

# Tower Tribune

WATER TOWER & PARK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## SPRING 2009

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If you have driven by the Water Tower on Grand, you've probably seen the ugly orange fencing in front of the Naked Truth statue, surrounding the large pond and enclosing an even uglier mound of dirt and concrete debris. It's been that way for a while, but be assured that work is progressing. There has been much coordination between us (WTPPS), City of St. Louis Water Division, City of St. Louis Board of Public Service (the public works department) and Alderwoman Kacie Starr Triplett. Behind the scenes, work continues on developing plans and getting bids.

Design of the pond hasn't been finalized. Plans have gone from a design built like the Forest Park Basin with a concrete bottom to the original design of the pond with a clay bottom. Of course, in these days of tough economic times we are looking for the most cost-effective way to get this done correctly. While the design of the Forest Park Basin would be nice, the cost was three times what was budgeted. Current plans favor restoring the pond to its original style with a clay bottom-- which lasted around 100 years! Plans also call for a fountain, as in the past. You will see work continuing this spring and summer including taking of soil samples, additional grading, and hopefully construction. To keep updated, access our website ([watertowerfoundation.org](http://watertowerfoundation.org)) and click the Renovation link and then the Renovation Action Updates link.

While this project is our driving focus for this year, we are already planning our next projects. Of course, in these uncertain financial times we continue to rely on your support. We TRULY appreciate it! If you are able to help a little bit more we would really appreciate it. Further, if you know of any history-minded group or organization that can help us, please contact us. Our mission---"To restore, preserve and promote the Compton Hill Water Tower and its immediate surroundings"--remains constant.

Finally, the winter weather is breaking and signs of spring and summer are arriving! This means tower openings are back in full swing on the first Saturday of each month April through November. Please come see the work on the pond, climb to the top and see the great view of the St. Louis area and bring some neighbors and friends. Help us get the word out about this great landmark!

*Barbara Absher*

## Volunteer Spotlight



~ Volunteers are not paid -- not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless. ~  
---Unknown

Have you seen a visitor to the Compton Hill Water Tower going up the steps on their backside? This is just one of the interesting tales Nellie Hohnsen has seen while volunteering at the Tower Openings. Nellie is a dedicated volunteer who has served at five Water Tower Openings during 2008. John Maxwell, volunteer coordinator for the openings describes Nellie as “outgoing, friendly and reliable”.

Nellie, who is in her 80’s, lives across from Tower Grove Park. She keeps herself active by volunteering at Tower Grove Park, the Piper Palm House, and her church. She enjoys visiting Tower Grove Park, reading at the Botanical Gardens, and doing embroidery and cross-stitching.

Recently, she took some time to visit with the “Tower Tribune” and talk about her interest in the Water Tower, and what she enjoys about volunteering.

### **TT: How often do you volunteer for the Compton Hill Water Tower?**

NH: Whenever I can, from April to November. I worked five Tower openings in 2008.

### **TT: What keeps you coming back?**

NH: I love to talk to people. It’s fun finding out where they come from and why they are here. And it’s fun to learn what they’re interested in---architecture, engineering, or just looking for their own house. I always remind them they are going to see a different view (a view from atop).

### **TT: What interesting stories have you heard?**

NH: I once had a lady who went up the stairs backward on her seat since she was wheelchair bound. She loved every minute of it!

### **TT: What is it about the Water Tower that interests/excites you?**

NH: The architecture and the grounds and the history. Just to think that St. Louis has preserved three of these water towers. I’m interested, I suppose, because one of my grandfathers ran water works in two towns in Sweden, beginning in 1904, till he died at the beginning of World War II.

### **TT: What other volunteering do you do?**

NH I like to volunteer at Tower Grove Park, Piper Palm house, my church and, in the past, have done Meals on Wheels and worked at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

### **TT: When was the first time you have been up in the Tower?**

NH: I first found out about it after going to the Bissel House and getting some information there.

### **TT: How long have you been a resident of St. Louis?**

NH: I first moved here about 18 years ago from the Chicago area. I guess I’m just noseey about things, particularly my own neighborhood. Shortly after getting here, I got information about St. Louis from the Tourism bureau and took buses or walked at least once a week to visit interesting sites.

### **TT: What hobbies do you have?**

NH: I go to the concerts in Tower Grove Park, read in the Garden, do embroidery and cross-stitching.

### **TT: What do you find rewarding about volunteering?**

NH: I notice that when I’m talking to people about our Tower and the other interesting places in the neighborhood, they get excited, and it gives me an excited feeling!

## Spruce Up the Park Dates Set

Two dates for weeding and general cleaning in the park have been set for this summer.

When: Sunday, May 31st at 11am.  
Sunday, August 16th at 11am

Where: On the south side of the park by the “garage door” into the Reservoir.

What: Bring any gloves, shovels, rakes and other gardening tools.

Who: Whether you’re a novice or professional, we can use YOUR help!

If either are rained out, they will be on the following Sunday. If you are able to make it or have any questions please leave us a message at 314.552.9000.

## ‘Dogged’ Persistence Creates a Place for Pooches

The Water Tower Dog Park, 9,000-plus square feet of romping room for canine residents of Compton Hill Reservoir Square and surrounding neighborhoods, marked its first anniversary on March 15 of this year. It was a milestone made possible by the (pardon the pun) “dogged” persistence of dog owner and lover Richard Wachel, who had to push, pull, fetch and jump thru hoops for more than 5 years to create the facility.

Richard began looking into the possibilities of an off-leash play yard for dogs starting in 2003. “For three years, off and on, I inquired, researched, visited other dog parks, talked to neighbors, talked to the City, and just kept running into obstacles,” Wachel explains. The City was the most demanding, he notes. Ordinances required the approval from the Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, from the Ward Alderman, from the neighborhood association, a petition with names of 25 residents, in addition to detailed drawings and specifications. The biggest hurdle was the requirement that a City-approved contractor erect the fence that enclosed the park. “The expense was just much more than we had available at the time,” Wachel says.

But then in 2007, he learned from Sharon Hoffman, neighbor in Compton Heights that a City-aldermanic fund of \$15,000 for beautification was being unused. “So with generous support from the Compton Heights neighborhood association and Alderwoman Triplett, we were able to have that money transferred to the Water Tower and Park Preservation Society and designated for the purpose of a dog park within the group’s master plan of development.” There were still hoops to jump through, Wachel notes. “We had to install a water line, get liability insurance and meet several other requirements and changed requirements before we could get started.”

In 2008, Wachel and others formed the Water Tower Dog Park, Inc., which is a legally separate entity from the

WTPPS and is the group responsible for creating and running the dog park. They measured off a plot 108 by 84 feet, in the northeast section of Reservoir Park, just east of the Parks maintenance yard. They had the handsome, Victorian-style fence erected, water line installed and on March 15th of 2008 proudly opened the gate to pets and their owners.

The park is open from 6 a.m. to sunset to paid members of the WTDP. Membership is \$40 annually for residents of the immediate neighborhoods—bounded by Park Ave., Jefferson, Shenandoah and Grand. Persons from other areas are charged slightly more. “We have folks from other parts of the City, as well as Belleville and even a regular visitor who lives in Cape Girardeau,” he notes. Membership includes one dog; additional dogs are included for \$10 each, to a maximum of three dogs per owner. Membership fees cover the cost of \$2 million of liability insurance, and other maintenance costs. During its inaugural year, the dog park had 67 members. By mid-March of this year, 28 owners had joined, with more expected as the weather turns nicer, Wachel says.

Recently, neighbors and members planted burning bush and azalea plants along the fence line. Rhododendron plants at the corners are starting to bud nicely. Richard also planted a crimson maple tree inside the enclosure, and has the promise from the City Parks Div. supervisor at Reservoir Park of another seating bench inside.

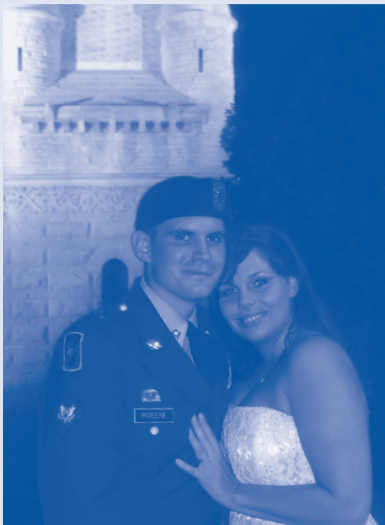
Wachel said the dog park has definitely fulfilled his hopes. “Obviously, it’s a great, safe place for our dogs to run and exercise. And for some dogs that have been pretty isolated, it’s a way they can learn how to socialize with other dogs.” And humans, too. “Yes, it’s a good opportunity for residents to socialize as well. You meet other pet owners who are neighbors, and develop friends in the community.”

## Witnessing a Wedding

Park walkers were treated to an unusual sight early one evening last September when they came upon a small wedding ceremony at the base of the western staircase. The location choice wasn’t as random as it might first appear.

The bride, Kristie Lepper, spent her early childhood in the Reservoir Square neighborhood. So when her husband-to-be came home on leave recently from Army duty in Iraq, both families gathered in the park near her childhood home for the ceremony. Instead of the usual year-long wedding planning, this one took less than two months.

The honeymoon for the new Mr. and Mrs. Josh Rosene was short because Josh had orders to Germany, so Kristie, who now lives on The Hill, awaits his return before the two decide where in South St. Louis they’ll buy their first home.



## Tower Openings

This year's tower openings will again be the first Saturday of each month, April through November. These days are:

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

Touring hours each Saturday are 12 noon to 4 p.m., so plan your activities within that time frame. 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 free.

So call a friend or family member you've been meaning to connect with. Then pick an opening, and call them with a unique invitation to show them the best view of the city. Then go grab a late lunch, drinks or dinner and talk over old times, or the city you've just observed. Trust us, it will be a bonding occasion like nothing they've ever done!

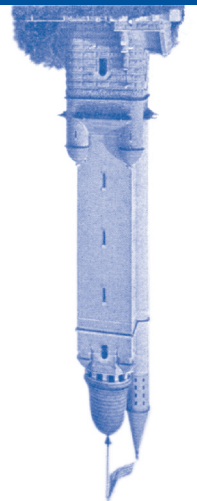
### Join Today – Be Part of The Restoration Effort

Membership categories range from \$25 and up.

The Compton Hill Water Tower is one of only seven 19th Century water towers in the entire United States (three of them are in St. Louis). It became a National Historic Site in 1972. Go to [www.watertowerfoundation.org](http://www.watertowerfoundation.org) to become a member.

*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 NEIGHBORHOODS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.**



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