

## History of the Melrose Park Neighbors Association

The Melrose Park Improvement Association was dormant for many years. Around 1990, Andrew Rudin saw it listed in a publication from Nancy Gibson, the Information Officer within Cheltenham Township's administration building.

Around this time, Howard Sitron, who used to live on Chestnut Avenue, wanted to organize neighbors around the issue of our polluted stream, called Mill Run, which flows along Coventry Avenue and New Second Street. Andy Rudin helped Howard organize a meeting at Howard's home. Most of the effort was in cleaning stuff out of the stream around each Earth Day.

Then, when State Representative Lawrence Curry was campaigning door to door, Andy confronted him with the problem with stream pollution. Larry told Andy that another neighbor, Albert Fried-Cassorla, was also interested in the stream pollution and had organized a meeting about it at his home. Andy attended the meeting.

Shortly after this, Albert and Andy formed the current Melrose Park Neighbors Association, changing its name because 'improvement' hinted that our neighborhood was faulty. Albert became president for several years. Around 2002, Michael Schectman created bylaws for MPNA and filed with the IRS for the organization to become a 501.c3 non-profit organization.

MPNA held meetings at the Elkins Park Free Library and at the home of Patrice and Tom Steigerwald. Issues that became important to neighbors included crime, speeding traffic, stream pollution and a new SEPTA train station for Melrose Park. For each issue, neighbors heard presentations from SEPTA officials, Cheltenham police, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Philadelphia Water Department, and others.

As a result of this organizing, the Philadelphia Water Department has spent more than a million dollars cleaning up the pollution of Mill Run and rebuilding the outfall, the first place that the water in Mill Run sees daylight at the corner of Coventry and Cheltenham Avenues.

Another result was that members of MPNA – Gretta Gilles, Bill Donnelly, Gwen Koths and others – gave a lot of input to SEPTA about the design of the new station. One estimate is that the station cost \$2.6 million to build.

Another result was the evolution of the Melrose Park Town Watch into an email alert system in which the Cheltenham Police notify MPNA of crime activity. MPNA then sends an alert to its email members and associates.

In 2004, Albert resigned as president, and Andy Rudin took over. He created a new, independent website, developed a list of email addresses, and produced dozens of newsletters, all of which are available on the website [www.melroseparkneighbors.org](http://www.melroseparkneighbors.org). Our website is currently maintained by Jesse Larocque in St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

The current members of the MPNA Board are Caryl Levin (president), Michael Shectman (treasurer), Jim Muldoon (membership), Andrew Rudin (newsletter editor), Cindy Blackwood, Ricki Lent, Debbie Posmontier, Phil Kates, and Albert Fried-Cassorla.

If you are interested in joining or helping out with MPNA, please email Andy Rudin at [andrewrudin@earthlink.net](mailto:andrewrudin@earthlink.net).