

OANA General Meeting Minutes — 01/25/18

Around 35 neighbors and friends turned out for the first OANA meeting of 2018, scheduled for 6 pm at the Maumus Center. The first 10 minutes were set aside for membership renewals, now due for this calendar year. Twenty-four households, with 43 total members, renewed. One lucky member, John Sikorski, won this year's paid dues as a door prize!

Our usual MC, President Barry Lemoine, was incapacitated due to a hip replacement, but he and Katherine Lemoine put together an excellent slideshow for Secretary Linda Van Aman to present. We began as usual with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the OANA 2017 Year in Review.

OANA's signature events for 2017 were highlighted: Sippin' in the Sunset -- this time we hosted four at 3 hours each rather than six at 2 hours -- and Sugar Fest in October. The first Fall Sippin' fell on the International Day of Peace, and many turned out in tie-dye; we also welcomed Canseco's Market, which would soon open in Old Arabi. Sugar Fest had great sponsors, music, vendors, and the ever-popular donut eating contests.

Our events can always use more help, especially with setup and cleanup. This year, 2018, will be the 10th Anniversary of Sugar Fest, and we hope to make it the sweetest ever. Members interested in helping this happen should contact Committee Chairman Ray Lauga. Sippin' organizer Maegan Dobson encouraged members to come an hour before opening or stay for half an hour afterwards to give us a hand. We'd love to have more vendors, too, so if anyone knows of food or crafts businesses that would like to participate, please let the organizers know.

In addition to hosting fun events, we also strive to be an active part of the community. Our community impact in 2017 included:

- The Mitchell Smith Culinary Scholarship, which awarded \$1000 for the spring semester to Hailey Baumann, an Arabi resident attending Nunez who hopes to open her own restaurant in St. Bernard one day. We just learned that Hailey is continuing in the program, so we'll be giving her another check this year.
- Night Out Against Crime, one of our social events that is open to all. It was held at the Arabi Food Store's newly renovated outdoor patio, with the help of the Food Store's new owners, the Landry family. It was very well attended, possibly the largest gathering ever for this event. Guest speaker Charlie Borchers from the St. Bernard Sheriff's Office gave his most important advice: "Lock your cars!" He also encouraged neighbors to report any suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Office.
- St. Bernard Day of Service, where several members participated in the

event at the Old Arabi Community Garden, planting the beds and watching the sunset.

- The second Old Arabi Utility Art Box on St. Claude Avenue (the first is in front of Studio Arabi) — local artist Sabrina Smith has been commissioned to paint an OANA-sponsored design highlighting the Mississippi River and one of the parish's first cash crops, indigo. The boxes help to showcase our Cultural Arts District.
- As our traditional holiday donation, OANA adopted 10 needy families from Arabi Elementary, each of which received a \$200 gift card from Canseco's Grocery, a \$300 gift card from Walmart, and a voucher for a Christmas tree from Renaissance Gardens.
- Bar tips from the November Sippin' in the Sunset were donated to the St. Bernard Veterans' Association, and we also donated the drinks for the annual Veterans' luncheon at Rocky & Carlos.

Members-only events for the year were:

- our August Summer Social, held on a dark and stormy Katrina anniversary night, the 29th. Despite another hurricane watch, turnout was good at The Valiant Lounge, with delicious food catered by Arabi Food Store and The Kitchen Table. Many thanks to all three businesses for their support!
- the annual December Holiday Party at The Kitchen Table, with more great food & cheer. At the party, Debbie Smith was honored with our very first Friend of Old Arabi Award for her selfless commitment to our neighborhood and our association. We plan to make this an annual feature as well.

Our membership has grown, and so have our finances!

- We began January of 2016 with \$41,381, and ended December 2017 with \$46,121 (the data shows a two year period, since scholarship and beautification money was earmarked during that time).
- Sippin' profits were about \$1500 in the fall and \$1500 in the spring. We also invested in ice chests, tablecloths, and dispensers.
- Sugar Fest profit exceeded \$6200.
- Membership at the end of 2016 was 42 households with 68 members; at the end of 2017 we had 68 households with 120 total members.
- \$11,867 remains in the Mitchell Smith Scholarship Fund, and \$8877 is earmarked for ongoing beautification projects.

Thanks and kudos to our other Committee Chairs:

- Beautification — Troy Barrios has been working closely with the Community Garden, and member John Sikorsky has been mowing and edging around the beds there. Member Kathy Hall can be seen picking up trash on her long walks through the neighborhood.

- Sunshine — Jenifer Heintz sends cards of congratulations, birthday greetings, get-well wishes and condolences to members. Make sure to provide us with birthday & anniversary dates to receive some sunshine!
- Hospitality — Kelly McCartney has done a fabulous job organizing our Socials and providing refreshments & door prizes for these general meetings.
- Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws — Sal Cusimano is working on revisions, and the Board will be working on them in their February and March meetings, with the goal of presenting proposed changes to the membership at the next General Meeting in April.
- Membership — Charlie LeSage helped increase our membership in 2017.
- Financial — Alison Barrios is doing a great job refining our bookkeeping systems to be more organized and professional.

At the end of 2017, OANA Vice President Charlie LeSage sold his Mehle Street home and currently resides outside the parish. Former OANA Board Member Maegan Dobson has agreed to serve as interim Vice President, at least through April, when we hope Charlie will return. We thank them both for their commitment to OANA, and welcome back Maegan!

Congratulations were extended to these Board Members:

- Alison Barrios & Linda Van Aman were accepted into this year's Leadership St. Bernard class and will begin attending sessions next week. The two split an OANA scholarship that will pay one full fee for a member or members entering the program every year.
- Jenifer Heintz was given the BPW Golden Circle Award for her commitment to that organization, and was also appointed head of the Tourist Commission.
- Alison Barrios received the 2017 Entrepreneur of the Year Award by the Women's Council of REALTORS New Orleans Metropolitan Network.

Upcoming dates were announced:

- Sippin' in the Sunset, Thursdays March 15th (the Ides of March) and May 10th, 6-9 pm.
- The next General Meeting will be in April, tentatively on Thursday the 12th, 6 pm at the Maumus Center.

February Planetarium Dates were presented, with shows on Saturday the 3rd and Wednesday the 21st. For more information, call Gena Asevedo at 504-301-0239.

New in Old Arabi: Chew Rouge, food at Pirogue's Whiskey Bayou. Visit their website for menu and details, dine in or carry out, call or text orders to

504-314-9342.

Door prizes were drawn and the meeting was adjourned just before 6:30, with these reminders:

- renew your membership
- encourage your neighbors to get involved
- keep your tax dollars in the parish!