

COMMUNITY

Meet the Mariemont Tree Advisory Board

By MARGARET JEVIC

Nine months ago, Mariemont formed an official Tree Advisory Board (TAB) to address the needs of the Village trees. If you're just catching up on this news, the board has quite the undertaking. Many of the trees around town are very old, very large, and reaching the end of their urban lives - all at the same time. Many need to be taken down, leaving us with extensive gaps in our beautiful tree-lined streets. This dilemma was the impetus for the formation of the TAB.



The question of what to do about the trees has been a focus of Mariemont since our Village began. Residents here have a deep appreciation for trees and the shade they provide, their beauty, and their benefits for wildlife. The planning, caring for, and decision-making is now being centralized in a committee of five voting members and a handful of other non-voting voices to aid the process. I've spent nearly the last year on the TAB as a non-voting

member, and I'd like you to meet the rest of the team!

Barb Whittaker is the chair of our nascent committee and is at the helm of everything we do. She joined the TAB after taking a freshman level Tree Commission Academy (TCA) class, and is now at the sophomore level. TCA is a series of educational courses offered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that, according to their course catalog, are "designed to give the citizens who are responsible for planning and managing... community trees the skills and knowledge they need to be successful." The TCA classes build on one another from freshman to senior level, and graduates of the program are well-versed in the intricacies of building a healthy urban forest. After she took a course with TCA, Barb "knew it was possible to have a good tree program using volunteers and the resources ODNR provides to communities. It is important to me that we make that happen here."

Kristin Van Scoy is the vice chair of the TAB. She is a former brand manager at P&G and brings experience with project management and communications to our committee. She also describes herself as a master gardener and is working through TCA. She grew up in Kansas City and went to college at Kansas State University. After receiving her MBA from the Darden School at the University of Virginia, Kristin took a job with P&G in Cincinnati, and has lived here for 18 years.

Kristin joined the committee because one of her favorite parts of living in Mariemont is "the abundance of beautiful, old shade trees. The trees we enjoy today are here because of the foresight and planning of individuals who saw their value decades ago. I joined the committee because I want to do my part to ensure that we create a sustainable plan to protect and expand our tree canopy. I want to preserve this legacy for our children and our children's children."

Jason Brownknight is the secretary and a voting board member whose vast array

of knowledge and talent lend themselves perfectly to the TAB. As a forestry management professional for twenty years, Jason told me he has "been fortunate to have helped restore and protect over 12,000 acres of land in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana." He holds a master's degree in Landscape Ecology from Ohio University and is a graduate of the Ohio Watershed Academy from The Ohio State University. Jason says he joined the TAB because he is "passionate about urban forestry and the important role trees play in our community." I have the good fortune of living across the street from him, and am glad to see such an asset aboard the tree committee. A fun fact about Jason - he shares a birthday with his favorite baseball player Ken Griffey Jr.

Mary Beth York is a voting board member and longtime Mariemont resident. She has been a part of the Garden Club of Mariemont for 30 years and is a trustee of the Mariemont Preservation Foundation. Some of her work with MPF includes being part of the MPF Tree Fund Program whose goal, she told me, "is to rebuild the street tree inventory with consideration of the John Nolen plan." Any residents who would like to help this mission

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VILLAGE

Tree Board (from previous page)

can donate to the Tree Fund on the Mariemont Preservation Foundation Website. As to why she joined the tree committee? "I love nature," she said. "I love Mariemont, and I believe in preserving the uniqueness and beauty of our community." Mary Beth is currently at the sophomore level of TCA, honing her skills and knowledge to be a valuable part of the TAB. A fun fact about Mary Beth - her favorite tree is at the end of her driveway and every year she decorates it with Easter eggs.

Marcy Lewis is a voting member of the TAB. You may already know Marcy as a member of our Village Council and part of the Parks and Recreation committee. Marcy has been in this community for 25 years and told me, "I appreciate the 'National Exemplar' in which I live. I am committed to maintaining and improving Mariemont's Tree City USA designation so that our Village remains vibrant and sustainable." This is a sentiment we all share and unites us in our quest to care for the Village trees. A fun fact about Marcy - she is

married with two adult children and three cats (who also frequent our Zoom meetings).

Along with this panel of voting members, the TAB is fortunate to have the help of **Wendi Van Buren**, an Urban Forester with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Wendi has been a guiding presence at our meetings, assisting us in forming official protocol, hashing out plans for future tree sites, and providing us with a wealth of knowledge unique to planting an urban forest. Alongside Wendi is Mariemont Service Department's **John Scherpenberg**. John and his team oversee and execute the Village tree planting and maintenance.

Filled with an abundance of expertise and passion, the TAB is beginning to determine and address the tree needs of the Village. As we have discussed at our meetings, there is a lot more to this job than simply planting trees. A good deal of specialized knowledge, science, careful planning, and proper execution go into

creating and maintaining a healthy tree canopy. In an effort to increase awareness and interest in what the TAB is doing, you'll regularly be hearing from me or another tree committee member throughout the year in the Town Crier. We'll keep you up to speed on the interesting projects we're doing as well as educational pieces.

Maybe you've never really thought about our Village trees, or maybe you're acutely aware of the arboreal goings on. Either way, they're an integral part of what makes this community special. The more we appreciate and understand our trees, the more they will thrive.

TCA course catalog and information:
<https://tinyurl.com/5eamjwrs>

If you'd like to see Mariemont's Tree Code, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/t2yty53v>



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