

NORTH FOUR CORNERS NEWS

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY THE NORTHWOOD-FOUR CORNERS CIVIC ASSOCIATION ■ DECEMBER 2023

Winter Wonderland Holiday Social

By Sharon Canavan

NFCCA is hosting a Holiday Social on Wednesday, 13 December, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at Forest Knolls Elementary School. This event takes the place of NFCCA's usual December meeting.

Come meet and mingle with your neighbors! There will be activities for kids, music, and a holiday market with vendors selling their arts and crafts. You are invited to bring sweets or appetizers to share. Drinks will be served,

but no alcohol is permitted on school grounds. Artisans who would like to show their wares at the holiday market can email *president AT nfcca.org*.

In the giving spirit of the holiday season, there will be a Food Collection Box for Silver Spring-based Manna Food Center, which encourages healthy eating choices. Their list of most-needed foods includes instant brown rice, whole grain pasta, canned tuna, salmon, or chicken packed in water, dry or canned beans, canned vegetables or fruit, shelf-stable milk boxes, cooking oil, spices, instant formula, and baby foods. Low-sodium products are preferred. Manna does not provide goods such as soda, cakes, cookies, or candy to their customers.

If you have decorated your home or yard for the holidays with festive displays, lights, trains, or villages and want to be added to the Holiday Tour map for our community, send an email with your address to *HolidayTourMap AT nfcca DOT org*. A map will be posted to the listserv and on our website *nfcca.org* to make it easy for everyone to take a self-guided walk or drive through the neighborhood to see the decorations. ■

Next Meeting on 13 December to Be Holiday Party

The next meeting of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association will be held on Wednesday, 13 December 2023, at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held *only in person* at Forest Knolls Elementary School; **it will not be held virtually**.

In lieu of our usual meeting, however—except to vote in a new Board member—this “meeting” will be a Holiday Social! Music, sweet treats, and hot cocoa are expected. Please see the details at left.

All residents of the Northwood-Four Corners-Forest Knolls area are invited to attend and enjoy the festivities.

We kindly ask that you support NFCCA by paying dues. Annual dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the meeting or online. ■

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WWW.NFCCA.ORG

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In 2023-2024, I'm looking forward to my second stint as NFCCA President. Reflecting back, I want to thank everybody for their efforts this past year—our neighborhood volunteers, Board members and Officers, and all who make this a better community. A lot of folks stepped up to plan over a dozen neighborhood activities, plus recurring CommUnity walks, weekly casual soccer games, and bicycling events, including three all-ages outings and several Friday bike bus rides to school.

The NFCCA board and volunteers work behind the scenes to make our community a better place to live. The *North Four Corners News* is delivered to your doorstep by 49 volunteers—a huge effort where many hands make light work. I want to shout out to Ema Perez, our outgoing President, for his energetic efforts (too many events to mention!) and Julie Whitcomb for rolling up her sleeves and putting on two stellar events—the neighborhood yard sale and National Night Out. Although Linda Perlman has chosen to step down from the Board, we really owe her a debt of gratitude for her many years of service (count them—17) and her sage legal advice upon which we have so often relied. Long-timers Sondra Katz and Jacquie Bokow—8 and 23 years, respectively—continue to manage NFCCA's finances and helm the newsletter and website.

In this vein, we need to keep up the engagement level. Presently, the NFCCA does not meet our bylaws requirements for an eight-member Board—there is one vacant seat. NFCCA covers a pretty large area, representing slightly more than 1,600 households. Our community's residents are diverse—economically and ethnically, newcomers and long-timers, young, middle-aged, and seniors—all with varying needs and views. I strongly believe it is important for NFCCA Officers and Board members to bring varying perspectives and represent the full range of these differences.

Volunteer to serve on the Board to help us make Northwood-Four Corners-Forest Knolls an even more excellent community! Offer to run yourself or nominate someone you believe can contribute their expertise. Please contact me at *president AT nfcca DOT org* or call me at 240.281.3911 if you have any questions about serving or suggestions for a nominee.

Volunteering to serve on the NFCCA Board does not have to be a heavy lift in terms of time or energy to get involved. There are five NFCCA general membership meetings annually and a board planning meeting is scheduled a month before each of these. Board members and officers choose how much time to devote to volunteer activities, such as planning social activities, writing articles for the newsletter, or tracking upcoming planning, legislative, or regulatory issues that will affect our community.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Communicate!

NFCCA Listserv

To join:

nfcca+subscribe@groups.io
[add "un" to unsubscribe]

To send messages to group:

nfcca@groups.io

NFCCA Deals!

Buy Nothing Forest Knolls/North Four Corners/Woodmoor

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/517319962826076>

Compost Crew: 5-gal. @ \$22, 12-gal. @ \$29, compostcrew.com

Seasonal Roots: Sign up @ \$25, seasonalroots.com/nfcca

NORTH FOUR CORNERS NEWS

The *North Four Corners News* (formerly *Northwood News*) is published by the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association. The NFCCA represents the ~1,600 households in the area bounded by Colesville Road (Rte. 29), University Blvd. (Rte. 193), Caddington Avenue, and the Northwest Branch.

Any resident of this area is eligible to join the NFCCA. Annual dues are \$15 per household and may be paid online, at any Association meeting, or mailed to the treasurer.

The *North Four Corners News* is published five times a year—in October, December, February, April, and June. To place an ad or discuss a story, please contact the editor.

Editor

Jacquie Bokow
10603 Cavalier Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901
301.593.8566
editor AT nfcca DOT org

Visit Our Website

www.nfcca.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

NFCCA wants to acknowledge the efforts of individuals who make a special contribution to our community with a Good Neighbor award. If there is someone you would like to nominate for this award, please send your nomination to *president AT nfcca DOT org* with a short write-up about how the person has made the NFCCA area a better community.

I also want to remind everyone that we are at the beginning of the next NFCCA dues cycle. In 2022–2023, we hit an all-time high for membership with 267 paid member households. We are off to a good start with dues received from 114 households, so join up! The October newsletter included a dues envelope; if you cannot locate it, you can bring a dues check to any NFCCA meeting. Or paying online is easy via PayPal on the NFCCA website or use

the QR code below. We keep costs low by relying on neighborhood volunteers; NFCCA membership comes at the low, low price of \$15.

We are always looking to the community to share your ideas and help guide NFCCA in setting our objectives for the upcoming year. Attend the general membership meetings in person or via Zoom, get involved, and help steer the direction of our neighborhood organization.

Finally—for something a little different—instead of our usual business meeting, NFCCA is hosting a Holiday Social on Wednesday, 13 December (for further details see page one in this newsletter or go to *nfcca.org*). Have some fun, bring your kids for games and treats, meet your neighbors, and come prepared to chat with the NFCCA Officers and Board about your thoughts and ideas for next year!

—Sharon Canavan

Dedicated Bus Lane Pilot on University Under Construction

By Sharon Canavan

Installation of MCDOT's dedicated bus lane pilot on University Boulevard between Amherst Avenue and Dennis Avenue has begun. The pavement where the bus lane will run has been painted already from Amherst Avenue to Sligo Creek parkway going east and will ultimately run to Dennis Avenue and along the west-bound curb lane for the same stretch of highway.

Bicyclists will also be per-

mitted to ride in the dedicated bus lanes. To make a turn into the neighborhood, drivers will be allowed to move into the bus lane within 100 feet of their turn. The bus lane pilot does not involve any changes to existing properties, parking, or loading.

For further details on the bus lane pilot, refer to the newsletter story in the June issue of *North Four Corners News* at www.nfcca.org/news/nn202306c.html. ■

NFCCA BOARD

The Board of Directors for the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association serves for one year and meets every month except July and August. Current officers (until October 2024) are:

President

Sharon Canavan
10213 Edgewood Avenue
240.281.3911
president AT nfcca DOT org

Vice President

Mario "Ema" Perez
10608 Margate Road
703.400.9560
veep AT nfcca DOT org

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At Large

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John Prochilo
114 Southwood Avenue
978.502.4412
john AT nfcca DOT org

Vacant [Hey! Why not you?]

Immediate Past President

Mario "Ema" Perez

PAY DUES HERE



2024 is an Election Year

By Jacquie Bokow

Yes, elections are happening next year. The Montgomery County Board of Elections is always in need of volunteers. Working at the elections is fun and rewarding—and you get paid! People who speak Spanish are particularly needed.

Working the Upcoming Elections

Recruitment of Election Workers for the 2024 election cycle begins in January. All former volunteers will be contacted at that time via email. If you'd like to sign up to serve as an Election Worker, visit www.777vote.org or call Recruiter Deborah Hamer at 240.777.8571. In-person training for the Primary Election begins 12 February 2024, so don't wait to sign up. You get paid for both in-person training and the actual election day. (The sooner you sign up, the more likely you can get a spot at local classes at Wheaton Public Library or other nearby locations instead of having to go to BOE HQ in Gaithersburg.)

Since our neighborhood and county are heavily Democratic, workers affiliated with other political parties (or unaffiliated) are needed, so please consider volunteering

if you are registered as a Republican or a member of some other party, or unaffiliated.

Higher Pay Begins Next Year

New Election Worker pay rates for the service stipend will begin with the 2024 Election Cycle. Most full-day positions—for example, Voter Operations worker (VOP), Provisional worker (VOP-P), or Same-Day Registration worker (SDR)—can earn \$250 for their service plus \$50 for training. Additionally, returning Election Workers who previously served at a polling place during early voting or Election Day will earn \$100 extra each full day of service during early voting and/or election day in the 2024 election cycle. For more information on position requirements, duties, and service hours, visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/ElectionJudge/jobdescription.html.

Temporary Work at BOE

If you are interested in temporary employment with the Board of Elections for the 2024 Elections, the job announcement for Election Aide II (Grade 10) has been posted on the Montgomery County Government Human Resource website. You must submit your application directly through the county's website. Follow these instructions below to apply:

- Visit www.work4mcg.gov or www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/
- Select Job Openings
- Select "Search Jobs" tab
- Enter "IRC59438" in the

Upcoming Elections

Thursday, 2 May 2024 through Thursday, 9 May 2024

Primary Election Early Voting

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

2024 Presidential Primary Election

Thursday, 24 October 2024 through Thursday, 31 October 2024

General Election Early Voting

Tuesday, 5 November 2024

2024 Presidential General Election

Keyword box

■ Select "IRC59438" in the name column to read the job description

The Election Aide II positions at BOE fill a variety of roles to assist in the election planning and preparation process. Most positions require 40 hours or more. They have vacancies in the following areas:

- Voter Registration
- Election Worker Recruitment
- Election Worker Training
- Voter Services
- IT Warehouse Support and Clerical
- Operations Warehouse
- Drop-Box Lead
- Floater

Only looking for full-time work? Filling a temp position will not only give you an idea of what to expect and let you meet future coworkers but also give you a foot in the door.

[Check the nfcca.org website later for list of candidates, polling places, dates, etc.] ■

**ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE
IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY?**

GO TO

<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>

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Porcelain-berry: The Invasive Vine Taking Over Our Neighborhood

By Jennifer McGuire Cox

If you walk down any street in our neighborhood, within a few minutes you're likely to meet an invasive vine that is quickly strangling our community: porcelain-berry.

While some might think the small white flowers and colorful berries are a nice addition to their yard, the vine spreads prolifically, quickly taking over yards and weakening and killing other plants, shrubs, and trees nearby.

What Is It and What Does It Look Like?

Porcelain-berry (*Ampelopsis glandulosa*, var. *brevipedunculata*) is a climbing, woody vine in the grape family. It was introduced to America from Northeast Asia in the 1870s as a landscape plant, popular for its durable

groundcover qualities, but eventually spread to the wild. It is now commonly found throughout the East Coast and is slowly spreading westward across the United States. It is of particular concern in the southeastern United States where its spread is often unchecked.

The most obvious characteristic of porcelain-berry, other than being a vine, is its bright, multicolored berries—ranging from purplish red to dark blue and pale pink—that emerge in early fall. These berries spring from its hundreds of white blooms that develop in June to August. Its heart-shaped leaves also resemble those of grape vines, deeply lobed, and it has non-adhesive tendrils at the base of each leaf that help it climb and spread.

In the fall, the vine loses its leaves as the berries are eaten or dropped on the ground below. It will re-emerge in the spring with new blossoms and leaves and, eventually, new berries.

How Does It Spread?

Porcelain-berry is spread in two different ways: by animals and vegetatively. Birds and other wildlife, such as small mammals, eat the colorful berries and spread the seeds to new areas in their droppings. This is often how porcelain-berry first gets established in many yards. The seeds then sprout, and those that do not can wait for years in the soil before perfect conditions lead to their germination. The plant, once established, can also resprout from its roots, creating a number of new vines.

Why Is It Bad?

Porcelain-berry is a very aggressive and opportunistic plant that can take over disturbed areas as well as forest edges, pond margins, and streambanks. The vine grows quickly, forming thick mats that crowd out native plants and vegetation, making it difficult if not impossible for them to grow. This reduced diversity of plant species reduces habitat for wildlife.

In addition to taking over groundcover, porcelain-berry can use its tendrils to climb shrubs and trees, reaching heights of 20–25 feet. This not only blocks out sunlight but the extra weight weakens



Porcelain-berry easily outcompetes native plants, reducing species diversity and impacting habitat for wildlife.

'5477666' by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org. CC BY

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

NURTURING NATURE

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the tree and can lead to its eventual death. In short, one vine can quickly take over your yard and spread to the yards of your neighbors before you know it, wreaking death and destruction in its wake!

How to Tell the Difference Between Porcelain-berry and Native Grape Vines

While porcelain-berry is pretty distinct, the plant is in the grape family and can, therefore, be confused for native grape vines. How do you tell the difference?

1 Look at the vines.

Native grape vines are dark brown whereas porcelain-berry vines are gray-brown and noticeably bumpier. Porcelain-berry vines are also covered in lenticels (raised spots that allow gas exchanges), and do not peel, unlike native grape vines.

2 Look at how the flowers/fruits hang on the



Porcelain-berry taking over shrubs and trees in a yard in our own neighborhood.



The berries of the porcelain-berry, which emerge in the fall, hang above the vine and appear pink, blue, and purple. The leaves of the plant are heart-shaped or deeply lobed, with 3-5 divisions. '5477821' by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org. CC BY

vine. The flowers and fruits of native grapes will hang below the vine, whereas porcelain-berry flowers and fruits hang above.

3 Look at the color of the fruit. Whereas the fruit of both native grapes and porcelain-berry start off pale green, the berries of native grapes ripen to a dark purple or black. Porcelain berries will ripen in many different colors, including pink, blue, and purple.

How to Remove It

There are a number of methods for removing porcelain-berry. The easiest way is through early action. As soon as you see a seedling emerge, you should remove it, and the roots, completely. Be prepared for repeated removals, as seeds that did not germinate might still be viable in the soil and start to grow. In addition, any root fragments left in the soil can result in new growth. Hand-pulling

vines in the fall or early spring will prevent flowers and, thus, the plant from producing seeds the next season.

If the vine is already producing fruit, make sure to collect all the berries when removing the plant to prevent seed dispersal and take time to remove the entire root system to prevent it from coming back. If the vine is well-established and is spread over a large area, chemical treatment may be necessary in conjunction with manual methods.

If the vines have spread to trees and shrubs, don't just pull on the vines to get them off, as this will likely do more damage to the vegetation. Instead, using pruners or loppers, cut an opening, or window, into the porcelain-berry at ground level and again about two to four feet off the ground. This will eventually lead to the vine dying off of the tree and help in the tree's recovery.

[Cox lives on Belton Rd.] ■

How to Find a Lost Cat

By Heidi Barron

I've been keeping a list of places where lost cats have been found to help neighbors when their cats go missing. Before that ever happens, the best thing you can do to ensure your cat comes home safe and sound is to get your cat microchipped. You pay for the initial registration, but you do not need to pay an annual fee for the microchip to remain linked to you. Just make sure to keep your contact information updated if you change phones or emails or move. Also make sure to keep a good photo of your cat on your phone so you can post, text, or email a photo of your cat that will best help to identify your cat, especially if you are lucky enough to be able to use facial recognition software via the County.

When your cat is missing outside, check your property first and ask your neighbors to check their properties, too. An indoor cat who is not used to being outside will most likely stay close to home. Check under decks and crawlspaces, window wells, inside and under sheds, in garages, in and under vehicles, and inside barrels and dumpsters.

Don't forget to look up; cats can climb up trees and onto roofs. If you live near commercial buildings, ask building managers to check their facilities for your cat.

Double down on checking places close to home, including double-checking places you have already searched but maybe not well enough. They are good at hiding. Unless you are absolutely sure the cat is

outside, don't forget to look inside your house. Just because a door was open and a cat is missing does not mean the cat is outside. The cat could be hiding at home! Hiding places inside the house include cabinets, closets, drywall gaps (such as under sinks), drawers, and inside furniture (recliners, couches, beds, mattresses), including new or discarded furniture (pets are sometimes found inside furniture that has been recently donated). If you have recently moved items to a storage facility, even an offsite facility, check your storage room and the boxes you moved. As with airports, if a cat is missing somewhere in a large storage facility, leave out food and water.

Keep looking for your cat. You are the best person to be searching since your cat will respond to your voice. Searching on foot is best. Always ask for permission to look in neighbors' yards and maybe they will help, too. If you have not found your cat within an hour or two, it's time to spread the message. Email the list-serv with a photo and the last known location of your cat plus your contact information if your cat is spotted. Let folks know if your cat is friendly or will run if approached. Put up photo posters on poles in your neighborhood. If your cat is microchipped, call the microchip company to let them



know.

Post on Facebook, Nextdoor, and other social media with a local audience. Post about your cat on the County's Lost Pet Facebook page by following the rules set forth at www.facebook.com/MCMD-LostPets. You can no longer post directly but an admin will post for you. Also contact Animal Services and file a lost pet report. They have other great suggestions, including the facial recognition service. This page is recommended reading in advance of any cat going missing: www.montgomery-countymd.gov/animal-services/oas/LostPets.html.

The initial hours are key. Cats cannot go many days without eating. If your cat is still missing by sundown, put out food, water, their used litter box, and a bed. Don't give up on your cat but don't expect the neighborhood to find your cat for you. You must lead the charge! Contact local shelters and local vets. If your cat is friendly enough to be picked up, then someone may have rescued your cat and taken your cat to a shelter or a vet, including emergency hospitals in case your cat was injured. Sometimes cats even pick new homes to live in, so your cat may have moved in with another family.

If your cat is an indoor-outdoor cat, then your cat will have a few more street smarts and probably knows where the porches are that have food. An indoor-outdoor cat may venture farther afield than an indoor-only cat, so broaden your search area. Indoor-outdoor cats may also know how to go down into the drains

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The Miniature Holiday Village, Train Return to Margate Road

For the third year, the holiday display of a miniature town returns to the big Cherry Tree located on Margate Road (at Snowy Owl). The tiny village is made up of ceramic buildings and figurines and also features a full set miniature train: The North Pole Express. The display was set to go on display to the public and was operational by Thanksgiving week. The North Pole Express will typically run (weather permitting) from 5:30 p.m. until around 8:30 p.m. on weekdays and with longer hours on weekends. The tiny buildings will light up by sundown, so come on by the big cherry tree on Margate and see the tiny town folks and catch the miniature train as it makes its way around the town's square, the seaport, and the countryside.

There will be special community evenings with hot drinks and s'mores, so make sure to check the NFCCA list-serv and at www.facebook.com/NFCCAMoCo for updates and announcements.

Both C and AA battery donations to keep the train and the lights on are very much appreciated.

El Pueblo de Vacaciones en Miniatura y el Tren Regresan a Margate Rd.

Por tercer año, la exhibición navideña de una ciudad en miniatura regresa al gran cerezo ubicado en Margate Rd. El pequeño pueblo está formado por edificios y

figuras de cerámica y también cuenta con un tren en miniatura completo: el North Pole Express. La exhibición está programada para exhibirse al público para la semana de Acción de Gracias. El North Pole Express normalmente funcionará (si el clima lo permite) desde las 5:30 p.m. hasta alrededor de las 8:30 p.m. de lunes a viernes y con horarios más amplios los fines de semana. Los pequeños edificios se iluminarán al atardecer, así que acérquese a Margate Road y vea a la pequeña gente del pueblo y vea el tren en miniatura que recorre la plaza del pueblo, el puerto marítimo y el campo.

Habrán noches comunitarias especiales con bebidas calientes y s'mores, así que asegúrese de consultar los anuncios en el servidor de listas de NFCCA y en www.facebook.com/NFCCAMoCo. ■

Lost Cats

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

and emerge farther from your house.

If you are a neighbor lucky enough to spot a missing cat, never chase the cat. Let the cat's family know immediately where the cat is and keep an eye on the cat from afar until the family comes. If the cat is known to be friendly, then you might be able to make a connection by sitting on the ground near the cat and speaking gently to the cat, using the cat's name. Cat treats and smelly fish can help. Let the cat come to you. If you can get the cat into a carrier without harm to you or the cat, that's the best! If you fear spooking the cat, though, it's best to just observe until family arrives.

Finally, when your cat is home safe and sound, let everyone know so we can all stand down.

[Barron lives on Malta Lane and has 40 years of experience caring for cats.] ■



Ema Perez's annual miniature display on Margate Road.

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Wazzup in the Neighborhood

NFCCA is planning a number of events in the upcoming year:

- Holiday Social “Winter Wonderland,” 7:30 p.m., 13 December at Forest Knolls Elementary School
- Chili Cookoff—February or March
- Lockridge Drive Cleanup—Spring
- Spring All-Ages Bike Ride
- CommUnity Walk along Northwest Branch—Spring
- Neighborhood Yard Sale—May Date TBD
- Thunderbolts Baseball Game—Summer Date TBD
- 4 July Bike Ride
- National Night Out—6 August
- Hallowheel Bike Ride
- Halloween Parade

We post information about events on our website, *nfcca.org*. When there is enough prior notice, a newsletter story highlights an event. You can also find us on Facebook by searching for *NFCCAMoCo* where information is posted about upcoming community activities, so an event can show up in your feed.

Events are posted to the NFCCA calendar in the *nfcca AT groups.io* listserv. On the tools bar at the left of the screen (shown at right), select Calendar to see upcoming events. Click on an event date if you wish to save it to your smart-phone, then choose the Download Event at the top, so you can open or save the iCalendar (ICS) file to the calendar on

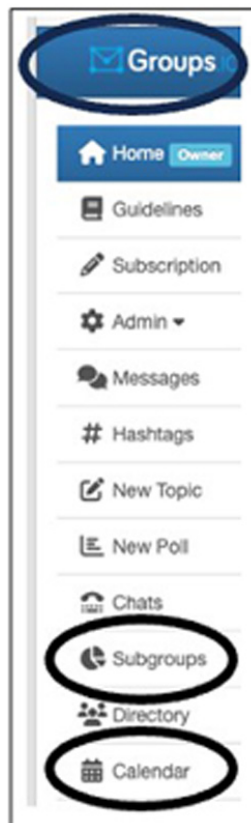
your personal device.

If your street is hosting a block party or other event and you want to notify the neighborhood, contact *president AT nfcca.org* to have your event added to the listserv calendar.

Details on how to access and use the NFCCA Calendar is on pages 21–22 of the “How to Use the Listserv” PowerPoint under “Meetings and Presentations” on our website.

Currently, two subgroups—Northwood Bicycle Club and Northwood Garden Club—share information and details about events related to their interests. To sign up to join a subgroup, tap on Groups at the top of the menu bar, then select a subgroup and its homepage will pop up with instructions on how to join the subgroup. Although you must be a member of the

NFCCA listserv to join one of the subgroups, if you want to limit emails you can find out how to do this by consulting the “How to Use the Listserv” PowerPoint referenced above.





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New subgroups for participants to share special interests or as a discussion forum for particular ideas can be set up; contact *president AT nfcca DOT org*. All we ask is that someone must step up to take responsibility as “owner” of the subgroup and act as moderator for its discussions.

Keep an eye out for NFCCA’s upcoming 2024 events and join in. Hope this information helps you stay up-to-date and engaged! ■

Michelle Bailey Fine Art

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