

## Briarwood Action Network (BAN) Newsletter

### THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

**by Aida Vernon  
President  
Briarwood Action Network**

I often think about the wondrous changes that technology has brought to our lives. Facebook, Twitter and similar sites allow people separated by great distances to "friend" and connect with others on the other side of the country, or the planet. And I know I would have a hard time going about my daily life without the ability to send and receive texts and access apps on my smart phone.

But paradoxically, while bringing people closer together, the Internet, social media and mobile computing have also divided us into isolated communities of those who share specific, narrow tastes, likes and dislikes. Technology has both pulled us together and pushed us apart.

I still say that there is no substitute for face-to-face interactions between human beings. This is especially true when a community consists of as many diverse nationalities, religions, races and ages as Briarwood does.

As a founding member of Briarwood Action Network and its current President, I have found that nothing connects people more than meeting, exchanging ideas and working for the common good. I have seen it many times over the past two years since BAN was formed: at our Park Day events at Hoover Park; our food and toy collections for the Briarwood Family Residence; our voter registration drive; our informational meetings on the Van Wyck construction and other issues; and our recent group tour of Maple Grove Cemetery. This is truly the most wondrous change of all: that technology has not replaced our need to be with each other, in "real time."

In the best of both worlds, we connect with each other by good old-fashioned in-person conversations, with a little help from technology. This is what BAN, through its community events and its website, hopes to accomplish in our little corner of the world.

**Contact the Briarwood Action Network at:  
[briarwoodactionnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:briarwoodactionnetwork@gmail.com)  
[www.briarwoodactionnetwork.com](http://www.briarwoodactionnetwork.com)**

### Odyssey

Wide-eyed boy  
skipped out the door, past sleeping sentry,  
to meet the smiling sky.  
Mother cried, Avonte, Avonte,  
Where do you wander?  
Wide-eyed boy strolled among unknowing  
strangers,  
enraptured by iron horses and rubber-rimmed  
beasts.  
Mother howled, Avonte, Avonte,  
Where do you wander?  
Wide-eyed boy stumbled on stony shore,  
embraced by the beckoning waters.  
Mother whispered, Avonte, Avonte,  
Where do you wander?  
Moved by mother's plea,  
the unyielding sea  
gave up her secrets, and brought the  
wide-eyed boy home at last.

### **Thoughts on the Briarwood Action Network (The "Network" part)**

There are several definitions for "Network":

*noun "an arrangement of conducting elements, as resistors, capacitors, or inductors, connected by conducting wire"*

*noun "an interconnected or interrelated chain, group, or system"*

*verb "to interact socially for the purpose of getting connections or personal advancement"*

The common element in all of the definitions I've read is connection. I am the Briarwood Action Network Board Secretary and Webmaster. I maintain contact information, I maintain lists, I record minutes, I update the website, I check that it's appearing online properly. A lot of what I do for BAN is done in front of a screen and keyboard. You might think that I relate to seeing Network defined as "a number of interconnected computers, machines, or operations", because of the

**(Continued on Page 2)**

# Briarwood Action Network (BAN) Newsletter

## **MEMBERS, WE LOVE MEMBERS** **WE LOVE LOTS AND LOTS OF MEMBERS**

The BAN Membership Committee has the responsibility of obtaining and retaining members; planning social events for members and reaching out to Briarwood community institutions including businesses and institutions.

I have had the privilege of working with the dedicated, talented people in our committee for some time. We meet regularly, to plan events, catch up on BAN and Briarwood happenings and enjoy each other's company.

Recently we planned two successful outings to explore the history and hidden treasures of our community. These were a trip to Rufus King Manor, home of one of the founders of the United States, and a tour of Maple Grove Cemetery, a splendid Victorian, park-like cemetery, where we heard dramatic stories of the lives of many of those who are interred here. Our most recent trip was to the newly renovated Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Park. We enjoyed new and old exhibits, including the 1939 and 1964 Worlds Fairs and the famous panorama of New York City.

Aside from our own committee activities, Membership supports the events organized by other committees and BAN groups. We share strong community spirit and realize that to fulfill BAN's mission of dedication to the welfare of Briarwood, we need the continuing support of members.

So com"on good neighbors, it's time to join us and become a member of BAN.

For further information please contact  
**ssherman.ban@gmail.com.**

## **Thoughts on the Briarwood Action** **Network (The "Network" part)**

***(Continued from Page 1)***

words "computers" and "machines", but those aren't the words that jump out at me. What relates most to what I do for BAN -- and what I think BAN does best and most importantly -- is not computer, it's connect.

For over two years now, BAN has been working on connections. We have contacted and assembled agency and elected representatives to connect them with the concerns of those of us living in Briarwood. We've organized park day events to better connect Briarwood residents to our environment. We've organized collections for Hurricane Sandy victims and occupants of the Briarwood Family Residence to connect people in need to the goods they need most. We've held numerous community meetings to connect all of us to useful information.

The purpose of the BAN website is to help connect us by providing a place for Briarwood residents to get useful information. The new BAN blog provides a forum for Briarwood residents to share ideas and information. When you find us on facebook (please like us, by the way) you can keep in contact with your neighborhood online. When you follow us on twitter @BriarwoodAction, you can get quick information about BAN and Briarwood.

It's all about connection.

The most vital thing BAN does -- through meetings and events and those "interconnected computers and machines" -- is to connect all of us to each other.

**Crystal Courts**  
**Board Secretary/Webmaster**  
**Briarwood Action Network**

## **Community Service Committee**

At the heart of Briarwood Action Network, (BAN), are the activities planned and implemented by the Community Service Committee.

Each fall and spring, for example, committee members round up volunteers to assist with It's My Park Day. We rake leave in Hoover Park, paint benches, plant daffodil bulbs in fall, serve refreshments to workers and others who stop by, and we provide informative tips on all aspects of life in Briarwood.

***(Continued on Page 3)***

## Community Service Committee

*(Continued from Page 2)*

We have also raised funds for our Briarwood Library. We have established a solid relationship with the Briarwood Family Residence, a temporary housing facility in the neighborhood. Throughout the year we hold drives to collect food, toys, household goods, etc for the residence.

Additionally, the committee helps facilitate communication between the community and our government agencies and elected officials. The committee has held informational meetings on important issues such as employment, financial planning, and safety as it relates to the Kew Gardens Interchange Project and its impact on both pedestrian and motor traffic and transportation.

To support our endeavors, the committee encourages all to participate and continue to serve Briarwood by joining BAN and working to strengthen our community.

### ARE WE COMMUNICATING YET?

The dictionary describes communication as:

: the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else

: a message that is given to someone : a letter, telephone call, etc.

**Communications:** the ways of sending information to people by using technology

We here at the **Briarwood Action Network (BAN)** need to communicate to our members and the community in general what we are doing. We also need to let you know after the fact what we have accomplished.

The Communications Committee is working hard to keep you updated on what is going on in Briarwood. Needless to say the constant construction on Queens Boulevard is something that we want to keep residents informed about.

Our association has placed press releases and press notices in all of our local newspapers. We want to keep everyone in the loop as to what is going on with BAN and our community. The coverage has been substantial.

Since **BAN** and their Communications Committee have been doing their job, please help us out. Communicate with us; let us know about problems in our community that we are not aware of.

**Contact the Briarwood Action Network at:  
briarwoodactionnetwork@gmail.com  
www.briarwoodactionnetwork.com**

### Briarwood Votes BAN's Voter Registration Drive

Prior to the Election, Briarwood Action Network held a drive to encourage eligible voters to register and vote. The leader of this project was Justin Wax-Jacobs.

Teams were organized to work throughout Briarwood, at locations along Queens Boulevard, at the Briarwood Van Wyck subway station, and at one of our community's religious centers, the Jamaica Muslim Center.

We promoted the importance of registration and voting, distributed Board of Elections forms, shared basic information about requirements for voting and location of polling places.

Seemeen Kamran, one of our participants guided and prepared me in regard to the appropriate dress for a woman visiting the Muslim Center. This is a large Muslim Community Center, right outside of Briarwood. Although, many of the members come from other countries, and speak different languages, we were welcomed across cultural and language barriers, to spread our message. We were helped in this by the Center Administrator. This enabled BAN to connect with another sector of our community.

After elections, upon review of voting results, it was found that there was an increase in voter activity in the areas in which we had reached out. This suggests that we had a positive impact and were successful in turning out the vote.

**Sylvia Sherman**

# Briarwood Action Network (BAN) Newsletter

## WELCOME TO BRIARWOOD

Did you ever wonder how the name "Briarwood" came about?

A quick check on the internet reveals that the neighborhood was named for the Briarwood Land Company, which launched a construction project in 1905 to build homes in the area. Unfortunately the company went bankrupt and the tract remained empty until the 1920's.

Two decades later The New York Life Insurance Company constructed housing, and the United Nations built the Parkway Village Houses for its employees. Lack of housing following World War 2 brought many contractors to Queens, and many apartment buildings sprang up virtually overnight in Briarwood.

Over the years, Briarwood has proven a microcosm of the most ethnically diverse county in the United States with residents from every ethnic, racial and religious background.

**Nancy Lookabough**

## BRIARWOOD, THE GARDEN SPOT OF AMERICA!

"Welcome to Briarwood, the garden spot of America" - that is what I say when my friend, Paul, comes to visit from his white bread residence in Connecticut.

Briarwood Jamaica is very diverse: we have it all. There is my manicure salon with Chinese girls, the Russian lady who is my hairdresser and then there is my doctor from the Philippines. My neighbors are of all religious backgrounds, cultures and ethnic groups.

Two blocks from my home, every want and need can be met. They are grocery stores, dining establishments, a bakery, banks and assorted small businesses. I can walk to the corner, hop on a bus and be at a railroad station that can take me to Long Island, Manhattan, Brooklyn. Fifteen minutes in opposite directions, I have a major international and domestic airport that can take me to anyplace in this world.

There is a library two minutes' walk away where I can lose myself with my love of books and on the way back from the library I can sit under huge shade trees in the park and look at birds and squirrels.

It's not really the garden spot of America, but it comes pretty darn close.

**Barbara Pramberger D'Ambrosio**



## **Briarwood Action Network**

### **Our Purpose:**

This Organization is formed to promote the quality of life in the Briarwood community and to provide a forum for the diverse members of the community to inform and express themselves on the full range of issues affecting Briarwood. The areas that the Organization will address include, but will not be limited to, safety, beautification, environmental conservation, education and general welfare of the community.

BAN continually strives, via emails, community meetings, and our website, to keep our neighbors informed. Check our website - **[WWW.BRIARWOODACTIONNETWORK.COM](http://WWW.BRIARWOODACTIONNETWORK.COM)** -, facebook page, and twitter feed -**@BriarwoodAction** - for neighborhood information. Please also use those forums to make us aware of any news. You can also email us at **[briarwoodactionnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:briarwoodactionnetwork@gmail.com)**. Or send mail to:

**Briarwood Action Network**  
PO Box 356068  
Briarwood, NY 11435