



# Cheviot Hills

*The greatest neighborhood in the world*

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# Won't you be my neighbor?

By Ben Lee

My family and I recently saw the excellent Mister Rogers' Neighborhood documentary. If you haven't had the chance to see it yet, I highly recommend it. Growing up, I had seen the Mister Rogers show a handful of times but didn't appreciate at the time what an interesting and somewhat revolutionary figure he was. One aspect of the film that certainly resonated with me was the concept of an actual neighborhood. One that included all sorts of people living near one another, forming a community. It seems like an idea that's easily taken for granted: how a kind gesture or thoughtful action performed by a neighbor in turn can help influence the (small) world we are all living in. Often we go about our lives somewhat immune to the needs of those who may live just a door or two away. The nicer we are to each other, the more conscientious we are of each other's homes and whereabouts, the thoughtfulness and kindness we extend towards one another has a ripple effect and Mr. Rogers knew that. It's an attitude/hope/expectation that reaches beyond one's neighborhood and out to the world at large. Even if the idea of spreading kindness towards one's neighbors seems an obvious thing to do, sometimes it takes a few hours with the legendary Mr. Rogers to be reminded that the simplest of lessons are often the ones most taken for granted and usually the most important.

The other part of the movie that resonated with me was the respect and attention Fred Rogers gave to the voices and specific needs of children. You come away from the movie feeling like he really heard them and devoted his life to creating a platform that supported whatever it was they were experiencing in a safe, nonjudgmental way. It was a novel endeavor at the time to offer a television show geared towards kids that didn't involve the wacky antics of clowns or animated coyotes trying to blow up roadrunners. Mr. Rogers wasn't the most outrageous or funny or exciting guy in the room, but he made every



child feel like he/she was important and that his/her voice really mattered.

It struck me as particularly timely that my family would see this documentary a few days before our middle son, Spencer, was given the chance to have his voice heard in a monumental way. He joined KidScoop Media: an organization based in Culver City that allows children of all ages to be heard. The group, founded by Michelle Mayans ten years ago, connects boy and girls with unique opportunities, usually by way of allowing them to conduct interviews with influential people and then write about their experiences.

Since 2008, Michelle has sent many kid reporters (or 'scoopers' as they're commonly referred to) to the tarmac of LAX to greet the arrival of Air Force One. They interviewed Vice President Joe Biden multiple times around Los Angeles and a contingent traveled to the White House a few years ago to sit down with President Obama. They continue to cover various White House events. Scoopers have also covered NASA launches and red carpet movie premieres, interviewed actors, musicians and most recently met with the Parkland shooting survivors/activists David Hogg and Emma Gonzalez when they were in town to talk about gun safety and voter registration.

Our son was lucky enough to get involved after Michelle put out a call on her Facebook page for students who were interested in musical theater, specifically the show Hamilton. A month later, Spencer (and his mom) found themselves on Broadway in New York City where, not only did Spencer get to sit in the 4th row of this still-impossible-to-get-tickets-for show, but after the final bow, he was

invited on a backstage tour and then got to interview the show's two musical directors. For a kid who knows everything about Hamilton yet hadn't experienced seeing it on Broadway, it really was a dream come true. After the interview was over, Spencer had a week to write an article that will appear in a Culver City publication (we've published Spencer's piece in this edition of the newsletter, printed right next to this article).

There was a cost involved as KidScoop Media is a nonprofit and is at the mercy of private funding/donations to stay in business. However, operating costs are relatively low and part/most of the fee incurred goes towards scholarships so that kids of all socioeconomic backgrounds can still take part in these unique opportunities. Coming up in October will be a Culver City School Board Kid Forum at which Scoopers will have the chance to pepper board members with questions directly pertaining to issues that involve and concern them the most. It should be an interesting and lively evening and no doubt will make an impact on both the kids and school officials alike.

Whether it's giving a platform to kids and letting their voices be heard or simply acting like a good, kind person towards a fellow neighbor, there's no time like the present to do something positive for our community and make every day a little bit better and brighter than the one that came before it.

Mr. Rogers would approve.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KIDSCOOP MEDIA CONTACT MICHELLE MAYANS AT: [MMAYANS@KIDSCOOPMEDIA.ORG](mailto:MMAYANS@KIDSCOOPMEDIA.ORG)

## My Hamilton Experience

By Spencer Lee

On July 31, I saw the musical "Hamilton," on Broadway in New York City. I fell in love with this musical since I first heard the soundtrack a year ago. I immediately thought Lin Manuel Miranda, as well as the cast and crew behind Hamilton were geniuses. With the smart and catchy hip-hop lyrics, along with stunning vocals, Hamilton truly is a revolutionary creation that deserves a million standing ovations.

I traveled to New York to interview the musical directors of Hamilton on assignment for Kids Scoop Media. This is an organization that helps kids have life changing opportunities through interviewing politicians, celebrities and activists/leaders. I was so excited to have this chance to interview Hamilton's musical directors on Broadway because not only is it my favorite show and I had a lot of questions, I had never seen it on Broadway.

I got to sit in the fourth row, which was so awesome because I was sitting so close to the stage. After the show, I got to meet the people I was interviewing at the stage door. I had my questions prepared, and I was ready to go. I got to go on to the stage, and I met the actress who played Angelica! She was really nice, and after saying hello, I went into the director's office.

I met with the musical director, Kurt Crowley, and the associate musical director Ian Weinberger, and I had a very friendly, casual, interesting, and informative interview with them. They were so nice and willing to take time, at 11:00 at night, to answer all the questions I had. They told me many interesting things that I didn't know about Hamilton.

They both said that as musical directors, they were in charge of every single note of every single song. In addition to conducting the orchestra, they also play the keyboard during the show, and that keyboard is monitored on a TV screen that the actors see from the stage. That's what helps keep them on track while the conductor is playing the keyboard. Weinberger said almost all of Hamilton is sung, but some effects are computer-generated, such as pre-recorded beatboxing. He added that part of being a musical director is to know when to start





# My featured listings

## BEN LEE PROPERTIES

**Rancho Park - NEW LISTING!** 6 Bed / 8 Bath



**2463 Patricia Ave – \$3,995,000**

A Nantucket-style showplace, newly built with unparalleled craftsmanship and an incomparable view of the Rancho Park Golf Course is a true neighborhood gem. An extra wide entryway leads to an open floor plan in which the formal living room, glass enclosed wine room and dining room seamlessly blend into a cohesive, shared space. Stylishly designed and fully functional for a busy family, the kitchen offers stainless appliances and marble countertop island. Located in the highly coveted Overland Elementary School with convenient proximity to the shops and restaurants of Pico Boulevard, this inspired home is a perfect example of how a property can effortlessly combine style, function, comfort and class.

**Beverlywood - NEW LISTING!** 4 bed / 3.5 bath



**9730 Lockford St – \$2,995,000**

One might be surprised to learn that beyond the exterior of this picturesque, one-story, storybook cottage, nestled among colorful and cascading Bougainvillea, tucked into a quiet cul-de-sac of a tranquil tree-lined street, that inside is a very vast and sprawling home with limitless possibilities. The attached formal dining room is chockfull of country charm and leads to the chef's kitchen with state of the art appliances. The guest room has a private entrance, full bathroom and is located near the den that includes a wet bar and powder room. This utterly charming home on a family-friendly street in the Canfield School Elementary district should be yours today.

**Rancho Park - NEW LISTING!**

4 Bed / 3 Bath 2,949 Sq. Ft., 6,253 Sq. Ft. lot



**10575 Cushdon Ave – \$2,999,000**

**Kenter Canyon - SOLD**

5 Bed / 3 Bath



**500 Hanley Pl – \$2,999,000**

**Cheviot Hills - NEW LISTING!**

5 Bed / 7 Bath



**2719 Forrester Drive – \$5,199,000**

**Beverlywood - SOLD**

5 Bed / 6 Bath



**3017 Bagley Ave – \$2,150,000**

**Cheviot Hills - IN ESCROW**

5 Bed / 7 Bath 4,449 Sq. Ft., 7567 Sq. Ft. lot



**10452 Lorenzo Place – \$4,855,000**

**Cheviot Hills - SOLD**

5 Bed / 5 Bath 3,842 Sq. Ft., 7,444 Sq. Ft. lot



**2742 Forrester Dr – \$2,625,000**

**Cheviot Hills - SOLD**

4 Bed / 3 Bath 8375 Sq. Ft. Corner Lot



**2751 Motor Ave – \$2,195,000**

**Cheviot Hills - SOLD**

5 Bed / 5 Bath Large Corner Lot



**3035 Queensbury Dr – \$2,999,000**

**Cheviot Hills - SOLD OVER ASKING**

4 Bed / 3 Bath



**10523 Dunleer Dr – \$2,250,000**

**Cheviot Hills - SOLD**

5 Bed / 6.5 Bath



**2715 Forrester Dr – \$4,999,000**



# Cheviot Hills happenings

## Westside Places

By Michael Harris

The Balboa Pavilion is located on a prominent point on the Balboa Peninsula. It is a historic edifice dating to 1906 built to promote the sale of lots in the Newport Harbor area. Its original builders were well rewarded and of course Balboa and the surrounding Newport Harbor area is now grown and succeeded beyond all expectation. The Pavilion was originally a prominent dance pavilion which featured bathing beauty contests and a bingo game which was

later closed down because of the gambling prohibition. The Gronsky family bought it shortly after WW II because it had become somewhat run down. The family replaced the pilings supporting the structure and made it a sport fishing hub for the area and for a time maintained a monopoly on supplying bait for the local sport fishermen. That monopoly was lost, but the family acquired a comprehensive shell collection which was an attraction for a time, but that collection is now housed at the Bowers Museum. The building



needed further restorative work in 1961 when it was sold to the Ducommon family which did indeed spend money to restore the structure

to its original look. It is again being operated for the sports fishing trade and it can be accessed on the trip to Newport.

*If you enjoy reading these vignettes each month, you may want to check out my father-in-law's book, Westside Stories. It's a memoir/history of growing up on the Westside of Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s with great photos, anecdotes and stories. Perfect for the history buff/enthusiast in your family! It's available for purchase on Amazon, search Westside Stories by Michael Harris.*

### HAMILTON

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conducting again after applause or to take a longer pause if necessary.

Kurt Crowley described his experience while conducting the performance that Vice President Mike Pence watched back in 2016. I remember hearing about it at the time and reading that Pence walked out as the cast spontaneously confronted him directly from the stage. They were protesting against his anti-immigration policy. Crowley mentioned that the cast had always planned to speak to the audience after the show because it was the period of time in which casts all over Broadway were asking for donations. He explained that Pence did walk out but it wasn't necessarily because of the actors or the audience. Secret Service often tells the person they're protecting when it's time to go and the timing of his exit may have been

coincidental with the curtain speech. As they say in Hamilton: You don't know the real story unless you're "In the room where it happens."

Crowley has worked with Lin Manuel-Miranda since his first Broadway musical, "In the Heights," eight years ago. The first time he heard any songs from Hamilton, it was during the White House Performance for the Obamas in 2015. He was impressed but wasn't sure bigger audiences would appreciate it. "[When I first heard Hamilton], I thought it was smart, but not commercial. Boy was I wrong." Once the collection of songs became a full musical, Michelle Obama went to see it on Broadway and Ian Weinberger happened to be conducting for the first time at that performance. "It was terrifying" he said.

One question I had was: "What happened to Peggy?" The third Schuyler sister was featured in the beginning but then seemed to fade

away without being mentioned again. Weinberger explained that Lin Manuel Miranda wanted there to be a trio because it's better for harmonies and mimicked girl groups like Destiny's Child. In real life Peggy died young of Yellow Fever and the other sisters played a more important role because both were in love with Hamilton.

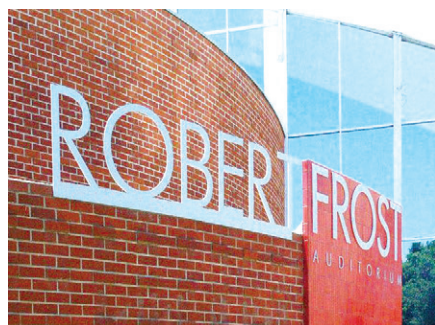
I learned so many other interesting facts, such as: Hamilton is now frozen, meaning nothing can be changed about the musical. There was a song in the show that is not on the soundtrack called "Tomorrow There'll be More of Us." When I asked why that was the case, the directors explained that they wanted to give the audience a little surprise. I learned that Hamilton is touring all over the world because there are clocks in Crowley's office that shows what time it is at each performance.

In conclusion, I had a great time interviewing Kurt Crowley and Ian Weinberger. I thought their answers to



my questions were very impressive, and I am so glad I learned all of this information, because I think Hamilton is a masterpiece. Since I am Hamilton's biggest fan, I appreciate knowing all the secrets and fun facts behind Hamilton.

## Grand opening gala tickets featured in this month's raffle



By Ben Lee

Thank you to all those who entered last month's raffle to everyone's favorite neighborhood hardware store: Emil's on Robertson Boulevard. Alas, there can only be one winner and that lucky title goes to Ed Lazar. Time to refresh that tool belt, Ed, with all the supplies \$50 can buy! To everyone else

who entered and didn't win this time, don't worry. There's always another raffle around the corner. This month we are giving away two free passes (valued at \$50 each) to the Grand Opening Gala of the newly renovated Robert Frost Auditorium in Culver City. You and a guest will enjoy a fun and festive street party, featuring catering by Akasha and special

performances to compliment the newest performing arts venue in Culver City. To enter to win two free tickets to attend, simply email me at: [ben@benleeproperties.com](mailto:ben@benleeproperties.com) and write: GALA in the subject line. That's it! Since the event is on September 29th, get your entries in early because we'll pick a winner at random and let you know by September 20th. Good luck!