *thrilled* our school was chosen for the capital improvement project. Anyone who has been inside Nebinger will attest to how gorgeous it is. They simply don't make buildings the way they

used to! Since there have been upgrades in technology since 1924, we are grateful for electrical improvements in 2024.

**Teacher Classroom Supply Lottery.** Funding programs at the school is at the heart of our mission as a PTA and what better way to do that than to directly fund upgrades to classrooms? Launched this year, any Nebinger teacher can enter to win \$200 worth of classroom supplies. Our October winner, 2nd grade teacher, Ms. Smith, used her funds to buy chapter books for her classroom library. Our November winner, 1st grade teacher, Ms. Walker, will purchase STEM kits for her classroom.

**Curious about Nebinger?** We love Nebinger and are always here for prospective families. We have the best teachers and cherish our school community. Our PTA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit—one of only two PTAs in the district (*really*). We welcome community support and donations. For more information about the Nebinger PTA and how you can get involved: [www.nebingerpta.org](http://www.nebingerpta.org) and our social media channels, @NebingerPTA

**WE WANT YOUR OPINION**

PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE MOSAIC MURALS AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD (PHILADELPHIA MAGIC GARDENS, AND THE LIKE)

[HTTPS://QR.CO.DE/BEOLRG](https://qr.co.de/beolrg)

\*This study is being conducted by graduate students in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania\*

SCAN ME

### SPONSOR BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION BY PLACING YOUR AD IN THE NEWS

There are two opportunities to have your business noticed by neighbors:

BVNA's weekly *E-News of Bella Vista* is delivered directly to more than 1,800 email inboxes, with a successful 55%+ open rate.

BVNA's twice-yearly print *News of Bella Vista* is delivered to more than 3,000 neighborhood homes and businesses.

Both of these news outlets are volunteer run. The proceeds support neighborhood initiatives including sidewalk sweeping.

Find out how, contact Chris Shelley [chris.d.shelley@gmail.com](mailto:chris.d.shelley@gmail.com)

# BELLA VISTA BUILDINGS WE LOVE

## SOUTH PHILADELPHIA STATE BANK AT 915 SOUTH 11TH STREET, BUILT 1919

By: Ralph Marano, BVNA Preservation Committee



The neighborhood we now call Bella Vista was home to thousands of Italian immigrants from the 2nd half of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. This was Philadelphia's "Little Italy", the 2nd largest in America, with a population 2nd only to New York City. Not speaking the language and being immersed in entirely new cultural and social systems, these immigrants had a very difficult time negotiating

their housing, legal, and financial needs. That support was often provided by building associations such as the Societa' di Unione e Fratellanza Italiana (The Union and Italian Brotherhood Society), which was housed in Columbus Hall, 744 - 746 S. 8th Street, a building listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. There were also many banks, some officially chartered by the state and others that were unofficial and sometimes took advantage of their customers.

Despite the fact that their wages were the lowest out of 23 immigrant groups, it is amazing how much was saved by Italian immigrants. Italians earned about \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day at the beginning of the 20th century. However, they only needed 50 cents to live. They sent the rest home to their families in Italy to invest in land, to pay old debts, or to allow them someday to return to enjoy the fruits of their work. As early as 1893, there were 25 banks in Bella Vista. Many Italian banks prospered until the stock market crash of 1929 when almost all of these banks fell. Bankers wrote letters, transmitted money to Italy, and acted as lawyers, realtors, employment agents, and travel agents selling tickets back to Italy.

The South Philadelphia State Bank was designed by the Philadelphia architectural firm of MacKenzie and Wiley. The firm designed at least 5 commercial and residential buildings in the Philadelphia area. It was built in 1919 by contractor Frank Lucci of 1603 Ellsworth Street. The photo on the right was taken in 2012.

In 1923 alterations were made to the building, designed by architect Max A. Bernhardt (1896-1947), who designed over 50 residential, commercial, and industrial buildings in the Philadelphia area. He studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, receiving his B.S. in



Architecture in 1917 and his M.S. in 1918. During the 1930s, Bernhardt served as an architect for the Department of Banking of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



In 1924 scandal struck the South Philadelphia State Bank when a shortage of at least \$16,000.00 was discovered from the bank's holdings. An arrest warrant was issued for Edward A. Fichera, the Vice President and Treasurer of the bank. Fichera disappeared shortly after accepting a \$3,000.00 cash deposit on a Friday afternoon. The vast majority of the bank's 4,500 depositors were working men and women of moderate means. For many of them, their entire life savings

were gone. As word spread, scores of them stormed the bank demanding their money. As the crowd grew to the proportions of a mob, riot police from the 7th Street and Carpenter Street station arrived to hold back the milling crowd.

### References

*South Philadelphia's Little Italy and 9th Street Italian Market* Michael DiPilla, Arcadia Publishing, 2016. P. 63.

*Philadelphia Builders' Guide*, v.34, 1919 p. 343

*Philadelphia Architects and Buildings* : <https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/index.cfm>

*Philadelphia Builders' Guide*, v.38, 1923 p. 380

*The Philadelphia Inquirer* September 7, 1924 p. 1

Interested in learning more and helping to preserve  
Bella Vista's historical buildings?

The BVNA Preservation Committee meets every other  
month at 7:00 p.m. at the Palumbo Recreation Center.

All are welcome, [info@bellavistaneighbors.org](mailto:info@bellavistaneighbors.org)

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# NEED SPACE FOR GUESTS?

By: Gianni Parente

With the leaves starting to turn and pumpkins arriving on doorsteps, the holidays are fast approaching. Soon, it will be time to share memories with loved ones and relatives, many coming in from out of town. If you live in a smaller rowhouse like me, or you just want to make sure you have a little space from your guests, there are two great local options that can host your family and friends.

Within Bella Vista lies the aptly named The Philadelphia Hotel Bella Vista at 758 South 10th Street. This three-suite hotel has been hosting customers since 2020 in an 1860-vintage architecturally significant mansion. The hotel can accommodate up to eight visitors across the three distinct suites, styled in manors consistent with Victorian, Parisian, or Art Deco décor. All suites come with individually controlled AC/heat systems, a smart TV, private bathrooms with jet spas, a hotel-style kitchenette, and other features such as original art. Nearby restaurants such as Dante and Luigi's, Sam's Morning Glory Diner, or Hawthorne's abound. For more information on how to book at The Philadelphia Hotel Bella Vista, please visit [www.philadelphiahotelbellavista.com](http://www.philadelphiahotelbellavista.com) or call (844)-867-7526.



Deacon Hospitality Group, the new hotel opened in August and is aiming to be the "neighborhood guest room". Not only are there 13 suites to choose from (including one ADA-accessible unit), Wim Café is downstairs for your coffee and pastry needs, and Yowie's original boutique has moved from Fabric Row to the ground floor of the new hotel. Your family and friends will be able to experience a truly "inspiring and unique stay in a real Philadelphia neighborhood." Maldonado's favorite suites face out onto South American Street, where guests have views of those quaint streets and brick rowhomes for which Philadelphia is famous. A Pennsport native, Shannon is also excited to be joining a legacy of South Street businesses that she has long

New to the neighborhood in adjacent Queen Village is Yowie Hotel, a very exciting addition to South Street (226 South Street). Owned and developed by Shannon Maldonado and her partner,

admired and patronized. The New York Times, Philadelphia Magazine, Travel + Leisure, and Bon Appetit have all written glowing articles about the new hotel, and we are certainly excited about this addition to the neighborhood and rooting for its success.



If you are interested in booking a room, please visit [helloyowie.com/hotel](http://helloyowie.com/hotel) and use the neighborhood discount code BVNA10 for 10% off your stay. Studios

through 2 bedroom/2 bathroom units are available and range from approximately \$165-225 per night.



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## BVNA EVENT CALENDAR



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It has been AMAZING seeing everyone at our recent BVNA events! Be sure to follow our event calendar to stay up to date on upcoming events!

<https://www.facebook.com/BVNeighbors/events>

If you are interested in joining BVNA to support the Bella Vista community, please email the [info@bellavistaneighbors.org](mailto:info@bellavistaneighbors.org).

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming neighborhood events!

**BELLA VISTA**  
NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

*A Pennsylvania  
Nonprofit Corporation*

Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) is a volunteer organization. None of our members receive compensation for their service. Your involvement and contributions are essential to our success and the quality of life in our area.

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## BVNA Meetings

## BVNA BOARD

**First Mondays at 7:30 pm**

### Palumbo Recreation Center, 10<sup>th</sup> & Fitzwater

*Board of Directors' monthly business meeting. All meetings are open to the public.*

## ZONING

**First Tuesdays at 7:00 pm**

### Palumbo Recreation Center, 10<sup>th</sup> & Fitzwater

*Open meetings for community input on building and renovation projects requiring variances of the zoning code.*

## PSA 1

**First Thursdays at 5:00 pm**

**QVNA Office, 709 S. 5th St.**

*Meeting between police leadership and stakeholders in Police Service Area 1 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. Review of monthly crime statistics.*

*For possible schedule changes,  
check social media, @BVNeighbors  
or the website, [BellaVistaNeighbors.org](http://BellaVistaNeighbors.org)*

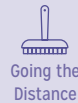
# BELLA VISTA SIDEWALK AND CURB SWEEPING REPORT

## WORKING TOWARD A LITTER-FREE BELLA VISTA!



**\$12,518 RAISED**  
from the community

The sweeping program is entirely funded by neighbors. Here is what we have been able to accomplish up through September 2023 with your support!



64.8 MI. CLEANED  
5.4 mi./sweep



14,650 POUNDS  
of trash collected



**\$1.82/LB**  
value of trash  
collected



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