

UNION SQUARE

news and notes from around the neighborhood

BOARD NOTES

Our next general meeting features the introduction of exciting projects and new committees. These new areas of interest offer more opportunities to get involved so that our neighborhood can continue to move forward.

There is so much talent in our neighborhood, and everyone's ideas and passions are needed.

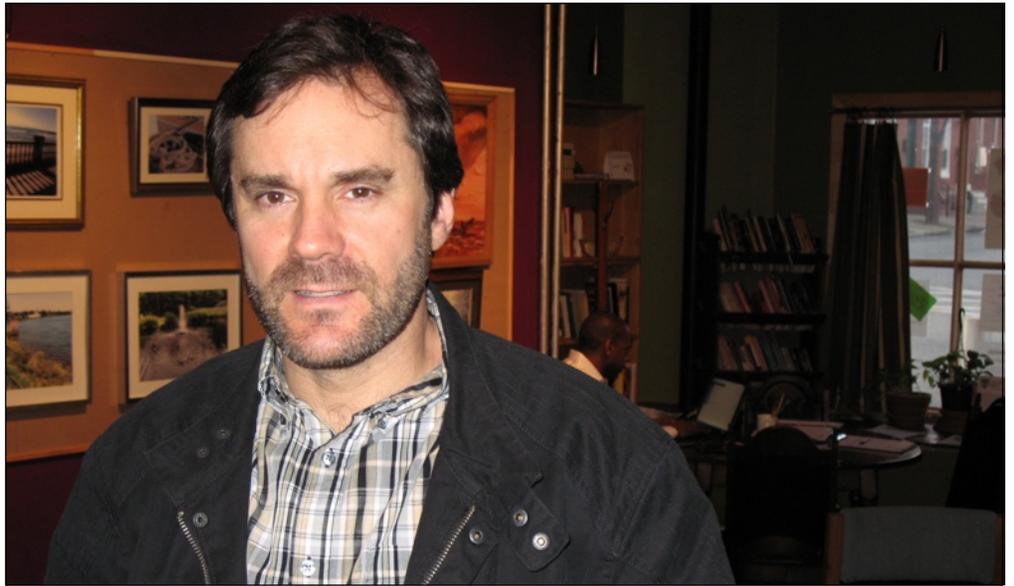
Following are proposed committees:

- Marketing Committee
- Social Committee
- Streetscape Committee
- Youth Group
- Fundraising Committee
- Chap Committee

This month's agenda may include:

- Meet the new police major for the Southern District.
- Hear a proposal for a new restaurant in Union Square (voting issue).
- Review the 2012 budget for Union Square Association (voting issue).
- Learn more about the association board's initiatives and committees for 2012. We encourage members to bring their own ideas for initiatives and committees.
- Receive updates from Andrea Wegner about local health and wellness programs.

Bring a friend who may be interested in joining our association. The size of our organization directly correlates with our ability to affect positive outcomes with the city concerning our neighborhood.



Clay Pots manager Dwayne Hess aims to create a space where area residents can exchange ideas and experiences. At right, the non-profit's computer is the site for continued education classes.

Clay Pots offers 'place to grow'

Many deals are struck over a pot of coffee.

That's what happened four years ago when a group of area residents decided to get serious about helping others make positive changes in their lives.

"There was a weekly meeting for spiritual, emotional, intellectual support," says Dwayne Hess, the day-to-day manager of Clay Pots. "At some point, we were feeling burned out with that, and we wanted to see what our next step would be."

Up until that point, the insular and loosely-tied group had been using the 1635 West Pratt Street space as a place to play their music, sit together and talk. They had



pulled their resources and bought the building in 2002 for \$30,000.

"A bunch of us had a church connection, initially," says Hess, who has lived in the neighborhood for 19 years. "But we were also disillusioned, in a way, with the church idea and how it connected to this neighborhood. We wanted to do spiritual community without a certain set of religious beliefs."

The non-profit had dabbled into tutoring, but the direction toward education was given firm footing with a Open Society Foundations fellowship a few years back. The grant was

Clay Pots

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UPCOMING EVENTS

New offerings from

Community Supported Wellness

For more info, email the center at cswbaltimore@gmail.com or call 410.566.4258. All Wellness programs held at Clay Pots, 1635 W. Pratt St.

Reiki Clinic

Saturday, April 21

De-stress and re-energize in a 30-minute session with two or more practitioners. Reiki is an energy healing approach using light touch - you remain fully clothed. Everyone is encouraged to partake of this offering, so there is no set cost. However, a financial contribution according to your means is gratefully accepted. Contact us for details and to reserve your early afternoon appointment.

Real Food, Real You

Do you take care of everyone yet neglect yourself?
Do you want to create healthy habits?
Are you confused about what to eat?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, this four-week nutrition and wellness support program is for you. The class meets Monday evenings, starting in April. The program includes hands-on cooking, whole-foods nutritional information and group support. **An informational meeting will be held Monday, March 19 at 7 p.m.** There will be door prizes and recipe sampling.

- The Sowebo Running & Walking Club of Baltimore is beginning a monthly group walk/run at Carroll Park. **First Saturday of the month at 10 a.m., starting April 7th.** All are welcome. Meet in the playground area at James and Bayard Streets. FREE.
- Digital Photography classes at Clay Pots, 1635 W. Pratt St., beginning this month.

Mondays 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursdays 7 to 9 p.m.

Call 410.233.1133 or email claypots@claypotsbaltimore.com for info or to register.

JOIN THE BUZZ

Friend, blog and tweet about what's new and happening on your block and around the neighborhood. The following sites depend on input from your to keep up the flow of news and information, so please spread the word and share what's on your mind.

- Friends Union Square/Facebook: **unionsquare Baltimore**
- Read the blog: **blog.unionsquarebalt.com**
- Send out a tweet: **twitter.com/unionsquarebalt**

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS | Ray Williams

We encourage submissions, story suggestions and comments from our community. We are always looking for writers, reporters, artists and idea people interested in volunteering for this publication.

Email raywilliamsmedia@aol.com with your story and content ideas.

Clay Pots

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for \$47,000 over 18 months. It enabled Hess to work full time at Clay Pots to get the group's programs up and running. Clay Pots has since gotten other grants and increased its donor base.

"It was an amazing opportunity for us because our GED program started," Hess says. "The coffee house expanded. Before, we had Saturday mornings; we now do it three days a week. It helped with all the continuing education that's going on; we have volunteer groups coming in from all different places."

The building is on the edge of Mount Claire and Union Square. Carrollton Ridge is right up the street.

David Flemmons is benefiting from the service expansion. For two months, the 40-something student has been attending classes toward his GED. Flemmons has his commercial driver's license but has hit road blocks with most employers who want their workers to have a minimum education. Flemmons dropped out of high school years ago to help his mother support the family.

"The jobs I had wasn't paying me the type of money [I needed] to live in this society today, you know, comfortably," Flemmons says. "And the jobs that would pay that type of money required me to have a GED. So from that point, I looked for certain spots to farther my education. That's when I ran across Clay Pots."

Flemmons has three more months of classes toward his GED. A diverse group of visitors come to the house to take classes in basic studies, Spanish, knitting and photography.

"But I will say this: our coffee house, there's typically been a large number of people coming from the recovering community," Hess says. "There's a lot of transitioning houses in the community, and this is one place they can go that they don't have to pay."

The group's next goal is rehabbing the building they own next door. It has a back addition that's in bad shape. They are hoping to tear it down and make an outdoor peace garden and courtyard. The space would be used for reading, meditation and classes.

"We want this place to be a place where everyone can come together and value different backgrounds, different lifestyles, different beliefs," Hess says.

Like clay pots: a place where anything (or anyone) can grow.



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