

Celebrating 35 Years of Fourth & Gill Tour of Homes

CHEERS
To
35
YEARS

Pop the cork! Throw the confetti! This year marks the 35th Tour of Homes and Secret Gardens—quite an accomplishment. The neighborhood rises to the occasion year after year providing the many volunteers needed to pull off a major event like this. Thank you, neighbors, for your support. This event alone funds the FGNO budget every year.

How many of us who've moved here in the last ten years know how it all got started? Or even know the urgency that sparked the idea? The tradition of the Fourth & Gill Tour of Homes began in early 1990, when the neighborhood was battling TDOT over freeway expansion and struggled to find help and recognition to assist in that battle. How could Fourth & Gill get the attention of city government and citizens of Knoxville to come to our defense and to help us save a historic piece of the city that had long been forgotten? How could we raise the funds to fight TDOT and show them this was a valuable and valued neighborhood?

The answer was to show it off. With much fear and uncertainty, six brave neighbors met and planned the biggest event they had ever planned. After hours of volunteer effort and the hospitality of even braver folks who opened their homes for the event, those involved waited through a sleepless night to see if anyone would come tour the neighborhood.

On Saturday, September 22, 1990, Fourth & Gill proudly



ABOVE
Melynda and Jackson Whetsel, 1990 before first TOH



RIGHT
1000 Eleanor home on 2019 tour

opened our doors to 1,000 curious visitors who came to discover their grandmother's home, sit on real front porches, rub their hands over old oak mantles, look at period furniture and light fixtures, and rediscover history. The initial event was a huge success, and the tour has continued for 35 years. Thanks to Melynda Whetsel for conceiving the Tour of Homes idea and spearheading that initial effort after being approached by a couple of FGNO Board members, Bob Whetsel and David Massey, about the need to raise funds. Not only was the first tour a success, but its proceeds went toward funding legal and engineering help to develop and propose alternatives to TDOT's plan. That effort modified the expansion route and saved a

good number of homes that had been marked for demolition.

People continue to tour Historic Fourth & Gill because it is truly a unique Knoxville place that gets better with age. Last year's attendance was 600. Most of the homes are now over 100 years old—a rarity in our throw away culture. In 2022, the Tour committee added homeowners' secret

gardens to the tour. Visitors experience high quality original craftsmanship and painstaking restorations. They delight in the way old spaces have been adapted into contemporary spaces and infill projects conform to the neighborhood's charm. They see how homeowners have created lush and inviting urban gardens. Most of all, they connect to family and community history and to the warmth and friendliness of the people who have opened their homes to them.

In the early years, tour attendees often said that Fourth & Gill was Knoxville's best kept secret. Now the secret is out. The Dogwood Arts Festival describes Fourth and Gill as a "premiere historic district". We have received awards from Knox Heritage, MPC, both city and county governments. We have achieved the recognition we originally sought as a place that is beautiful and vital to this city and now is one of the most sought-after neighborhoods to live in. Attending this event has even become a tradition for the many attendees themselves.

This year's event will take place on Sunday, May 4, 1-6 pm. Tickets are available on our website at www.fourthandgill.org.

Thanks to Melynda Whetsel for contributing to this article.



Spring Bulletin Board

FGNO Board President's Report

Thank you to everyone who attended the Fourth & Gill Neighborhood Organization's Annual Meeting in February. It was a great evening of community connection, and we're excited to welcome two wonderful new members to the Board (you can read more about them elsewhere in this newsletter).

I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to recognize the contributions of two Board members who rolled off due to term limits: Chris Griffin and Dan Howett. Over the past six years, Chris served as our Treasurer and Dan led the Social Committee—two of the most essential and time-intensive roles in the organization. Their passion, dedication, and leadership have left a lasting mark. If you see them around the neighborhood, please take a moment to thank them for all their efforts.

While they leave big shoes to fill, their departure from the Board opens the door for new leadership and fresh ideas. I'm particularly excited about the prospect of our Social Committee being led by a pair of co-chairs, one Board member and one non-Board member. It's a model that reflects the best of our neighborhood spirit: shared ownership and collaboration.

At our recent Board retreat, we committed to making 2025 a year of generating deeper community engagement—especially with newer residents who may not yet feel connected or aware of what Fourth & Gill has to offer. In that spirit, here's a call to action for all residents. If you're a longtime neighbor, invite someone new to an event in 2025. If you're new to the neighborhood and have ideas or want to get involved, take the leap. Come to an event, share your ideas, and find something you are passionate about to serve the community on a neighborhood scale. Everyone is welcome, and this is Knoxville's neighborhood that welcomes all.

Thanks, *Chris*

SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Gina Truitt

Gina Truitt moved to Fourth & Gill in 2022 with her partner Aaron and three kitties, Sam, Malcolm and Chloe. Gina is general manager of Boyd's Jig & Reel. Gina will co-chair the Social Committee this year.

Jeff Johnson has lived in Fourth & Gill for 15 years, consecutively chairing the Social and the Tour of Homes Committees. Jeff will use his talents to strengthen community and serve as the FGNO Treasurer.



Jeff Johnson



LUMINARIES ON LUTTRELL

In December, the Social Committee pulled off a new and magical neighborhood event. Over 700 lighted lanterns were installed along several blocks of Luttrell. Many neighbors strolled the street and gathered around firepits for hot chocolate and s'mores. Special thanks to the Committee and to the Howards and Kay Newton for hosting the firepits at their homes.



Luminaries on Luttrell. December 2024



Greeting runners in the Covenant Health Knoxville Marathon through Fourth & Gill, April 2025



Good Neighbors Beget Good Neighbors

Fourth & Gill is known as an action-oriented, tight-knit community. The City of Knoxville encourages and recognizes community action with the Diana Conn Good Neighbor of the Year Award. This year, our neighborhood had two nominations for the Good Neighbor Award—Bill Murrah



Mayor Indya Kincannon and Bill Murrah

and Scott Schimmel—among 10 nominations from around the city. Bill Murrah won the overall award.

Bill has lived as a good neighbor here for 53 years. His work with nonprofit organizations has enhanced the lives of people of low to moderate income; even in retirement, he continues this work as a volunteer. Bill's actions go beyond the ordinary responsibilities of citizenship as he fosters connections across demographic and social divides. He also has played a pivotal role in the revival of the Birdhouse Neighborhood Center, overseeing building improvements, organizing workdays, and fostering a sense of collective ownership. Hundreds of volunteer hours have gone into this effort.

Scott's contributions are many, both within Fourth & Gill and around the city. Scott rallied the FGNO board to create the Fourth



Mayor Kincannon and Scott Schimmel

& Gill Traffic Calming Committee, tirelessly advocating for safer streets and working with city employees and officials to implement workable and affordable solutions to our escalating traffic issues. Recent initiatives include securing new crosswalks and repainting existing ones, relocating a speed limit sign

that was obscured by a relocated KUB pole, and improving visibility and curb safety near stop signs. Scott wrote and secured a grant for a mural installation on the Interstate-40 underpass crossing Gill Street, aimed at slowing traffic and welcoming visitors to our neighborhood. Active in fundraising for various community causes, Scott and his wife, Lisa Sorenson, also regularly donate to and sponsor neighborhood events—a commitment to the ongoing preservation of our neighborhood.

When you see Bill and Scott around the neighborhood, please congratulate and thank them for all their efforts. Neighbors like them are what makes Fourth & Gill a vibrant community.

Thanks to Roz Miltenberger and Kevin Brown for contributing to this article.

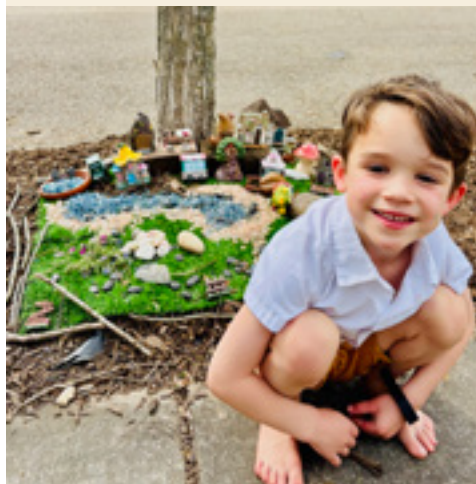
Spring in Bloom at Luttrell Traffic Circle

Each year in the fall, the Parks and Beautification committee members gather to plant 200 tulip bulbs. The tulips are selected and graciously donated by Melynda Whetsel. This year, they were in full bloom the last week in March—first week in April.



Spring in bloom at Luttrell traffic circle

918 Gratz Annex



There's a new neighborhood in town. Finn Crockett created this wonderful village, which is rapidly growing thanks to generous contributions from other Gillbillies.

Finn Crockett and his village on Gratz

2024 FGNO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Brown
Chris Ivey, President
Jeff Johnson,
Treasurer
Celia Lawren
Roz Miltenberger

Jen Mowrer
Grace Novinger,
Vice President
Gina Truitt
Melynda Whetsel,
Secretary

Refreshing the Birdhouse

The Birdhouse Neighborhood Center held its second annual fundraising campaign in late 2024, which was an astounding success. A group of dedicated volunteers and neighbors—Brett Burdick, Eldora Fitzsimmons, Betty Henault, Laurie Meschke, Emily Morin, Bill Murrah, Kay Newton, Konrad Quast, Scott Schimmel, and Brent Waugh—raised more than \$17,000 from 89 donors! Of those, 67% were Fourth & Gill neighbors! A huge “thank you” goes out to everyone who volunteered and donated. Your donation allows the Birdhouse to continue offering meaningful community programming and paying their part-time employee.

Additionally, the Birdhouse recently received the DowGives Community Grant for \$24,000 to improve the outdoor / garden areas around the Birdhouse building! Grounds updates will improve the usability and appearance of this beautiful historic house. Planned projects include building a deck or patio in the backyard, leveling

the backyard, adding trees along Gill Ave, landscaping throughout the premises, and adding better outdoor lighting. The Birdhouse will be working with other neighborhood groups to ensure the new landscaping complements the neighborhood aesthetic.

In February, the Birdhouse held its third annual Mardi Gras party, featuring live music by Leftfoot Dave and the Magic Hats and food from Fred Beans and Rice in the downtown Knoxville Brew Hub. Attendees had a great time eating, dancing, crowning the queen and king, and finding the babies in the King Cakes!

The Birdhouse continues to offer live music through generous funding from the City of Knoxville, the Arts & Culture Alliance, and the US Department of the Treasury. The New Market Train Wrecks packed the house for their honky-tonk show in March. Upcoming shows include the UT Jazz Ensemble on April 26 at 7:00 pm, bluegrass by Willow, Jesse, and Cody on May 17 at 7:00

pm, the Pellissippi State Student Swing Band on May 31 at 7:00 pm, and the Big Asses day-long free

music fest on June 6.

Thanks to Catherine Abbott for submitting this article.



New Market Train Wrecks performing at The Birdhouse



Attendees at the Mardi Gras celebration at The Birdhouse

GOOD INFO TO KNOW

- 1 Always call 911 if a crime is being committed. If you feel someone needs help or intervention, 311 is the community support number. Social workers and police work together to help in these situations.
- 2 To stay up to date on neighborhood activities, join the Fourth and Gill listserv. To be added, contact Jen Mowrer at jen@mowrerpower.com or go to www.fourthandgill.org, top of homepage, click here to get neighborhood updates.
- 3 New to the neighborhood? We'd like to welcome you with a gift. To let us know, please contact Nina Reineri at ninareineri@gmail.com.

4 & G UPCOMING EVENTS

(Details released on the Fourth & Gill listserv)

April 1-30

Dogwood Arts Walking
Trail & Open Gardens

April 24

Garden Club

May 4

Fourth & Gill Tour of
Homes & Secret Gardens

May 17

Fourth & Gill Yard Sale

May 31

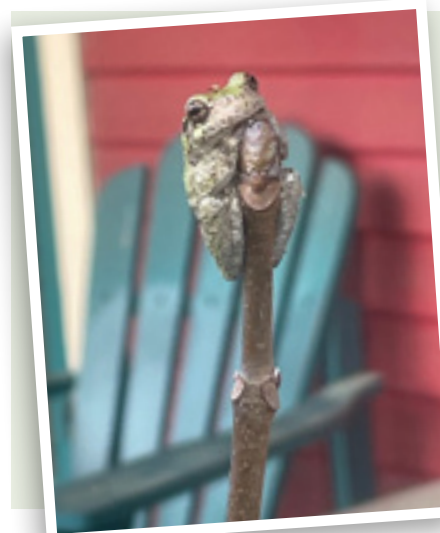
Garden Club

June TBD

Porch Hop

FGNO Board meetings

occur on the 3rd Sunday
of the month at 4 pm,
CUMC 2nd Floor.
2nd Floor.



Hello Little Friend!

Cope's gray tree
frog, courtesy of
Alice Shoo-Jerger

