

# PARKSIDE

HERMANN PARK CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

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in the park

## Construction to Begin on Trail Improvements



The Greenway trail, which winds through the golf course, will be open throughout the renovation, allowing walkers to complete a half-loop until improvements are finished. Like the Greenway trail, the updated trail will have a new decomposed granite surface with concrete edges and will be lined with attractive lighting.

This spring and summer, the pedestrian trail in Hermann Park will undergo a renovation to include widening, a new decomposed granite surface with concrete curbs, ravine bridge, lighting, and drainage. Made possible by funding through a federal program, the project will completely transform the experience for walkers and joggers in Hermann Park.

Park Golf Course, will be widened up to 14 feet across and will provide a safer atmosphere away from the busy street traffic. In one spot where the old path was forced by a ravine to curve toward the street, a new bridge will be constructed so pedestrians can walk over rather than around it.

The North MacGregor portion of the trail is one segment of the entire two-mile trail system set to receive a facelift thanks to the federal funding, administered by the Texas Department of Transportation. Construction will take place on roughly half of the trail route at a time, while the other half will remain open. Park users will be able to use the Greenway trail, which cuts through the golf course, to complete the half-loop during this time. The trail renovation will be completed this summer and will open back up to the public in its entirety.

More connectivity improvements on the way include the Bill Coats Bike Bridge, which will link bicycle and walking trails on both sides of Brays Bayou, and a pedestrian underpass, which will take walkers safely under North and South MacGregor and onto the golf course side of the Park.



**HATS IN THE PARK**  
see pages 4–5

### MISSION

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



The improved pedestrian trail along North MacGregor will be constructed on the site of the old North MacGregor roadbed, which was once a carriage trail.

These improvements are part of a multifaceted plan to increase connectivity and accessibility to and within the Park. One earlier project which allowed this phase of the overall plan to take place was the pairing of North and South MacGregor roads. The old North MacGregor was removed, while the new road was paved closer to its parallel partner. The old road bed, which was built on a historic carriage trail and is shaded by a canopy of mature Live Oak trees, is being reclaimed for pedestrian foot traffic. The picturesque path, which winds along the edge of the Hermann

from the executive director

At the festive *Hats in the Park* luncheon on March 8, Hermann Park Conservancy honored Ned Holmes as the recipient of the Bob and Elyse Lanier Award. Ned, a native Houstonian and longtime friend of the Park, is chairman and CEO of Holmes Investments, Inc. In addition to land development, construction, and banking interests, he has served on many public commissions and charitable boards. Currently a commissioner of the Texas Department of Transportation, Ned helped advocate for the Commission's approval last fall of nearly \$3 million in funding for the Grand Gateway renovation, which will transform Hermann Park's historic main entrance into one worthy of its awe-inspiring interior.

When accepting the honor from Mayor Annise Parker, Ned spoke fondly of the time he spent in the Park with his family during his youth. Like many children on picnics in the Park, Ned enjoyed seeing the ducks, and even went so far as to ask his mother if he could bring one home. Confident he would never be able to chase one down, she gave him permission to try—a decision he recalls she promptly regretted when she saw the duck in their car. (Fortunately for all, she convinced him to release it!)



Doreen Stoller and 2011 *Hats in the Park* honoree Ned S. Holmes

The ducks and migratory birds are, of course, still cherished and beloved creatures in Hermann Park. Though we wouldn't encourage anyone to try it, I would bet they are a little harder to catch these days. Since Ned's childhood, the "grand basin" where ducks spend much of their time was expanded to become the beautiful eight-acre McGovern Lake, complete with three islands—one reached by Park visitors by foot bridge, and two for migratory birds. The bird islands are not accessible to pedestrians, allowing our feathered friends to have a home all to themselves where they can thrive during their Hermann Park stay.

Hermann Park is a joy to many children and families. Ned's story is a great example of how cherished memories in the Park can last a lifetime. We are humbled by Ned's continued commitment to the Park and so pleased to recognize him as our luncheon honoree. Hats off to Ned!

See you in the Park!

*Doreen*

Doreen Stoller  
Executive Director



Mayor Parker recognizes Ned S. Holmes as the 2011 Bob and Elyse Lanier Award recipient at the luncheon.

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**Hats in the Park Luncheon**

All gifts in honor of Ned S. Holmes, honoree, and chairs Franci Crane and Sandy Godfrey

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## Terunobu Nakai Revisits the Japanese Garden



Mr. Nakai sketches his design ideas for a second pedestrian gate into the Japanese Garden.



Mr. Nakai animatedly explains his plan for a new shrub bed inside the Japanese Garden.

This February, Mr. Terunobu Nakai, esteemed landscape architect, made his sixth visit to Hermann Park to continue his recommendations for the improvement of the Japanese Garden. The five-day visit focused primarily on maintenance, with Mr. Nakai touring the interior of the Garden, recommending appropriate plant material and planting locations, drawing sketches, and supervising the planting of new trees.

Mr. Nakai met with White Oak Studio landscape architect Jim Patterson, who has long been involved in fulfilling the Park's master plan objectives, to discuss improvements to the Fannin side of the Park and explore the possibility of installing a second pedestrian gate into the Japanese Garden. A design charette

took place during the visit, which resulted in renderings of the potential gate, trail access, landscaping around the entry, and repositioning of two service gates into the Garden. The concept, which would be beneficial to those entering the Park from the Rice University MetroRail stop, is still under consideration.

Additionally, Mr. Nakai reviewed last year's maintenance "homework" and made suggestions for the Parks Department staff regarding continued Japanese-style maintenance of the plant material, and additional design recommendations and planting plans. With his expertise and guidance, the maintenance team can continue to carry out his vision moving forward.

## Valuable Volunteers



YES Prep students clear the pea gravel in the Live Oak allée along the Jones Reflection Pool.

Volunteers not only help keep the Park beautiful, they aid conservation efforts within the Park. Since the beginning of the Conservancy's 2011 fiscal year last July, nearly 2,600 people have contributed nearly 13,500 hours of service by weeding, raking, planting trees, removing

invasive species, and growing native plants to help restore natural areas within the Park. The removal of weeds and invasive plants contributes to the health and aesthetics of the Park, as weeds and invasive species can take up valuable space and nutrients from desired plants. Removing these aggressive growers takes time and many hands.

Thanks to the dedication of many volunteers, the Park's natural areas are able to thrive and its manicured gardens continue to be beautiful, photo-worthy sites for Houston families and visitors. If interested in becoming a Conservancy volunteer or bringing a volunteer group, please contact Diane Kerr, volunteer and educator coordinator, at **713-524-5876 ext. 332** or [volunteer@hermannpark.org](mailto:volunteer@hermannpark.org).

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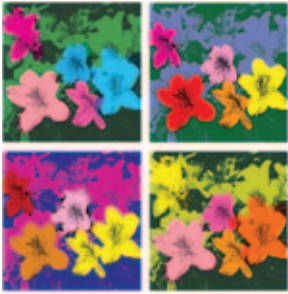
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## Hats in the Park

No two were the same as feathers, flowers, ruffles, and ribbons adorned hats of every style and color at the 4th annual Hats in the Park luncheon on Tuesday, March 8, 2011. Nearly 300 guests enjoyed a champagne reception and a tented outdoor luncheon overlooking the Hermann Park Golf Course. Chairs Franci Crane and Sandy Godfrey hosted the elegant event, which substantially exceeded its fundraising goal.

Hats literally flew in the air as Mayor Annise Parker presented honoree Ned Holmes with the 2011 Bob and Elyse Lanier Award, in recognition of his commitment to Hermann Park. In addition to advocating for a 4:1 match for Hermann Park's Grand Gateway project from the Texas Department of Transportation, Ned was so impressed by the commitment of the luncheon guests who donated an additional \$30,150 that he personally added \$5,000 toward the match.

With the conclusion of this fun and festive spring highlight, buzz is already building around next year's event, which will be chaired by Donna Bruni!

**Thank you to the chairs and to everyone who supported this event, which raised vital funding for ongoing efforts to improve Hermann Park.**



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1 Lee and chair Sandy Godfrey, chair Franci Crane, and Krystal Thompson 2 Laura Mitchell, Emily Covey, Kay and honoree Ned Holmes, Heather Mitchell, and Erin Holmes 3 Kristen Nix, Sheridan Williams, and Lauren Clark 4 Jack and Ginger Blanton and Kelli Blanton 5 Phoebe Tudor and Linda Hunsaker 6 Anna Dean, Ann Short, Clair Amonett, Jana Arnoldy, Liz Scully, Lindley Arnoldy, Denise Monteleone, and Karen Bradshaw 7 Carolyn Henneman and Lynn Guggolz 8 Lois Taber, Carolyn Robertson, Franna Litton, and Lynn Glazer 9 Cece Fowler and Sanford and Susie Criner 10 Mindy Hildebrand, Julie Moorhead, and Roxanne Neumann 11 Mayor Annise Parker 12 Cabrina Owsley, Lisa Sherrill, Karen Rozzell, Debbie Dalton, Ellen Turner, Anita Brandstrader, Ann Moebius, and Gaye Kelsey 13 Kim Tutcher and Ellie Francisco 14 Cissy Segall Davis and Council Member Wanda Adams 15 Y. Ping Sun and Cynthia Petrello 16 Lauren Harrison, Alicia Raymond, and Monica Eskridge 17 Gina Bhatia, Lindsey Love, and Mary D'Andrea 18 Bobbie Nau and Jeanie Kilroy 19 Guyla Pircher, Donna Bruni, Isabel David, and Lynn Wyatt 20 Nataya Carter and Karen Susman 21 David Groover, Jim Nelson, and C. C. Conner



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# New Ways to Enjoy the Hermann Park Railroad

*Houston Chronicle* columnist Ken Hoffman and his son Andrew are the first to try out the Engineer for a Day program in March.



Hermann Park Railroad has delighted visitors young and old for decades, and now there are more ways than ever to enjoy one of Houston's most popular attractions.

## Engineer for a Day

The new Engineer for a Day program, introduced by the Visitor Services department of Hermann Park Conservancy (HPC), allows train enthusiasts to experience a day in the life of a Hermann Park Railroad engineer! Participants work alongside an experienced engineer, greeting visitors, blowing the whistle, and even narrating the guided tour. The Engineer for a Day package, \$135 for HPC members or \$150 for non-members, includes an engineer's cap, train whistle, bandana, name badge and certificate. For an additional \$50, a relative, parent, child, or friend may tag along as Conductor for a Day. This opportunity would be a perfect Father's Day gift for the dad who has everything.

## Birthday Parties and Private Train Rides

Birthday party packages and private train rides are also available through the Visitor Services department. Near Kinder Station and the pedal boat lagoon, a private space to accommodate up to 30 children is available for birthday parties or cocktail events. Children's tables and chairs, a special gift for the birthday child, paper goods, and a book of 10 train tickets are also provided in

the package, which starts at \$250 for two hours. Private train rides around the picturesque two-mile track through the Park can accommodate up to 90 people, and can be arranged for \$270 for HPC members or \$300 for non-members.



Hermann Park Conservancy's Visitor Services department is now offering birthday party packages!

## Member Benefits

In addition to exclusive discounts on these opportunities, all Conservancy members receive complimentary Hermann Park Train and Pedal Boat tickets. Members at the Conductor's Circle level (\$2,500) even receive a coveted unlimited annual pass to ride the train and pedal boats! The pass is good for the cardholder and any one guest on the train or three guests on a boat.

If you would like to take advantage of these member benefits, please join Hermann Park Conservancy at [www.hermannpark.org](http://www.hermannpark.org). To sign up to be an Engineer for a Day or schedule a birthday party or private train ride, please call Visitor Services at 713-526-2183.

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### Hats in the Park Luncheon *continued*

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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 15, 2011, as well as all *Hats in the Park* luncheon donors and George Hermann Society members. Please note that gifts to the *Evening in the Park* gala will be recognized in the issue immediately following the event. In compliance with IRS standards, commitments paid over time in installments are recognized once in full at the time of the pledge. Please contact the Conservancy if we inadvertently have not included your name or if you would like to be listed differently in future listings.**Upcoming Events***A toast to*  
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