



Garden District News

Roseland Terrace, Kleinert Terrace and Drehr Place Historic Neighborhoods

Spring 2015

From History to Art to Accidental Publisher

By: Mindy Piontek

Kara Casanova didn't intend to become a publisher. She started out in marketing after taking a hodge podge of courses in college from history to art to marketing and design. Although she didn't realize it at the time, her meandering course work was the perfect preparation for the life she has ended up leading.

After working at Chick-fil-A for a time, where she went far beyond mentoring a couple of teens to becoming a mother to them, in 2004 she was dragged into spearheading a project at Westdale Middle Magnet, which her other two children attended, to raise funds to finance the construction of the biggest playground in Baton Rouge. When the person originally hired to lead the project dropped the ball, Kara picked it up and ran with it. Under her leadership, she raised \$65,000 in a handful of months.

There was then a natural lull in the project around Christmas time, while the school waited for the playground to be constructed and then delivered. Not one to remain idle, Kara told her committee, "Don't call me for a few weeks. I'm going to be baking cookies." She planned to make three shapes of cookies for her kids to take to school for their friends. She baked polar bears, snowflakes and penguins.

Surrounded by cooling sugar cookies that covered every surface of her kitchen,



Kara Casanova with her new book "Elvis the Penguin."

"Every time I frosted the penguins, the icing flipped up. It was 2 am, and I was laughing hysterically, because the penguins looked like Elvis."

Kara and her daughter began the long process of frosting them. "I saved the penguins for last," Kara said, "because the black frosting can be tricky."

It was late at night and into the next morning when Kara began frosting the penguins. "Every time I frosted the penguins, the icing flipped up. It was 2 a.m., and I was laughing hysterically, because the penguins looked like Elvis."

Over the next few weeks, the image of those pompadour-ed penguin cookies kept Kara amused, and a story began to

See **PUBLISHER**, page 5

Garden District Easter Egg Hunt Brings Community Together

By: Mindy Piontek

The skies were blue, the grass was green, and the oak tassels fell like green snow over the fifty or so neighbors gathered for this year's Easter Egg Hunt. For the twelfth year, Amy Cave and her family hosted the event on their park-like lawn at the corner of Drehr and Oleander.

"I just love meeting all the new people and seeing all the young kids," said Amy.

Although this was the Cave's twelfth time hosting, the hunt has been held at the property for much of its thirty-eight year run, according to Mary Fontenot, the event's long term organizer and occasional bunny. The event has been held at a handful of other houses, and one year it was held at the now defunct community garden.

"The first hunt was in 1977," said Mary. "I remember because my son was a baby." For the first few years, Goudchaux's lent

the GDCA a white bunny suit. "Then one year it was a green bunny suit," said Mary. When she went back the next year to borrow the bunny suit again, a Goudchaux's representative informed her that someone else had rented the suit and not returned it.

"That was Saturday, and the hunt was on Sunday," said Mary. So she did what only a die-hard GDCA Easter Egg Hunt organizer

See **IN THE HUNT**, page 2



Children take off on Palm Sunday for the Garden District Easter Egg Hunt - or is it a race?! Top left is Matt Swanner as the forever famous Easter Bunny.



After winning a photo finish grab for one of the silver eggs, Cooper Puryear (left) shares his prize with runner-up Michael Paul Miller and evidenced the true spirit of charity and sportsmanship of this Easter Season in the Garden District.

ON THE HUNT

Continued from Page 1

would do—she made one. Although Mary claims the suit was awful, with a cotton ball tail and ears fashioned from cloth covered wire hangers, “We used that suit for years and years.”

The current white bunny suit is once again a borrowed affair. The suit was first brought to life by Mary’s husband, Willie Fontenot, who proudly wore it for twenty years. He passed the bunny duty to Mary, who wore it for a few years. The latest bunny is Matt Swanner, who joked once he had returned to civilian clothes, “This might be my last year.”

The bunny isn’t the only thing that has changed over the years. According to Mary, “In the beginning, we boiled all the eggs and dyed them in the back yard.” The real egg tradition

screamed to a halt the year an overlooked egg was devoured several months later by a neighbor’s dog that survived but left an overpowering odor of rotten egg that filled the block. After that, the GDCA switched to plastic eggs filled with candy.

This year, volunteers hid 700 candy filled eggs in sections designated for different age groups, from toddlers to preteens. At 3:00, the children lined up on the tape marking their age group’s section, and in just a few minutes, the only eggs on the grass were a few empty shells tossed aside after their candy was harvested.

Surprisingly, candy, cupcakes and cookies weren’t the most popular comestible for the day. That honor went to the contents of the Easter Bunny’s basket—fresh, leaf-topped carrots.

See more photos on the website at www.gdcabr.org!

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Garden District News

The Garden District News is published quarterly by the Garden District Civic Association and is edited by

Mindy Piontek

If you have comments or story ideas that you would like to submit to the publication contact Mindy Piontek at mmpiontek@aol.com.

WWW.GDCABR.ORG

UPDATED PHONE NUMBERS FOR GARDEN DISTRICT SECURITY

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, or if you see a crime in progress, call BR Police Dispatch at 389-2000, or call 911. If a GD security patrol officer happens to already be in the area, Dispatch will call them.

TO DISCUSS ONGOING SECURITY CONCERNS regarding criminal activity, Sgt. Don Stone, BRPD and head of the GD security patrol, is available at 389-3361 (office) or 571-7244 (cell). Please begin all messages with your name, address, and phone number.

Sgt. Stone is happy to talk about security concerns, but he should not be called for emergencies, traffic or parking violations, or other non-threatening matters. For those concerns, please call BR Police Dispatch or the appropriate EBR agency.

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A little Pet Friendly animal etiquette goes a Long Way!

The Garden District is a very pet-friendly neighborhood. Here are some "canine etiquette" tips to help us all keep it that way:

- It's not courteous to let your dog walk on people's front lawns, or urinate on their landscaping. Instead, walk your dog on the sidewalk and allow access only to "rough" areas to eliminate.
- Don't leave your house without a plastic bag for picking up after your dog! Or try one of those handy refillable bag dispensers that attach right to the leash.
- And don't forget to use it, even if your dog eliminates in the space between the sidewalk and the street. Remember, people DO walk in those areas to get to their cars. You wouldn't like a "surprise" stuck to your shoe when you're hurrying off to work; why would anyone else?
- When approaching another person walking their dog, tighten up on your leash to make your dog walk by your side, especially if the other person is already tightening up as a courtesy to you and your dog. This is usually a sign that their dog likes to pull toward oncoming dogs.



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Would you like to be on the GDCA E-Mail List Serve?

By **CAROLYN SCHWARZHOFF**

The name of our official neighborhood e-mail list is: GDCA_BR, also known as the Garden District E-Mail List. It runs on free Yahoo Groups software and there are nearly 700 Garden District neighbors subscribed.

Our e-mail list has been up and running since 2000 and it grows larger every month!

We use the list to:

Post Garden District announcements, security alerts, calls for neighborhood action, etc.

Send reminders and calls for volunteers for neighborhood events and activities

Discuss neighborhood concerns and answer questions

This is a closed list. Only Baton Rouge Garden District residents or landowners may sign on (our boundaries can be found on the GDCA website here <http://gdcabr.org/districts-filings>). All messages are checked by the administrator for appropriateness before being posted and must concern topics regarding the immediate neighborhood or closely surrounding areas.

All messages must also be signed with your first and last name AND follow all other guidelines for posting. Complete guidelines and other information for the GDCA_BR e-mail list can be found at our website at: <http://gdcabr.org/> (under: Connect with the GDCA, Join the Yahoo Group).

We use the guidelines to try to keep the list focused on Garden District topics so that your mailbox doesn't overflow and neighbors will stay subscribed.

How can you join?

It's easy! Just send an e-mail message requesting to join to the list administrator (Carolyn Schwarzhoff) at: gdcabr@hotmail.com and make sure to include: your name, your street address (to confirm that you are a Garden District resident). New subscribers to the list are usually added within a week.

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www.gdcabr.org



Troy Tazuin and Christian Macedo with the 'replanted' Garden District Sign on Park Blvd.

Hey, What's Your Sign?

By: **Eric Troutman**

Thanks to Troy Tazuin and Cristian Macedo, who repaired and reinstalled

the Garden District sign at the corner of Park and Government. The sign was hit by an on duty police officer, but it's looking good as new now!

Gulf South Solar, Louisiana's oldest and most experienced solar integrator, has been busy installing solar electric and solar hot water systems in the Garden District and surrounding areas!

Your neighbors are enjoying lower utility bills with systems that sell energy back to the utility company and battery back-up systems which provide emergency power to your home in the event of a power outage. We also install solar water heating systems which provide year-round hot water heated by the sun.



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Continued from Page 1

coalesce around their image. Then in January, with her kids back in school, she realized, "I should just write it down and get it out of my system."

In no time, she had most of the story written down. "I had it pretty much composed in my head," Kara said.

While she might have had the story of Elvis the Penguin down, it was not about to get out of her system. Friends who read the story encouraged her to publish it. So, after clearing the idea and the use of lyrics with Elvis Presley Enterprises, and working

with LSU art student, Anne Lipscomb, on the illustrations, she shopped the manuscript to several traditional publishers, none of whom were willing to move forward.

Undaunted, Kara took matters into her own competent hands by self-publishing with WingSpan Press.

"The book broke records," said Kara, from the moment it came out. Usually, according to Kara, at Barnes and Nobles book readings, they sell about 24 books. "Mine sold 72." She has had two book tours, appeared at the Tupello, Mississippi, Elvis festival, and this spring she will be in Las Vegas to promote the second edition.

Elvis the Penguin has more work to do, though. He will appear as part of ICare's anti-bullying campaign in local schools. They have developed curricula featuring Elvis and the bullying he receives in the book for being different from the other penguins. The curricula targets different age groups and moves from simple coloring sheets to discussions about social diversity. Elvis the Penguin mania will culminate April 20-24, when schools celebrate Elvis the Penguin week, complete with costumes, readings and penguin themed activities.

There will be more Elvis the Penguin coming in the future, too, which has led to a shift in goals for Kara. "My whole goal was to promote the book myself for two years and get the attention of the big boys of publishing," said Kara, "but another business person helped me realize that I don't need them." Instead, Kara has restructured the business, bringing on investors to help her move forward. She has almost completed the process of becoming licensed by Elvis Presley Enterprises, since a second product, whether a book or a stuffed animal, would trigger copyright infringement.

Her next problem to address is more mundane—where to store 4,000 copies of Elvis the Penguin in the small house on Oleander that she currently rents. Although she doesn't plan to rent forever, Kara has no plans to leave the Garden District. She, her four kids, and a small penguin with funny hair are home.

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We're all lucky to live in a fantastic neighborhood with a thriving civic association. Only one thing could make it better—you! If you've already joined, thanks and welcome to the club. If not, dues are only \$120 per year and cover everything from patrols by off duty police officers, fun picnics, Easter egg hunts, crawfish boils, to this newsletter. You may join online by using PayPal on the website, gdcabr.org (word of warning—gdca.org will take you to the Great Dane association, a worthy organization, but not one that supports our neighborhood).

If you prefer, you may send a check to the Garden District Civic Association Treasurer, PO Box 4113, Baton Rouge, LA, 70821. For more information see the website or like us on Facebook, where you can see more about our great activities.

A Good Book is Right Around the Corner

By: Mindy Piontek

If you are in need of a good book, look no further than the corner of Camelia and Terrace or the block of Kleinert between Drehr and Camelia. The Garden District Civic Association recently placed a Little Free Library in the yard of Ray and Beryl Mack. This new community library joins the one in Larry and Susan Melsheimer's yard. Both are painted to blend with their respective hosts' houses, and both have an assortment of books from fiction to non-fiction to books for kids.

Originally, the GDCA hoped to place the library a few streets away from the Melsheimer's library on Kleinert, but they were unable to find a yard that would take it.

"Beryl and I agreed to put it up in our yard," said Ray Mack. "We looked at the Little Libraries online and had Aren Langland of Langland Construction LLC build it." Ray then painted it with some of the paint left over from the spring painting of the Garden District signs, and he chose dark green trim to match the Garden District t-shirts.

According to the Little Free Library website, Todd Bol built the first to look like a



Little library on Kleinert between Drehr and Camelia in the yard of Larry and Susan Melsheimer.

little red schoolhouse as a tribute to his mother, a former school teacher. Friends and neighbors enjoyed the little library so much, that he ended up building a few more and giving them away. Currently, there are over 20,000 Little Free Libraries in

more than 70 countries. More information is available at www.littlefreelibrary.org.

So the next time you're out for a stroll, do some browsing! If you have a book you'd like to share with your neighbors, add it to the shelf!



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