

A Note from the Editors

By Barbara Gilchrist

I left the TGHNA meeting on February 25, six months ago, with notes I had taken so that I could summarize the meeting for the next issue of the Gazette. It was an interesting meeting with Mayor Lyda Krewson as the guest speaker. She brought along Dr. Frederick Eckles, Director (now Acting Director), City of St. Louis Department of Health, to talk about a new virus we had begun to hear about. He assured us that we had a strong public health system and that plans were in place to deal with it. He went on to talk about the implementation of the Cure Violence program.

As we all know, about two weeks later, the City was under a shelter-in-place order. The following *Gazette*s have been distributed in early June, which meant we would have needed all interviews completed and stories written by early May. Then there are multiple meetings with a graphic designer before it is sent on to the printer. It would also mean that our *Gazette* deliverers would have had to deliver to homes and businesses. If you remember, in March and April, we were told that the virus could live on mail, food, and surfaces and be spread through contact. Medical scientists were doing their best to understand this novel virus that behaved differently from ones we have seen before. Co-editor, Tricia Heliker, and I quickly realized that the usual process would not be safe for any of us, even if the designer were available remotely or the printer open for business.

Like so many other aspects of our lives that have changed so dramatically because of COVID-19, the Summer issue of the *Gazette* did not



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Rising to the Challenge

By Tricia Heliker

Operating a business comes with diverse duties and often unexpected situations. An employee who cannot make it into work, a piece of equipment that breaks down, supplies that don't arrive when scheduled, or even the weather that ruins patio seating on a crowded day are examples of what business owners juggle on a daily basis. COVID-19 added challenges that no one was prepared to handle. But business owners know there is only one way to survive, and that is to be flexible and creative in a crisis. South Grand business owners rose to the challenge.

CAFÉ MOCHI AND VP SQUARE owner, Victor Pham, was concerned when the virus hit Missouri. Business dropped quickly, and the devastating consequences of a long-term slow down had him worried. Two things kept his businesses open. He applied for the government assistance that was available and he worked with his staff to create an efficient to-go procedure. Victor attributes the success of this endeavor to the faithful customers who supported delivery and pick-up service,

and who were generous with their tips. He says his patrons were courteous and willing to follow the procedures put in place to keep everyone safe. Once dine-in was allowed, his guests were content to eat from disposable containers to further protect everyone. Victor appreciates the help he received

Two things kept his businesses open. He applied for the government assistance ... and he worked with his staff to create an efficient to-go procedure.

with PPP, although he did find the paperwork somewhat confusing. He realizes that it was his customers who kept his restaurants open, and he is very grateful for their patience and their support.

BOTANICALS DESIGN STUDIO was severely affected by the cancellation or postponement of events due to restrictions on large gatherings. Scheduling a florist and selecting flowers is something

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Tower Grove Heights Gazette

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MEETINGS

All TGHNA meetings have been suspended until further notice because of COVID-19. Please check our website and TGH Facebook for notices. A MailChimp notice will also be sent when meetings resume.

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A Case for Native Plants

By Peggy Hoelting

I've been hearing about the native plant revolution for many years, but it wasn't until I heard a lecture by Doug Tallamy that I had my epiphany. Tallamy is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He became the darling of the native plant community with his 2007 book, *Bringing Nature Home*, which provides a scientific basis for replacing the exotic ornamentals that dominate our gardens.

Daylily, Hosta, Burning Bush and Japanese Maple are beautiful plants, but they haven't evolved for thousands of years with our native insects, butterflies, birds and wildlife.

The need to support our local ecosystem has never been more urgent.

they do not provide shelter or support stable food networks that run our ecosystem.

Exotic plants are not the ecological equivalents of the native plants they displace because

Native plants like Coneflower, Butterfly Milkweed, Witch Hazel, Red Buckeye and Oak, occur naturally in the region in which they evolved. Without them (and the insects that co-evolved with them) local birds and wildlife cannot survive. Native Oak trees support over 500 species of native caterpillars. Compare that to a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, the Ginkgo, which host only five species of native caterpillars. One brood of chickadees is fed over 6,000 caterpillars, so that is a significant difference.

The need to support our local ecosystem has never been more urgent. More than forty percent of insect species are declining, and bird populations have declined by almost a third in the past 50 years. Our preserves and national parks are not enough. Eighty-five percent of the land in the United States is privately owned. If we all planted native plants and trees on our little slice of the American pie, we could create one big connected habitat for species that we are driving to the brink.



BUTTERFLY MILKWEED

adapted to native soils. Their longstanding relationships with beneficial native insects also help keep invasive pests in check.

Tallamy wants us to rethink our relationship to plants and animals, particularly the idea that "nature" is something set aside in preserves and parks, something separate from our daily lives and something we go to visit. Once I understood the urgency of our situation, I realized that planting native plants in my garden was critical to saving the human race and the planet.

Get more information on growing Missouri native plants at grownative.org
Peggy Hoelting is a garden coach and consultant. Check out her garden blog at GardenEditSTL.com.



CONEFLOWER

(photo taken at the street-lawn featured in the Resident Profile article in this edition)

Rising to the Challenge

By Tricia Heliker

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that is usually done well in advance of a wedding, but the pandemic made wedding couples rethink their ceremony. Keith McDonnell commented, "Most have rescheduled for a future date, and a few have scaled down, choosing more intimate gatherings." The designers at Botanicals were able to accommodate many grateful



couples as they scrambled to adjust their plans. As Keith put it, "One of the more enjoyable outcomes of the current situation, is the many new couples who have contacted us, last minute, for wedding flowers. From a few weeks' notice, to a few hours ahead, happy couples have requested beautiful wedding flowers for their micro weddings. Groups of three, five, or ten have been choosing to go ahead with the big day, even if it isn't so big."

It's been fun to provide special arrangements and ease some of the disappointment for those who had to forgo their larger celebration, but still wanted to keep their date and make it special."

URBAN MATTER used their four-month closure, during the COVID-19 shutdown, to prepare for the opening of their companion store at 3189 S. Grand, just two doors south of the original store on the corner of Connecticut and S. Grand. Both locations opened with shortened hours and private shopping, by appointment, in July. The newest location has merchandise that focuses on women, children and pets. They also have a sale section. The 3179 S. Grand location continues to offer home goods, décor, furniture, men, and general gifts. Hours of operation will increase as it makes sense to do so.

Kathleen, at **GARDEN DISTRICT STL**, had this to say about her experience: "My main thought is that I am so grateful to this supportive community! Not only with shopping, but with kind messages and checking up on me and my team. I have learned about my personal adaptability. Not only did I offer free porch delivery, curbside, and shipping, but I worked with a guest to host several virtual events. We put together a kit for an online social event. It was not only a fun time, but an excellent networking opportunity for me to engage new customers to the wonderful products in our store."

When delivery or curbside pick-up became the only choice for **PIZZA HEAD**, Scott Sandler eliminated the "by-the-slice" option from his menu and sold whole pies only. He also began offering bagels, an idea he had been considering adding to his menu. He felt this was the time to introduce them and, they were well received. But Scott's main goal was to keep his staff employed, and the best way he could do that was to make as many pizzas as possible. He spent about three weeks perfecting his on-line ordering system making sure all glitches were detected and eliminated. Streamlining meant terminating orders by phone so, when the on-line system was ready, he made that his singular system for ordering. Time saved with the ordering process allowed the staff to focus on pizza

production. A new convection oven was added during this time, too. All in all, Scott says he feels good about the changes he made and grateful for the impetus to make them. He said he will consider adding pizza slices back to the menu when in-house dining becomes the norm.

JAY INTERNATIONAL FOODS prides itself on being open seven days a week and has rarely closed during its 50 years of operation. As JoJo put it, the COVID-19 era changed that. He elaborated saying, "... we decided it was an ample opportunity to make some adjustments and we closed our doors for roughly 10 days. Within that time period, we were able to reinstall some new shelving, widen the aisles a bit to better adjust our cozy shop to social distancing, but also install a much-needed point-of-sale system that would just increase efficiency and ease of mind for our team members at Jay's. It was a lot of work, transferring (I think, about) 10,000 SKUs from our old system and into the new one, but we can all agree that it was for the best and an investment in the future. They also located six hand sanitizer pumps throughout the store, installed shields on the cashier stations, and stocked up on gloves and masks for the employees. This was because "we want our friends to feel comfortable and at home when they come into our house." And then he added, "One of the things that we love about the Tower Grove area and the city of St. Louis was just the outpouring of love when we finally reopened our doors. We were gifted with so many compliments and "we missed you" comments, that it just filled our hearts and it inspired us to keep doing better."



Dave McCreery, owner of **TOWER GROVE CREAMERY**, said business is down, but activity at the door has been quite good. He believes, because families are not attending their usual sporting events, church events or other gatherings, they are making a trip for ice cream an outing. It's a bit more work for his employees to service customers at the door, but he's happy they are able to be open and provide a treat for people when some of their other activities have been curtailed.

RACHEL WITT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SOUTH GRAND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, said she was proud of the way the community came together to support South Grand. She said it was "extremely humbling and rewarding to represent the South Grand Business District when it is shown they fully care about the well-being of their employees and customers by doing the right thing during this tumultuous time." She also mentioned that the surrounding neighborhoods have shown their continual support by purchasing gift cards and making online purchases and participating in carry-out to keep the businesses going during this time. Rachel summed up the general feeling of the South Grand Community this way: "South Grand will power through this pandemic due to the tremendous support of our neighborhoods and loyal customers who have faithfully patronized the businesses for over 20 and even 30 years or more."





Hartford Street Players

By Greta Reitenbach

When most people hear the term “summer camp” during this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, they think of sitting alone in a bedroom, perhaps on a Zoom call. Maybe they think of the infamous breakouts at boy scout camps. Or maybe they think of all the cancelled opportunities for children across the world. What I’m sure they don’t imagine is a camp with 27 children from ages 6 to 15 – in person. This wouldn’t be so out of the ordinary for any other year, or if it weren’t for the fact that it doesn’t break any guidelines and each camper (including yours truly) is perfectly safe. This is the case at the Hartford Theater Camp.

The camp has evolved over the ten years of its existence. The shows began in a small backyard in Tower Grove Heights. Later, it was moved to the cafeteria of St. Margaret of Scotland school. In more recent years, the productions have taken place at St. Louis University High School’s theater. The list of campers hasn’t changed much over the years, so the campers are a close-knit group. Due to this, when asked about the possibility of having camp this year, the answer was an enthusiastic yes! We’d love to have our production in the theater under the lights in front of hundreds of people, but as is with everything these days, it’s not that simple.

Due to the size of the camp and the recent COVID-19 guidelines, the plays have been switched to films that will be sent out to each family. The campers have been split into four groups, each with

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two high school directors. They wear face masks, eat individually packaged snacks, and always stay six feet apart. Even with all these changes, none of the campers would trade this experience for anything. From backyards to giant theaters to home televisions, nothing will stop the Hartford Street Players from putting on a show.



PICTURED LEFT:

Greta Reitenbach
Otto Reitenbach
Anna Morely
Kane Luchuen
Audrey Bushlack
Sarah Ann Drebes
Molly Schiltz
Ellie Deiters
Sean Bushlack
Molly Kavanaugh
Ben Drebes

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TGNCDC Supports Energy Efficiency and Healthy Homes While Keeping People in Their Homes During COVID-19

By Sean Spencer, Executive Director, TGNCDC

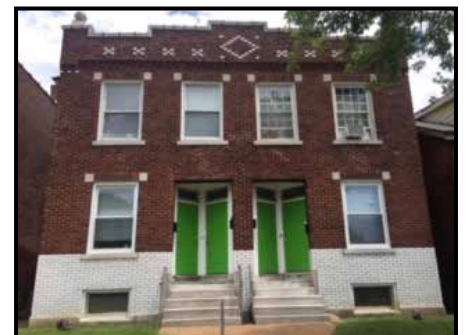
In late 2018, Tower Grove Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation purchased a 4-family building at 3732-34 Bamberger that needed just about everything! A major part of the renovation includes energy improvements. Potential improvements were identified by an Ameren multifamily assessment specialist and will include replacing light bulbs, fixtures, windows, faucet and shower aerators, HVAC, and windows, sealing cracks around doors, windows, and in the duct work. The total project is expected to cost \$31,000. Ameren is offering rebates that will cover \$11,000 and we secured a grant from U.S. Bank that will cover the remaining \$20,000.

The improvements are expected to improve indoor air quality and tenant comfort, reduce calls for repairs, and the annual utility savings are anticipated to be \$1730 for the entire building. Those savings will be realized by our tenants!

Since COVID-19, much of our attention has pivoted to keeping people housed. So our advocacy efforts have been directed toward:

- prioritizing Rental & Mortgage Assistance from the federal CARES Act funds;
- securing the Emergency Rental Assistance Loan (may be forgivable) for our tenants and tenants of our partners through RedDough (<https://reddough.com/>);
- ongoing moratorium on evictions from our rental units;
- referring mediation for resolving tenant-to-tenant related issues;
- negotiating payment plans with tenants, especially for those who have lost income due to COVID-19;
- removing tenant late fees;
- suggesting property owners contact their mortgage lender to seek a forbearance, if they are struggling to pay;
- utilities to have a moratorium on disconnections, waive late fees, and no-fee reconnection; and
- identify property owners with vacant units for those in need of housing.

TGNCDC staff participates in weekly video conferences with members of the St. Louis Community Builders Network, attempting to keep each other informed of resources available to aid the greater St. Louis community.



So You Want to be a Landlord?

By Rich Iezzi

Jean and I have been landlords for over 40 years, and it's been a great experience. We've introduced people to City living, made great tenant friends and have been privileged to own some magnificent buildings. But we've had our share of interesting phone calls. Here's a few:

One night I got a call saying there was an animal in our rental house. It had left its "calling card" on a 3rd floor bed. I spied a popped-up floor vent and figured the beast somehow got in through the central air system. Everyone cleared out of the house and I stayed on the 3rd floor until 2:30 a.m. checking things out. Hearing/seeing nothing, I figured the worst was over and screwed down the vent covers. Big mistake.

Five days later, I got a call from the same group saying there was a raccoon in a 2nd floor closet. OK, it was New Year's Eve and the gals sounded tipsy, so I figured it was a prank. Nope. On a closet shelf, there was a raccoon that looked two feet tall. We would later find its footprints throughout the house as it foraged for food throughout

Hearing/seeing nothing, I figured the worst was over and screwed down the vent covers. Big mistake.

Falling plaster ceilings are never good. I had a violinist tenant from the symphony tell me that a huge section of ceiling dropped right next to him as he sat on the couch. I drywalled over the entire original ceiling, promising to tape/sand and paint it at his convenience. That was over five years ago. So far, no one's ever noticed the raw drywall.

Another falling ceiling episode occurred in a place with a small baby. The baby was set up in the dining room and, of course, the ceiling failed. I drywalled and finished the entire ceiling only to get another call. They moved the baby to the bedroom and now that ceiling came down. After making repairs, I begged them to stop moving the baby.

No owner wants to hear, "I think something is living in my ceiling." The only fix is to use a Havahart trap, catch it and release it at least five miles away. Simple, right? Never. After two weeks, I finally caught the trespassing squirrel but along the way, I also caught six opossums,



the night. It was in the house the whole five days. I opened a bedroom window and it lumbered off.



four raccoons and 10 other squirrels, each requiring the 10-mile round trip and re-baiting the trap.

On another occasion, I was told there was an animal living right above their kitchen's drop ceiling. I got on a ladder and pushed a ceiling panel up but didn't see anything. When I turned to check behind me, I saw an enormous raccoon coming right at me. I dropped the ceiling panel and jumped off the ladder. With its hiding place compromised, the raccoon family moved on.

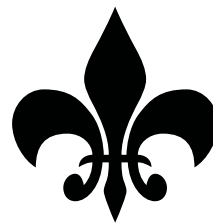
I've been asked how many 3 a.m. calls we get. None. We did get one at 2:30 a.m., though.

In 1983, St. Louis was about to get a super cold front, but I had water dripping to prevent freezing. I slept soundly until 2:30 a.m. when a call came in saying a building had no water. The water department shut off the water main to repair a leak and at 16 degrees below zero, the no-longer-dripping water line froze. I knocked on my neighbor's door at 3 a.m., asking if I could connect a hose from my building to his.

For the next two weeks, our 4-family flat got all its water from my neighbor's garden hose. When our water line finally thawed out, I bought my neighbor the biggest steak I could find.

How could I forget my ghost calls? We own a building that's generated – well, weird things. My first call was from a crying tenant (never good) saying that what she thought was steam didn't dissipate when it went in front of a fan. Oops. In the same building, I was showing an apartment when a voice said "hello" from the kitchen. We all said hello back – but I knew no one was in the kitchen. When the new people moved into that apartment, a 10-year-old boy was talking in an empty room. "Who are you talking to?" I asked. "That little boy in the corner. His name is Nicolaus." I told the new peeps about it but they never heard from Nicolaus again.

Lastly, a tenant from the same building said someone was playing with a ball in the apartment above her. The space had been empty for weeks and I had the only key. When I went upstairs, I didn't see a ball anywhere, but I had a funny feeling. There was an old access hole cut into the dining room floor and when I removed the boards, there was the ball.



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By Barbara Gilchrist

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happen. This is the first time in almost 30 years that an issue has not been published. We know so much more now about how the virus is spread and how to work remotely or socially distanced so that this issue can be published. We hope you and your family are well. Our hearts go out to everyone who has lost a loved one or has been negatively impacted economically or physically. These are hard times, but we are in this together. Stay safe.

Jennifer Florida, Realtor

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

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Put the Lime in the Coconut and the Trash in the Bin

By Katie Wolf, Neighborhood Improvement Specialist/NSO

"The monkeys seized all the cocoanuts within their reach and sent them down upon us."

Johann David Weiss, The Swiss Family Robinson.

Good News! The trials of our current journey of seclusion and survival do not include being pummeled with coconuts. Somehow we narrowly missed that danger (fingers crossed).



What we ARE seeing is an influx of trash issues. I know. It is a frequent topic of my articles. Trash is the #1 topic of requests for assistance, and the #1 monthly service request for Ward 15. So the repeated address has merits.

Pre-COVID, I recommended that residents say something when commercial properties are surrounded

by trash. I think some of you took me up on it because I do see a difference. I have seen more trash patrols - even during quarantine. And I have seen new trash cans in a few restaurant drive-thru lanes. Progress! Let's keep suggesting!

After six months of social distancing together (or six feet away from each other) we can review what issues are occurring and where improvements could be made. Quarantining is stretching the capacity of many alley containers. Also, more bulk items seem to be sprinkling the alleys and they are staying there longer.

So what can residents do to help stem the tide of debris?

Break down boxes INTO alley recycling bins. The bins are filling up with non-folded boxes. The cardboard should not get wet so the lids need to be secure and covering everything. Boxes piled next to recycling bins will not be picked up. They will sit there until they become mush OR your neighbor will break them down while cursing you.

Check the City of St. Louis Refuse Department website for your Solid, Yard, and Recycling collection days. Consider holding off if the bin is overflowing and pick-up day is in sight. Keep in mind that sometimes pick-up days are delayed due to holidays and COVID trash mountains. The more the container is overfilled, the more trash will fall out while dumping. If it does not fit - QUIT! Instead, use the dumpster a little farther down the alley.



trash I generate. At the least, I try to smush it down so it takes less room. And sometimes I try to convince myself to cook up a big pot of something so I have a few container free days. It is just an idea. I support supporting local restaurants too.



And finally - bulk items. They are multiplying. Make a recurring monthly calendar date to take three items out on bulk pick-up week. Collaborate with friends and neighbors (especially those with trucks) to haul a load of mixed bulk to the dump. If you set out items for pickers and grinders, check back in a few days and make sure it is gone or dispose of the remains. Oh, and don't pile it against the dumpster or it will fall under the dumpster when collection time comes.



So that's it. Just a few suggestions. I know you probably already know most of it - but reminders help me so thought I would share. For the next issue I will research ideas for neighborhood clean-up projects. And if you ever have a question or frustration - please email me at wolfk@stlouis-mo.gov. And don't let the coconuts get you down! You got this!



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With my trash, I notice that the more meals I carry out, the more

TGNHA Presidents Message

By Ryan Barry

Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association knows the difficulties that our residents and businesses are facing in the wake of the COVID-19 virus. As circumstances continue to change, we continue to develop our response and the best way we can play a role in offering support to the neighborhood.

Recently, the TGNHA board and committee members personally donated \$500 which went towards purchasing gift cards in \$25 increments from South Grand small businesses. They were given away to our neighbors to use at their favorite places for take-out or delivery. We wanted to

Recently, the TGNHA board and committee members personally donated \$500 which went towards purchasing gift cards in \$25 increments from South Grand small businesses.

help in any way possible during this tough time.

Until the pandemic subsides, we will continue to prioritize the immediate health and safety of neighborhood residents, TGNHA board, and volunteers by ensuring we are operating within the current CDC and The City of St. Louis Department of Health guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID-19. TGNHA meetings are cancelled, but our critical work will continue remotely, until further notice.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is presenting tremendous challenges for our entire world with long-term consequences we cannot fully predict or comprehend. During this period of hardship and

support our area's small businesses, and at the same time, we wanted to show our appreciation for the business district and our neighbors. Many of them are struggling, and it only seemed fitting to

uncertainty, TGNHA is dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of our community and neighbors.

I thank our determined board, and our first responders for their exceptional efforts now and in the weeks to come. From the positive yard sign messages, the Red and Black Brass Band rolling down our streets, and to the friendly waves at a distance, Tower Grove Heights has shown resiliency and strength, yet another reminder of what makes this neighborhood truly special.

It is my sincere hope that you and your families are able to stay healthy and safe during this time.



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Angle House on Humphrey

By Sharon Angle

I was born 115 years ago on Humphrey St. I'm a red brick beauty—two and a half stories tall with a stone front porch that replaced my original wooden one. One might think I'm a lot like my peers. On the surface that might be true, but we all have our unique lives, our separate stories, our own families who love us, and of course, our own secrets.

It's not quite so secret that in the not too distant past, I was a Buddhist Educational Center. I took it in stride. Many religious books lined my spacious bookcases. I was proud to have a purpose. I had an internal peace and calm.

I use "owner" for lack of a better word because no human owns me.

I'll still be here when all of my "owners" have gone elsewhere.

But for reasons I didn't quite understand, my Buddhist "owner" left me. I use "owner" for lack of a better word because no human owns me. I'll still be here when all of my "owners" have gone elsewhere. But I digress: my owner left me and didn't come back. She stopped paying my taxes. She left so hastily that she left some music playing on my third floor (or at least that is the legend) and a neighbor had to break in to turn it off.

The immediate neighbors just couldn't take that music anymore. Apparently, it was eerie. I don't really know. I don't have human hearing capabilities.

Eventually, the city I reside in became my new "owner" and then sold me to someone who decided to clean me up and give me

a make-over. I became more modern too, which is quite a feat for a centenarian. During the time I was the Buddhist abode, some of my beautiful red brick in the back had been painted even redder. I was known as the "Red House." I hated that! It marred my intrinsic beauty. That horrible red paint was painstakingly removed. That did wonders for my self-image.

Fast forward to today: I'm very certain my current caretakers love me. I have a new purpose, I'm happy and I'm once again filled with books. I'm kept clean on the inside but they could do a better job with my garden! Oh well. One of my new residents loves yoga and meditation. Sometimes I feel I'm becoming Hindu now. That's OK. I'm humble, calm and grounded. And I'm looking forward to the next hundred years. I believe they will be quite an adventure!



EDITOR'S NOTE: We wonder what makes your home unique. Please let us know if you would like to write about it for the *Gazette* or if you want an article about it written by someone else.

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Perplexity over Absentee/mail-in Balloting

By Nigel Holloway

If you are confused by the rules governing mail-in balloting, you are not alone. I am a notary and a poll judge and I host a Facebook group called Vote by Mail STL, and yet I was confused. Several people who asked me to notarize their absentee/mail-in ballot were also befuddled. Our Alderwoman, Megan Green, said she heard how folks were floored by the distinction between absentee and mail-in ballots. (Absentee ballots are for people who expect to be prevented from going to their polling place on election day. Mail-in ballots are for those who want to avoid the risk of contracting COVID-19.)

This muddle in the run-up to the primary elections on August 4 does not augur well for the vote in the general election when the stakes are even higher. I could tell you what the rules are as of the beginning of August 2020, regarding whether you need a notary to cast a mail-in or absentee ballot. But the regulations may change before November. The ACLU, et al., has a pending lawsuit seeking to allow all Missouri voters to cast their ballot by mail without a notary during COVID-19. If the lawsuit is upheld in court, you won't need a notary. If it isn't, you will need your ballot envelope notarized, under certain conditions, such as a "no-excuse mail-in ballot." Now, set aside the question of notarization, and you'll find that things get simpler. Whether or not you require a notary, if you wish to cast a mail-in ballot, allow yourself plenty of time to (a) request such a ballot from the Board of Elections and (b) mail it to the board. Any ballot received by the board of elections after 7 p.m. on election day will be rejected. The board says to allow yourself four to seven days for the mail to arrive at the board, so play it safe and mail it ten days early. That way you don't have to worry about whether the time period covers the weekend as well as business days.

The issue of voting by mail is a non-partisan issue or at least it ought to be. Unfortunately, it has become politicized. There are those, including myself, who want as many people as possible to vote and to do so in a properly regulated process, in which fraudulent ballots, of which there have been very few historically, are weeded out. The pandemic will deter people from voting, however hard the Board of Elections tries to ensure the safety of polling places. Mail-in ballots are intended to help those afraid of catching the virus, or spreading it, by enabling them to avoid the polling station and cast their ballots anyway. I, and many others, will be active in the weeks preceding the general election, providing as much information as possible to all voters, irrespective of their political sympathies. We will be using social media and other channels to inform people of how to vote by mail. I recommend that readers of the *Gazette* should start educating themselves about the voting process in St. Louis at least a month before the election.

It is worth remembering the words of civil rights

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leader John Lewis, who wanted the following to be published on the day of his funeral, July 30, 2020: "Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it."



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Resident Profile

By Mike Miller

There's a small garden nestled just off the sidewalk on the strip of land that runs along Spring Avenue to the corner of Humphrey Street. It's where bright flowers and wild plants grow out of the ground, adding splashes of summer colors to the neighborhood.

For Susan Brower-Toland and her husband, Brent, gardening has become a pastime since they moved to Tower Grove Heights in 2011. And it's not just the blooming greenery that makes it worthwhile. The people that the plants attract are a perk, too.

"It was just an interesting neighborhood in a lot of ways."

"We meet a lot of people because we're out there working," Susan said. "We

see a lot of people come by, so I've come to like doing that side garden even more than my backyard because people enjoy it."



Over the past nine years, the neighborhood has indeed come to feel like home to Susan and Brent, who, before settling in St. Louis, crisscrossed the country in pursuit of their studies — she is a professor at Saint Louis University specializing in Medieval philosophy, and he is a research scientist at Bayer Crop Science. They both grew up in Colorado and met at the University of Arizona before making subsequent moves to Iowa, Indiana and Upstate New York to finish degrees.

When the couple initially moved to St. Louis, they rented a place in Dogtown to figure out the lay of the land. They were open to buying nearly anywhere in the area and went looking for the perfect place. After each search, they found themselves pulled in by the city life. They settled on a place in Tower Grove East, though, once their twins entered the picture, the couple realized they'd need something bigger. So they settled on their house on Humphrey because it was both available and in good condition. But it wasn't only the practical reasons that made it a good fit for their growing family.

"It was the diversity and the variety."

"It was the diversity and the variety," Brent said of the neighborhood. "It was just an interesting neighborhood in a lot of ways."



before she and Brent began seeding that area along the road and bringing it new life.

Perhaps the highlight of their collection is the rose bush, which glows with red buds every few weeks in the summertime. But there are other plants, too, that have the attention of the homeowners. Susan is particularly fond of the Blue Glow thistle, with its colorful, spiky balls.

"I put that in two years ago, and this is the first year it's really taken off," she said. "So, I've been really excited."

"We have some pretty healthy milkweed plants, too," Brent said. "They're not beautiful, but the butterflies and the bees like them, so they're great. And we do have a butterfly bush. We've had to go through a few of them, but they're always fun. The number of butterflies that visit is just great."



Living on the corner has its appeal, too.

Both Susan and Brent enjoy working in the yard, and as the years have passed, their garden has grown. At first, they kept their greenery limited to the backyard, where they have several raised beds for growing vegetables. Susan didn't know she could add plants to the ground on the tree lawn along Spring, but it didn't take long



And it's not just the butterflies that come by.

"People stop and talk," Susan said. "I feel like we meet a lot of people and have great conversations with neighbors. That's become a much more fun place to work because it's appreciated, and it feels sort of like a contribution to the neighborhood."

Tower Grove Heights Real Estate News

By Jennifer Florida

I don't think I need to tell you that we are in the middle of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic! Home is more important now than ever before. Realtors are doing their best to serve the needs of buyers and sellers. We are following CDC recommended practices to mitigate risk of infection.

Just an overview: Inventory (homes for sale) are way down. Mortgage rates have sunk to an all-time low (Washington Post - July 9). The share of renters who say now is a good time to purchase a home is at the highest level in five years (60% - Fannie Mae, July 8). Mortgage demand from homebuyers has jumped up 19% from last year. The lack of inventory continues to be the buyer's biggest hurdle in what is an otherwise strong summer housing market.

Our beautiful, historic neighborhood is in demand and reflects this bigger housing story. We have had a very active quarter! Twenty closed sales, with six pending sales and only one active listing in Tower Grove Heights to date!

Stay safe and take good care

REAL ESTATE NEWS

E-Mail your real estate questions to: jfloridastl@gmail.com

Homes Sold in Tower Grove Heights this quarter

| Street | Listed At | Days on Market | Sold Price |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| 3873 Wyoming | \$230,000 | 4 | \$230,000 |
| 3627 Utah | \$275,000 | 15 | \$230,000 |
| 3849 Humphrey | \$269,900 | 4 | \$269,900 |
| 3825 Juniata | \$289,900 | 20 | \$289,000 |
| 3717 Hartford | \$275,000 | 2 | \$295,000 |
| 3738 Connecticut | \$300,000 | 6 | \$302,500 |
| 3635 Juniata | \$319,900 | 0 | \$319,900 |
| 3714 Humphrey | \$315,000 | 1 | \$329,600 |
| 3879 Wyoming | \$385,000 | 16 | \$370,000 |
| 3847 N Utah Pl | \$409,900 | 32 | \$416,500 |
| 3814 Connecticut | \$425,000 | 33 | \$425,000 |
| 3707 Utah | \$465,000 | 71 | \$445,000 |
| 3661 Utah | \$439,000 | 6 | \$456,000 |
| 3836 Utah | \$425,000 | 6 | \$460,000 |
| 3664 Hartford | \$485,000 | 2 | \$482,000 |
| 3873 Utah Pl | \$515,000 | 66 | \$484,000 |
| 3706 Connecticut | \$495,000 | 8 | \$485,000 |
| 3726 Arsenal | \$515,000 | 31 | \$515,000 |
| 3855 Juniata (2-Family) | \$289,900 | 26 | \$290,000 |
| 3639 Humphrey (2-Family) | \$339,900 | 7 | \$328,000 |



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