

The Kirkwood Greentree Festival: A History

The year was 1961. John F. Kennedy was President, the Berlin Wall was constructed, Gary Player won the Master's tournament and hula hoops were the rage. In Kirkwood, Bill Pfitzinger was Mayor, Kirkwood was recovering from a long period of drought, Dutch Elm blight had taken a great toll on some of the city's beautiful trees, and Angie Munson was Chairperson of the very first Greentree Festival.

The Greentree Festival's creation actually came about as a way to replace drought-stricken trees. It was the brainchild of then Mayor Pfitzinger and Council Members Robert Reim, Ninian Edwards, and Robert Staed.

In the weeks leading up to the first Festival, as well as throughout the event, the City offered Pin Oaks, Sweet Gum, Thornless Locust, White Birch, and Tulip trees for sale for just \$1 each. Thousands of these trees were purchased and planted and to this day, many still flourish, lining a number of Kirkwood streets. In fact, trees continue to be an important part of the annual Greentree Festival. Boy Scout Troop 325 sponsors the free give-away of hundreds of tree seedlings each year at the Festival.

A great number of things about the Festival have changed over the years; others have not. It still requires an enormous number of volunteer hours donated by dedicated citizens, working from February through September to handle this celebration. All of the City's services, especially Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire, Electric, and Public Works, have consistently put in lots of extra hours making sure all goes well for the thousands of residents and visitors coming to Kirkwood Park for this event.

There has always been a parade, a dog show, service clubs and organization-sponsored booths, good food, and family fun. Keeping it fresh and exciting is the fact that each year's volunteers initiate something new. Many of those events have since become an integral part of the celebration. The Greentree Festival remains a family-oriented celebration! Won't you join us?