

To BAN members, friends and supporters (and anyone interested in what we do),

Happy New Year!

Here are a few reflections as we turn the page from 2014 to 2015:

The month of January is named after the Roman god "Janus." He is usually depicted as having two faces, since he looked to both the future and the past.

The ideas of beginnings, transitions and progress that Janus symbolized in ancient times are still very much a part of modern New Year's Eve celebrations. As 11:59 pm on December 31 rolls into 12:00 am on January 1, we simultaneously look back at the year that has passed, and forward to the year that lies ahead. Most of us feel a mix of regret and relief as the clock strikes midnight. For some, there was great loss, pain, sadness in the departing year; for others, there was success, prosperity, happiness; for many, a mix of both. And who does not feel anticipation and hope for the things to come in the arriving year?

Which brings me to the most important thing of all:

Despite the many external dissimilarities that we humans tend to focus on, people are much more alike than different. Families and friendships, in their infinite variety, are the ties that bind us all. Sadly, in 2014, there were many terrible reminders of what happens when people see only the differences between them, when they believe that those differences are always bad, and when they stop seeing each other as individuals and see only the "Other."

But like beacons in the dark night, there were also amazing examples of what happens when people look past the differences and just see each other as members of the same extended human community. Just look at who was selected as TIME Magazine "Person of the Year": The Ebola Fighters -- those in Africa, the U.S. and other parts of the world who "risked and persisted, sacrificed and saved" in the fight against one of the most terrifying diseases to affect humanity. One of the most striking things about this choice was that it was not one single person who was chosen, but a group with a common mission. That group's members were of many nationalities, races, and religions. They were both male and female. They were just human beings trying to help other human beings.

So, what does this all have to do with our little patch in central Queens, New York?

BAN was formed, and exists, to bring people together. The residents and businesses of Briarwood form a mosaic of diversity that we seek to unify for the good of the larger community. Our organization provides a channel for those interested in being part of that community. In 2014, BAN brought people together to:

- Volunteer to rake leaves, paint benches, plant flower bulbs, and generally beautify Hoover Park and Briarwood Playground;
- Collect and donate food and toys to benefit the residents of the Briarwood Family Residence;
- Receive valuable information on a variety of subjects at Community Meetings;

And

- Participate in group tours and community outings.

BAN has also shared information via our website, emails, Facebook and Twitter posts on a variety of topics of interest including the Van Wyck construction, subway entrance re-opening, and more. In 2015, we look forward to finding new ways of getting folks to engage with each other. We want to continue to hear from you and work with you! Check our website - briarwoodactionnetwork.com, Facebook page, and Twitter feed - @BriarwoodAction for news from us. Please also use those forums to communicate news to us.

BAN is not a large, wealthy organization. The power of BAN comes from its ability to tap into our community's deep spirit of volunteerism and neighborhood pride. Our mission from the beginning was to activate that spirit – that's what the "Action" in Briarwood Action Network stands for. BAN is not the names of the Board of Directors listed on the letterhead. BAN is all of us who care about Briarwood . . . and hopefully about the rest of our city, our country and our planet.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!

HERE'S TO GOOD THINGS IN 2015!

Aida Vernon
President
Briarwood Action Network

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