



Pickleball takes St. Louis by storm

by Sal Easterley

If you have driven by any tennis court in the city, you may have noticed the new smaller courts and the dozens of people playing a new tennis-type game. This game is called pickleball.

St. Louis is now a destination for pickleball players all over the country, thanks to the self-described “selfishness” of Mike Chapin. Chapin made it his goal in 2015 to have the city install one pickleball court in Tilles Park on Hampton, which was near his home, so he would not have to travel to Kirkwood Park.

This Niagara Falls, NY native did not attend high school in St. Louis, but has worked at Washington University for the last 18 years. Chapin explains that his “selfish” vision took on a life of its own, taking this tennis player and nationally ranked pickleball player to the forefront of the sport’s expansion in the St. Louis area.

Pickleball was invented in 1965 in the Pacific Northwest and was named for a family pet, rather than the ball. Using existing equipment of a ping-pong paddle, wiffle ball and badminton net, pickleball took off from one backyard to become one of the fastest growing sports in the United States.

“Pickleball is an easy game to learn,” Chapin states as a reason for the sport’s rapid expansion. He also credits its popularity to being a vehicle for social interaction and for quadrupling the number of people that can play on a tennis court. The slow pace allows for conversation that at competitive levels can reach “trash talking” status for the players.

“I have to sometimes un-teach tennis players,” Chapin says in comparing the sport to tennis. “The oversized wiffle ball does not bounce up, placement of the ball is more important than power, and it is a game of strategy where grandchild can play grandparent.”

In 2015, some friends took Chapin to a court and taught him how to play. His teachers ingrained in him the importance of drop shots, the kitchen, and the two-bounce rule. His love especially grew as his body aged and his love for tennis diminished like torn cartilage in a knee. In Chapin’s research he found out that the St. Louis area had only one court, in Kirkwood Park, and one Ambassador, Kathy Westerbeck.

The playing area is on a tennis court surface and has its own rules and jargon just like any game. Chapin has become an ambassador, trainer, instructor, and nationally ranked player in the sport. In May, the visionary and athlete was able to qualify for the National Championship.

Pickleball is extremely easy to learn and play, but Chapin recommends having an expert walk new players through the nuances, rules, and jargon. “The downside is that many people ignore some of the rules and I must re-educate a lot of students during a lesson,” Chapin says.

St. Louis City’s introduction to Pickleball began on a dilapidated court in Tilles Park on Hampton near Chapin’s home. The genesis is documented online with images of “Chainsaw Chapin” digging and clearing debris for the first court in St. Louis City.

With the help of his alderman and the parks department, the court was completed. Even though ■ Cont’d on page 2

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Pickleball (Cont'd from Page 1)

there was a pickleball expansion program in Springfield, IL that he could use as a guide and model, Chapin took it upon himself to create and disperse flyers to invite people to Tilles Park to see what Pickleball was about.

"I wanted to grow it organically," Chapin says. With every flier came a few people and he documented each gathering with pictures, posted to his social media sites and emailed to city authorities. "First there were eight, then 11, then 14, then 16. With every flier and every demonstration the crowds grew."

His determination started to pay dividends and as he began negotiations with city leadership he was able to amass 10 pickleball courts throughout the city in 2016. For comparison, there were 149 tennis courts available for public use at the time.

According to Chapin, St. Louis is now ranked as a top five destination for pickleball tournaments; the area has over 125 courts available and keeps expanding throughout the metro area.

Chapin also believes the COVID-19 pandemic has been a reason for the sport's success, citing a New York newspaper that reported sales of portable pickleball nets were off the charts and that nets were in short supply. "We know parks were shuttered, but when they opened up, tennis was one of the sports deemed to be safe due to social distancing," Chapin remarks. "Pickleball followed. Pickleball can utilize the same court with some tape and lowering of the net."

That being said, when approached by the local alderman about installing pickleball courts in Francis Park, Chapin was initially opposed. "I did not want Francis Park to touch their tennis courts because I did not want to upset the tennis community," Chapin says. "The pickle ball makes more noise and can irritate tennis players that have to share their area. The plastic ball makes a lot of sounds that may interrupt a tennis player and with pickleball allowing four times more players than tennis, there may not be a way to share the courts." Still, pickleball won again and courts are now installed next to the tennis courts in Francis Park.

Pickleball is a great way to save space and money. Instead of the city simply resurfacing 10-year-old tennis courts, they can be retrofitted with tennis and pickleball courts making them multi-use.

Even though the game moves a bit slower, Pickleball can also be a great workout for people with diminishing physical capacity. Scoring is to 11 or 15 points and each game can last 10 to 20 minutes. Professional matches can last up to an hour.

"It is super inclusive, socially engaging, and can still be competitive," Chapin says. "All you have to do is go to a park where people are playing and they will work you in."

2021 holiday lighting awards announced

by Michael & Caitlin Kremer

The holiday decorations and light displays of St. Louis Hills never fail to impress. Each year seems to attract more and more visitors from the neighborhood and beyond. Judging these spectacular displays is never an easy task. This year the judges nominated a total of 53 individual houses for awards! A change in this year's rules required that all winners be active members of the neighborhood association. Judges are also tasked with nominating homes from each section of the neighborhood. The ten individual home award winners for the 2021 season are the following:

- 6493 Rhodes, Bethany Heck
- 6494 Rhodes, Tina Baraba
- 62 Willmore, Cheryl and Gary Steffens
- 6555 Murdoch, Mary and Ben Moramarco
- 5220 Tamm, Kory and Patrick Hinrichs
- 4716 Prague, Stacy and Russ Smith
- 6544 Neosho, Janice Starbuck and Tom Scheifler
- 6612 Neosho, Megan and Greg Santacruz
- 6246 Delor, Ellen and Robert Willner
- 5815 Walsh, Mary Kay and Scott Kirchner

In addition to these ten homes, one multifamily property, 5815 Nottingham, won the award for Best Decorated

Multi-Family Property. Hope United Church was the recipient of this year's Best Decorated Business Award. Judges admired the vast number of bushes strung with lights around the property.

Three beloved blocks, Candy Cane Lane (6500 Murdoch), Angel Avenue (4700 Prague), and Snowflake Street (6500 Neosho) rounded out the winners of the Best Decorated Block Award.

Congratulations to all of the winners and nominees!



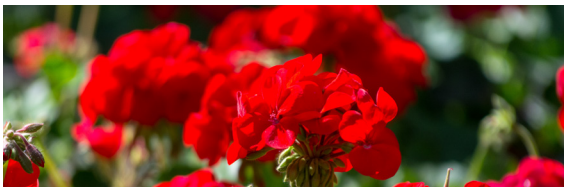
5220 Tamm was one of ten individual home winners for the 2021 holiday lighting awards. Photo provided by Michael and Caitlin Kremer.

SAVE THE DATE

Ascension Lutheran Church's Annual **THINK SPRING SALE**

Saturday, April 30, 2022 | 9AM to 1PM

Choose from a colorful selection of fresh, locally grown annuals, perennials, vegetables and hanging baskets. Brighten landscapes or give to Mom for Mother's Day!



Please visit AscensionSTL.com/PLANTS after March 1 for complete details and to download the order form.

Pre-order required and due by April 13, 2022 for annual flowers.

Proceeds benefit our youth activities.

Questions?

Karen Hilkerbaumer - 314-378-2977 | gbomber@swbell.net
or Julie Headrick - 314-258-2169 | hea102@sbcglobal.net

Pickleball (Cont'd from Page 2)

If you want lessons, there are several places that can accommodate you including taking professional lessons from someone like Chapin. www.pickleballteachers.com is one such resource. Equipment can be bought online for less than \$40.

So, if you happened to receive a set of paddles and balls from your children for Christmas, go to any city park and begin your journey. If you meet Mike Chapin at your park, know that you have met a person that achieved his goal and introduced you to a new game and social activity – and more than achieved his goal of just one court.

For more information, visit the websites of the USA Pickleball Association (www.usapa.org) or St. Louis Pickleball (www.stlouispickleball.com).

A more normal Christmas



Clockwise from upper left:

- Partygoers mingle at the annual St. Louis Hills holiday party.
 - The second annual Santa Parade prepares to depart on its route through the neighborhood.
 - Santa waves to the assembled crowd during the parade.
 - Fredbird entertains the crowd at the annual Christmas tree lighting in Francis Park.
- Photos by Nan Vordtriede, Dee Baebler and Sarah Seger.



30 trees planted in Francis Park

On the morning of November 7, 2021, 30 new trees were planted in Francis Park. From left to right, the tree planting crew consisted of Brad Arteaga, Mike Banahan, Pepe Greco, Pepe Greco Jr., and Dominic Arteaga. Photo provided by Brad Arteaga.

The trees were provided by Project CommuniTree, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri's free tree program, and included:

- 4 Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)
- 6 Cherrybark Oak (*Quercus pagoda*)
- 10 Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*)
- 6 Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arboria*)
- 4 River Birch (*Betula nigra*)

Getting to know Southwest City Dog Park

by Judi Nicoletti

Nestled deep within Willmore Park is a robust dog park. As Southwest City Dog Park begins our 16th year we realize many folks don't know we are here. We thank SLHNA for the invitation to introduce our dog park to St Louis Hills residents. Whether you have a canine in your household or not, we hope you will agree that Southwest City Dog Park is yet another great amenity offered within Willmore Park and its presence brings fantastic value to the neighborhood.

As we wrapped up 2021, we had 1,363 dogs with 463 of them living in 63109, many in the St Louis Hills neighborhood. While some members come from as far away as Olivette, Ballwin, Lemay and the downtown area, most SWCDP households are located within 3-5 miles of Willmore Park. No worries – they do not all come at the same time. People self manage; when it gets too crowded folks tend to go home. But we are growing and need more space.

SWCDP has a wonderful dog-centric community. We do not discriminate against any breed – all well behaved dogs are welcome. We have purebreds and mixed breeds – some acquired through reputable breeders but most adopted from various rescue organizations. Dogs range from our

smallest, a 5 lb Pomeranian, and our largest, a 180 lb Great Dane – and everything in between.

Per an agreement between St Louis City Parks and SWCDP, we have a thorough vetting process. SWCDP requires proof of current canine vaccines, paying the annual user fee, and signing a city-required waiver. And just as important, human members agree that both humans and canines will behave according to all SWCDP rules and protocols. But, even with all the vetting, SWCDP is an animal based facility and as such we are a Use At Your Own Risk venue.

It was agreed that SWCDP will collect an annual membership fee to finance necessary operational costs. We are proud of the fact that we have raised fees only slightly a couple times since 2006.

2022 SWCDP membership fees for the first dog is \$52 for City and \$67 for Non-City residents. A \$15 fee applies for additional dogs in the same household (maximum 3 dogs). An awesome deal considering most users come more than once a week – many come daily. We will be in a transitional period until our master redesign project is completed – and that includes a necessary Spring closing to renovate the turf (end of March to May/June, TBD) and shorter periods, as needed throughout the year.

If dogs could talk – their humans tell us they would all be woofing in unison, “Our dog park is our treasure.” Some humans tell us they cannot say the words “dog park” at home without creating a lot of zoomies, spinning, drooling – dog drooling and spinning, that is. Some dogs have learned how to spell dog park. When humans start

spelling d-o-g, many of our dogs go crazy with anticipation before their humans can get to the o.

And other humans have reached the point that they no longer speak about the upcoming car ride. But these wise dogs know what it means when their humans put on their dog park shoes. And, yes, those pups go nuts, too. Once they arrive at the park the happy canines can barely contain themselves until they get through the SWCDP front gate. They know what is in store for them - a promise of fun and friends. This is their turf.

SWCDP has something for everyone.

We see it all. Dogs that enjoy the thrill of running, roughneck players who love to wrestle or tug, dogs addicted to ball fetching, those who find chase exhilarating, and those that prefer hanging out with the humans and just watching the action. We offer a Main playground for the robust play and larger dogs and an Alternate playground for the smaller dogs or dogs who do not appreciate big play. All spaced out on 1.15 acres.

SWCDP is a combination canine fitness center and social club. We have swimming pools, a climbing straw maze and a year round Agility course. Also, a much loved Dog Wash where dogs can shower off after their workout.

Before Covid, SWCDP held 3-4 social events each year plus events featuring various trainers or Veterinarians speaking about dog behavior/training and health/safety issues. We are working towards bringing many of these back once we see how 2022 shapes up. We did re-instate our Halloween party in 2021 and everyone had a blast!

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Dogs chase each other through the Southwest City Dog Park. Photo provided by Judi Nicoletti.

Dog Park (Cont'd from Page 5)

Dog Sports. Yes, there is such a thing and SWCDP are big supporters. Let's talk Agility. This sport provides a fantastic bonding experience between human and canine. Working together as a team, it is wonderful physical exercise but just as important is the mental stimulation. Some dogs only discover they actually have feet after they learn how to maneuver through weave poles or run up the A-frame.

SWCDP offers a free Agility Intro each year. Participants learn about the equipment and pick up tips as they move their dogs through the agility stations. Giving the dogs a chance for paws-on practice usually creates a desire for more Agility. Many demo participants go on to the SWCDP sponsored training series. Partnering with our Agility Trainer we are happy to offer deeply discounted training opportunities. Having Agility and training options on site is another SWCDP benefit. SWCDP plans to develop other dog sports opportunities, such as Treibball and Nose Work activities; hopefully, debuting in 2022.

Looking back at SWCDP beginnings.

To appreciate how far we have come – looking back is worth reviewing. In a nutshell, a few area residents had a dream for a City dog park, long before dog parks became as popular as they are today. Blazing through a unique set of challenges, the hard work began in 2004 and SWCDP finally opened its gates in September 2006.

The founders influenced several City Alders – led by Donna Baringer – to create an appropriate ordinance (66595), convinced St Louis City Parks Department to provide a small section of Willmore Park, won necessary organizational sponsorship via the Southampton Neighborhood

Association, found donors to provide start up money and recruited volunteers to do the work. Current and future dog park users will be forever grateful for the vision and dedication demonstrated during those early years.

Southwest City Dog Park became the first dog park located within the St Louis City Parks Department's system and we are still the largest dog park in the City. The agreement between SWCDP and the City means SWCDP is responsible for everything inside our fence. SWCDP handles all administrative work including membership processing and maintenance tasks as well as property improvements.

We are committed to continuous improvements and each year we set aside some of our membership fees or do special fundraising to make positive changes. A few examples include an underground sprinkler system in 2010, additional water stations in 2012, dog wash and pool pad in 2013, access control system and several website and computer upgrades in 2018-2019, fence replacement in 2019 and 2021, and shipping container on-site storage 2021.

Volunteers make Southwest City Dog Park possible. Without SWCDP members pitching in, operating the dog park would not be possible. We have no paid staff. Our volunteers are pawesome and everything we have accomplished is because of our volunteers.

But, many of our volunteers are no longer available. Some aged out or passed away, relocated or have a variety of personal or business changes. SWCDP is consistently told we have a well run and clean dog park; we do try to run a tight ship. We ask our current or future members

to think about how they might help SWCDP keep our high standards as well as develop the dog park even more.

A look forward is both exciting and challenging. In spite of all the successes and good things we have talked about, SWCDP is not without challenges. During all of these achievements, we have been developing a plan for a major dog park redesign to solve operational problems as well as adding more amenities and increasing the dog park footprint to help manage our growth.

We hope to announce a final plan in 2022 and begin a fundraising campaign. We have been busy discussing options with current members and outside contractors as well as input from Parks Department and the Ward 12 Alderman. We are grateful to Bill Stephens, our Alderman and Kim Haegele, Parks Commissioner for their support of our project – but we have a long way to go. We expect this to be a 2-3 year project.

Key issues to address in the master plan include resolving ongoing turf destruction, wastewater troubles, occasional theft and vandalism, outgrowing our space, adding more fun stuff, and more.

For more info visit SWCDP website at www.swcitydogpark.org.



Two dogs cool off in the Southwest City Dog Park. Photo provided by Judi Nicoletti.

LeGrand's Market thrives despite pandemic

by Chip Kastner

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, one of the first things Jim LeGrand did was go to Home Depot and buy all the plexiglass they had in stock.

"We were one of the first stores in St. Louis to do that," LeGrand, the owner of LeGrand's Market and Catering in St. Louis Hills, says. "At first, I thought we would cause a panic by doing that, but it worked."

As a grocery store, LeGrand's never had to close its doors to its customers. Still, despite the plexiglass barriers, masks, and sanitizing procedures, many customers did not feel comfortable coming inside, so LeGrand's began to offer alternative shopping options.

"Curbside service really did ease a lot of the customers' concerns," LeGrand says. "We did deliveries to a few customers that would not leave their homes."

However, when indoor dining was temporarily banned during the spring of 2020, more significant changes had to be made to LeGrand's deli operations. The tables and chairs in the middle of the store were all put up. Made-to-order hot sandwiches were temporarily replaced with cold premade versions.

"We started a hot pizza program that was abruptly changed by the pandemic," LeGrand says. "It changed to a frozen pizza program that has been selling out each week. St. Louis Hills loves their Legend Pizza."

As more time passes since the arrival of COVID-19, LeGrand has contemplated whether some of the changes could be here to stay.

"Masks and sanitizing procedures can't hurt any of us,"



While COVID-19 necessitated some changes, LeGrand's Market in St. Louis Hills has thrived during the pandemic. Photo provided by Jim LeGrand.

LeGrand says.

Through it all, LeGrand was proud of the sense of community spirit that was brought out during the worst stages of the pandemic.

"I had customers offering to help bag groceries. Barbecue for us, or anything else they could do to help," LeGrand says. "They never hoarded toilet paper, milk, eggs or anything else. Most impressive of all was how they all told us how much they appreciated us being there."

"That's why I love St. Louis Hills," LeGrand adds.

Annual Easter Egg Hunt in Francis Park!

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR for the St. Louis Hills Neighborhood Association's Annual Easter Egg Hunt in Francis Park. Children up to 3rd grade can gather eggs filled with candy and prize coupons. Children in 4th – 8th grades will search an extended area to find FOUR GOLD EGGS with a \$25 prize in each egg.

The Easter Bunny's helpers will be on hand to help the little ones and for photo opportunities.

In addition, representatives from St. Louis Children's Hospital will be on hand to sell and fit bicycle helmets. Adults and children may bring their own helmet to be fitted for free, or children may purchase a new one for \$11 per helmet. The child must be present to purchase a helmet. We hope to see you all there!

Saturday, April 16, 2022 / Francis Park near the playground area

Bicycle helmet sale and fitting 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. / Easter Egg Hunt begins at 11 a.m.

Registration for the event is not required.

Adults are welcome to come at 9:30 a.m. to help set up. Many volunteers are needed!

Any questions, please email Angie LeGrand at Anhelita19@gmail.com. Thanks for your support!

Housing spotlight: 6527 Nottingham


by Nina Chastain

In 1934, Miss Elsie Straube and Miss Lorene Ferguson launched their new home at 6527 Nottingham Avenue for the price of \$4,500. The Cyrus Crane Willmore Development Corporation was touting St. Louis Hills as “The ideal location for a country home in the city with fresh air and sunshine.” Building a new home was a brave undertaking with 25 percent of Americans unemployed at the time. But the two ladies had a great architect, steady jobs, and loads of their own talent to lend to the project.

Jules F. Reither was the chosen architect and builder. He designed several notable homes in St. Louis, University City and Webster Groves. Reither was later known for modern kitchen design and worked to incorporate practicality by reintroducing use of pantries.

Straube and Ferguson both taught at McKinley High School. Straube was born in St. Louis in 1902. Her father was an upholsterer and cabinetmaker. She graduated from Harris-Stowe College with her master’s degree and was only 31 years old when she built their home. Newspaper articles on social events often mentioned Straube, who loved entertaining.

The first edition of News of St. Louis Hills expounded on Straube’s and Ferguson’s artwork creating their own lamps, fireplace screens, and needlepoint on the dining room chair seats. While the furnishings are gone, there are five remaining window panes with rolled lead between two pieces of glass depicting scenes from exotic places around the world, and events like the Olympic discus thrower.

St. Louis Hills is full of gorgeous and charming homes featuring different architectural styles. For 6527 Nottingham,  **Cont’d on page 9**



Clockwise from top:

- 6527 Nottingham as it appeared in News of St. Louis Hills, vol. 1 ed.1, 1935.

- The rolled lead window pane is one of five decorative windows surviving from the house’s early days.

- Elsie Straube was one of the two original owners of 6527 Nottingham.

Photos provided by Nina Chastain.


Why I opened my business in St. Louis Hills

by Chris and Catherine Saracino

Look around South Saint Louis, do you see an orthodontist office? Neither did the Saracinos. That’s why Dr. Catherine Saracino opened her orthodontics office in St. Louis Hills in July of 2021. “There is obviously a need for orthodontics in the City of St. Louis. I was working in offices in Arnold and West County and realized my neighbors were traveling that far for care too.”

Talking with family, friends and neighbors in St. Louis Hills, Dr. Saracino quickly realized the residents of South St. Louis were having to travel far to Sunset Hills or Webster to see an Orthodontist. She wanted to change that. “I wanted to open an office here, where I live, and provide the best care to people right here in their own neighborhood.”

Her new office is located at 6555 Chippewa St., Ste. 200. She and her husband opened the office to further their investment into their community. “Why should our neighbors in St. Louis Hills have to travel the highway just for braces or Invisalign? With so many local dentists, we thought we should also have a specialist in the area.” Dr. Saracino offers a variety of services from traditional braces for both children and adults, Invisalign, clear and ceramic braces. She strives to provide the best care for her community while making it affordable for everyone.

Catherine Saracino, MS, DMD, MS moved to St. Louis in July of 2016. Her education took her from her hometown of Jasper, Indiana to the University of Notre Dame to Louisville, Kentucky and eventually SLU.  **Cont’d on page 11**

2021 and 2022 at the Board of Aldermen

by Tom Oldenburg, Ward 16 Alderman



Happy New Year, St. Louis Hills Residents!

I hope that this note finds you well-rested from a holiday season filled with memorable neighborhood events. Whether you strolled down Candy Cane Lane, attended the annual Christmas tree lighting, celebrated at the St. Louis

Hills holiday party or simply decorated the exterior of your own home – you helped show St. Louisans how much our neighborhood embodies the holiday spirit.


Looking ahead to 2022, my work continues to be comprised of two main areas: tackling citywide issues through the Board of Aldermen, and assisting Ward 16 residents with their day-to-day problems.

On the citywide front, my work on the Capital and Ways and Means committees keeps me very busy. We continue to work closely on appropriating the large amounts of federal Covid-relief dollars and the NFL lawsuit proceeds that have been committed to St. Louis.

Also, the City's annual budget planning process is already underway. Being in the banking profession, I continue to place a priority on maximizing revenues and wisely spending... as we work to approve a new budget this summer and find quality of life returns on the uses of this federal money.

Back in our neighborhood, quality of life and safety continues to be my top priority. I am pleased to report that in 2021, my office helped facilitate:

- 808 visits from the City's Forestry Division to handle branch removal, tree trimming and weeding;
- 58 pothole repairs by the Streets Department in our streets and alleyways;
- 1,104 responses from the City's

 Cont'd on page 11

6527 Nottingham (Cont'd from Page 8)

it's the Mediterranean revival architecture that's eye-catching. Mediterranean revival is a combination of different styles meant to recreate the relaxing oasis of a warm, luxurious seaside villa, blending elements from the Spanish Renaissance, Spanish Colonial, Italian Renaissance, and Venetian, Gothic, and Arabic styles. Because the style is eclectic, Jules Reither was able to blend Mediterranean and Art Deco, as well as some colonial, to make the house unique.

6527's exterior has the signature red tile roof with wide eaves, rock walkways and porches, arched doorways and outdoor courtyards. While the original white paint on 6527's bricks has just about worn completely off, it still retains some lighter color in sheltered porches. The exterior has wrought iron grills on the front windows and ornamental wrought iron on the balcony. The airy living room with large windows focuses on the backyard garden. Narrow art deco style stained glass windows face Nottingham.

Hand-hewn oak beams with wide pine paneling make the ceiling special, with wrought iron stretchers from wall to wall. Recessed lighting behind wide wood trim runs the

length of the stucco walls. The brick fireplace has a heavy oak mantle. The original steel-framed windows have been replaced with much more efficient ones; however, the five panes of artwork were saved. The doorways have wood rope molding and red tile floors.

Original linoleum, popular in the 1930s, is still on the second floor landing. An art deco stained glass window echoes the oranges and reds in the floor. The bedroom is entered through four French doors framed with redwood – which was likely from the virgin timber stands in California. The bedroom is distinguished with a high barrel ceiling and oak floor. The master bath also has a barrel ceiling.

6527 Nottingham was home to the two ladies until sometime in the late 1940s. Next, Mr. William G. Sieber had the home at least into the 1980s. Mr. Lee Hutchings was the owner starting in the '90s, who put his own signature art into it. Now, Gary and Nina Chastain are working to restore and improve the home with refinished woodwork and redesigned gardens, as they hope to make the unique home shine.

Further adventures in home security gadgets

by Chip Kastner

If you read our autumn 2021 edition of this newsletter, you may have seen an article I wrote called “Ring vs. Nest: Which one should I choose?”. I discovered the perils of writing about technology in a quarterly newsletter when my article became outdated between the time I sent it to the printer and the time that it was printed.

Namely, Ring doubled the monthly price of their offering. Previously, \$10/month would get you 60 days of video history for all your cameras, cellular backup for your alarm system, and professional monitoring. Now, \$10/month will only get you the video history; for cellular backup and professional monitoring, you now need to spend \$20/month. (People who were paying for professional monitoring before the price increase will keep the old price through 2025.)

To complement the new \$20/month tier, they introduced a new device called the Ring Alarm Pro base station. The cost is a bit steep (\$249), but it serves as both an alarm base station and a wireless router. If you’re paying for the professional monitoring and have one of these devices, you can get cellular backup internet connectivity for your whole house through the device; you can also insert an SD card to store footage from your Ring cameras in case you lose internet connectivity. I haven’t bought one of these yet; online reviews aren’t great. It seems that many manufacturers rush to get their devices on the market as soon as possible and then work out the kinks through

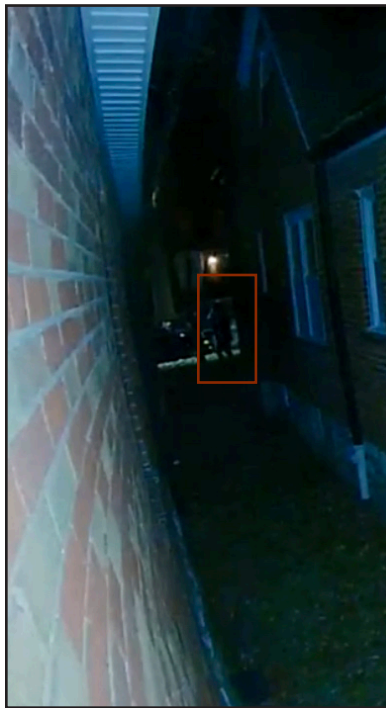
automatic software updates. I’ll keep an eye out to see if the reviews improve.

I did buy a few other gadgets since the last article, though. Ring sells a host of “smart lighting” solutions, and I purchased an outdoor smart plug. This is a weathersafe device that allows you to independently control two outlets through the Ring app. I have some string lights in my backyard that I connect to one outlet, and I connect holiday lights to the other; I use the app to have them turn on at sunset and turn off at 10 p.m. (for the string lights) and 11 p.m. (for the holiday lights).

Like most Ring devices, there are opportunities for linkage with other Ring products. If the alarm goes off or one of the outdoor cameras in the backyard detect motion after 10 p.m., the string lights turn back on. I’ve been quite pleased with the lights so far; my only complaint is that to control smart lights, you have to buy a “Ring Bridge.” The bridge can control up to 50 smart light devices and can be bought in a bundle with the outdoor smart plug for \$50.

I also purchased a couple of Ring’s new outdoor contact sensors; I put one on each of the gates in my fence, and they’ll trip the alarm if it’s armed and one of the gates is opened. My wife forgot about this feature when we were out of town, and asked our neighbor to put a package on our back porch; the neighbor complimented the alarm on how responsive it was, but it gave her a bit of a fright.

Cont’d on page 13



After several months, I finally felt vindicated in my purchase of a large number of Ring products when the motion lights on one of my cameras scared off a potential burglar at four o’clock in the morning.

In this series of images, you can see the trespasser exit his vehicle, freeze when the motion-activated spotlight turned on, and flee back to his vehicle as quickly as possible.

Photos provided by Chip Kastner.

Saracino Orthodontics (Cont'd from Page 8)

After graduating dental school in Louisville, Dr. Saracino completed her Orthodontics Residency at St. Louis University. During residency she met and married her husband, Chris Saracino Jr. They now have a new baby girl, MaryRose.

Chris and many generations of his family have grown up in St. Louis Hills. The Saracino family immigrated here from Italy and put roots down on Kinsey Place, just south of Francis Park. Bart and Roseanne Saracino, Chris's grandparents, opened LaCino's Restaurant on Hampton Ave. The four boys of Bart and Roseanne all attended St. Raphael the Archangel school and three of the four continued through Bishop Dubourg High School. The Saracino boys continued the family restaurant business through owning and operating Bartolino's Osteria and Chris' Pancake and Dining, both of which have been supporting St. Louis Hills for many years.

Chris' maternal family, the Simons, also grew up in St.

Louis Hills, on Tamm Ave. and then later on Homeland Place. Judge Paul Simon served the Eastern District of Missouri as an appellate judge from St. Louis Hills. Extremely proud of his neighborhood, Judge Simon was an advocate for St. Louis Hills in many respects. Judge Simon and his wife, Mary Jane, educated all five of their children in the St. Gabriel the Archangel parish.

When Chris and Catherine were married they moved into their first home together in South St. Louis. As Dr. Saracino continued to work in offices outside the city she hoped one day for her own office. As they began looking for an opportunity to open their own office, they saw no better opportunity than right here in St. Louis Hills. Dr. Saracino hopes to provide excellent orthodontic care to her community throughout her career right here, in St. Louis Hills, where she and her family enjoy deep and meaningful ties.

Tom Oldenburg (Cont'd from Page 9)

Refuse Division to address overflowing dumpsters, illegal dumping and bulk item disposal; and
- 369 responses to property maintenance issues throughout our neighborhoods.

Careful planning and coordination resulted in the completion of more than \$800,000 in improvements in Francis Park in 2021, including two brand-new pickleball courts, the resurfacing of all the current tennis courts, the much needed sewer work for the creek and the private investment made by Rockwell Brewing Company which activates the center of our Park.

A few more projects, including new playground equipment and additional drinking fountains are just around the

corner. I want to thank the Friends of Francis Park for their continued support and oversight of these efforts – and the residents of St. Louis Hills for their patience throughout all the construction.

Lastly, if you have an issue that you want to discuss, please contact me at (314) 896-0204 or oldenburgt@stlouis-mo.gov.

You can also follow me on Facebook or Twitter (just search for @OldenburgSTL to get started) or sign up for my e-newsletter at www.ward16stl.com.

No matter what your preferred method of communication is, please know that I look forward to hearing from you soon.

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Protect yourself from door-to-door scammers

by Pat Talley, Crime and Safety Education

We all know that sinking feeling when we answer the doorbell thinking it's a delivery or visitor and instead find a door-to-door solicitor.

Most of the time it's someone selling legitimate services like internet service, new windows, solar panels or roofing. This is perfectly legal and these people may be selling something of value to you.

However, there is also a class of solicitor that is out to scam you and it's important to understand the difference and what your rights are in dealing with these people.

Selling door-to-door is legal within city limits between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with proper photo I.D., license and permit. However, not providing services paid for, and not leaving private property when asked to do so, is against the law.

If you enter into a conversation with a salesperson, ask to see their permit and photo I.D. and confirm they are employed by the company they claim to work for. Without proper identification, ask them to leave. If they refuse to leave, call 9-1-1.

Some typical statements used by scammers are that part of the sale will go to a charitable organization, the person was at one time addicted to drugs but getting straightened out, they are in a contest to win a trip, they are raising money for a school, the product has been specially discounted for you, or they are conducting a survey.

These declarations are red flags and you should not feel embarrassed or guilty in protecting yourself and asking this person to leave. Additionally, you should not allow anyone into your house to use a phone even when they claim to be a neighbor or that their car is broken down nearby.

If you have confirmed that a solicitor has the proper permits and identification and you would like to discuss what they are offering, keep the following tips from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in mind:

- Ask yourself if you really need to product or service being offered;
- Do not give our personal financial information like a bank check or credit card unless you know the company;
- Don't allow pressure tactics to push you into a purchase you are uncomfortable with;
- If you sign a contract in your home you can cancel within 10 days by giving a notice of cancellation via email, fax or registered letter;
- If your agreement contains an estimate, the final price cannot be more than 10 percent above it;
- Consumer agreements must disclose important details and if they are not included you can cancel within one year;
- Contracts can be canceled if they provider does not perform its obligations within 30 days;
- By law there is a minimum warranty on the quality of services;
- You are protected by law against unfair business practices such as deceptive promotion and sales tactics. If such a thing occurs you rescind the agreement within one year;
- When you cancel an agreement signed in your home any other arrangements you made as a result of the purchase, like a financing agreement, are also canceled.

It's an unfortunate fact that disreputable people are out there and a good day at the office for them is scamming as many people as possible out of their hard-earned money.

For more information, search the internet: AARP and the Consumer Federation of America have information on their websites that may be helpful.



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Security Gadgets (Cont'd from Page 10)

I had really hoped to be able to review the Ring Always Home camera by the time this newsletter was published, but I wasn't able to get my hands on one. This is Ring's flying indoor drone camera. When the alarm detects motion (or when you manually trigger it), it takes off from its perch and flies one of several pre-programmed routes to investigate the scene. One nice feature is that when it's on the docking station, the camera is physically blocked from being able to see anything, which is a nice benefit for people who don't like the idea of a camera in their house. Maybe I'll be able to tell you how it works in the next issue.

In my last article, I talked about the importance of good wifi connectivity for wireless cameras, and I've really gotten a lesson in this topic in the last few months. Two of my cameras are over 100 feet apart from each other, with multiple 12-inch solid brick walls in between. To my knowledge, there aren't any commercially-available wireless routers at a reasonable price that can provide strong connectivity across that distance.

For that, you need to invest in a mesh wifi system, which allows you to combine multiple wireless routers spread around your house into a single wifi network. I used to have a relatively inexpensive mesh system made by TP-Link; unfortunately, these routers kept giving me trouble, requiring frequent reboots and providing inconsistent connectivity.

I decided to splurge on a pricier mesh system, in this case the Eero Pro 6. Much like Ring, Eero is owned by Amazon (the aforementioned Ring Alarm Pro contains an Eero router). Any Eero can talk to any other Eero, so if you strategically place several of them around your house, they can provide a single strong wifi network covering your entire property.

The reason I chose the Eero Pro 6 specifically is because it's a "tri-band" router. This means that the Eero Pro 6 devices on your network talk to each other via a dedicated radio channel. (Wifi is, after all, just radio waves.) "Dual band" mesh routers, which are more common and generally lower in cost, use the same radio channel to talk to each other that they use to talk to all of your devices.

In other words, if your dual band router is sending data to your phone, it can't be sending data to another router at the same time. With enough load, your network's performance can suffer. A tri-band router can help keep up the performance under higher loads. I've been happy with the Eero Pro 6 so far, and setup is extremely easy.

Now, I've written a lot about spending a bunch of money on home security devices, and you probably have two big questions.

First, am I happy with it? The answer is, "more or less." I used to have some Nest cameras, and I generally found them to be nicer: They can record constantly, the video quality seemed a little better, and the app was more responsive and seemed to have fewer glitches.

However, Nest devices tend to be a bit more expensive than their Ring counterparts; this might not be a big deal if you're buying one, but if you're buying a lot of products, it can add up. Nest also lacks the variety of camera options that Ring sells. Finally, Nest no longer sells an alarm system, and I really like how the Ring alarm, lights and cameras work together.

The same is also true with Reolink, another brand favored by many home security enthusiasts. They have a very impressive and varied camera lineup, but don't have a doorbell camera, smart lighting or alarm system.

So, while Ring may not be the best system out there, it seems to be the one that has the broadest set of features while at a fairly reasonable price.

Second, is it worth it? For several months, my wife said "no" and gently teased me about going overboard. I learned a bit about the techniques of "handle flippers" (see the article on page 12) but my setup didn't really stop any crimes from happening. That is, until this past November.

I was reviewing the overnight events from the cameras, and at four o'clock in the morning saw an SUV drive past our house, stop, turn around, and park right in front. Someone got out of the vehicle, ran across my front yard, and into the very dark and narrow area between my house and my neighbor's.

As soon as he did, the motion lights on the camera that I have on the side of the house went off, he froze in his tracks, and about two seconds later ran back to his car and drove off. I'm not sure what his exact intentions were, but I'm pretty sure either myself or my neighbor would have been burglarized if it weren't for the security camera. My wife told me that it vindicated my spending spree.

No camera or security system is going to work flawlessly or stop every crime; and indeed, my experience shows that handle flippers tend to disregard cameras. However, my experience shows that lights, cameras and an alarm system do play a valuable part in helping to deter criminals.

Come visit your legislators in Jefferson City!

by Donna Baringer, State Representative, Missouri District 82



As your State Representative, I look forward to returning to the State Capitol to serve you. While I have been diligent in attending community events and meetings, I—along with other legislators—will effectively be living in Jefferson City every Monday to Thursday from January until the end of May. I

apologize in advance for any meetings I will be unable to attend during this time frame. Also, consider coming to see your legislators in action. The best days to visit during session are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and Amtrak drops people off in Jefferson City a few steps away from the

Capitol.

To learn more on many current legislative topics, please sign up for the 82nd District email blast at donna.baringer@house.mo.gov, so you may receive all correspondence electronically. To follow how a bill is progressing you can go to the House website at house.mo.gov, and once there, click on the button towards top labeled “Legislation.” Here is where you key in the bill number and find all the detailed information. You can also watch debate on the House floor or committee hearings via livestreams managed on the House site. From the homepage, simply click “House Media Feeds” near the middle of the page, or click “Video” underneath the Chamber Messageboard on the left side of the screen.

Please feel free to contact me if you need assistance.

Let's go out to eat on Watson... in 1974!

by Ron ‘Johnny Rabbitt’ Elz of KMOX

While talking with Chris Saracino at his Chris’ Pancake & Dining, and enjoying a Johnny Rabbitt Special Breakfast (of course), we reminisced about some of our area’s dining and drinking spots of the past. So I zeroed in on the random year of 1974 when the corner section of his place was Joe Pizoni’s tavern, there was a Farmer’s Market across Watson at 2807, plus the Crossbar lounge at 2817. Chris’s dad, Bartolomeo, at that time had Bartolino’s at Hampton and Columbia.

If you headed toward St. Louis Hills on Watson there was Meglio’s Luigi’s Pizza and Italian eats; now Rich Lo Russo’s. The Meglio family bought the place from my parents who had taken over from Fred P. Rapp of supermarket fame and fortune. The Schultze Pasty Shop was in that same strip, as was Catanzaro Produce and across the street it was the Watson House restaurant.

Next at Pernod where the Komorek’s Trattoria Marcella is located, it was Ron & Shirley’s Pizza and Italian food. The late Ron Preiss and Shirley Venezia and yours truly spent many years together at Mallinckrodt School. Then there was, and is, the venerable Pietro’s at Mardel that now, and for many a year, has been under the auspices of the Iovaldi family.

In ’74 if you were a donut fan there was Dunkin’ Donuts

at the northeast corner of Chippewa and Macklind... and the Donut Drive In at Donovan and Watson. On Chippewa at Sulphur it was the Ranch House bar and dining house (they served a fine spaghetti and meatball dinner). It was in the small ranch house style white brick building that’s still there. The much-missed White Castle that for decades had commanded the southwest corner of Chippewa and Hampton was in place in ’74, but the carhops were no more. In the 6000 block on the north side it was the Plush Steer, and Pilot House Kitchens, where fried chicken was king.

The International House of Pancakes was in place at 6301 Chippewa, and in what had been Stan Musial & Biggie’s it was a Flaming Pit. Burger Chef was on the south side of Chippewa at Childress, and Dobb’s House was at the wedge at Watson. There was Miss Sheri’s cafeteria at 6500, and Kentucky Fried Chicken was at Donovan. The Chilton Motor Lodge sported the Chilton Room restaurant in the hotel that had been built for a Howard Johnson’s, with a restaurant, when I-44 had been planned to be much closer to the old Route 66.

6600 Chippewa in ’74 was home of Saro’s Sunny Italy, and the last dining establishment at that address was Garavelli’s. Where Starbucks is located at Lansdowne, there for many years was a Steak ‘n Shake. Ted Drewes Cont’d on page 15

Combat loneliness: Connect with neighbors

by John O'Leary (www.johnolearyinspires.com). Reprinted with author's permission. Edited for length.

For many, with the click of a button, our garage door opens, we pull our car in, push the button and the garage door shuts behind us. We enter our house without needing to interact with anyone.

According to a 2018 study done by Pew Research Center, only 26% of us report knowing most of the people living around us. Even more is that 21% of the youngest of us, ages 18 to 29, report that they do not know a single neighbor.

The cynics reading this are thinking, "Who cares? I have enough friends. I am busy enough. The garage door is there for a reason. I don't need more relationships. And besides, have you met my neighbor, O'Leary!?"

But in a world where we are digitally connected to innumerable others, the majority of us report feeling more isolated and lonelier than ever. The solution to combat loneliness isn't connecting with more and more people digitally. Instead, it's putting energy into building enduring, authentic relationships. Not that it can't be done virtually, but the depth of connecting with someone in close physical proximity can't be overlooked.

Years ago, I watched as a man walked past my house with a white cane by himself. As the cane swiped and searched the terrain in front of him, I was amazed he was able to navigate the neighborhood without the ability to see. A

few days later I was outside working and saw him walk by again. Finally, a few days later I was playing outside with my son and when the same man

walked by, I introduced myself.

I learned during this visit, and the many that followed, that Bill lost his vision and nearly his life when he was shot by a stranger at close range. About the murder of the two men he was walking with. The early months he spent learning to navigate life unable to see. And how, eventually, he was able to learn new skills like skiing without the ability to see. As he shares his stories, I'm constantly in awe of how he boldly moves through each day.

Bill released an outstanding book called *Snow Blind* detailing his story, his injuries, the mindset required to overcome them, the people who showed up to support him, and an unlikely romance with a nurse who took care of him and ultimately became his bride.

Years ago, in my front yard, playing with my kids, focusing on my life, I watched as a neighbor a few doors down made his way with the assistance of a white cane guiding him along the bumpy sidewalk past my home. And I almost let him walk past, again, without saying a word.

I remain grateful we connected that day and became friends over time. Bill and Ginny have enriched our lives, not just through the manner in which they live theirs, but by reminding those who take the time to meet them of the limitless possibilities within ours.

Life can feel isolating, divisive and difficult but it doesn't have to. There remains cause for confidence, optimism and joy. Perhaps the best place to begin rebuilding, reconnecting and returning to the truth that better days remain ahead is with the very people in our neighborhood.

You might reach out to them simply because it's the nice, neighborly thing to do. But in doing so, the life that will be elevated, inspired and changed could be yours.

Johnny Rabbitt (Cont'd from Page 14)

Frozen Custard had been just where it is for 33 years in '74. A Baskin-Robbins was at the southwest corner at Prather, and Grau pastries was on the north side of the street. There was the Georgetown lounge at 6986 east of McCausland and Mascara's on the north side at River Des Peres. The westernmost address

on Chippewa was that of the Liberty Supermarket.

Looking over the list of these I've noted that 12 of the proprietors of these places once made St. Louis Hills their home. I could go on, but so as not to hog too much space I'll save Hampton, etc. for another time.



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Community Outreach/Business Liaison:
Don Veile, 314-444-0168, dlveile@slmpd.org

Problem Properties Officers:
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Dave Krapf, dekrapf@slmpd.org

Crimestoppers: 866-371-TIPS

City Fraud Hotline: 314-641-8600

Citizens Service Bureau: 314-622-4800

Refuse Division: 314-353-8900

Neighborhood Improvement Specialist, Ward 16:

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Upcoming Events

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April 16, 11:00 a.m.: Easter Egg Hunt & Bike Helmet Sale/Fitting @ Francis Park Playground

April 30, 9:00 a.m.: Think Spring Sale @ Ascension Lutheran



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