



THE HILLTONE

2020 Worthy Projects Initiative

By Jacques & Maureen Lebel, Co-Chairs

Early in 2019 funds from the Hiltonia Association annual budget were set aside to support Hiltonia's Worthy Projects Initiative. Two Worthy Projects were selected, and our association agreed to match donations from Hiltonia residents up to \$250 for each of the two recipient agencies (Meals on Wheels of Mercer County, and the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie). Thanks to the generosity of our Hiltonia neighbors, Meals on Wheels ended up receiving \$700 (\$450 total from individuals and the matching \$250) and the Trenton City Museum received \$650 (\$400 total from individuals and the matching \$250). We think New Jerseyan Frank Sinatra would have agreed that "It was a very good year"...well, at least as far as Hiltonia's Worthy Projects Initiative was concerned.

Once again \$500 from the Hiltonia Association 2020 annual budget has been set aside to support this year's Worthy Projects Initiative. It has been decided to again select two worthy endeavors and distribute the funds no later than early December, a time when most eleemosynary organizations run low on resources and would greatly appreciate a charitable donation. The strategy of limiting these funds to be used only for matching will also be continued, as the match encourages Hiltonia residents to contribute.

So now we are beginning the process of identifying agencies or projects that warrant consideration for Hiltonia's 2020 Worthy Project awards. Anyone wishing to suggest a possible recipient organization (or project) is invited to send a nomination e-mail to drmlebel@aol.com. A brief statement of what the project does and why Hiltonia should offer a financial donation would also be appreciated. **NOTA BENE:** While not a required element, worthy projects where one or more Hiltonia residents are involved (as staff, volunteers, clients, or advocates) would be a positive consideration.

Porchfest Trenton 2020 is Coming to Hiltonia

By Kathi Eckert



A few weeks ago a [trifold brochure](#) was delivered to every home in Hiltonia, to provide you information about our upcoming event on June 13, 2020, from noon to 5:00 PM. It will be a rain or shine event.

What is Porchfest, you ask? It is a free grassroots music festival where front porches become stages, front yards become venues, and generosity and good will rule the day. The first Porchfest was held in Ithaca, NY in 2007 and currently more than 100 annual events are held across the US. Trenton is now the 148th town on the Porchfest list.

We are looking for Hiltonia neighbors who will volunteer their porch, driveway, or front yard and host a musical band or performer for one-hour intervals. We will also need lots of volunteers prior to and during the event. For more information, to sign up as a porch host, or sign up as a volunteer, go to our Porchfest website at www.porchfesttrenton.com and fill out the registration forms (even if you have already told Jeannie you want to help). There is other information on the forms that we need to compile. If you have more questions, contact Jeannie Weakliem with any questions or concerns at mamaweak22@gmail.com or call 609-577-7148. We hope to see you all there!



Co-Presidents' Message

By Dennis Wendell & Terri O'Prey



Winter has been kind to us weather-wise (so far!), which is a good thing considering all of the neighborhood happenings this year. It's been a busy few months, and with planning for Porchfest Trenton 2020 kicking into high gear we don't expect any lulls as we welcome spring to Hiltonia.

At our January membership meeting, kindly hosted by Scott and Margaret Mason, City officials Yoshi Manale (Chief of Staff) and Wahib Onitiri (Director, Public Works) took the floor to provide general updates and answer questions. Among the topics of interest were the paving of Stuyvesant, removal of old telephone poles, street lighting, and the overgrowth along the canal side of Hilvista. We look forward to continued communication and collaboration with the City. If you have ideas for future guest speakers, please let us know. We also bade a fond farewell to outgoing Recording Secretary Margaret Mason and Corresponding Secretary Chrystal Miles. We thank Margaret and Chrystal for their years of service to the Association, and we welcome Melinda Chance as Recording Secretary and Michael Nalbene as Corresponding Secretary. We look forward to our work together in 2020.

We announced at the January meeting that Jeannie Weakliem is heading up a committee charged with all things Porchfest. Jeannie has already shared basic event and volunteer information with the neighborhood, and she'll continue to do so as plans take shape. Meanwhile, please do let her know if you have questions, concerns, or want to join the fun. Email her at mamaweak22@gmail.com.

January also brought us together for the annual Winter Party. For the third year running, Barry Giordano and Joanne Rounsaville welcomed Hiltonians into their party-perfect home for a night of merriment. This popular event gave everyone the opportunity to catch up after the holidays in a festive atmosphere of good company, food, and drink.

In a timely turn of events, we closed out January and looked ahead to Valentine's Day by attending a wine and chocolate tasting at Ellarslie, led by Hiltonian David Fiscarelli of Earth Dog Chocolate Foundry. This sold-out event was festive and informative. It was fascinating to learn about chocolate production and ethical sourcing, all while tasting truly fine chocolate (paired with wine, cheese, and other accompaniments). We wish David much success in his chocolate endeavors.

We stepped out of our Flaming Friday comfort zone in February to attend a "Second Saturday Social" hosted by Mark and Lori Emmerson. It was fun to shake things up and we enjoyed not having to rush to an event at the end of a workday. Others must have agreed—and perhaps the three-day weekend was a factor too—because attendance was outstanding. A good time was had by all, and Lori is exploring various options for adult socials going forward. If you have ideas for events or would like to host one, please let her know (lorimarkemmerson@gmail.com).

Winter hasn't stopped Becky Taylor from keeping alive our Cadwalader Park project, and her Leap Day cleanup benefited from the efforts of new Hiltonia participants in addition to our usual crew of neighbors, Trenton Central High students and teachers, and park enthusiast Jordan Antebi. Jordan presented an informative talk about Frederick L. Olmstead at the March general membership meeting. In addition to unearthing a big swath of the pathway running parallel to the pond, we cleared a tremendous amount of brush obscuring the rock walls and freed the last tree along the cleared pathway still encased by rusty fence and rebar. Many thanks to Becky for inspiring us to dust off our cleanup tools, brave the cold, and work together in good cheer (the bakery treats helped too!).

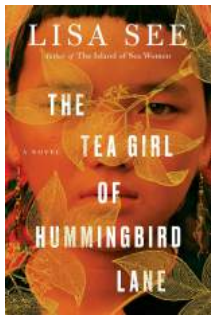
Last, but not least, it's time to [**renew membership or join the Association for the first time**](#). Dues remain the same, and they support children's social events, the Garden Party, Winter Party, National Night Out, Worthy Projects, publication of *The Hilltone*, and more.



Hiltonia Book Club: *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*

By Terri O'Prey

It wouldn't be right to begin this recap without kudos to club member Lori Emmerson for arranging an unforgettable experience closely tied to our book's theme. Hiltonia readers ushered in 2020 by traveling to the Trenton Farmers Market, where Michael and Deborah Raab of Tea for All hosted our discussion of Lisa See's novel. Although we departed from the norm in location, we brought aspects of our regular meetings to this special event (i.e., a well-planned menu to complement the book and publisher-recommended discussion questions to foster lively dialogue). It was immediately clear that tea would steal the show. Michael and Deborah welcomed us with a combination of history, ritual, and exquisite teas. Seeing actual tea cakes, learning about harvesting and processing, and experiencing a tea service enriched our understanding of See's tale. I know I'm not alone in wanting to reread the book with a renewed focus on the tea itself. It also was interesting to hear from Rana Tewari about the nuances between tea consumption in China and India.



Tea remained the focus as we dined on sautéed veggies, cashew chicken stir fry, tofu stir fry with garlic sauce, vegetable spring rolls, egg rolls, and fresh scallion pancakes courtesy of Jeannie Weakliem and her traveling electric skillet. We closed our meal with moon cakes and continued talk of tea. And although we never got to the prepared questions we did reflect on the book and each brought home a question for further consideration.

While Maris Williams was unable to attend, she was instrumental in organizing our menu and carpools. It seems fitting to close with her thoughts on the book: "Lisa See's writing reminds me of Isabel Allende, whose action-packed novels draw you into a foreign world full of surprises; fascinating, well-developed characters; and a plot that is beautifully woven together. I enjoyed the

book very much. It's a Cinderella story for a foreign child adopted by wealthy Americans. She not only has the benefit of loving, supportive adoptive parents, but also just happens to fall in love with a young man whose life was saved by tea trees belonging to—guess who? Her natural mother. Ta Da!! OK. Not really believable, but, you know what? I loved it anyway. Fairy tales are popular for a reason."

Interested in joining the fun? Contact Maris at maris.w@comcast.net.



- We are in need of speakers for our general meetings. If you have any suggestions, if there is someone whom you want to hear from, please contact either Terri or Dennis to suggest someone.
- An ordinance was recently passed which will cover the paving of Stuyvesant Avenue.
- There will be NO Easter Party this year due to low attendance at previous Easter events. Instead the Children's Committee will concentrate on National Night Out in August.
- We are in need of a host for the May 12 Association meeting. Please reach out to Georgia Wallar if you are willing to host (see page 6 for all contact information).
- We need more porch hosts and volunteers for Porchfest Trenton on June 13 to spread out the joy and merriment. Go to the [Porchfest Trenton 2020 website to sign up](#).
- Becky Taylor wants you to know there will be another cleanup at Cadwalader Park in April. If you haven't checked out all of the volunteers' hard work, take a stroll along the recently "rediscovered" walking paths. Enter from Cadwalader Drive and be thoroughly impressed.
- City Council meetings are videotaped and shown on YouTube. For a clickable site to check out their archives for 2018 through 2020 go to: <http://www.collaborationtrenton.com/TrentonNJCouncil/>
- June Guerrero is our "Welcome Wagon" greeter. If you have a new neighbor who has bought or rented a home in Hiltonia (within the last year), would you please share their contact information with us so we can meet and greet them? hiltonia.association.president@gmail.com
- You can be notified in the event of emergency situations or critical community alerts via the City's Emergency Broadcast System. Go to <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/6211EDDC238F> and fill out the form. It's that easy.



What Is a Tax Appeal?

By Linda Reid

To start with - it is a misnomer. One cannot appeal their taxes. What the tax appeal process does is challenge your tax assessment.

Your taxes are calculated by multiplying the tax assessment by the tax rate to arrive at the tax dollars due for each year.

In order to have a successful tax appeal, the equalized assessment of your home needs to be higher than the market value of your home.

Your 2020 tax assessment will be on the green and white postcard that the City sent out a few weeks ago. (If you did not get the card you may want to call the City Assessor's office at 609-989-2090.)

The first step is to make sure that you are considering the 2020 tax assessment (most assessments don't change from year to year). The next step is to equalize your assessment. The assessment from your 2020 assessment notice is divided by .9496 (that's 94.96% - the equalization ratio set by the State of NJ).

To have a successful appeal, your equalized assessment needs to be at least 15% higher than the current market value of your home, based on the closed sales price of homes similar to yours in terms of size and condition. The assessment date is October 1st of the pre tax year (that would be 10/1/2019 for your 2020 tax assessment), and the comparable sales need to be from 2019.

The assessment is determined to be correct if your assessment is within 15% of market value. This is called the corridor. (For example: if your equalized assessment was \$200,000 you would

have to be able to prove your home is worth less than \$170,000). The assessment is presumed correct if it is within a 15% corridor.

If you appeal an assessment that is too low, the City can do a cross appeal to RAISE your assessment if it is more than 15% too low. (For example: if your market value is \$200,00 but your assessment is less than \$170,000 the City can appeal to raise the assessment.)

I know we all think our taxes are too high, but the value of your home is the determining factor. Most of our assessments are fair (many are on the low side).

If you still have questions, or don't understand feel free to give me a call

Linda Reid

(h) 609-394-2314

(c) 609-273-4152



Thank You!

-to Scott and Margaret Mason for hosting the January Association meeting.
-to Barry Giordano and Joann Rounsaville for hosting our Winter Party.
-to Lori and Mark Emmerson for hosting our February "2nd Saturday Social" party.
-to Lily Knezevich for hosting the March Association meeting.
-to all the neighbors who provided content for this issue !!
-and to our **EXTREMELY AWESOME** proofreaders, Terri O'Prey, Lily Knezevich, and Margaret Mason!!!

Email Distribution & Opting-Out of the Printed Newsletter

We are trying to improve communication within the neighborhood, so we have created a new co-president's email list. If you are currently not receiving any neighborhood news via email, and you would like to, please send your email to hiltonia.association.president@gmail.com and we will add you to the list. Our co-presidents will keep you informed of neighborhood news and happenings.

We would also like you to consider "opting-out" of the printed form of *The Hilltone*. Please send a note from your preferred email to kathi325@gmail.com with your name, address, and phone with your wishes (email only or print only). **We will continue to distribute it in printed format if you so choose**, but we will need your name and address to compile a list of print recipients. Thanks!



Tea for All

By Pat Flores

Once upon a time the stars aligned. An unbelievable series of events were set into action. Follow along!

My book club read *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*, by Lisa See. One of our members loves tea and buys all her tea from the shop in Trenton Farmer's Market named Tea for All. She (Lori) was in the shop buying tea and talking with the owners, Mike and Debbie Raab. Turns out they had read the book too, and offered to host our book club with a tea tasting, to introduce us to the exotic teas written about in the novel. It was a fabulous evening, and we were in awe over what we learned and tasted.

I was telling Fran, one of my storyteller friends (and a member of Trinity for 42 years) about our tea tasting, and she said Mike and Debbie were active members of Trinity Cathedral. Wow! She knew them. Some coincidence. The stars are starting to align.

Through Fran, president of our Garden State Storytellers League (GSSL) we had solicited Trinity about renting Synod Hall for our annual luncheon. This year our story focus was on England and we were interested in having a tea. Our requested date was April 18. We were informed that the Cathedral had already committed that date for their fundraising event.

Enter Denise, the lay leader at Trinity. She and Fran are good friends. Conversation ensued, and before we knew it, we had created a merger. GSSL storytellers and Trinity were coming together with a common purpose, that of serving the community. Celestial coincidence.

The GSSL is a volunteer service organization composed of men and women from all walks of life. We are dedicated to promoting the spoken word and "keeping the art of storytelling alive and well."

We met with Patrice of Trinity (who has created all the amazing flyers for this event) and also with Mike from Tea for All. We laid out our ideas: Alice in Wonderland, Mad Hatter's Tea Party, costumed characters from the book: The Cheshire Cat, Caterpillar, Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, March Hare, and Dormouse, to name a few.

The excitement grew. Debbie Raab researched the book for food ideas, (Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll) and came up with our scintillating menu. George Sinkler on keyboard will provide a medley of

(continued on page 6)

Calendar of Events

March 12th, April 9th, and May 14th:
Trenton Council of Civic Associations (TCCA) meeting, 7 PM, Thomas Edison State College, 111 West State Street (2nd Thursday of every month)

March 26th, April 23rd, and May 25th:
Citizens Police Advisory Council (CPAC), 4th Thursday of every month from 6-7 PM at the Hermitage Police Substation (Hermitage & Artisan Aves.)

April 2nd and 16th, May 7th and 21st :
City Council Public Meeting; City Hall; 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM

April 3rd: First Friday Flamingo Social, TBA (**Would you like to host this one?**)

May 1st: First Friday Flamingo Social, TBA (**Would you like to host this one?**)

May 12th: Tuesday, General Association Meeting, 7:00 PM, TBA

June 5th: First Friday Flamingo Social, TBA (**Would you like to host this one?**)

June 6th (rescheduled from March 28th):
Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Recycling, 8 AM to 2 PM; Dempster Fire Training School, 350 Lawrence Station Road, Lawrenceville

June 13th: Porchfest Trenton, 12:00 PM to 5:00, in Hiltonia

Note: Some of these events may be postponed. Please watch local news and emails for updates.

To access the links in this newsletter go to our Association website.

You can download this newsletter at:

<http://hiltoniaassociation.org/the-hilltones-1998-thru-2019/>



Tea for All

(continued from page 5)

song and background music. Our finished product is a concerted effort by all. The cooperative English Tea/Luncheon is a fund raiser for the Cathedral's many and varied ministries.

The grandeur we share evolved from the simple beginnings of a book and a tea tasting. One serendipitous meeting led to another; networking fell into place. The stars aligned and we are all blessed. Welcome to our Mad Hatter's Tea Party!

(UPDATE: This event has been rescheduled to Nov. 7, 2020.)

Membership Information

If you are not sure of your membership status for 2020, please contact our Membership Chairperson, Dr. Donnie Johnson, at DRJOHNSON821@GMAIL.COM (609-943-2895).

Dues are payable for the 2020 year. Membership forms for 2020 can be downloaded at <http://hiltoniaassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/09/2020.Membership.pdf>

Donna's Little Free Library Awaits You



A leprechaun dropped by with *A Gentleman in Moscow!* Borrowed, read and returned, this great book is once again rarin' to go! And there are several great elementary school level books for our youth, so parents, encourage your kids to stop for a look.

What toddler doesn't love *Goodnight Moon*? *Millions of Cats*. Finger puppet books sized for small hands. The library's got 'em!! I eagerly await new "reads." Then I promised tea and a cookie! Promise still holds. Yes, they await your visit in my freezer. To those of you who still have books to donate, bring 'em on! Let me know when to put the kettle on.

Since all public libraries are closed, I have tried a new approach with the books. I removed all children's books to a plastic box on my front porch, with a note that children can sit on the steps and look through them. They were out of reach in the actual library, and were not being utilized. As children are out of school now, please walk them by to have a look! Remember you don't need to bring a book in order to take a book. We want READERS!

I have rearranged and renewed the adult books, many new and exciting novels in the first row. Behind are some religious books that may be of interest: Buddhist, Mormon, Christian, and other insightful reads. Do stop and check it out!! A nice walk through the neighborhood is one way to get some exercise.

Happy reading, Your Library Steward, Pat Flores

2020 Hiltonia Association Officers

Co-Presidents: Dennis Wendell & Terri O'Prey, 7 Renfrew Ave. (732-996-6370; 732-996-6369)

1st Vice President: Jeannie Weakliem, 12 Hilvista Blvd. (609-577-7148)

2nd Vice President: Ali Wilson, 111 Kensington Ave. (609-331-5122)

Treasurer: Barry Giordano, 123 Renfrew Ave. (609-575-8705)

Recording Secretary: Melinda Chance, 7 Cadwalader Dr. (609-393-2715)

Corresponding Secretary: Michael Nalbene, 10 Buckingham Ave. (609-468-2436)

Immediate Past-President: Lily Knezevich, 207 Renfrew Ave. (215-534-7739)

2020 Chairpersons

Adult's Social: Lori Emmerson, 8 Kensington Ave. (908-256-4816)

Children's Social: Kathleen Coughlin, 205 Kensington Ave. (856-397-3799)

Civic Committee: Paulette Ayres, 8 Renfrew Ave. (609-695-4656), and Jeannie Weakliem, 12 Hilvista Blvd. (609-577-7148)

Communications: Kathi Eckert, 40 Glenwood Ave. (609-731-1705)

Hospitality: Georgia Wallar, 2 Buckingham Ave. (609-695-8711)

Membership: Dr. Donnie R. Johnson, 1502 Stuyvesant Ave. (609-943-2895)

Nominations Committee: Linda Reid, 212 Renfrew Ave. (609-394-2314)

Park Projects: Becky Taylor, 123 Cadwalader Dr. (609-240-6886)

Porchfest: Jeannie Weakliem, 12 Hilvista Blvd. (609-577-7148)

Publicity Committee: Linda Reid, 212 Renfrew Ave. (609-394-2314)

Welcome Wagon: June Guerrero, 201 Buckingham Ave. (732-673-0374)

Worthy Projects: Maureen & Jacques Lebel, 25 Cornwall Ave. (609-218-5124)