

# The TIMES of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Vol. 35 No. 3

September-October 2004

FREE

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

Grace Under Pressure:

## Skinker DeBaliviere Faces Metro Construction

by Lana Stein

Many of us now perhaps are praying that MetroLink construction will soon terminate so that we can return to the halcyon days prior to expansion. This major project has asked a lot of us. We no longer can use our major east-west artery, the Forest Park Parkway. Most of our trips take longer and we burn more gas.

Then there is the noise of it all. It is not constant but when it

occurs immediate neighbors lose sleep or concentration. Those in 6100 Pershing have suffered the most, 3 weeks of round-the-clock work. Then, there are the problems with Skinker. Skinker southbound backed up almost every day at rush hour. Now there are lines at 11am! It has helped that 2 southbound lanes are now functioning at the Parkway; Metro said the delay was due to Wash

U. It's just another irritation for a neighborhood which has reacted at the highest level to each new impediment. And what about the dirt? Had neighbors and Alderman Krewson not spoken out, we would experience every load taken from the project and in trucks frequently not covered. Now we get half the loads which

is better than all and most trucks are covered. If you venture down Des Peres toward Lindell, however, you find that the flag people give all precedence to dirt trucks and other Tarleton vehicles, further impeding progress. But, there is less dirt and less noise than otherwise would have been the case.

In an interesting side note, Metro has fired its construction coordination team citing delays. The stories in the PostDispatch have also attributed delays to the protests of Skinker DeBaliviere neighbors. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Metro never stopped working when we questioned their route; they did not stop working or hauling while a judge deliberated. We are as responsible for Metro's delay as we are for Hurricane Charley. The Post thought we were

wrongheaded. That's their problem. Any successful neighborhood has to fight for the wellbeing of its neighbors. We are better off for having raised our voices.

The question now is what further event of consequence will befall us because of light rail expansion. We're waiting . . .



At the MetroLink site at Skinker and Forest Park Blvd., a temporary bridge was set so they could tunnel underground.

The following letter, sent by Msgr. Polizzi to the PostDispatch and as yet unpublished, sums up a lot of the neighborhood frustration:  
Aug. 14, 2002

Dear Editor:

So the DOG AND PONY show continues. This time it is with Mr. Salci and the contractors. Perhaps we should make a movie of this fiasco and help pay for the project. It is absolutely ludicrous to say the complaints of the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood delayed the MetroLink project.

The principal cause of the delays has been unbelievable poor planning from beginning to end in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood. The people of this community have been extremely patient even though those in charge of the project from "top to bottom" have continuously lied to them. I don't think even absolution can help them!

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Msgr. Sal E. Polizzi, Pastor  
St. Roch Catholic Church, 6052 Waterman Blvd.

This November

## Voters to Decide on Fate of Charter Amendments

by Lana Stein

As we go to the polls on the first Tuesday of November, we will be selecting a president, senator, governor, and other offices. But, we will be also deciding on four amendments to the Charter of the City of St. Louis. The amendments will change city government in the following ways:

1. Abolish the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, placing contractual and budgetary authority in the hands of the mayor.
2. Establish the position of a chief executive officer, with appropriate degree and at least 5 years' experience, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the board of aldermen.
3. Make 7 county offices, currently elected at large, appointive: license collector, collector of revenue, treasurer, public adminis-

trator, recorder of deeds appointed by the mayor; clerk of the circuit court and sheriff to be hired by the Circuit Court. The financial duties of these offices will be taken over by a Director of Finance.

4. The Comptroller will no longer have a fiduciary role but will become the city's chief auditor.
5. The president of the board of aldermen will no longer be elected by an at large vote of the people but will be chosen by the aldermanic board from its membership.
6. The Board of Aldermen will be reduced from 28 to 15; this change will take place after the redistricting brought about by the 2010 census.

There are numerous arguments pro and con these charter amendments. They are designed to

reduce factionalism and give the mayor greater authority. Opponents say they thwart the popular will and lessen accountability.

Residents of our neighborhood and the Central West End will be able to attend a forum on the charter amendments sponsored by our neighborhood organizations. The proposals will be explained in depth and residents will be able to ask questions. Please call Laure at the SDCC, 862-5122, to get more details.

The FOCUS St. Louis organization (formerly Leadership St. Louis) will host "Home Rule—the Citizens Speak" on Tuesday, September 21, 4:30-6:00 p.m. at 1910 Pine St. Free Parking is available in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield lot on Chestnut between 18th and 20th. For more information, call Nikki at 622-1250.

## New Veterinary Hospital Building

Open House Coming  
September 18

By Lana Stein

Dr. Steve Brammeier's dream of a modern, state-of-the-art veterinary hospital is now a reality. He and his associates began seeing patients at the new Kingsbury Animal Hospital in June. The old hospital, a former gas station, has been demolished. The front window will soon be in place and the back entrance in use. Also, tiles prepared (under supervision) by customers will be placed along one inside wall, giving a permanent place to the dog and cat clientele.

My calicos, Caroline and Charlotte, had their annual exams at the new site. I am not sure they were properly appreciative. Caroline tends to squirm and claw in such situations. But, I certainly liked the clean well-lit place and the spaciousness.

On September 18 from 6 to 8pm the community is invited to a grand opening. Guests can tour and join Steve and company in celebrating this proud new addition to our neighborhood.

## Editor's Notebook

by Lana Stein

In two months, we choose a president of the United States. The choice could have major consequences on tax policy, military deployment, energy, and the environment to name just a few. The electorate is clearly very divided. A colleague of mine cited some troubling statistics when he recently delivered an address at a new student orientation. His words again made me wonder about how much we know when we make critical electoral decisions.

Only about a third of college students can name significant public officials besides the president. The lack of information is only equaled by a lack of concern. Only about the same percentage think public affairs are important and pay attention to them. This survey of young people is a paradigm for the American public at large. Only half of those registered ever make it to the polls for a presidential contest. Lesser races are decided by fewer people.

Part of the difficulty could be that many Americans do not like politics and think poorly of politicians. It's too bad because when people turn off they abdicate to others key decisions about the future.

As a professional student of politics, I cannot understand the apathy or disinterest. I've been interested in politics since I was 6 years old. I remember it vividly. An older child came down the street with a chest covered with I Like Ike buttons. I asked my father for one and he said no, that we were for Stevenson. From then on, he had me watch Meet the Press with him and brought me news magazines from his drug store. When I was sixteen, I handed out literature at the polls for the first time. I was always an inveterate reader and loved biographies.

Our political system produces weak parties and difficulties in concentrating power. We also vote more than citizens of other countries. The British, for example, may vote twice in 5 years, for a member of parliament and for local officials. We vote for many more offices and usually every year and often more than once a year.

If there's a message here, it is vote in November and begin early to interest your children in how government works and why it matters. Let's grow that third. It would make my job better for sure.

## The TIMES of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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### Guidelines for Submitting Copy

The Times welcomes unsolicited articles and letters. Because of the small size and volunteer nature of the writing staff, the quality and range of the Times has always depended in large part on submissions from non-staff area residents. Calendar listings should be phoned in to the editor at 721-7532, or mailed to 5953 Pershing Ave., 63112.

The writer is responsible for the accuracy of the data, including times, dates, location, and particularly the spelling of names. The editor retains the right to omit or alter any material.

**Deadline for Fall issue: October 15, 2004. Please send copy by e-mail to [jvatcha@peoplepc.com](mailto:jvatcha@peoplepc.com) or by disc to 6008 Kingsbury, St. Louis, MO 63112.**

Readers are welcome to send us e-mail or letters commenting on any of our content. Send to [jvatcha@peoplepc.com](mailto:jvatcha@peoplepc.com) or [lstein@umsl.edu](mailto:lstein@umsl.edu).

## Calendar

### Upcoming Events Calendar

**September 1**, 7:30 a.m. SDCC (Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council) Executive Committee Meeting; 6008 Kingsbury.

**September 1**: 6:00 p.m. SDCHC (Skinker DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation) Board Meeting; 6008 Kingsbury

**September 8th and 9th**: Explore alternative sources of funding for neighborhood housing activities. Call SDCC at 862-5122 for information.

**September 13**: 7:00 p.m. SDCC Board Meeting. Open to the public. 6008 Kingsbury

**September 15**: 6:00 p.m. SDCHC Board Meeting. 6008 Kingsbury.

**September 20**: 7:00 p.m. Kingsbury Square Association Annual Meeting. 6008 Kingsbury

**September 21**: Policy Forum: Home Rule - The Citizens

**September 22**: 7:00 p.m. Security Seminar. Jointly sponsored by Washington University Police, University City Police, St. Louis Metropolitan Police (Seventh District) and Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council. To be held at the Regional Arts Commission, 6128 Delmar. All residents and Washington University students are welcome.

**September 29**: 7:30 a.m., SDCC Executive Committee Meeting, 6008 Kingsbury

**October 6**: 6:00 p.m. SDCHC Board Meeting, 6008 Kingsbury

**October 6**: 6:00 p.m. Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation

**October 11**: (yes, it IS Columbus Day!), 7:00 p.m. SDCC Board Meeting. All residents are urged to attend.

### Other Events of Interest:

**Wednesday, September 8**: Regional Arts Commission, Gallery Talk with artists represented in the "Exotic Places and Local Women". Exhibit runs through Oct 2.

**Tuesday, September 21**: Policy Forum; Home Rule - The Citizens Speak. Hear from a panel of citizens who participated in the process of deciding how the City of St. Louis' charter will be redesigned. 4:30-6:00 pm, FOCUS board room, 1910 Pine Street, free parking available in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield lot on Chestnut between 20th and 18th, RSVP to Nikki at 622-1250 x.102 or [nikkiv@focus-stl.org](mailto:nikkiv@focus-stl.org).

**Nov - Oct. 24**: Saint Louis Art Museum features University City Ceramics, art potteries of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, the Art Academy and Porcelain Works.

**Nov - Nov. 28**: Photographs of St. Louis by Anna Kuperberg at the Saint Louis Art Museum.

**Oct. 14-17**: The Awakening by Kate Chopin performed at the the Edison Theatre, Washington University.

**Nov. 12-14**: Kansas City Ballet at the Edison Theatre at Washington University.

## Loop in Motion

The 18th Annual Loop in Motion Arts Festival kicks off the evening of Friday, October 1, and continues throughout Saturday, October 2. Events are posted on their website at [www.ucityloop.com](http://www.ucityloop.com), a great website to see everything that's happening in The Loop.

The festival takes place in The Loop along Delmar Boulevard in University City and the City of St. Louis. A gallery walk and dance performances are planned for Friday night, and live music and dance on three stages will be among the 25 sites participating in the festival on Saturday, October 2.

## News from Washington University

A couple of years ago, Washington University purchased the Angelica uniform factory and adjacent Radiant Products. Now, after these businesses chose to vacate their premises, the University has moved a number of offices there. In what it calls North Campus, the Parking and Transportation Department, the ROTC program, the Mail Services Department and Performing Arts Department storage can now be found. The University's shuttle bus operator will also move there soon and the Neighborhood Security Patrol will operate from this location too.

The University's shuttle buses that link the Hilltop Campus to the Medical School and to various neighborhoods in between will now require riders to show ID. Other prospective riders can obtain passes by contacting the office of Transportation Services at 935-5601.

# Music Brings People Together

by Lana Stein

Bill Christman has had a studio at Four Corners for many years. He also has participated in many neighborhood events such as Art Exposed. His chuck wagon dispensed corn dogs to the multitudes many times. He has worked intimately with the Central West End Arts Council and has helped place objects of art around our neighborhood. Bill's signs and other projects have always had a note of whimsy and quickly attracted attention.

He now is involved in a project of a different sort. In order to ensure a sense of community and to provide a place for neighbors to meet and relax, he turns his studio into Joe's Cafe one night a week. On Thursdays beginning at 8pm, neighbors are invited to bring themselves and their refreshments to the Cafe to hear

acoustic music and get to know each other better. Everyone kicks in a little for the musicians. Otherwise, it's a pleasant, inexpensive interlude close to home. Bill welcomes children and dogs (behaved of course).

Following is a schedule of forthcoming attractions:

- Sep 2, Soulard Blues
- Sep 9, Bill Jones Flamenco
- Sep 16, Mitsu Saito - Cello
- Sep 23, Hillbilly fiddle and guitar
- Sep 30, Tom Hall Blues, Jazz, Celtic

Everyone is welcome. For information call Bill at 8622541. The music is acoustic, not amplified. Come and check out this slightly bohemian and very Christman enterprise!

# Ute Levi's Colorful Mosaic

By Andy Cross

Neighborhood artist Ute Levi has created a beautiful tile mosaic to dress up the stage at the Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners, at Kingsbury and DesPeres. Ute wanted to add a splash of color to the concrete structure, and the result is a fine work of art. This project was funded by a grant from

the Regional Arts Commission, awarded to the West End Arts Council of Skinker-DeBaliviere. Some of the tiles used in the mosaic were donated by former Skinker-DeBaliviere residents Marty Cross and store owners Kevin and Michael Bove of Cabinets, Flooring, and Moore on 8008

Olive. Some other materials were donated by Steve Schiller of Colonial Carpet, now located at 2626 Woodson Road. Still more tiles and ceramic pieces were collected from neighbors, to create a mixture of textures and materials.

The River Des Peres flows underground alongside Des Peres Avenue. When the playground at Four Corners Park was created, the theme of the River Des Peres

was incorporated into its artistic elements: the curvy pathway, the rock-lined gardens, and the stenciled ballards in the alley. Ute incorporated the playground's river theme as a playful design element in her creation. She included two alligators, sea creatures, even a purple octopus with-



Neighbors Jon Parker, Ute Levi, Katrina Stierholz, and children, work on creating tiles for the stage sculpture.

in the tiles. On the top surface of the stage, Ute created three beautiful chess/checker boards, so that tournaments could be held. Colored, plastic milk-jug caps are available to be used as checkers: blue on one team, red/pink on the other.

This beautiful and useful creation is very well crafted and will provide beauty and entertainment to 4-corners for years to come.

# News of Neighbors

By Jo Ann Vatcha

Summertime babies in the Skinker-DeBaliviere Neighborhood include little **Thomas Gustafson**, born May 16, a hearty 8-pounder. Proud parents are **Patty Heyda**, of Hellmuth Obata Kassabaum and **Bret Gustafson** of Washington University, who live on the 6100 block of Washington.

**Kelly and Kasha Stocke** of the 5900 block of DeGiverville welcomed their new baby in June, just after the Big Breakfast Garden Tour. Congratulations!

Word from Chicago that **Nicole Blumner** and husband **Warren Rosenblum** will be back "a little sleep deprived" on the 6000 block of Westminster very shortly with their new baby daughter, **Eve Celia Rosenblum**, born July 9th. Nicole, who works at St. Louis Development Corporation, and Warren, who professors at Webster University, report they're doing fantastically - wonderful news.

Proud Mom and Dad, longtime neighborhood residents **Willie and Rogerine Kinds** of the 5900 block of DeGiverville let us know some exciting news about their son, **Kenny Kinds**. Kenny entered his first film in the fourth annual film makers St. Louis show case July 11 through July 15, 2004. The short film 'Signal to Noise', chosen from over one hundred entries, was previewed on Tuesday, July 13th, at the Tivoli Theater. Of the forty films shown at the Tivoli, only two were selected for the international film festival in November, and Kenny's film was one of the two chosen! Kenny, formerly a resident on the 5900 block of DeGiverville, attended St. Roch grade school, CBC High School, UM Rolla and UMSL. He holds a degree in information systems management and works for a small computer firm in West Port. Congratulations, Kenny!

Neighborhood shopper **Norb Hart** reports that there are two new stores on Delmar which might be of interest in rounding out back to school clothing or simply getting ready for fall. **Reflections** at 6146 offers jewelry, shoes, jeans, dresses, lingerie, and other accessories including purses. Their phone number is 863-5656. **Spot 9** is down the street, at 6140 Delmar. The proprietor is **James Myers**. This shop offers an assortment of

shoes, sandals, and accessories. Their number is 721-1500.

Other new businesses in the works on Delmar include **Granite Works**, a showroom and granite countertop installation business at the old Waldman Glass building at 5959 Delmar, and a great new restaurant concept, **Lifestyles Cafe**, which specializes in healthy vegetarian soul food, from published cookbook author **Denise Hairston**, who is also president of the Black Women's Health Network, an 800-member organization which promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Finally, some good parking news for Delmar. **Joe Edwards** has recently purchased the large parking lot, as well as the funeral home building, next door to the Pageant Theatre, in addition to the lot to the west extending almost to Skinker. All these parcels will be developed as free parking. Thanks to **Alderman Lyda Krewson** and super planner/entrepreneur/neighbor **Joe Edwards**!

A nice introduction to an organization we weren't aware of at the recent Rags to Riches was **'Mocha Moms, Inc.'**, part of a national support group for mothers of color who have chosen not to work full-time outside of the home. Playgroups and support meetings, as well as social activities and community service projects, are all part of this interesting concept, which reminded this older mom of our neighborhood's earlier days. Board members who live in the neighborhood include **Ingrid Anderson** and **Kia Swan-Moore**. For more information, visit [www.mochamoms.org](http://www.mochamoms.org). The local chapter is also sponsoring a breastfeeding awareness forum will be held on September 11, 2004, at Harris Stowe State College from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m. in the beautiful new Harris Stowe library.

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# Garden Tour Highlights

By Andy Cross

The 6th annual Skinker-DeBaliviere Breakfast Garden Tour was held June 5, 2004. Each year the tour rotates to a different section of the neighborhood, this year on the 6100 blocks of Washington and Westminster.

The McPherson Community Garden on the 5900 block of McPherson plays host to the Breakfast portion of the tour, showing off its sixty raised beds, more garden plots than any other community garden in St. Louis.



Photos by Andy Cross

Garden Tour Breakfast

Not far from the McPherson garden is another beautiful spot, with 27 raised beds and more great neighbors. The Block Unit 1035 Garden has also won its share of awards, especially for its creative scarecrows. This garden will be on tour next year.

Gardens featured this year were:

6107 Westminster, Dave Wood and Elsie Listrom, has a Garden of Eden atmosphere and a wonderful pond.

6163 Westminster, Bob and Patti Beal, a formal garden with an outstanding fountain.

6165 Westminster, Paul and Nancy Hohmann, with decorative architectural elements from Paul's St. Louis worksites and lots of shade-loving plants.

6178 Washington, Rick and Mary Wimmer-Brown, a country style in our city neighborhood.

6163 Washington, John and Maria Schneider. With the bright lights of the Pageant as a kind of glowing theatrical backdrop, the garden provides fun amid seven different kinds of ground cover and more.

6154 Washington, Erich and Anna Friesen. Many 'century plants', inherited from Erich's grandmother, abound in this tidy yard, which uses only organic yard



You can't miss Bob and Patti Beal's home on the 6100 block of Westminster. Large decorative urns with palm trees flank the majestic columns of their home. In the back garden, major undertakings have transformed this yard with an outstanding deck and deep fountain centered among a variety of trees and flowering plants in a formal garden.

products, such as lady bugs instead of pesticides.

6152 Washington, Joe Gudiswicz and Ligaya Figueras, a surprise in every corner makes for a wonderful city yard.

6115-6117 Westminster, Sam and Lu Green/Neville and Jo Ann Vatcha. The Greens' yard is lush, with a fish pond and waterfall constructed by Sam, and lush plantings lined with stepping stones managed by Sam, and lush plantings lined with stepping stones constructed by Sam, and lush plantings lined with stepping stones managed by Sam, and lush plantings lined with stepping stones managed by Sam.

ferent style, with playful elephant fountains and a swimming pool with an intricate deck, built by Neville and Sam. These 'good neighbor' yards have been combined to make one big yard and have been the site of many neighborhood parties, fundraisers and new neighbor gatherings. It has also been the site of story creations for the TIMES of SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE newspaper and meetings to plan, design, scheme, defend, and promote our great neighborhood.

## Community Gardens Win Competition

by Laure Porterfield

Gateway Greening announced the winners of their 2004 Urban Garden Competition at a luncheon at the Missouri Botanical Gardens on July 9th. Gardeners from the Block Unit 1035 Community Garden, as well as the McPherson Community Garden, attended and were recognized for their efforts and accomplishments.

The Block Unit 1035 Garden took 5th place in the 'Established Garden' category, under the leadership of Jesse Brown. They also received honorable mention in the 'Best Scarecrow' competition; they are often recognized for their very creative scarecrows. The Outstanding Raised Bed Awards were dominated by our neighborhoods two community gardens, who collectively took four of the ten awards. Lou and Angie Menard and John Medicino of the Block Unit 1035 Garden, and Betty Elliot and angelica Michaelson of the McPherson Garden all received prizes for their raised beds.

A record number of entries in the Established Garden category were acknowledged this year by Gwenne Hayes-Stewart, executive director of Gateway Greening, as she presented the awards, saying the competition was very strong. McPherson Community Garden leader Andrew Cross was awarded 'First Place for Established Garden'. This year the prize was a beautiful Bloodgood Japanese Maple. Some of the gardeners who gave extra time and effort this year included Mary Hellwig and Roger Duncan.

The playground garden and planters at the Greg Freeman Four Corners Park were entered for the first time this year. They received a prize as well, earning the title 'Nicest Community Patio and Planters'. Many neighbors, including the Girl Scout Troop 3528, help to keep this green



Deep in the heart of the McPherson community garden, neighbor and frequent photographer to the TIMES King Schoenfeld is himself photographed enjoying the breakfast garden tour.

space colorful and attractive under the guidance of the Beautification Committee of Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council.

Congratulations to all the community gardeners! It takes a lot of work from many hands to maintain these gardens, and our entire neighborhood benefits from these efforts.

### Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting April 12, 2004

SECURITY REPORT: Sgt. Mike Deeba gave the security report. 18 robberies were committed between January 14 - April 6, 2004 in the Skinker DeBaliviere and east of DeBaliviere areas. Sgt. Deeba recommended that we request a robbery detail between 6pm - 2 am. There were some concerns expressed over the incident at 5826

Waterman involving shots being fired at police and illegal drug activities that resulted in the arrest of a repeat offender. Officers will write tickets and/or issue summons for commercial vehicles in residential areas. To report gang graffiti, please call the Citizen's Service Bureau.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Peggy Droege presented the Report for February and March 2004. It was mentioned that some of the decimal points in the report were in the wrong place. To date, the Friends campaign has raised \$5,800.

ALDERMANIC REPORT: Alderwoman Krewson reported that the city dumpsters have almost all been delivered. A request was made to review the dumpster situation in the 6100 Kingsbury alley - dumpster is always full, would like a bigger dumpster. Alderwoman Krewson will request a larger dumpster. Alderwoman Krewson gave an update on the various issues surrounding the MetroLink contractors hauling dirt through the neighborhood; at the peak there will be approximately 400 trucks a day. There have been several meetings including the Mayor's Office, the contractor and Larry Salci from Metro. Also, the Board expressed some concern regarding an article appearing in the St. Louis Post Dispatch about a recovering drug abuser now residing with her children on DeGiverville. The question rose - How can Skinker DeBaliviere be made aware of these placements and work with all parties to promote the positive attributes of the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhoods while creating a win-win situation for all involved?

COMMITTEE REPORTS  
BEAUTIFICATION: Andy Cross gave an update on the activities:  
\* A new neighbor has arranged for welding the barricade posts back into place.  
\* McPherson & Rosedale - planter box destroyed in ice storm will soon be replaced with new box.  
\* Blitz Day - will work weekend before, day

of and after; 5/1 is the alley clean-up date and 5/15 is flower distribution and plant exchange. Activities will include 6000 Westminster: clean up pocket park, alley greening in 6000 Westminster & Kingsbury alley, and alley greening in 6100 Kingsbury and McPherson alley

\* Breakfast Garden Tour- June 5th, gardens will be on display in 6100 McPherson, 6000 & 6100 Washington, still looking for gardens in 6100 Westminster

\* Planting Day and Plant Exchange is 5/15  
TRANSPORTATION: Dan Schesch said there was no committee report this month. However, Dan did provide an update on the various meetings and court actions that have transpired concerning the hauling of dirt by Metro contractors through the neighborhood.

RESIDENTIAL: Paul presented the Report. The Committee reviewed Taulby Roach's proposal to develop townhomes at Hamilton Middle School site. The plans look interesting but will require review by the Historic District Review committee. President Keaveny said he would send letter to Board of Education inquiring as to where the Board is on selling the school building.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Laure reported that SDCC received a clean audit from Federal Grants. She was looking for assistance with Blitz activities; specifically help with grilling the hotdogs. Ten tickets will be given to each Board member for the Breakfast Garden Tour. Members are asked to be responsible for selling ten tickets. The Advance St. Louis speaker is scheduled for May 17th; a signature petition is required to place the charter reform changes on the ballot. There was some discussion pertaining to selling note cards, Operation Blitz, the plant exchange and the garden tour.

SKINKER DEBALIVIERE COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION: Gary Boehnke presented the Housing Report. A copy of the report is attached. Several properties on Delmar are under contract, Joe Keaveny was elected Treasurer of the Housing Corp.

OTHER BUSINESS  
\* There is an ever-expanding sinkhole in the vacant lot at DesPeres and McPherson. Are any utility people working to correct the problem? Gas line has been capped; the Street Department has drilled but so far has not come up a permanent corrective action plan.  
ADJOURNMENT



# Garden Tour

Photos by Andy Cross



## Regional Arts Commission Presents Local Women and Exotic Places – August 13 - October 2, 2004

The Regional Arts Commission (RAC) is pleased to present "Local Women and Exotic Places," curated by J.A. Lewis-Harris, featuring the work of six St. Louis women artists - Jerry Au, Nanette Hegamin, Jane Birdsall-Lander, Adelia Parker, Olivia Lahs-Gonzales and Sandra Nickeson. These artists will interpret the concept of exotic locations through a visual exploration of a specific place, conceptual or real. The exhibit will feature a collection of photographs, mixed-media sculpture, paintings and drawings. This is the fifth show for The Gallery at the Regional Arts Commission, in the new Cultural Resource Center, located in the emerging stretch of the Loop (just southeast from The Pageant), and will run through Saturday, October 2nd. Also on view are two pieces of newly installed public art, both commissioned by RAC. Kardia, an 8'11" x 9'11" brilliantly-colored glass artwork by William Cochran that can be seen both inside and outside The Gallery, and Haptic Portal, two 10' high bronze panels with viewing portals that flank the front entrance to the building by local artist Lindsey Stouffer.

Viewing of the art in the gallery is FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Regular gallery hours are Mon. thru Fri., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. & Sun., noon to 5 p.m. Regional Arts Commission is located at 6128 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis, Mo., 63112. Parking available in the lot behind The Pageant. For more information, contact Jen Meyer (314) 863-5811 x 24 or jen@strac.org.

**(Upper Left) Elsie Listrom and Dave Wood's wonderful fish pond attracted Westminster neighbor Hitch Powell and many others.**

**(Middle Left) Rick and Mary Wimmer-Brown and children have created a little bit of country in the big city on the 6100 block of Washington. A great two-level playhouse/fort is being built, a marvel in its early stages. Plantings include herbs and vegetables, and there are also chickens, a rabbit, and baby chicks!**

**(Bottom Left) Joe Gudiswiz and Ligaya Figueras have a deceptive garden on the 6100 block of Washington. A tall old redbud tree delineates Ligaya's part of the yard, composed entirely of plants received from neighbors and family. But elsewhere, Joe has built in such 'hidden' details as a reinforced fence built to receive high velocity soccer balls. Vegetables, a fig tree, raspberries and more make the garden a delight.**

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## Voters to Decide on Fate of Charter Amendments This November

by Lana Stein

As we go to the polls on the first Tuesday of November, we will be selecting a president, senator, governor, and other offices. But, we will be also deciding on four amendments to the Charter of the City of St. Louis. The amendments will change city government in the following ways:

1. Abolish the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, placing contractual and budgetary authority in the hands of the mayor.
2. Establish the position of a chief executive officer, with appropriate degree and at least 5 years' experience, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the board of aldermen.
3. Make 7 county offices, cur-

rently elected at large, appointive: license collector, collector of revenue, treasurer, public administrator, recorder of deeds appointed by the mayor; clerk of the circuit court and sheriff to be hired by the Circuit Court. The financial duties of these offices will be taken over by a Director of Finance.

4. The Comptroller will no longer have a fiduciary role but will become the city's chief auditor.

5. The president of the board of aldermen will no longer be elected by an at large vote of the people but will be chosen by the aldermanic board from its membership.

6. The Board of Aldermen will be reduced from 28 to 15; this

change will take place after the redistricting brought about by the 2010 census.

There are numerous arguments pro and con these charter amendments. They are designed to reduce factionalism and give the mayor greater authority. Opponents say they thwart the popular will and lessen accountability.

Residents of our neighborhood and the Central West End will be able to attend a forum on the charter amendments sponsored by our neighborhood organizations. The proposals will be explained in depth and residents will be able to ask questions. Please call Laure at the SDCC, 8625122, to get more details.



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## Arts in Transit on Delmar

By Jo Ann Vatcha



Art in Transit haiku poetry participants previewed the public art presentation at National Night Out.

Metro's Arts in Transit kicked off a summer and fall of public art on Delmar on August 7 in the open lot west of 6146 Delmar (Mirasol building).

"Body English", an inspiring ten-minute video by artist Michele Ryker-Owens, illustrates ideas of motion flow with stunning imagery and haiku poetry, performed by the writers involved in a special workshop with participants from Sts. Peter and Paul Church shelter. This example of 'performance art' will be presented again from dusk to nightfall on September 25. Kim Humphries of Arts in Transit thanked the neighborhood's Delmar Commercial Committee, Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council, Joe Edwards, and Dave Mastin of the architectural firm St. Louis Design Alliance, who contributed to the refreshments served to celebrate the installment of the art work and the new streetscape. In addition to the "Body English" presentations, other art on Delmar includes:

"Free Ride" by Heidi Dolamore, also a performance artist. Heidi and her Free Ride art volunteers will give away 2500 free Metro Link tickets with buttons suggesting possible destinations. Their T-shirts celebrate

the Delmar Loop MetroLink Station.

"BACKOMWEL" by Katy Scoggin, is a neon sign sculpture which plays with poetic and abstract variations of the phrase 'Welcome Back.' It has been installed at 5926 Delmar, near the intersection of Delmar and Hamilton.

"City Effigy" by Karen Woodward is another neon sign sculpture installed in a storefront window at Christopher's Barber Shop at 6197 Delmar. Tiny glass faces appear to be one large portrait with neon accents from a distance. Very visible at night from Skinker, too, it's even better close up, as you notice many smaller portraits, all unique and endearing.

There's a new permanent sculpture, too, in front of Big Shark Bicycle Store. We'll profile that next time.

## As 35th Anniversary Approaches, Grace & Peace Fellowship Keeps Strong Skinker-DeBaliviere Connection

by Melody Burke

Grace & Peace Fellowship (Presbyterian Church of America), whose first members lived mostly in the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood, is celebrating its 35th Anniversary as a church this fall. Now housed one block east of DeBaliviere at the intersection of Delmar and Clara, the church began in the summer of 1969 with its first worship services in the living room of Ted and Gladys Smith's home, just blocks west of Skinker on Washington. In the Constitution they drafted early on, the eager, mostly twenty-something congregants set church goals related to loving and improving their St. Louis City neighborhood as well as sharing and attempting to live out the Christian gospel. They purposed to live as involved members of the Central West End neighborhoods.

The church's first physical 'home' was the storefront at 6003 Kingsbury, across the street from Four Corners. Brenda Frazier, one of Grace & Peace's many practicing fine artists and a Skinker-DeBaliviere Neighbor since the early 1970s, remembers, "I designed the planters for the front of our new building. We got the concrete cracked up [to make space for them] by challenging the men to try to break the sidewalk with a sledgehammer."

From the 1970s to the present, the church has contributed to the community particularly by helping the poor and the children among their neighbors. In the 1970s and 1980s, a tutoring program for neighborhood children was housed in what is now the yoga center at Pershing and DesPeres. The Manthano program, also for Youth, included both fun activities and Christian instruction at the church building and helped many children grow up safely. For several years, a church-run Food Coop helped families stretch their cash. From its current Delmar home, the church provides food to 15-20 households per week, and shelters homeless women in its winter emergency Shelter.

Peter Vaughn, an early Grace

& Peacer who now lives in an apartment building renovated by other church members many years earlier, remembers: "As graduate students ...at 56xx Waterman in the summer of 1969, [my wife] Linda and I were enthused to learn of Grace & Peace Fellowship in the neighborhood. We left after seven years, but upon our return from France last year, we were so impressed with the changes both at the church and in the neighborhood that we moved back to this community."

Grace & Peace's founding pastor, the Rev. Egon Middelmann, was one of many church members who made their homes in Skinker-DeBaliviere. He lived in 60xx McPherson until his death in 1994. The church's current pastor, Reverend Kurt Lutjens, rehabbed a burned-out home on McPherson near Des Peres after moving to St. Louis for seminary in the late 1970s. He returned from Pittsburgh to pastor Grace & Peace in 1995 and has lived with his family in three different homes on McPherson. Reverend Lutjens warmly invites everyone to participate in Anniversary events or visit the church: "After...fourteen years in Skinker-DeBaliviere, it is not hard for me to see God's great interest in the people of this neighborhood. We welcome anyone eager to learn with us of his generous kindness to the broken of heart."

The Anniversary Celebration is planned for Sunday, October 24 with the theme 'Be Thou My Vision.' The Anniversary Worship Service will be from 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. and will include display of a new worship banner being designed by the Liturgical Arts group of Grace & Peace. Evening events begin at 4 p.m. with an extensive art exhibit entitled 'Thou Our Vision' featuring art and fine craft from within the congregation. From 6-8 p.m. the Grace & Peace choir and other musical artists will present a lively concert. All events will take place at 5574 Delmar Blvd. and are open to the public. For more information, please call 367-8959.

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## Security Seminar

All neighbors and Washington University off-campus housing residents are invited to attend a personal Security Seminar on Wednesday, September 22nd, at 7:00 p.m. The seminar will be held at The Regional Arts Commission facility, 6128 Delmar Boulevard.

Sponsored by Parkview Properties, the Washington University Police Department and Security services, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Seventh District and the University City police department, the program will offer personal safety guidelines as well as important information regarding resources available in our communities. Attendance prizes and refreshments have been organized through Parkview properties' efforts. For further information contact Sandi LaManna at 863-2600 or Laure Porterfield at 862-5122.

### Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting

May 10, 2004 Meeting Place: SDCC Office  
**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS** - Dog Park Proposal - Presentation made by Sarah Murphy, President of the CWF, Dog Parks and 4 others. Ms Murphy indicated that their organization was interested in opening a dog park in SDCC. Specifically, they are interested in a lot at the NW corner of Pershing & DesPeres and they are requesting a formal letter of support for a dog park in SDCC. They would secure the dog park with a wrought iron fence. Had questions about the ownership of the lot and the City process to secure the necessary support. Discussion followed. At present, the group will explore acquiring the parcel at Pershing and DesPeres while also looking for other properties in the SDCC area. A copy of the CWF Dog Parks handout is attached.  
 They will be moving the Central West End dog park to Olive and Taylor  
**FINANCE REPORT:** The April financial report is attached; it indicates that revenues are slightly above projection. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report; the report was accepted. The cash balance includes restricted funds of \$54,000 leaving available cash of \$14,000. The Treasurer will look for a more reader friendly way in which to reflect the restricted fund on the financials. To date, the campaign has raised close to \$5,000 and donations continue to come in.

**SECURITY REPORT:** Lt. Glenn Williams thanked SDCC for their support. He cited several crimes in the areas - 2 burglaries in the 6100 McPherson & 6100 Kingsbury; gunpoint robbery of woman in the 5500 block of Waterman, problem property in the 5800 block of DeCiverville, police have met with owners and will continue to monitor; and a mar seen driving a Blue Olds, was seen exposing himself. There was also mention of a burglary in Parkview and a car thief. 7th District police have met with Washington University police to address neighborhood concerns and to coordinate safety efforts. Lt Williams reminded us to lock doors when working outside and to use window locks when leaving windows open.

**ALDERMANIC REPORT:** Alderwoman Krewson attended the ribbon cutting from the East meets the West festival this morning and informed us of the Landmarks Association awards to the Coronada, Joe Edwards for the 6172-78 renovation and the Lister Building. She also updated us on the status of the Metro contractor hauling dirt through the neighborhood. The Judge call both parties together to get it settled and said there should be more than one route. An agreement is in the works. As part of the agreement the DesPeres Cul-De-Sac will temporarily come down, no one route can take more than 60% of the hauling traffic. The City will place an inspector on site to monitor the agreement.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**BEAUTIFICATION:** An@X Cross reported on planting Day activities at 4 corners and the playground on May 15; posts are being repaired. A sign-up sheet for volunteers for the Breakfast Tour was circulated.

**Executive Director's Report**  
 Laure reminded us that the Breakfast Tour is June 1. Each Board member was given 10 tickets for the Breakfast. A copy of the Executive Director's Report is attached.

**SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE HOUSING CORPORATION:** No oral report was given, however, a copy of the written report is attached.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** At Laurel & Delmar, John Matthews is rehabbing

**Steve Givens** reported on the following Washington University events: 5/21 Washington University commencement speaker will be Tom Friedman, NY Times

columnist. Honorary degrees will be bestowed upon Judge McMillan and Joe Edwards; Olin Library can be used as research tool.

Olympic torch comes on June 17th. On June 16, Washington University is having a ceremony at Frances Fields - the rededication of field ceremony.  
 Ms. May reported that a job fair, jointly coordinated by West End Community Center and Mt. Carmel Church on May 20 from 3 - 7 pm at Hamilton School  
**ADJOURNMENT**

### Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting

June 14, 2004 Meeting Place: SDCC Office  
**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS** - **FINANCE REPORT:** Finance report was deferred until quorum present  
 Stephanie McDowell reported on Seniors Project being conducted. This project involves surveying seniors in the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood to determine what services are provided to seniors and what services they would like. This project utilizes resources from Grace United Methodist, New Cote Brillante and St. Roch Churches. The outcome is to build up Grace's Senior Task Force and to build a connection between the three churches so more people can be served. Students from Washington University School of Social Work would be conducting the neighborhood assessments.  
**SECURITY REPORT:** Sgt. From SLPD reported on continued home invasions in Skinker-DeBaliviere while residents are in the home. The police are continuing to investigate and have identified some tentative suspects.

**Transportation Committee:** Dan Schesch reported on the MetroLink construction. There are still reports of considerable noise from the construction. The lane lines on Skinker need to be repainted to better identify the individual lanes. The initial problem of the construction gate not being closed seems to have been resolved. The gate is now being closed.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**  
**BEAUTIFICATION:** Andy Cross will enter McPherson community in Post Dispatch contest - McPherson garden for Gateway Greening. McPherson barricade has been replaced. Andy will get volunteer sheet together for watering, 4 corners. Garden Tour reached goal, they have raised over \$1,000 to date.

**Financial Report:** Peggy reviewed financial reports; expenditures are below normal at 38% of budget. Motion was made and seconded to accept Treasurer's report. motion passed.

**Executive Director's Report:** Laure reported on status of RAC grant application. SDCC awarded \$3,000 for the Concert Series and Winter Market. A motion was made and seconded to allow the Executive Director to execute the RAC contract. Motion passed.

Due the costs of insurance and the price of the beer, it is not cost effective for Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council to sell beer at this year's National Night Out celebration at 4 Corners. A motion was made and seconded to not sell beer at the National Night Out. Motion passed.

**SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE HOUSING CORPORATION:** No oral report was given, however, a copy of the written report is attached.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Dan Schesch updated us on the Charter amendment being proposed by Advance St. Louis. Steve Givens invited residents to attend the rededication ceremony of Francis Field on Wed between 5 - 5:30. There will be several Olympians present to sign autographs.  
**ADJOURNMENT**

# National Night Out

Photos by King Schoenfeld



Looks like a hot discussion on a really hot National Night Out: Marvin Nodiff is seen here with Alderman Lyda Krewson.



Live music captured the attention of young and old alike at Skinker-DeBaliviere's National Night Out.

## Rags to Riches

Photo by King Schoenfeld



SDCC again sponsored its "Rags to Riches" neighborhood-wide yard sale on August 21. Don Walker, of the 6100 block of Westminster, started this annual neighborhood tradition and again this showed his wonder assortment of treasures.



There's Tim Schoemehl at the food booth.

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# IN YOUR EAR

by Hawkeye Z. Hoerr

What's happening to us? I mean, the constants in life are like sand are shifting and moving under our feet. It's hard to know where to put your trust. It used to be that carbohydrates were meaningless, Russia was a major force in world politics, and our president was wise. Boy, how things have changed.

Locally, look back just a score of years and the differences are astounding. Today there are too many local governments, political leaders are being assailed for questions of conflict of interest, suburban sprawl is costing everyone, too many students are leaving schools unprepared, health care costs are rising at an alarming rate, and there are questions about the viability of our local airline. Oh, wait a minute, did I say 20 years ago or was I talking about today? Hmmmm.

OK, to be fair, there are changes. Look at the Delmar East Loop, for example. Or look at the great loft apartments being built downtown. Or look at cable television, found in almost every home. (On second thought, given the programming, don't look at cable television.) Yes, Aunt Mary Lou, like it or not, society is changing. But because we're on this train while it's moving, we often don't see the differences, even though they're there. And no where are these changes more obvious than in our relationship to major league baseball (MLB). This worries me because without MLB to obsess us, we might have

to get serious about government reform or our responsibilities to the less fortunate in our society. Now there's a scary thought!

Here's what I mean. Are you a baseball fan? Probably not; I knew it. OK, you may follow baseball, particularly the Cardinals. Given their performance this year, it's hard not to be a fan. But I am willing to bet that you're not a zealous fan, regardless of their performance this or any year. If you're a sports fan - which statistically, most of us are, almost as many women as men - baseball is likely not among your top sports. You may have played baseball and probably did play softball; heck, you may still pick up an old leather glove and bat and trek to some park on a regular basis. You've had your share of base-hits and missed fly balls, you've skinned your knees sliding, and you've eaten a hot dog and drank a cold one at a game. Or maybe you've watched a child play t-ball or softball or baseball in an endless competition, walk followed by error followed by walk followed by error. Is it time to go home yet? Thank Heaven for the 10-run rule. (Why isn't there a 10-run rule in life? That would certainly simplify things.) But I'll guarantee you the purchase price of this fine newspaper that you don't attend as many Cardinal games as you used to, that you don't eagerly check the local listings to see when the Cards or in the tube, and that you don't pour through the newspaper account of yesterday's game. And this is when they're winning madly!

Baseball, among all major sports, is the only one hemorrhaging. I don't consider hockey a major sport so won't deal with it here. Suffice it to say that when fist-fights and violence are integral to the game, one has to ask "Just what is the game?" (Noted social observer Rodney Dangerfield put it best years ago when he said, "I went to the fights and a hockey game broke out." Thanks, Rodney.) While the NFL's television ratings are flat, every Sunday is sold out and the networks still pay mega-bucks for broadcasting rights. The NBA is a-flying high and has evolved to become an amalgam of hip-hop, lacrosse, ballet, high-jump, MTV, and The Sopranos. There's no doubt that professional basketball players possess the best combination of speed and agility. A close second to them are the people who stand in the middle of busy traffic intersections, selling pretzels or candy.

And then there's major league baseball, MLB. It's in decline for years now. Unlike the NFL or NBA, the rules for baseball were created shortly after the Civil War, and simply haven't kept pace with our changing world. Actually, and this is the chief problem, given the pace of the game, I should say "And... then... there's... major... league... base... ball..." Talk about slow. Think frozen molasses. Think frozen molasses flowing uphill. Get the picture, Major Pita?

Unlike the NFL and NBA, both of which were 20th century inventions and both of which found true success post-Viet Nam, baseball was invented before there was television, automobiles, or, gasp, microwave ovens. Indeed, professional baseball was played when the streets of Skinker DeBaliviere were simply pastures far beyond the western boundary of St. Louis. The famous 1904 World's Fair wasn't even a dream when baseball was born.

OK, so we now understand the problem. Like rotary-dial phones, typewriters, bell-bottom pants, and voting being a privilege for white

males only, baseball represents yesterday. There are 10-13 players on the field at a time, and one player throws a ball to another player who swings a bat. The ball is in play, the players are moving, for maybe 10 or 15 seconds, then everything settles again for a minute until the next pitch is thrown. Or maybe it's a minute or two. Honestly, if you have some deadly disease and want to extend your life, attend baseball games. You won't really last any longer but sitting through inning after inning after inning, it will feel like you're living forever.

So what can be done? If you assume that some good emanates from having a thriving MLB team in a city - some amount of economic activity is generated, there's a bit of positive community identity when the team wins, building a new stadium is more important than the quality of education or health care (alright, so we'll accept two out of three) - then something must be done to save baseball from itself. This is an important issue to me; time alone in one's cell allows for deep thought, so I've pondered it a great deal. I'm not talking about adding high-amplified rock music or actual fireworks before the game, or, even. Hooters waitresses in the aisles. No, I'm talking significant and meaningful changes that get to the essence of the game and bring it into the twenty-first century. What follows are five practical suggestions, one for each inning, for making MLB a hot-ticket item once again. (Five, one for each inning? you wonder? Just wait.)

1. The game should represent the face of America. That is, every team should not only have a range of skin colors, which it already does, it should be gender-neutral too. Half of the players should be women. There are women's baseball teams in high school and college, so why not continue and have them on the MLB teams? Now it's true that men tend to be bigger, stronger, and faster, so we need to do a bit of social engineering here. By lottery, half of the team would be filled by a woman; by lottery, before each game, half of the starting lineup must be occupied by a woman. This will have to increase both the grace of the game and its interest; hopefully women won't start chewing tobacco and scratching their crotches. (In the interests of full disclosure, I must note that while men tend to be bigger, stronger, and faster, women tend to be smarter, more sensitive, and kinder. That has to help any organization. Plus they're better cooks.)

2. Move the bases closer together. When you consider how airlines and automobiles have shortened distances, why shouldn't this happen in baseball too? Instead of bases being 90 feet apart, make them only 60 feet from one another. A couple of things would happen. First, hitting and scoring would go WAY up. Everyone wants to see offense and runs scored, so this would be ideal. With the closer bases, a team would score 20-25 runs a game. The typical player's batting average would increase by 300 or so points; a major leaguer averaging .666 wouldn't be unreasonable. Albert Pujols might go weeks without making an out. Second, with the bases this close to home plate, the third-base man and first-basemen would need to wear a chest protector and face mask, just like the catcher. Watching line-drives being hit at these positions would definitely keep the game interesting (if a bit masochistic).

3. In order to keep games under two and one-half hours, since teams are scoring 20-25 runs a game, games are reduced to five innings. The seventh inning stretch is now the third inning stretch (and is needed because 15 runs have already been scored and people are tired of sitting). This might also translate to fewer commercials,

not a bad thing.

4. Base-running directions are changed. In odd-numbered innings, things stay the way that they are now: a batter who hits the ball runs to his right, proceeding counter-clockwise along the bases. However, under my new bring-the-life-back-to-baseball approach, in even-numbered innings, a batter who hits the ball will run clockwise, going initially to third base, then to second, and then to first. Not only will having base runners go in different directions make the game balanced and visually more appealing, it will change what is required of players. Each side of the infield will be the same and players will need to learn to be dexterous to their right and left. Plus, and here's the kicker, human nature being what it is (especially among, ahem, people who are not playing MLB because of their high IQ), invariably someone will forget and run in the wrong direction after hitting the ball or while on base. You'd have players passing one another, crossing over, and changing directions. A little unpredictability never leads to boredom.

5. Immobilize a player. Speaking of unpredictability, this last suggestion is a real winner. Of the four focus groups to which I presented my ideas, this one was the overwhelming favorite. Each of six players in the field, excluding the pitcher, catcher, and first-basemen (or third basemen in even numbered innings), wears a red light-bulb on top of his/her cap. As the pitcher prepares to deliver the ball to home plate, a computer program randomly selects one of these six players; the players' light begins to flash and s/he receives a mild buzz. The light signals everyone else and the buzz signifies the player that for this particular pitch, s/he can only take a maximum of one step in either direction. Beyond that, s/he is frozen in place. On some pitches, this won't make any difference. That's because either the batter doesn't swing, the pitch is fouled off, or the ball is hit to someone else and the player whose light is flashing isn't involved in the play in any way.

On other pitches, the ball is hit nearby a flashing light player (FLP, as they are called) but s/he can only take one step and streeeeetch. The ball becomes a base hit or the FLP is forced to make an acrobatic play. Much of life, including success in baseball, is about luck and this would simply put luck on the table for all to see. Think of how exciting this would be to watch. As soon as the pitcher starts his/her windup, everyone looks to see whose light is flashing. I can hear Mike Shannon broadcasting this, 'Morris is on the mound and begins his windup. Oh yes! Edmonds' light in centerfield is flashing. I sure hope that Bonds doesn't hit the ball there! O! Abner has done it again!'

I rest my case, dear reader. Any of these changes can bring MLB back to the prominence it once held. Instead of kids wanting to be like Mike or saving money to buy a LeBron jersey or pretending they're Marshall Faulk, they would aspire to be the Cardinals' Scott Rollins or Caroline Kline. My changes don't cost any money, they just make the game a bit more with-it, a bit more sensitive to our culture. I can hardly wait to go to the new stadium and see a game played under these new rules. Souvenir vendors, I have no doubt, will be selling Cardinal hats with flashing light bulbs on them.

In a future column, I will offer equally practical and pragmatic suggestions for revising Metro Link construction, the Supreme Court, and the unruly lines in front of Ted Drewes Frozen Custard Stand. These changes are long overdue. I mean, doesn't it amaze you that George W. Bush is President because of Diana Ross? What? Oh, it was the Supreme Court? Never mind.

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