



Washington Park Association

www.WPA-TROY.org

Troy, NY

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WASHINGTON PARK RECOGNIZED AS TROY TREASURE

TRIP Awards Washington Park Association Inaugural Troy Treasure Award

The Washington Park Association was recognized as the first recipient of the Troy Treasure Award by the Troy Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (TRIP). The honor will be bestowed to the group at TRIP's gala dinner on October 25 at the Heffner Alumni House on the RPI campus.

The Troy Treasure Award recognizes an individual or neighborhood organization which has consistently contributed to the vitality of the city of Troy. TRIP's selection committee was stunned by the list of accomplishments and ongoing activities of the Washington Park Association (WPA). TRIP was also amazed that WPA has its own press office, a significant accomplishment for a small neighborhood group. WPA has been in existence since 1840 (although none of the original members are still alive) and has functioned reasonably well for almost two centuries.

TRIP, through its selection of WPA, recognized that the group has been committed to improving Troy through big and small levels of activity. On a small scale, WPA members pick up trash and litter on a daily basis; place flower pots on vacant buildings; maintain the pocket park and lot at the corner of First & Adams; hang window treatments in vacant buildings; assemble volunteer snow blowing teams to remove snow from everyone's walks; host croquet and picnics in the Park for all residents of the immediate area; host a spectacular Pumpkin Carving Contest at Halloween for everyone; and secure positive press for activities which showcase the convenience and fun of urban living. On a larger scale, WPA maintains a website for community building (www.wpa-troy.org); produces and distributes a monthly newsletter to residents of Washington Park and the surrounding neighborhoods; participates in the annual Victorian Stroll with open houses, food and entertainment; hosts historic preservation tours with the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway, RPI, Sage, Historic Albany Foundation and Rensselaer County Historical Society; presents lectures on historic preservation/urban revitalization at such venues as Wiawaka, area realtors, Saratoga preservation seminar and the Hudson Valley Ramble; hosts the Neighborhood Arts Stroll to raise funds for the South Central Neighborhood Resource



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Center; runs an ad in relevant publications promoting living in Washington Park, Osgood, Pottery, Historic Sage, Fifth Avenue, Little Italy and South Central neighborhoods of Troy; writes articles promoting Troy for various publications; initiated the Troy Treasures column; rented roll off containers for large scale neighborhood trash removal; and stabilized 8 Washington Place in a joint project with the City of Troy and TAP.

Known as the most pretentious of Troy's neighborhoods, Washington Park has broken down the barriers that existed between itself and the surrounding neighborhoods for over a century. WPA president Lynn M. Kopka comments that, "We have developed joint approaches to problem solving, welcomed 'outsiders' to park events and made the most use of the prime asset in the neighborhood – the park. The most apparent result is one that is not visible – cooperation and sharing between Washington Park, Pottery District, Historic Sage, Little Italy, South Central, Fifth Avenue, Osgood and River Triangle neighborhoods."

WPA has an asset – the park - which contributes to the stability of the immediate area. Although the park is private and has restricted use (it's called the "no fun" park for a reason), it is recognized by the property owners as a desirable asset. As the park area rises or falls, so do the areas around it. Everything WPA does – from the newsletter to stabilizing threatened buildings – promotes ripple effects throughout the surrounding neighborhoods. WPA's focus has become one of unifying neighborhoods so together all are stronger.

Kopka notes that the Washington Park Association has taken a more proactive, neighborhood/community building approach in the past 5 years. Members are striving to break down barriers, both physical and psychological, which isolate the park, while at the same time being a strong force for urban revitalization. WPA clearly recognizes the premise that "in unity there is strength". The members have made tremendous strides in the past decade in attracting responsible owners, spurring private investment in deteriorating housing stock and being good neighbors.

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