



90th Anniversary Celebration

On Sunday, May 23, over 100 members enjoyed a celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the Kansas City Rose Society and the Laura Conyers Smith Municipal Rose Garden. In addition to marking these milestones, it was the first time our organization was able to reunite in-person after more than a year apart. The joy-filled afternoon, filled with a relaxed sense of normalcy, resulted in a room of smiling faces among friends.

The event was hosted at fellow Kansas City Parks Partner, Starlight Theatre, in their Garden of the Stars and indoor-outdoor VIP Club. Guests received nothing short of the VIP treatment while relishing individual, custom meals from Lon Lane's Inspired Occasions while reveling in the musical stylings of the Kansas City Symphony's Quintet Giocososo. Each table was dressed with fresh roses in the shades of a sunrise, symbolic of both the return to brighter days after a year of darkness and of the many positive plans on the horizon for our organization.

Starlight, one of Kansas City's most beloved entertainment venues that has been shuttered for the past year, was coming back to life before our eyes. Guests enjoyed exclusive tours of Starlight's greenhouse, where hundreds of native and tropical plants are grown for the venue's grounds each year. Clayton Williams, head of Starlight's horticulture department, shared a wealth of knowledge with our members. During the program portion of the afternoon, Clayton was gifted a membership to the Kansas City Rose Society in keeping with our 90th Anniversary mission to reach out into the community and connect with those that share our passions.

The afternoon concluded with remarks from Board President, Martha Comment, and 90th Anniversary Chair Taylor Smith. An update on the latest development in the garden, a vast and comprehensive online rose library and corresponding QR coding displays, was shared by Garden Chair Lauren English. Special guests, including longtime "keeper of the roses" Judy Penner and Wine and Roses Honorary Chair Shirley Helzberg, were honored with a commemorative anniversary book created by fellow member Kathy Killip.

Hosting an event on the cusp of COVID was challenging, but incredibly rewarding. One guest described the event as "a needed exhale" after a year of holding his breath. It was an afternoon of pure delight, plus a celebration of an iconic space and a storied organization. We will continue to honor our anniversary year throughout the season and, as we move forward, we will do as our roses do: we will continue to grow.