



Around the Neighborhood: September 2020

## Description

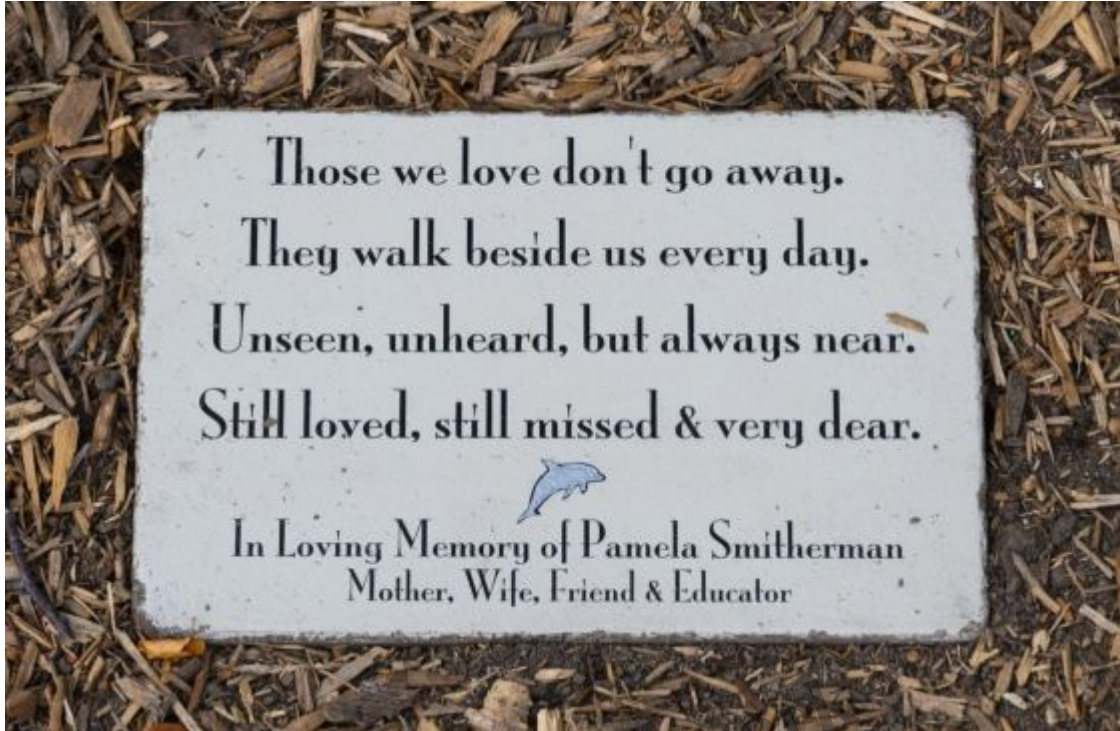
On a beautiful day artist Karen Heyl's dolphin bench was dedicated at the North Avondale Recreation Center. Many people attended to commemorate Pamela Smitherman: a North Avondale resident and former Board Member; mother; wife and CPS educator who left us way to soon. They respectively wore masks and were social distancing. Daniel Betts, CRC Director, Councilman David Mann, Neighborhood Officer Anthony Hill, as well as Mayor Cranley spoke honoring Pam.

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Thank you to Beth Ewing for spearheading this lovely remembrance and sponsors: The North Avondale Neighborhood Association and The North Avondale Recreation Center.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the ***Friends of Pamela***









In the family photo, the Smitherman children are from left to right: Isaac, Christopher II, Malcolm, Camille and Caleb.

*Photos courtesy of J. Miles Wolf*

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### North Avondale's Punch House featured on WLWT

[Watch the interview](#) or read the transcript below:



- The sounds of people hard at work echo through the Punch House on Reading Road in North Avondale. The boxing gym trains athletes of all ages. “All walks of life. Children from as young as 4 all the way up to elderly, maybe 70 or 80,” said **Yaazanyah “Israel” Yisrael**, one of the personal trainers at the gym. Yisrael said he grew up down the street. “It was rough. My parents did everything they could for us,” he said. “I saw the drug dealers and people out there just drinking, doing drugs or whatever. So to have something positive, to give you a goal, to keep you focused, that’s everything.” That is what inspires him to help children and adults reach their full potential. “Once I began boxing and began working out my confidence just shot through the roof,” he said. “A lot of our youth around here are missing a positive male role model, father figures, and I feel there are many of them here that they can come here and get the things that they may be missing at home.” The gym has inspirational sayings painted on the walls. For example, “The moment you want to quit is the moment you need to fight,” and “Your only limit is you.”
- **Michael Caporale**, president of the North Avondale Business Association, said the neighborhood is one of Cincinnati’s best kept secrets. “This is a very welcoming community,” he said. “These homes will rival anything in Hyde Park ... The cost here are a lot less here than what they are in Hyde Park.” He has been part of the push in recent years to improve the business district, make it more pedestrian friendly and attract new businesses. “We have a vacant lot up on the end of the block here which when I moved in was just a dump. We’ve turned that around and had it sodded. We’re now trying to get developers interested in doing something with that,” he said. “We want to see and have the things everybody else has: a coffee shop, an ice cream shop, a bakery, maybe a little food store. All those kinds of things that bring people together where you get to be a part of a community and share your lives.” Caporale is proud of the community engagement, low crime and partnerships with community organizations and police. He said that is part of what makes the area attractive for small-business owners. **Tyler Wolf** is one of them.
- “North Avondale is really nice for a small business to get started, affordable rent and really nicely centrally located,” Wolf said. “We’ve really grown from an operation of about two up to four and now six full-time employees.” Wolf runs **Urban Blooms**, a nonprofit organization he launched about six years ago while he was completing his degree at Ohio State University. Urban Blooms designs and creates living walls with an attempt to make Cincinnati neighborhoods specifically more beautiful and sustainable. There are walls in areas like Bond Hill, Corryville and Clifton, as well as at several Tri-Health locations throughout greater Cincinnati and even in other major cities in the region. “We’ve done work everywhere from Columbus, Louisville, Lexington, Indianapolis, with the majority here in Cincinnati,” Wolf said. For example, the living wall the group built in Corryville cost about \$50,000, plus maintenance. “These are very much at the intersection of art, technology and ecology,” he said. “It’s really a living piece of artwork.” Wolf said the business is doing so well that it has outgrown the neighborhood where it got its start. “Fortunately, it’s for good reasons. We’re moving up and trying to find larger spaces for us,” he said, adding that he is in the process of moving the company to another Cincinnati neighborhood, possibly to the West End. He profits North Avondale for giving the company its start and the opportunity to make Cincinnati more beautiful and sustainable. “These walls are designed to thrive for 30, 40, 50 years even,” Wolf said.

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## North Avondale residents launch construction project to halt devastating landslide



By: Monique John and Andria Carter

Posted at 11:41 AM, Aug 28, 2020 and last updated 9:11 PM, Aug 28, 2020

After more than a year of sustaining property damage, petitioning, research and fundraising efforts, a group of families have started a construction project to stop a landslide that has been wreaking havoc on their homes at Wess Park Drive in North Avondale.

Workers have been at the site for about a week. It is expected they will finish the project to halt the landslide within the next one to two weeks.

“Now we have a Tonka truck rally down the street,” said Richard McKenzie, one of the affected homeowners who has been organizing the project. “We just love hearing the noise. We love hearing the diesel engines and it means progress. It means we’re getting fixed, it means that there is a light at the end of the tunnel...”

The issue [first arose last April](#). Earth from the hill standing up against a number of homes’ backyards on Wess Park Drive started slipping. One house’s foundation was so badly damaged from the impact of the landslide that it was condemned by the city and demolished a month later. The city of Cincinnati cited the incident for code violations and originally gave the residents 30 days to address the issue, declaring the landslide was occurring on private property.

Construction vehicles are parked where a house that was crushed by the landslide once stood.

However, the residents were struggling to resolve the issue in part because options to make repairs were highly expensive. One original plan to drive pillars into the bedrock as a way of securing the land would have cost almost \$330,000. Without financial support from the city, residents could not afford to pay for the robust plan on their own. Furthermore, they grew frustrated that the city was paying more attention to landslides in other areas, like those on Columbia Parkway.

The city would go on to give the residents [further extensions to resolve the issue](#) and they settled on a second, less costly, plan at approximately \$100,000. This entailed putting drains beneath the hill to extract water from the dirt, thereby preventing the land from continuing to shift. Residents say they managed to raise approximately \$60,000 with donations from friends and family, as well as support from some of the residents' churches, the People's Church in Corryville and the Corinthian Baptist Church in Bond Hill.

"One of the really good things that has come out of this is that it's brought us all closer together as neighbors," said Deanna Lane, one of the affected residents. "We've been all working together to try to raise the money to take care of the problem."

[Click Here to read the rest of the story](#) or to watch the story: <https://www.wcpo.com/news/our-community/north-avondale-residents-launch-construction-project-to-halt-devastating-landslide>

*Andria Carter is a reporter with the Cincinnati Herald. WCPO 9 and the Herald worked together to produce this story. The two news organizations are deeply committed to covering what is happening in our African-American community.*

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