

Tower Grove Heights Gazette

GRAND TO GUSTINE

ARSENAL TO UTAH PLACE

Volume 32 No. 3

Fall 2021

STREET TREES *and* THE COVETED PARKING SPOT

BY Dan Waeltermann, HORTICULTURIST AND OWNER OF GRAND GARDEN SERVICES

As summer closes, we are, again, witnesses to how valuable our city's street trees are. A blast of oven-like temps and bare legs hitting sun-scorched leather car seats reminds us of the fact that trees are a blessing.

Parking spots have always been at a premium in St. Louis, especially in Tower Grove Heights with South Grand's business patrons and 2-3 cars per household, the first spots to get taken on hot sunny days are ALWAYS under trees. Go figure!

Now is the perfect time to request a city tree from St. Louis Department of Forestry. You can even suggest this to the neighbor who likes to park under the shade of the tree in front of your house. I'm not getting into the classic south side argument of "parking rights" but there's definitely a percentage of inconsiderate neighbors and I'll leave it at that.

Our Forestry Department does street planting mostly from October through February, weather permitting. Requesting a tree now will better ensure having it planted by springtime. Go to <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/parks/forestry/trees/report-tree-problems.cfm> and follow prompts to "request tree planting" or call 314-622-4800.

IN THIS ISSUE

Street Trees.....	1
Manga Italiano.....	2
President's Message.....	4
Real Estate News.....	5
Grand Spirits.....	6
National Night Out.....	7
Good Dog.....	8
Arch by Homescreen.....	9
Resident Profile.....	10
Kitchen Floor.....	12
More Than Cards.....	14
Matt-The-Cat Award.....	15

You can request a specific type of tree that you would like planted at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/searchresults.cfm?q=list+of+trees>. The link has the list of various tree species that our forestry dept uses. The city won't have every one of those trees listed in inventory so I suggest listing three varieties you like best in the notes section. There are no specific dates or timeframes for when it gets planted. Forestry has their timetable, and they plant them when they plant them.

If you're not too knowledgeable about street trees, here's my list of favorites (in no particular order):

Blackgum - medium size tree, red fall leaves, native to Missouri

Ginkgo - ancient prehistoric tree, bright yellow fall color, spindly when young but matures gracefully. A tree the next generation would appreciate you planting.

Hackberry - a great native tree. Often seen in the wild. Not used a lot as a street tree. Small leaves turning rusty yellow in fall.

Interesting bark texture.

Sugar maple - large tree, insane fall color with transitions of green, red, yellow and orange. It glows!

Red oak - THE mighty oak, a majestic tree, slow to start but once established grows quickly.

Forestry doesn't water these trees once they're planted so, they do request you give them a good drink throughout the first three years to help them along. There is no individual charge for this service, all paid for by our taxes. Definitely a service we are all grateful for!



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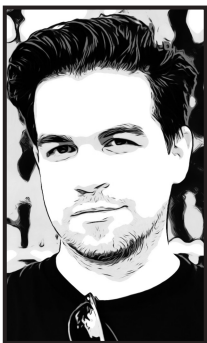
MEETINGS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our meetings will be conducted via Zoom and live on the TGH Facebook page. Everyone is welcome to tune in.

A Zoom invitation will be sent through MailChimp and posted to the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Assn. Facebook page and Tower Grove Heights Facebook Community Group or contact
info@towergroveheights.com

www.towergroveheights.com

MANGIA ITALIANO SPACE REINVENTED



BY Mike Miller

For nearly four decades, Mangia Italiano operated as a staple of the South Grand culinary scene. But not even beloved old haunts were able to evade the clutches of the COVID-19 pandemic's death grip on the restaurant industry.

Although the unique feel that Mangia brought to South Grand can't be replaced, two new restaurants, Steve's Hot Dogs and Padrinos Mexican Restaurant, are taking its place and hope to build on its legacy.

STEVE'S HOT DOGS

It's been a whirlwind couple of years for owner Steve Ewing and his crew at the beloved, locally-owned wiener shop. For nearly a month in early 2020, even before the pandemic swept into town and changed the service industry as we knew it, Ewing closed Steve's Hot Dogs after an 11-year run. But the shop didn't stay dark for long. Mere weeks after what was supposed to be the restaurant's final day of business that February, Ewing reopened his Tower Grove East location with the help of new investors, answering the wishes of a loyal fan base who weren't ready to say goodbye to his gourmet franks.

Now, after weathering the depths of the pandemic and establishing itself as one the most impactful, community-focused restaurants in St. Louis, Steve's Hot Dogs is ready to continue its second chapter at its new location on South Grand.



STEVE EWING

"We were looking for some more space," Ewing said.

"We were running our events and things at the Tower Grove (East) location, but had been running out of space, as far as inventory goes. We only had a few days' inventory, so we really needed to expand."



Luckily for Ewing and company, the old Mangia spot has all the things he'd been looking for. And while the extra square footage is the motivation for the move, Ewing is also excited to take advantage of all of the other perks that come with the new location. Like the proximity to the adjacent Ritz Park.

"We have a really killer park next to us, which is an open area that lets a little overflow happen. So we'll be able to do movie nights and live music in the park"

"We'll be able to do everything that we do at the other location," Ewing said. "We're in a commercial district so we're not necessarily on top of the neighbors. So if we have live music, it's not going to put everybody out. We have a really killer park next to us, which is an open area that lets a little overflow happen. So we'll be able to do movie nights and live music in the park. There are a lot of cool things we can do. We'll have a little more dining space, so we can get more people in there. And we'll have a full bar."

Not only will it be a full bar, it'll be a St. Louis-inspired bar that will prioritize local beers and spirits.

"We have so many local breweries here in St. Louis," Ewing said. "It just seems like a no-brainer. We want to make sure we support all of the other breweries in St. Louis because

they've been really supportive of us, so it felt like it'd be important to feature them."

Since opening his shop more than a decade ago, Ewing has strived to be in tune with the city and give back to the community that has given him so much. When the pandemic set in last year, Ewing and his partners launched a giveback program called #FeedThePeople aimed toward providing meals for first responders and people in need. Charitable St. Louisans were able to donate to a community fund that helped make the meals possible, and since the program launched in April 2020, #FeedThePeople has served more than 6,000 meals in the region.

"We're not this big corporate entity," Ewing said. "We're right there inside the neighborhood. We thought we really needed to make sure that everybody was fine, as much as we could. It was super important."

PADRINOS

What's in a name? For Padrinos Mexican Restaurant partners Ciro Trapala, Rafa Rosas, and Christina and Enrique Robles, the word "padrino" is everything.

In Spanish, it literally means "godfather." But it's also associated with someone with whom you're quite close, conjuring memories of a good friend, a passionate mentor, or committed protector.



"If someone is your padrino," Robles said, "that's family for life."

And so the word itself felt like a fitting name for their restaurant located in the other half of the former Mangia space, where Trapala, Rosas and the Robles's are eager to share food that's near and dear to their families with the rest of South Grand.

"We're excited to be in the neighborhood," Christina Robles said. "We're excited to have people try us out and be Steve's neighbor. I want people to be so happy when they come in. I want them to feel like they are coming home."

Enrique Robles has more than a decade's worth of restaurant management experience, but this will be the group's first shop together. When they learned of the location's availability earlier this year, the quartet jumped at the opportunity to open the kind of warm, inviting restaurant they've always wanted to own.

"If someone is your padrino, that's family for life."

"We've had this inspiration for a long time," Christina Robles said.

Padrinos' menu reads like a tome, offering Tex-Mex staples such as nachos, burritos, fajitas, enchiladas and combination platters. Christina says the management team is especially enthusiastic about the crispy California-style tacos. Christina, meanwhile, touts the bar's summery, fruity and flavorful margaritas.

"Ciro and Rafa, they're chefs," she said. "Their influences come from the kitchens of their moms, their aunts, their grandparents from when they came to the United States. Ciro really specializes in the crispy tacos. That's one thing he adamantly wanted to add to the menu. Based on some of the discussions I've had with neighbors, they're very open to trying real deal Mexican food, too. So that's really encouraging for the cooks. In addition to the crispy-style tacos and the Tex-Mex, we'll be trying to bring in more authentic Mexican dishes. This is an opportunity for the cooks to bring in their style of cooking."

"Mangia left such a great memory for the neighborhood and we feel honored to pick up on that."

And an opportunity, too, for the whole Padrinos family to offer up a new and exciting taste to an already vibrant culinary scene on South Grand.

"We've been keeping our eye on this neighborhood for a long time," Christina Robles said. "Thank God we never gave up on the possibility. Mangia left such a great memory for the neighborhood and we feel honored to pick up on that."

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - FALL 2021



Whiling away long, cool evenings around a backyard fire pit. Enjoying all the harvest season brings to the weekly farmers' markets. Prepping kids for the back-to-school regimen. Tracking the progress of the spectacular display of tree foliage in the park (and expressing gratitude our smallish city yards can only hold so many fallen leaves that need to be raked).

BY Patrick Weber

We all have our favorite Fall rituals – some long-standing, some upended in the last two years. But, for me, the common theme of all these quintessential neighborhood traditions is the idea of coming together. After a long St. Louis summer spent out and about, Fall seems like a season to come home again. My favorite part of Fall in St. Louis has always been the abundance of festivals, events and activities; sometimes dozens to choose from over the course of any given weekend.

I will admit, at the time of the writing of this column, it feels nothing like the carefree celebratory Fall season I want to have: we are midway through a typical hot, humid St. Louis summer and in a resurgence of the pandemic that has disrupted so much of our daily lives the past year and a half. But if we have learned anything through the past year it is how to carry on, adapt and eke out some optimism for the days ahead.

The Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association's contributions to the busy fall season, the alternating Neighborhood-wide block party and resident-hosted dinner/party

Autumn Fest will return this year with a block party scheduled for Saturday, September 25 from 2 - 5 p.m. at Spring and Connecticut. While many activities are planned, including local music, games and activities for kids and a spotlight for our local artists and businesses, will continue this year, we will adapt the event to meet our current reality and maintain a healthy environment

"But if we have learned anything through the past year it is how to carry on, adapt and eke out some optimism for the days ahead."

by following the City's Health Department guidelines, closing off a larger street area to promote social distancing and keeping the event entirely outdoors. The Board will continue to monitor guidelines and advice for outdoor gatherings and make

any adjustments needed, right up to and during the block party, to ensure a safe event for all.

The Neighborhood Association has always viewed the block party as an opportunity to bring residents together and to recognize the generous nature and community spirit embodied in Tower Grove Heights. And, in a year where the residents of this neighborhood have once again shown that generosity through the support of the Officer Bohannon Memorial fund, a record-setting 100 Neediest Cases donation and simple, everyday acts that improve our quality of life here it seems only fitting to restart that tradition.

So, I hope you will be able to join us on September 25 to celebrate our collective home and neighbors. Although we have all been through a lot during the last two years (and may not be entirely sure when it will end), I still see Tower Grove Heights coming out ahead.

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REAL ESTATE NEWS

Email your real estate questions to jfloridastl@gmail.com

Homes Sold in Tower Grove Heights this quarter

Street	Listed At	Days on Market	Sold Price
3880 Hartford St	\$265,000	3	\$302,500
3720 Humphrey St	\$315,000	0	\$315,000
3844 Connecticut	\$374,900	48	\$367,000
3860 Wyoming St	\$325,000	6	\$376,255
3877 Connecticut	\$325,000	6	\$380,500
3715 Humphrey	\$424,900	1	\$417,000
3831 Juniata St	\$375,000	34	\$431,000
3708 Juniata St	\$435,000	7	\$447,000
3830 Humphrey	\$465,000	35	\$450,000
3728 Humphrey St	\$399,000	41	\$460,000
3880 Humphrey	\$474,900	2	\$495,000
3871 Utah	\$510,000	5	\$530,000
3893 Humphrey	\$499,900	5	\$532,750
3800 Wyoming A	\$299,900	46	\$301,000
3829 Wyoming	279,500	11	\$285,000
3880 Juniata St	\$329,900	11	\$329,900
3634 Wyoming	\$350,000	7	\$371,000
3646 Humphrey	\$395,000	7	\$400,000
3176 Gustine	\$710,000	108	\$615,000

Currently there are six properties under contract or pending sales.



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As a former chef, Michael Fricker was very conscious of the ingredients that went into the dishes he prepared, and care was taken to source food that was clean and wholesome. He feels passionate about saving the earth and protecting the environment as well.

Natural, organic, pure, recycled, and sustainable are descriptors that inform

everything he does. So, it's no surprise he has incorporated those ideals into his new endeavor, Grand Spirits Bottle Co.

A little research reveals that wine and alcohol go through various processing steps before they are bottled and consumed. That process could include pesticides, additives, preservatives and filtrations that involve ingredients not in line with the natural philosophy of what is good for human consumption. Michael's goal is to bring wine and other spirits that are produced naturally, with the same farm-to-table concept he integrated as a chef, to this new horizon.

His ethics around sustainability and saving the planet relate not only to the product he serves but also to the surroundings in which they are served. Wine crate wall décor, from reclaimed wood salvaged from a 100-year-old barn, is a focal point of the wall opposite the wooden rack that displays over 2000 bottles of wine. Down the

center of the room, rectangular light wooden tables dot the space in front of a six-foot custom bar. Once a month those tables will stretch end-to-end to form a long farm table.

Can you guess where this is going? Yes! Every month a local chef will prepare a farm-to-table meal and Grand Spirits will couple that with the appropriate spirits to complement the food.

There will be other special occasions as well. Wine tasting seminars are scheduled once a week and various other events such as wine classes, agave tastings, wine and cheese events, and possibly some wine and painting nights will be vying to make it onto your calendar.

In the back, just past the bar, is the Agave Room. The atmosphere, according to Michael, "... will feel like a mezcal bar in Oaxaca Mexico. It is going to be single pours along with flights and education about the spirits you are tasting and the categories as a whole." The space will also be utilized for other tastings and special events.

Staying true to his beliefs to source locally, Michael commissioned a St. Louis artist to paint a mural of the shop and had the restroom walls tagged by local graffiti talent.

Not only will residents in the area be able to purchase wine and other spirits to enjoy at home but, there will be numerous opportunities to gather, socialize, learn, meet old and make new friends at Grand Spirits Bottle Co. What a welcome addition to the Grand scene!



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by Katie Wolf
NEIGHBORHOOD
IMPROVEMENT
SPECIALIST

As of today, National Night Out 2021 is HAPPENING! Whoot! However, as you know, things change daily with the regional COVID-19 infection rates fluctuating. Please bear with us as the situation unfolds.

The City of St. Louis is celebrating National Night Out (NNO) on Tuesday, October 5, 2021. You can register online for your NNO block party, and you can indicate whether you wish to close off your street for the event. Registration is on the City of St. Louis website, on the Neighborhood Stabilization Team page. It is not mandatory to register your participation, but it is needed if you wish to close the street.

For those unfamiliar with National Night Out, here is a little background, nationally, city-wide and in Tower Grove Heights. National Night Out began in 1984 to encourage participation in anti-crime programs. It is meant to strengthen community pride and partnerships, foster neighborhood camaraderie, encourage inclusivity and participation in local and neighborhood community and anti-crime programs, and to send a message that crime is not welcome.

In 2017, primarily for heat concerns, the City of St. Louis moved their annual NNO celebrations from the nationally observed first Tuesday in August to the first Tuesday in October. NNO is celebrated in all wards in St. Louis, in a myriad of ways. There are block parties, multi-block parties, events held in recreation centers and schools that include potlucks, food trucks, sponsored meals indoors with speeches, awards, games and conversations. The NNO registration page has tons of suggestions.

I was given my ward assignment on NNO in 2018 and I got to sample all the parties while meeting my new residents and stakeholders. Tower Grove Heights and Tower Grove South had about 10 blocks participating, and it was a joy to meet everyone and see all the different ways the evening was celebrated. The kids are always overjoyed to get the OK to play in the street, which cracks me up. The food is always delicious and plentiful. And there is usually someone with a wagon full of adult beverages. So I hear...

Please celebrate responsibly – as if I need to ask. I know some blocks celebrated last year unofficially, and had wonderful, small, physically distanced events. Some blocks just had family picnics outside on their front lawns as their neighbors did the same on their own lawns. *Even making sure your porch lights are on that evening is a way to participate.*

Whatever you do – be safe and know that you are a member of a great community. We are here to help each other and I see evidence of neighborly kindness daily. Thank you for being a great neighbor and here's to our fabulous city! Cheers!

WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR DOG?



by Dan Noecker

For many years, walking my dog was my way of staying in touch with my neighborhood and connecting with my neighbors. We recently lost our dog after his long and happy life and the idea of raising a puppy sounds exhausting. At 63, I wonder if I have it in me.

So, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to drop in on Cait Patton, owner of Good Dog Enrichment and Training, located at the intersection of Spring and Wyoming.

Cait and her husband, Will, remodeled the corner storefront into a bright, no nonsense dog training center. Her approach and training can turn you into your dog's best friend.

Cait has paid her dues in the K-9 arena. As a young teen, she lifted and toted her way around volunteer shelters and learned the ropes by working at her aunt's obedience center. She achieved her certifications as a trainer and began a career that is also her passion.

Along with her staff, Cait promotes positive reinforcement to lead your dog to appropriate behavior. Cait says dogs want to please us but, sometimes we give mixed signals. At Good Dog, people learn how to build a relationship with their dog that is deeper than dominance and submission techniques.

Like the "boomer" I am, I utilize only a small part of my phone's capabilities.

Likewise, many dog owners under utilize their "four-pawed potential" and as a result, can miss out on the benefits of what a well-rounded canine brings to a household.

I was curious about some of the common problems clients report. Cait said the pandemic has certainly brought typical issues to light.

"Her approach and training can turn you into your dog's best friend."

People's work schedules have been inconsistent with long stretches of at-home time which resulted in all day stimulation and companionship for their pets. Now with on-site work time re-emerging, dogs are left to adjust to being home alone, and with no adult at home things can go sideways.

Good Dog covers all the bumps in the journey to having a good dog relationship. They offer a variety of training services to fit the client's needs:

- Day training – so your pet can have a wide variety of interactions with other dogs and trainers
- Private lessons – with you and your dog at the Tower Grove South location, working one-on-one with a certified trainer to address specific problems
- In-home lessons – they come to you and will customize a plan to fit your lifestyle

Likewise, many dog owners under utilize their "four-pawed potential"

Cait said her proven methods can address things like aggression towards other dogs and extreme shyness.

(This would have been a good tool to have when my dog was tearing up the mail!) Other in-house classes range from "puppy success" to "advanced learner" courses and much more.



Cait says she loves the positive response they have received, and the location is great. Having a large indoor space is essential for group and agility work. She added that being located on a corner with frequent foot traffic is a bonus. It provides clients an opportunity to practice their training with real world distractions.

Tower Grove Heights offers so

much wonderful stimulation to anyone taking a walk. The tremendous architecture of the historic buildings, the ever-changing beauty of the seasons and the casual conversations with neighbors are all part of the experience of taking a stroll. Having a "good dog," or two, by your side is the icing on the cake.

I'm excited about finding a new pal to accompany me as I explore and connect to the treasures that are part of the Tower Grove experience. With the help of Good Dog Enrichment & Training, maybe this old dog can learn some new tricks.

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ARCH by HOMESCREEN

BY Ella Gross ARCH by Homescreen adds a pre-screening application to provide criminal and eviction data to nonprofit users.

In February, Tower Grove Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (TGNCDC) launched ARCH by HomeScreen. ARCH, an acronym for At-risk Renters' Connection to Housing, is a platform that expands TGNCDC's tenant screening platform, HomeScreen, to nonprofit organizations searching for rental properties for their clients. At its core, ARCH is an apartment listing service and since launching we have onboarded 60 landlords and 76 nonprofit users from 28 nonprofit organizations.

We recognize that the demand for affordable housing is extremely high and nonprofit agencies have a difficult time securing the supply from landlords across the region. ARCH by HomeScreen strives to facilitate and expedite the housing process by acting as the centralized database of available affordable rental units to all nonprofits. However, to that end, we recently introduced our Pre-Screening Application to the ARCH by HomeScreen platform. The Pre-Screening Application allows our nonprofit users to obtain background information on their client, even if no available apartments are suitable at the moment. With

the Pre-Screening Application, we offer a national criminal background check and national eviction record that can be used to prepare for ongoing apartment searches, to obtain benefits or housing vouchers, or to secure a job. We plan to work extensively with Employment Connection, who subcontracted CARES Act Funding to TGNCDC to create ARCH by HomeScreen, to provide the background checks needed for their employment programs. We believe that knowledge is power and having this information as the clients prepare for new housing is necessary. Our nonprofit users have access to this information for \$25 per report.

Revenue generated through HomeScreen and ARCH by HomeScreen is used to support community development activities and is directly invested back into the City of Saint Louis. TGNCDC is a real estate-focused community development corporation that has facilitated 100s of redevelopment projects with a focus on eliminating blight, created 84 affordable rental units in the last five years, supported infrastructure projects, delivered landlord/rehabber training seminars, and advocated for energy efficiency programs for low-income renters.

If any nonprofit organization is in need of this service, please contact Ella Gross at ella@towergrovecdc.org to get set up with an ARCH by HomeScreen account.



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RESIDENT PROFILE REDUX



by Barbara Gilchrist

of them dancing on Utah Place.) They are also one of the few households on the 3600/3700 block of Juniata Street where the same people still live as when I moved in. I read the older article after my interview. Gail and Bill were interesting then and continue to be. Given the resident turnover since 2005, many of you are meeting them for the first time.

Sixteen years ago, Gail Planer and Bill Breithaupt were featured in a resident profile piece written by Ellen Wilson. (See *Gazette*, Fall 2005, page 8.) I did not know that until after I made an appointment to interview them for this issue. I have been a neighbor since 1998, some might say a nosy neighbor, noticing that they take walks, bike rides, and play tennis. They have a nine-year-old Pomeranian (maybe a mix) who is now blind and last year I found out that they dance. (See *Gazette*, Winter 2020, page 14 for a picture



GAIL PLANER

Gail bought their house in 1978 and raised her two children in it. In the 2005 piece she was quoted as saying that the house was a “really good investment.” Since she paid about \$26,000 for it, she certainly has been proved right. The house was built in 1905 and variety of renovations have been made over the years – adding bathrooms, updating the kitchen, stripping woodwork, and more.



BILL BREITHAUPT

The couple wed in 2003 in Tower Grove Park, having met at swing dancing events in 1995 which is when Gail started dancing. Bill started dancing in 1978. They continued to dance and teach others all over the country until the pandemic stopped their participation in 2020. Sadly, they lost several dance friends to COVID. Gail proudly told me she won a dance contest on a Norwegian cruise about two years ago.

Both are retired now. Gail was a social worker for more than 25 years. She was an associate for the Fox Theatre for the past ten years, again stopping because of COVID. She has also been a

musician for St. Pius Church for over 30 years. Bill was a butcher until three years ago and is proud of his 53 years in his union. He was never a typical butcher, however, as he is a vegetarian.

They enjoy retirement but stay very busy. They will return to swing dancing as soon as it is safe. In the meantime, Gail has a five-day group bike trip planned on the Katy Trail. Recently, she began learning Russian. Bill likes to work on house renovations and is currently working on their back porch.

They still love Tower Grove Heights and Tower Grove Park after all these years. They enjoy walking in the neighborhood and in the park and patronizing the many restaurants on South Grand. If you happen to be awake at 4:00 a.m. and see a man with a ponytail and a fluff-ball of a dog, that is probably Bill out for his morning run.



Tower Grove Heights NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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 your 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

Membership level choices:

- ☐ **INDIVIDUAL** (1 vote) \$10/year
- ☐ **HOUSEHOLD** (2 votes) \$15/year
- ☐ **ASSOCIATE** (non-voting) \$10/year
- ☐ **LIFETIME INDIVIDUAL** (1 vote) \$100 single payment
- ☐ **LIFETIME HOUSEHOLD** (2 votes) \$200 single payment
- ☐ **BUSINESS** (1 vote) \$25/year
- ☐ **LIFETIME BUSINESS** (1 vote) \$500 single payment

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PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Include my name, address and contact information in the TGHNA Buzz Book:
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YOUR NEW 30,000 LB. KITCHEN FLOOR



by Rich Iezzi

After being in the rehab business for over 40 years, I didn't think I could get excited about anything new. I was wrong. When we had an apartment come up for rent, it needed a new kitchen floor. The linoleum that we got from Hood's for \$2.99/sq. yd. was shredded after 14 years of cat claws. What to do?

I used to love linoleum when it was shiny but linoleum today is dull. "Hides the dirt," say the new linoleum people. I resisted the click and stick "looks like wood" floors because they seemed temporary and I never warmed up to ceramic tile. I'm a wood guy.

When a friend said he had installed a new, prefinished oak floor in an afternoon, I was interested – for a lot of reasons.

We've loved having oak floors professionally installed but things have changed. If you're doing anything serious to the kitchen besides the floor (new granite, new cabinets, etc.), scheduling is the new nightmare. Last year, we jived up an empty apartment with a granite countertop and new oak floor. It was like dueling banjos. The granite people couldn't do the template until the new cabinets were installed and the cabinets couldn't be installed until the new floor was done. If we missed our template date, we'd have to start all over. How about having less drama by installing your own floor?

I bought our 3/4-inch-thick oak flooring from Home Depot for \$3.79 per square foot. Cheap, compared to the \$12.50 sq. ft. installed price I got from a floor company. BTW, the "next available date" of the floor company I called was two months away.

I hate to beat-up on floor installers but laying, sanding and finishing new floors in your house can be a nightmare. "Dustless sanding" is a complete oxymoron and you'll probably incur a bit of damage. Years ago, the head of an enormous floor sander became disconnected and went right through one of our walls. Yipes.

The oak floor I installed was tongue and groove and came pre-finished with a stained, rock-hard surface. Doing the installation was simple but requires a chop saw along with either a table saw or circular saw to cut length wise. If you want to rent the nailing tools for a day, an air-powered nailer costs \$39 and a compressor is \$21. Again, cheap.

Before installing your first board, a few questions. While it's possible to install the floor around your existing base cabinets

instead of removing them, this only works if your countertop is removeable. Otherwise, installing the 3/4-inch-thick floor might trap the dishwasher forever. If the kitchen job includes adding a new permanent counter, you need to remove the base cabinets and install the floor under them for future dishwasher access.

"It was like dueling banjos."

I'm sure there are YouTube videos covering floor

installation but here's a few tips: Before starting, unpack several boxes of boards and stack them according to size against the far wall to help with board selection. Rooting through the boxes for boards wastes time. Check for true on each board before nailing.

Choose the correct pressure for the nailing gun. I made a HUGE mistake firing an under-pressurized gun resulting in nails protruding 1/4-inch from the board. That's a real bad thing. Incidentally, the nail point pressure on a pneumatic nailer is around 30,000 pounds. You'll see sparks from the friction – cool.

This type of flooring is relatively inexpensive, can be done in a day, is not dusty, doesn't damage walls or cabinets and can be walked on immediately. And who doesn't enjoy firing nails with 30,000 pounds of point pressure?



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DEALING OUT MORE THAN CARDS

by Michael Shirk

My best memories of time spent with my grandmother are of the two of us playing cards. We went from War, through Go Fish and Old Maid, to Double Solitaire and Gin Rummy. Slowly, but surely, over the years, her patience led me from being a sore loser, through being a gloating winner, to simply enjoying the sparring of skill against skill and time spent together.



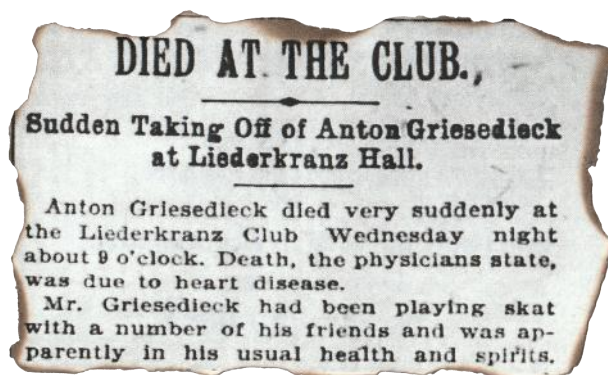
It was in the 14th century that playing cards entered Europe. By that time they had left China and crossed the middle east and were already in a recognizable form: four suits of numbers, headed by royalty, and used to play a game of “tricks” – like Bridge, Hearts, or Spades. They quickly took hold among both the rich, for whom hand painted decks were commissioned, and the poor, who could procure a cheap printed pack. Printers in every country

experimented with their own unique take. The suits we know – hearts, spades, clubs and diamonds – come from France, but others are used in Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Italy. The games played with the pack multiplied as well. It can be fascinating to see how games traveled around Europe: a lower-class game might be quickly spread by mercenary soldiers; an upper-class game might jump from Milan to Paris to London when a royal marriage took place. Certain games became international crazes, and other games arose in their particular region or even village, never to be known elsewhere.

Early settlers in North America brought the games they knew with them. Whist, Cribbage and Pitch were early arrivals that have lasted to this day. New games devised here have since become international hits: Euchre grew to be considered “the national card game” in the late 19th century, and Poker seems to have arisen from a melding of French and Middle Eastern gambling games in New Orleans.

One game that was popular here in the late 19th century was Skat. A game for three, played both casually and competitively, it had spread with German immigrants to various places in the United States. In downtown St. Louis in 1898, the Victor Skat Club hosted the founding of the North American Skat League at Liederkrantz Hall. A few years later, Liederkrantz Hall moved to a new building on the northeast corner of Tower Grove Park where Ruler Foods now stands. The late Bryan Cathar found some newspaper clippings mentioning Skat games that were held there.

Sadly, anti-German sentiment during the wars and the rise of Bridge seem to have caused Skat to fade from memory in most of the US. However, it remains the most popular game in Germany and is still widely played around the world. I would love to see a revival of the American form here in St. Louis!



Social isolation during the past year has of course impacted the pastime. Although in-person playing has been reduced, it has led a lot of people online to make connections that they would not otherwise have done. An online community I belong to has members from all over the world, sharing what websites are best for what games, and introducing each other to our respective favorites. Some folks have leveraged their contacts to put together several “international tournaments” to play cards across country and language barriers! Early in the lockdown, I was able to play a small role myself in helping move the card games online: as a computer programmer, I implemented a game played only by a few hundred people in Denmark on a popular board and card game site (boardgamearena.com), and thus allowed the older players who are preserving this treasure of a game to keep playing it.

For the past few years, I've been running a card game Meetup focused primarily on my favorite family of card games, played with Tarot cards. (<https://www.meetup.com/Tower-Grove-Tarock/>) No, nothing to do with fortune-telling! Known as Tarocchi in Italy, Tarock in the Hapsburg lands and Tarot in France, this ancient family of related games is similar to Hearts, Spades, or Euchre. We have about eight regulars, and have kept going online through COVID. We're always happy to have new players. We do play other games as well – usually once a month.

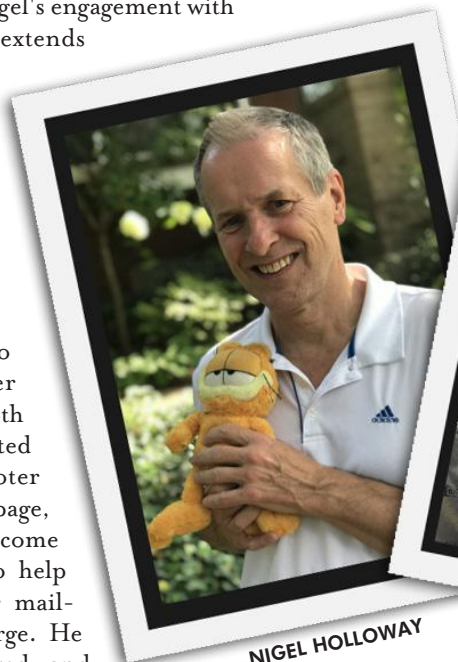
Any time you see me out and about – I probably have a deck of cards on me! I'd be happy to join a Euchre game at Blackthorn, to teach you Skat at the Gelateria, or have a casual game of Cassino at Hartford Coffee! It's my favorite way to get off the electronics, mix with people I might not otherwise know, and share some time having fun and strengthening our wits. See you at the card table!



MATT-THE-CAT AWARD

by Barbara Gilchrist and Debra Knox Deiemann

Block Captain Nigel Holloway received this year's Matt-the-Cat Award for his organization of the Spring Extravaganza Alley Clean-Up Blitz in the alley between 3600-3700 Hartford and Juniata. However, Nigel's engagement with the neighborhood extends far beyond this single event. He is also a frequent contributor to the *Gazette*, has organized block parties for his block, 3600-3700 Hartford, volunteered to assist with voter registration at a booth in Ritz Park, created a non-partisan voter education Facebook page, and registered to become a notary in order to help voters notarize their mail-in ballots at no charge. He is an active, engaged and responsive resident who regularly attends Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association meetings and events and whose



NIGEL HOLLOWAY



MAIRE MURPHY WITH MATT

ongoing participation in the Tower Grove Heights neighborhood is recognized and valued. Indeed, a well-deserved honor to a worthy recipient – congratulations, Nigel!

Matt-the-Cat is a local cat who got lost and brought together the neighborhood in the search to find him during the winter of 2015. The story of the search for Matt represents a neighborhood that cares, goes out of the way to help each other,

and strives to make our place in St. Louis just a little bit better than it was before. The *Gazette* featured his story in the Spring, 2016 issue as did the *Riverfront Times* and the local public radio station.

In the spirit of the Matt-the-Cat search, TGHNA established the Matt-the-Cat Award to honor a neighbor who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the neighborhood. The first Matt-the-Cat award was made in 2017. We wondered how Matt has been faring in the ensuing years so we arranged an interview with Matt and Matt's human, Maire Murphy. Murphy reports that Matt is "fantastic." She believes Matt loved all the attention, but, is not looking for

another adventure. "He is behind me whenever I leave the house." Matt is about 12 years old now. He came into Murphy's foster care along with three other kittens. Homes were found for two of the littermates, but Matt and his brother, Oliver, were adopted by Murphy, who admitted that Matt has always been the more affectionate of the two – a real "love muffin."

We also wondered why this particular lost cat got so much attention since there are frequent Facebook and Nextdoor posts as well as signs posted in the neighborhood about missing pets. Murphy's thoughts on this are that, at the time, many people needed something to feel good about and this search provided a non-political, non-commercial cause to be positive about. Once the story caught on, there were thousands of social media posts, only two of which were negative. "Total strangers who may not have had anything else in common came together, united in the goal to bring Matt home." Murphy said she received messages from two different people who had been house hunting and were so impressed with our community's involvement, that they moved this neighborhood to the top of their list. In addition to individual efforts and support, after Matt was home, Purina Farms gave him a basket of goodies and Mutts & Cuts gave him a spa day.

When asked about some of the takeaways from Matt's adventure, Murphy responded, "This experience has really taught me to be optimistic and that no matter how bad something looks, there is still hope."

For more information on TGHNA's Matt-the-Cat Award, see <http://www.towergroveheights.com/wp-content/uploads/Matt-the-Cat.pdf>.

Previous Matt-the-Cat Awardees are featured under the Neighborhood Spotlight tab on www.towergroveheights.com.

Tower Grove Heights NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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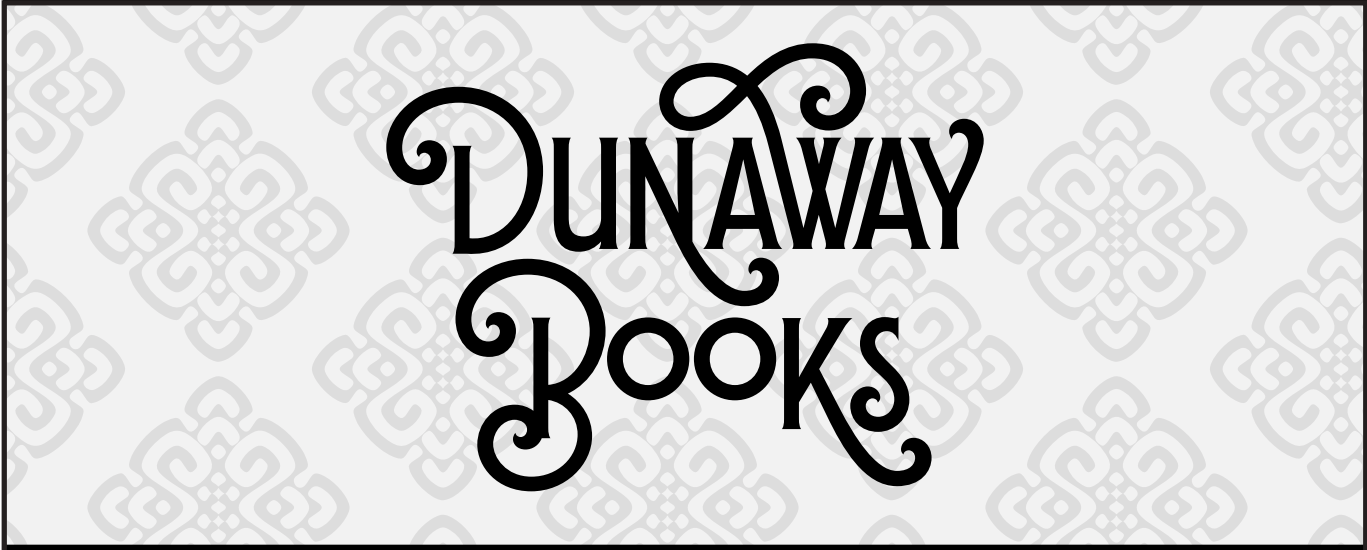
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