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DISTRICT 158 is Looking for a swift solution

BY MELANIE JONGSMA

LANSING, Ill. (June 2018) – Outgoing Superintendent Ceal Heiberger was surprised to learn about the large colony of chimney swifts that has been nesting at Coolidge Elementary School for 20 years or more. It was only after construction plans were well underway that the birds' migratory patterns became an issue.

Avian Wildlife Rehabilitator (and former Memorial Junior High teacher)

Kat Podgorski is the Lansing resident who alerted Heiberger to the situation. Podgorski has lived across the street from Coolidge for 15 years, and the swifts' summer return to the large chimney is something she notices and enjoys each year.

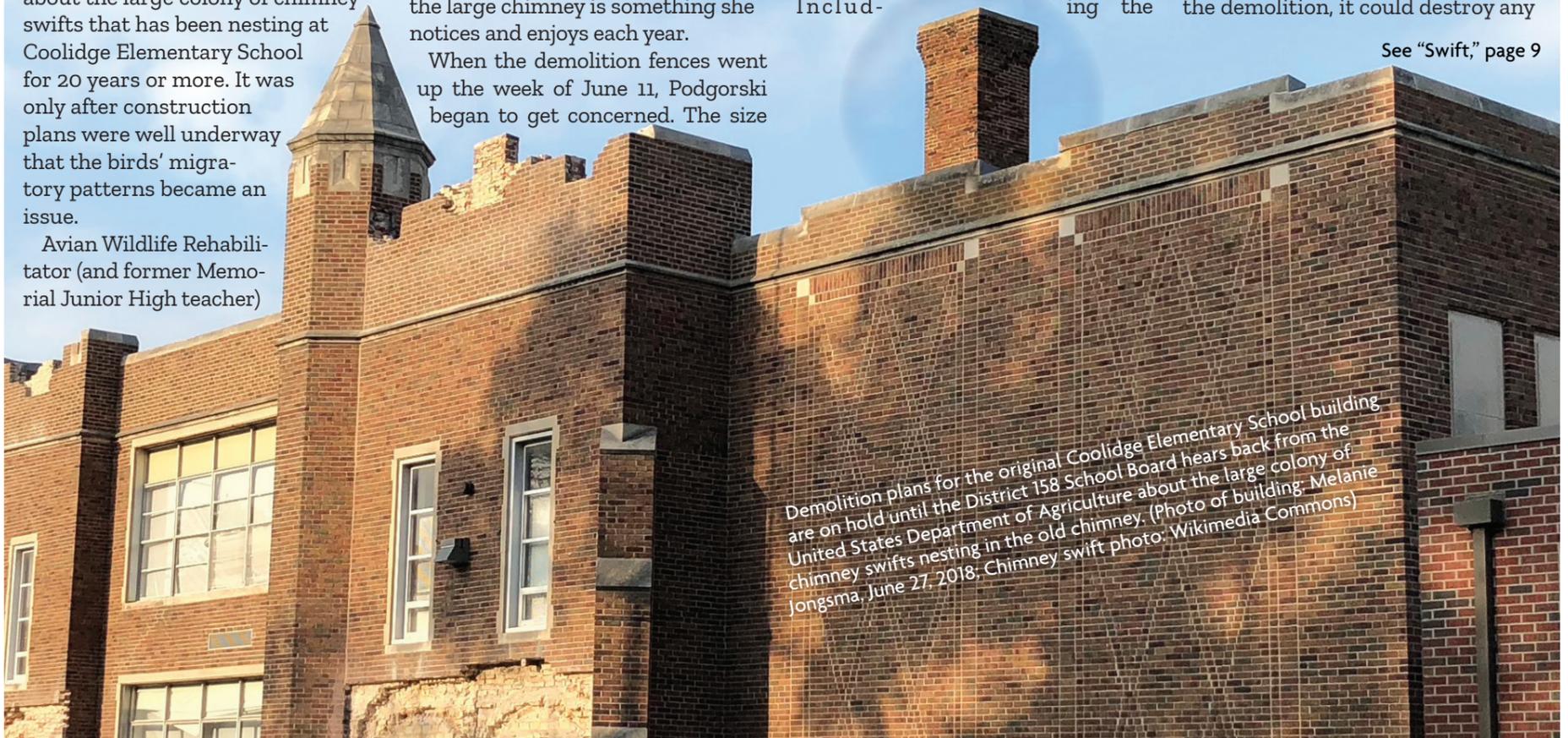
When the demolition fences went up the week of June 11, Podgorski began to get concerned. The size

of the old brick chimney allows it to accommodate hundreds of swifts. By comparison, an uncapped residential chimney might become home to a single pair of swifts. Including the

Coolidge chimney in the demolition of the old school building would leave more than 300 birds without a home.

And depending on the timing of the demolition, it could destroy any

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Demolition plans for the original Coolidge Elementary School building are on hold until the District 158 School Board hears back from the United States Department of Agriculture about the large colony of chimney swifts nesting in the old chimney. (Photo of building: Melanie Jongsma, June 27, 2018; Chimney swift photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Building blocks one neighborhood's experience using a block party to build community

BY ADAM BARKER

LANSING, Ill. (June 29, 2018) – Early this year, my wife Alli and I began thinking about a block party—what a great way to build relationships with neighbors we've lived next to for years but have never met! Having never organized a block party before, we learned a lot along the way. This article will share our experience in the hope of inspiring similar community-building efforts throughout Lansing.

THE INITIAL SPARK

We knew that for this to be a true community event, the community needed to have ownership of it, so we approached a few neighbors with the idea. Mike and Alissa, good friends two blocks down from us, were the first to get on board. Denarius and Alex, who live next door to us, and Maria and Paul, a few houses down, were happy to be involved. Colleen joined us a bit later, and this became our planning group.

Over the course of four months we met in each other's homes five or six times to plan the event. For some neighborhoods it might not be necessary to have this many planning meetings, but we found them to be helpful because



The Oakley Avenue Community—as they are now calling themselves—had their first block party on June 23. They are already planning more neighborhood events and get-togethers. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)

they allowed us to have multiple voices involved in the process. Just as important, the meetings gave us an opportunity to get to know each other. We learned that we all want deeper, richer community in our neighborhood, and it was fun to talk about ways to make that happen. When the day of our block party arrived, deeper community was already developing among the nine of

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