

# ParkNotes

a semiannual newsletter published by the Lafayette Park Conservancy

Issue 4

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## Volunteers Beautify Lafayette Park

Visitors to Lafayette Park invariably remark on its well designed, well maintained plantings that make for such pleasant encounters. But I wonder how many of them realize that the vast majority of park maintenance is actually performed by volunteers, who design, plan, grow, plant, water and prune those many decorative plantings.

While it is undeniably true that the City of St. Louis mows the grass and picks up the trash, these tasks make up only a relatively small portion of overall park maintenance. Total maintenance man-hours paid for by the city equal approximately one full-time employee on an annual basis. Volunteer hours, on the other hand, accumulate to at least two to three times that amount! Furthermore, volunteer tasks are usually of a much higher skill level than grass cutting. These "labours of love" would be simply unaffordable if we had to pay professional horticulturalists to perform them.

Volunteer gardening is accomplished by a sizable cadre of regulars who have "adopted" areas of the park, plus a much larger group of volunteers who come from far and near in the spring and fall, when the seasonal work is the heaviest. Regulars and other residents include Patricia Barber, Erin Budde, Keith Welsh, David Horr, Carol Ward, Susan Pinker-Dodd, Larry Dodd, Carolyn Willmore, Rebecca Wright, Ward Buckner, John Emery, Jorg Albrecht, Ella Heigham, Tom & Lynn Keay, Linda & Steve Skinner, Caerie Koenig, Don Heus, Mitchell & Devyani Hunt, Doug Krebs, Robert Bischoff, Dave Bridwell, Betsy Clark & Alicia Pierce, Robin Kruse & Steve Mann, Matt Brazelton & Jeff Jensen, Crystal Peairs, Al Horst, Mike Harkins, Sue & Bill Hegerty, Bridgid Simpson, Todd Decker, Mark & Terry Etling, Doug Fish, Vickie Houghton, Marilyn Lane, Jad McDaniel, Roy Peterson, Greg Platt-



ner, Sue and Terry Linhardt, Don & Daphney Terrill, Michael Knight, Addy Donnelley, Rhonda Wright-Broderick, Pete, Karen & Ellie Snyder, Tim Kaminiski, Don Owens, Adam Rucker, Jon Culbertson, Larry & Penny McCoo and their currently mobile children Elijah, Taylor, Kenyon & Dillon, Troy & Sarah Doles and their twins, Evie & Donovan. Plus many others that we're sure we failed to mention. Two large groups that provide significant help in the spring are volunteers from Macy's and students from St. Louis University. If you see any of these folks working in the park be sure to offer them your heartfelt thanks for the valuable work they perform.

## Join Us In The Park!

As spring gives way to summer activity starts to heat up in Lafayette Park. Plan now to add one or more of these events to your usual park routines of dogwalking, strolling, jogging, fishing, and playing on the playground.

\* Live Music Concerts, sponsored by the Arts Council. Every two weeks beginning on Saturday, June 6. To see who's playing check the signs in the park or [www.lafayettesquare.org](http://www.lafayettesquare.org).

\* Movies In The Park, also sponsored by the Arts Council. Fun for all, but especially the kiddies. First movie is Spiderman on June 13.

\* St. Louis Perfectos and Cyclones Vintage Baseball, played by 1860s rules. See game schedules at [www.stlouisperfectos.org](http://www.stlouisperfectos.org).

\* Installation of the Revolutionary War Gun on new carriage and pad. July-August. More details on this patriotic event will be coming soon.

\* Tour de Lafayette Bike Race, September 4.

\* "Save The Boathouse" Halloween Party. A dress-up fundraiser with live New Orleans style music. It's never too early to begin thinking about your costume!

## From the President...

For this issue of ParkNotes we're doing something a little different. The LPC has so many active projects that it's sometimes hard to keep track of where we are on each one.

Our 2009 budgeting process found us preparing not only our usual operational budget, but also, for the very first time, a capital budget. The capital budgeting process gave us a very good handle on how much money was actually available for various projects, and provided the impetus to take on more of them simultaneously. To let you see the bigger picture we'll list every one of our active or recently completed capital projects, and we'll show you at what stage each project is and what its next step should be.

I'm happy to report that the Conservancy raised \$34,000+ last year from grants, fundraisers, and memberships. At the same time, we held administrative and operating costs to only \$2100, freeing more than \$32,000 towards capital projects.

But the fundraising never ends! Many of our existing funds are allocated to specific projects. Some of those projects are in the planning stages, while others are further along. Perhaps our most urgent project is the repair to the boathouse roof, which cannot begin until we raise another \$30,000. This project is urgent because the roof is leaking, causing rapid deterioration. We must somehow find the funds to complete on this project before the end of 2009, or the boathouse structure could suffer serious, perhaps irreparable, damage.



We're looking for volunteers with ideas, skills, and energies to expend in raising capital for the boathouse and other park projects. If you're at all interested please contact me at [rbischoff@yahoo.com](mailto:rbischoff@yahoo.com) and we'll put you to work!

## Projects Completed Or Near Completion

**New Park Bench.** As you meander through the southeast corner of the park over house tour weekend, take note of two delightful additions in this area.

Over the last two months this new bench was installed at the north end of the lagoon, on a nicely landscaped concrete pad. This project was funded by a generous grant from the Regional Business Council and accomplished through the efforts of park wizard Ward Buckner, who performed the installation work.



**New Urns.** Two graceful and imposing urns were installed in late May (too late for photos) at the head of the east steps down to the grotto. They were made possible through a generous donation from Carolyn Willmore, and put in place with foundation work by Ward Buckner. Fabrication services to put the urns together with the bases were also generously donated.

These permanent improvements to the grotto area are set off beautifully by the restful but ever-changing shade plantings in the grotto, which our volunteer gardeners keep improving so magnificently year after year.

**Gazebo.** Not to be missed in the same corner of the park is the beginning construction of the long-awaited gazebo attached to the west end of the Park House. This substantial project, which provides both expanded venue space and ADA same-level access to the Park House, is being funded and managed very ably by the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, who currently leases the Park House as their headquarters. Kudos to Pete Snyder for what we are confident will be a magnificent addition to Lafayette Park.

**Irrigation.** Late last fall an underground system was installed to simplify watering at the Washington statue and better maintain the plantings there. Although much of our spring has been rainy, the system has easily proven its worth during our inevitable hot, dry spells. This system was made possible by a grant from Gateway Greening, who also furnished the newly planted Knockout roses, replacing older, diseased varieties.

**Cannon.** As many of you park regulars undoubtedly already know, the first of the three Revolutionary War era guns from the British warship HMS Actaeon was recently removed from the park and taken, along with its crumbling gun carriage, to Zymo Studio. Zymo artisans are working conscientiously to build an historically accurate reconstructed carriage. It will be installed on a new, larger, brick-topped platform in the park to better display and conserve the gun. We are planning to reinstall the gun in the park during mid-summer, with suitable ceremony and patriotic celebration.





## Projects Being Contracted

**Benton Statue.** Conservators have recently been active in the park, gathering detailed information to prepare their bids for restoring the corroded bronze statue and providing ongoing maintenance to curtail its deterioration in the future. (Did you know that recommended maintenance involves washing and waxing one or twice a year, similar to that recommended for your car?) This work is fully funded from prior fundraisers and should start within a couple of months.

**Playground.** A replacement sign has been installed with the correct wording, as specified by City Parks. Swingset frames will be painted forest green once the weather dries out. The painting contractor will use manufacturer-approved materials and methods.

Tooling is now available to round off the abrupt concrete curb cuts, and that will be accomplished as work schedules permit.

The Cassilly frog has now been relocated nearer the playground, where kids seem to enjoy it more.

A few of the brighter plastic parts will be swapped out this summer by the manufacturer, to colors more compatible with the older playground equipment, which is primarily tan and green. That will complete the capital portion of this project, using donor funds restricted to this purpose.

Many playground patrons have expressed a need to keep the playground and nearby restroom cleaner and tidier, by removing leaves and other tree debris, and raking the wood chips beneath the swings. The Conservancy is exploring ways to do this, including forming a playground users' group. If you are interested please drop us a note at the Park House or speak to any board member.

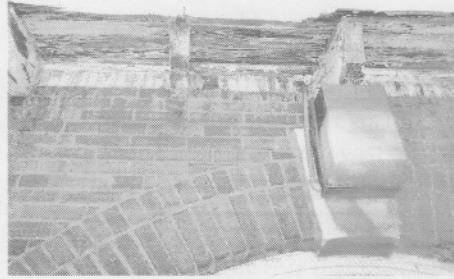
**Trees.** We're very excited to report that our grant application to the Missouri Department of Conservation has been submitted and should be approved shortly. This grant will fund approximately 80% of the \$10,000 cost to produce both a current inventory of the 800 or so trees in the park and a multi-year tree management plan covering removal, maintenance and planting. The inventory work will begin later this year.

It is very likely that this grant will lead to annual grants for a similar amount in subsequent years, as that has been the state's policy. We commend the Trees Committee for their efforts.

## Projects In Planning Stages

These are all active capital improvement projects, but each requires further design and/or funding before any active construction can begin.

**Boathouse.** The Boathouse roof has deteriorated precipitously, especially on its south slope. Rain is now leaking in and causing damage to the roof deck itself. It is urgent that work begin soon to fix the roof, but it is not as simple as slapping on another layer of asphalt shingles. Our structure stabilization estimate of \$99,000 includes bids for tuck pointing, permanent tile or metal roofing, copper flashing, insulation and carpentry work. Repairs cannot begin until all funds are in hand or pledged. We have set aside a total of \$69,000, but that still leaves \$30,000 to raise, and we are pursuing City funds, potential donors, and fund drives to do so as quickly as possible.



**1876 Music Stand.** Preliminary design documents and a cost estimate of \$500,000 are in hand. We are now producing fundraising materials, including color renderings, in an attempt to interest potential funding entities.

**Pathways.** H3 Studio, the design firm that prepared the Lafayette Park Master Plan in 2003, has been selected to prepare a preliminary design and cost estimate for improving the pathways throughout the park. On May 30, they presented visuals at a public meeting that compared the current state of the pathways in and around the park to the goals set out in the master plan, focusing on changes that will result in the greatest overall improvement.

The meeting was organized to solicit public input, and a number of valuable points were raised and discussed. Much attention was devoted to the surfacing material to be used, with general agreement that it must be firm enough to support slow-moving wheeled objects such as wheelchairs, tricycles and baby carriages. Other high priority items included resurfacing deteriorated paths, restoring paths that cross the grotto bridge, increasing ADA access, edging formal plantings, reducing excess paving around the music stand and the Washington statue, and improving the appearance of major park entrances.

The Conservancy would particularly like to thank the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, whose generous donation has made this preliminary design work possible. Once the design work has been completed the Conservancy will begin raising funds in earnest to complete the project, with the intention of beginning construction on the first phase during 2010. At least one local grant-provider has already expressed interest in helping to fund this project. We will be applying for grants this fall.

**Historic Walk.** This project, headed by John Bishop, was begun independently, but joined under the Conservancy umbrella when it became clear that at least the first deliverables--an iPod tour and a few sidewalk embedded plaques--would be focused on park grounds. \$6500 has been donated by the LSRC to carry out the pilot project, although the eventual scope of the Historic Walk might embrace the entire neighborhood, placing it outside the Conservancy's more narrowly focused mission.