

Chicago's Black Literary Renaissance: A Bus Tour



Join the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame on its Sunday, Aug. 12 tour. Part of the larger Chicago Black Renaissance, the literary movement started in the 1930s and continued to foster important African-

American authors through the 1950s. On this bus tour, we'll visit some of the foundational cultural institutions of the movement (George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library, South Side Community Art Center, *The Chicago Defender*) as well as the homes of iconic authors (Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lorraine Hansberry). Along the way, we'll explore how these and other authors used their personal experiences and observations of the city to create literature that explored the devastating effects of prejudice during the Jim Crow era and up to the Civil Rights movement.

Sunday, Aug. 12, 2018

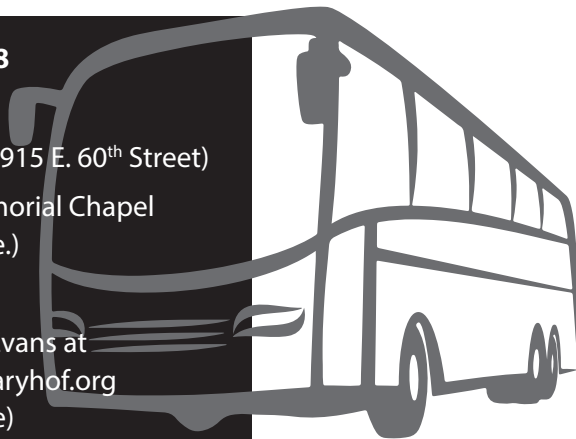
10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Meet at Logan Center (915 E. 60th Street)

End at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel (5850 S. Woodlawn Ave.)

Cost: \$40

To register email Don Evans at dgevens@chicagoliteraryhof.org (only 50 spots available)



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THE OFFICIAL REWARDS PROGRAM OF THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
www.ChiParkPoints.com

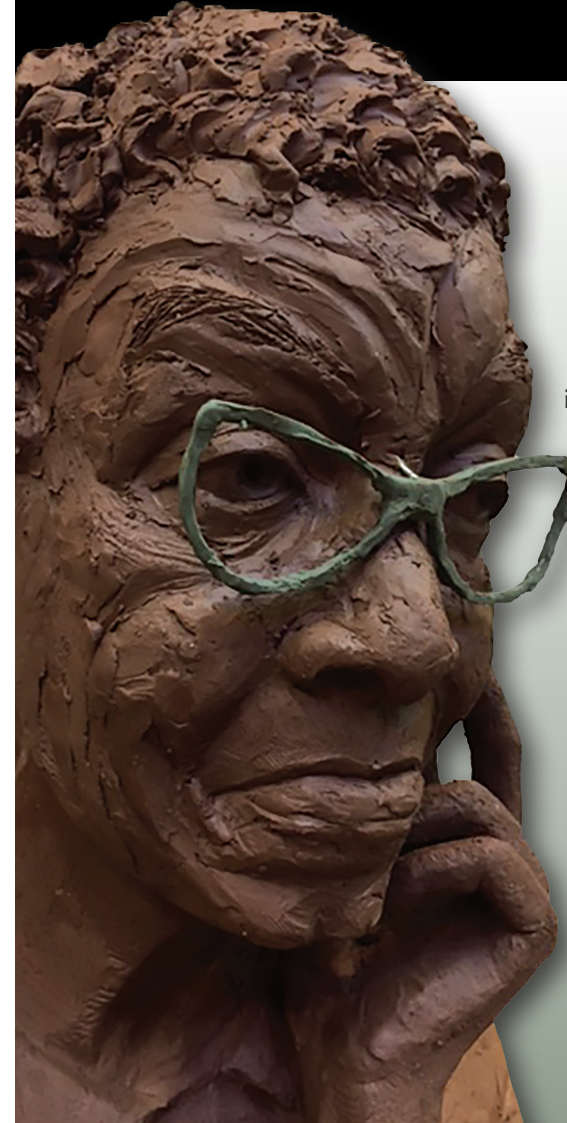


This program is presented as part of the Chicago Park District's Night Out in the Parks with the support of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Arts programming in neighborhoods across the city advances the goals of the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Cultural Plan. Learn more at:
www.nightoutintheparks.com

City of Chicago | Rahm Emanuel, Mayor
Chicago Park District | Board of Commissioners | Michael P. Kelly, General Superintendent & CEO

For more information about your Chicago Park District, visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com or call 312.742.7529 or 312.747.2001 (TTY).

THE CHICAGO LITERARY HALL OF FAME PRESENTS *Gwendolyn Brooks:* *The Oracle of Bronzeville Dedication*



Thursday, June 7, 2018
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Brooks Park
4542 S. Greenwood, Chicago

This will be a transformative moment in the history of public art in Chicago, with the unveiling of a new sculpture *Gwendolyn Brooks: The Oracle of Bronzeville* by renowned Chicago artist, Margot McMahon.



www.ChicagoLiteraryHOF.org

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TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

Rana Segal: *Gwendolyn Brooks: the Oracle of Bronzeville*
(Video Presentation)

Donald G. Evans (Chicago Literary Hall of Fame):
Introductory Remarks

Rev. Lisa M. Goods: *Welcome to Our Community*

APG: Performing *Paul Robeson* and of *De Witt Williams on His Way to Lincoln Cemetery*

Mike Puican: *Gwendolyn Brooks' Birthday*

Ydalmi Noriega: *Gwendolyn Brooks and the Poetry Foundation*

Kelly Norman Ellis: *The Gwendolyn Brooks Center at Chicago State University*

Angela Jackson: *Home*

Alderman Sophia King: *Chicago's 4th Ward*

Haki Madhubuti: *Gwendolyn Brooks: For Her People*

Nora Brooks Blakely: *Mom*

Margot McMahon: *Come See the Statue*

Margot McMahon and Nora Brooks Blakely: Dedication,
poetry reading, and statue unveiling (at Brooks Park)

I've stayed in the front yard all my life.

I want a peek at the back

Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.

A girl gets sick of a rose.—"a song in the front yard"

Most likely, there were wooden houses in the area where the park now lies. Margot McMahon, the artist who created the Brooks sculpture, said that when she was digging the site for her installation, she discovered the foundation of an old building.

In a racially polarized Chicago, Kenwood was one of the restricted areas where Blacks were denied access to housing until a Supreme Court decision of 1947, says Sherry Williams, the founder and president of the Bronzeville Historical Society.

"Black homes were bombed, vandalized, and Blacks were assaulted, killed for moving near," Williams wrote in an email interview.

She said that creation of the monument is significant because "it signals how Chicago has not given Brooks her due honors."

Williams is frustrated that the memorial to a Pulitzer Prize winner, Illinois poet laureate, Chicago Literary Hall of Fame inaugural inductee, and philanthropist is located on a small playground, and that monuments to White leaders such as Casimir Pulaski and George Washington take up prime real estate throughout the city. Yet she wrote, "I am elated the sculpture and park will raise the visibility of the work of Gwendolyn Brooks."

Williams, like many other educators and cultural organizations in the neighborhood, plans to use the sculpture as an occasion to teach: in her case, she will give presentations on the power of Gwendolyn Brooks' writing.

Home and library taught me that books are bandages and
voyages. Links to light. Keys and hammers. Ripe redeemers.

Dials and bells and healing hallelujah.

Report From Part Two

BROOKS PARK

By Nonna Working

There's an irony in the new memorial to acclaimed Chicago writer Gwendolyn Brooks.

The Chicago park where the sculpture and installation is located is named for Brooks, but the area was too dangerous for African-Americans to visit during her mother's lifetime, daughter Nora Brooks Blakely says.

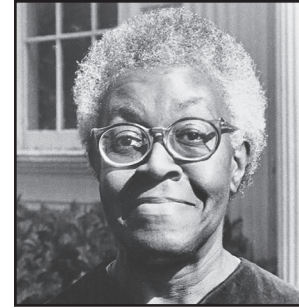
One of the most renowned and beloved Chicago poets, Brooks could hardly imagine that her portrait statue would be just the second sculpture of a woman and the first of a poet in any Chicago park.

Brooks lived in Bronzeville at a time when the area east of Cottage Grove Avenue was off-limits to Blacks. The park was established in 1970 after the city acquired an acre of land in the Kenwood neighborhood, and at first it was known as Hyacinth Park. The park doubled in size between 1995 and 1998.

The Chicago Park District renamed the park after Brooks in 2004 as a part of an effort to recognize achievements of local women. The city also chose to honor Brooks because the park is less than a mile from Brooks' childhood home at 4332 S. Champlain Ave, where she lived from the age of two until she graduated from college.

Instead of Kenwood, young Brooks regularly went a few blocks south to the heart of Depression-era Bronzeville: the intersection of 47th Street and South Park Way (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive). She liked to watch movies in the Regal Theater with her mother and brother. At that time, the theater was also a night club and a music venue that attracted performers such as Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Nat King Cole, and Sam Cooke.

Because of its proximity to downtown Chicago, the community of Kenwood was settled early, in the 1850s, primarily by wealthy citizens who wished to have homes in a quieter area.



GWENDOLYN BROOKS

June 7, 1917 – December 3, 2000

We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond.

Gwendolyn Brooks was raised and educated on the South Side, taught at several local colleges, and set much of her poetry in the city. With the publication of *A Street in Bronzeville* in 1945, Brooks won a Guggenheim Fellowship, became one of Mademoiselle's "Ten Young Women of the Year," and generally triggered an avalanche of praise that would continue unabated until her death. With *Annie Allen*, in 1950, Brooks became the first African-American to capture a Pulitzer Prize; she was poet laureate of Illinois and the United States; she was named National Endowment for the Arts' Jefferson Lecturer; is a member of the National Women's Hall of Fame; and has four Illinois schools and a library named in her honor. In conjunction with her 80th birthday in 1997, Mayor Richard M. Daley declared Gwendolyn Brooks Week, at which 80 performers and writers from around the world presented her gifts. The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame inducted Brooks as part of its inaugural class in 2010.

WORKS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <i>Negro Hero</i> (1945) | <i>Report from Part One: An Autobiography</i> (1972) (Prose) |
| <i>The Mother</i> (1945) | <i>A Capsule Course in Black Poetry</i> |
| <i>A Street in Bronzeville</i> (1945) | <i>Writing</i> (1975) (Prose) |
| <i>The Children of the Poor</i> (1949) | <i>Aurora</i> (1972) |
| <i>Annie Allen</i> (1950) | <i>Beckonings</i> (1975) |
| <i>Maud Martha</i> (1953) (novel) | <i>Other Music</i> (1976) |
| <i>Bronzeville Boys and Girls</i> (1956) | <i>Black Love</i> (1981) |
| <i>The Bean Eaters</i> (1960) | <i>To Disembark</i> (1981) |
| <i>Selected Poems</i> (1963) | <i>Primer for Blacks</i> (1981) (Prose) |
| <i>A Song in the Front Yard</i> (1963) | <i>Young Poet's Primer</i> (1981) (Prose) |
| <i>We Real Cool</i> (1966) | <i>Very Young Poets</i> (1983) (Prose) |
| <i>In the Mecca</i> (1968) | <i>The Near-Johannesburg Boy and Other Poems</i> (1986) |
| <i>Malcolm X</i> (1968) | <i>Blacks</i> (1987) |
| <i>Riot</i> (1969) | <i>Winnie</i> (1988) |
| <i>Family Pictures</i> (1970) | <i>Children Coming Home</i> (1991) |
| <i>Black Steel: Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali</i> (1971) | <i>Report From Part Two</i> (1996) |
| <i>The World of Gwendolyn Brooks</i> (1971) | <i>In Montgomery</i> (2000) |
| <i>Aloneness</i> (1971) | |

TONIGHT'S PARTICIPANTS



Aurora Performance Group (affectionately known as “APG”) is a touring performance ensemble geared towards enhancing the knowledge and relevance of Gwendolyn Brooks and her world of written works. Through a fusion of theatre, music and poetry, APG illuminates the illustrious legacy of Gwendolyn Brooks.



Photo Credit:
Don Seeley

Nora Brooks Blakely was the Producing Artistic Director and primary playwright for Chicago’s Chocolate Chip Theatre Company for nearly three decades. Her readings and lectures have been conducted in several states. Brooks taught for eight years in the Chicago Public Schools and spent more than twenty years teaching drama and writing workshops for students and teachers. Brooks has also served on boards and committees for several youth organizations. She is the daughter of two writers, Henry Blakely and Gwendolyn Brooks, and founded Brooks Permissions, a company which manages her mother’s body of work and promotes its continued relevance in the 21st century and beyond. She co-edited *Seasons: A Gwendolyn Brooks Experience* (2017).



Kelly Norman Ellis is the author of *Tougaloo Blues* (2003) and *Offerings of Desire* (2012). Her poetry has appeared in *Sisterfire: Black Womanist Fiction and Poetry*, *Spirit and Flame*, *Role Call: A Generational Anthology of Social and Political Black Literature and Art*, *Boomer Girls*, *Essence Magazine*, *Obsidian*, *Calyx*, and *Cornbread Nation*. She is a recipient of a Kentucky Foundation for Women writer’s grant, a Cave Canem fellow, and founding member of the Affrilachian Poets. Ellis is an associate professor of English and creative writing and chairperson for the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Literatures at Chicago State University.



The **Rev. Lisa Maxine Goods** serves as Kenwood United Church of Christ’s senior pastor and teacher; she has the distinction of being the first female pastor in the church’s 131-year history. Rev. Goods attended McCormick Theological Seminary, where she received her Master of Divinity (2009). She was the winner of the Jesse Halsey Award for Imagination in Preaching (2007), as well as the prestigious James Taylor Award in Preaching (2008 and 2009). *African American Pulpit* published her sermon, “Ending

Those conversations with Nora and Cynthia inspired my reading. My book group discussions (one on *Annie Allen*; the other on *In the Mecca*, *Riot* and *In Montgomery*) helped me develop my understanding and formulate decisions for this sculpture. Meanwhile, I attended and consumed the wonderful and varied Our Miss Brooks 100 programming. I followed along as scholars broke down the intricacies of her work. I listened as other renowned poets read her poetry. I fell in sync to spoken word and rap interpretations. I delighted in student recitations of her classic literature and their writings. And I heard adults remembering elementary school conversations with the great woman. I bounced here and there around Chicago, trying to keep up with the rigorous schedule.

I tried to take all that I learned and translate it into an experience.

Young Gwendolyn Brooks began writing poetry as early as most children learn to read, and her back porch served as her first writing space. The tiny cubed porch that became part of this installation symbolizes those beginnings, and was built as a place for reading, writing and presenting literature.

The child and then adolescent Brooks grew up in Bronzeville, and I created the winding, stepping stone path, etched with *Annie Allen* excerpts, to tell that coming of age story. The adult Brooks collected colleagues, readers, protégés and friends, and I tried to show that path leading to a larger sphere.

As Brooks moved into her middle career, she was recognized, through a variety of prestigious honors, as one of our country’s best writers. The stone circle symbolizes that ascension.

Finally, the portrait itself, which was sculpted to capture the teacher, the mentor, the editor, the activist and inspirer, the forger of paths for many to follow, the visionary and the poet who broke through barriers. I wanted to show her humanistic perspective. Her smile is downturned with a knowing, inquisitive look. Her look is deep, insightful, soul-piercing, and compassionate. My search in soft clay was to measure the rhythm of her features into a likeness, and my mission was to capture what was unique about her.

I wanted to give the viewer the opportunity to meet Miss Brooks. I wanted to sculpt her listening to us and giving importance to our stories, like she had for so many school children. I wanted to sculpt her humanism that encouraged us to be all we could be. Her listening to stories gave importance to each person. Her witnessing each story and forging stories into literature gave humanity new insights.

I wanted Gwendolyn Brooks to be here for us, looking down, as witness, to our own efforts at making a positive impact, here, in her old neighborhood, and everywhere else.

MAKING GWENDOLYN

By Margot McMahon

The project to sculpt Gwendolyn Brooks started when the Chicago Community Trust and Our Miss Brooks 100 people gathered together Chicago's cultural organizations to discuss programming ideas. It would be the centennial celebration and all around the table organizers and participants popped enthusiasm, passion, and ingenuity. I attended by the request of Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's founder, Don Evans. We wanted (and would) conduct a marvelous bus tour of *Gwendolyn Brooks' Bronzeville*. I'd already sculpted three CLHOF inductees. So when my turn came, I introduced myself and offered a bus tour and a sculpture of Gwendolyn Brooks. Nora Brooks Blakely and I talked that day about a sculpture in Gwendolyn Brooks Park. I discovered the park that day.

As a supporter and now board member of the CLHOF, I'd already sculpted Richard Wright, Alice Hayes, and Ernest Hemingway. Don and the CLHOF have long wanted to make our great literary heritage more visible, better preserved, and accessible to a great many people. Don and I talked about the importance of having the Gwendolyn Brooks sculpture in the park bearing her name. This was the perfect project to make a down payment on these ambitions.

I knew going in that my greatest challenge would be in finding a way to access Brooks' unique combination of wisdom, power, and grace. I had never met Miss Brooks. She was a friend of my parents, and I'd read much of her poetry. I knew, second hand, about her extraordinary gifts, not only as a writer, but as a teacher, mentor, feminist, activist, and all-around citizen. But I did not have any personal connection to the woman who was now my artistic subject.

The first order of business, back in 2016, was to talk with Brooks' daughter Nora and her longtime friend Cynthia Walls. We talked about a symbolic gesture and stance. Cynthia spoke about her generosity of spirit that changed lives. These two women deepened my understanding and appreciation.

The day I found Brooks Park would be the first of dozens of visits. Being on the physical location of the future installation, and taking in the sights and sounds of the neighborhood, enhanced my vision, while also grounding my thoughts in reality. I began to see the possibilities, and I was excited. Inspired. Motivated. I began to see that this project's significance extended beyond a mere tribute to a great poet; it would be a way to foster community, engage people in the art of life, and generally carry on traditions to which Gwendolyn Brooks dedicated her life's work.

the Identity Crisis," in their 2006 Top Seminarists edition. The United Church of Christ ordained her into the Christian Ministry in 2011. In her spare time, Rev. Lisa sings with the Chicago Community Chorus.



A renowned Chicago poet, novelist, playwright, and biographer, **Angela Jackson** is the recipient of many honors, including the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's prestigious Fuller Award for lifetime achievement. She has also won an American Book Award, a Pushcart Prize, a Carl Sandburg Literary Award, a Shelley Memorial Award, and the John Gardner Fiction Prize, among others. Jackson's seven books of poetry include the Pulitzer Prize nominated *It Seems Like a Mighty Long Time* (2015). She is also the author of two acclaimed novels and four plays. Her major biography, *A Surprised Queenhood in the New Black Sun: The Life & Legacy of Gwendolyn Brooks*, came out last year.



Since becoming alderman in April 2016, **Alderman Sophia King** has led the 4th Ward with transparency, a focus on service, and as a voice for those who have historically lacked a champion in City Hall. Before Mayor Rahm Emanuel appointed King to the Chicago City Council, she served as president of Harriet's Daughters, a non-profit organization dedicated to employment and wealth creation opportunities for African-American neighborhoods. In 1996, King helped to establish Ariel Community Academy. King's 4th Ward includes the Bronzeville, Hyde Park, Kenwood, and Oakland neighborhoods.



Haki R. Madhubuti is an award-winning poet, one of the architects of the Black Arts Movement, an essayist, educator, and founder and publisher of Third World Press and Third World Press Foundation. He is the author of over thirty books of poetry and nonfiction, including *YellowBlack: The First Twenty-One Years of a Poet's Life*; *Liberation Narratives: New and Collected Poems 1967-2009*; *Honoring Genius, Gwendolyn Brooks: The Narrative of Craft, Art, Kindness and Justice*; and the best-selling *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* He retired in 2011 after a distinguished teaching career that included Chicago State University and DePaul University, where he served as the Ida B. Wells-Barnett University Professor. He is a co-editor of *Not Our President: New Directions from the Pushed Out, the Others, and the Clear Majority in Trump's Stolen America* (2017). Madhubuti was honored with the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's Fuller Award for lifetime achievement in 2015.



A lifelong environmentalist, internationally-awarded **Margot McMahon** sculpts forms of nature. Chicago Sculpture Exhibit called her the “Studs Terkel of the sculpting world” for her interpretations of everyday heroes. *Just Plain Hardworking*, an exhibit of Chicagoans who have made a difference, is collected by DePaul University and the subject of a WTTW documentary. The Smithsonian, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago History Museum, Sokka Gaikai, Mobil Oil, Chicago Botanic Garden, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Steans Family Foundation have also collected Margot’s sculptures. She has taught sculpture and drawing at the School of the Art Institute and Yale University, where she earned an MFA. Margot has enjoyed residencies at the Oak Park Art League and Ragdale Foundation. Margot recently published *The Gift of Art: Sculpture Ventures for Young Artists*.



Ydalmi Noriega is a Chicago-based writer and arts administrator from Rincón, Puerto Rico. Ydalmi serves as the Poetry Foundation’s Director of Community and Foundation Relations.



Mike Puican has had poems in *Poetry*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Bloomsbury Review*, and *New England Review*, among others. His essays and reviews have appeared in *TriQuarterly*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Brevity*. He won the 2004 Tia Chucha Press Chapbook Contest for his chapbook, *30 Seconds*. Mike was a member of the 1996 Chicago Slam Team and is a board member and past Board President of the Guild Literary Complex in Chicago.



Rana Segal has worked as a filmmaker for more than 30 years. Her work has aired on PBS, The Learning Channel, and Discovery Health Channel. She produced and directed the Emmy-nominated *Painting the Town* for *Artbeat Chicago*. Her award-winning documentaries include *Shifting Sands: On the Path to Sustainability*, *When the Spill Hit Homer*, and *Blue Collar and Buddha*. She won a Cine Golden Eagle for producing and directing *On the Shoulders of Giants*, a behind-the-scenes look at Lincoln Park Zoo. She is now working on *Hema: The Dance of Life* about the life of Hema Rajagopalan, a Bharata Natyam dancer from India.

SPECIAL THANKS



To the Poetry Foundation for a generous grant, in keeping with its tenacious support of fine poets.



To the Chicago Park District and City of Chicago for honoring this project and opening Brooks Park to the benefit of the neighborhood and literary community at large; also for a Night Out in the Parks grant, and the hard work of its staff, especially Michael Dimitroff, Sonica Ruiz, and Kelly Wren.



To Kenwood United Church of Christ, especially Rev. Lisa M. Goods, for welcoming us into its home.

To Brooks Permissions, especially Nora Brooks Blakely and Cynthia Walls, for helping orchestrate this event.

To Third World Press for its kind and helpful donation.

To Ravensvoyage Productions, i.e. Rana Segal, for her tireless video artistry.

Guild Literary Complex for its enthusiastic help with this event and its continuing work keeping up the Brooks Day tradition.

To the Illinois Woman’s Press Association for fundraising and marketing support.

To South Side Projections, for making our video screening possible and affordable.

To Pleasant Gift MB Church, particularly Rev. Krista Alston, for lending their resources and generally offering fantastic neighborly assistance.

To Kennicott Park and Brooks Park, particularly Supervisor Renee Shepherd-Owens, for embracing the concept.

To Oak Park Education Foundation, particularly Angela Hawkins, Adrienne McMullen, and Kristina Murray, for helping with architectural drawings and linking this project to students.

To Pete’s Fresh Market and Lagunitas for contributing refreshments to our volunteer staff.

To all our artisans, including Robert Johnson Carpentry, STK Landscaping, Trueform Productions, ABC Monuments, who went above and beyond to make this beautiful.

To all the family, friends, and supporters who donated through our GoFundMe campaign, without which this would have been impossible. Please continue to give; it might seem like we’re done paying for this, but we’re not. <https://www.gofundme.com/CLHOFBrooks>

The Saints for their spirited help setting up and moving people around.

OUR CEREMONY HOST: KENWOOD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A staple in the North Kenwood Community for over 132 years, Kenwood United Church of Christ seeks to serve God and unite people through dynamic worship, sound, relevant teaching, and working for justice and the full humanity of all people. Kenwood UCC takes seriously Jesus’ imperative to care for the least of these and demonstrate this through our Soup Kitchen that provides hot breakfast and lunch, as well as social services four days per week, our Free Clinic, Life Recovery Program, and family support programs.

