

Bridges



Newsletter of the Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood

June 2009, Fifth Edition

Neighborhood Adopts Hester Park

It's official! The process for the Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood to formally adopt Hester Park was completed in January 2009. So this spring, with a little assistance from the City Park Department, some residents have begun giving the park a little TLC.

Accumulations of large yellow bags and piles of brush appeared on the boulevard alongside the park several times in late May and early June after about a dozen neighbors worked over 75 hours to clean out many years' worth of leaves, debris and overgrown brush from the flower beds near the northernmost bridge and the ravine. About 105 bags of yard waste and several piles of brush were removed from the park.

Thanks to all who helped with the work, and a special thank you to Joan Rydberg and Kelly Haugen in particular, who donated significant time and energy to the project. One surprise was finding a well-hidden nest of duck eggs in the greenery of a flower bed just days before the ducklings hatched. Another was discovering a yellow plastic Easter egg which had never been discovered from a Wildeson family Easter egg hunt when Emma was 4 or 5 years old (she is 9 now.) But the best surprises have been seeing smaller plants peeking out once excess leaves were removed, and watching bushes perk up after the overgrowth was pruned.

On Juneth4a first planting of ferns, hostas, bleeding hearts, lilies of the valley and irises took place near the north bridge. Special thanks to Ellen "Susie" Lies and Carol and Evan Jones for the plants they donated to the park.

Everyone in the neighborhood is invited to help us make the park our own. If you happen to be walking along the path and see a few weeds, go ahead and pull them. Or if you notice debris on the steps, bring a small broom next time you walk through to do a quick sweep. If you are willing to help with future cleaning and planting projects contact Denise Gagner (291-1291) or Joan Rydberg (253-8403.)



Neighbors put some muscle into garden work at Hester Park this spring

Historical Pools of Hester Park

In 1938 it was announced that among the coming WPA (Works Progress Administration) improvements for Hester Park would be the addition of two wading pools. The pools were completed the next year and were fed by a small piped-in stream that began with a pretty little waterfall close to 6th Avenue by the current tennis courts.

The stream meandered under two granite bridges before emptying into the first pool, which ran over into the second pool down closer to 5th Avenue. The first pool was quite shallow while the one closer to the river was five to six feet deep. At that time the terrain of the park was much different than it is today.

Interestingly, some thought that the pools diminished the beauty of the park. But to the kids the pools were the park's crown jewels. Later reports state that the pools were a big hit.

One long-time Northside resident (Jane Doe) recalls walking across 6th Avenue and stepping into the stream just below the waterfall to start cooling off as she walked down the stream to the first pool. The concrete stream bed was green with slippery moss allowing her to "skate" down to the shallow pond. This was, of course, discouraged, but fun. "Jane" recalls the joyous rite of passage when she stepped out of the shallow "kiddie pool" into the deeper pool for big kids. She says the pools were always packed on hot days.

Swimming in the Hester Park area goes way back to when beaches naturally developed along the Mississippi River at Hester and across the river at Wilson Park. The beach swimming was banned after a drowning at Hester in 1940.

Hester was one of the parks considered as a site for a grand new swimming pool which was eventually built near Lake George after WWII.

While the days of swimming at Hester and even the "grand pool" are past, kids have been cooling off in the wading pools at Hester Park since 1939. Thanks to the energetic efforts of some

of the park's neighbors we will hear the joyous sounds of children splashing about in the wading pool at Hester on the warmest days of 2009!

Announcements / Upcoming Events

Hester Park Pool Celebration

The St. Cloud Rec Department is sponsoring a celebration at Hester Park pool on Tuesday, June 30th, from 4 to 6 p.m. The event will celebrate our efforts to keep our wading pool open this summer. Heidi Smith (who is a neighborhood resident) is an intern with the Rec. Dept. who is planning and coordinating the event.

Activities will include sidewalk chalk art, soccer, basketball, a Hawaiian pool theme, tug-of-war, face painting, and relay races. There will be snacks and drinks for sale including hotdogs, brats, chips, pop, water & slushies. All proceeds will go to the Hester Park pool fund.

Spread the word and come celebrate with us!

Granite City Days Parade

Calling all neighbors! We will have a Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood float in the Granite City Days Parade on Saturday, June 27, at 6:30 p.m. Our float will highlight the 3 biggest projects we worked on this spring: the Home Tour, the wading pool fundraiser, and the Hester Park cleanup and planting.

If you would like to help us creatively decorate our float using extra Home Tour posters and tickets contact Cindy at 240-9280. If you'd like to join other neighbors walking the parade route with our float or maybe even participating in a simple dance routine (with garden tools) call Kaye at 259-8737. Let's see if we can bring home the Community Spirit Award this year!

Fourth of July

Since we are "tuckered out" from the number and scope of the projects undertaken this spring (Spring Cleanup, Home Tour, unexpected Hester Park Wading Pool Fundraising, Hester Park Cleanup and Planting, Granite City Days Parade Float) and encountered some difficulties coordinating things we will NOT be doing a 4th of July neighborhood fundraiser in Hester Park this year.

HOWEVER – next year is the 100th birthday of Hester Park, so next summer there will be a celebration!

Fireworks Volunteers Needed

The Fourth of July fireworks organizers have asked us to assist in recruiting volunteers to help with set up (7:00 a.m.) or take down (10:30 p.m.) of the "V.I.P." section for event sponsors which will be above the water treatment plant. If you can help, please contact Kaye (259-8737) or Wanda (248-3900.)

Meet Your Neighbor

Sue Pundsack LOVES her home on 6th Avenue North! She moved in along with her energetic Avon Terrier "Pepper" in August 2005.

Sue's house is just 6 blocks from where her Mom lives and only a few blocks from where she grew up near St. Raphael's Convent, now Place of Hope. Her parents both worked for the convent for 50 years while raising their family of six boys and one girl. Being part of such a big family she learned to work hard. Her first job was working for the Benedictine Sisters at St. Scholastica, the home for retired Sisters. "You really learn how to do things the right way from the Sisters," Sue said. "There isn't a speck of dust or a badly made bed anywhere out there." She also said she learned about caring and compassion from the Sisters.



Sue Pundsack

Sue graduated with a teaching degree from SCSU in 1988 and she has been teaching at St. Mary's Catholic School in Melrose ever since. She teaches sixth grade and she truly loves her students and her job. She often plays guitar and sings for school masses with "her kids."

Sue says that all six of her brothers have special skills and they all help her out. In turn, she loves to have family and friends gather at her house. She hosts the family Christmas and she also has the annual pumpkin carving contest at her home. Last year there were 38 people participating.

Music is a big part of Sue's life. She owns a beautiful hammer dulcimer that she plays often. She's met a lot of people "jamming" at various locations. She's also part of a women's singing group called "Decades." Each of the four women members was born in a different decade, from the 1930's through the 1960's.

You may also see Sue out kayaking on the river below her house or riding her bike as she trains for one of her charity rides. She'll be doing the MS TRAN 5 day 300 mile ride later this summer. To celebrate turning 40 she rode in the AIDS ride – 500 miles from Mpls to Chicago!



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Visitors Flock to First Home Tour

Visitors to the inaugural Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood Home Tour enjoyed a perfect spring day May 2 – suitable for leisurely strolling – and a welcome reception at each of the six featured homes. Performing musicians added elegance to the experience and crafters showing or demonstrating their wares added a touch of whimsy.



Smiling Home Tourists Approach

Everywhere the festive mood was evident. For Northside neighbors it was an opportunity to tour some of the neighborhood's intriguing homes and to meet the owners. Many people walked the route and along the way neighbors waved or called out to each other and gabbed about the day, declaring it a success. The event attracted enthusiastic visitors from outside the neighborhood too, contributing to the 236 tickets that were sold.

Planners intentionally chose a variety of homes to showcase. Michelle and Krister Johnson's home, with its bright lemon-drop exterior, was tastefully appointed with minimalist design. Ann Ringness's cottage, built over a ravine, had a crooked charm most akin to a fairytale. All the neighbors were excited to finally see the inside of our landmark "wavy brick house." Derek Schreifels showed how a little creativity and TLC can make a renovation a success. Some people call Judy Weyren's home the "pepperoni brick house." After the tour most people called it stunning. And it was amazing to see how Vance and Ann Ressler had seamlessly combined

the old with the new when they doubled the size of their home built in 1917.

The day's informal friendliness lent itself to spontaneity. At the Ressler house, as Sue Pundsack played the hammer dulcimer, she looked up and shouted "Paul!" The object of her greeting was Paul Imholte, a member of the local Celtic band Ring of Kerry. Declaring him the master, she insisted he play a song. For the next few moments he transfixed everyone with an impromptu performance. It was that kind of day.



Fran Schellinger, whose father and uncle were carpenters of the "wavy brick house" talks with Kristi and Dave Laliberte

Check out our Neighborhood website at <http://northside-hesterpark.wikispaces.com>
Our goal is to make this an informational and interactive site!

We Saved the Wading Pool!

Thanks to numerous donations from neighbors, other St. Cloud residents, out-of-towners and area businesses the fundraising effort to save the Hester Park pool from closure this summer was a tremendous success!

Northside-Hester Park group began the fundraising effort in late April, immediately after the city announced the planned closure of the pool. Our "get-out-the-word" campaign started with distributing flyers to all neighborhood residents and placing "Save our Pool" donation jars at each house participating in the Home Tour. Before long our news spread to the St. Cloud Times, WJON, KARE 11, and even USA Today, which included Hester Park in a front-page story on May 26th that featured residents and businesses raising private funds to save parks, pools, and fireworks displays across the country from budget cuts.

In early June we were notified by the City that the cost to operate the pool for the summer would be about \$6,100.00, down from the \$7,500 amount originally provided to us, due to cost savings and other reductions. By that time we had already collected more than was needed and the City made plans to open the pool on schedule. It will remain open through the summer and additional funds raised are being earmarked for future park and pool projects.

Our neighborhood is deeply grateful for the generosity of everyone who stepped forward to help us achieve our goal. Many contributions received were accompanied by notes of appreciation that our neighborhood was coming together to find a solution to this problem.

Please refer to the other side of this newsletter pool insert for a listing of everyone who donated to the cause. In particular we encourage you to support the businesses that helped us reach our goal.



Brielle & Ellie tried out the Hester Park pool



We Did It!

Thanks to the overwhelming support of neighbors, friends, business partners, and local organizations, the wading pool at Hester Park opened on schedule on June 13, 2009.

On behalf of everyone who will now be able to enjoy the pool this summer, the Northside-Hester Park Neighborhood would like to thank the following contributors:

Head under Water (\$1,000+)

Krister D. Johnson, Attorney at Law
St. Cloud Optimist Club

Up to the Chin (\$500 - \$999)

CentraCare Health System
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Mary Anne and John Valo
...and many Home Tour attendees!

* on behalf of Joan Rydberg



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