

# Tower Tribune

WATER TOWER & PARK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## 'ReLeafing' the North Slope

When Interstate 44 came crashing through in 1964, most of the northern edge of Reservoir Park was lost to pavement. In the past 46 years, the empty space that remained has borne little resemblance to anything park-like, being only a steep, empty slope from the wall of the reservoir down to the rush and fumes of traffic below.

That started to change a bit last fall when volunteers from the Water Tower and Park Preservation Society planted 70 red bud and witch hazel saplings along the north fence line of the park.

It resumed March 14 this year, when they put another 40 saplings in the ground along the fence line..

**John Maxwell**, WTPPS vice-president and an arborist by profession, said the tree planting effort was envisioned in the 1995 Master Plan. "We want to restore the topography to make it look like a park once again," Maxwell said, "and to provide a bit of screening between users of the pathway and the noise and distractions of the traffic below."

Maxwell chose Red Bud and Witch Hazel trees, mostly because of their distinct colors. The Red Bud produces vivid scarlet blooms in late spring. The Witch Hazel produce bright yellow and orange leaf colors in the fall, and yellow blooms in late winter and early spring.. "If passers-by give a look, they'll see a really attractive display of color," he said.



**It was a chilly March 14 when a team of volunteers planted trees along the north fence line of Reservoir Park. Digging were (from rear to front) Kathy Greminger, John Maxwell, Lou Perry and Paul Richter.**

The saplings were provided to WTPPS by Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, a locally based organization which seeks to reforest areas owned or managed by public or non-profit groups. The group receives a major grant each year from AmerenUE, which encourages utility-friendly tree planting.

## President's Message

### *Great Neighborhoods, Greater Community*



**IN MID-APRIL**, the five adjoining neighborhoods along South Grand Blvd. Produced another "Grand South Grand House Tour," which showcased more than a dozen homes in the various neighborhood. It was a terrific marketing effort that showed hundreds of visitors how interesting, varied and gracious residential living can be here in this part of the City.

Shortly after the close of the Tour, GSG Tour Chairperson Anne Moore indicated that the GSG Tour Committee will examine ways to make the three major public spaces of Grand South Grand—

Tower Grove Park, the Grand Blvd. Streetscape, which includes the medians, and the Compton Hill Water Tower and Reservoir Park—permanent beneficiaries of future years' Home Tours.

**THE EXACT FORMULA** for allocating funds hasn't yet been determined, but I think we in the WTPPS can be delighted to be included in the short list of major environmental assets of this area.

This isn't the first time the WTPPS has benefited from GSG's generosity, as we received \$5,000 from the 2008 house tour.

**BUT I THINK** it demonstrates even more. It says that we form a community. That means that we know the people of Compton Heights, Tower Grove East, Tower Grove Heights, Shaw and Compton Hill Reservoir Square. And that we know how to co-operate with them in working toward significant common goals.

We're very grateful for the financial support; we're even happier to have our neighbors come and enjoy what we have.

*Barbara Alsher*

## Our Visitors: From Far and (Mostly) Near

A statistical analysis of visitors to the Water Tower in 2009 shows that almost half—49.2 per cent, to be exact—came from the four neighborhoods immediately adjoining Reservoir Park.

Using ZIP codes written in the visitors' log, Board Member **Karen Goering** discovered that visitors from ZIPs 63104 (Compton Hill, Compton Heights, Benton Park, Lafayette Square, etc.) and 63110 (Shaw, Forest Park Southeast, Southwest Garden) were just about identical—each ZIPs provided 14 per cent of the recorded ZIP codes. ZIP 63116 (Tower Grove South and south to Carondelet Park) accounted for 12 per cent of last year's visitors. ZIP 63118 (Tower Grove East and south to Meramec St.) recorded 8 per cent of the visitors.

The 50 per cent or so from elsewhere were spread widely, she noted. City ZIP Codes 63109 and 63139 provided about 8 per cent of the tally. Webster Groves and Kirkwood

ZIPs produced about 6 per cent.

The Water Tower did attract visitors from far away, however. In addition to outstate Missouri and Illinois, visitors came from Baltimore, California, Seattle “and Cody, Wyoming,” Goering noted. Several international tourists were also recorded.

The figures came from a sample of about 400 of the 1,300 visitors the Tower had last year. A number of visitors overlooked the log book, or declined to sign, or only volunteered partial information.

Board Member **Joan Bricetti** is designing a user-appelling form to get geographic information from a greater share of this year's visitors, Goering noted, in order to more accurately judge the extent of our reputation in the St. Louis area and beyond.

## Tulips Bloom for a New Generation

Terrence Jones directs the attention of his one-year-old son Timothy to the brilliant blooms of the Darwin Tulips, in the Stephen Bayer Memorial Circle, the afternoon of April 9. Jones said he grew up on Lafayette Av., and remembers hunting grasshoppers at a boy in the park lawns for fishing bait. He and his family now live in Shaw, and visit the park regularly. The 300 tulips, plus variegated hosta, were the talented work of WTPPS volunteer Stephen Lopez.



## New V-P, Board Member

At its January meeting, the WTPPS board of directors elected **John Maxwell** as vice-president of the Society.

Maxwell, a horticulturist and arborist, has been a board member for the past several years and has been closely involved with the Water Tower and Park since his wife, Kit Jenkins, formed the organization in the late 1990s.

As vice-president, he will help President **Barbara Absher** coordinate and track the activities of the various WTPPS committees. Maxwell will continue to monitor the needs of the park grounds, and will coordinate Tower operations, including the monthly openings and recruiting of volunteers to staff them.

As vice-president, he succeeds **Joan Briccetti**, who will continue to actively serve as a member of the board.

At its March meeting, the board appointed **Christian Saller** as a new member of the board. Saller, a resident of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood, is a former president of the TGE organization and presently serves on its board of directors, as well as on the board of the DeSales Community Housing Corp. A one-time aldermanic candidate from the 6th Ward, he currently works as coordinator of the MAP tenant screening services for the Grand-Oak Hill Community Corp. He fills the vacancy created by the resignation of board member **Mark Stiffler**.

### OFFICERS

Barbara Absher . . . . . President  
John Maxwell . . . . . Vice President  
Alysha Black . . . . . Secretary  
David Seifert . . . . . Treasurer

### BOARD

Joan Briccetti  
Bob Byrne  
Fran Fanara  
Karen Goering  
Bob Herleth

Steven Kidwell  
John Maxwell  
Judy Miniace  
Joel Pesapane  
Rob Rebman  
Alderman Lewis Reed (ex officio)  
Christian Saller  
Chris Shearman  
Curtis Skouby (ex officio)  
George Thornburgh (emeritus)  
Alderman Kacie Starr Triplett (ex officio)  
Rob Wagstaff

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# A Beautiful but Misbehaving Centerpiece

The spray fountain of the just-rebuilt Reservoir Park Pond has attracted attention and admiration from neighbors and passers-by alike.

But like a beautiful child, the glittering centerpiece has required a fair amount of attentive care—and some corrective action—from our watchful volunteers.

**Richard Wachel**, active member of the Water Tower and Park Preservation Society, said the problem started a month or so after the Oct. 3 inauguration event.

When it first began, the fountain sprayed about six or seven feet into the air, Wachel noted. But by early December, it was only spouting about half that height. “We learned that the water intake, on the underside of the pump, was clogged with leaves being sucked from the surface,” Wachel said. The remedy, he said, was to pull on a set of chest-high wading overalls and walk out to the fountain, then pull the accumulated leaves that had blocked the intake portal. Problem resolved, or so he thought.

“But come January, when all the leaves had gone, it clogged up again,” Wachel said. That meant another trip to clear the pump intake. And again in February, and several times more, by which time the water was rising a puny two feet or so. Although autumn’s leaves were gone, a more “urban” pollutant had developed: plastic shopping bags. “They blow around, stick to the surface of the water and then get sucked into the pump,” Wachel explained. “After I’d made 8 or 10 trips, I decided that we needed to find a more permanent solution.”

Surprisingly, the fountain manufacturer, Precision Fountains of Overland, claimed to be unaware of that kind of problem, and couldn’t recommend a remedy, Wachel said. “So, we had to devise our own fix.”



**Richard Wachel, left, and John Maxwell are waist-deep in the Reservoir Park Pond Apr. 2, hauling plastic bags, leaves and other debris that had clogged the spray fountain. After clearing the blockages, the installed a circular screen around the fountain intake, hopefully preventing a recurrence.**

The morning of Friday, April 2, Wachel and **John Maxwell** waded out to the fountain, pulled out another four or five pounds of sticks, leaves, plastic and other debris, and then installed a circular screen around the base of the fountain pump. The screen is basically a 48-inch high swath of half-inch hardware cloth, wrapped into a cylinder and placed all around the base of the pump, reaching to the clay floor of the pond. “The idea is simply that the screening prevents the floating debris from reaching of the pump intake, and lets the fountain spray normally.”

As a further preventive measure, Reservoir Park Supervisor Larry Hood has instructed his crew to pull a net along the rim of the pond every week or so, to pull out floating debris that accumulates along the edges.

Gratified that the fountain was operating properly for the next day’s “tour season opening,” Wachel was guardedly optimistic. “I hope it works, at least for a few months. If not, we’ll have to come up with something else.”

## July 3 & 4 Raffle Will Dazzle

Once again, the Water Tower and Park Preservation Society is offering a Fourth of July Raffle that will dazzle even the most experienced fireworks-watcher.

For a \$10 ticket, a raffle-buyer will have a chance to win a party at the top of the Compton Hill Water Tower for themselves and 25 guests, on the nights of Saturday, July 3 and Sunday, July 4. Both nights will feature an extended fireworks display on the riverfront, produced by Fair St. Louis.

The riverfront display is easily visible from the top of the Tower, noted **John Maxwell**, WTPPS vice-president and Tower operations coordinator.

“What makes our viewing point so dazzling, however, are the other fireworks displays that you can see all around the City,” Maxwell noted. “Last year I counted seven major community fireworks shows, almost simultaneously, plus dozens and dozens of smaller neighborhood and backyard displays. You can see them all, spread out all over the horizon. It’s just spectacular, and something you’ll not see from any other viewing spot in the area.”

The \$10-a-chance Raffle Tickets will be available at the Water Tower opening on the afternoon of Sat., May 1, or from any member of the WTPPS board. Information on purchasing will also be available by calling Maxwell at 398-2519.

## Park ‘Foundation’ Is Mapped

It’s not as dramatic as the Water Tower, or as lovely as the blooming red bud trees, but Compton Hill Reservoir Park now has a fundamental, detailed map of everything that lies within—and beneath—the park boundaries.

Rob Wagstaff, professional architect and a member of the Water Tower & Park Preservation Society board, said that the work of “mapping” the park is called an “ALTA Survey.”

“This is the top-grade property survey in the world of real estate,” Wagstaff said. The name “ALTA” derives from the American Land Title Association, which compiles the criteria for what the survey must include. It was authorized by the Board in late 2009 and performed in late January by the Massmann Engineering Co., a local firm.

“It gives us the picture of the entire ‘foundation’ of the park that lies between the outside walls of the reservoir and the curbing,” Wagstaff said. This means detailed measurements and locations of every water, electrical and sewer connection, line and conduit above and below ground, the size of any and all structures and encroachments, location of the paved walkways as well as the elevation contours. “This tells us what’s there, and prevents any surprises or unknown obstacles when we carry out the various features of our Master Plan.”

The finished survey is available to us on CAD disc as well as paper drawings, Wagstaff said. Overall cost was \$8,200.

## Record April Opening; Ch. 2 Makes the Climb

This season's visits to the Water Tower have gotten off to a stronger-than-ever start, with a record-breaking opening day and, a few days later, a camera-toting TV news team making the climb.

The first opening of the season on Saturday, April 3 attracted slightly more than 200 adults and a dozen or so children, reported **John Maxwell**, WTPPS vice-president and coordinator of Tower Operations. "This was the biggest opening day crowd we've ever had," Maxwell said. By contrast, last year's opening day produced 148 visitors.

The April 3 crowd included several dozen members of a local photography club who swarmed the Park and Tower, cameras in hand, recording the scene. The day generated some \$1,350 in revenue, which included three new WTPPS Memberships, two at the \$25 level and one at the \$50 level, plus sales of several packs of post cards and note cards.

Then four days later, area-wide viewers of KTVI Ch. 2 News saw WTPS President **Barbara Absher** lead a Fox 2 News Reporter and cameraman on a fully-videotaped climb to the top of the Tower.

On the morning of Wednesday, April 7, Fox 2 Reporter Tim Ezell followed Absher, step-by-step, in three separate video segments, each about 3 min. long. The segments were telecast at 6:40, 7:40 and 8:40 a.m. As they made the climb, Absher discussed the Tower's construction and purpose, architect Harvey Ellis, the one-time tennis courts atop the reservoir, and the 360-degree view—which the cameraman captured.

Remaining dates of this year's Tower openings are:

**May 1 June 5 July 3 Aug. 7 Sept. 4 Oct. 2 Nov. 6**

Between 12 noon and 4 p.m., on these dates, volunteers will be on hand to guide you, relate a bit of history and suggest what to look for on the 360-degree horizon you'll find at the top.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children age 6 to 12, and free for children 5 and under. Members of the Water Tower and Park Preservation Society are admitted free. Free parking is available along Russell Blvd.

## MISSION

*The central purpose and role of the Water Tower & Park Preservation Society is defined as:*

**TO RESTORE, PRESERVE AND PROMOTE THE COMPTON HILL WATER TOWER  
AND ITS IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS AND TO FACILITATE COLLABORATIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBOURHOODS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.**



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