

Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association Meeting  
January 24, 2012      7:15 p.m.      34 Attendees

The TGHNA meeting was chaired by President Rich Seifert. First-time attendees were introduced, as well as the current officers of the Association.

Rich mentioned the [survey](#) that is being conducted by TGHNA. It is on the Website so please take the time to share your thoughts. This is also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization so let us know how you want to celebrate this event.

Vintage issues of the Gazette were available for attendees to take, if interested.

The February meeting will have a speaker from [Your Vote Counts](#)—a group working to prevent the Legislature from overturning citizen-approved initiatives.

Mahrya Fulfer, Prosecuting Attorney, spoke about how cases come to the Circuit Attorney's office. An arrest comes first and then there is a 24-hour period to bring cases to the Prosecuting Attorney. The Warrant Office gets the case. The decision is made to charge or not and what charges—felony or misdemeanor. The case can go to jury, grand jury, or a preliminary hearing for a judge to decide whether to charge, for example. A Circuit Attorney is assigned and then the defendant decides whether to have trial or be tried by a judge. Mahrya emphasized the importance of attending jury duty—it is very necessary for the legal process. What can the community do? If the defendant pleads guilty, we can go to court to let the court know how the crime has impacted the neighborhood. Officers of TGHNA have attended these hearings. We have signed petitions to keep the defendant out of the neighborhood. Mahrya left cards for people to contact her if they want to attend these court cases. Her office decides the charges but they have to be based on statutes. If we have questions about particular cases, Mahrya can research them for us. Mahrya goes to various neighborhood meetings in this area so she can keep us up to date on pending cases.

Our next speaker, Judge Steven Ohmer, is a resident of the neighborhood—he's lived 30+ years on Hartford. He started as a prosecutor with duties as described by Mahrya. He has been a judge for 17 years—he was appointed by Gov. Carnahan. He told us that citizen participation is crucial to the judicial process. Seeing residents in court discussing the effects on the neighborhood is very impressive. Involvement in these cases and the witnessing of impact on the neighborhood helps judges make good decisions. Being a concerned citizen and cooperating with the Police and authorities is an important aspect of the criminal system. Judge Ohmer said he can't emphasize enough the importance of jury duty. The cases must have juries. In a given week, there are 350 pending felony and 350 civil cases on the docket. The very presence of juries makes the process go forward—95% get resolved without a jury, but this is often only because of the presence of potential jurors. If you don't serve, you leave the decisions to others. We need participation from the solid core of the local citizens. It's just as important as voting—it's a direct impact on the judicial system. Outsiders to our country are dumbfounded that we allow common citizens to make these kinds of legal decisions. Rich has acted as a liaison to the courts so contact him through the TGHNA [Website](#) if you have questions about a specific case.

Officer Joseph Calabro, Community Outreach Officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District, and Captain Gerald Leyshock, Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, spoke on the knockout crimes. No organizations such as Wash U, the high schools, or other local groups have shown interest in becoming involved in helping to work on these cases or to help study these things. Officer Calabro thinks we may have more of these crimes in the future. There is a crew calling themselves the Knockout Kings centered around Gravois Park. The Police have most of them identified. The challenge is how to identify a random 14-year old who thinks this is a thrill and just attacks. At this point, the cases are always started in Juvenile Court after which a certification hearing occurs to determine whether to charge the defendants as adults. In the Grand Blvd. case, without a witness, there was no case. This kind of thing defies predictive analysis. This is a time when neighbors should be very vigilant watching for unfamiliar people, cars, etc. The police did go and make presentations to students on what the consequences are with this kind of thing. Captain Leyshock isn't convinced that these attacks are racially motivated. The thrill is to just punch someone, although it sometimes leads to robbery. They're looking for people who can't defend themselves. Be aware of your

surroundings, look all ways and pay attention. Don't give them an opportunity to see you as a victim. Trust your instincts and if you see anything suspicious, act on it. Get an idea of what people look like so you could describe them, if necessary. Captain Leyshock also told us that we now have a license-plate recognition car and that the Police have made arrests based on information from it. There is a new court program where, if they catch someone with a firearm during a crime, there is a \$30,000 minimum cash only bond. This may have helped decrease homicide levels. The [Officer of the Year](#) lunch is Feb 17, 11:30 a.m. at the Palladium. Tickets are \$20. Capt Leyshock has been selected for a Leadership Award.

Jennifer Florida, 15th Ward Alderman, discussed 3618 Hartford, a problem property, which has been sold to a real estate investment broker who will rehab the property and move into one of the 4 residences. We are in the process of creating a collaborative portal like Square Share.

The [St. Louis Great Streets Initiative](#), Phase 2, has been sent to MODot for review. The green alleys project is out for bid.

Judy Lane, the 15th Ward [Neighborhood Stabilization Officer](#), reminded us to call Ameren for alley lights that are out. Call the [Citizens Service Bureau](#) for street lights that are out.

The meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held on February 28, 2012.

Claudia Seifert, Secretary