

NORTHSIDE NEWS

October / November 2009

Statue of Liberty replica at Warner Park targeted for restoration by Northsiders

By Anita Weier

Northside News

Northside resident Barbara Arnold was born in New York City and treasures the Statue of Liberty as “a symbol of freedom and opportunity.” So she is very interested in helping to restore a deteriorated Liberty replica in Warner Park.

Alder Michael Schumacher also is excited about a new drive to repair and conserve the statue, which was dedicated to the city of Madison in 1951 by local Boy Scouts, with financial help from the Rotary Club.

“I am from Germany, and the statue had a special meaning to me,” Schumacher said during a meeting Sept. 23 at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center organized by the Madison Arts Commission to find out whether there is interest in repairing the statue.

The nine-foot tall copper Liberty on an eight-foot concrete and stone base is located in a plaza west of the Community Center, in a secluded grove where few people notice it.

The statue was one of more than 200 replicas of the Statue of Liberty presented to communities around the United States from 1949 to 1952 by the Boy Scouts of America, as part of the Scouts 40th anniversary celebration. A Kansas City businessman and Boy Scouts in that city launched the project to celebrate Liberty in New York and liberty in America. A Chicago company manufactured the replicas and the Kansas City Boy Scout office sold them to troops and others around the country for about \$350 each.

Madison’s Statue of Liberty replica was first located in Giddings Park,



Photo by John Weier

Efforts are underway to raise funds for the repair and restoration of the nine-foot Statue of Liberty replica located in Warner Park.

A second community meeting on the restoration effort is scheduled for 7 pm. Wednesday, Oct. 28, at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center

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Statue of Liberty Restoration

where it may have been vandalized. Then it went into storage, where it was unfortunately damaged when a truck backed into it, according to local conservator Tony Rajer. It came to Warner Park in the 1970s, again with Boy Scout encouragement for the move.

The statue is cracked, pitted, stained and discolored.

A survey for the Madison Art Commission in 2007 found that Liberty was "in most urgent need of care" of all city statues. The replica "exhibits advanced signs of deterioration from neglect and failed repairs," the survey found. "It's sad that our national symbol of liberty is the most damaged public sculpture in the city."

Rajer, who teaches at the UW-Madison, says the local Liberty has suffered from decades of neglect. "The city has never invested any money in its care and repair," he said previously.

John Frey, a Northside resident and active member of the Yahara Boy Scout District, has been traveling to Scout meetings in the Madison area with a self-created Liberty display, trying to stir interest in repairing the statue.

"Maybe this could tie in with a school history lesson," said Frey, 69. He suggested at the meeting that perhaps a penny drive at schools would be appropriate for raising money to repair the copper statue.

"The kids like penny wars," chimed in Supervisor Paul Rusk of the Dane County Board.

Karin Wolf, arts program for the city of Madison, has learned from three arts conservators that costs to restore the statue and create a maintenance endowment would be from \$25,000 to \$40,000. More would be needed if landscaping were done.

Two members of the Arts Commission – Chairwoman Connie Kilmark and Nick Schweitzer – helped Wolf lead the meeting and expressed interest in restoring the statue, if the commu-



Photo by John Weiter

The Statue of Liberty at Warner Park is cracked, pitted, stained and discolored. Local groups are interested in restoring this symbol of our liberty.

nity raises funds.

"Don't think small," Kilmark advised the dozen people present. "See how the vision catches people. Don't let the figure scare you."

Ann Brickson, who helped lead a successful drive to restore an Effigy Tree sculpture at Hudson Park, said their fund-raising group applied for grants and held neighborhood events to raise money.

Barbara Arnold, an emeritus student services coordinator at the UW-Madison School of Library and Information Studies, suggested that the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation might be a source of funds.

Rajer, who repaired and restored another Liberty replica in Mason City, Iowa, said that statue was in worse shape than the Madison statue. "This statue is sick but could make a full recovery," he said.

Another organizing meeting was set for 7 pm. Wed., Oct. 28, at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center.