New year, new name; McWilliams Dog Park in Hermann Park takes shape

Four-Four-legged visitors to Hermann Park—and their humans—won’t have to wait too much longer for an off-leash dog park. They’ve got two people in particular to thank for that.

The upcoming Hermann Park Dog Park—now officially known as McWilliams Dog Park—recently received a major donation from Laura and Brad McWilliams. The couple gave a $1 million gift, naming the dog park and putting the project at more than halfway to its goal.

A dog park was the most requested project in the public feedback research a few years ago while planning the extended master plan. It will cover nearly two and a half acres along South MacGregor Way, in the shadow of Bill Coats Bridge. Thoughtfully designed by Lauren Griffith Associates, the dog park will offer separate areas for small and large dogs, areas of rest for both dogs and their owners, state-of-the-art dog agility equipment, and unique water play sections. Paired with natural shade and dedicated surface parking, the McWilliams Dog Park promises to be a step above your average dog park.

“A dog park is an idea whose time has come…”

“We have a long history with Hermann Park. Brad used to fish in the fishing pond there as a kid, and today its green space is even more important for this urbanizing neighborhood next to the Medical Center. A dog park is an idea whose time has come, and the location makes great use of this corner of the Park,” Laura and Brad McWilliams said.

In addition, the couple own a pair of Brittany dogs. They say they are thrilled to be a part of something their dogs can also use.

Construction should begin later this year, with an opening date in 2021.
As I start my eighteenth year at Hermann Park Conservancy, I remember vividly my first year in 2003 when a revitalized Heart of the Park was still millions of dollars and years of work away, and McGovern Centennial Gardens was far beyond what we thought we could—or would—accomplish. Each day at this treasured Park brings new adventures and experiences.

I often say Hermann Park is a miracle of community engagement, and its never been more true. The dreams of countless individuals—who really—told a lot of team effort, determination, and hard work. With an incredible team of board members, donors, volunteers, community leaders, and staff members, we’ve seen our way through the terms of five Houston mayors and four parks directors working with each of them to continue executing the master plan for Hermann Park. Very few plans “live” to get executed over a 25 year period. It’s testament to the careful planning and diligent stewardship of all involved that the Conservancy leads such a steady course over time.

I am blessed to work with such a dedicated team and marvel at the magic happen—major events like the annual Kite Festival, or transformational projects like the redevelopment of Lake Plaza are all produced by this small but mighty team. That team effort, determination, and countless individuals—now reality—took a lot of team effort, determination, and hard work. With an incredible team of board members, donors, volunteers, community leaders, and staff members, we’ve seen our way through the terms of five Houston mayors and four parks directors working with each of them to continue executing the master plan for Hermann Park. Very few plans “live” to get executed over a 25 year period. It’s testament to the careful planning and diligent stewardship of all involved that the Conservancy leads such a steady course over time.

But that same team also helps each other in little ways, every single day. That includes rounding up runaway worms. One morning I walked into the Conservancy offices and I found several of the office staff on hands and knees, combing through the carpet, searching for runaway Red Wigglers worms.

Kyle Wolfe, our volunteer coordinator, had recently purchased worms for an Earth Day event to teach kids about how worms can be used in creating compost and disposing of waste in a sustainable way. Kyle had set up a display to give kids a hands-on experience with about 250 worms. Left in a box on his desk over the weekend, the lid somehow dissolved, giving those worms the perfect chance to make a break for either freedom or greener pastures, or both. That morning, they were scattered all over the front half of the office, frolicking on their journey out. But due to the team work—even in this small way—of the office staff, the worms were delivered back to their original home and the Great Worm Exodus of 2019 came to a happy conclusion.

This team has grown from the four of us in 2003 to over 60 managing many everyday operations in Hermann Park and we have learned a lot together—from using goats as part of our natural practices to maintaining the McGovern Centennial Gardens to running the Hermann Park Railroad. We are proud that the Park has so much to offer, from the free Garden & Nature Series classes in McGovern Centennial Gardens to Tai Chi in the Park to Student Performances in the Park.

Those programs are made possible through the efforts and cooperation of everyone on the Conservancy team—including you. It’s a part of our larger goal of creating not just a destination for special family celebrations, but a place where all Houstonians are welcome every day. See you in the Park!

Doreen Stoller, President

Office staff round up the worms, which were chipped in USPS

Horticultural staff round in front of the new conservatory wing

The Commons at Hermann Park
$5,000,000+
John F. McGovern Foundation
$250,000–$499,999
Abby and Robert Altman
Lourdes S. Sanfilippo—In honor of Christopher Birinyi Sanfilippo
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Stephen L. Goldberg and Tim Kubatschus
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Anne C. Mandelkohn
Jennyl D. Niwate
$100–$499
Ed Smith
Dog Park
$50,000–$99,999
Winnie Schweer and Kevin Bornebrake
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Laura and Reid Natoli Maine
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Kathryn Crowder and Susan Zaraie—In memory of Elle
Greg Grobenberger
Pauline and John Goodgame
Mandy and William Kao
Robert J. Lorio
Maya Lu
Sue and Randy Sin—In honor of Ping Sun
$300–$499
Anonymous (3)
Marc and Kim Mark
Steven Cowart
Anthony Grayson
Andrea and Bruce Holbland—In honor of Mary, Max, Mills, and Lucy
Cristina and Morgan Lunt
Bella and Saeana Moore—In memory of Rosanne (Rose) and in honor of Antonio (Tony)
Sydney and Ryan Messner—In honor of Cris
Sean Murphy-Moreno and Hector Moreno—In memory of Billy Murphy Moreno
Aimee and Dennis O’Brien
Sheila D. and O. Keith Owen
Stephanie Reynolds—in memory of Rory Reynolds
Shavonnah Roberts Schieber and Joseph Schieber—In memory of Rocky Roberts Schieber
Michelle and Clifford Sheld
Sanghee Yoo

The past few years at the Conservancy have been all about planning for the future.

A major part of the Conservancy’s planning process is intensive public feedback gathering, throughout all stages of development. Whether that’s through the general public or Park stakeholders like donors and board members, it is a vital part of the process that guarantees Hermann Park is planned by and for all parts of the community, in an equitable and sustainable way.

Over the past few years, the Conservancy has hosted a number of public feedback meetings designed to give the public a chance to give feedback during the design stage of the master plan. Now that several projects in that plan are moving forward, the Conservancy is looking to keep the public a big part of the process. One of the first steps is inviting Park stakeholders to attend several “Deep Dive” meetings that focus on these projects. Held at McGovern Centennial Gardens, these morning and lunchtime sessions give you a chance to get an in-depth look at the planned projects, followed by a roundtable discussion of what these projects will entail. These discussions will be offered once a month, and are free to attend. Registration is required.

Interested in signing up for one of these “Deep Dive” discussions? Email development@hermannpark.org or stop by the Conservancy informational tent at this month’s Kite Festival.

These are just a few of many such events the Conservancy is hosting in order to not only spread the word of upcoming projects at Hermann Park, but also continue to gather feedback from Park users on what is the best for the future. Keep an eye out for more events in the future. In the meantime, feel free to contact us via social media, or send your ideas to ideas@hermannpark.org.
Get out in nature; free classes at McGovern Centennial Gardens

As we roll into spring and McGovern Centennial Gardens come into full bloom, it’s time yet again for Hermann Park Conservancy’s Garden & Nature Series. These classes in the Family Garden focus on a variety of subjects all related to garden and nature and the benefits associated with being outdoors. There are three of these classes coming up, starting in April. On April 22, join the Harris County Master Gardeners to celebrate Earth Day and learn all about tree planting in Houston and the vital role they can play in protecting our environment. On May 27, Lauren Jansen Simpson will guide you through capturing the outdoors in all their glory, all while using your phone's camera.

And on June 24, take a walk through McGovern Centennial Gardens with the Harris County Master Gardeners and learn about the design of the Gardens and how home gardeners can take tips with them to improve their own backyards.

The best part about all of these classes is that they are completely FREE to the public and open to all ages. All you have to do is sign up. Go to hermannpark.org/GardenNature for more, and to sign up.

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In Kind
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The Bar Method Houston Montrose
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Houston Bicycle
Houston Curling Club
Houston Grand Opera
Houston Museum of Natural Science
The Houstonian Hotel, Club, and Spa
Hotel At The Moon Houston
Jeremy Kelley
Johnny’s Gold Brick
Kokache Shoppe
La Mexican Restaurant
Lawnside Art Center

Get more by visiting hermannpark.org/GardenNature.

What started a decade ago as a way to give area students a platform to showcase their talents has turned into a perennial Hermann Park favorite. If you’ve ever stumbled upon a group of singing schoolchildren or a teenaged orchestra while strolling in the Park, you’ve likely already seen one of the Student Performances in the Park.

In its tenth year, the Student Performances in the Park series features the talents of Houston metropolitan area students. About once a week or so, a school group will pop up in Lake Plaza to share their talents with Park goers. And, of course, it’s completely free for anyone to attend and enjoy.

With 23 groups scheduled to perform this school year alone, there’s something for everyone. From klezmer to contemporary dance to recorders to children’s choirs, the talent spectrum is truly wide-ranging. Do you have a performing group that would like the opportunity to perform in beautiful Hermann Park? Please call 713-528-0827 or e-mail visitor.services@hermannpark.org for more information. If you would like to catch one of this year’s performances, go to hermannpark.org/student-performances for a full calendar.
Run in the Park

A warm Saturday, one of the last summer-like days last fall, was the setting for this year’s Run in the Park. This year marked the annual event’s 16th outing, with nearly 500 runners taking their laps around Hermann Park.

A new addition this year, along with the 5K run/walk and 1K kids’ run, was the 10K run, which took runners through the regular course along the Marvin Taylor Trail as well as along the trails on Brays Bayou.

A big thank you to this year’s lead sponsors, Reliant, an NRG company and Williams.

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Well Done Cooking Classes
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$1,000–$4,999
Will McLendon – in memory of Archie Tolfa
$100–$499
Linda and Bill Carson – in honor of The Frels
Gloria and Joe Pryzant

Urban Green continued
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Mize
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The Rice Winery
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Raising Cane’s
Recharge Brewing
Revolution Studio
Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy
The Rustic
RYDE
Saint Arnold Brewing Company
Sanctuary Spa
Adrienne D. Saxe
Smoosh Cookies
Soul Cycle
Standard
Swift + Company
Swoon Apparel and Accessories
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Town & Country Orthodontics
Vida and Health Day Spa
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Park to Port Bike Ride

Fall in Hermann Park means two things: the annual Run in the Park and the Park to Port Bike Ride. This 20-mile ride, along the bayou trails from Hermann Park to near the Port of Houston and back, is a popular event every year, now in its sixth year.

More than 500 bikers signed up for this year’s ride, making their way along the newly restored trails on Brays Bayou. Thanks again to this year’s main sponsors, Port Houston, Frost Bank, and Williams.
Urban Green spends “A Night in Vegas”

In addition, the party featured food and drinks from some of the best restaurants in Houston, an amazing silent auction, and—as always—Vegas Strip-worthy beats from DJ Max. In all, the party raised about $12,000 for Hermann Park Conservancy.

Mark your calendars: the next Urban Green fundraiser, Around the World, is coming up on May 28.

They say that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but that wasn’t entirely true as Urban Green celebrated its fall fundraiser on November 6 at McGovern Centennial Gardens. Complete with a lightshow and a fundraiser on November 6 at McGovern Centennial Gardens. Complete with a lightshow and a

Annual Fund/ General Operations continued

Joséphine and Philip John
Maria and Brendan Lee
Sabrina and Aid Mammoud
Jacki and Frank McCurry
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Pam Procewicz
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$250–$499

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DONORS

In honor of Doreen Stoller
Bees Buzz at McGovern Centennial Gardens

Martin E. Armitage
Macy and Harry Reesner
Annie and Bob Graham
Lou Ann and Milton Gray

Take a look behind the wooden fence in the Family Garden, and you might see something buzzworthy.

That’s right, bees are an active—and vital—part of Hermann Park Conservancy’s work in McGovern Centennial Gardens. Managed by volunteer beekeeper Shelley Rice, the small hive, made up of Western Honey Bees, is (mostly) harmless to the public and keep to themselves, but perform important tasks throughout the Gardens. According to Kyle Wolfe, the Conservancy’s volunteer coordinator; it’s just one of the many incredible things these small animals can do.

“Honey bees have the most amazing means of communication! When a bee finds a good source of nectar it flies back to the hive and shows its friends where the nectar source is by doing a dance which positions the flower in relation to the sun and hive. This is known as the waggle dance,” Wolfe said. Bees aren’t the only creepy-crawly inhabitants of the Gardens. We’ve got worms! A part of a new vermicomposting system funded by a grant from Non Toxic Neighborhoods and Stonyfield Organics, 24 pounds of worms have now found their home in a large compost bin. Materials from both Conservancy offices and the Gardens themselves can be deposited here, and the worms will work their magic to create nutrient-rich compost. Keep an eye out for a full story on the worms in the spring edition of Parkside.

In honor of Terrylin Neale
Anon
Ace
Shelby Rice and Kyle Wolfe tend to the bees. Center: Top: Black bees, photo by Lichipic Photography; Center Bottom: Just a few of the hundreds of worms now calling the Park home. Right: Workers tend to the vermicomposting bin.

To Love the Gardens

A warm springtime day, a bench in McGovern Centennial Gardens, and a good book has long been a recipe for a perfect day. And now, it’s even easier to get some reading time in while you’re at the Gardens. Located in the Family Garden, a brand-new Little Free Library has been installed and fully stocked. Donated by Hermann Park user Shahzad Yekta, this new addition is sure to please book lovers from all over Houston. Get more information at littlefreelibrary.org.

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For a full list and more information, head to hermannpark.org/MemberEvents.

Love Your Park: Member Volunteer Day
Saturday, March 7, 7:00 – 10:30 am
Lake Plaza

Bike Your Park
Saturday, April 11, 10:30 am – 12 pm
McGovern Centennial Gardens

Save the Dates! Hermann Park Conservancy Calendar of Events

Houston Rockets Dog Walk
Saturday, March 7, 8–10 am
Lake Plaza

Member Exclusive Events
Along with exciting benefits like free tickets for the Hermann Park Railroad and pedal boats and discounts across the Park, members also get invites to member-exclusive events. For a full list and more information, head to hermannpark.org/MemberEvents.

Membership continued
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Valerie Adair
Deborah Adams
Erin Tayi Allison and Daniel Allison
Peggy Amante
Dudley Anderson
Anonymous (15)
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Yvonne and Ralph Baughman
Michael Beuchle
Karen V. Benten
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Nancy and John Bradford
John Bradford Jr.
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Fameka and David Brown
Lauren Brownfield and
Michael VandenHeuvel
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Karen and C.E. Cantrell
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John D. Carter, Jr.
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Ute and Philip Cereaux
Amy Chieano and Martin E. Sandlin, Jr.
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Marlyn Miller and
Robert Hurley
Helie Peres
Maria Modeiska
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Sarah Neubauer and
Garnett Nerny
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Michael Norton
Ari Jo Goreti Palmer
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Juliette Peets and Alan Ring
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Claudia Robertson
Kristin Rodbell and
Matthew Nicklos
Gwen and James Sand
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Hats in the Park
Thursday, March 26, 11:30 am
Gena Bhatia, Mary D'Andrea, Allison Thacker
Honorees: Sandy Godfrey
McGovern Centennial Gardens

7th Annual Kite Festival
Sunday, March 29, 10 am–5 pm
Chairs: Holly Alvis, Katie Arnoldy, Brittany Salowetz Kasher, Natalie Stein
Miller Hill and James Reflection Pool

Evening in the Park
Friday, April 24, 5:30 pm
Chairs: Stu and Kathy Johnson, Valerie and Russell Windham
Honorees: Maryly Lott
Molly Ann Smith Plaza and Jones Reflection Pool

Details at hermannpark.org

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