

'I just Love This Neighborhood'

One Man's Love of Tower Grove Heights is Permanent

by Tricia Heliker

I have heard this statement and made it myself more times than I can count. But I have never met anyone who put it in ink. That is until I met Maxwell Borje-Berglin.



A few months ago, Barb and Roy Smith hired Kennedy Painting to refresh the paint in their home on the 3700 block of Hartford where they have lived for 38 years. Some of you may remember Roy as the artist who created the logo (shown above) for the Tower Grove Heights Gazette 35 years ago. So, imagine Roy's amazement when he saw that logo tattooed on the forearm of the painter sent to do the job.

Needless to say, there was equal astonishment from Max, the painter, when Roy explained that he created that logo. It was a "what-are-the-chances?!" moment.

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President's Message

by Erica Westbrooks

2023 Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association President

The Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association is an anchor for our community. We are a liaison between residents and the city. We connect neighbors. We provide guest speakers. We help surrounding neighborhoods. Our association is well known and respected at city hall. We must continue our legacy. In addition, when people consider moving into a neighborhood, having a neighborhood association shows the community is invested in and cared for. Before I became involved, I was so happy to know TGHNA was there. I love reading the Gazette because there is always something interesting to learn about our neighbors and our history. I have met new friends at Heights Nights and love supporting local restaurants. Our association keeps our neighborhood safer with the camera program and routinely checking sidewalks and streetlights. Without TGHNA and its funds, I just don't think it would be as great a place to live. This organization serves all of us well and I hope you will join/contribute so it may continue.

P.S. My family is celebrating ten years in our house by redecorating. Whew! I know all the work will pay off and it will be great.

Sincerely,
Erica Westbrooks
TGHNA President 2023

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REAL ESTATE NEWS

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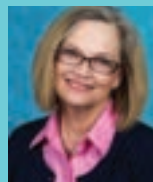
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3715 Humphrey St	\$525,000	6	\$585,000
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Are you ready to Connect?

by Jason Best

You can be forgiven if you've missed the revolution that's taking place in a relatively quiet corner right here in our neighborhood. After all, step into the storefront on the southeast corner of Wyoming and Gustine and what was previously a dog groomer is now an oasis of calm. The palette of sky and earth tones, the honey-colored hardwood floors, the flourishing collection of houseplants – at first it all feels familiar, especially if you've ever booked a massage or been to a yoga studio. And while both are offered here, along with a discrete selection of bath salts and Forest & Meadow teas available for purchase, it doesn't take long for it to sink in: this isn't your average day spa. In fact, there's no other place quite like it in all of St. Louis, possibly the entire Midwest.

"I said at the outset, we cannot have 'spa culture' here. We're about community and connection, not profiting off people's pain," says Dakota Gonzalez, cofounder of the aptly named Connect Community Center for Wellbeing, which celebrated its grand opening at the end of June. At heart is a subtle but important distinction: the emphasis on "wellbeing" instead of the culturally pervasive (and thoroughly commodified) "wellness." Whereas today it might seem as if the latter can only be achieved through some combination of high-priced body treatments, Tik Tok-trending superfoods, and the latest dubious "wellness" product being hawked by the likes of Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop, "wellbeing is a way of life," says Liberty Gonzalez, who along with Andy Prescott joined in founding Connect.

Together the trio form the core, offering a holistic approach to mind, body, and spirit through therapeutic massage, yoga classes, and life coaching. But inspired by the wellbeing collectives Liberty and Dakota encountered in Liberty's native Portland, Oregon, they've partnered with a bevy of local practitioners to provide a mind-blowing array of options, from Ecstatic Dance to Guided Breathwork, Social Dreaming to Queer Creative Co-Working.

If it all sounds a bit daunting to the uninitiated, Andy stresses the center's commitment to empowerment, inclusivity, and "holding space for compassion" (i.e., no making fun of novices). Nearly all classes and workshops are open to beginners, and then there are those geared toward folks with specific needs, such as Seated Creative Flow, which offers to those unable to participate in full-body movement the benefits of guided flow-based motion while connecting with a community. Curious folks can peruse the center's calendar online and book their first class free by using the code "connect." Or they can swing by for "Rest & Digest," a sort of hourlong weekly open house where you can stop in and talk with one of the Connect cofounders about what you're looking for and what the center might have to offer you.

Longtime Heights resident Erin O'Reilly attended several of Connect's grand-opening events and was impressed enough to opt for an entry-level membership, which includes four classes a month and a discount on massage and life-coaching sessions. She's attended a sound bath, booked a myofascial massage, and is jumpstarting her yoga practice. "I think it's a fantastic addition to the neighborhood," says the retired nurse, author and lactation consultant. "I like that they're attending to health, wellbeing, and connectivity. I mean, it's all there in the name."

Connect is at 3892 Wyoming St., or you can connect with Connect online, www.connectforwellbeing.com.



Image courtesy Connect Center for Wellbeing

Jason Best is a frequent contributor and member of the Gazette Editorial Board.



Working 9 to 5 IN THE HEIGHTS

by Ryan Haines, Sydney Logan, Shiroom Salameh and Tom Tabor

Disclosure: Gazette Editor Patrick Weber is also an employee of Market Square Architects.



Aesh Design Architecture and Design Lab was started in 2015 by Patrick Weber in a storefront at the corner of Spring and Connecticut. Since then, the office has grown to five employees, and stayed busy through many ups and downs the past eight years. In December 2022, Aesh Design was sold and merged with Portsmouth, New Hampshire-based Market Square Architects, operating as a satellite office and new base of Midwest projects for the company. The team in St. Louis has enjoyed the challenge of being a part of a larger firm yet staying a close-knit team in our office. We have all enjoyed the Gazette through the years and thought we would touch on why we all enjoy working in this neighborhood.

So, what do we like about working in Tower Grove Heights?

"As a city resident for the past 22 years I was excited for the opportunity to work in such a great neighborhood. We have grown the firm to five [employees] in almost three years, six, if you include our office dog, Amos. The great part about working in Tower Grove Heights truly is the walkability. Over lunch breaks, I can get a haircut, grab a beverage or lunch, pick up dry cleaning or stroll, bike or run through the park all within four blocks. I can take regular calls on the front or back patio while getting some fresh air and wave to another friendly neighbor strolling by. Our great storefront makes it easy to feel connected to the outdoors. My kids who went to St. Louis Public Schools got picked up right outside my office, another win. Truly a gem of a neighborhood you have here. Keep up the good work." – Ryan Haines (three years working in TGH)

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"One of my favorite things about working in Tower Grove Heights is seeing all the dogs walk past our office. I have never seen another neighborhood with so many dog owners and I absolutely love it! The next time you and your pup walk by, stop and say "hello!" We'll pet your dog for free!" – Sydney Logan (two years working in TGH)

"As a St. Louis city resident for more than 15 years and a part of the Tower Grove Heights neighborhood as an employee, I have found this experience to be truly rewarding. The neighborhood's strong sense of unity and inclusivity fosters meaningful connections with friendly and supportive neighbors, let's not forget about the most amazing restaurants and lunch spots in the area!

As a part of us belonging to the neighborhood we found that engaging in community events and initiatives had a major role bringing a profound sense of belonging and purpose to our firm by being able to give back to our community." – Shirook Salameh (1 ½ years working in TGH)

From living in the suburbs of St. Louis to working in Tower Grove Heights, I have experienced a part of St. Louis that I have found to love. It's one of the hidden gems of St. Louis. Being a couple of blocks away from Tower Grove Park makes the office feel secluded in the heart of the neighborhood. The accessibility to walk anywhere makes working here enjoyable, whether it is to get out of the office or grab lunch with my coworkers. I also admire the architecture, especially the fine brick detailing of the many homes and storefronts nearby that encapsulate the architectural grandiosity of St. Louis. I am proud to work in such an amazing neighborhood that has so much to offer. - Tom Tabor (five months working in Tower Grove Heights)

Ryan Haines, Sydney Logan, Shirook Salameh and Tom Tabor are longtime readers, 1st time contributors to the Gazette.




from L: Tom Tabor, Sydney Logan, Ryan Haines, office dog Amos and Shirook Salameh on the patio at Market Square Architects.




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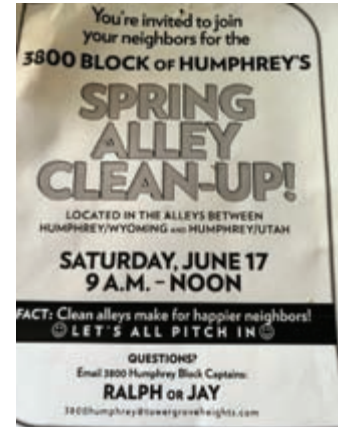
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On Saturday June 17th the 3800 block of Humphrey and Wyoming hosted an alley clean-up. Thanks to everyone who braved the summer heat and contributed to beautifying the neighborhood!



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STIGMA

...a dirty word

by Mimi Haag

One out of four people have it. We have it, our sons and sisters have it, our ancestors had it, the folks literally lying on the street, have it.

What is it? Mental illness.

Mental illness comes in many types of varying degrees, affects all ethnic groups, all ages and crosses all socioeconomic borders. It is an equal opportunity disease. So, let's take a closer look at it and find some ways to get help if you or a friend needs it.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illness (DSM), it affects "Someone over age 18 who has a diagnosable mental, behavioral or emotional disorder that causes serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities." The five major mental disorders are anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and schizophrenia, with several more categories added in recent years.

Mental illness is an imbalance of chemicals in the brain that controls behavior and personality. People with this illness of the brain have not chosen to have this disease any more than those with arthritis, multiple sclerosis, or heart disease.

Let's talk a little about "stigma." Are people shamed for having heart disease or Parkinson's, or a broken leg? No. Why is there so much stigma connected with mental illness? I've often felt that if my family member with bipolar disorder wore a big bandage around his head, people would see that something was very wrong and show concern, even compassion.

It's fortunate that many people with mental illness have family or caring people around them; people who ask questions, help them navigate the health system, insurance or transportation. Unfortunately, many do not. Keep in mind the person on the street - homeless, dirty, dressed strangely - probably does not have those advantages. We don't know why s/he is there, but does s/he want to be? What about more hospital beds instead of street corners? According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 26% of Americans 18 and older suffer from a serious mental disorder each year.

What can you do? Get educated. Show compassion. Call for help. There is so much good information out there today to help if you or your loved one suffers from mental illness. The National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) has helped people with mental illness and their families for over 40 years, offering education, support groups, advocacy, helplines and hope. For more information, visit namistl.org.

Mimi Haag is a former NAMI Family-to-Family educator, board member, Walk Captain and advocate.



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Alley Etiquette

by Rich Iezzi

I know there are more important things in life but using proper alley etiquette is essential. Knowing what to do can be difficult as there are no alley rules.

Take the head-on confrontation. You're headed to your alley garage when another driver is coming at you. Who blinks? There's a myriad of answers. I try to immediately blink by pulling off onto the first "wide" area, yielding the right-of-way. Concerning who's awarded the right of way, I feel that whoever has traveled the farthest distance in the alley is the winner but there are no right or wrong answers.

An obvious decision occurs when a driver enters the alley just as someone is about to exit. The entering driver is expected to back out on Spring or Gustine to provide safe passage. But what if you yield and the alley driver never appears? Waiting 10 or 15 seconds can be an eternity when you're sitting on Spring in the wrong lane, pointing in the wrong direction before peeking down the alley. A ghosting alley driver has usually pulled into their garage but I've also found them waiting at the foot of the alley, needing to make eye contact with me. Huh?

Which brings up another discussion. You're in the head-on driving situation but your garage is in sight. How do you communicate your intentions to the other driver? I try everything. If my garage is on the left, I use my left turn signal. If the enemy is still advancing, I resort to hand signals, emphatically pointing to my garage. Incredibly, I've almost come bumper to bumper even with all attempts to communicate.

Pulling out of your garage is less complicated but still has decorum. When backing out, you need to expose your car's rear end for five seconds or so to telegraph your alley entry. Since you have no alley privileges yet, you must immediately scamper back into the garage when challenged.

Lastly, alley parking. Alley blocking is legitimate if legitimate work is being done but some non-city people don't understand the importance of our alleys. I've mentioned to alley violators that we use our alleys all the time but I'm usually told, "They can go around." Ouch.

When confronted by drivers who have no intention of abiding by any rules, I'm reminded of the situation I overheard in a parking lot when an obstinate driver wouldn't yield. "I don't back up for idiots!" yells obstinate driver #1. "I do," demurs benevolent driver #2.

Rich Iezzi is a longtime Resident of Tower Grove Heights and frequent contributor to the Gazette.

'I just Love This Neighborhood'

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When Barb told me the story, I was curious to know more about it. I was able to contact Max via his employer and had a very enjoyable chat with him over coffee at the Gelateria. I wanted to learn what drew him to choose that particular image, an image that would be available to him at all times with just a flick of his wrist. With the charm of a self-assured 34-year-old, he responded with, "I have a lot of memories that took place in this neighborhood." He went on to list some of them. He was hit by a car while riding his bike here and he suffered through some of his worst hangovers here from his nights at Tin Can, CBGB (Bar and Pub) and Mangia. Turns out his parents moved from Kirkwood to House Springs when he was six months old. Fast forward 19 years and Max was back in the city, skateboarding for fun and working at Starbucks while taking classes in photography. Over the years he found other jobs in this area, Crispy Edge, Blackthorn, and Hartford Coffee Co. to name a few, and over time he found places to live on Hartford, Juniata, Utah and McDonald. His twenty-something memories (as many of us can relate) were pretty special, including his gigs as a drummer with Squircle the Destroyer band. The band members recently got back together and are performing at CBGB on occasion.

Max explained that when he came across a copy of the Gazette and saw that row of houses, it just spoke to him. He clipped it and stuck it in his wallet. The next time he looked at it, four years had passed. The attachment was still there and he decided to do something about it. That something was to search out a tattoo artist and make it permanent. He found the right artist in Carson Daryl and got his tattoo on June 25, 2018. The decision was made to shorten the tattoo by eliminating two of the houses, but that didn't stop Roy from recognizing his work. If the remaining houses look a bit different than the logo, it's because the tattoo is a mirror image of the drawing.



Max remembers doing some work for a Utah homeowner and thinking maybe some of the houses on that street were the ones in his tattoo, but Roy cleared that up when he explained that the houses in the logo depict five consecutive houses on the northeast corner of 3800 Hartford.

The meeting between Max and Roy seems destined. Max now knows those houses actually exist and even better, he knows the artist who drew them. When I asked Max about Roy's reaction to his tattoo he responded, "He said he was flattered." When Roy asked Max why he had that drawing on his arm, Max shrugged and said, "I just love this neighborhood."

Tricia Heliker is a frequent contributor, past Editor and current member of the Gazette Editorial Board.

Tower Grove Heights

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Elevating ZUCCHINI

by Pat Edwards

"The trouble is, you cannot grow just one zucchini. Minutes after you plant a single seed, hundreds of zucchini will barge out of the ground and sprawl around the garden, menacing other vegetables. At night, you will be able to hear the ground quake as more and more zucchini erupt." -Dave Barry

Here is an attempt to answer the question of what to do with the fruits of your labor if you were ambitious and planted zucchini or maybe you were fortuitous having been the recipient of someone else's ambition!

Zucchini are officially fruits. They are the large berries that grow as part of a flower. The word zucchini comes from the Italian zucca, "gourd" or "squash." Normally we treat it as a vegetable, preparing it in recipes containing garlic, onion, herbs, tomatoes, etc. But zucchini's flavor is mild enough to be mixed into quick breads or cake with delicious results. Following are two recipes that I hope will make you feel satisfied with your results.

Sauteed Zucchini

Zucchini (I recommend using zucchinis that are approximately 2" x 10")
olive oil
salt and pepper

Wash and dry as many zucchini as to your needs. (I suggest one zucchini per person for a side dish.) Slice them into ½" slices, vertically or horizontally. Put 2-3 tablespoons olive oil in a skillet with the heat on medium to medium high. Add the sliced zucchini in one layer, this may take several batches depending on how many you are cooking. After the first side has turned golden brown, flip them over and brown the other side. Remove them from the skillet after both sides are nicely browned. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. A squeeze of fresh lemon juice can be tasty as well. By caramelizing the zucchini you transform its flavor from a rather bland vegetable to a deliciously sweet and savory one.

This second recipe has more ingredients and takes more time but delivers on flavor. It complements many different foods. Perfect to top a bratwurst or mixed into tuna salad. Try it as a condiment with chicken or salmon. Use it as a topping for a cracker or crostini that has been spread with a mild cheese. Fold it into cooked pasta or rice. Once you taste it, you'll want to try it on everything.

Blue Ribbon Zucchini Relish
<https://ruralhighness.com/blue-ribbon-zucchini-relish/>
makes about 7-pint jars

12 cups zucchini, (peeled or unpeeled) finely diced
1 green pepper, finely diced
4 cups onion, finely diced
1 red pepper, finely diced
4 cups onion, finely diced
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon turmeric
4 cups white vinegar
3 cups sugar
1 tablespoon ground mustard
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice
1 tablespoon cornstarch
a squirt of yellow mustard



In a large bowl combine zucchini, green pepper, red pepper and onion with 1 tablespoon salt and 1 teaspoon turmeric. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Combine vinegar, sugar, ground mustard, celery seed, cinnamon, allspice, cornstarch and squirt of mustard in a pot large enough to ultimately hold everything. Cook until thickened, whisking to avoid lumps.

Rinse the vegetables in a colander under cold water. Add vegetables to sauce, simmer for 30 minutes. Fill pint jars leaving ½" head space. Process for 15 minutes in a water bath canner. If you are new to canning, refer to <http://nchfp.uga.edu/> for canning safety.

If the thought of canning gives you pause, make a half batch and store in the refrigerator or share it with your friends and neighbors.

Pat Edwards frequently contributes recipes and food articles to the Gazette and is our go-to for garden know-how.



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