



FROM THE BELLTOWER

*The Newsletter of the Friends of the
North Brookfield Town House*

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Time Has Taken Its Toll on the Town House

Longtime residents of North Brookfield will remember when the Town House was open and functioning as “the Center of Everything.” Here’s a peek inside today.

This area on Summer Street was once Benvenuti’s Market.



Formerly the Senior Center, this space on Main Street at the top of the ramp is now a storage area.



Inside the National Register Town House Today



Years of neglect, and the abuse done by work shoring up the building, and addressing the problems created by a leaking roof have left the space on the first floor, originally Howard's market, later reconfigured as office space, looking like this:

The Town Clerk's Office



Tax Collector

Veterans' Affairs



Elegant and Proud on the Outside, the Town House Deserves an Interior to Match the Stately Staircase Leading to the Great Hall, Still Standing Soundly Amid the Chaos.



Existing Annex

Having promised to help raise the funds to see that this goal is accomplished, the Friends of the Town House plan to apply in June for the next phase of the *Massachusetts One Stop* grant to begin the first step in the restoration of the building: the demolition of the annex at the back of the Town House to create a new two-story space for an entrance, lobby, elevator, and accessible restrooms as well as HVAC equipment and other mechanicals.





Cool Kids Choir – a Treat for Children and Their Families

Quoting from an MCC grant written by Town House Friends Board Member Eva Brown, “In our small community with an underserved population, offering a free after-school program to elementary school students can bring possibilities into the lives of children and their families. This musical group experience provides an opportunity for self-expression and discovery. Kids make new friends, learn about themselves, and feel a sense of pride in their accomplishments. When kids go home feeling happy, parents are happy. Good feelings are contagious!”

North Brookfield is fortunate that two of our residents are steeped in Cool Kids Choir. Bonnie Milner, the co-owner and principle of Long View Farm Studios and Entertainment, was the originator of Cool Kids and Channing (LeBlanc) Ford was one of her students. Now, together Bonnie and Channing are offering a priceless program to our elementary school students without cost to their parents.

The North Brookfield school community has been working hand in hand with Channing and Bonnie to create rehearsal space, set up concert dates, and prepare parent notices. Justin Steuer has volunteered to provide sound and technical support for the performances. And professional photography for the concerts is handled by Bruce Arnold. Parents arrange transportation and supervision when necessary.

The Friends of the North Brookfield Town House have been proud to sponsor the Cool Kids Choir in North Brookfield and the work that Channing and Bonnie have been doing. We want to thank the Massachusetts Cultural Council for supporting us with the \$900 grant we have received through our Local Cultural Council.

*The Cool Kids will be back on Stage – Tentative Date April 23rd
at the North Brookfield Elementary School*



Spotlight on Channing Ford – Cool Kids Choir Co-director

“Cool Kids Choir was a transformational program for me as it was for so many of my peers. In addition to learning music and all that goes along with it, we learned valuable life skills that are remembered to this day. For instance, hundreds and hundreds of young people who have participated in Cool Kids know that 'focus is not hocus pocus, focus is what works!' And, we all were told, experienced, and believe that 'we are in charge of our minds.'”

And in my case, Cool Kids was even more impactful because it was where I was discovered as a musician and performer. From Cool Kids I went on to record and perform with some amazing artists and producers, had one of my songs win an award at the Tribeca Film Festival, and had music distributed by Universal. I traveled to New York City and Los Angeles and went to places that exceeded my imagination.

After starting my family, I decided to become a teacher and chose Special Education as my focus. Today, I teach in the North Brookfield Public School System. In a beautiful, perfect circle, I am now directing Cool Kids Choir with the original founder, Bonnie Milner. Rehearsals are filled with laughter, dancing, joy and yes, meaningful work.

Another generation of young people are learning about their own personal power through the process of learning and performing music. More than ever this program is needed in our town, music multiplies but doesn't ever divide. Cool Kids Choir continues to be a bright, shining star in my life and for those fortunate enough to be involved.”

And Word from Bonnie Milner – Original Founder

“Channing was discovered in Cool Kids as an extraordinary musical talent and was invited to enter the Artist Development Program at Long View Entertainment. Through Long View, she wrote and performed countless original songs with acclaimed songwriters, studied voice with famed vocal instructor Mark Baxter, garnered acknowledgment at Tribeca Film Festival for co-writing and performing the title track in the film, Long Distance and achieved her first record deal with UMG at the age of seventeen and her single, 'Give Me Hope' was distributed on radio airwaves nationally. After success in the entertainment industry and bringing two beautiful children into the world, Channing decided to pursue a career in education. She is currently teaching Special Education in the North Brookfield School System while working on her master's degree, and volunteering as a Cool Kids Choir Director. Channing is absolutely committed to education, arts, and her community.”



We are very fortunate to have these special women working with our children here in North Brookfield.

Looking Back into Friends of the Town House History . . .

On May 9, 2016, the Friends, aided by Board of Selectmen member Mary Walter, hosted an informational tour of the Town House for Congressman Jim McGovern and area political and business leaders. Jim expressed to the Friends and local leaders his enthusiastic support of our Town House project in its prominent location across the street from Vibram/Quabaug Corporation, the maker of soles for the boots of American soldiers.

Town House tours are an important tool for the Friends. They allow us to personally demonstrate the possibilities created by our reuse plan and the foolishness of ignoring the value of a substantial historic property in the center of our commercial district. They help us draw in volunteers and recruit new supporters to our cause. One needs to 'show' a property to 'sell' it.

While Planning for the Future.

Once again, we will be conducting tours of the Great Hall, this time during the May Fest on **May 4th** in cooperation with the Haston Library and the Local Cultural Council. **Come, share your ideas with us, introduce your friends to our cause, see the possibilities, and decide how you can help us raise the millions we need to complete our project!**

Support Restoration

Revitalization, Education, and Creativity in our Community

friends@nbtownhouse.com

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email address for updates: _____

Individual [\$25] ____ Family [\$50] ____ Lifetime Member [\$200] ____ Business/Organization [\$200] ____

Signature (s): _____

Cash \$ _____ Check \$ _____ Check # _____ Donation Included \$ _____

I want to get involved: Fundraising ____ Membership ____
 Capital Campaign ____ Programs/Classes ____
 Special Events ____ Outreach to the community and potential supporters ____

I have time: weekly ____ monthly ____ one time/event ____

Please describe any special skills or talents you have: _____

The Friends of the North Brookfield Town House is a 501(c)(3) organization supported entirely by the generosity of our members and donors, and the success of annual fundraising events.

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