FORD CITY FLASH
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FREE!

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TAKE A WALK

by Sabrina Roberts

Ford City Community Garden Volunteers

Spring is upon us, folks. The birds are chirping, the alley cats are sunbathing, and Ford City has plenty of outdoor spaces to soak in the extra hours of sunlight. I've been a part of this community for three years now, and it seems each summer I find something new to appreciate about our space.

The parkette on the corner of Whelpton is among my favourite spots, with plenty of space to sit and watch the world around you. It's also the meeting spot for the Saturday morning run club: the Warm Up Run Collective (WURC). From 9am, you can find their group stretching, moving, and of course, running. All you have to do to join is show up. WURC organizer Amanda is happy to see new faces each week, saying, "Building a community as an adult is hard, so I think people -myself included- really appreciate having a space where they can connect." If you're new to running or prefer a shorter route, Amanda reassures of the 5k loop, "It's an out-and-back up Drouillard, so it's really easy for folks to add or reduce distance based on how they're feeling." And if running isn't your favourite thing in the world, she made the genius move to end the runs at Chance Coffee. What better reward for getting up and moving on a Saturday morning than an iced vanilla latte and a croissant from Iron Kettle? The club's route involves the Ford test track off Seminole, which is also a great spot to enjoy a run, walk your dog, or play soccer at one of the several fields inside. It's a perfect place to bring the family or meet with friends. There is something about getting outside on a beautiful day and spotting so many familiar faces on your journey. Even if it's just a passing hello, a little connection goes a long way in making the world feel less lonely.

Drouillard is also home to the Ford City Community Garden (FCCG). While having been around for quite some time now, it still feels like the hidden gem of the neighbourhood. It is a space to gather, garden, or just enjoy the sights and sounds of the street. Lauren Potvin is the garden's coordinator, welcoming anyone interested to become a volunteer. "We have an array of gardeners. Some have years of experience, others are planting their very first seedling. We all learn from each other and the garden each season." Volunteers can expect to work on general garden maintenance, such as weeding, watering, and harvesting. Do you only have time to help out every so often? No problem, the garden could use extra hands during bigger projects and events. Are you able to help out more consistently? Amazing, there are daily activities to be done for the garden to thrive. The FCCG is a great way to get your hands dirty and connect more with the community, as volunteers are encouraged to go together when working on the garden.

> "I think people... really appreciate having a space where they can connect."

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"It's a great spot for those who are new to the area [or] are looking for a new hobby." Lauren reflects that the FCCG has only gotten better with time and practice, saying, "We are continuously learning and doing our own research about how to create a better place for food, pollinators, and our community."

I love the walkability of our neighbourhood. This street has so much character and life; there is always somewhere to sit and savour the breeze or explore a corner of our community you haven't noticed before. There are parks and sports courts and gazebos and playgrounds for burning off your kids' 'school's out' energy. Ford City is home to so many people, and a home away from home to even more. Let's treat it accordingly. I know we all have to get to work, get home, and chip away at the never-ending laundry list of life, but please take your time. There are children boarding school buses. We have many furry friends taking walks throughout the day. There are cyclists and motorcyclists taking advantage of sunny days. With street parking, it can feel a little cramped here sometimes. So take it easy getting where you need to be. Check your blind spots. Watch for pedestrians. Enjoy the ride. Be good to one another. Have a nice time!

NEIGHBOUR PROFILE: MEETING MARIA

by Sabrina Roberts

Even if you're unfamiliar with the Ford City BIA, you've almost definitely met many of its members just by spending time on Drouillard. Our previous coordinator, Kaitlyn Di Pietro, did wonders with Ford City's logistics and events for longer than I've known her. Kaitlyn stepped down from the BIA this past winter, and we're grateful for the work and energy she put into helping make our community what it is today. Newly fulfilling the role is the incredibly talented and always kind Maria Mediratta.

Maria has been a familiar face on the street for a while now, previously featured as an emerging artist in the Dry Goods gallery. Here, she gained an appreciation for the community's constant interest in the comings and goings of their neighbourhood. As the BIA coordinator, Maria is more involved than ever in that enthusiasm. "I think this neighbourhood is a lot more vocal. They're coming at it in a way that's like, 'hey, I'm invested too.'" Having worked for a variety of art and cultural organizations, Maria actively seeks out community in any position she applies to. "Then it doesn't feel like you're speaking into an echo chamber...

...continued on back!

Maria Mediratta, Ford City BIA Coordinator

SHARING IS CARING: COMMUNITY EVENTS

by Sabrina Roberts

Ford City Flea Market

Do you enjoy having things to do? Do you find joy in scavenging for interesting and curated finds? Conveniently, Ford City has a lineup of community events to scratch that itch. From the Ford City Flea to the community clothing swap to Dropped on Drouillard, free up your weekends because market season is officially here.

Each spring, Lauren Potvin and Roxana Rangel host a clothing swap for the community. For just $10, you get full access to all the donated clothing, accessories, and seasonal wares you could hope for. The clothing swap has become something of a pillar to the neighbourhood; it's a chance to be together, share the wealth, and witness something you once loved be treasured anew. There is no limit to what you can take or donate, and the swap is always sorted into categories for you to peruse with ease. Lauren and Roxana also sort the donations seasonally, as there's typically a clothing swap done in the spring and again in the winter. It's a good opportunity to sift through the clothes that sit in our closets for far longer than they ought to, and an even better opportunity to snag some pieces that will freshen up your wardrobe.

If you've got enough clothes in your closet but still seek the thrill of sifting through goods and wares, the BIA also hosts a biannual flea market. In the spring and fall, the Drouillard block between Richmond and Whelpton is shut down, tents are set up, and the day is filled with trading, bartering, and purchasing. The flea is my personal favourite of the Drouillard events; there are so many scavenged goods waiting to be found and loved for another lifetime. Some of my favourite pieces - from home decor to jewelry to clothing - have come from the fleas. While the vendor list rotates a bit between markets, you can expect to see lots of local faces and businesses. The whole neighbourhood gets in on it; there are the established sellers who apply for tent spots on Drouillard, but there are also neighbours on surrounding streets hosting yard sales, plus locals setting up tables full of thrift hauls. All I'm saying is the least you'll get out of the flea is a good time and good connections, even if you (somehow) walk away empty-handed.

> "It's an opportunity to discover something new, to repurpose, to experience."

Last but not least, mark your calendars for August 15th; Dropped on Drouillard is already gearing up. A well-established and widely beloved summer event, there are some things you just know to expect at Dropped: live music, lots of food, plenty of people, and a multi-block vendor lineup. This is the place to be to check out local artists, vintage cars, live entertainment, and some of the best food Windsor has to offer. Dropped is an all-day event, so come ready and stay a while. This event has passed through many hands over the years, snowballing into something greater and grander than anyone could have imagined. Our latest addition to the BIA, Maria Mediratta, says, "The festival has become an annual expectation. It's nice because it has this strong foundation established, and you can put your own filter and spin on it every year. We want people to be inspired by what they saw, and continue to invest in [the neighbourhood]." These events aren't just cool and fun (truly, do not miss them); they're also an important part of the Ford City community. They give us something to look forward to and get involved in, something that reminds us to engage and reach out to the people we live among. It's an opportunity to discover something new, to repurpose, to experience.

FYI - you can keep an eye out for details on upcoming events like these by following the Ford City BIA accounts online (@fordcitybia).

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...Meeting Maria continued...

...You get a lot of voices in the room, you can get great feedback." We are often so bogged down by daily life that when something goes awry, even the smallest inconveniences can feel monstrous. Maria's job makes those issues more manageable by finding the right resources and implementing them for the benefit of the neighbourhood. "If it were on anyone else's list, it might get continually bumped down. But this can be [a] top priority for the coordinator because that's the whole point [of the role]." From researching grants for local businesses to organizing streetwide events, Maria is ready and willing to take it on. It's what makes her such a great fit for our BIA; she sees the community for what it stands for and wants to build upon that. "I [know] how I want to impact and help the neighborhood. But I feel right now it's very much just building a strong foundation so that I can do my best." If you see something on the street that could use the BIA's attention and care, please contact info@fordcity.ca to let Maria know.

It takes a lot of heart and knowledge to succeed in a role like this. It's a job where many people count on you, where caring is part of the job description. People know that this is their community, and are willing to speak up so they can continue to take pride in Ford City. "You need everyone to kind of have similar/overlapping goals, so the whole can benefit." Maria reflects. "It feels cohesive in this neighbourhood. It feels wholesome." The neighbourhood is in good hands with Maria, and I look forward to a summer guided by her fresh perspectives and integrity. If you spot her on Drouillard or at an event this year, make sure to say hi!

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