

Tower Grove Heights Gazette

GRAND TO GUSTINE

ARSENAL TO UTAH PLACE

Volume 21, No. 2

Summer 2010



Our Prestigious Permanent Signature

“The new Tower Grove Heights signs are beautiful. At long last the neighborhood has markers which reflect our history and our potential for the future. It takes 100 years to be a century neighborhood. These beautiful signs tell everyone who lives here and all who visit, that this neighborhood is special. Thanks to all involved, for completing this project.”

- Susie Gudermuth

“I'm hopeful the signs will help build a sense of community and help establish our neighborhood identity. We should take pride in where we call home.”

- Tom Reitenbach

“The new signs look great. Thanks to TGHNA for all the time and effort put into this. When I first saw them I thought back to when we were just a part of Grand Oak Hill, and there was no "Tower Grove Heights". Seeing that sign took me back to the early days, and it really made those days seem very special. What was just a dream, at that first meeting has become a reality. And now we have a permanent sign that makes it "oh so official". Again, thanks for making that happen.”

- Tricia Heleker

“The new signs are a terrific, welcoming addition to the neighborhood. I love the way the design coordinates with the park's signage and highlights our beautiful, historic homes. It's really nice to have permanent signs rather than banners that tatter in the wind and have to be replaced every couple of years. Many thanks to everyone who worked, over the years, to bring this project to completion.”

- Jan Clinite

“I love the new signs for the neighborhood. TG Heights has such a unique and identifiable style of architecture that it is nice to have signs for our neighborhood that are equally as classy. Thanks for pushing it through and for all the work you do for our neighborhood.”

- Doug Peden

continued on page 2



October 9th, 2010

We're looking forward to another fun-filled Autumn Fest in the Heights this year, to be held Saturday, October 9th, 2010. This is our opportunity to eat great food, sample an assortment of wines, hear musical entertainment, and socialize with our neighbors. An event this fun requires the efforts of a number of people to run errands, help set up and clean up, and otherwise assist where needed. If you have a few hours before, during, or after the event when you can help please call or e-mail Marilyn Browning, this year's event coordinator at 314-577-6273 or at mbrowning3831@charter.net.

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continued

Our Prestigious Permanent Signature

“If Jim and Veda Lynn (68 year-long residents of TGH who both passed away last year) would have been here to see the new signs go up, they would have been thrilled. Over their many, many years as homeowners on Utah Place -- from Jim's return from WWII in the '40's, to the Baby Boom and influx of families in the '50's, to the dark days of fighting drugs in the neighborhood in the '70's, to the resurgence and rehab in the '80's and '90's -- they were always involved and steadfast. Jim served as president and treasurer of the neighborhood association over the years and Veda will always be known as the best member-recruiting block captain ever (who could say "no" to that petite bundle of energy?) They would have said that the signs were a great way to let the world know that they were entering a wonderful neighborhood, rich in history, and with hard-working, proud residents.”

- Their daughter, Veronica Campbell

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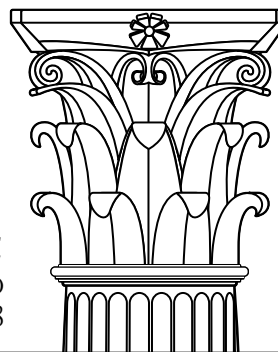
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“My husband and I have only been living in Tower Grove Heights for the last two years, but we’re so happy to be here. We see the signs every time we walk around the neighborhood and they’re the perfect reflection of Tower Grove Heights—good looking, with a blend of old and new, and a satisfying air of permanence.”

- Marilyn Browning

A Former Resident of Utah Place

“It was with a measure of pride that I admired the new street signs that adorn the entrances of the neighborhood. As was my former habit, during my last visit I walked the 4-block circle to observe what changes had taken place over the past several years. Most of them are positive: houses continue to be rehabbed, their lawns freshly landscaped with wild flowers, new sidewalks have been poured for some, and the parkway remains green and inviting. I learned what houses had turned over, who bought them, where their former residents are and who now owns my former home. I played “peeping tom” at a vacant home and was embarrassed to learn that it is occupied...it offered an opportunity to catch up with the residents and enjoy a neighborly chat. I have to admit; voyeurism was a hobby of mine...one of my most enjoyable pastimes was to walk the neighborhood at night, when I could get a glimpse into others’ homes and their architectural delights.”

“The community feel is alive and well in TGH, the most appealing attribute of this urban oasis. And at last the neighborhood has some permanent testament to its history through the symbolism of the new signs that proudly welcome visitors to Tower Grove Heights.”


“And one of the more notable changes... you can now turn left off of Grand onto Utah.”

“Carry on Utah Place and Tower Grove Heights! I miss you. And although I’ve been away longer than I lived there, I’m still watching.”

- Suzanne Brach

continued on page 14

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REHABBING WITH RICH

The New Gustine Market

BY
RICH
IEZZI

When I started to write about the Gustine Market, I didn't think that 'rehab' went with 'Gustine Market'. I also felt a bit guilty because the Gustine Market was never 'my' store.

Those of us living near Spring Street preferred the 'little store' at the north-east corner of Spring and Connecticut. Jim and Faye ran the store and we watched their daughter grow up behind the counter. Jim and Faye even lived over the store. It was so close to our house that I once bet my kids I could run there and back for pancake syrup before they counted to 60 (didn't quite make it).

The Gustine Market, on the other hand, was worn out and always smelled like Lysol and stale air. And the floor---it was like an archeological dig. First there was the stick 'em down tiles covering the old linoleum that covered the particle board that covered something else.

Then Kurt Cummiskey noticed a handwritten 'for sale' sign in the window. Kurt and his lovely wife Vicky live in the second floor of another building they rescued in Tower Grove Heights. Years ago, he converted a former rooming house into law offices and upstairs living space. Maybe by comparison, the Gustine Market project seemed small. Kurt thought the building could "use a little TLC and be put to a better use".

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CITY DINER

MORE THAN JUST A DINER.

BY MARILYN BROWNING

You can't live in this neighborhood long without knowing where City Diner is. The familiar steaming cup of coffee logo says plenty about what you'll find inside (as does that oh-so-familiar blonde hanging out of the bathtub over the patio area.) The retro atmosphere features a jukebox full of oldies, checkerboard vinyl floors, and plenty of memorabilia straight from my own misspent youth.

Like any great diner, City Diner serves breakfast all day, and the coffee is excellent. The menu features plenty of comfort food made from scratch, including hand cut fries and generously-sized burgers, but there's always something for the more adventurous eater. On the weekends you can satisfy those late-night diner food cravings, since the restaurant is open 24 hours on Friday and Saturday.

City Diner is the brainchild of Peter Spoto. Peter grew up in

the South City area, and got a degree in art education from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. After graduation Peter got his first part-time job in a restaurant to provide the steady income art failed to supply. In the many years since, he's worked both in the front and in the kitchen of plenty of places, including a stint in Anchorage, Alaska cooking for 200 oil field hands.

When his first marriage ended, and his daughter was three years old, Peter decided that it was time to get serious about making a living. He returned to the lower 48 states, eventually winding up where he had started, in Saint Louis.

Peter opened South City Diner in August of 1992, in the restaurant formerly known as Pearl and Ray's. The menu and the restaurant were designed to appeal to a broad-based clientele—white collar and blue collar alike, with reasonably-priced menu items a cut above your usual diner fare. The formula has been more than suc-

cessful in the years since. For a decade now, City Diner has been voted Best Diner in RFT's Restaurant Poll. Continued popularity of the restaurant brought the need to expand, and when Bretcher's bakery finally shut its doors, Peter moved City Diner into the larger space after a gut rehab. That was in 2003.

continued on next page





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It was the diner that brought Peter together with long-time South City friend Jeanne, who, as Peter says, came knocking on the diner door one day. Friendship blossomed into romance, and the two tied the knot. Jeanne Spoto became the behind-the-scenes partner in the business as well, doing the bookkeeping for the diner.

Now the Spotos are adding a new location, City Diner at the Fox at 541 N. Grand. It seems the Fox Theatre had been looking for a more moderately-priced place where theatre goers could dine. City Diner came up as a possibility, and they approached Peter with the idea. After solving some logistical problems, including availability of parking, plans for the diner have been moving forward. The second diner should be open by the time this article goes to print.

Peter may also have a chance to use that art background. He's recently outfitted himself with a kiln and potter's wheel, and plans to make the dishes for the new Fox location himself. Jeanne will be tapping into her own creativity, making some of the desserts for the new place. Something familiar, something new. It sounds like a great recipe for the future.

City Diner is located at 3139 South Grand Blvd. Their hours are 7 a.m. — 11 p.m. Mon. to Thurs., and 24 hours Fri.-Sat. Closing 10PM Sun. For more information call 314-772-6100.

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BY RICH IEZZI

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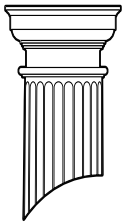
Naturally, there was more to it. The old floor had to be torn out down to the floor joists and the tin ceiling had to be sandblasted, for starters. But the past 100 years produced settling in the foundation walls that left the middle of the floor 'crowned'. Before installing the new floor, the crown had to be leveled out---never an easy job. When I asked about the fun part of the job, Kurt said it must have been the tetanus shot he got as a result of stepping off the bare floor joists and skinning his shin.

Eventually the work was completed and the store reopened. When I stopped by the new Gustine Market for eggs, I couldn't believe it. The stale

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smell and old floor were gone and the space was bright and airy. There was a beautiful new floor and the interior was spotless. On another occasion, I stopped by the market for something and Vicky reminded me of the wine tasting party. Wine tasting? At the Gustine Market?

Kurt says a lot of his present customers were also customers of the old Gustine Market. He constantly hears people say that they went to the old Gustine Market once, but never came back. When I asked about the best selling items, Kurt told me they were half and half, and of course, his famous Shakespeare pizza.

There are plans to complete the second floor at some point for either an apartment or commercial space. I vote for the apartment---so Kurt and Vicky can live over the store someday, of course. As for the question of 'would you do this again', Kurt summed it up with one word---"Hmmmmmm?" Guess that pretty much says it all.



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RESIDENT PROFILE: A New Leaf -

Cristina Stevens and Her Backyard Renovation

BY MARILYN BROWNING
All roads may lead to Rome, as the old saying goes, but many seem to lead to Saint Louis as well. With some detours along the way, Cristina Stevens found her way here from her hometown of Chiavari, on the northwest coast of Italy between Genoa and Pisa.

In 2008, Cristina was living in Pensacola, Florida. Her sons had already grown and moved away, one to Rockford, Illinois and the other to New Orleans, and another chapter in her life had ended. She took the opportunity to look around, and interviewed for a job at Saint Louis University as Director of Clinical Pastoral Education.

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RESIDENT PROFILE: **Cristina Stevens** ... continued **and Her Backyard Renovation**

Shown around the area by her prospective employers, she fell in love with Tower Grove Heights. She was drawn by the same things that attracted a lot of us—the proximity to restaurants, shops, and Tower Grove Park, and maybe just as importantly for an Italian girl, the fact that it was a stone's throw away from The Hill. She was, in fact, smitten enough to announce to her old boss that she was moving to Saint Louis before she even got the job offer!

The house she bought in the 3800 block of Connecticut was the first house she saw, though she looked at a number of them before making an offer. What followed was a familiar story for many that have moved from out of state: long-distance negotiations, scheduling for house inspections, and arranging the sale of the old house. In Cristina's case these tasks were complicated by the fact that she accomplished most of them while on the Italian island of Elba, with only a telephone connection to the U.S. As a consequence, the first time she had a thorough look around her new house was when the moving van arrived. Peering around the moving boxes, she could see a nicely-renovated 2 ½-story house, with white bead board kitchen cabinets, two baths, and a working fireplace. The other thing she saw, however, was a very overgrown and neglected backyard. She knew that it would require a drastic makeover to become the outdoor room she envisioned for the house.

Enter Abraham Mohler: sculptor, photographer, musician, and landscape designer. Over an eight week period he and Cristina ripped out the old weedy areas, the cracked concrete path and overgrown brick. What remained were the fruit trees, a good-sized lilac bush, and a lot of bare ground. It was here that Abraham's artistic vision came into play. Working in slate, he created a broad sweep of cut-stone tiles in various sizes, shapes and colors to form the patio. In place of the tired sidewalk to the garage, he created a line of pinkish slate rectangles, flanked on both sides by large blue-grey slate tiles.

Cristina researched the plants she liked and that would work in the space by visiting the Missouri Botanical Garden, paying particular attention to the Missouri Native Shade and English Woodlands gardens. Together she and Abraham planted hosta, ferns, heuchera, and other shade-loving plants under the trees. A hydrangea bush was moved from the front yard to the back, and the front yard landscaped with perennial plants and bushes. A finishing touch in the front was a new wrought-iron railing for the porch, made by local company Classic Metal Craft, Inc. The results were everything Cristina could have wished for, with an elegant front yard and a welcoming oasis of beauty and order in the back.

When Cristina showed me around the back yard, she described Abraham's landscape work in the glowing terms usually reserved for high art, and she was absolutely right. With its great use of natural material, interplay of colors and shapes, and its perfect balancing act of hard surfaces with garden plantings, the back yard stands as a true work of art. Often when we think of patrons of the arts, we imagine millionaires sipping champagne at black-tie benefits. Cristina's experience reminds us that we can all be art patrons, supporting local artists and being inspired by their works on a daily basis.

You can see the transformation of Cristina Steven's back yard, as well as sculpture, photography, and other landscape work by Abraham Mohler, by going to his website, www.abrahammohler.com.



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“One of our neighborhood's four corners received a welcomed makeover thanks to the City of St. Louis, Alderwoman Jennifer Florida and several TGHNA members. The new cobblestone walkway in the intersection of Utah Place and Gustine helps our friends and neighbors who are blind or have low vision navigate the intersection without worry, while the new median ensures all of us safe passage through a busy and rather long crosswalk. The new Tower Grove Heights sign, along with the beautiful rose bushes, make the median a welcoming and inviting entrance to our neighborhood.”

- David Bruns

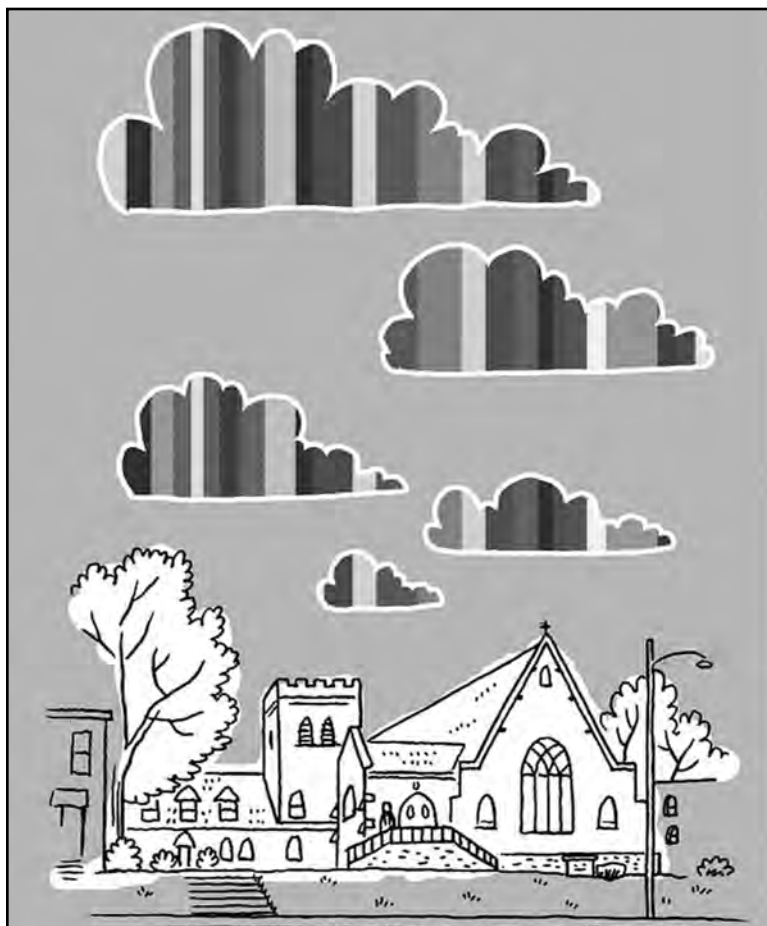
Mon. Wed. Thurs. 11-6
Tues. CLOSED
Fri. Sat. 10-7 Sun. 12-5

“I love the new TGHT's signs. I've always wanted something distinctive to proclaim the Tower Grove Heights territory and was insanely jealous when Tower Grove East put up their signs on old lamp posts years ago. In the early days, there was talk of installing heavy wrought iron TGHT's signs and even a vision of something over Spring Avenue similar to what SLU has on Grand but we couldn't afford the insurance (or the signs!). We finally got our signs and I love them.”

- Rich Iezzi

“The stately signs installed to define the Tower Grove Heights neighborhood are the product of persistence, patience, and collaboration exercised by many people. They are symbolic of the attributes common to so many friends and neighbors living within the twelve square blocks we call our neighborhood. May these inspire all of us to be more neighborly and to recognize our homes extend down the street and around the corner – well beyond the lots on which they stand. Congratulations to all who contributed to this effort.”

- John Papa



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 & 5:00 p.m. chapel

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www.towergrovechurch.org
 email: info@towergrovechurch.org

Tower Grove Heights

Neighborhood Association

CONTACT LIST

Monthly meetings 7:15 pm on 4th Tuesday (except Dec.),
First Church of Divine Science on 3617 Wyoming Street

- BOARD -

President:David Bruns
President-elect:Marilyn Browning
Past President:Mark Froese
Secretary:Claudia Seifert
Treasurer:David Kim
Asst. Secretary/Membership:Debbie Ervin

- COMMITTEE CHAIRS -

Block Representatives:Tom Reitenbach
New Business/Gazette Advertising:Gary Kushinsky
Fund Raising/Events:OPEN
Webmaster - towergroveheights.com:Robert Ashton

- BLOCK REPRESENTATIVES -

3600/3700 Arsenal:Recruiting!
3800 Arsenal:Recruiting!
3600/3700 Hartford:Carrie Samsel, Stacy Leimbach
3800 Hartford:Rich Iezzi
3600/3700 Juniata:Lynne Casey
3800 Juniata:Tom Reitenbach, Kim Cole
3600/3700 Connecticut:Recruiting!
3800 Connecticut:Recruiting!
3600/3700 Wyoming:Gen Obata
3800 Wyoming:Teresa Mithen
3600/3700 Humphrey:Recruiting!
3800 Humphrey:Erin L. O'Reilly
3600/3700 Utah Place:Rich Seifert, Susie Gudermuth
3800 Utah Place:Pat Edwards, Jim McClaren
3800 McDonald:Kathryn Heitzenroeder

SUPPORTING

- GAZETTE DISTRIBUTION -

3600/3700 Arsenal:Tim Klaas
3800 Arsenal:Mike Woolfolk
3600/3700 Connecticut:Rebecca Andrews
3800 Connecticut:Liz Clyne
3600/3700 Humphrey:Nels Moss

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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 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

Indicate your membership level choice: _____

_____ 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)

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...

_____ Yes _____ No

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

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

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