

OVERTON PARK

notes

spring 2013

Rainbow Lake Playground Takes Shape

The big orange fence is about to give way to a big green mound.

When crews at ViktorHall Construction finish renovating Rainbow Lake Playground in a few weeks, the space will offer a brand-new, adventurous experience to its many young fans.

Rainbow Lake Playground will have familiar elements such as swingsets, slides, a merry-go-round, and a sand pit. But this is more than just an ordinary playground; it was planned with Overton Park in mind.

"Its theme is the idea of being on this edge space between the Old Forest and the Greensward—from woods to open space," says Bill Ferguson of ANF Architects, the team that designed the playground. "We're adding elements like trees and plants that you would naturally find at such a boundary."

One of those features is **The Big Green Mound**, which features a tunnel designed to look like a fallen hollow tree. The middle of its trunk will be buried beneath a layer of

grass, giving kids the feeling of being underground. At the edge of the trunk is a sand pit designed to resemble a tree stump.

Artist Bernhard Meck is constructing both the tree tunnel and another unique feature that will contain objects kids can use for creative play. The natural materials will change over time, offering kids a new experience whenever they return to the playground.

Other new features include drums, two large climbing structures, and a musical sculpture designed by the National Ornamental Metal Museum.

Kids eager to try out the new playground features

don't have long to wait: the **grand re-opening** of Rainbow Lake Playground will take place on Saturday, June 8 at our family festival, A Day of Merrymaking in Overton Park. (See page 6 for details.)

Thanks to all who supported this project, including major funding from AutoZone and the Children's Foundation of Memphis. Donor opportunities are still available; call 901.214.5450.



Crews bring fill to cover the top of the tree tunnel for The Big Green Mound.



Overton Park has many stories. From the well-known and often-studied *Citizens to Preserve Overton Park v. Volpe* Supreme Court case that prevented I-40 from being built through the park, to the myriad tales of first dates, trips to the Zoo, and spectacular performances at the Shell, the park is full of the rich history of the people who love and advocate for it.

In December 2011, a new chapter in Overton Park's story began. Citizens of Memphis once again came together to protect this special place, forming Overton Park Conservancy out of a vision that a great city must have great parks. For the first time, Overton Park has an organization dedicated solely to its preservation and management.

In our first year, the Conservancy accomplished much – building Overton Bark, renovating restrooms, removing invasive privet from the Old Forest, renovating the formal gardens and planting 400 new trees and shrubs – the list goes on and on. While the Conservancy led these efforts, these improvements would not have been possible without the strong support of a community that recognizes the potential in Overton Park, and is willing to do the work needed to realize that potential.

Our first newsletter celebrates the accomplishments of the past year, thanks some of the people who helped us achieve them, and gives a glimpse of the exciting things planned for the coming year.

We invite you to share your tales of epic golf games, transformative art experiences, and mild juvenile delinquency with us through our Overton Park Stories program (see story on page 7). So much of what makes the park special is people like you who have lived important moments of your lives here.

We also ask you to continue the tradition of investing in the park by making a gift to the Conservancy today. Your general donation keeps the park clean and well-maintained, or you may designate your gift toward a particular element of the Rainbow Lake Playground. Your support is vital for taking care of the park so that Memphians can write their own stories here for years to come.

Tina Sullivan

staff & board

Staff

Tina Sullivan

Executive Director

Naomi Van Tol

*Director of Operations &
Capital Improvements*

Susan Green

Director of Events & Volunteers

Melissa McMasters

Director of Communications

Nancy Wiers

Office Ninja

Voting Board Members

Ronne' Adkins

Belinda Anderson

Andy Andrews

Ekundayo Bandele

Eric Barnes

George Cates

Lucia Gilliland

Janet Hooks

Greg Jardine

B. Lee Mallory

Margaret McLean

Mike Palazola

Elliot Perry

Marcela Pinilla

Ray Pohlman

William R. Reed, Jr.

Dr. Mary Relling

Diane Rudner

Stan Sawyer

Gail Schledwitz

Gary Shorb (Chairman)

Anne Stokes

Lauren Taylor

Jason Wexler

Melanie White

Denise Wood

Ex Officio Board Members

Roy Barnes

Sam Blair

James Jalenak

Dr. Ron Jones

Martha Kelly

Cameron Kitchin

Barry Lichterman

Dr. Bill Troutt

Bike path and plaza set for East Parkway



Left: Tylur French shows Naomi Van Tol the composition of the Bike Gate arch. Right: Bike Gate artistic rendering by Jeanne Seagle.

Overton Park is about to get a lot more welcoming for cyclists and pedestrians.

A new bicycle- and wheelchair-accessible path and plaza are set to be installed at the intersection of East Parkway and Sam Cooper Blvd. The path is part of the Overton-Broad Connector project, which will link Overton Park to Shelby Farms Park via the Greater Memphis Greenline. A new crosswalk and modifications to traffic signals will make it safer and easier to enter the park from Sam Cooper.

To lead visitors into the plaza, artist Tylur French is using recycled bike parts to build an arched gateway. The arch, known as Bike Gate, will contain parts of a variety of wheeled objects, including bikes, tricycles, wheelchairs, and penny-farthings. The unique structure will front a plaza designed by ANF Architects that will be filled with benches, water fountains, and other bike-friendly features.

First Tennessee Foundation generously donated funds for the construction of the sculpture, and the path was funded by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

Overton Park Conservancy's board of directors has identified improving bike and pedestrian connections as its number one priority for the next several years. Other proposed improvements include:

- A safer and more visible crosswalk at Poplar and Cooper, as well as a connector path into the park

so cyclists won't have to use the grass

- A safer crosswalk at Poplar and Tucker
- A crosswalk with a pedestrian-activated flashing crosswalk light at North Parkway entrance
- A perimeter path or sidewalk that surrounds the entire park

"Enhancing bike and pedestrian paths around and through the park will make the park safer, more accessible, and more welcoming," says Conservancy Executive Director Tina Sullivan. "Overton Park has been dominated by vehicle traffic for most of its life, and we're excited to encourage alternate ways of accessing and enjoying the park."

If you'd like to be part of this project, engraved pavers are available on the plaza for a \$250 donation. Visit www.overtonpark.org/pavers for details or call the Conservancy offices at 901.214.5450.

*also at east
parkway:*

**new restrooms
opening in june**

**made in the shade
food truck rodeos
sundays thru september
11:30 - 2:30**



Cutleaf toothwort
(*Cardamine concatenata*)

One of the earliest-blooming wildflowers found in the Old Forest, these plants from the mustard family have floppy white or soft pink flowers.



Celandine poppy
(*Stylophorum diphyllum*)

These bright yellow flowers form a beautiful carpet on the forest floor in early spring. The stems of this plant contain a yellow sap that was used as a dye by Native Americans.



Prairie trillium
(*Trillium recurvatum*)

Everything comes in threes for this plant: leaves, petals, and sepals. The only trillium that occurs in the Old Forest, this one has dark green and purplish leaves and a deep purple flower.



Jacob's ladder
(*Polemonium reptans*)

Named for the ladder-like arrangement of its leaflets, this plant has light blue, bell-shaped flowers. It grows well in the shade, making it ideal for the forest floor.

Attacking invasives in the Old Forest

If you walked through the Old Forest this winter, you probably noticed many piles of leafy branches along the trails. These piles were the results of Overton Park Conservancy's aggressive efforts to fight non-native, invasive Chinese privet.

In 2012, 1,500 cubic yards of privet debris were removed from 35 acres of the Old Forest. Another 1,000 cubic yards were removed in 2013, and crews from Echo Systems, Ltd. covered all 126 acres of the Old Forest State Natural Area at least once.

Privet has likely been present in the Old Forest for

over 60 years, since it became popular as a landscape plant in the 1950s and began spreading to natural areas. Some specimens removed from the Old Forest stood over 30 feet tall and 12-18 inches in diameter.

Privet's rapid growth and the difficulty of controlling it make it one of the worst invasives in our region. It quickly closes off the understory of a forest, preventing new trees and shrubs from growing. The life cycle of the ecosystem is interrupted because there are fewer new trees to replace the old ones as they die. Because not many animals eat privet, it also eliminates plants that our native wildlife depend on for survival.

The Conservancy's efforts to combat privet will continue well into the future, because any roots left in the ground will enable the plant to resprout.

"This battle will go on for years to come," says Naomi Van Tol, Director of Operations and Capital Projects. "But by knocking out bushes that have been growing for decades, we're removing seed stock and reducing the amount that will regrow."

We're thrilled to have donors and a board of directors who consider invasive removal an important investment. Although it may sound contradictory, active management of ecosystems dealing with harmful introduced species can be the best way to help them thrive as nature intended.



Crews from Echo Systems remove privet in the Old Forest.

A winning team

Kathy Fay isn't sure what variety of hawk she's looking at, but she knows one thing: it's enjoying its afternoon snack in the Old Forest.

"I think I saw a red shouldered hawk," she writes in the latest of her Team Overton Park check-ins. "I had to check the field guide when I got home, but red shouldered matched the best. He was happily finishing off his lunch - Some kind of small beastie - mouse, vole, shrew..."

Kathy is no stranger to animal observation...or to Overton Park. She and her husband Richard Meek retired last year from their zookeeper positions at the Memphis Zoo. They walked or biked to work every day for 25 years, and now they walk their dogs in the park twice a day. Their regular presence made them perfect candidates for Team Overton Park, a volunteer program that allows park users to communicate with Overton Park Conservancy about what they see and hear on their visits.

This may take the form of identifying maintenance needs (like a loose handle on the gate to Overton Bark), sharing that a Sunday afternoon had drawn families to the Greensward for a picnic, or snapping a

photo of an interesting plant in the Old Forest.

Team Overton Park members also serve as ambassadors for the park. Because every member receives a TOP t-shirt, they're becoming recognizable to park users as authorities on Overton Park. If a visitor has a question about the location of restrooms or the progress of a construction project, chances are a TOP volunteer has the answer.

Currently, the program has about 40 active volunteers who have committed to making online check-ins at least twice a month. In return, the Conservancy sends back regular progress reports. The program was designed to fit easily into the lives of people who already visit the park regularly.

"We did daily reports at the zoo, so it makes me crazy to see an issue somewhere and not have a means to report it," Kathy shares. "The great thing about TOP is that I can now report those issues as well as the good things I see happening in the park."

If you'd like to join Team Overton Park, you can learn more about the program and apply online at www.overtonpark.org/top.



Kathy Fay and Richard Meek incorporate Team Overton Park into their daily walks of dogs Tink and Sophie.



Volunteering with Overton Park Conservancy

We host regular volunteer events in the park, such as this planting in the formal gardens on March 30. (Pictured here is volunteer Jay Sweeney.) We're also seeking volunteers to help spread the word about the Conservancy in our booth at neighborhood events and festivals.

If you're interested in learning more about these opportunities, visit www.overtonpark.org/volunteer.

A Day of Merrymaking

Get ready for a day of fun in the sun as Overton Park Conservancy presents our first-ever family festival.

From 10:00am to 3:00pm on **Saturday, June 8**, the Greensward will be filled with food, games, activities, and performances for the entire family. Suggested donation is \$5, which goes toward continued improvements to the park.

We'll celebrate the grand re-opening of Rainbow Lake Playground, as well as the one-year anniversary of Overton Bark. Hollywood Feed will be on hand with a dog agility course, a canine costume contest, and treats for pets.

A European street fair will be headlined by Val Russell, owner of Memphis Aerial Performance Troupe and Training Center. High-flying aerial acts will be accompanied by jugglers, dancers, and other movement artists.

Our children's area will feature bouncy castles, old-fashioned games and races, a storytelling stage, and activities presented by YMCA of Memphis & the Mid-South. John Kilzer headlines the music stage, along with a performance by The Mighty Souls Brass Band. A food tent will feature local cuisine from vendors including Huey's and YoLo.



Would your business like to be a sponsor or vendor at A Day of Merrymaking? Give us a call at 901.214.5450. For more on this and other events in the park, including our fall fundraiser, A Magical Night, visit www.overtonpark.org/upcoming-events.

our donors

Overton Park Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations who made gifts, pledges, and in-kind donations between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2012. If we have inadvertently omitted the name of one of our supporters, we sincerely apologize. Please help us correct any errors by contacting us at 901.214.5450.

\$1,000,000 and up

Plough Foundation

\$500,000 - \$999,999

The Assisi Foundation of Memphis, Inc.
Hyde Family Foundations
George & Bena Cates
Anonymous

\$100,000 - \$499,999

First Tennessee Foundation
Hollywood Feed
Thomas W. Briggs Foundation

\$10,000 - \$99,999

Burch, Porter & Johnson
Children's Foundation of Memphis

Deupree Family Foundation

FedEx

Jim & Lucia Gilliland

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Loeb

Miriam and Ernest Kelly Family Foundation and members of the Kelly family

William & Lyn Reed

Gary & Glenda Shorb

Anne & John Stokes

Henry Turley

Melanie & Frank White

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Eric Barnes

Dick & Peggy Bodine

C. William Butler

Citizens to Preserve Overton Park

Classic Party Rentals

The Commercial Appeal

Meg & Scott Crosby

The Daily News

Diversified Trust

Echo Landscaping Systems

Evergreen Historic District Association

Luther & Dot Gause

Independent Bank

Greg & Jennifer Jardine

Emily & Rob Jarrett

George Johnson

B. Lee Mallory

Liz Manugian

The Memphis Flyer

Memphis Light, Gas & Water

Mike Palazola

Elliot Perry

Mr. & Mrs. Clifton Phillips

Ray Pohlman

Raymond James Morgan Keegan

Dr. Mary Relling

\$101 - \$999

Anonymous (2)

Anna Acerra

Mr. & Mrs. Ben C. Adams Jr.

Ronne' Adkins

Belinda Anderson

Ekundayo Bandele

Benchmark Wealth Management

Wight Boggs

Mr. & Mrs. Wallace B. Bruce

Ron & Jan Coleman

Mike & Heather Cooley

East End Neighborhood

Association

Evergreen Garden Club

What's your Overton Park story?

Did you meet the love of your life in Overton Park? Wipe out on the old ice skating rink? What's the most memorable concert you saw at the Shell? Whatever your memories of Overton Park, we want to hear them.

The Overton Park Stories project is designed to capture all the things that make the park special. We're asking you to share your memories and photographs--whether you've been coming to the park for 50 years or just experienced your first spring here. We're archiving these stories on our website, and at the end of this year we'll bring them together in a book.

We've also partnered with the Memphis Public Library to offer the option of adding your photographs to a collection at the Central Library's Memphis and Shelby County Room. Your physical or digital photos can be part of this permanent archive about Memphis.

There are several ways to share your story:

- Contact Melissa McMasters at 901.214.5450 or mmcmasters@overtonpark.org.
- Visit www.overtonpark.org/stories, where you can write your tale and upload photos.
- Visit the **Overton Park Stories booth** at A Day of Merrymaking in Overton Park on June 8.



Brenda Craig, Dawn French, Shelley Thomas, and Glenda Eadey playing onstage at the Shell circa 1977 - submitted by Shelley Thomas

- We're hosting a story/photo collection day at the Central Library's **Memphis and Shelby County Room** on June 29 from 1:00 - 4:00pm.

Will Ferrell
Andrew Gibbs
Jennifer Hagerman
Anna Holtzclaw
Ron Jones
Chris McCall
Margaret & Alexander McLean
Simone Meeks
Rich Olcott
Vicki Park
Peggy and William Carrington
Jones Fund
Rebecca Perry
Gail Schledwitz
Tina Sullivan
T. Joseph Clifton Gallery, Inc.
Lauren & Justin Taylor
Kevin & Tanja Thompson
Lois & Hubert Van Tol
Naomi Van Tol & Larry J. Smith
Jason Wexler

Up to \$100
Lesley Adkins
Judge Robert Benham
Sam Blair
William Boyd
Roger Bransford
John Branston
Carrie & Tony Brooks
Jim Brooks
Vernon S. Broyles, Jr.
Lynn & Jon Buhler
Sen. Stephen Cohen
David Cotton
B DeWeese
Dan Eason, DDS
Laura Eason
Price Edwards
Walter Fields
Elizabeth Flanagan
Turner Foster
Eugene Forrester, Jr. &
Kathleen Mooney
Timothy Fuller

Stacey Greenberg & Warren
Oster
Ashley Harper
Rachel Jabaily
Kenny & Margaret Jabbour
James Jalenak
Amanda & Stanley Johnson
John Kilzer
Robert Lanier
Lisa Lawhead
Mike & Nancy Lawhead
Dr. Marsha Lee & George
Callow
Michael Lupfer
Laura & H. Montgomery Martin
Lisa Martin
Brian Martinelli
Tim & Cheril McGinnis
Cindy Moore
Larry Nance
Deanie Parker
Marcela Pinilla
Janice Raiteri

Steven Ross
Diane Rudner
Sunshine Snyder
Edward & Mimi Steepleton
David & Anne Suitor
Richard & Ann Sullivan
Caleb & Melissa Sweazy
John Sweazy
Sansbury Sweeney
Twentieth Century Home &
Garden Club
Wagner General Contractors,
Inc.
Robert & Dania Watson
Robbie Johnson Weinberg
Nancy Wiers
Richard T. Wood, III



VERTON PARK

CONSERVANCY

1914 Poplar Avenue, Suite 202
Memphis, TN 38104

901.214.5450
www.overtonpark.org

Please pass this newsletter on to a friend!

BECOME A PARK MEMBER

Put the park on the path to success.

Join Overton Park Conservancy today.

www.overtonpark.org/membership