



## Roland Park has much to celebrate this week

*Accomplishments go beyond raising money for firehouse*

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Celebrate Roland Park Week is ostensibly a fundraiser for Roland Park's historic firehouse.

But the week-long fundraiser June 1-8, in which Roland Park restaurants and other merchants will donate portions of their sales to help renovate the firehouse, also marks a year of intense neighborhood activism.

That civic engagement has succeeded not only in raising nearly enough money for the firehouse, but also in stopping a plan to develop 17 acres of Baltimore Country Club green space as a retirement community.

A year ago, Roland Park was still basking in the glory of its renovated library, which the community raised \$2.7 million to redo, and which had reopened six months earlier.

The neighborhood was wrestling with how to raise money for a decaying 118-year-old water tower that the Roland Park Civic League estimated would cost \$1.5 million to fix.

That spring, firefighters had approached the civic league asking for help in raising roughly \$350,000 to renovate the station, more than a century old and showing its age.

As if that wasn't enough, the community learned in June that the Baltimore Country Club had signed a contract worth \$12.5 million with Keswick Multi-Care for 17 acres of the club's undeveloped land in the neighborhood.

Although the announcement's timing may have been inopportune, it was the kind of event civic league president Phil Spevak was looking for to galvanize his community.

"I hoped there would be something that would kind of wake up the community," he said this week.

The neighborhood launched a campaign against the development while moving forward on its other projects.

Now, the neighborhood is as engaged as ever, and events like Celebrate Roland Park Week are helping to keep the community involved, Spevak said.

"I don't see the celebration as a bookend. I do see it as a way to celebrate the good things that continue to happen," he said.

Martha Marani, co-chairwoman of the Homes for Heroes fundraising group and editor of the quarterly newsletter Roland Park News, said the week is more of a beginning than an end.

Her group has raised \$36,000 of its goal of \$46,000 to pay for a new kitchen and new lockers for the firehouse, and helped secure a \$110,000 state bond for the upgrades.

But she said that's only "phase one" and the group intends to begin fundraising again to help renovate the firehouse's dilapidated living quarters.

She said they intend to have another Celebrate Roland Park Week as well as another Chili Cookoff like the one they held this past winter.

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