

Tee shots will help the waters rise

A celebrity golf tournament will raise money to restore the lagoon fountain at Kenneth Hall-Jones Park in East St. Louis.

By Denise Hollinshed
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

EAST ST. LOUIS • An effort to restore the fountain in Kenneth Hall-Jones Park will be helped by a celebrity golf tournament Sunday.

Several former Cardinals baseball players are among the celebrities expected to attend the tournament at the Grand Marais Golf Course at Frank Holten State Park in Centreville.

This is the first major fund-raising campaign to benefit the Emma L. Wilson King Foundation's fountain restoration program and its scholarship program. The fountain has not been in use since 1977.

Last year, the foundation awarded four scholarships to needy students, according to board member David King.

King, 58, of East St. Louis, is the second-oldest of 12 children of Emma King.

The children organized the foundation as a way of keeping alive the spirit of their mother, a longtime volunteer in East St. Louis and a strong believer in education. All 12 of her children, all graduates of Lincoln Senior High School, went to college.



Bownes
Remembers fountain's glory days



The old fountain in the lagoon at Kenneth Hall-Jones Park in East St. Louis has not been in use since 1977. A golf tournament this weekend will raise money to help repair and restore the fountain. Odell Mitchell Jr. | Post-Dispatch

Fundraiser

Where: Grand Marais Golf Course at Frank Holten State Park, 4500 Pocket Road, Centreville.

When: 11: a.m. Sunday.

Donation: \$100 entry fee.

Information: 618-274-2872, Web site: www.emmalkingfoundation.org.

King estimated the cost to restore the fountain at \$350,000, with an additional \$75,000 needed to build bathrooms. The park now has portable toilets.

King said plans are also under way to improve the park grounds so that someday it could be used for weddings and social events.

"It is somewhat of a shame to look out there and see the state the park is in," King said. "I think with the restoration of that fountain it will pave the way for a number of things, especially with the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center across the way

and the accessibility of the Metro line and bike trail. This I think is a giant stepping stone to some of the revitalization that people have talked about."

The guest list includes former Cardinals players Ron Allen, Richie "Dick" Allen and Ted Savage, former Washington Senators player Hank Allen, former Harlem Globetrotters players Art "Bones" Smith and Marques Haynes, former University of Illinois football star Dana Howard and former Boston Celtic and University of Iowa star Kevin Gamble.

The 18-hole tournament features \$3,000 in prizes. The \$100 entry fee includes green fees, range balls, cart, tee package, box lunch and refreshments.

The Jones Park fountain was once one of the largest and best in the Metro East area. Its grandeur was recalled by Percy Bownes, 50, of East St. Louis, as he and friends sat on the bank of the lake in Jones Park with

fishing rods extended.

When Bownes learned that the fountain would be restored, his eyes lit up.

"Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus," Bownes said as he clapped his hands.

"I remember when the water fountain was going with its different colored lights and there were boats out here," Bownes said. "I use to throw pennies in the fountain and wish."

The foundation hopes to have the money raised within a year and renovation completed in early 2008. The project has the approval of the East St. Louis Park District.

Landscape architecture students at the University of Illinois are helping to redesign the fountain, which will be renamed the Emma L. Wilson King Memorial Fountain in Jones Park Lagoon.

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Family hopes to honor matriarch

By Doug Moore
 Of the Post-Dispatch
 04/18/2005

Heirs want to fix up a fountain in Jones Park

Of East St. Louis

When Emma L. Wilson King died five months ago at age 82, more than 1,000 people crowded Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in East St. Louis to say their last goodbyes.

King was not a politician, the head of a corporation or a woman who achieved fame as an athlete or actor. More importantly, her children say, she was a homemaker and mother of 12 who was adamant that her dozen offspring finish high school and go to college, two things she did not do.

All of her children graduated from Lincoln Senior High School. Nine of the 12 have college degrees. The other three took college courses.

Now her children are turning their attention to keeping their mother's memory alive by renovating a fountain in Jones Park and having it named after her. The house on Lincoln Avenue where King fussed over her children and their friends is about a quarter of a mile northeast of the park. Her husband, Willie, and their youngest child, Mia, still live in the house.

The project has the approval of the East St. Louis Park District and the children have formed a foundation to raise a minimum \$100,000 to renovate the fountain, which has not been in use since 1977.

King always believed in East St. Louis, even when others were fleeing to communities where there were more jobs, better schools and safer neighborhoods, her children said. She was active in Mount Zion's Willing Workers volunteer group and in the Jolly Angels, a band of older women who met weekly to lunch, laugh and think of ways to make the city better.

"This is our way of honoring her and continuing her life," said her son, Jerome King, who works for the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington as a national diversity coordinator.

Jerome King, 47, is ninth in the lineup of children, who

range in age from 63 to 36. The oldest, Willa Allen, is president of the foundation, which is offering \$250 scholarships to two East St. Louis Senior High students this spring to carry on their mother's message that education is the key to success.

"You don't have to be a politician or actor of someone famous to be important to the community," Willa Allen said, although she said her mother was famous for her biscuits.

"That's what my friends always wanted when they came in from out of town and she fixed them breakfast," said Willa Allen, who works for Sony Pictures in Los Angeles.

The foundation is working with landscape architect students at the University of Illinois to design the fountain. The four students who were selected as finalists from among 16 will present their designs at a public meeting at 2 p.m. Saturday at the East St. Louis Public Library, 5320 State Street. The 19-member foundation board will select a winner the following day.

The foundation hopes to have the money raised within year and renovation on the fountain completed in early 2008.

To raise money, the foundation is selling bricks to build the fountain plaza. The bricks can be engraved with a name or personal message. Other fund-raisers are planned as well, Jerome King said.

To learn more about the fountain renovation, visit the foundation's Web site at emmalkingfoundation.org.

"We want young people in East St. Louis to see a project like this and find it uplifting that things like this can be done with community spirit, which is what my mom was all about," Jerome King said.

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Family adopts fountain as tribute

Linda S. Lawson
Of the Suburban Journals
East St. Louis Journal

The fountain in the old Jones Park represents the loves of the late Emma J. King—nature, water, family and fellowship.

As a legacy to their mother, the King children are launching a foundation with the goal of restoring the fountain back to its days of grandeur and glory for families to enjoy.

This past weekend, a two day session launched the Emma L. Wilson King Foundation. On Saturday, University of Illinois architectural students presented renditions for the fountain and its immediate surrounding area. The King family, area officials, the board of directors and members met for the presentation and to receive an overview of the project.

The King Family chose Alec Cashman's rendition to best capture their mother's spirit and create an operable area. The project is estimated to cost \$300,000.

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The project will be funded through both corporate and private donations. The foundation has launched a brick campaign. For \$100 and \$200, the bricks can be purchased.

The lily pond within the fountain will be resurrected as the

central point. An amphitheater to accommodate 350 people will encircle the fountain to be used for special events including weddings, concerts and parties.

The donation bricks will also encircle the area. A magnolia tree will represent the King parents, with six dogwood trees on each side to represent the children. A series of King's beloved rose bushes will be highlighted. A bronze book monument engraved with King's favorite quotes will serve as a testament to her love of

education.

The fountain once was the pride and joy of East St. Louis. When urban flight devastated the city, the park and its centerpiece fell wayward.

The unkempt relic smothered by weeds has only been a reminder of what once was. That was until the death of the King's beloved mother, Emma, in November, sent them in search of a tribute project.

"It just fits Ma," said Renee King. "She would take something someone didn't see value. You nurture it, you give it love, you give it food and water. You help it to grow. The more Jerome (brother) talked about it, the more excited I became."

Emma Wilson King wasn't known because she was a scholar. She didn't finish high school. She wasn't known because she had some high-powered profile job. She was known for her love of her family and her community. She was known with ensuring, along with her husband, Willie, her children would receive an educating to provide the passport to a better life they didn't have. She became known for nurturing 12 children and sharing her love and life with those in the community.

"If she saw a child needed a coat or some clothes, she would give them clothes out of our closet. We would come home and look for something and she would say she gave it away to someone who needed it," said Willa King, the eldest child.

Jerome King, the ninth King child of 12 children, didn't look far from the family home to find a befitting memorial.

"Ma loved to garden. Every year there would be a flower garden with roses and tulips in the front and a vegetable garden with tomato plants in the back," Jerome recalled.

Prior to the civil rights movement, African Americans could not swim in the pool and frequent the park. The project is crossing all racial lines with the family receiving calls from those who remember it from its youth. It's seems fitting it would create multiracial interest.

"She united us in life and she's now uniting us in death," Mia King said.

For information on making a donation or purchasing a brick you may reach the foundation at 1-866-766-1991 or go to their website at emmalkingfoundation.org.

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