

Tower Grove Heights Gazette

Volume 19, No. 3

Grand to Gustine

Arsenal to Utah Place

Fall 2008



Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association Turns 20

BY **Rich Iezzi** Can you believe it? - Our neighborhood association is 20 years old. Actually, the framework and goals of our neighborhood go back exactly 100 years.

While researching this article, I found an old newsletter from the Tower Grove Heights Improvement Association stating that its organization was formed on July 2, 1908. Accompanying the article is the stern face of early president James M. Rollins, who lived at 3702 Juniata.

100 years ago, the first Tower Grove Heights Association adopted the word 'betterment' to describe the organization's purpose. It was concerned with the completion of Grand Avenue, Arsenal Street and the Carpenter Library. The current TGHNA was formed 20 years ago because it had a vision of what the neighborhood should be, including the 'betterment' of three important area assets: Tower Grove Park, the Grand Business District and our beautifully preserved housing stock. The current

association has focused on marketing the neighborhood and communicating with residents, to make sure Tower Grove Heights is a perfect fit.

Our current association began after residents began to move out of the area 20 years ago. A lot of us thought 'this is a perfect neighborhood, why would anyone leave?' A small group was formed and created the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association and its first

continued on page 2

Autumn Fest in The Heights Returns

BY **John Papa** The Fourth Annual Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Assoc. Autumn Fest will take place on Saturday, October 11, 2008, from 5:00 p. m. to 8:00 p. m. As in the past years three residents will open their homes and gardens along Spring and Utah Avenues to welcome neighbors and friends of the Heights to a relaxing evening of food, drink, entertainment and activities. Nostalgic horse drawn carriage rides will fill the air with the rhythmic sound of hooves on pavement. Local restaurants are once again generously providing an international variety of hot and cold appetizers. Nowhere in St. Louis exists a greater diversity of dining choices than in and around our neighborhood, and many countries will be represented on our tables. After sampling such savory items, you can treat yourself to delectable homemade desserts that have become an Autumnfest tradition. You won't find anything similar at the convenience store

or grocery cookie aisle, and they do not come with those guilt-ridden labels!! One of our annual sponsors, Van Gohz Restaurant and Bar, is providing a complimentary five variety wine tasting with each ticket. These wines will also be available for purchase by the bottle (\$20.00) or glass (\$6.00) as you mingle with your neighbors and guests in the cool Autumn evening.

Individual tickets are offered for sale at \$15.00 in advance or \$20.00 on the day of the event. Please call John Papa or Pat Edwards at (314) 865-2545 to arrange for ticket purchase and delivery or with any questions. We are also recruiting friendly volunteers.

If you're tired of blockbuster movies and the stale party scene as entertainment options, come spend a calm, casual, relaxing evening welcoming Autumn. As the sky light gradually dims over the neighborhood, you'll be amazed at how all your senses will be awakened just a few steps from your door.

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>TGHNA Turns 20</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Autumn Fest Returns.</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Local Group to add Dog Park ...</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Featured Advertiser -</i> | |
| <i>Korzendorfer - Bick</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Resident Profile -</i> | |
| <i>The Sullivans</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>Rehabbing with Rich -</i> | |
| <i>The Three Week Kitchen</i> | <i>9</i> |
| <i>Jewels in the Crown</i> | <i>10</i> |
| <i>MOBOT Gardens Café</i> | <i>15</i> |
| <i>Light up the Heights</i> | <i>19</i> |
| <i>TGHNA Contact List</i> | <i>20</i> |
| <i>Membership Form</i> | <i>20</i> |

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TGH Neighborhood Association Turns 20

- CONTINUED -

function was to go door to door telling residents of the new organization. After holding an open house in the old American Legion building at Spring and Wyoming in early spring of 1988: Block captains were assigned, monthly meetings took place, and our neighborhood began to communicate with itself. The creation of the Gazette helped residents to see that progress was being made and the neighborhood was coming back.

Those early days were filled with optimism and enthusiasm, but also had challenges. Realtors were afraid to even drive to our area, much less market our houses. Also, years of stagnation made many residents negative. We fought back by picking up trash, holding house tours, planting trees, and showing up at City Hall to fight bad landlords. Early groups worked with Tower Grove Park, the Grand Business District, City Hall, realtors, and the police, by starting 'cookies for cops'. The right people were in the right place at the right time.

A highly visible breakthrough came with the transformation of 3151-3161 Spring (aka the Hartford Arms), by the St. Louis Housing Board. Our own Susie Gudermuth served as the general contractor and the project was awarded largely because of our active and supportive neighborhood association. The successful completion of this project made an enormous improvement to Spring, our central corridor.

It's hard to walk, or drive through Tower Grove Park, and imagine it as a detriment to our area, but it didn't even have working street lights when John Karel became the Park's fifth director in 1987. It had no walking paths, no band concerts or farmers market and was known chiefly for its nefarious activities. John Karel's appointment began a working relationship with our neighborhood association that helped fuel the success of our area.

The same was true of Grand Avenue, 20 years ago. The new buildings east of Grand between Arsenal and Hartford didn't exist, and a lot of the remaining commercial buildings were deplorable. Our association met with early commercial developers, encouraging them to take on projects like the Botanical building (remember the Kingsway Sandwich Shop?), the popular 'King and I' location, and the Diner property. After the success of these early projects, Grand Avenue became a magnet for stores like The Bread Company and Kinko's.

I love the 100 year old description of our area from the first association. It reads: "It's hard to conceive of a section more ideal in its location, more convenient to the business centers and blessed with the happy surroundings of natural air, green grass and ideal homes". One of my 20 year old tenants used current vernacular when, after living here three days, recently told me "This neighborhood's awesome".



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The Gazette is a non-profit publication published quarterly by the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association. For information concerning advertising rates and layout planning email Gary Kushinsky at gazette-newbiz@towergroveheights.com

Your letters and comments are always welcome at the Gazette.

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Local Group seeks to add Dog Park to Tower Grove Neighborhood

by
Deb Springer

According to studies compiled by the Humane Society, owning a pet can lower blood pressure, reduce stress, prevent heart disease, lower health care costs and fight depression. Nationwide 39 % of households own at least one dog and, while the Tower Grove neighborhood seems particularly “dogcentric”, we lack one important amenity for pets and their owners.

Dog Parks, fenced areas for off leash play among dogs and socialization among their owners, are fast becoming an expected part of urban communities. In fact, Tower Grove lags behind many St. Louis neighborhoods that already are enjoying dog parks. Neighborhoods with dog parks already open or in the planning stages include the Central West End (with two parks), Benton Park, Benton Park West, LaSalle, Lafayette Square, Soulard, Shaw Park, St. Louis Hills (SW City Dog Park), Fox Park, and Lucas Park. Since the number and quality of neighborhood amenities is an important criteria for choosing a home, these areas enjoy the boost a dog park gives property owners in this tough real estate market. Now Tower Grove is poised to join their ranks.

A small group of Tower Grove residents has formed into a coalition with the intention of founding a dog park in our neighborhood. Although other groups have begun the process in the

past, now seems the perfect time for the project to be successful and this group is dedicated to seeing the venture flourish. Already much time and effort has been poured into the planning stages and the hope is that the park will be ready to welcome its first four legged friends in late spring 2009.

People who haven't visited a dog park may wonder how they operate. Luckily the committee working on this project is benefiting from the hard work and experience of others who have already set up successful parks in our city. Thriving dog parks operate under a system of rules designed to ensure safe interaction between a variety of dogs and their owners while being a “good neighbor” to residents nearby.

The first question that invariably comes up is, “What about the poop?” At dog parks all owners are required to pick up after their dogs—and perhaps, a bit more. An important part of the success of any park depends on keeping the area free of dog waste. The general rule in most parks is to pick up any poop you see since, even if it isn't your dog's, it could have been. Much of the policing is done by fellow members who are all invested in the park's success.

Security is of course a concern. Access to the dog park's entry gate is by a code given when the owner registers and it is changed often enough to ensure that those in the park are members.

continued on page 4

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Local Group seeks to add Dog Park to Tower Grove Neighborhood

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In addition, dogs registered to the park are usually given identifying tags to wear. The dog park entrance would have a double gate to ensure that no pooches escape when members enter and exit the park. The flip side of this is that dog parks are often associated with a reduction in crime in the immediately surrounding neighborhood since the park generates more foot traffic and therefore, more eyes on the street than before.

The dog park would be operated on a fee structure similar to that which governs others in the area. After the initial start up costs involving securing the location, piping running water to the area and installing a suitable fence are paid, excess funds would be funneled back into the park—and therefore the neighborhood. Depending upon the space chosen, funds would be earmarked for additional amenities and landscaping.

Membership to the Dog Park would be limited depending upon the size of the site chosen. The committee is now accepting email addresses from interested neighbors who would like to be kept up to date as the process moves forward and who would be added to the announcement list once memberships are available. The committee is currently pursuing non profit status and will be ready to accept donations soon. Please email gtclark83@yahoo.com to be added to the list and to have the opportunity to participate in a survey designed to better fit the park to the needs of its patrons.

In addition, the group is actively looking for both corporate and private sponsors for the purchase of the lot, fencing, benches, water access and landscaping and would be happy to accommodate those who would like to donate for a memorial to a loved one.

It truly looks like a textbook “win-win” situation for our neighborhood, for local property owners, and of course, for local dogs and the people who love them. †

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BY
Patrick Bost

Established in 1898, this business survives Today in part by its loyal customer base. Not that any current customers have been around since then, but it would almost certainly seem that way to hear present owner Seamus Dowling speak about his customers. Generations of clients come through the doors with an array of items to be framed, knowing full-well the job will be done timely and of the highest quality of craftsmanship. That's what brings them back, generation after generation. Also, the shop is not in a high-end retail setting so Dowling can keep his costs low and consequently offer a better price to his customers without sacrificing on quality.

Dowling, along with partner David Goodson have maintained the family-owned/operated style of conducting business that has served the long history of the shop so well, by keeping it to a manageable size. There are no other employees unless you include Buddy, a friendly stray Dowling and Goodson rescued from the streets, who now happily greets everyone who enters the shop. They do not sell art, posters, gifts or other items you would normally expect to find in the average frame shop, at the local mall or strip center. It's just sticks, mats, mouldings and glass.

All work is custom and done by them on the premises. Expansion into a larger operation, with a staff of people, working shifts seven days a week, is not the kind of business Dowling envisions for the future of the shop. His customers know him, and come to expect him to be there when they drop-off their next piece to be framed. Often they will do just that, and know Dowling will frame the piece suitably to the particular work of art, and to their taste. That level of customer service you just cannot get with a rotating staff. And so his business is built and maintained on the greatest form of advertising, word-of-mouth. Although Dowling is quick to add that he has been a regular advertiser in the Gazette since its inception, and as a resident of Tower Grove

Heights, he believes-in, and supports the neighborhood. Dowling and Goodson are also supporters of Stray Rescue, and pets are always welcome in the shop with their owners.

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RESIDENT PROFILE:

Sullivans Enjoy Their Home on Arsenal

by
Ruth Brooks

Carol and Brian Sullivan moved to Tower Grove Heights in 1985. The family of seven thoroughly enjoys the ongoing project of rehabbing their home on the 3700 block of Arsenal Street.

In addition, Carol has been home-schooling the five Sullivan children for the past 14 years. The eldest, Christina, has finished college and now works as an accountant in Nashville. Hannah is currently working on a degree in stage management. Katie is completing high school at home while taking some college classes at Forest Park Community College. Michael and Maggie also continue to study at home with Mom. Dad Brian works at Washington University Medical School. He loves to walk and often commutes on foot or via bus and MetroLink.

The family enjoys living across the street from Tower Grove Park. Their front lawn has been transformed into a hillside of flowers which flourish with

very little watering. The Sullivans learned how to choose plants, native to Missouri, by seeking advice from the Missouri Botanical Garden.

The couple met as students at St. Louis University. Brian grew up in North St. Louis while Carol has her family roots in Affton. As a young couple, they looked forward to the challenge of rehabbing a home built in 1904. Over the years, almost all of the family has been involved in some stage of creating new and beautiful spaces in their century-old home.

Because the children have spent so much time together during their years of home-schooling, their parents feel that this unique experience has created special relationships for them all.



The Sullivans

Brian and Carol say they are in "year 23 of their 5-year plan" to renovate their home. In the early years, most of their time was spent knocking out old plaster to replace the walls and ceilings, one room at a time. They added new wiring, insulation and new windows. Stripping woodwork is an ongoing job throughout their house.

continued on page 7



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RESIDENT PROFILE: **The Sullivans**

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A major addition was added onto the back of their home in 2003-2004. This was done with the help of Brian's brother who worked with architects and contractors to design this new space. All the kids had input about what should be included in this space. Even with this professional help, Brian, Carol and the children did lots of the tilework, painting and refinishing the floors themselves.

The additional living space gave them a large open kitchen and breakfast room on the first floor, and a massive master bedroom suite with walk-in closets on the second floor. Both floors feature lots of south and east-facing windows. Additional baths were included on both levels. Much-needed storage space makes this a very impressive addition a beautiful blend, with the original older woodwork found throughout the rest of their home. Also on the second floor, is a new laundry room and rehabbed bath.

The years have passed quickly for this family as the children move on to college and beginning their own careers. Carol added, "Tower Grove Park has been our kids' playground since they could walk." She and Brian patronize the restaurants along South Grand. However, they would

continued on page 14

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REHABBING WITH RICH

THE THREE WEEK KITCHEN

By RICH IEZZI

I was excited to do a rehab article on Milan and Kathleen Berry's home on the 3800 block of Connecticut because I was familiar with their house. Back in the '80's, my wife Jean and I saw the house after its elderly owner decided to sell. It was one of those rare houses where every detail of woodwork and decorating was still in place since its construction in 1905. The gleaming natural pine had been polished to such an extent that the built up wax produced a marble-like shine.

When I arrived, Milan was doing a great job of being Mr. Mom with Layla, their nine month old daughter. Milan told me that he and Kathleen noticed the pristine woodwork when they bought the house 2 1/2 years ago and kept that theme by using Messing Planning Mill to reproduce new windows to look original.

As I viewed their new kitchen, I had to fight the feeling that it was built with the house. Sure, there's a granite countertop and granite covered island with new appliances but the design made so much sense that it looked original. Kathleen and Milan used TGHT's resident contractor Dave Gibson to design a small arch between the kitchen and dining room to match the existing arch between the living room and dining room, then installed a soffit for overhead counter lights. Milan explained, "We wanted to have

continued on page 17



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Jewels in the Crown that is Tower Grove Park

BY
John
Papa

Following a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew near London during the early 1860's, prominent business man and aspiring philanthropist Henry Shaw had a vision for a sprawling tract of land on the outskirts of St. Louis. He partnered with James Gurney to design and build a classic Victorian park covering over 500 rolling acres of virgin, treeless prairie.

More than ten thousand trees were planted within the boundaries of what Mr. Shaw called Tower Grove Park, a public complement to his adjacent private estate. Graced with gently curved walking paths and carriage roads, it enticed people to stroll or ride at a leisurely pace amid calm, cool breezes away from the din of the city.

This urban sanctuary has remained true to its Victorian character throughout the generations. While the carriages are now mostly horseless, the walkways and byways still offer the serenity and peace of a time genteel and less hectic. The flower beds, shrubs and trees conjure a tum of the 20th Century Currier and Ives postcard, but the true jewels in the crown that is Tower Grove Park belong to the ten whimsical pavilions or shelters strategically placed along the Park's eastern spine.

More than any other feature on the grounds, these structures built between 1871 and 1873 to "afford shelter from showers and sunshine" (according to Mr. Shaw) confirm the park's homage to Victorian utility, opulence and style.

Just to the east of Center Grove Road rises by far the largest, most imposing shelter, the Turkish Pavilion. Originally intended as a dovecoat with its cavernous dome designed as a

roosting area for pigeons and song birds, it now is able to comfortably accommodate over 250 seated patrons. Its distinctive candy cane colored onion dome creates an intimate carnival atmosphere despite its size.



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



The Old Carriage Shelter lies due east of the Turkish Pavilion. An octagon with red posts and green wooden accents support a sturdy wood shingled roof. As the name suggests it first served as a place to water horses. Today

it can accommodate at least fifty guests, who likely consume a comparable amount of beverage to their hoofed predecessors.



The Twin Humbolt Pavilions (north and south) bracket the boulevard in the vicinity of the statue of the famous naturalist regarded as the father of modern geography, Alexander Von Humbolt. These structures also housed wells at first. They are significant for their Germanic design with yellow roofs supported by olive green posts and topped by a spire with yellow, green and red highlights. They also served to recognize one of the first wave of European immigrant artisans to call St. Louis home, the German brick masons.



Jewels in the Crown that is Tower Grove Park

...continued

Further east stand yet another pair of shelters on each side of the motorway, Cypress North and South. These small (25 patrons), Greek style porticos are patriotically dressed in red, white and blue. In Shaw's day they were the site of countless "basket parties."



continued on page 13

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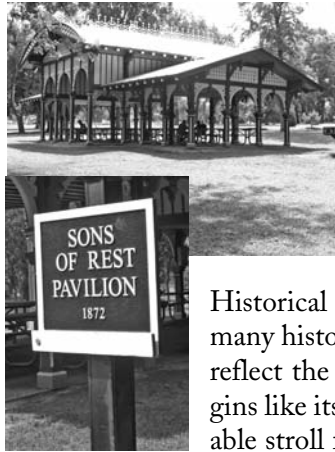
Traveling still further east and on the slope of the highest physical feature in the park (interestingly and not so creatively known as "The Hill") is another testament to the international flavor of the park pavilions and the Victorian era fascination with the Orient. It is believed Mr. Shaw was enamored with a black and red pagoda he had seen in London. The classically styled fiery red and green Chinese Pavilion adorned with menacing dragons exposed St. Louis to the mystery and magic of the East. While small in stature it was given a place of prominence within the grounds.



Just to the north across the road stands the stately Old Playground Pavilion. Of moderate size and dimension, its softly curved, pastel blue roof with cupola evokes feelings of calm and serenity in part as a result of its eight supporting archways.



Perhaps the most playfully decorated pavilion with a Hansel and Gretel feel was placed by Mr. Shaw just inside the stately Grand Avenue park entrance. Clothed in starkly stunning black, white and red The Sons of Rest Pavilion appears designed by an architect dreaming of a gingerbread orgy.




Decorated with intricate filigree throughout, the second most spacious pavilion in the park laid out in the shape of a Greek cross, the structure provides an interesting contradiction. "Sons of Rest" was a Victorian euphemism for "retired persons". There is nothing retiring about this tenth jewel in Tower Grove Park.

Tower Grove Park, one of only four National Historical Landmark Parks in the United States, contains many historically significant buildings and features, but none reflect the sparkling light and atmosphere of the park's origins like its ten Victorian era pavilions. All within a comfortable stroll from Tower Grove Heights.

(Information for this column was obtained, in part, from the following reference materials available in the Carpenter branch of the St. Louis Public Library: (a) Walks and Rambles in and around St. Louis; Robert Rubright, 1995; (b) Seeing St. Louis; Barringer Field, 1989; (c) Walking St. Louis; Judith C. Galas, 1998.)



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RESIDENT PROFILE: **The Sullivans**

... continued

like to see more places in South St. Louis for middle class people, to buy clothing and other items. They feel that such stores are missing the opportunity of selling their goods to many people living in our neighborhoods.

Smaller creatures, who happily share this lovely living space with the Sullivans are: Sunny, their golden retriever; along with three feline friends; Leche, Yellow Tiger, and Lou Lou.

The Sullivans added, "We live cautiously in our neighborhood." Occasional crimes have been experienced, but they feel that the pluses of living in Tower Grove Heights have outweighed these incidents. They love walking to the Carpenter Library and to Schnucks.

Even though they cannot find certain types of stores nearby, today, they can go online to find most of the things they used to be able to shop for in South St. Louis. Shoe stores, dry goods stores, butcher shops, and others are sadly gone from South Grand these days.

However, the Sullivans plan to stay here for many years to come: "We feel grateful for a viable, attractive neighborhood," they say.

* * *



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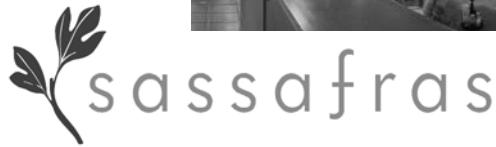
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CAFÉ NAMED STATE'S
FIRST CERTIFIED GREEN RESTAURANT



(ST. LOUIS): The Missouri Botanical Garden's café, Sassafras, has become the first Certified Green Restaurant™ in the state of Missouri. The official designation was made by the Green Restaurant Association (GRA), a national non-profit organization whose mission is "to create an ecologically sustainable restaurant industry."

"The Garden takes pride in this certification, which is another way we stand behind our mission to preserve the planet," said Garden President Dr. Peter Raven. "As stewards of the Earth, it is of great importance that we continually seek out ways to become more environmentally friendly in all of our practices."

The GRA performed a thorough evaluation of existing practices in the café to begin the certification process. After the assessment, the organization recommended steps the Garden and Catering St. Louis, which operates Sassafras, could take to improve upon its sustainable practices.

The restaurant was remodeled in early 2005 to incorporate environmentally friendly materials. Tabletops and divider walls are made of recycled paper products and renewable agricultural resources. Areas around the service counter are made of natural cork oak bark, one of the best-rated sustainable materials available. Ceiling tiles contain over 70-percent recycled content. Ceiling lights use energy efficient fluorescent bulbs, and accent lighting uses compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). Natural light is maximized through skylights and windows.

Visitors will also find napkins and menus made from 90-percent post-consumer recycled paper, with no chlorine bleach. Food is served on colorful, washable dishware with real cutlery, so there is less disposable waste. Aerators installed on kitchen sink equipment help to conserve water.

continued on page 16

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- continued
sassafras

Sassafras staff recycles all paper, glass, plastic, aluminum, steel, cardboard and more. Visitors are also encouraged to recycle waste in marked bins at the restaurant entrance. To-go orders are served in recyclable paper boxes, as opposed to polystyrene containers.

The Garden is required to make four recommended café improvements per membership year, to maintain its standing as a Certified Green Restaurant.

"The café at the Missouri Botanical Garden joins over 260 restaurants nationwide in making a commitment to sustainable practices," said GRA President Michael Oshman. "Sassafras already had in place many of the kinds of measures we recommend when the Garden joined the GRA. We are proud to showcase their example, and we look forward to working on more challenging environmental measures together."

"The Garden recognizes the need to continually learn about and incorporate sustainable practices," said Jean Ponzi, program manager at the EarthWays Center, a division of the Garden. "Going green is a process. We're striving for ways to grow more sustainable in all that we do, especially in our service to visitors."

The Missouri Botanical Garden is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lunch is served in the Sassafras café from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Light snacks and beverages are available throughout the day. Brunches are offered yearly on Easter and Mother's Day.

Admission to the Garden is \$8; residents of St. Louis City and County are \$4 adults and \$2 seniors. Children age 12 and under and Garden members are free.

For more information on the Garden, visit www.mobot.org or call the recorded line at (314) 577-9400. For more info on the Green Restaurant Association, visit dinegreen.com.

Deborah Springer | Communications Department
Missouri Botanical Garden
P.O. Box 299, St. Louis, MO 63166-0299

NOTE: Digital color images available by request. Check the online Media Room for downloadable news releases at www.mobot.org/press. <http://www.mobot.org/shop/sassafras.asp> for more information.

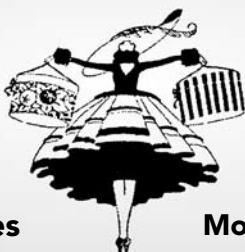
The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 149 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display.

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REHABBING WITH RICH

THE THREE WEEK KITCHEN

...continued

access to the dining room for entertaining but also for the convenience of caring for Layla”.

I was expecting to hear about the nightmares of living without a kitchen during rehab but Milan said the project covered just three weeks. “I did the grunt work and David did the design work”, Milan explained. They also used some brainwork by reusing the existing cabinets and remounting the old countertop until the granite was installed. Naturally, working with an old house is challenging. Milan claimed, “There’s not a square wall in this house” and pointed to where the drywall was dug out to accommodate the new counter. There was also a problem with a heat duct and wire junction box that didn’t want to be moved for the arch. Milan gives full credit to David Gibson for his excellent design work and also brothers Kevin and Matt Crowe of Stone Fabricators for their flawless granite installation.

Luckily, Milan loves to cook and he solved the no kitchen problem by cooking out in the cold on the Weber grill every night. “I cooked steak, asparagus and Italian bread for three weeks straight. To this day, Kathleen can’t eat asparagus”, smiled Milan. Doing the dishes (and baby bottles) wasn’t as much fun as they had to be done in the basement sink.

But I have to give Milan and Kathleen credit. They only finished their kitchen project last May and already say they’d do it again. Milan did confess that he didn’t like any part of the work involving the kitchen project but is already gamely planning next year’s backyard project. And that might work out better---while Milan is outside moving dirt around, Kathleen can be cooking away in the new kitchen. Something besides asparagus, perhaps. †





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BY RICH IEZZI

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Also, we all like trees, but they greatly reduce street light illumination, leaving porches and sidewalks dark. The next time you're fumbling in the dark with your front door key, promise yourself you'll flip that porch light on and keep it on to 'Light up The Heights'.



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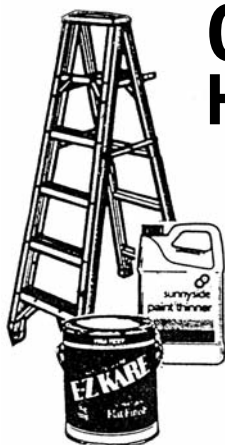
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Asst. Secretary/Membership:Pauline Ashton

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3800 Connecticut:Virlene Reichert
3600/3700 Wyoming:Gen Obata
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www.TOWERGROVEHEIGHTS.com



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 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 the neighborhood a more interesting and fun place to live

Please indicate your membership level choice:

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