



Northside United

Issue #4: Winter 2016

Get to Know Your Neighbors: Moe Lay

It all started with a note that Kyaw Thura sent to Moe Lay in the Thai refugee camp where they were both living. It said that he thought she was very pretty and he would like to meet with her. Moe Lay liked the looks of Kyaw Thura so, after hesitating politely, she sent a note back, agreeing to meet. When asked what she would have done if she hadn't liked him, she said she would have torn up the note and that would have been the end. These are the customs of courtship in Burmese villages.

Meanwhile, Moe Lay's widowed mother did not approve! "Her Mother was so mad at me!" said Kyaw Thura

laughing, "She thought I was too old." They met in secret for a while.

Then, eight years ago Kyaw Thura came to Ithaca as a refugee. He got a job at the Statler Hotel and later became an American citizen.

Three years later, Moe Lay and her family arrived in North Carolina. Kyaw Thura immediately asked his cousin and a friend to go with him to get her. And, with her mother's permission, they brought her to Ithaca.

With the help of Sally Wessels and Bob Love, friends of Kyaw Thura, they were married in a civil ceremony in Ithaca and soon after in a Buddhist ceremony



Moe Lay, Kyaw Thura and their children.

Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services & Hayner Hoyt Construction
Hosted by Northside United



Please join us
February 1st
6:30 - 8:00 PM
Quaker Meetinghouse,
120 Third St.
Childcare provided

We will discuss our 210
Hancock construction
schedule and answer any
other construction questions
that you may have.

Follow the progress online at 210hancock.org

with her family in Ohio. The walls of the living room in their comfortable home are decorated with photographs of Moe Lay in a beautiful white wedding gown and Kyaw Thura looking young and handsome.

Moe Lay and her family fled Burma because of the repressive military regime when she was three years old. They lived in a refugee camp in Thailand most of her life. The trek from their village to Thailand took two days on foot.

Kyaw Thura was older when he reached the camp. His older brother had been imprisoned because he was active in the anti government pro-democracy movement. And Kyaw Thura's father was afraid that his other sons would either be conscripted into the army or put in prison so they fled Burma as well.

Moe Lay and Thura now have two sons, three-year-

old Aung Khant Nyein, and five-month-old, Thura Nyein. Aung Khant Nyein attends the Downtown Ithaca Children's Center and is becoming a bilingual child. Thura still gazes at the world in wonder. He is the youngest member of Northside Neighborhood United.

When asked why she joined Northside Neighborhood United, Moe Lay said her friend, Sally, thought she would enjoy it and she has. She is especially appreciative that Northside United helped her get a scholarship for childcare for Aung Khant Nyein. Once the baby is old enough she will be able to resume her ESL classes.

Right now she has a Tompkins Learning Partners tutor who helps her with her English language skills. Learning English well is very important to Moe Lay. She has also begun the

Moe Lay

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News from the Hood

On December 21, about 20 people from Northside United and the Friends Meeting walked around Northside singing songs of unity and peace in celebration of the Winter Solstice. Everyone gathered at 5:30 p.m. for a soup and dessert supper. Well fortified, they strolled around our neighborhood bringing good cheer. The singing was well received by our neighbors. This could become a tradition. Special thanks to Mimi Meligrito who led the chorus.

Playground Design Committee

The Playground Design Committee will be holding a community meeting to discuss the design for 210 Hancock Street Playground. The meeting will be February 1 at 5 p.m. at the Greater Ithaca Activities gym. All are welcome, especially teenagers and families with middle and elementary school age children. Serenity and Irene Dixon and Beth Myers will be facilitating the meeting with the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing landscape gardener and staff from the Ithaca Children's Garden. Come and give your ideas for this special area **tailored to activities for older children**. The Playground meeting is immediately before our regular Northside United meeting; a report-back will be presented at the meeting.

February Northside United Dinner Meeting

Our regular Northside United dinner meeting at 5:30 at the Friends Meetinghouse (120 Third Street, corner of Madison Street) will be shorter this month due to the INHS project update meeting at 6:30. Please join us for soup and sharing.

Update on 210 Hancock Street Development

INHS has received all necessary funding for the project. Demolition will begin in March with a summer 2017 completion goal. There will be 54 rental apartments and 7 townhouses for sale. The first floor will be occupied by an Early Head Start Program and commercial spaces.

Anyone interested in applying for residence should e-mail Joe Bowes (jbowes@ithacnhs.org) to get on the in-



Northside United and Friends Meeting members Caroling December 21st.

terest list. He will send an application. It is first come, first served. If there are more applicants than units available, they go to a lottery system.

Contractors will abide by pile driving recommendations; if pile driving vibrations are above limits, they will stop pile driving.

Block Stewards' Report

In November, the block stewards went from door to door distributing our Fall newsletter. They spoke with people and asked about what they liked about the Northside neighborhood and what concerns they had.

The likes included that the neighborhood is really quiet, safe and that the traffic signs are working to slow down traffic.

On the concerns side, people felt there is a need for more public relations to improve the reputation of the neighborhood. They also mentioned poor lighting in some areas, absentee landlords not keeping up properties and that there is no city bus to Northside on weekends. People also do not like alternate side parking.

Any of these issues can be worked on by all of the residents in the area. Our representatives on Common Council have been listening to the concerns of the members of Northside United. Changes have been made. Join us to help create an even more vibrant and healthy community.

Northside United Listserve

Sign up for the Northside United listserv by emailing northsideunited14850@gmail.com.

And don't forget to like Ithaca Northside United on Facebook.

Report a Burned Out Streetlight

Have you noticed a burned out streetlight? Call NYSEG at 1.800.572.1131 to report it.

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process for becoming a US citizen. The couple would like to raise their children in the US. Kyaw Thura says he wants his children to get a good education, to be good people and to help others.

He also spoke movingly about Burma: "People are very broken in Burma because they lived under oppression for so long. Economic conditions are bad and health care is poor and expensive. Young people want more. They want a better quality of life. Hopefully with the new government, this can happen."

Put it on your calendar!

The March meeting of Northside United will be Monday, March 7 at 5:30.