

PARK NEWS



POST-DISPATCH LAKE AND GOVERNMENT HILL

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Director's Corner

*A season
of gratitude
and renewal*

Dear Members and Friends,

In the months since the May 16 tornado devastated the St. Louis region, many of us have faced extraordinary challenges. At Forest Park Forever, we had to manage potentially competing demands: maintaining our daily care of Forest Park (p. 9), advancing projects already planned or underway (pp. 4–7) and beginning tornado recovery efforts (p. 9). Thanks to Park advocates like you, we have not yet had to choose between these priorities.

Immediately after the storm, hundreds of volunteers helped Forest Park Forever and the City of St. Louis make the Park safe and accessible again. New and renewing members provided essential funds that allowed us to sustain the level of care our visitors expect. And generous donors contributed specifically to tornado recovery efforts.

I am deeply grateful for this generosity. Renewing memberships and attracting new members is vital for our ability to make repairs and improvements as Park usage and maintenance costs continue to rise.

Our entire team hopes you were able to enjoy a beautiful, heartwarming fall in Forest Park with us! As we move into a quieter season, there remains so much to see, do and appreciate in the Park (p. 8).

This newsletter includes updates about ongoing projects and a look ahead at upcoming events. It also provides some highlights of what we achieved together in 2025. I hope that reading these instills a sense of pride in the important work you help make possible!

With gratitude,

Lesley S. Hoffarth, P.E.
President and Executive Director



Save the Date for Trivia Night

Join us on Saturday, February 7, for our annual trivia night, hosted by the Young Friends of Forest Park Forever! Our very own fearlessly leading Lesley will be on hand to provide optimism and inspiration at the *Parks and Recreation*-themed event! Stay tuned for registration and sponsorship opportunities at forestparkforever.org/trivia.



"Go find your team. Get to work."
—Leslie Knope



Forever a Place for All of Us

Forest Park. It's forever where we walk, run, ride and play. Forever a place for making memories with family, friends and neighbors. Forever a habitat for native species and sanctuary for migrating wildlife. Forever a community space open to all. Forever our favorite urban park.

Because Forest Park is *ours*, it's up to us to sustain it. The May 16 tornado was a reminder of how quickly the things we love can change—and the high emotional and financial costs of restoring them. In this season of gratitude and giving, we are grateful for the thousands of supporters who offered to clean up storm debris, donated to tornado recovery and became Forest Park Forever members.

Members like Luke Smith, who considers Forest Park his go-to third space. “I’m there all the time, running, biking, hiking and walking. By myself and with others. We go to the Boathouse. We go ice skating. We take advantage of all the amenities and opportunities to connect with each other and nature.”

Luke was heartbroken by the tornado damage in the Park, even as he was repairing his own home after a tree fell on it in the storm.

Visiting the Park frequently before the tornado, Luke noticed the constant work it took to maintain and improve it. Last year, he decided to become a member of Forest Park Forever and the Young Friends board to lend his support to our mission.

“The Park doesn’t look like this or operate at this level only because of the people who work here. It’s also the time and money so many people give because they love Forest Park. It’s because of them that people come from all over to enjoy it. Without these [volunteers and donors], the Park wouldn’t be what it is. I’m lucky this is my local park that I get to enjoy all the time. I’m happy to support it.”

Thanks to Luke and many others, we’ve made significant progress cleaning up and beginning to restore the Forest Park tree canopy (p. 9). We also continued our daily maintenance and care, completed the East Waterways project (p. 7), advanced the Glade and Steinberg Rink project (pp. 4–5) and began a major renovation of the Boathouse (p. 6).

If you’d like to become a member or renew your membership, please visit forestparkforever.org/join.

Membership Comes with Park Perks!

Member benefits

- Invitations to exclusive events
- Discounts on merchandise
- Discounted registration for the I Love Forest Park 5k
- “Forest Park Forever Member” decal
- And more!

Not yet a member?



Join today to double the value of your gift! The Enterprise Mobility Foundation will match new membership gifts of up to \$1,000 between now and Dec. 31, doubling your contribution. Visit forestparkforever.org/join to learn more.

Already a member?

Thank you! Your membership gift helps us continue daily care and restoration of Forest Park, and **your employer may match it**. Contact your human resources department to find out if you are eligible for this benefit!



Countdown to the Glade and a New Steinberg Rink

After months of foundational work, Forest Park’s next great destination is beginning to take shape. The Glade, an all-season vision for Steinberg Rink and the surrounding area, is on track to welcome—and wow—visitors in November 2026.

The Glade comprises 22.5 acres on the eastern edge of Forest Park, north of the recently improved Jefferson Lake. Once opened, it will feature a variety of activities that attract visitors from across the region.

Fortunately, the project site was mostly untouched by the May 16 tornado, and construction has continued with minimal weather interruptions.

Features of the Glade

With thoughtful programming and flexibility for different seasons, the Glade will feature many of the best things about Forest Park all in one place.

- The **reconstructed rink** venue with state-of-the-art ice system and renovated café will offer an improved skating experience and flexibility for **activities and events outside of ice skating season**.
- New amenities at Steinberg Rink include a **rooftop restaurant and patio** overlooking the rink and Park, an indoor “community living room,” a first-floor bar, event spaces and outdoor fire pits.
- Outside the rink, an accessible **water cascade**, a **splash pad**, **fountains**, **shade structures** and gathering spaces will offer relief from the heat during warm months.



- A landscaped hillside with ADA-accessible pedestrian path will create an **inviting new entryway to the Park from Kingshighway.**
- An expansive **community lawn** will invite year-round activity and relaxation between Steinberg Rink and the Taylor Kindle River.

Fundraising for this project continues through the Imagine the Glade campaign. “This is a generational opportunity for St. Louis,” said President and Executive Director Lesley Hoffarth at the groundbreaking in May. “We’ve already seen a strong spirit of support and look forward to announcing more partners in our journey to bring life to this historic space in Forest Park.”



Imagine the Glade

An all-season vision for Steinberg and eastern Forest Park



Learn more about the Glade plans and construction at forestparkforever.org/theglade.

Please contact Megan Crain, Director of Development and Campaigns, at mcrain@forestparkforever.org to discuss supporting the Imagine the Glade campaign.

Construction Progress



The new chiller unit is installed on the hillside.



Concrete is poured for the first floor.

Related Path Closures and Detours

Construction site fencing has been extended to Faulkner Drive. The gravel and asphalt dual recreational paths south of Klein Prairie are closed, with a detour to a protected lane on Faulkner Drive. This detour will be in place through the end of construction in November 2026.

Pedestrians and cyclists should follow signs to access the temporary 10-foot-wide lane on Faulkner Drive.

What Happens to the Dual Recreation Path After the Glade Opens?

To allow for the expansive new community lawn (see the summer aerial rendering above), the dual recreational path will be rerouted across the Taylor Kindle River and follow along the river’s west side between Klein Prairie and Jefferson Lake.



Renovations Begin for the Boathouse’s Next Era

The current iteration of the Boathouse was rebuilt and expanded in 2003 to create a restaurant in addition to paddleboat rentals. In the two decades since, its popularity as a dining destination and recreational facility has far exceeded its current capacity. The dining area, kitchen, dock and support infrastructure also need maintenance and modern upgrades.

To prepare for these renovations, funded by private donors, we engaged more than 4,000 community members to learn more about how they use this amenity and what would make it even better. Those comments helped guide plans for the major renovation now underway.

We’re excited to give you a sneak peek into our plans for this space. Inside, the dining experience will be enhanced by better acoustics, a dedicated bar area, increased food production capacity and floor-to-ceiling windows with clear views of Post-Dispatch Lake.

Outside, a new dock will extend farther onto the water, allowing for additional dining areas and more space for watercraft renters. And a dedicated rental office will improve the Boathouse experience for diners, renters and staff!

Other outdoor enhancements include a larger patio, new shade canopies, an outside bar, a bandstand for live performances and the removal of steps and uneven terrain for full ADA accessibility.

Enhancing dining and rentals isn’t our only goal. The Boathouse will become an all-season destination and full-service event space. The tent that hosted events at the north end of the venue in warmer months will be replaced by a permanent pavilion for events, which will feature a new cozy outdoor fireplace.

There is still fun to be had in this part of the Park while renovations are underway. The restaurant will remain closed until the Boathouse reopens in 2027, but Forest Park Forever and the City of St. Louis are exploring temporary dining options during construction. Stay tuned for details!

Big Muddy Adventures continued boat and bike rentals at a relocated dock just north of the site, where they will resume rentals when warm weather returns in spring 2026.

Keep up with all the latest news and construction updates at forestparkforever.org/boathouse.

East Waterways Completion is Next Step to a Transformed Eastern Forest Park



The completion of the East Waterways project in 2025 brought new magic to eastern Forest Park, an area that will only get better when Steinberg Rink at the Glade reopens in fall 2026.

On Aug. 6, Forest Park Forever, the City of St. Louis and members of the community celebrated the completion of the decades-long vision for an interconnected waterway. The Taylor Kindle River now meanders 3.35 miles from west to east within the Park.

This final phase connected the river to Jefferson Lake and added new awe-inspiring spots and significant improvements to Bowl and Round Lakes.



The public commemoration included live music, food trucks, lawn games and gorgeous views: Wise Falls spilling into Jefferson Lake, Bayer Boardwalk extending over the water, Seven Pools cascading down the hillside and under a new pathway that takes visitors to Bowl Lake's new sculptural pavilion.

The results are beautiful and practical. Thousands of plantings, including many native species, increased wildlife habitat and biodiversity as they took root this year. The waterways capture more stormwater runoff, creating an additional 1 million gallons in storage capacity for high-precipitation events. The project also reduced reliance on the municipal water supply for these water features by 70%.

East Waterways Project Facts

240

trees planted

850

shrubs planted

9.5

acres of mowed grass replaced with meadow, native plantings

2.4M

pounds of Missouri ledge stone used

Winter Events in Forest Park



SciFest Series at the Saint Louis Science Center

Saturdays, Feb. 28, May 30, Aug. 8

At SciFest, visitors of all ages can connect with local scientists, engineers and innovators. Immerse yourself in the problem-solving world of engineering and explore the connections between STEM and innovation, play and creativity!

Learn more: slsc.org



Yours Forever: Forest Park at 150

Opening Saturday, Dec. 13

Forest Park turns 150 in 2026! "Yours Forever: Forest Park at 150," opening Dec. 13, celebrates a century-and-a-half of making memories in our favorite urban park. The exhibit explores how St. Louisans created—and recreated—the Park and have enjoyed its many amenities since 1876.

Learn more: mohistory.org



Winter Festivities at SLAM

Festive Fridays: Nov. 28–Dec. 19

Winter Celebrations Festival: Dec. 13–14

Festive Fridays at the Saint Louis Art Museum include free concerts, tours, gallery activations and art-making activities every Friday from Nov. 28 to Dec. 19. The Winter Celebrations festival is a free, family-friendly event highlighting holiday traditions from around the world.

Learn more: slam.org



Winter Fishing in Forest Park

During Park hours

The Missouri Department of Conservation stocks Jefferson Lake throughout the year, including trout in winter. Special regulations apply, including catch-and-release only for trout until Jan. 31.

Learn more: mdc.mo.gov/fishing



Thursday Nights at the Missouri History Museum

Thursdays, Dec. 11 and 18

The Thursday Nights at the Museum series takes on a holiday twist on Dec. 11 and 18! Shop for festive goods from local vendors at the winter market and enjoy live music, interactive sing-alongs, holiday trivia, a cash bar, food and more.

Learn more: mohistory.org/thursday-nights



Wild Lights at the Zoo

Select nights Nov. 28–Dec. 28

Stroll through a million twinkling lights while sipping hot cocoa and making memories that will last a lifetime. New this year, visit with Santa and shop for gifts at the Holiday Market.

Tickets: stlzoo.org

Recent Park Maintenance & Improvements



MAINTENANCE

Kennedy Forest Boardwalk Repairs

Several sections of the Kennedy Forest boardwalks were damaged by fallen trees during the May 16 tornado. Crews are replacing walkways and handrails.



Nature Playscape

As the Anne O’C. Albrecht Nature Playscape nears its fifth anniversary, some decaying natural features will be replaced with new ones made from tornado-felled trees.

The Cascades Accessibility Improvements

An improved seating area replaces crushed gravel at the base of this popular waterfall, allowing for better access to the benches.



Turtle Playground Continued Restoration

After recent maintenance, we discovered several sculptures with cracks and lime leeching. Two artists who worked with the late Bob Cassily on the reptile replicas will help us restore them.



Jewel Box and Korean War Memorial Path Resurfacing

The asphalt paths near the Jewel Box and Korean War Memorial have been repaved and are now open.

Dual Path Repairs

The paved path between DeBaliviere Avenue and Grand Drive was resurfaced this summer. We also installed infrastructure to improve drainage nearby.



Pedestrian Access from West Pine

Following a collision, the City of St. Louis closed the pedestrian bridges spanning Forest Park Parkway and the MetroLink tracks. We are working with the City on a site study to assess Park access in this area.



GREEN CARE

Thinking of Spring

More than 150,000 Dutch bulbs were planted throughout Forest Park in November, a pivotal step for the spring blooms visitors love. Laid end-to-end, the bulbs would stretch 3.1 miles, or the length of the I Love Forest Park 5k!



Planting Trees

We’re taking the first steps in tornado recovery, which will continue for decades. At the 26th annual Forest Restoration Day and our Partnership Day with the City’s Forestry Division, we planted over 1,000 trees!



Prescribed Burns

Plans call for two burn days—instead of the typical four—focused on the eastern half of the Park. Due to tornado impacts, we will not burn in Kennedy Forest and Kennedy Savanna this year. Follow our social media for updates.

I Love Forest Park 5k

The only 5k in Forest Park that supports Forest Park raised over \$45,000 on August 17! More than 1,000 participated, including 78 little ones who ran around the Nathan Frank Bandstand in the Kids Fun Run that followed.



Nathan Frank Society Legacy Luncheon



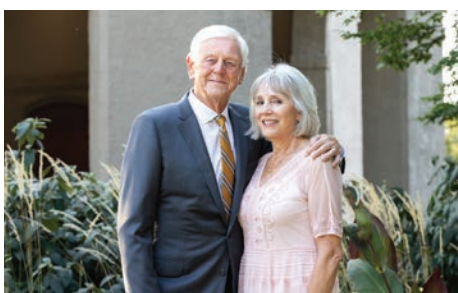
Our annual luncheon for Forest Park Forever's planned giving members, the Nathan Frank Society, took place on Nov. 18. Attendees heard from our leadership team about tornado recovery and progress at the Glade. Supporters who include Forest Park Forever in their estate plans are eligible to become Nathan Frank Society members.

Volunteer Appreciation Reception

This year's Volunteer Appreciation Reception took place at the Saint Louis Zoo, where our tireless volunteers were treated to live music, modeled for caricature artists and visited with penguins and polar bears after hours. In 2024, 1,911 volunteers contributed 11,840 hours.



Leffingwell Society Evening



The annual Leffingwell Society Evening in September celebrates our lead membership group, whose gifts provide more than 75% of the funds we use to maintain Forest Park annually. This year's event included cocktail hour in the Anne O'C. Albrecht Nature Playscape before Anne and Doug Albrecht were honored with the 2025 Leffingwell Award.

Twilight in the Trees with Young Friends



The Young Friends of Forest Park Forever annual fall social on Oct. 9 brought these young supporters to the Jewel Box. Attendees raised awareness of funding needs for tornado recovery and annual maintenance in Forest Park while enjoying live music, mingling with other Park lovers and creating their own mini-Jewel Boxes as mementos of the sparkling evening.

Membership Appreciation

Hundreds of our members gathered on a blustery but bright fall day at our family-friendly Membership Appreciation event on Oct. 19. Our staff led behind-the-scenes wildflower and tree tours, noting the devastating effects of the May 16 tornado—and donors' critical role in helping the Park recover.

They also brought heavy equipment and tools, giving ecstatic little ones the chance to “check out our trucks” and pop bubbles blown by an electric leaf blower! Live music, lawn games, hayrides, fall-themed food and drinks and a festive photo booth rounded out this year's event.



LEFFINGWELL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT



“During our almost five decades of living across Oakland Avenue from Forest Park, we first saw the Park as a space to walk and bike *through*. But with the stunning enhancements made possible by Forest Park Forever (and also with the pandemic-era need to learn outdoors), we felt more and more compelled to *linger* in the designed landscapes (the Grand Basin, the Playscape, the Visitor Center playground, and now the East Waterways Project) and to marvel at the creatures now joining us—horses, turtles, turkeys, frogs, ducklings, egrets, blue and green herons, owls, hawks, floating (and chattering) bald eagles, and, on one occasion, a sleek pair of minks.

And yes, Olivette has indeed dared to fling wood chips into the gaping mouth of the T-Rex guarding the Planetarium.”

—Rich Moran
(pictured with granddaughter Olivette and daughter Elizabeth)

To join the Leffingwell Society, our leadership donor group, contact our office. You can also learn more and join online at forestparkforever.org/leffingwell.

Sustain Forest Park with Ongoing Support

Become a Monthly Giving Member! It's easy to sign up, and it's a convenient way to give because it's automatic—a win-win for you and for Forest Park Forever.

For you:

- Offers budget-friendly options
- Decreases the amount of mail you receive
- Increases the impact of your gift

For Forest Park Forever:

- Makes it easier to budget and plan how to care for the Park
- Saves on administrative costs
- Sustains the Park monthly!

\$1,000 Leffingwell Society: \$84/month

\$500 Park Guardian: \$42/month

\$300 Park Trustee: \$25/month

\$180 Park Naturalist: \$15/month

\$100 Keeper of the Park: \$9/month

\$60 Park Friend: \$5/month

How it works:

Sign up quickly and securely with a credit/debit card or bank account.

Your monthly gift will be processed on or near the 15th of every month, and you may increase, decrease or cancel your monthly gift at any time.

Your membership will automatically renew every year, and your member benefits will be mailed to you at that time.

Your monthly gifts are tax-deductible, and you'll receive a summary of your gifts each January for the previous calendar year.

To sign up, visit forestparkforever.org/monthly-giving.

For questions, email membership@forestparkforever.org or call 314.571.6074.

Support that Sustains

We extend our gratitude to these Corporate and Park Partner Leffingwell Society donors who made gifts of \$2,500+ over the past year in support of the Annual Friends Campaign. These gifts support our essential day-to-day operations.

LEFFINGWELL SOCIETY

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Saint Louis Science Center	Dwight Davis Memorial Tennis Center
Missouri History Museum	

To learn more about corporate giving opportunities, contact Sara Curran, Manager of Corporate & Foundation Giving, at scurran@forestparkforever.org or 314.571.6082.

Thank You to Our Tribute Donors

Tribute gifts are a unique and thoughtful way to celebrate a special occasion or pay homage to a loved one while supporting Forest Park. To learn more about tribute gifts in Forest Park or make a gift, email tributes@forestparkforever.org, call 314.571.6074 or visit forestparkforever.org/tributes.

Thank you to our tribute donors who made a gift between June 2025 and October 2025.

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Andi Williams's Father

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Aaliyah A. Wilson

Anonymous

Mary D. Young

Cindy & Betsy

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Questions? Please email tributes@forestparkforever.org or call 314.571.6074. Any corrections or additions to this list will be published in our next newsletter.

2024 Impact Report

The 2024 Forest Park Forever Impact Report chronicles major improvements and capital projects in Forest Park from the year, plus snapshots of the daily care our team conducts for its green spaces, waterways and hardscapes.

Check it out for maintenance updates, member listings, vivid photos and other demonstrations of how your support makes Forest Park "the best city park" in the country.

To read the new Impact Report, visit forestparkforever.org/annual-reports.





Forest Park Forever
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PARK NEWS

