

PARKSIDE

HERMANN PARK CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

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Endangered Species Media Project



Students from Chavez High School make seed balls, each containing the seeds of a particular prairie species, to be scattered around the designated planting sites.

Project Blazingstar has brought together hundreds of volunteers who have collectively put over 2,000 hours into this effort.



Conservancy Staff



Priscilla Dickson

HATS IN THE PARK
See page 4

in the park

Project Blazingstar Brings Native Plants Back To Hermann Park

Hermann Park was once located in a coastal prairie rich with grasses up to eight feet in height. As development took its toll, the prairie increasingly became scarce in Harris County and eventually made the list of endangered ecosystems.

In 2009, Hermann Park Conservancy joined forces with a number of organizations to create Project Blazingstar, a comprehensive effort to restore prairies in Hermann Park by replacing non-native plants with native species. Project partners include sponsor Waste Management, as well as Coastal Prairie Partnership, Katy Prairie Conservancy, Texas Master Naturalist, Houston Audubon Society, Native Plant Society of Texas, Endangered Species Media Project, Eyes on the Bayou, Houston Zoo, Student Conservation Association, Harris County Master Gardeners, and Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD). The first year goal is to plant more than 2,000 rescued and cultivated prairie plants in the Park.

Preparation began last summer with the collection of native annual and perennial wildflower and grass seeds for seed ball production.

Volunteers also rescued plants from undisturbed prairie sites around the Houston metro area. This March, over 200 student volunteers made over 8,000 seed balls. Seeds included Blazingstar, Rattlesnake Master, Indian Blanket, and Muhly Grass, which will bring rich colors and textures to the Park's natural areas.

Last summer, Conservancy volunteers and HPARD staff began preparing the first planting site, located between the Japanese Garden and McGovern Lake, working diligently through April. They cleared invasive plants, transplanted small trees to other sites in the Park, and mowed overgrown non-native grasses. Volunteers and partners then planted 1,300 rescued plants and thousands of seed balls on April 17, 2010. Future projects will be located in Bayou Parkland and at the corner of Holcombe and Braeswood.

Restoration of the prairie ecosystem will create a better environment for the Park's wildlife, recover a vibrant and colorful landscape, and raise awareness about prairie conservation.

MISSION

Hermann Park Conservancy is a citizens' organization dedicated to the stewardship and improvement of Hermann Park—today and for generations to come.



from the executive director

Restoring our nearly hundred-year-old Park requires attention to details large and small. At the *Hats in the Park* luncheon, we honored a person who has stood by the Conservancy as it has tackled all levels of Hermann Park's incredible transformation.

Ann Hamilton, the 2010 Bob and Elyse Lanier Award recipient, has a special knack for not only caring about the large capital projects, but the projects that appear a bit less glamorous.

Recently retired after an 18-year career at Houston Endowment Inc., Ann's legacy of ardent support for improvements in Hermann Park can be seen in many ways. Getting excited about the vision for the Jones Reflection Pool when it was not much more than a muddy basin is one thing, but being passionate about the replacement of 55-gallon plastic drums with attractive trash cans throughout the Park is perhaps another. But Ann has been enthusiastic about all aspects of our work, caring deeply about creating a positive, memorable user experience.



Ann accepts a small tree from Mayor Annise Parker. In appreciation of her efforts, a large Loblolly Pine tree has been planted in the Park.

operations to build a solid foundation for implementing the vision she shared with the Conservancy's founders. It also provided funding for the master plan for Hermann Park, which has guided our restoration efforts. The foundation significantly funded the Heart of the Park restoration, which included the Jones Reflection Pool, and was again a major presence when the Conservancy took on the Lake Plaza project, completed last year. The Jones Greenway in the Plaza, which resembles a winding bayou swale with a walking trail, replaced a dirt ditch surrounded by concrete in the large parking lot used by visitors to the Houston Zoo and Lake Plaza. Ann was as eager as anyone to pull up the concrete and create something greener, healthier, and more attractive in its place.

A tip of the hat to Ann for her inspiring dedication to quality of life issues and parks in Houston. Hermann Park is certainly the better for it.

See you in the Park!

Doreen

Doreen Stoller



Ann Hamilton, *Hats in the Park* honoree, and Doreen Stoller

Ann has been supportive of the Conservancy's mission since its beginning when the Park was in a state of serious disrepair. Houston Endowment helped fund our staff and

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Genevieve L. Duncan

Hats in the Park Luncheon

(All gifts in honor of Ann Hamilton, honoree, and chairs Jana Arnoldy and Linda Hunsaker)

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Photos by Conservancy Staff

Engraved boulders welcome visitors to the improved Japanese Garden.



Mr. Iwasaki prunes a crape myrtle in the Japanese style.

During the last two weeks of February, when the cold weather in Houston seemed like it was never going to let up, Hermann Park Conservancy was honored to host a visit from our Japanese Garden horticulture team from Japan. Over the last three years, the team, led by esteemed landscape architect Terunobu Nakai and honored landscape gardener Hiroshi Iwasaki, has focused on shrub pruning techniques in the Japanese style, construction of the teahouse tea garden, and the installation of hardscapes throughout the Garden and at the welcoming entry.



Mr. Nakai (left) and Mr. Iwasaki (far right) teach Japanese Black Pine trimming technique to Park staff and volunteers.

Previously nondescript, the entrance to the Garden on the west edge of the Jones Reflection Pool has been made prominent by large granite boulders. The boulder on the right hand side of the wrought iron gate is engraved with a welcome message written in Japanese characters by former Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu. A short history of the Garden is etched in English on the

boulders to the left of the entrance.

Once inside, visitors appreciate new stone paths, stepping stones, bamboo fencing, appropriate plant material, and a wisteria trellis overlooking the koi pond, all of which have changed the face of the Garden from an Americanized version of a Japanese Garden to the real thing.

Over the course of their latest visit, Mr. Nakai and Mr. Iwasaki held Park staff training sessions in the techniques of Japanese Black Pine trimming and shaping, illustrated Japanese crape myrtle pruning, and located sites for 40 new trees. Due to the exceptionally cold weather, the team was treated to a spectacular flowering of ornamental trees throughout the Garden. Cherry trees planted last season at their direction exploded with pink blooms, the specimen Japanese apricot tree (*Prunus mume* 'Kobai') displayed its dark coral pink petals, the Mexican plums flaunted their showy white aromatic flowers, and the Redbuds stole the show with their hot pink-purple display.

The annual Japan Festival, held the weekend of April 10 and 11, 2010, attracted visitors from throughout the Houston region. Displays of martial arts, Japanese music and dance, and vendors selling Japanese fare and merchandise kept the crowds engaged and amazed.

Mr. Nakai and Mr. Iwasaki plan to return to the Japanese Garden in a year or two to continue contributing their expertise to the transformation of this important cultural landmark in Hermann Park.

HATS IN THE PARK

From subtly sophisticated to gravity-defying, the hats were a sight to behold at the third annual *Hats in the Park* luncheon benefitting Hermann Park Conservancy on Tuesday, March 9, 2010. Chaired by Jana Arnoldy and Linda Hunsaker, the packed event brought together roughly 300 guests for a champagne reception at the historic clubhouse at Hermann Park followed by a luncheon on the lawn.

With many ladies sporting floral themed ensembles, the colorful outfits were appropriate for an event that helps keep Hermann Park blooming. Mayor Annise Parker presented Ann Hamilton, former Houston Endowment Inc. grant officer and avid parks advocate, with the 2010 Bob and Elyse Lanier Award for her contributions to the Park. For the occasion, Ann wore a hat ornamented with red roses, a nod to Elyse Lanier and her favorite flower.

Tiffany & Co. sweetened the afternoon with a fabulous raffle opportunity, with proceeds going toward the Conservancy's renovation and beautification of the Grand Gateway, the historic main entrance to the Park from the Mecom Fountain to the Sam Houston Monument. All said and done, the festive event grossed over \$220,000 for Hermann Park. Something to celebrate indeed!

Thank you to everyone who supported *Hats in the Park* this year, and especially to the chairs for their time and effort ensuring its success. We are excited to report that Franci Crane and Sandy Godfrey will help continue the legacy of this wonderful event as chairs next year.

Photos by Ed Cowan

Photos by Priscilla Dickson



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HERMANN PARK CONSERVANCY



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1 Gracie Cavnar and Jana Arnoldy 2 Linda Hunsaker, Leslie Blanton, and Claire Thielke 3 Don and Ann Short
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Celebrating Lake Plaza

It's official! Hermann Park's new Lake Plaza, the \$11-million Centennial Campaign project spearheaded by Hermann Park Conservancy, has been awarded LEED Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is an internationally recognized green building certification system that assigns ratings to qualifying projects based on their energy savings, water efficiency, and stewardship of resources, among other factors.

In Lake Plaza, the effects of the choices that culminated in this prestigious award can be seen and felt across its eight acres. Mature trees were incorporated into the landscape design, while the 300-plus new trees, shrubs, and flowers are all native East Texas plants, chosen for their sustainability. The new buildings were designed to blend seamlessly into the park setting, while the shed roofs help generate airflow through breezeways to help keep visitors cool. The Plaza's Jones Greenway, whose plants will eventually grow to resemble a thriving East Texas forest in the middle of the parking area, serves as a detention basin during heavy rainfall. Not only does this help with flood prevention, but the water collected in the Greenway's swale is filtered of sediment and pollutants by lush plant life before being released into Brays Bayou.

Scott Adams



Rainwater in Lake Plaza is collected by runnels featuring small art objects and attractive rock gardens. Water then flows into the Jones Greenway, where it is filtered by plants before traveling on to Brays Bayou.

For its impact on the community and its environmentally conscious design, Lake Plaza has received numerous awards and accolades since opening last spring, including:

2010 Merit Award, Texas Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

2010 Development of Distinction Award, Urban Land Institute, Houston

2009 Parks and Natural Areas Award, Houston-Galveston Area Council

2009 Proud Partner Award, Keep Houston Beautiful's Mayor's Proud Partners Awards

2009 Leadership in Action Award, Leadership Houston

So just how "green" is Lake Plaza?

Consider a few statistics: Water-conserving irrigation equipment and plants reduce the amount of water needed for irrigation by an estimated 62%. Low-flow plumbing fixtures have resulted in an estimated 57% reduction of the amount of potable water used in buildings. Through responsible construction waste management, 60% of construction waste was diverted from landfills. Ninety percent of construction materials were sourced locally (within a 500 mile radius), resulting in a significant reduction in construction carbon emissions. The Plaza is powered by 25% green (wind) energy, while energy efficient lighting, HVAC systems, and passive solar design result in a savings of 33.8% in electricity from baseline building design.

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BENEFITTING: Hermann Park Conservancy

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WHERE: Hermann Park

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 Learn more about the annual gala at www.hermannpark.org

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The names listed above and on the preceding pages include donors who made gifts or pledges of \$100 or more between January 1 and March 31, 2010, as well as all George Hermann Society members. In compliance with IRS standards, commitments paid over time in installments are recognized once in full at the time of the pledge. All gifts to the 2010 *Evening in the Park* gala will be recognized in the next issue. Please contact the Conservancy if we inadvertently have not included your name or if you would like to be listed differently in future listings.

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PARKSIDE / SPRING 2010

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