

The Virginia-Highland

VOICE

Fall 2008

How Can You Make a Difference? Get Involved in Your Civic Association!

What Virginia-Highland Civic Association Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

When Monday September 22, 2008 at 7 PM

Where Cafeteria of Inman Middle School located at the corner of Virginia Ave. and Park Ave.

Please consider volunteering as a board member - see President's Corner on p.4 for more information.

Summerfest Success! 25 Years of Art, Food & Fun

Inside:

Callanwolde to Restore
80 Year Old Bath House,
Renovate Grounds

Update on Phase II of
Va-Hi Streetscape
Improvements

Col. Mustard Visits
Diesel

Cycle Man looks at
Recreational Commuting

by: Pamela Papner and Kim Nickels
(Event Co-Chairs)

Without doubt, this year's Summerfest was THE BEST EVER! Our decision to use "zapplication," an online tool for artist applications, along with the excellent word-of-mouth reputation we've earned over the years within the artist community, resulted in what was arguably the highest quality art we've seen in the event's history. We received many compliments on the quality of the artist's market, and we hope all residents had an opportunity to enjoy it.

Our decision to add a third day to the event (in celebration of our 25th year) worked well as we had sufficient traffic on Friday; however, we are still assessing whether the benefits outweighed the cost of expanding to a third day. The artists' feedback was that they did not sell much on Friday as compared to Saturday or Sunday, and residents along Virginia Ave. were inconvenienced for an additional day. This year's extreme heat may have been the primary driver of lower sales volumes on Friday (for both artists and beverage sales). That factor, along with artist/resident feedback and a more detailed financial analysis, will drive whether or not we move the event back to its original two-day format next year.



The community dinner and Movie was our most well-attended ever, with an estimated 1,200 residents participating. It was obvious by looking at the crowd that a great time was had by all, and the food (from Atkins Park) and dessert (from Murphy's) was delicious. The Road Race sold out and was a success. KidsFest was very hot, but well-run and fun for all. The music was the best ever, and our new parade was quite the "hit" with our first year's participants. We will likely continue the parade next year.

Two new twists on Summerfest brought in healthy incremental revenue. The first was the "after-hours" party with beverages and acoustic music held at the intersection of Virginia and N. Highland Avenues on Friday and Saturday evenings. The second was the introduction of "neighborhood sponsorships," the revenue for which goes directly to the community (incremental \$13,000 this year!).

Unless you've been "in the trenches" yourself, it's difficult to imagine the amount of work that goes into pulling off an event the size of Summerfest. We are so fortunate to have had such a dedicated group of directors and volunteers to manage things this year. Special thanks go to:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Pam Ahern/Charlie Lefort: | Volunteers |
| Neil Bowen: | Design/Graphics |
| Allie Coker: | After-Party/Publicity |
| Doris Betz: | Parade |
| Rob Frazer: | Operations |
| Julie Tepp: | Artist's Market |
| Will Davis: | Music (DaveFM) |
| Ed Williams: | Road Race and Tot Trot |

- Georgia McFarlin:
 John Wolfinger:
 Karen Page:
 Chris Clark:

- Kids Fest
 Safety/Parking Program
 Treasurer
 Security

We also send a heartfelt "thank you" to our nearly 300 festival volunteers, without whom this event could not take place. Additionally, we thank the residents of Virginia Avenue and Greencove, along with the residents of nearby side streets, for putting up with the disruption caused by an event the size of Summerfest.... thanks for your support!

Va-Hi residents and volunteers should enjoy reading the following sample comments made by artists through surveys completed at the end of the festival:

- *A hearty thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers that participate in making this the most artist friendly show of the year. Wow, did I feel cared about and taken care of with meals, water and the on-going check in of the volunteers to assure that all was well.....*
- *Hats off to you, your staff and volunteers for a wonderful show experience. It was our first time in your show, and you have set the bar high for every other show we'll do, especially where communications, artist treatment, and load-in/load-out processes are concerned...wow...sums it up. Even with the heat and worrisome economy, we had a good show... and we were impressed with the overall quality of art we saw. We will definitely apply to next year's show and hope to get in.*



• *The amenities were fabulous... the show was indeed excellent, from load-in to load-out. The crowd was fantastic, both abundant and appreciative of the artists and their work and for the most part, jurying into the show was well done. When we asked for assistance, we received it, and requests or comments seemed to be acted upon immediately. Although sales were down, still it was a successful show and I've put it at the top of my list for next year.*

• *I would like to thank everyone for such a fine show. Set-up and take-down went amazingly smooth. The water, lunches and snacks that were passed out was a nice touch.... My hat (the one you gave me) is off to everyone who had a hand in putting on the festival!*

• *I can't fully express my appreciation for all the hard work you and your army of volunteers did over the insufferably hot festival. The sense of community and goodness shines in Virginia Highlands and really makes this festival a joy to participate in.*

• *I wanted to take a moment to thank you for helping put together such a wonderful festival. It was a successful weekend for me, and I had so much fun. I was really impressed with how well organized and artist-friendly the entire event was. I hope to take part in Summerfest again next year.*

• *Thanks a lot for having me this year. Fortunately, I had a bang-up Sunday and came away happy. Great and generous neighbors were icing on the cake.*

President's Corner

by: Pamela Papner
Board President, Virginia-Highland Civic Association

As the VHCA year draws to a close, I'd like to take a moment to recognize the significant achievements of the past year. The community owes a huge "thank you" to all board members and neighbors who contributed their time to improve our community. Below is a recap:

Planning

- **Variations:** Review and investigation of variance requests takes time and expertise. Thanks to Joe Krebs (Co-Chair) and his Planning Committee (Jack White, Frazier Dworet, and John Peak) for leading and supporting this effort each month.
- **Neighborhood Commercial:** By the time this VOICE goes to press, Neighborhood Commercial Zoning may be ready for submission to the zoning approval process. This is one of the most significant initiatives ever undertaken by the VHCA, and its impact will be beneficial and significant. A huge thank you goes to John Peak, who led this initiative with the support of the Steering Committee comprised of residents and commercial property owners Lynn Dewitt, Stuart Meddin, Liz Coyle, Jack White, Pamela Papner, and Frazier Dworet.
- **Residential Preservation:** The Neighborhood Preservation Committee completed significant research and inventorying this year, as it continues toward its goal of developing recommendations for preserving the historical character of Virginia-Highland residential areas. The committee includes many active volunteers but we should recognize the following team members who are working tirelessly on this stage of the project: Mark Arnold, Doris Betz, Pam Bullock, Lola Carlisle, Sandy D'Aprile, Dianne Fishel, Karri Hobson-Pape, Mary Johnson, Linda Merrill, Larry Santiago, and Caitlin and Max Zygmunt.

Parks and Substation

- Thanks to Jack White and Rob Glancy for overseeing maintenance and improvements to our local parks.
- Thanks to Jack White also for concluding such an excellent solution to mitigate the impact from the Georgia Power substation on Ponce de Leon Place.

Safety

- Thanks to John Wolfinger for his many efforts to promote safety in our neighborhood, including oversight of the Safety Patrol; development of the street captain program; regular safety updates via email; improved relationships with local police, fire and administration; and this year's National Night Out.

Communications

- **Voice Community Newsletter:** Thanks to John Becker (Editor), Preeti Ayyangar (Designer), and Amy Eisner (Business Manager), for the many hours spent developing such an informative and beautiful newsletter each quarter.

- **Community Emails:** Thanks to Doris Betz for keeping us informed via email.
- **Safety Emails:** Thanks to John Wolfinger for keeping us atop news that impacts safety in our neighborhood.
- **Web Site:** Thanks to John Peak for keeping our Web site content organized and up-to-date.

Fundraising

- Summerfest and Tour of Homes brought in over \$150,000 in revenue this year! This money goes directly back to the community to support initiatives such as Neighborhood Commercial (consultants were hired to facilitate this initiative); legal research when needed; maintenance and repair of John Howell and Orme Parks; printing and mailing of quarterly VOICE newsletter; Va-Hi Safety Patrol; sidewalk repair program; and neighborhood grants. The following grants were awarded last year:

Atlanta Fire Station #19	\$1,000	For new outdoor furniture
Atlanta Police Station	\$1,000	
Church of Our Savior	\$1,500	For new childrens' art class program, open to the Va-Hi community
CINS - Council of Intown Neighbor Schools	\$1,000	
Grady High School PTA	\$2,000	
Hillside	\$1,000	
Inman Tech Foundation	\$9,200	Promethian interactive boards used for teaching, Inman Middle School
Morningside Elementary	\$5,000	Playground contribution, awarded earlier this year
PEDs	\$1,000	
Ponce de Leon Public Library	\$8,000	Upgrades to computer stations and other physical plant items
Trees Atlanta	\$3,000	
Total:	\$33,700	

Thank you to the many Board members and residents who led and volunteered their time to support these fundraising events!

Lastly and no less important, we are actively recruiting residents from the community to run for the VHCA Board of Directors. If you want to contribute more to our community, please consider running. To get on the ballot, email your name and a short bio to: president@vahi.org no later than September 15th. Bios of those running for will be posted to www.vahi.org starting September 8 for community review.

Callanwolde to Restore 80 Year Old Bath House, Renovate Surrounding Grounds

by: John Becker

Some Rosedale Rd. residents spent early July listening to the sound of heavy equipment and earth being moved to the east – and wondering what the heck was going on over at Callanwolde.

As it turns out, the fine arts center on Briarcliff Rd. is spending \$2.57 million to restore a circa 1920's bath house and renovate the grounds surrounding it. The center's executive director Sam Goldman says public meetings were held and other steps taken to inform the public about the project, but many Rosedale Rd. residents – some of whose properties sit less than 100' from Callanwolde – say they were unaware.

The project includes interior and exterior renovation of the Bath House (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and addition of an external elevator for ADA accessibility. The renovated building will be used for art classes, training sessions and small meetings. A small stonewall 'council ring' is being built with pathways, benches and low-level lighting. An abandoned greenhouse will be refurbished and used for horticultural workshops and summer camps. The Formal Gardens are being renovated to include a memorial hydrangea garden and a 3-tiered grassy/stone terraced area that will serve as a small amphitheatre. An existing road is being improved to support the renovated structures and areas.

\$1.47 million of the project's funding comes from a municipal park bond and the remainder from a gift from the Callanwolde Foundation. Project completion is estimated for late this year.

A meeting for concerned residents was hosted at Callanwolde on July 16 by Goldman; the DeKalb County engineer responsible for the project, Bob Sims; and the project's team of architectural, construction, and landscaping experts.

Following a general presentation on the project, there was discussion of resident concerns including:

- the extent of tree removal,
- privacy loss due to reduction of buffer between Callanwolde and adjacent properties,
- water run-off from newly paved areas and its impact on the seasonal stream behind the property,

- loss of wildlife habitat,
- possible auditory and visual intrusion from new lighting and performances at the amphitheatre, and
- lack of dialogue between Callanwolde and Va-Hi residents prior to project commencement.

Sims assured the group that only six trees had been removed, and some of those were diseased or had storm damage. A landscape expert reviewed a list of new hardwoods to be planted to replace those taken down.

Sims said steps were being taken to replace the privacy buffer between Callanwolde and properties to the rear. Evergreen trees are being planted to form a natural wall behind the amphitheatre, and a temporary wooden fence will be erected to serve as a buffer until the new trees mature. New lighting will be turned off when the amphitheatre is not in use. Other low-level ornamental and pathway lighting shouldn't have an impact on adjacent residents.

Sims pointed out that the project plans have been approved by the county's planning and development department, and both the state and federal EPA with respect to control of storm water run-off and environmental impact. He emphasized their decision to create an underground storm water retention system as opposed to a free-standing open cistern as plans called for originally.

Goldman eased resident concerns about noise by agreeing to put in writing that no amplified concerts will be held at the amphitheatre. Some events like weddings or public speakers that include a small amount of amplification will be allowed. The nature and scope of these events, as well as their time-of-day limitations, will be addressed in a written agreement between Callanwolde and the neighborhood.

Goldman and Sims both apologized for the lack of up-front communication with area residents. Everyone seemed to agree that some resident concern might have been avoided had the neighborhood been notified properly prior to the start of construction. Goldman and VHCA President Pamela Papner, who was in attendance, agreed that both organizations can and will work better together in the future.

The Bus Stop

News of interest from Inman Middle and Morningside Elementary Schools

Morningside Elementary School

Susie Lazega & Blaine Schreiner
MES PTA Co-Presidents

Each year students in grades 1-5 must to take the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (GCRCT). The test is designed to measure the success of the instructional program mandated by the state. The state requires students in third grade to pass a reading test to go to fourth grade. Students in fifth grade must pass reading and math tests to advance. The following percentage of MES students met or exceeded expectations on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in grades 1-5.

Content Area	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Reading	96%	98%	95%	98%	95%
Language Arts	94%	95%	96%	97%	98%
Math	97%	95%	86%	90%	90%
Science	n/a	n/a	90%	95%	91%
Social Studies	n/a	n/a	96%	99%	95%

School principal Rebecca Pruitt also announced the school met over 80% of the targets set for it by Atlanta Public Schools. The targets measure growth in meeting and exceeding expectations on the GCRCT as well as school-wide attendance.

For more information on activities at Morningside Elementary School, visit www.morningsideschool.org.

Inman Middle School

Denise Romeo
VP Communications, Inman PTA

Inman Middle School is gearing up for another successful school year. A Meet & Greet for new and returning students was held for Friday August 8th from 1:30-3:30 pm. Families bought school supplies from the School Store, join Inman's award-winning PTA, and received information about bus transportation, intramural sports and after-school programs.

The Inman PTA thanks the Virginia-Highland community for its support of the Inman Oasis Drink Booth at Summerfest. The booth made \$3,800 to support the Inman PTA! The hot weather, the sale of "glow" items at movie night, a "Live" promo on DaveFM, and the added Friday hours contributed to our outstanding profits – but we couldn't have done it without our amazing volunteers!! Thanks to everyone for their hard work in the blazing sun and especially to Ansley Kroger for supplying much needed ice.

Visit Inman's web site at www.inmanmiddleschool.org to stay informed about happenings at Inman Middle School. You can view online copies of Insight, our school's monthly newsletter, view the interactive online calendar and join the Inman email list to receive electronic updates and announcements each week.



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Recreational Commuting

by: Cycle Man

A good sign that you've got a favorable commute is when you're disappointed you weren't able to go into the office and had to work at home. I ride my bike to work and if I work at home, I miss my commute.

Gas prices are a good reason to consider riding a bike to work, but for me, my commute is like playing hooky. Every day - twice a day - I'm basically goofing off. Goof off on the way in and then goof off again coming home. I call it *recreational commuting*.

In a car, I rarely consider taking a loop or two around Piedmont Park or cruising around the Georgia Tech campus while classes are changing. On a bike, I go wherever my fancy takes me.

Some people drive with their top down to enjoy the outdoors. When I leave my driveway, the top's always down. Cycling is like being dipped in the outdoors - bike speed is the right speed.

On the bike, people wave to each other and wish each other a good day. I spend time talking with neighbors and friends who are on their bikes or out walking the dog. Even motorists are more likely to roll down their window to talk with you. The sense of community keeps me smiling the whole way.

My ride to the office in Midtown is 3 miles if I go straight, but I often like to head toward Emory so I can enjoy Lullwater Dr. The street is a shade tunnel with fragrances that change over the course of the year. Lullwater leads to the Candler Park Golf

Course where PATH trail bridges cross over several streams. Sometimes I meet other cyclists for breakfast at various spots along N Highland or Edgewood. Cyclists enjoy their trips to the "filling station" much more than motorists do.

Virginia-Highland is an ideal spot for cycling to jobs in Midtown, Downtown, Decatur or for classes at Emory, Georgia State and Georgia Tech. The distance is just right, there are several good choices for routes, the motorists are overwhelmingly courteous, and the available side trips are like an all-you-can eat buffet. The recreational commute is an attractive option for many Va-Hi residents.

Of course, the rational side of the brain may find the occasional need for practical reasons for so thoroughly enjoying your commute. If necessary, keep the fun part a secret, and for those times you need to provide logical, grown-up reasons, here are a few:

- Exercise is built-in. You're accomplishing two goals simultaneously.
- Saving fuel and parking.
- It is better to remove one car than to curse the traffic.
- Cleaner air.
- More cyclists on the road encourages others to join in.

If you're like me, it's really hard keeping the secret that riding your bike is fun. Fortunately, you don't have to.

Illegally Placed Signage - My Pet Peeve

by: John Wolfinger

I've wanted to write about one of my pet peeves for a while now, and now that we're in an election year - this seems like a perfect time for me to vent. What is that gets my dander up? Illegally placed signage (especially political and real estate postings).

The City of Atlanta has clear, concise and enforceable sign ordinances - thanks in part to the diligence of our councilperson, Anne Fauver. To view the ordinance go to www.municode.com, click on Online Library, click on the Georgia state outline, then go to City of Atlanta. Read Chapter 6, section 2 and Chapter 138, section 13. In a nutshell, these ordinances say that signs cannot be placed on public sidewalks or roadway medians or be affixed to any bridge, utility pole or box in the public right of way. This includes signs relating to political campaigns, real estate offerings, special events, businesses and messages from private citizens. The public right of way includes roadway medians and the areas at least six feet from the roadway curbing. It is also unlawful to place handbills, flyers, cards, etc. on automobiles parked on public streets.

Although APD can enforce these rules, the Public Works Enforcement Division is the primary citation writer. Estee Andrews heads this enforcement group and is a very dedicated and tireless worker. He brings violators to City Court every week and those found guilty can receive heavy fines. He has greatly reduced the stacking signs on utility poles by entertainment and C.D. promoters. Violations can be emailed to him at EAndrews@atlantaga.gov. Take digital pictures of the offending signs and be specific as to location including street numbers if possible. Let him know the date the pictures were taken.

And yes, the ordinances prohibit yard sale and lost pet signs, too. If you must put these signs up, at least be neighborly and take them down after the sale or when the pet is found. The cash strapped Public Works Department cannot afford to have folks out cleaning our city of this urban street spam.

After a little observation, it becomes apparent which of our neighborhood real estate agents obey the rules and which don't. The most successful agents are probably those whose few signs are legally placed on private property. This is 2008 and there are better, more practical ways of letting the world know you have something to sell or that you are running for elective office.

There's a tie-in to public safety, too. Neat, clean, orderly neighborhoods can reduce crime by signifying that residents care about their surroundings and the safety of themselves and their neighbors.

Additional info at -
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixing_Broken_Windows, or
www.keeppatlantabeautiful.org

Enthusiastic Feedback at Summerfest for Historic Designation

by: Doris Betz

Visitors to the Neighborhood Preservation Committee booth at the Virginia-Highland Summerfest last month were greeted by friendly volunteers. Interested residents could add their name to any of several different sign-up sheets, all part of getting ready for the next steps in determining if Historic Designation status for Virginia-Highland is what the majority of people want.

There was a lot of feedback and great conversations with Va-Hi neighbors over the course of the festival. Most comments were positive, though it was informative to hear other viewpoints as well. The committee was very pleased with 70 people signing up to receive more information and 10 people volunteering to be street captains

The committee's attention now turns to the big push this fall for the kick-off event, and then to getting out into the neighborhood. This will be a long, labor-intensive effort, but it's critical to reach out to as many people as possible for feedback on this important issue that will affect the future of our neighborhood. The volunteers on the Neighborhood Preservation Committee are committed to getting the job done comprehensively and professionally.

To get involved or for more information, please go to www.lovevh.org (our new domain) or www.vahi.org.



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City Prepares for Phase II of Va-Hi Streetscape Improvements

Construction to Begin in Late September

by: John Becker

The city of Atlanta is in the final stages of planning the second phase of streetscape improvements to the intersection of Virginia and N. Highland Avenues.

This phase of the project will reconstruct and enhance sidewalks along Virginia Ave. from Todd Rd. to approximately 170 feet east of N. Highland, and along N. Highland from Virginia Ave. south approximately 300 feet. Improvements include installation of new concrete and brick paver sidewalks, new curbing, wheelchair-accessible ramps and driveways, street furniture, enhanced pedestrian lighting, and new landscaping and street trees. Intersection improvements are also planned for N. Highland Ave. to the south of Virginia and for Virginia Ave. to the west of N. Highland.

According to a July 22 project update from the office of Public Works Commissioner Joe Basista, the city will complete an internal plan review, consider and approve legislation required to award a contract and execute an agreement with the chosen vendor – Desmear Systems, Inc. – during the months of August and September.

Basista estimates construction will begin in late September with hardscapes completed by mid-December. Completion of landscaping and installation of street furniture will take place in late December or early January 2009. The project was originally scheduled to begin just after Summerfest and be completed around Thanksgiving but delays related to right of way acquisition made that impossible.

The project's first phase – which brought similar improvements to the north side of the intersection – was completed in early 2007.

The project's second phase will cost approximately \$450,000 and is funded through the city's \$150 million Quality of Life bond program.

Landscaping Begins Around Georgia Power Facility

New Wall, Trees, Bushes Will Serve as Natural Screen for New Substation

by: Jack White

Anyone traveling Ponce de Leon Place just south of Virginia Avenue has seen the recent construction of a granite wall and wrought iron fence that will anchor new landscaping in front of the Georgia Power facilities. The Lithonia granite that will form the face of the wall is on site as of this writing and will be in place soon. Two new entrance gates will be installed shortly. The gates will slide open laterally and should be somewhat less visually intrusive than their predecessors.

The new landscaping is part of the company's recent construction of a new substation behind their main office building. Thankfully the substation itself sits 15-20' lower than street grade, but anyone who looks west will have no trouble noticing it. A large number of trees and shrubs will be planted this coming dormant season (November to January) and will serve as a natural screen for the facility. Many of the trees along the main sight line are evergreen and a number of them are rather large (10'-12' tall at planting). There should be some improvement in appearance immediately, much more next spring, and even more apparent results over the next several years. There will be additional plantings along the fence, in the vicinity of the buildings, and (less obviously, but importantly) within the property. A drip irrigation system will be installed as well, so even if the drought continues, the plants along the street should be fine.

Noted Atlanta landscape architects Tunnell & Associates did the design and will monitor significant aspects of the installation. All plants and materials are as local and native as practical - no Elbert granite here. The plans - and notes about some of the specific project goals - can be viewed on the Va-Hi website at www.vahi.org.

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Colonel Mustard in the Kitchen with a Knife

Colonel Mustard – referring to the character from the board game Clue – is a pseudonym for a Virginia-Highland resident who enjoys dining at the many wonderful restaurants in our neighborhood and sharing thoughts on the dining experience with others. In this issue the Colonel takes a look at a neighborhood newcomer – Diesel.

Diesel
870 N. Highland
404 815 1820
<http://dieselatlanta.com>

Diesel fuel, Diesel jeans, Diesel shoes, Diesel band and now Diesel – a new restaurant in Virginia-Highland, located appropriately enough in the old service station that used to be home to Dish.

For starters, the napkins were a nice touch: shop rags like a mechanic would use, really quite effective to dab one's mouth. The flatware is very sturdy and the wine glasses are stemless. The patio fans kept us comfortable on a mild evening and I thought they had added sound effects but it turned out a car in the parking lot had a noisy problem.

My companion started with tuna salsa, a mixture of chunky tuna, avocado, tomatoes, and onions spread on pita bread. He enjoyed it with a beer. The beer and wine list is long enough to satisfy most anyone. As an entrée my companion had grilled trout over rice and I ordered the chicken-fried rib eye, seemingly a real waste of my favorite cut. It was too thin to be enjoyed by itself but just right for frying, of course served over mashed potatoes and gravy. The lackluster steamed vegetables served with both entrees needed some seasoning help but the trout and rib eye were very good and the portions large enough to go home for a second meal the next day. My salad fed us both and came with a tasty fig balsamic dressing and a couple of overgrown croutons.

Some of the other offerings sparked interest for the next visit: a green tomato burger, a pork club, and a beer chicken "air line" breast - a regrettable adjective, or is my memory of air line food faulty? - infused with dark ale along side a poblano grit cake.

Now for the real draw: dessert. My partner had grilled – yes, grilled – pound cake with strawberries and ice cream and I had fried – yes, fried – chocolate cake with ice cream. The crust on the cake was irresistible and the portions huge, enough to go home with the entrees. You might want to eat light some day and go just for the desserts.

The service was friendly and well informed. We enjoyed our evening very much and give Diesel 4 hot dogs (out of 5).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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