

Our Tower Grove Heights is Very Unusual - did you know that?

BY RICH IEZZI You might live in Tower Grove Heights but what do you really know about it? With the 25th anniversary of the TGHT's Neighborhood Association coming up, I'd like to point out a few things that make our neighborhood a bit different from other city neighborhoods.

Back in the 1980's, our neighborhood leaders proposed the fourteen square blocks that comprise TGHT's with good reason. Sure, our present boundaries were part of the original Tower Grove Heights land tract but there's so much more.

We have great housing stock in Tower Grove Heights but it's very different from other areas. There are about 690 buildings in our neighborhood and not one is an 'in-fill' structure. In-fill housing usually produces newer, ill-fitting units after original properties were torn down. Not even magnificent Compton Heights, Washington Terrace or Westmoreland/Portland Place can claim this.

There are also no single story buildings in Tower Grove Heights and all 690 structures are constructed of brick or stone. None of the neighborhoods surrounding TGHT's share either of these advantages.



OK, we know we've got great buildings but is that it? Nope. The housing mix of TGHT's is also strangely unique. Most city neighborhoods are predominately rental or residential but we had an original balance of 341 two-family flats and 29 four-family flats with the remaining

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2011 100 Neediest Families Holiday Gifting

BY ELLEN WILSON This year our neighborhood selected families to help through the holiday season who were circling the wagons to support their families. The multi-generational families we selected this year were all facing hardships, but were pulling together to try to get through a rough patch. Through the generous donations and support of our neighborhood we were able to provide a helping hand. This year gift certificates ruled the day. Each family received over \$230.00 worth of certificates for groceries and personal items. In addition, the cash donations allowed us to contribute \$522.50 for each family toward their utilities. While that alone would have been a wonderful contribution there were also lots and lots of presents. Gifts ranged from beautiful comforters, winter coats for all the boys, clothes for the kids and adults, games, toys, perfume, books, and household items. There was plenty to go around and I hope our contribution brought a beautiful holiday morning to both families.

As always, the organization of this project was an enormous group effort and I would like to thank each person who helped to make this a true neighborhood effort. The TGHNA Board is helpful with the selection process of families and donates space in the Gazette as well as printing costs. This year TGHNA President Marilyn Browning did double duty this year by also helping to keep the money in order. The Gazette staff and editor Mark Froese work to get information to all the neighbors. And as always, the biggest help comes from people in the neighborhood who are willing to donate generously of their time, effort, and of course cash, to help the families.

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Janice Nesser

EDITING TEAM:

Mark Froese

Kyle Froese

BUSINESS MANAGER:

Gary Kushinsky

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Marilyn Browning, Rich Iezzi,

Susie Newsham, Rich Seifert,

Ellen Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHY:

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Mail them to:

The Gazette/TGHNA

3891 Utah Place, St. Louis, MO. 63116

or email

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buildings consisting of homes, businesses and a few six-family units. It's like the original planners wanted home owners and renters to live together and that's a good thing. We often see TGHT's residents begin as renters, then become home owners without ever leaving our neighborhood.

I used 'original mix' when listing the property breakdown because a lot has changed. In the last 100 years, 111 housing units in TGHT's were eliminated as 101 two family flats were converted to 'singles' and five 4-family flats were changed into condos. Along with reducing density and parking problems, this change meant that a large number of rental units became owner occupied.

These things help make us unique but when you sprinkle in Tower Grove Park and South Grand, we really get cooking. Not only do both of these provide a boundary of sorts but they also give residents a walking destination. What other neighborhoods have the convenience of being able to walk to the post office, get your hair cut, do your banking, pick up your dry cleaning, shop for stuff and have a great meal? Tower Grove Park serves as a boundary, an anchor and a destination and its green space softens our entire area. Neighborhoods that don't border a park are just streets.

Something else that's unusual about us is that we're about 58% rental when 60% rental is considered a tipping point. But we're not tipping. Why not? That's because many of our rental units are more spectacular than our houses. Our apartments attract quality tenants because they feature old world charm, spaciousness and the convenience of South Grand and the beauty of Tower Grove Park. Unlike new construction, our buildings are finite and will never be built again.

By now you should feel special or at least unique. Our neighborhood sure is.



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Meet Your Neighbor

by Susie Newsham

Ellen Wilson

The holidays are long past us, but we all know the hustle and bustle the holiday season brings. From shopping for gifts to all the family parties, it's hard to find time to for philanthropic activities. Yet, for Ellen Wilson, your neighbor on the 3600 block of Juniata, finding time to help neighbors in need during the holiday season has been her tradition for the past eight years.

Eight years ago, Ellen heard about the 100 Neediest Cases organization. Ellen wanted to get involved, so she went to the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association and asked for their support to help her get the neighborhood involved. The Association signed on, and Ellen began planning for the new initiative. One of the first things she did was ask the 100 Neediest Cases to provide her with families that live in or near Tower Grove Heights, so that neighbors could feel like they were helping neighbors. While the families' identities remain private, the organization agreed to Ellen's request, and the tradition began.

Each year, Ellen coordinates the initiative beginning with determining the families' needs. She's responsible for getting the information out to the neighbors through an article in the Tower Groves Heights Gazette, and she helps to produce a flyer that is distributed throughout the neighborhood to increase awareness. Luckily, she always has several neighbors that volunteer their time to help her get a flyer to all the houses in the community.

She temporarily houses all of the generous gifts in her home, most of them crowding in the corners of her home. After the donation deadline, she organizes a gift-wrapping party. Anyone in the neighborhood is welcome into her home to help wrap the many gifts, but for several years, Anne Orcutt and Pauline Ashton have been regulars at this fun get-together. Ellen and her fellow neighbors then deliver the beautifully wrapped gifts, toiletries and donated funds to 100 Neediest Cases.

Ellen credits the success of this initiative to the neighbors' commitment. In talking about the consistent, positive response from neighbors each year, she said, "It's so nice to be in a community where people naturally help others. Every year, I know we'll meet and even exceed our donation, but I'm always overwhelmed by the amount of time and money our neighbors are willing to give to people they do not know."

While Ellen praises the neighborhood for their efforts, it's important to recognize the backbone of this special donation. For eight years, Ellen gives more than 30 hours of her time to organize and execute the initiative; she gives her home as a storage place for the gifts and is completely committed to fulfilling the families' wish lists.

Outside of her busy holiday season, Ellen teaches geography at St. Charles Community College, the job that brought her to St. Louis. Prior to moving to Tower Grove Heights, Ellen lived in Cincinnati,

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Washington D.C., Montana and Portland. In fall 2000, she was offered her job and moved to St. Charles. While she shopped for a home, a co-worker talked to her about a great neighborhood in south city. After hearing about this community, she asked her realtor to show her some houses in the area. Her realtor responded with, "I haven't crossed the river in 30 years." So, Ellen decided to do her own research.

As the old saying goes, you can't judge a book by its cover, and I think that rings true for our neighborhood. There's something more to Tower Groves Heights than its beautiful architecture, something you can see just driving through, and that's the people. Ellen learned this before she even bought the house. One day, while house shopping, she came across the Juniata Block Party. She decided to walk into the crowd and check it out. Immediately she felt welcomed. Many neighbors approached her and introduced themselves. Before she left the party, the neighbors had convinced her to buy the house, and she couldn't wait to be apart of such a special community.

Upon moving in, Ellen had to fix up the place a bit. When I say a bit, she did a complete gut rehab over the course of six years, living in the home the entire time. But all her work and sacrifice was definitely worth it. She now has a gorgeous, functional home, a perfect fit for her 4-year-old son, West.

Like most neighbors, Ellen enjoys taking advantage of the park with West, including riding their bikes and attending the various festivals and events. During the summers, Ellen and West like to get ice cream at the Tower Grove Creamery, and get their fresh produce at the Tower Grove Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. In addition to the nearby activities, Ellen simply loves the old-fashioned feel of the neighborhood. She said, "I love that I can go to any of my neighbors for a cup of sugar, and that we check on each other during bad weather or power outages. Neighbors in this community are genuinely concerned about each other and pay attention to what is going on to make sure everyone is okay." They plan on being here for years to come.

If you'd like to get involved with 100 Neediest Cases next holiday season, watch out for the winter 2012 issue of the Gazette where you're sure to find Ellen's informative article on how you can help.

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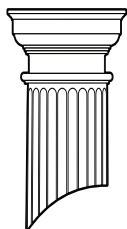
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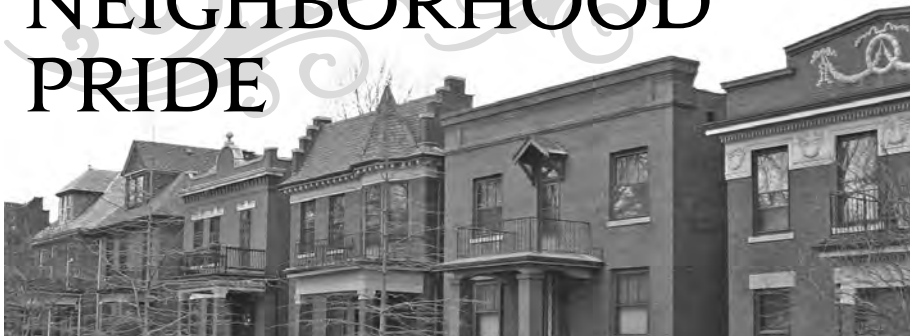


Homeowners around the country are creating rain gardens—gardens planted with wildflowers and other native plants in a slight depression in the ground. These gardens soak up rainwater, mainly from the roof of your house or garage. The rain garden fills with a few inches of water immediately after a storm and the water slowly filters into the ground rather than running off to a storm drain. Compared to conventional lawn, a rain garden allows about 30 percent more water to soak into the ground.

Why are rain gardens important in Saint Louis? We have plenty of impervious surfaces: buildings and paved streets, sidewalks and parking areas, not to mention all the building roof tops that prevent water from soaking into the ground. These impervious surfaces increase flooding, carry pollutants into local streams and rivers, and overload our municipal sewers and treatment plants. The resulting pollution from surface runoff is called nonpoint source pollution, since it can't be traced to a specific source, but instead comes from a number of areas.

As I've mentioned in previous articles, one way to reduce this runoff is by installing pervious paver alleys. One such alley has already been completed in the 36-3700 block between Humphrey and Utah. Construction on the remaining alleys will start this year, and will be funded by an EPA 319 grant being administered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

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There are many other ways, though, that we can reduce storm water runoff, and a rain garden is a great way to do that in your own backyard.

You've probably already seen rain gardens around the Saint Louis area. If you've driven north on Kingshighway you've seen one that was installed last year in front of Operation Brightside. There are also mini-rain gardens along South Grand that will be incorporated into the new streetscape, and Kemper Center at the Missouri Botanical Garden has a demonstration rain garden with mature plantings.

You can put your rain garden either near the house to catch roof runoff, or farther out on the lawn to collect water runoff from the lawn and roof. The rain garden can be almost any size, since any rain garden will provide some storm water runoff control. A rain garden is typically between four and eight inches deep. Any deeper and you may create a trip hazard that looks like a hole in the ground. Your goal is to make the garden as level as possible, so it doesn't create runoff of its own. A short wall of soil around the sides that's slightly higher on the downslope side and covered with grass or mulch will do the trick.


When considering what to plant, go native! Native plants are best, since they're more pest resistant, usually need less water and fertilizer, and are well adapted to our weather and soil. Just be sure to purchase your native plants from certified and inspected native plant specialty nurseries, rather than just removing them from the wild. To keep the look attractive and well-organized, group plants in clumps or in a grid pattern. Lay down two inches of mulch to retain moisture, and keep the plants well watered until they are established.

Need some specific plant lists for our area and the details on how to create your rain garden? Visit the Kemper Center Rain Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden, or just visit their web site at www.mobot.org



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Wrapping and delivering the gifts is always a huge task and this year we had a lean, but dedicated group. Thanks to Anne Orcutt who is a master at beautiful wrapping and to Pauline Ashton who keeps us laughing. Pauline also helped to get the gifts to the Grace Hill Center so the families could pick up their gifts this year.

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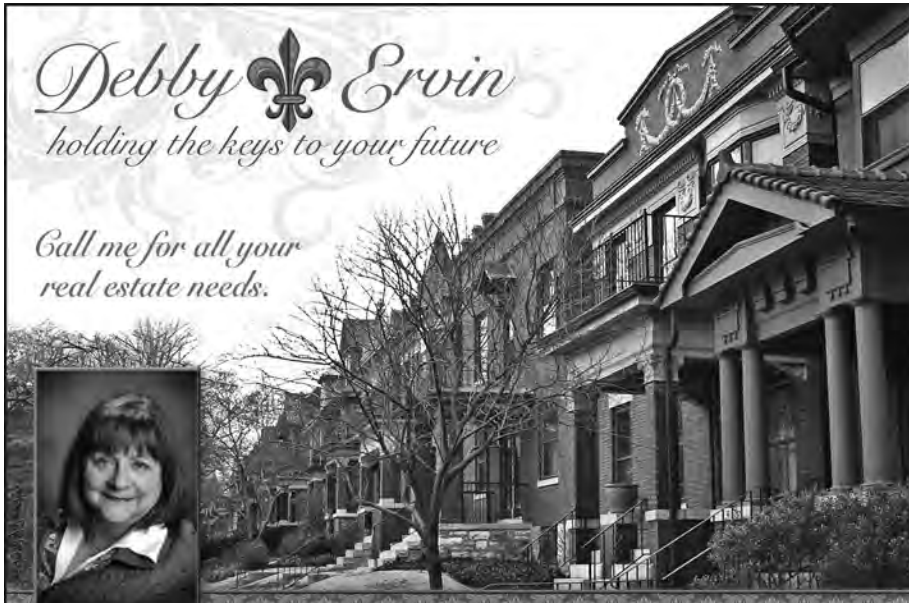
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— Millard Fuller

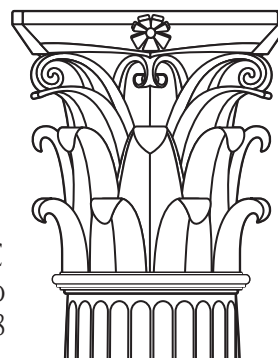
Please remember the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association when you are making donations this year. 100% of your donation to TGHNA is tax deductible and the money will be used to improve the neighborhood. If you would like to donate, send a check made out to "TGHNA" to:

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Backward & Forward With Your President

By Richard Seifert

Greetings! I am honored to serve as your TGHNA President in 2012. Let's do some backward and forward thinking for a moment.

BACKWARD:

This is a notable year, in that we reach the 25th Anniversary of the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association.

FORWARD:

How should we celebrate?

We, the Board of the TGHNA, have a few more questions to ask you. We've created a **short survey** that we want you, all residents of the Heights, to participate in. It's short, only 12 questions. Some questions have you look *backward*, at things you like or don't like around here. Some have you look *forward* to what new things or changes you would like for the neighborhood.

An easy way to **do the Survey** – and the easiest for us to gather results – is online. Go to our web site <http://towergroveheights.com/> and look for a link to the Survey. For those who can't get to a computer, we will also produce some paper copies.

Now think *backward* again. Do you have any stories or recollections of your life in the Heights that you will share with us? This anniversary year, we'd like to make a collection of peoples' reminiscences of living here. So be it a paragraph or a page or two, jot it down and send it to us. Then someday (looking *forward*) you may be published, in the Gazette or the website or who knows where.

Back to the here and now... I look *forward* to hearing from you!

Come visit . . .

Oak Hill Presbyterian Church
Corner of Oak Hill & Connecticut, StL
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Call us at 664-5525 or visit us at
www.oakhillpcusa.org



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"We would like to hear from ALL Tower Grove Heights residents."

Please fill out our survey on our website or on this page and mail to: **T.G.H.N.A. • P.O. Box 160069 • St. Louis, MO 63116**

1. With Recycle Bins now in each alley,

I recycle...

- ☐ much more
- ☐ somewhat more
- ☐ about the same amount

2. I feel that Police protection in the Heights is...

- ☐ great
- ☐ okay
- ☐ inadequate

3. Rate the Tower Grove Heights web site -
www.towergroveheights.com

- ☐ very informative
- ☐ decent
- ☐ need improvement
- ☐ I've never looked

4. The speakers and information provided at
TGHNA's monthly meetings are...

- ☐ interesting/informative
- ☐ usually decent
- ☐ not worth my time attending
- ☐ I rarely or never attend

5. I think the Minutes of TGHNA's monthly
meetings posted online are...

- ☐ important
- ☐ usually okay
- ☐ not worth the effort
- ☐ I've never looked

6. What do you think of the Gazette?
(print or online edition)

- ☐ a real asset
- ☐ usually pretty good
- ☐ could be better
- ☐ I seldom or never look at it

7. What do you think of the Autumn Fest?

- ☐ wonderful/look forward to it
- ☐ not something I want to do
- ☐ too expensive
- ☐ not familiar with it

8. The Heights sponsors 100 Neediest Cases families

- ☐ that is wonderful
- ☐ TGHNA should not be involved
- ☐ I'm not familiar with it

9. What are the biggest issues that Tower Grove Heights needs to address? _____

10. What new ideas, activities, or improvements should be pursued in Tower Grove Heights? _____

11. How should we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of TGHNA? _____

12. Which street and block do you live on? [e.g.: 3100 Spring] _____



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Reuse!

**Turn trash to treasure with a
materials exchange.**

Material exchanges might be the perfect outlet for your waste or the perfect place to find the stuff you're looking for.

RESIDENTIAL WASTE:

Craigslist St. Louis – <http://stlouis.craigslist.org>

A centralized network of online communities, connecting people who have something they no longer want with people who are looking for those items.

Gigoit – <http://www.gigoit.org> Phone: 877-244-4648

"GIGO" is an acronym that stands for 'Garbage In, Garbage Out' which is a modern spin on the old saying, 'One person's trash is another person's treasure'.

ReUseIt St. Louis – <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReUseitStLouis>
Find a new home for reusable items.

Recycle St. Louis – <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RecycleStLouis>
...everything posted on this recycle board must be 100% free.

St. Louis Baby Cycle – <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stlbabycycle>
...open to all who want to 'recycle' that special something rather than throw it away.

CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION WASTE:

Habitat for Humanity St. Louis' ReStore –
www.habitatstl.org/restore Phone: 314-531-4155

ReStore is an outlet for donating or purchasing new or used building and construction materials.



Tower Grove Heights NEEDS YOU!

The Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association can only be YOUR association if you join. With your participation, TGHNA will be a reflection of what YOU want the Heights to become. So please don't delay in joining or rejoining.

- 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)

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

☐ Yes ☐ No, Include my name, address and contact information in the TGHNA Buzz Book

☐ 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:

Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association • P.O. Box 160069 • St. Louis, MO 63116
(TGHNA is a tax exempt 501c3 organization)

