

THE MYSTERY PERSON COLUMN

By Elizabeth McManus

The Mystery Person Revealed



The Ochonicki Family

Our Mystery Person Revealed is Justin Ochonicki of Edgebrook. He is a television producer working on a nationally syndicated program filmed in Chicago. When Justin and his wife, Jackie, were looking for a home, they were drawn to Edgebrook because of the location, architecture and great schools. They moved to Edgebrook in late summer 2015 with their daughter and have since welcomed a son. Justin knew he would love Edgebrook, but it wasn't until the neighborhood came alive for Halloween that he knew his family had discovered a special neighborhood. His children inspired Justin to do his part to help make Edgebrook an even greater community. Justin developed a Facebook page, "Edgebrook: Chicago Neighborhood" (and its complimentary Twitter and Instagram feeds) in order to develop his social media skills. He hoped to make a page that would inform residents about the activities of the many civic organizations, schools, and churches, while highlighting the local businesses of the area. The pages were well received, and allowed him to connect with many community leaders, leading him into becoming a member of various local groups.

When the Edgebrook Community Association was look-

ing for board members, his wife suggested he give it a try. He was elected to the board in late 2016. "I am so glad to be associated with the ECA," Justin says, "After my family enjoyed ECA Easter Egg Hunts and 4th of July Picnics, I was impressed with the group's initiatives and felt I should participate. The existing board really trusted me to run wild and I am happy to bring my perspective to promote this great volunteer organization. The volunteers that make up the board are some of the best in Edgebrook and I suggest anyone wanting to help the community either contribute to or volunteer with the ECA."

Justin envisions a vibrant Edgebrook business district with occupied storefronts, thus was prompted to get involved. He discovered the Everyday Edgebrook business and community organization. "After meeting its members and seeing how they successfully gave this community the gift of the Edgebrook Farmers Market, I really wanted to volunteer some time with them." Justin explains, "The people with Everyday Edgebrook are 'doers'. Members really go above and beyond to showcase what our neighborhood business district is and what it can be." He first worked with the group and members of other Edgebrook organizations to devel-

op a community-wide online Edgebrook Event Calendar to help market civic events and ensure they were well-attended. It wasn't too long before he really rolled up his sleeves. This past March, he and a team from Everyday Edgebrook hosted a new "Cabin Fever" Beer Tasting event. Justin recalled, "The feedback from this event was so overwhelmingly positive. I worked alongside some great Everyday Edgebrook leaders and am glad they trusted me to help bring Edgebrook something new."

Justin is an avid biker who regularly commutes to work using the North Branch Trail. "I love the forest preserve system and try to enjoy the trails everyday," Justin added. Justin's latest volunteer effort finds him on the board of the newly formed North Branch Trail Alliance of Greater Chicago. The group aims to connect North Branch Trail users to cultural, shopping, and dining experiences while creating economic development for all communities surrounding the trail. He is currently helping plan the Alliance's inaugural ride on May 20th. Justin says, "for more information on the ride, any volunteer group, or for links to the Edgebrook Event Calendar and/or social media pages, please email me at edgebrookchicago@gmail.com."