



The James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Foundation
Gardner Family Foundation



NEWS

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CONTACT: MANDA HURDELBRINK 513.324.8610

**GARDNER FAMILY FOUNDATION
ANNOUNCES \$2.3 MILLION GIFT FOR
SMALE RIVERFRONT PARK**

CINCINNATI, OH:—The James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Foundation announced today that it will provide a \$2.3 million gift to the Cincinnati Parks Foundation to establish the Gardner Family Grove and Rose Garden in Smale Riverfront Park. The area for the new grove and garden is located in the park west of the Roebling Suspension Bridge and south of Mehring Way.



Jim and Joan Gardner

The James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Foundation was established 1994 to provide grants in several areas including Higher Education, Health and Medicine, the Arts and Humanities and the Environment.



“The establishment of this grove and garden in Smale Riverfront Park is a joyful yet bittersweet occasion for the Foundation and for our family,” explained Gary Johns, Chairman of the Gardner Family Foundation and son-in-law of Jim and Joan Gardner. “Jim’s passing in November came at a time when the family was preparing to surprise him with the creation of this grove and the rose garden. Jim loved growing roses throughout his life, and learned the art of caring for them from his father. He had been wanting to do something significant for the city for some time; to give back to the community that had meant so much to him, his wife and family for so many years. This would have meant the world to him.”

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Jim Gardner helped his brother-in-law, Dick Farmer, along with thousands of others build Cintas Corporation into a successful Cincinnati-based company. Jim retired as Vice President in 1988, and continued to serve on the Board of Directors until 2004. Jim was known to many as a humanitarian who quietly went about doing the work that he felt was so important. He directed many of his philanthropic efforts towards helping those experiencing poverty, homelessness and despair achieve their dreams. "My father established the Mary Magdalene House in Over-the-Rhine because he wanted to make a real difference in the lives of those in the most need," said Peggy Johns. "Above all, he wanted these people to be treated with dignity so that if they had clean clothes, a shower, a haircut and help to find jobs, they would know what it felt like to be respected and valued."

In 2007, the Foundation provided significant funding to establish the James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Center for Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders at the University of Cincinnati Neuroscience Institute. For many years, Jim cared for his beloved wife Joan, who suffers from Parkinson's disease.

The Gardner Family Foundation has also provided financial support to Xavier University, the Cintas Center, the University of Cincinnati and Boys Hope Girls Hope Cincinnati.

"We are beyond grateful to the Gardner Family Foundation for their generosity and for this gift to the community that will endure for generations, " said Susan Dorward, Executive Director of the Cincinnati Parks Foundation. "The mission of the foundation is to utilize its resources for the betterment of the community and its citizens. This certainly exceeds the scope of that inspired mission."

"With this gift, the Gardner Family Foundation has ensured that so much of what is extraordinary about this city will continue to grow," noted Willie F. Carden, Jr., Director of Cincinnati Parks. "This is a significant investment in our region and in the belief that Smale Riverfront Park will always play a pivotal role in the quality of life for the citizens of this community. The Foundation has indeed earned the gratitude of this entire community."

Members of the Gardner family include Joan Gardner; Linda and Tom Mueller, Adam, Laura, Adeline and Amelia Mueller; Eric Mueller, Jonathan Mueller; Lori and Maria Sommer; Spencer, Matthew and Nathan Gardner; Gary and Peggy Johns; Kyle Johns, Blaire and Madeline Johns.

For more information, please contact Manda Hurdelbrink at 513.324.8610.

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The Gardner Family Grove & Rose Garden in Smale Riverfront Park



The West Tree Grove is a 1 ¾ acre expanse of shade trees and understory trees extending from the Roebling Bridge to Elm Street, south of Mehring Way. The north edge of the grove borders the Ohio River Bike Trail along Mehring Way, and the southern edge of the grove frames the upper edge of the Great Lawn.

The grove consists of over 80 shade trees including red oaks, pin oaks and swamp oaks, honey locust and American elm, which will form a canopy of dappled shade. There will also be several open sunlit areas within the grove, and understory trees such as ironwood and redbud. The ground plane will have long horizontal drifts of low flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Within the tree grove will be a variety of new park features such as the Castellini Esplanade, a picnic terrace and the Vine Street Water Garden. A special feature within the grove will be a Rose Garden with a variety of roses supplemented by compatible flowers and shrubs. The 11,000 square foot Rose Garden consists of a center lawn panel surrounded by planting beds.

The lawn panel can hold a tent and provide a venue for weddings and special events with a seating capacity of 150 to 175 people. Roses will be in beds as well as climbing on trellises and will provide a rich variety of color and floral interest from early spring to late fall.

