



In This Issue...

When I came to Bloomington for the first time in the fall of 2005, what caught my attention and started my thinking about moving here were the neighborhoods. I was most impressed with the Near West Side and Elm Heights. Although I admire modern houses and the inventiveness that often goes into their design, I am irresistibly drawn to the old. And the homes in both of these neighborhoods, each in its own way, had the kind of character and tradition that I love. It was easy to see that the residents cared greatly about them and about their neighborhoods as a whole.

In the case of the Near West Side, I could tell that it was an area still in transition. Brightly colored, immaculately restored bungalows and Victorians were intermingled with houses in need of a paint job and repair. I was not surprised to learn that many of the restored houses belonged to artists and craftspeople. Their creativity was evident in the vibrant colors they chose and the imaginative touches they had added.

In this issue, we celebrate one slice of the Near West Side: Prospect Hill. Driving by on a wintry day, the homes along Rogers and West 3rd Street look as snug and cozy as a comforter and a fire. I went on one of the annual tours that take you inside some of these homes and was pleased to find that the interiors were as lovingly and painstakingly maintained as the exteriors.

What I was surprised to learn is that the restoration of Prospect Hill was largely due to the efforts of one couple, Bill and Helen Sturbaum. The Sturbaums are people of modest means who for decades taught in the local school system. You can read their inspiring story and visit inside some of those cozy Prospect Hill homes on page 80.

Our cover story this issue is entitled "What Is Democracy?" It is hard to think of a more relevant topic right now. Democracy is the theme of this year's ArtsWeek (February 20 to March 1), an annual program designed to share the university's cultural riches with the larger community.

Visually, ArtsWeek 2008 celebrates graffiti as art and as a legitimate, powerful means of political expression. At the inspiration of local artist and educator Joe LaMantia, several large graffiti boards were placed around town for all to express their opinions. Five area artists were also invited to participate. Their creative, diverse renderings can be found on page 74.

Another feature you will find in this issue (at 140 pages *Bloom's* largest yet) is "20 Questions for Mark Cuban" (page 61). Mark is the IU grad who went on to become an Internet pioneer and owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team. As billionaires go, he is one of the fun ones. I think you will enjoy getting into the head of this dynamic, exuberant character.

Chef Daniel Orr is another larger-than-life entrepreneur with Indiana roots who went on to the big time. He has recently returned with a brave new venture: FARMbloomington, an immense and eclectic new restaurant. His story can be found on page 94.

Finally, our second annual Wedding Guide opens on page 101. It has been said both that everyone loves a good love story and that nothing succeeds like excess. To be safe, we have included five happy ever-afters for you.

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher