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# Our vision is a reality

friends of  
Mandell Park

Fall  
2014



Ten years ago we established Friends of Mandell Park with the following vision:

*The Friends of Mandell Park envisions developing a tranquil green space with The Meredith Gardens as a centerpiece. It will also have aesthetically pleasing art forms within the park. Mandell Park will offer a welcome respite where people can come to relax and enjoy the quiet solitude of nature and art.*

Thanks to the support of so many people and foundations this vision became a reality on August 21, 2014, with the **Renovation Celebration** grand opening ceremony. With Mayor Annise Parker and Joe Turner, director of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, present to preside over the ribbon cutting, Mandell Park was officially opened to the public after a million-dollar renovation.

This is my last article as president of Friends of Mandell Park. Karen

**SEE PAGE 2 FOR  
KAREN ANNE VINSON'S LETTER.**

Anne Vinson started her tenure this month, and will now focus on public events in the park, and on-going maintenance to keep the park as beautiful as it is today.

The complete rebuilding was accomplished by the work and support of many individuals, foundations and corporations. It is impossible to thank everyone individually, but I would be remiss if I didn't thank certain individuals whose support was crucial to our success.

First, my thanks to Kathrine McGovern (and the John P. McGovern Foundation) who provided a substantial seed grant early in our capital campaign. Kathrine's very generous donation paved the way for other foundations to recognize our project.

Second, to Marianne Jones who took on the daunting task of Chair of **Planting for the Future**, the capital campaign to raise \$1,000,000. Marianne's leadership and tenacity raised over \$1.2 million and made the "master plan" a reality.

Third, to the many foundations

and corporations whose grants and matching funds provided a substantial portion of the money we raised.

Fourth, to Joe Turner and the City of Houston for providing a major donation from the Open Spaces Program.

Finally, my thanks to all the individuals who believed in our vision and who supported us financially year in and year out for over 10 years. It was this early and continuing support that kept us believing we could accomplish our goal.

As I leave the Presidency, I am proud of our accomplishment. Mandell Park is significantly more beautiful and wonderful than I ever imagined as we found our way from a group of folks with a crazy idea to a successful organization that created a remarkable public space that everyone can enjoy.

Stanley (Skip) Almoney, PhD  
Outgoing President  
Friends of Mandell Park

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# From the New President

## WHERE WE STAND NOW

After 12 years and a community's efforts, **Mandell Park is open!**

It all started with a 1.22 acre property formerly owned by the City of Houston Library Department. Residents followed the lead of neighbor Meredith Burke planting herbs and vegetables ... creating organic beds ... growing curiosity.

Today, Mandell Park is a tranquil green space, with Meredith Gardens as its centerpiece, where people can relax and enjoy the quiet solitude of nature and art.

Our ribbon cutting brought recognition to Meredith, the original board, and the gardeners and numerous volunteers/neighbors who spent hours pouring ideas and sweat, lifting our vision.

Our first phase of the park is finished thanks to the efforts of our community plus the determination of our past president, Skip Almoney. I can't even begin to explain the amount of time and energy Skip brought to the

board. His leadership and encouragement gave us the confidence to move forward.

## WHAT'S NEXT

We're collaborating with local artists, musicians, and businesses to bring activities and education to the park every month.

For October, we will host **Pumpkin Decorating on Saturday, October 25, 9-11 am**. Thanks to our new VP Bill Haase for creative ideas like this. We look forward to seeing what other events he'll think up for Mandell Park!

## WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Elani Hantel, our garden coordinator and "uber-organizer" will have Meredith Gardens growing in no time ... So come by and check out your new park! Bring a picnic, tour



**CHANGING OF THE GUARD:** *Incoming president Karen Anne Vinson and outgoing president Skip Almoney*

the grounds, or just relax. Let us know what other uses you find for this wonderful gem.

Signing off and doing a happy dance,

Karen Anne Vinson  
President



## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Karen Anne Vinson, President  
William Haase, Vice President  
Judy Boyce, Secretary  
Stanley "Skip" Almoney,  
Treasurer

Allison Brayton  
Adra Hooks  
Jill Jarvis  
Marianne Jones  
Willem Kegge  
Richard Ruckel  
Elani Hantel



Meredith Gardens is open for planting! And we are really *digging* our new raised beds with sprinkler systems. The beds are four feet wide and made of beautiful stone with an 18-inch seating wall. What a treat not to have to bend so far and have our knees in the dirt!

We are equipped with a state-of-the-art compost facility, an herb spiral, thirty garden beds and a pocket prairie.

Our state-of-the-art compost facility is ready for action. Our first event on September 27 was a neighborhood composting drive. We discussed what Meredith Gardens will accept and where to put it. We also explained how to manage waste materials (composting) in order to create rich, fertile soil from yard and kitchen waste at your own home.

The centerpiece of Meredith Gardens is a permaculture-designed herb bed. It is a spiral design that allows us to plant herbs that need many different microclimates in one small space. Come and see the new wave in vertical gardening!

In addition, we will be planting fall vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuces, kale, cabbage, onions, and more. Bring the children by to show them what vegetables look like when they are growing.

Our "pocket prairie" located in the center of the park contains prairie plants native to our area of Texas. Once established, the plants will be identified with labels. The prairie will serve

as a learning facility to conserve these plants that are disappearing due to urban development.

Although we lost many of our long-term gardeners while we were closed, we are happy to have many of the very experienced gardeners from Upper Kirby Levy Park join us, after their garden closed!

We have 30 garden beds. Anyone wishing to garden with us is welcome to contact Garden Coordinator Elani Hantel at [gardens@mandellpark.org](mailto:gardens@mandellpark.org).

Community gardening days are Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9 to 11 am. A garden mentor will be on hand.

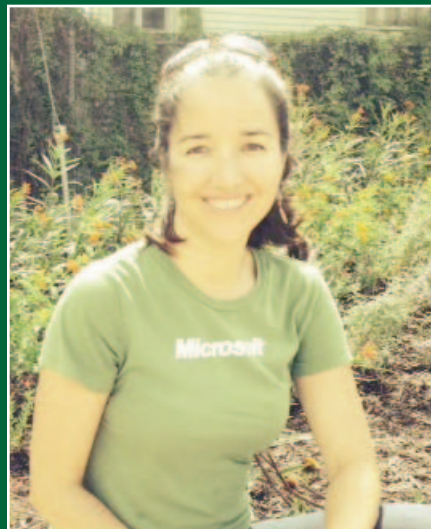


*The permaculture-designed herb bed allows herbs to grow in many different microclimates all in one bed.*

## FACES IN THE GARDEN



*Meredith Gardens coordinator Elani Hantel greets future gardeners at the August 21 celebration.*



*Alejandra Díaz, Garden Mentor*



*Judith Miller (shown with her dog, Toby) will head the Wounded Warrior Project in Meredith Gardens.*

# Contributors

Friends of Mandell Park thanks the following major donors:

Kathrine G. McGovern/  
John P. McGovern  
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City of Houston Parks &  
Recreation Department

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The Elkins Foundation  
The Wortham Foundation, Inc.

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Adra Hooks & Gene Creely, II

## Friends of Mandell Park Newsletter

Lynn Kelly, Editor  
Jen Cooper, Designer

### COMMENTS

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Become a Friend of Mandell  
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[FriendsofMandellPark.org](http://FriendsofMandellPark.org).

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\*In-kind donations

Join us for

## PUMPKIN DECORATION IN THE PARK

Saturday, October 25  
9 – 11 am

