

# The *TIMES* of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Vol. 36 No. 1

April - May 2006

FREE

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

## Loop Center Is Coming!

By Lana Stein



Neal Shapiro has operated **Original Cast Lighting** in our neighborhood for 30 years, first on Skinker and now for 26 years on Delmar. Some time ago he purchased the Yellow Cab site on 61xx Delmar. Now he and his son Josh are working to see that a bold new development replaces an old eyesore. They have received a TIF to help finance this development Loop Center. The old cab building will come down and in its stead will be a two story mixed use project with 30,000 feet of retail/restaurant and office space (about half for each use). In addition, there will be 63 parking spaces for the development. The Lawrence Group is the architect and marketing is beginning.



**Josh and Neal Shapiro in front of the old Yellow Cab Co., soon to be removed for a new retail and office development.**

Neal Shapiro been active in the Delmar Commercial Committee for many years time and has also served as an officer of the East Loop Special Business District. He is very excited about this new venture and is especially pleased that his son is his partner.

several years.

- Peter Downs, SLPS parent and editor of the St. Louis Construction News and past candidate for the School Board.
- Donna Jones, SLPS parent and Educational Associate and Risk Assessor for the St. Louis Lead Prevention Coalition.
- Dennis McLin-Shireff, former St. Louis Police Officer.
- Joe Clark, retired former head of the SLPS plumbing department and trustee of the St. Louis teachers' pension fund.

The Board of Election Commissioners has also announced that the new touch-screen voting machines will be in place for the first time in the City of St. Louis.

## VOTE ON APRIL 4

By Marj Weir

Six candidates will vie for two open seats on the St. Louis Board of Education on April 4, 2006. Each voter may vote for two of the six. The two with the highest number of votes overall will be elected.

- The candidates are
- James Buford, chief executive and President of the Urban League and an incumbent board member appointed by the Mayor in November, 2005, to fill a vacated seat.
  - Darnetta Clinkscale, Patient Care Director for Respiratory Care and Rehabilitation Services at Barnes Jewish Hospital and also an incumbent who is completing her first term and has served as President of the Board for

### Once again, Skinker DeBlaviere Community Council Brings You **Operation Brightside BLITZ DAY** Saturday, April 1st, 2006

*Help cleanup your neighborhood!*

The Beautification Committee of the Skinker DeBlaviere Community Council needs YOU to join your neighbors for this big clean-up day.

After making the neighborhood shine, join us from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. for free hot-dogs & soda Greg Freeman Park at Four Corner Park (Kingsbury & DesPeres).

**And then next month –**

**Neighborhood Greening** – Saturday, May 6, 2006  
Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners and all around the neighborhood.

**Available FREE at your Four Corner Park on Saturday, May 6, 2006:**

- woodchip mulch (for garden beds and trees, etc.)
- grass seed packets for small bare spots in lawns
- sign up to water flowers at Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners
- Block Captains flower orders to be picked up

**Question?**

**Call Skinker DeBlaviere Community Council at 862-5122.**

SDCC is funded in part by a grant from CDA and HUD.

### Operation Brightside **PROJECT BLITZ 2006** **Alley Clean-up Day**

#### Trash Instructions

Trash pick-up will start at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, April 1st.

- Trucks will pick up several times throughout the day.
- Please put your large trash items out by 10:00 a.m.
- Car batteries, used motor oil, large appliances, and tires will be recycled. Please separate from household items (such as furniture, mattresses, etc.)
- Place grass, leaves, and twigs in *Yard Waste Only* dumpsters.
- Branches more than two inches in diameter and no longer than 3 to 4 feet must be bundled and placed with bulk items for collection.

Call Skinker DeBlaviere Community Council with questions at 862-5122.

#### Placement of Items:

- Place all small items in the trash dumpster. Be careful not to overload the dumpster.
- Place large items, such as appliances and furniture, directly behind your home at the alley line. (This is your regular bulk pick-up site.)
- If you have a dumpster directly behind your house: Make sure your bulk items are at least four feet away from the dumpster. No large items should be placed next to or behind the dumpsters.
- Trash trucks will not be able to empty trash receptacles if there is any material placed within four feet of any dumpster.
- Do not block alleys with bulk items.
- Items placed on private property will not be picked up.
- If you clean a vacant lot, all bulk items must be placed at the alley line for the material to be collected.
- All debris must be bagged or put into the trash receptacles.
- Loose debris will not be picked up by the trucks.

Brought to you by Operation Brightside and the Skinker DeBlaviere Community Council.

# Editor's Notebook

By Lana Stein

**The Right to Walk.** After I moved to Skinker DeBaliviere in 1989, I became an inveterate walker. It was a great pleasure and beneficial exercise. My walking days have been curtailed by arthritic knees but I remain a strong supporter of pedestrians everywhere. Today, a number of residents are concerned that an essential point of egress to Delmar may at some time be cut off. In the late 1980s, a precursor and then the Skinker DeBaliviere Housing Corporation acquired the apartment buildings known as Rosedale Square. As part of this action, the city vacated Rosedale between Washington and the alley just south of Delmar. This meant that this small portion of street and the sidewalks was no longer a public thoroughfare and could be closed off by the owners of the property. The street is closed but the sidewalks always remained open although there was talk of a sidewalk closing back then.

Before saying how could that happen and why, we do have to remember that Delmar was a very different thoroughfare in 1987. There were few points of interest – two good cleaners – on the south side. The street appeared unsafe to many. To see that the Rosedale Square apartments succeeded under the new ownership, some dreamed of defensible space to keep out the undesirable.

The Delmar Commercial Committee formed in 1989. The Committee secured improvements to the streetscape, including a new crosswalk and stoplight at Rosedale, and fashioned a redevelopment plan. There was some progress but the street really began to change when the Pageant opened 5 years ago. There came new retail, restaurants, and other businesses. It has been a spectacular Renaissance. The streetscape is vastly different; Delmar is no longer a wasteland, particularly after 6:00 pm. The Delmar transformation has been paralleled by our neighborhood's increase in property values, its greater desirability, and a surge in foot traffic within the neighborhood. When I moved here, everyone (or almost everyone) drove to Council meetings. Now, when I go there, I walk. Crime is not nonnegligible here but it is considerably less than 15-20 years ago.

The Housing Corporation recently sold Rosedale Square to Saamen Corp. The apartments will be redeveloped as condominiums. This redevelopment will occur without any governmental subsidy, abatement or TIF. While the Housing Corporation was negotiating with Saamen, SDCC president Dan Schesch pointed out that, as purchaser, the Saamen Corp. would control the sidewalk, which enables so many of us to go to MetroLink, to the Pageant or Halo Bar, and to the new and

(Continued on next column)  
**The Right to Walk**

## The TIMES of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Co-Editors: Lana Stein and JoAnn Vatcha  
Business Manager: Lois Schoemehl  
Contributors: Norbert Hart, Maggie Peters, Laure Porterfield, Tom Hoerr, Andy Cross, King Schoenfeld, Nicole Blumner, Rachelle L'Ecuyer

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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 Summer issue: May 15, 2006. Please send copy by e-mail to 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 or lstein@umsl.edu.

# Calendar

## Upcoming Events Calendar

Monday, April 10, and May 8: Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council Meetings, 7:00 p.m., 6008 Kingsbury.

Wednesday, April 5, April 19, May 3, and May 17, 2006: Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation Meetings, 6:00 p.m., 6008 Kingsbury.

Save the Date: June 3 – Breakfast Garden Tour

## Other Events of Interest

April 9: U. City Annual Sculpture Series Featuring Centennial theme sculptures by Washington University artists. Reception at 2:30 p.m. City Hall, 6701 Delmar.

April 22-23: Thurtene Carnival will return to the Brookings parking lot along Skinker and Forest Park Parkway, Washington University.

May 10: Washington University last day of final exams.

May 19 - July 9: Glass + Metal at Craft Alliance. An invitational exhibition featuring the works of five artists creating jewelry from the pairing of metal and glass. C. James Meyer from Virginia Commonwealth University and Ginger Kelly from Seattle are among the artists included. This exhibition coincides with the Glass Art Society's national conference to be held in St. Louis, Missouri in June of 2006. Craft Alliance, 6649 Delmar, (314) 721-1177.

May 29: Annual U. City Memorial Day Run. Starts 10 a.m. at the U. City Library, 6701 Delmar, (314) 727-3150.

(Continued from previous column)

### The Right to Walk

wonderful Delmar restaurants. A new owner could close off the sidewalk. That thought appalled any number of us. Housing Corporation members introduced the issue. Saamen agreed that the purchasers would not close the sidewalk. In the longterm, if 75% of the condo owners wished they could vote to close it off. That language is in the sales contract.

The what if remains. Some would like Saamen to give back the street and sidewalk to the city. The alderman has asked them and they have refused. The city has no cachet to force the issue. This issue has come to a head, thanks to the SDCC president's web site and postings. He has spoken to 3 of the owners. One said (and I am paraphrasing) that the sidewalk should be closed. Delmar was too dangerous, etc. and hardly anybody uses that sidewalk. Obviously, he is back in the 80s. A friend's daughter lived at Rosedale Square right on Rosedale for almost a year. No problems.

The question is what to do now. There has been debate in the Council. Although no one course of action has been chosen, the concern is quite evident. Obviously vigilance is important. And it is also key to be able to show a high degree of usage by residents of that sidewalk and strong popular support against any closing. We can lay blame: the street shouldn't have been vacated in the first place; that parcel of street and sidewalk should not have been part of the sale. But, we can't relive the past. One not very walking friend said what's the point? People can just go around the block. But, that's a lot of difference to those on their way to work, people with small children, or people who are slightly infirm. I have heard that someone would like to negotiate with Saamen and get them to give us an easement. That would be great for us but not likely to be seen as in their corporate interest. We have to show we care and make that care known. But, we must be pragmatic as well. There may not be a problem. But, there could be. Vigilance is the watchword.

## St. Louis Roma Music Festival

On Sunday, April 9, 2006, 1 - 5 p.m., Gitana Productions, in collaboration with Croatian, Bosnian and Macedonian Roma living in St. Louis, will present The St. Louis Roma Music Festival, to be located at the Worlds Fair Pavilion in Forest Park. The festival will include authentic music and dance of Eastern European Roma. Gypsy Fire, based in Chicago, will headline the event, which will include international and local Romani musicians.



Alija of Gypsy Fire.

Local Roma and arts organizations such as Behar and the St. Louis Cultural Flamenco Society will provide a display of traditional

dances coming from Eastern Europe, Spain and Northern Africa. Additionally, there will be Eastern European foods that are typically served by Bosnian Roma.

Come to dance, to eat and to enjoy the glorious spirit of the Romani (Gypsy) people against the beautiful backdrop of Forest Park. Everyone is welcomed.

Tickets are \$10 per person for people 13 or older. Children age 12 years and younger are admitted for free. Tickets are available through MetroTix at <http://www.metrotix.com/> or by calling (314) 534-1111.

# News of Neighbors

By Jo Ann Vatcha

Arrivals and Departures: A belated welcome to neighbors on the 6000 block of Westminster, **Joan Hart-Hasler** and **Tony Hasler**, both teachers, and their children **Lois**, **Jack** and **Maude**, students at St. Michael and St. George on Wydown. Daughter 'Loie' was one of the charming neighborhood Girl Scouts who kept us supplied with cookies this spring.

On the 6100 block of Westminster, we welcome new neighbor **Peter Egelsman**, with a fond goodbye to **Steve and Nancy Cramer** and their delightful children, who moved to Ames Place. Further west, welcome to **Sammy and Elanor Sampson-Scott** who have recently purchased a home on Westminster.

Neighborhood Security Update: A series of second-story burglar-like noises on a recent late evening sent us scurrying into the street and into the safe harbor of our great neighbors. The police

responded within five minutes and did everything right, including asking about possible pets and other residents before thoroughly searching our house and yard. We were collectively relieved to find an air conditioner which had fallen in, instead of a break-in. The four policemen who came could not have been more helpful or respectful and assured us we had done exactly the right thing to call 911. Thanks to our local **9th District police officers!**

Congratulations to **Tom Hoerr**, longtime columnist for THE TIMES and Head of the renowned New City School, upon the publication of his newest book, *"The Art of School Leadership."* We are so proud of his and the school's great successes. A new website really shows the innovative and productive atmosphere of New City. Visit [www.newcityschool.org](http://www.newcityschool.org).

**We'd love to share YOUR news. Call 726-6974 or e-mail me at [jvatcha@peoplepc.com](mailto:jvatcha@peoplepc.com) to let us know what's happening.**

## Welcome NSO Chris Howard

By Rachelle LiEcuyer

We have a new Neighborhood Stabilization Officer in Skinker-DeBaliviere but as a life-long resident of the city and 16-year veteran with the City of St. Louis, Chris Howard, may be a familiar face to many of you.



to track and report suspicious behavior and nuisance activity and to encourage people to be diligent about reporting these and property maintenance issues." His experience as a Problem Property

Coordinator where he coordinated the communication between police, city counselor and property owners in identifying and abating nuisance property, along with his years of experience should make this goal a reality.

Chris has close ties to our area; his children attend St. Roch School and he was born and raised in the Central West End (part of the 28th Ward!) "I enjoy the diversity of the job - working with all types of persons and organizations with the single goal of improving or sustaining the quality of life for their neighborhood." Chris says of his work which has included coordinating the City's annual National Night Out and the Landlord Conference; an advisory member to city landlord associations; served on the implementation committee for the US Dept. of Justice Weed & Seed anti-gang initiative; Organized participation in Olympic Torch Relay through the city; certified community mediator among other things!

When asked of his work goals for our community, Chris says, "What I would like to achieve in this neighborhood is to help establish a process for residents

When asked what the highlight of his career has been, Chris illustrates the uniqueness and diversity of his work, "I guess it was giving a personal tour of neighborhood anti-crime and improvement projects to then U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno!"

Please welcome Chris Howard to the neighborhood! Contact information follows:

Christopher J. Howard, Neighborhood Stabilization Officer, Ward 24 & 28, Room 418 - City Hall, 1200 Market St., St. Louis, MO. 63103

314.622-4628  
314.613-3120 (fax)  
314.613-7023 - (desk/V.M.)

## Remembering Laure Porterfield

by Lana Stein

It seems strange to think that she is gone. She was the executive director of the SDCC for over 10 years. She was the voice at the end of the line, the smiling face at community gatherings. I first met Laure Porterfield when she interviewed for the SDCC job. It was the end of a long, hot evening but we perked up at her infectious warmth and her love of neighborhoods. We had her back for a second interview and she got the job. Her husband's family, the Schillers, have lived here for years. Their business was on Delmar. So, she knew a good deal about us when she started. But, she had a strong curiosity to learn every facet of the neighborhood and meet everyone in it.



She worked very hard and many of us probably didn't know the multitude of health problems she had. Sometimes, she had trouble walking in the office. But, she never gave in and she fought until the very end. She had a remarkable patience. I, and others, certainly were not always the easiest to deal with but she did not lose her temper with us. She never held a grudge and she always spoke for the neighborhood and council.

There were many accomplishments during her tenure. She created the lunch for police and firefighters. She enhanced National Night Out. She was there at every Rags to Riches. But, perhaps most of all, she took the time to speak with everyone who called or came by. She made many feel very special. I enjoyed chatting with her on every topic under the sun especially cats. She loved animals and left 3 cats behind.

Her funeral at St. Roch was filled with neighborhood people and with police officers who enjoyed her company and her constant assistance and appreciation.

She died too soon. Her beloved daughter will not have her to guide her through the shoals of young adulthood. She was a good person as her husband told me. Laure always wanted to see a drinking fountain at Four Corners; heaven knows there are enough children who could use it during their summer excursions to the playground. The SDCC is collecting funds to build this in memory of Laure. If you would want to contribute, you can send a check made out to the SDCC to 6008 Kingsbury. Say that it's a thank you to Laure.



**Laure Porterfield's daughter Stephanie and husband Steve Schiller received a Resolution of the Board of Alderman honoring Laure, presented by Alderwoman Lyda Krewson at the Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council's annual Martin Luther King commemoration.**



## Welcome to McPherson Place!

Yes, beautiful new construction is available in the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood!

The 5700 block of

McPherson is home to a new community with a mixture of quality new and renovated homes, blending historical and contemporary. Starting at \$339,900.



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314-419-8989

# Big Shark Bicycle Company Receives 2nd National TOP 100 Bicycle Retailer Award

By Jo Ann Vatcha

Bicycle Retailer and Industry News has named our own **Big Shark Bicycle Company** as a Top 100 Bicycle Retailer for 2006. According to this national industry trade paper, which surveyed over 5,500 bicycle shops, the criteria for selecting their top 100 Retailers for 2006 were: market share, community outreach and

store appearance. All the bike manufacturers get a vote, so it is clearly a great honor to be selected.

Mike Weiss' Big Shark Bicycle Company has been serving bicycle riders in the St. Louis area for thirteen years, and have grown from a tiny 800 sq. ft. spot in the Loop to a spacious 3,200 sq. ft. storefront, also in University City, to their current location in the City of St. Louis, with over 7,000 sq. ft. With eleven manufacturers to choose from, a customer can find a bike for whatever their needs may be. Big Shark owner Mike Weiss states their philosophy: "We want all of our customers to be infected with our passion for the sport. We really want our customers to have a great time cycling and try to do as many things in the community that promote participation as possible. We actively promote over fifty events per year and keep trying to creatively come up with more fun things for our customers and us." For example, on Thursday



Photos by JoAnn Vatcha

Mike Weiss, Big Shark Bicycle.



evenings during the summer, they sponsor competitive bike races in the remodeled Veladrome (the only one in St. Louis!) in Penrose Park, Kingshighway just south of Highway 70. Closer to home, on April 30, 2006, the "Tour of St. Louis" race, the only bike competition to take place in Forest Park, will take place. For more information, call 862-1188. Viewing it instead of riding in it could be a great family activity, rather like seeing future Lance Armstrongs up close and in person.

Mike Weiss has actively participated in the renaissance of The Loop by moving east, relocating two years ago into the City of St. Louis next to the Pageant Theatre. Big Shark is experiencing growth and stability while offering unique and high quality products. They are located at 6133 Delmar in a beautifully renovated former car showroom, designed by Kiku Obata and Company. Their hours are M-F 10 am - 8 pm, Sat. 10 am - 6 pm, Sun. 12 pm - 5 pm. Their very informative website is: [www.bigshark.com](http://www.bigshark.com). Or phone 862-1188.

## BUSINESS ON DELMAR

By Norbert Hart

This issue we feature somewhat of a seasonal business with our local tuxedo operation. Used for tuxedo rental for many years, the site is currently occupied by **Savvi Formalwear**. Savvi both rents and sells tuxedos and accessories. By far the busiest period for rentals and sales is March through May due to proms. Summer comes next with the holidays coming in a distant third.

Currently there is not a real trend in styles, as most people are opting for the classics, with even pin stripes have been remaining strong. One thing the store has noticed of late is matching ties and vests.

The company offers several wedding specials, among them being a plan that allows the customer to order and try on several styles before picking the one they want. Savvi does not offer cleaning for outside tuxedos.

Savvi Formalwear is located at 6185 Delmar, 725-2150. Hours are M-W, 10-6; Th-F, 10-8; and Saturday 8-5. Operations are usually extended March through May.



## Yoga Center

By Jim Signor

SkinkerDeBaliviere residents have been lamenting the fact that Des Peres Ave. now deadends at Forest Park Parkway. However, the notoriety of this intersection goes way beyond Metrolink construction woes. It just so happens that a little known St. Louis landmark also resides at this corner. The **Solar Yoga Center** has been quietly offering hatha yoga classes for the past 30 years. Its survival, in large part, is due to

its "community oriented" roots. Students often stay on and become part of this nonprofit organization as the next generation of teachers and volunteers. Director Diane McCameron passed along that: "We offer an encouraging atmosphere for students of all abilities and ages."

Instructor/Administrator Cathy McClellan began taking classes in 1991 and never left: "I like the sanctuary from the noisy world that the center provides." Students are always invited to participate in vegetarian potlucks as well as a very popular yoga/meditation

retreat, with yoga Master Jose Michan, every Memorial Day weekend.

Hatha Yoga, itself, is a practice that helps to bring the body back into balance through a set of postures and conscious breathing which, in turn, aid in improving one's stamina, flexibility and mental outlook on life. In the past few years the Center has grown to offer a number of alternative classes. This includes Gnana Yoga: a discussion on deepening the practice of yoga, Falun Dafa: a traditional Chinese cultivation practice of body and

mind, Yami: a spiritual study course plus prenatal yoga for the needs of pregnant women, and Innergi: a celebration of the joy of movement and dance. Finally, there is Vipassana Meditation, a bimonthly introduction to the techniques of Insight Meditation.

The Solar Yoga Center is located at 6002 Pershing (Pershing & Des Peres at Forest Park Parkway), (314) 726-5133 or [www.solaryogastl.org](http://www.solaryogastl.org) for schedule information. New students are always welcome. No prior yoga experience is necessary.

# Greetings from Germany

By Nicole Blumner

Last May, as my family and I prepared to leave for a year in Berlin, Germany, my days were consumed with the twin tasks of readying our house for tenants and trying to cram everything we would need into five oversize suitcases. As I stuffed most of our worldly possessions into bags and boxes, I would occasionally think about Jo Ann Vatcha's request that I write as a 'foreign correspondent' to the Times. The idea intrigued me, but I wondered, how different could things really be? What would people find interesting about our lives over here?



A nearby schraebergaerten.

After our arrival, I forgot these questions as we adjusted to our new lives. I attended language school full-time while my husband Warren, on sabbatical from Webster, worked on a history manuscript, and our daughter Eve got started in German day care, or 'Kita'. We moved into the Friedenau neighborhood in southern Berlin, on a quiet tree-lined street of five-story apartment houses. Some buildings, like ours, dated back to the turn of the century, and others were clearly post-World War II replacements (Berlin was 70% destroyed by bombs). Our flat turned out to be lovely, with 12-foot frescoed ceilings, massive solid wood doors and hardwood floors. It came IKEA-furnished and outfitted with crib and high chair, a welcome perk in a country where unfurnished apartments often require the tenant to bring not only furniture but also their own kitchen cabinets, fridge and clothes washer. There were no closets, but there was a balcony off our bedroom and wireless DSL.

Our introduction to German day care began as many things in this country do, with a bureaucratic encounter. After much struggle over papers and their proper stamps at the local Youth Agency, Eve was able to begin at the Kita in late July. The first two weeks of school consisted of an 'acclimatization period' during which Warren accompanied her there for about two hours per day, gradually leaving the room for brief periods. Only after the teacher was sure she had made the adjustment was she allowed to stay for alone for lunch and nap time. Eve's teacher, Uli, has been at her Kita for many years, as have the majority of the staff.

was well-designed for children, with a wooden bridge connecting the classrooms to the expansive sand playlot, and the building is set right next to the community gardens. We were initially taken aback at the breakfasts, which often include Nutella and chocolate milk, but the lunches are home-cooked and worthy of a discriminating palate - a recent lunch included cauliflower with hollan-daise sauce and there is a vegetarian meal once per week.

As summer wore on we missed our yard and garden, and took long walks in the nearby gardens to console ourselves. Known as 'schraebergaerten' in German, these gardens are a bit like community gardens in the States, but the parcels are bigger and are fenced off from each other. Each lot has a simple multi-purpose structure on it, kind of a cross between a garden shed and a summer cabin. Technically you are not allowed to live in the sheds, but many people spend all their waking hours there on weekends in the warm months - gardening, preparing meals, visiting with family and friends, or just relaxing. The garden tradition extends back for at least a century, but became especially popular after 1945, when food was in such shortage that people were forced to grow their own. Even the Tiergarten, the Forest Park of Berlin (without the golf courses) was temporarily converted to feed the city.

In the fall I began working as



Eve Rosenblum, at center, at her Kita, a German day care.

In Germany, being a day care worker is a formal career path, and jobs have better benefits than most American day care workers received. Also notable is that about 90% of the cost of the care is paid for by the government, making good day care truly affordable for all.

Eve's classroom was very international, with children from Turkey, Jamaica, Austria and Argentina. We were the only Americans there. The kita itself

a visiting fellow at the German Institute for Urban Studies, where I did research on the temporary use of vacant land in Berlin and Leipzig, another city that was part of the former East German Republic. I spoke with city planners and community activists grappling with the physical manifestations of population loss. They are turning vacant land into an opportunity by encouraging artists, entrepreneurs and environmentalists to transform on a temporary basis empty space

into art, sports venues, markets, gardens and other uses that attract people to an area and help stabilize it. Local government helps by providing tax subsidies and technical support. Surely this was the city planning equivalent of turning lemons into lemonade.

As winter arrived we bundled up against the cold, stoically awaiting for the sun to emerge through grey skies every week or so. We listened with envy to reports of 60° days from friends back home. And not only did the weather turn cold. Giving up on jogging after snows turned the sidewalks into sheets of ice, I joined a health club, where on one of my first visits I was scolded by a woman for getting the floor 'too wet' (I had just come from the pool). Cold weather really brings out the unfriendliness in people here, I reasoned. But there was at least one bright spot in winter.

Every year around this time, the city of Berlin gets a wake-up call from the late-winter doldrums with the start of the international Berlin film festival, or Berlinale. Luminaries such as Spike Lee and George Clooney descend along with hordes of lesser-known film industry big shots clad in black turtlenecks. You can pick these people out from a distance because they always have a cell phone glued to their ears and can be overheard discussing casting scenarios in unmodulated Amerikan-isch, as the Germans call our English. It has been fun to see so many of my fellow countrymen making a scene and feeling the city caught up in the glamour of Hollywood.

Although Germans may not be as friendly as Americans, at least not in winter, once you make a friend here, it is for life. We could not have survived without the help of several wonderful old friends from my husband's student days who provided gear, advice, and support on many occasions.

Yet I also think of our wonderful neighbors and friends at home who mailed us things we forgot and reassured us that our house was still standing after a month of resident Muni actors. We are particularly grateful to Faith Sandler and Michael Holahan and their kids Claire and Pete, who not only are hosting our cat for the year, but also took care of everything from supervising itinerant gardeners to removing dead tree branches from our roof. Our tenants Mikel and Virginia have also been great.

By the time you read this, spring will be in full bloom in St. Louis, while back in Berlin we'll still be trying to keep warm. But we're not complaining. Spending a year abroad involves giving up some things, like the comfort of your own home, in return for gaining other things, like a new language, and in our case, even a new baby (coming to theaters near you in late August). Viele Gruesse aus Berlin (Greetings from Berlin), and see you this summer!

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## Green Trails Are Coming to Skinker-DeBaliviere

By Joe Gudiswitz

Skinker-DeBaliviere can look forward to the arrival of two pedestrian/bicycle trails through efforts of the Great Rivers Greenway District and members of the Skinker-DeBaliviere Greenways and Transportation committees. This trail is part of a larger plan to connect rivers and water areas in greater St. Louis via pedestrian and bicycle trails. Known as the Great River Ring, the main trails will originate at the Lindell Pavilion in Forest Park, with the St. Vincent's Greenway heading north to end at Ramona Lake just north of the UMSL Campus, and the Centennial Greenway shooting northwest to finish at Creve Coeur Lake.

Construction of the St. Vincent's trail commences this summer. The trail will traverse DeBaliviere and head north at Delmar through Ruth Porter Mall. The goals of the trail system are to facilitate

connection between communities and parks, integrate underutilized lands, and to be a catalyst for new development. Ruth Porter Mall will undergo a clean up April 15th, with support from the Parks Department. Everyone is invited to roll up their sleeves and assist with clean-up efforts.

The Centennial Greenway trail is further off, with construction anticipated to be in 2007. A spur of this trail will connect the North Loop to Washington University via Ackert Parkway and then cross into Forest Park at Forsyth and Skinker.

Skinker-DeBaliviere neighbors worked hard to secure a path to connect our neighborhood to Forest Park via Des Peres. With construction slated to begin in 2009, this trail will utilize the light at Forest Park and Lindell, traverse the section of Des Peres recently cauterized to motoring

traffic by Metro Link, cross the pedestrian bridge, utilize the traffic light at Forest Park Boulevard and continue north along Des Peres Avenue. Possibly passing under Delmar, the trail will run alongside Metrolink tracks and then go west along Vernon, connecting with the Ackert Parkway spur and proceed northwest along a patchwork of parks, street side improvements and right of way easement to arrive at Creve Coeur Park in Maryland Heights.

Members of the Skinker-DeBaliviere Greenways and Transportation committees are planning to hold an informational meeting in mid-April to present the trail plan and discuss the impact of the trail for the Skinker-DeBaliviere community. Look for an announcement soon.

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Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting, January 9, 2006  
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS  
ROSDALE SQUARE CONDOMINIUM PLANS - Project name is Forest Park Condominiums  
\* Dennis Norman of Rosedale Square Development made a presentation on the plans for converting the Rosedale Square apartment to condos; 68 apartments will be converted to 58 condos  
\* Currently working on Phase I, most units are vacated or tenants have received notice to vacate  
\* BSI is the general contractor  
\* Phase I - completion tentatively scheduled for end of 2006, display unit scheduled to open in April 2006, marketing is underway  
\* Phase II - plan to close in May  
\* Conversion will include new systems, 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom units, sale price yet to be determined but are hoping to have a target starting price of \$139,000  
\* Rosedale vacated to property owners posing some title issues  
\* Parking will be off street, lots at rear of building, at least 1 parking spot per unit; also need street for development of parking  
\* A letter will be sent to neighbors advising them of project and giving them the developer's contact numbers  
MINUTES  
NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT - ELECTION OF OFFICERS  
\* Steve Givens presented the following slate of officers: President - Dan Schesch; Vice-President - Liz Johnson; Treasurer - Bob Mahon; Secretary - Alice Stanley  
\* Asked for nominations from floor, were none  
\* Motion made to accept slate as presented, seconded; motion passed  
FINANCIAL REPORT  
\* Bob Mahon reported that there were 2 small inactive checking accounts at Central West End Bank - Bingo fund with \$1,937.54 and NDP account with \$1,267  
\* Motion was made to close these two accounts and move the funds into the general checking account, seconded; motion passed  
\* Bob reported that the Friends Campaign had collected \$1,350 in December 2005 and \$1,116 during the 1st week in January 2006  
\* Bob Mahon presented the December 2005 financial report and reported that there was 1 discrepancy in Actual Available Cash of \$11,782.14; he wants to confirm/reconcile balance  
\* Under Miscellaneous, we are getting charged sewer bill for the garden but there is no sewer on the lot; will try to get MSD to stop billing for sewer  
SECURITY, Police Update  
\* Sgt. Russo reported that crime is up all over  
\* Suits can be filed against neighbors contributing to problems through the nuisance properties program  
\* Reminded that 9-1-1 should be called to report suspicious activities, the better the description (e.g., tattoos, other identifying remarks) the more it helps in catching the wrongdoers; suggested that we keep a log of the week's activities and have one person call in on a routine basis  
\* Stiffer penalties and sentencing guidelines would help to keep criminals off the street longer  
\* In the Weed 'N Seed Program, the US Attorney takes over prosecution  
\* The next Security meeting is scheduled 1/23  
\* Discussion - Should Washington University patrol car have lights on?  
ALDERMANIC REPORT. Ald. Williamson  
\* Update on Winston Churchill Apartments, 117 units to be gutted and rehabbed; explosion at apartments on Hamilton in which

one man did die as a result of the  
\* Reminded residents to let him know of nuisance properties; he will refer to the proper place  
\* Introduced Christine Boyd, the NSO assigned to the 26th ward, will also attend some of the SDCC Board meetings  
Chris Howard, the NSO for the 28th ward  
\* Reported on concerns received regarding a person living in a vacant building in the 6100 block of Pershing without utilities  
\* Application for liquor license at 6227 Delmar, hearing on January 20th  
\* Reinforced importance of calling police to report suspicious activity  
\* Has an example of a call log that he could pass along as a guide  
Harold Brown from Dougherty's office  
\* Reported that term ends this year; due to term limits, he won't be able to run next year  
\* Reminded that his office is here to support; for us to let them know what they can do to be of assistance; office number is 771-2091  
\* Reminded us that funding hampers police and sentencing  
\* Become proactive, form coalitions and send buses to legislature regarding safety and increases in the number of police officers  
COMMITTEE/NEIGHBORHOOD REPORTS  
SDCC Office Renovation  
\* Maggie Hart-Mahon (report attached) there is a need for monetary commitment, help in obtaining materials & supplies, and volunteers  
\* Renovation will involve moving offices for Gary and Laure to rear, moving kitchen to where Gary sits, widening door, expanding common area  
\* Motion made to authorize up to \$15,000 for SDCC office renovation, seconded; passed  
MLK Celebration  
\* Liz reported there will be a meeting on Thursday at 7:00 at the SDCC office  
\* Celebration will be on February 12th at Grace and Peace Church  
\* Would like to see more community involvement  
\* Looking for co-chair for next year's 07 event BEAUTIFICATION. Andy Cross reported  
\* June 3rd is the Breakfast Garden tour  
\* February 11th is the annual meeting for the McPherson Community Garden  
\* Looking for volunteers to help assemble the Friends Letter so it can get to Block Captains RAC Application  
\* Katrina updated us on status of RAC application - Application has been forwarded to Executive Committee, comments to Dan by tomorrow  
TRANSPORTATION. Dan Schesch reporting for Norb Hart  
\* Cross County web site indicates that the pedestrian overpass may be open by the end of January  
\* Expressway scheduled to open by the end of December - did not happen  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. Dan Schesch:  
\* Liquor License application for Shur Sav Mkt (in the Board packet); as of today, no signatures have been submitted to Kraiberg's office  
\* Question raised as to whether anyone had contacted the residents on Enright  
\* Discussion regarding impact of liquor store in neighborhood  
\* Motion made to allow liquor sales with restrictions and hours. seconded; passed, Police/Firefighters Appreciation, Dan reported  
\* There was lots of food and volunteers  
\* Thanks to all and especially to Gary and Juanita  
Housing Corporation  
\* Gary reported on activities of the Housing Corp  
\* A written report for the Housing Corp is



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# Panhandling

By Faith Sandler

Panhandling is on the rise in our neighborhood. Like many urban phenomena, panhandling data are hard to come by. That's because it takes several blocks, hours, or weeks to learn you've been a victim and a customary response is embarrassment. Those of us who are urban dwellers in social service professions are probably the least likely to report that we've fallen for a well-crafted story from a passer-by! This is my attempt to come clean.

I gave \$17 to a woman who stopped me at the corner of Rosedale and Westminster. She was lost and confused. She told me her car (a green Neon that hadn't had an oil change in 18 months because she couldn't afford it) had broken down and no one would help her push it to the side of Delmar. Having just moved from Kansas City a few weeks before, she was still learning her way around St. Louis. Her 13-year old daughter was home alone while she worked the early shift at the nursing home. She thought she could probably walk home and she asked me if she was headed in the right direction to reach a specific address on the 3800 block of Connecticut. She clutched her purse and looked

genuinely frightened. Her story had so much detail and sounded so plausible. I also have a 13-year old daughter; what if my car broke down and I had no money to fix it and knew no one in town?

I called the cab company from my cell phone (how convenient that she knew the number) and requested a cab. She must have known I wouldn't wait the required twenty minutes for the cab to arrive. I gave her the fare and continued a few blocks west, noticing that there was no Neon in the Church's parking lot where she said she'd left it. My stomach knotted. When I turned around and returned to the corner of Delmar and Rosedale where she was to wait for the cab, she was (of course) gone. Two weeks later, the same woman approached my neighbors as they were getting into their car one night and a similar story earned her \$10 before she saw me come out the front door to intervene.

Development of the east loop has been a wonderful thing. Restaurants and shops are within easy walking distance and the streets are populated with neighbors, students, and window shoppers. Rosedale Avenue, in particular, is a much more

travelled pedestrian thoroughfare. While most of the foot traffic is with legitimate purpose, it is also sadly accompanied by people who approach and ask for money. In bold new twists, some individuals have expanded from thoroughfares to residential streets and some have developed door-to-door methods. Caution is warranted, not just because you may give away your own grocery money to someone whose story has been fabricated, but also because it is not uncommon for more aggressive crime to follow.

If you "google" the phrase, you get 530,000 hits on panhandling. While many of the top entries are how-to guides for those considering this as an occupation, just as many are responses in the form of ordinances passed by municipalities struggling with the issue. In Baltimore, nighttime panhandling is illegal. The same is true in Denver, where panhandling within 20 feet of an ATM, bus or light rail stop, or pay-telephone is illegal. In many cities, aggressive panhandling is specifically defined and prohibited. In our neighborhood, some unified common sense might be more powerful than any legislation.

## Here are some tips:

### 1. Just Say No

Keep walking and stay where you are visible to others. This may be one of the only times I would recommend setting aside your progressive and humanist tendencies, but in all likelihood your cash will support a drug habit that puts that individual and the surrounding community at risk.

### 2. Channel Your Support to Organized Charities

It feels terrible to disregard a human being, even if you suspect the story may be untrue. Remember that there is help available to those in need. Find a shelter, pantry, or support agency doing good work and write a check or volunteer your time.

### 3. Remember Your Responsibility to the Rest of Us

Even if you have \$20 to spare and you don't care if the story is true or false, coughing up cash on the street creates a climate in which we all become easier targets for panhandling and more aggressive crime. Think of young kids with backpacks at the same intersection. What about the older gentleman at the end of the block who walks with a cane? We are all responsible for creating a neighborhood in which safety and respect are a part of our interactions at each and every intersection.

included in the Board packet  
PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY CENTER

- \* Mark Gorman proposed a community center to offer youth a structured environment to hang out and participate in activities rather than just being on the streets hanging out
- o The Men's Prayer group at Grace Methodist church is interested in being mentors & tutors
- o possible location - vacant school building
- o would like to set up a meeting of interested people at Council Office for the purpose of putting together a committee to present proposal to Board to use building
- o Avis indicated that Hamilton is available for use and can accommodate
- o Avis May, Brenda Davis, Mark Gorman & Liz Johnson will meet to discuss proposal
- o 1/15/06 is the deadline for articles in Times to inform neighbors of concept and solicit support

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- \* Georgi Fox advised there would be a meeting one evening in March at St. Roch's to discuss Medicare - Part D; Council can assist in promoting and encouraging residents to attend
- \* Dan presented a Calendar of Council Meetings for 2006, motion made to adopt as presented, seconded; motion passed
- \* Avis May distributed Comm. Ed. calendars

#### ADJOURNMENT

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board Meeting, February 13, 2006

#### ATTENDANCE

#### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

#### MINUTES

#### FINANCIAL REPORT

- \* Bob Mahon presented the January 2006 financial report.
- \* The sewer bill for the McPherson Garden is still in dispute and Bob has advised Juanita Wood to not pay; Maggie Hart will follow up with MSD.
- \* Katrina Stierholz reported that the Dewy Dempsey artist might not end up using all the funds; the committee needs to release the remaining funds to SDCC. Bob Mahon will follow up with Juanita Wood.
- \* Motion was made & seconded to accept January 2006 financial report; motion passed.
- \* Bob Mahon reported that the Friends Campaign has collected \$4,161.65 to date.
- \* Bob Mahon reported that donations in memory of Laure Porterfield to date total \$2,290. Contributors include Washington University, Grace Methodist Church, Parkview and St. Roch's.
- \* It was suggested that a portion of the contributions in Laure's memory be used for a drinking fountain with a plaque at Four Corners; a drinking fountain was one of Laure's wishes for Four Corners. Katrina Stierholz will cost it out.
- \* A motion was made and seconded to

authorize the 4 members of the Executive Committee to sign checks at Central West End Bank; motion passed.

#### SECURITY

- \* The Security Committee minutes are included in the Board packet.
- \* There was no police report.
- \* Dan Schesch reported that the first 7th District Awards Luncheon is on February 22nd at 11:30; the cost is \$15, we have 8 people committed so far and need 2 more to have a table of 10.
- \* Alderman Williamson reported that he had talked to the Street Department and they will look at the lights to see if the bulb wattage can be increased. Alderwoman Krewson has asked the Street Department to survey the streetlights and price the cost of increasing the wattage. There are 2 issues associated with increasing the wattage - the actual cost of upgrading the lighting and the ongoing electrical costs.

#### ALDERMANIC & NSO REPORTS. Ald. Williamson

- \* Update on Delmar Express, new name for small grocery store at Delmar & Hamilton. A conditional use hearing was on Friday, liquor license was not issued because not enough signatures were collected; current liquor license is under the previous owner.

- \* A concern was raised about a derelict blue car on Nina Place; car has been parked there about 4 months with one of its tires sitting sideways. Alderman will have one of the NSO officers look into.

#### Alderwoman Krewson

- \* Reported that the TIF leg for the Delmar projects is going thru the legislation process; should pass by the end of this session (4/17).

- \* Updated us on the status of Forest Park Parkway - the city portion should be complete in about 4 weeks; the Metro piece probable won't be complete until the end of the year

- \* Fabio's restaurant (6227 Delmar) was issued a restrictive liquor license

#### Chris Howard (28th Ward NSO)

- \* Tracked owner of property at 6153-55 Pershing, owner leaves in Alaska and is a relative of the person now residing in the property without utilities and water. Property is in bad condition. He will condition to monitor situation and work on finding an acceptable resolution.

- \* A request was made to check out property at 6172 Washington; property had been vacated about 2 year ago, appears that someone is working on it but not sure what the plans for the property are.

#### Christy Boyd (26th Ward NSO)

- \* Nothing to report this month.

#### COMMITTEE/NEIGHBORHOOD REPORTS

- SDCC Office Renovation
- \* Maggie Hart-Mahon reported that they are looking for volunteers on an ongoing basis.
- \* Renovations are on target; back offices will be framed and carpeted
- \* Dan Schesch extended a special thanks to

Maggie and Michelle for heading up the office renovation project.

#### BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

- \* Andy Cross reported that he has replaced one planter box and is building a new planter box for Kingsbury

- \* He is working to put trees along back fence of Lacier Park

- \* McPherson Garden held their annual meeting last week; it went well

- \* April 1st is our Blitz Day; looking for volunteers

#### TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- \* Norb Hart provided an update on the Metro Link expansion, construction crews are hitting bedrock at Skinker and trains are running approximately every 16 minutes

- \* Metro's plan to revamp bus service will change the Lindell line to the Central West End line.

- \* The Greenways Committee is planning for a neighborhood meeting to discuss the 2 greenways (Centennial & St. Vincent) and gather feedback from the residents.

- \* The MetroLink parking lot on DeBaliviere will be repaved and surface improvements will be made, a date for it to reopen has not been announced.

- \* Norb Hart also brought to our attention several parking issues. In the 6100 block of Waterman, there is concern about the lack of parking, residents are noticing that people are parking their cars on the street and getting on the WU shuttles.

- \* Alderwoman Krewson advised that Archway, the treatment center, has moved and that Mark Jaffe now owns the building.

- \* A question was raised as to whether Skinker would be repaved. Response was that there are no immediate plans for repaving Skinker.

#### MLK Celebration

- \* Liz Johnson reported that the MLK program was held at Grace & Peace Church. The program was really nice; attendance was a little low.

- \* A resolution from the City of St. Louis Board of Aldermen was presented to the Schiller family in recognition of Laure Porterfield's efforts on behalf of the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood; her family was appreciative and her husband will provide a copy of the resolution to hang in the SDCC office.

- \* Dan Schesch thanked Liz Johnson and her committee for another successful MLK program.

- LIBRARY EXPANSION
- \* Georgi Fox reported that the library (see letter in packet) would expand 350

sq. ft. adjacent to current location.

- \* Georgi Fox thanked everyone for signing the petition.

- \* Rev. Mary Harvey will take a copy of the letter to the library.

- \* Dan Schesch and Georgi Fox will meet with library to see if library is interested in long-term occupancy of additional space.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. Dan Schesch:

- \* Executive Director recruitment process will start immediately

- \* Liquor License application for Shur Sav Mkt was denied.

- \* Article distributed on special taxing districts as a possible mechanism to support lighting and alley improvements in Skinker DeBaliviere. Dan Schesch encouraged us to read the article, iYour Own Private Revenue.

- \* Also, distributed brochures on 'Bridges Across Racial Polarization' for Council to read. Wants to know if there is any interest in starting up a Bridges program in the area. He will share the information on special taxing districts and Bridges with neighborhood residents via the e-mail list & the Times of Skinker DeBaliviere if that is OK.

- \* Dan Schesch reminded us of SLACO conference on March 18th at Forest Park Community College from 8:30 - 4:30, cost is \$15, encouraged representation from Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood.

#### Housing Corporation

- \* Gary reported on the activities of the Housing Corp and mentioned there was an article on the Housing Corp. in the Times. A written report for the Housing Corp is included in the Board packet.

- \* Matt Peters is the new Housing Corp. Board member.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- \* Dan Schesch distributed drawings of the Forest Park condos which came from their web site.

#### ADJOURNMENT



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# IN YOUR EAR

by Hawkeye Z. Hoerr

Regular readers of this column may not know that I am semi-rapidly approaching the end of my studies. Yes, after years and years (and still more years), I am about to receive my terminal degree! Thank you in advance for your cards and well wishes, for your presents, similes, and smiles. It has been a long and arduous route and, if I don't say so myself, I've earned this degree.

There were many times when I could have taken an easier route, could have elected a soft course or not been so driven and been satisfied with a grade of B. Not me, though; no way, no how. As much as this sucker is costing me, I'm going to make myself hurt to get it.

The impending degree, what is it? Sorry. I'm receiving a doctorate in American Hoo-Hah. No, this isn't a common degree; in fact, I don't know anyone else who has one. American Hoo-Hah is somewhat of the evolution of American culture. Culture, though, is, well, it's culture. Hoo-Hah is, well, it's Hoo-Hah. There's nothing deep about Hoo-Hah. But hey, a doctorate is a doctorate. As long as I can prescribe medicines and get a better restaurant reservation, who cares?

The institution, what is it? Sorry.

It's the University of Lackluster. Yes, I recognize that, ahem, it's not a well-known institution. That's OK. Most well-known or even not-well-known institutions might not take an academic chance on me. Give the folks (actually, I think it's just folk) at the University of Lackluster credit, though, he saw my potential. Once my credit card company affirmed that my card would cover the tuition, I was welcomed with open arms. Actually, the University of Lackluster is a postcard program. All communication, including lectures, takes place via postcards and the U. S. Mail. There was some talk about using on-line capacities but the Lackluster Provost, so I'm told, didn't want to use this new technology until he is sure it's not just a fad.

The postcards added an extra wrinkle of complexity, but the courses weren't tough. To be fair, though, the introductory course was challenging because it required me to do original research. Wanting to discover useful knowledge, I decided to compare the tastes of bottle and draft beers. That took quite a bit of time. I, ever the intrepid student, decided to make the question even more relevant by also comparing beers tasted in the city versus those tasted in suburbia. Research is never easy, but I was up to the task. I found that I could taste up to eleven or twelve beers in a single evening, as long as I cleaned my palate between brews with a bite of a Crispy Creme donut. Hoo-Hah!

The composition class wasn't hard but took forever. The University of Lackluster is a very savvy place, and the faculty member realizes that most people don't write any more. Think about it. In your life, most communication takes place via voice mail or on a cell phone, right? What little writing takes place is done with thumbs. Between broken email phrases and cryptic cellphone sentences, a regular sentence is an aberration. So why bother to teach writing?

Anyway, in recognizing that people don't write from scratch, the writing requirement at the Unversity

of Lackluster became very focused: Construct an essay using only the sayings on fortune cookies. I'll admit that this can be a bit limiting; there aren't a whole heck of a lot of adjectives on fortune cookies. On the other hand, this avoids superfluous phrasing or extraneous words. Plus, the General Tao's Chicken is great. Fortune cookies go well, by the way, with both bottled and draft beers.

There was no math requirement at Lackluster U., which I applauded. Math has never been my strong suit, not even my strong sports coat, so I was happy to wave at it. The social sciences are the strength at Lackluster U. The university's advertisements say that they produce real leaders (at least that's what I think they say; it's very hard to read the tiny print on matchbooks). Their leadership preparation consists of putting you - I mean me - in a complex situation, and then seeing how we - I mean me again - respond to it. There are three situations per class, each one is followed with a reflection and analysis, all written in fortune cookies phrases.

My first situation was to figure out how to get into Busch Stadium for a Cards game with no ticket and no money. It was a snap. I disguised myself as a baseball bat, and was carried in by the team's equipment manager. The varnish on my face didn't feel too good, and did n't like being held by the ankles and slammed against that batting-practice baseball, but at least I was inside the ballpark. (Since then, people at work have been referring to me as Slugger.)

My next challenge was just that, a real challenge. For this one, I had to board a commercial airline at Lambert, and fly somewhere with no ticket and no money. In fact, I had several failed attempts. I rented a TWA pilot's outfit, but was stopped at the gate. I was stunned to find that the airline is no longer in business! When did that happen? Then I tried simply saying that I'd forgotten my ticket. I gave them my destination and flight time, but they weren't buying. What's with all this airport security, anyway? I also tried dressing up like a Saint Bernard and being shipped somewhere, but I couldn't find anyone to ship me, and no one understood my barks. Plus, that outfit was hot. Hoo-Hah! Finally, I succeeded by remembering my Mom's advice for whenever I was in a pickle: "Go back to what brought you, Sonny," she'd say. No, she wasn't great with words. She meant that I should stick with the true and tried, so I did. I disguised myself as a baseball bat and was shipped on board with the rest of the Cardinals' equipment for a flight to spring training in

Florida.

The final requirement for the doctorate from the University of Lackluster is a capstone research project. The standards are really stiff here! The research needs to be quantifiable, arduous, publishable, and significant to advance society. This is the make and break stage of the doctorate. I pondered long and hard on what to pursue. Getting my degree was the goal, but I wanted to go above and beyond. We're only here once, and this might be my chance to make a difference in the world. I decided to study tattoos.

The study of tattoos is, surprisingly fairly rare in the research. There's not been a lot of work here which baffles me. I mean, everyone I know studies a tattoo when it's visible! My research question dealt with categorizing both the kind of tattoo, i.e., What is the topic? and the location, i.e., on what part of the body is the tattoo placed? Going beyond and above, I then did a cor-relational study to ascertain if the lo-cation of the tattoo increased the likelihood that it would be of a parti-cular nature. (It took me a long time to rule out the converse, i.e., whe-ther the nature of the tattoo deter-mined the location. Since tattoos are stationary, though, that isn't possible.)

I'll devote a future column to sharing some of my tattoo findings; the column-inches left to me here do not give ample room to write about my conclusions and their profound societal implications. Suffice it to say, though, that there are some mighty big correlations. I've yet to see a tattoo of a cross positioned on buttocks, just as I've yet to see a tattoo of Batman on a forehead. (If you know of either of these, please contact me!) The enthusiasm for tattoos doesn't appear to be diminishing at all. More and more young people are wearing tattoos, and more often than not they're in fairly salient places. That makes research easier (though the obscure ones are the most fun!). What does all this body modifying mean? Bringing all of my Lackluster U. preparation together, I mused a great deal on the meaning of this while comparing draft and bottle beers and looking for the just right fortune cookie message.

OK, dear reader, I must go now. It turns out that I have some parking fees that must be paid be-fore I can be granted my Lackluster degree. That's pretty odd since Lackluster U. has no campus, but I'm looking so forward to grad-uating and being called Dr. Hawke-ye that I'll gladly pay. Lackluster U. doesn't have a cap & gown cere-mony; that's far too traditional for a cutting-edge institution. Instead, we will graduate wearing bowling shirts and shorts. I hope to wear my TWA pilot's cap,

too. Until we meet again, start noticing those tat-toos, will you, and keep some anecdotal records? I may need the data when I en-roll in my post-doctoral program at the University of Lackluster.

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