

Tower Grove Heights Gazette

GRAND TO GUSTINE

ARSENAL TO UTAH PLACE

Volume 21, No. 1

Spring 2010

Grand LIVING

16th ANNUAL GRAND SOUTH GRAND HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

April 17th & 18th, 2010
11 am - 5 pm

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Compton Heights
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16th Annual Grand South Grand House & Garden Tour

BY ANNE G. MOORE **T**he 16th annual Grand South Grand House and Garden Tour will be held from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday, April 17th and 18th, 2010. The tour will showcase the architectural and personal styles of grand living in twelve homes through five neighborhoods linked by South Grand Boulevard: Compton Heights, Compton Hill Reservoir Square, Shaw, Tower Grove East and Tower Grove Heights. Visitors will have the opportunity to see inside homes and gardens many only admire from the outside.

This year's tour has one of the greatest diversity of housing of any previous tour. There are mansions, condos, new store fronts with dynamic housing above and old store fronts that have been restructured into an artists living and work space. There are homes that will delight and gardens that will inspire. So put the Grand South Grand House and Garden Tour on your calendar today!

continued on page 2

A Permanent Signature to our Historic Neighborhood

Over the past 2-3 years the board of TGHNA has been seeking a replacement for the worn, tattered banners that flank our neighborhood. The fabric banners have served us well, but as anyone can tell, they have out-lived their useful life. The board approached Architect and TGH resident Tim Barker, who offered

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Tower Grove Heights Gazette

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Your letters and comments are always welcome at the Gazette.

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(except December)

APRIL 27TH 2010

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Everyone is Welcome to Attend!

Grand South Grand House & Garden Tour

continued from page 1



Beyond the wonderful selection of homes on tour the Water Tower in Compton Hill Reservoir Park will be open for visitors for a separate fee. The Compton Hill Water Tower, which stands on the highest point in the city, offers a spectacular 360° view of St. Louis from a vantage point just shy of the height of the St. Louis Arch.

The Grand South Grand House and Garden Tour starts in the South Grand entrance to Tower Grove Park at Pestalozzi, just across from Messiah Lutheran which will also be on tour this year as they celebrate their 100th anniversary. Free parking is available in the park and free shuttles are available throughout the tour. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$18 the day of the tour. Advance tickets can be purchased at select locations: Gringo Jones Imports, Botanicals Design Studio, the Missouri Botanical Garden in the Garden Gate Gift Shop, or over the phone by calling 314.773.4844 or by Paypal at our website: <http://www.towergroveeast.org/housetour.aspx>.

Three of our neighbors will be on tour this year. We appreciate their generosity in opening their homes to promote city living, in general, and our own neighborhood, in particular.

YOU CAN HELP

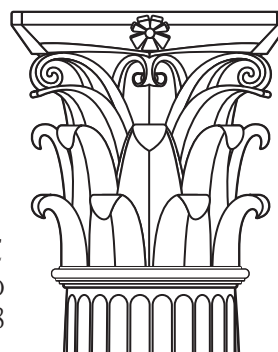
It takes five neighborhoods to make this event a success, and there is a role for everyone. Volunteers are still needed to work in the tour homes or at the ticket booth. Shifts are generally three hours in length, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm and 2:00 pm – 5:00pm. Volunteers receive a free admission to the tour, which can be completed over both Saturday or Sunday. Anyone interested in volunteering please contact Debbie Ervin at (314) 560-7018 or deborahervin@att.net, or Anne Moore at (314) 664-4776 or gamblemoore1987@yahoo.com.

Residents are encouraged to ensure lawns are mowed, gardens are tended and any trash cleared from streets and sidewalks for the tour dates.

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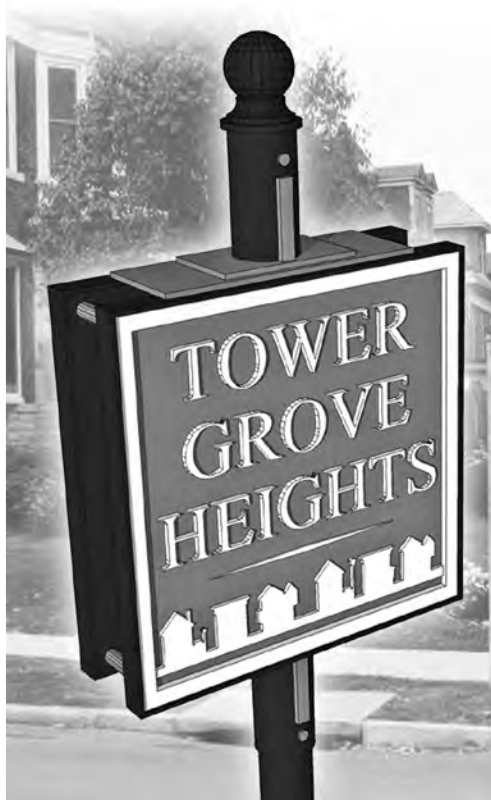
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concepts to the board for consideration. A design was adopted and Classic Metal Craft was chosen to fabricate the signs and free-standing poles.

Alderwoman Jennifer Florida initiated the process for the acquisition of funding to pay for the project. Six beautiful cast-iron and aluminum permanent signs will serve to welcome residents and passers-by to our neighborhood for many years to come.

Look for the installation of our new signature during the next couple of months.



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STRAY DOG

A Professional Theater in the Neighborhood

By Robert Ashton

Would you believe me, if I told you that you could see top quality theater for a reasonable price with free parking and within two miles of our neighborhood? Well, you can if you go to Stray Dog Theatre at Tower Grove Abbey, 2336 Tennessee in Tower Grove East.

Gary Bell, Artistic Director, formed Stray Dog Theatre (SDT) in January 2003 along with his partner Rob Ogden, Executive Director and Bell and I met late in January to talk about his theater company. Like many smaller professional companies they struggled to find a permanent home. When I acted with SDT under Bell's direction in "The Elephant Man" in the fall of 2005 it was at the theater at Clayton High School. So how did Stray Dog end up in Tower Grove? "It was purely fortuitous", says Bell. "We had bought the former pastor's house next to St. Luke's United Church of Christ. The congregation there had been shrinking over time and they were already renting out the church for use by a second congregation, the South City Presbyterian

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CHIMICHANGA MEXICAN RESTAURANT

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BY MARILYN BROWNING

Some people have great ideas, and some recognize great ideas when they hear them. The guy with the great idea was Willie Flores. Willie was sure that he could open a restaurant that would be a hit, with great food, great prices, and the kind of happy tropical-colored walls that lift your spirits the minute you walk in the door. For a couple of years, Willie talked about this dream of his with just about anybody that would listen. Finally, as luck would have it, he talked one night with Joe Gabriel, the guy who recognized the great idea when he heard it.

Joe knew of a property where the lease would soon be expiring, and offered to be the silent partner. Joe did the construction, including the arches between the rooms. Willie chose the menu, hired the staff, and did the decoration himself. Inspired by visits to Cancun, he gave the tin ceilings a coat of ocean blue. The walls were painted lime green and pumpkin orange. Willie strung Christmas lights, hung wall plaques, and put a couple of palm trees out on the patio Joe had constructed. The exterior got a coat of sunshine yellow.

There were a couple of lucky breaks. Willie found the head cook through a chance overheard conversa-

tion, an interview, and a phone number saved through the long months until the restaurant could open. A person from the neighborhood who believed in the success of the restaurant volunteered to distribute flyers and menus. A featured TV spot on Show Me St. Louis helped publicize the restaurant.



continued on next page

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My first visit, the meal began with warm, fresh-from-the-kitchen tortilla chips accompanied by lots of deliciously smoky picante sauce and a 12-oz. margarita, a steal at \$2.00. I ordered the chiles rellenos, and my own silent partner got the pork carnitas. The carnitas were tender, yet crispy on the edges, perfectly spiced and served with Mexican rice, nicely-textured refried beans, and a creamy guacamole. My chiles rellenos were wonderful, with spicy finely-ground beef cooked to tender perfection, tons of creamy queso and velvety chiles. Convinced that more research was needed, we came back the following week and ordered combination plates. Again, the food was great, the portions generous, and the prices more than reasonable.

The restaurant remains a work in progress. In the smoking section, a local artist is painting a mural that immortalizes Willie, his partner Joe, manager Karen Johns, many of the long-time staff, and last but not least, Willie's dogs. A wall of photos shows happy birthday celebrants wearing the gaudy mariachi-style sombreros that Willie provides for the occasion. More photos are added with each new party. Last year Joe enclosed part of the patio, and heaters were added for dining comfort in the cold months.

Some things will remain the same, though, for the foreseeable future: the excellent food, the warm and colorful atmosphere, the low prices, and the great service. And Willie Flores himself? He plans to be in Saint Louis for a long time to come. †

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STRAY DOG THEATRE

- continued from page 4 -

Church.” After a while, Bell and Ogden were approached by the church for ideas on how to use the building more effectively and they saw this as an opportunity to establish a permanent home for SDT.

“We wanted to create a neighborhood arts center where people can relax and enjoy theater, music and other arts,” explains Bell. So, they rented the church, built a stage, made some repairs, painted and opened as a theater in September 2008. On Sundays, the space reverts to its original purpose as the two congregations return to conduct services. Recently, there was a change of ownership and the theater bought the church and now both congregations rent from SDT. In addition to the theater, the space includes meeting rooms and kitchen facilities and can be hired for meetings and events.

If you go to the Tower Grove Abbey, what sort of theater can you expect to see? “I like to create a season that is like a menu in a restaurant,” says Bell, “giving a range

continued on next page

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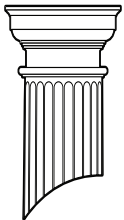
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of different things for people to try – an opportunity to experience a variety of performance while still being able to see classic theater.” Take this current season for example – it opened in July 2009 with “The Rocky Horror Show” and will close in June of this year with the classic “Our Town”.

“Our last show was “Speech and Debate” by Stephen Karam,” states Bell. “It is a play that most people will not know but comes as part of our collaboration with two young artists in what is called the [Insert Name Here] Theatre Project.” Most theater companies have an older audience base and this collaboration is aimed at a younger adult audience addressing issues that affect them. “Following that, we have an important drama and winner of the 1971 Pulitzer Prize for Drama “The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds” by Paul Zindel.”

But SDT is more than a theater company. “Outreach has always been part of our philosophy”, explains Bell. SDT runs two state-licensed after school programs under the After School for All Partnership; one at Woerner Elementary School in Holly Hills and the second based at Shenandoah Elementary school, which includes older children from other schools. Bell continues “the aim of the programs is to provide after school continuing education but using arts as a means of reinforcing the school curriculum.” The programs including tutoring

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and physical components and are led by both actors and retired teachers. SDT provides free tickets through charitable organizations like Almost Home and Independence Center to individuals who would not normally have the means to see a theater production.

Okay, I have to ask – why “Stray Dog”? Gary Bell explains: “Just prior to the Russian Revolution, a group of mostly avant-garde artists created an impromptu bistro and performance space in a seedy basement in St. Petersburg, Russia. It was known as the Stray Dog and it became the focal point of local culture. It was an inspiration to us as we tried to establish a community based theater and arts center”

There are no other parts of St. Louis that can boast of its own professional theater company with such a neighborhood focus. If you haven't already been to see a show at the Abbey, give them a try – I think you'll enjoy it.

For more information, go to their website at www.StrayDogTheatre.org or call (314) 865-1995.



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Pavilions of Tower Grove Park

By John Papa

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Due north of the Turkish Pavilion and across the road is found the Lily Pond shelter. Smallest in stature of all the pavilions, providing cover for no more than 20 persons, it offers an exceptional vantage point to enjoy the newly restored Lily Pond.



Did You Know...



the TGH Gazette is delivered to your door, as a resident of Tower Grove Heights? Did you ever wonder how it gets there? Well, the staff of the TGH Gazette would like to thank the many **BLOCK REPRESENTATIVES**, throughout our neighborhood, who distribute the Gazette in such a timely manner. They **perform a very important part in the success of this publication** and we are very grateful for their service to TGHNA and to the many individuals and businesses who advertise within these pages.

Among other opportunities, in lending a hand within TGHNA, there are **openings for Block Representatives along Arsenal St. (3600/3700 and 3800), and also along Humphrey (3600/3700).** If you have an interest in becoming a Block Representative and wish further information, please go to our website at **www.towergroveheights.com** for a full description and contact information.

"All things are perceived in the light of charity, and hence under the aspect of beauty; for beauty is simply reality seen with eyes of love."
~Evelyn Underhill

Please remember the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association when you are making donations this year. 100% of your donation to TGHNA is tax deductible and the money will be used to improve the neighborhood. If you would like to donate, send a check made out to "TGHNA" to:
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Tower Grove Heights

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- To find out what is happening in the neighborhood
- To have a liaison with City Hall and other agencies
- To make the neighborhood a more interesting and fun place to live
- To make the Heights a cleaner and safer place
- To better protect our property values

Please indicate your membership level choice:

PLEASE PRINT:

- ___ **Individual (1 vote) \$10/year**
- ___ **Household (2 votes) \$15/year**
- ___ **Associate (non-voting) \$10/year**
- ___ **Lifetime (1 vote) \$100 single payment**
- ___ **Business (1 vote) \$25 /year**
(entitles member to a 10% discount on TGHNA Gazette Ads for one year)

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___ Yes ___ No, Please add my email address to the Neighborhood Forum Email notification list

Return this form and tax deductible gift to your block representative or send to:

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