



# Summer Newsletter

2021

## OUR VISION

A WORLD CLASS ROSE GARDEN  
WHERE THE COMMUNITY CAN  
ENJOY AND LEARN ABOUT ROSES.



## 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

By Taylor Smith



*Judy Penner was honored for her years of dedicated service in the garden.*



*Wine and Roses Honorary Chair Shirley Helzberg was recognized for her kindness to the Rose Society.*

On Sunday, May 23, 100+ members celebrated the 90th Anniversary of the Kansas City Rose Society and Laura Conyers Smith Municipal Rose Garden. It was the first time our organization reunited in-person after more than a year apart!

Hosting an event on the cusp of COVID was challenging; but incredibly rewarding. One guest described the celebration as “a needed exhale” after a year of holding his breath.

The celebration was held at our Kansas City Parks partner, **Starlight Theatre**, in their Garden of the Stars and indoor-outdoor VIP Club. Guests received beautifully packaged custom meals from **Lon Lane’s Inspired Occasions** while listening to the **Kansas City Symphony’s Quintet Giocoso**. Each table held fresh roses in shades of a sunrise, symbolic of our return to brighter days after a year of Covid darkness, and the many positive plans on the KCRS horizon.

**Clayton Williams**, the Starlight’s Horticulture Department leader, shared a wealth of knowledge with our members and invited them to tour the Starlight’s greenhouse, where hundreds of native and tropical plants are grown for the venue’s

grounds each year. During the program, 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 who share our passions.

The afternoon concluded with remarks from Board President, **Martha Comment**, and 90th Anniversary Chair **Taylor Smith**. Special guests, Wine and Roses Honorary Chair **Shirley Helzberg** and longtime “keeper of the roses” **Judy Penner**, were honored with a commemorative anniversary book created by member **Kathy Killip**.

Our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration will continue throughout the summer as we do what our roses do: continue to grow!





## Get To Know Our Board

By Margie Paxton

These are the first in a series of Board Member profiles designed to help you know - and maybe join - them!



President Martha Comment

Board Secretary John Riley

Ever wonder how you get to be president of the Kansas City Rose Society? **Martha Comment** worked her way into the position by serving as a Rose Garden Groomer for the last eight years and, along the way, being invited to be on the Board. She served as Wine and Roses Chair for a year, did ad hoc jobs as needed, and later became VP before becoming President.

Her current job: to oversee pretty much everything – from finances to communications to QR codes to events. And as President during the challenge of Covid, she’s felt her primary responsibility is to help members stay engaged.

Martha was born in Tennessee and lived in New York, Virginia, Florida and Pennsylvania before moving here in 1988. She loves Kansas City because it’s less congested and friendly!

Martha has many talents! After earning a degree in Retailing, she worked as a Buyer and in retail management, where she met her late husband, Jeff. When they moved to KC, she went back to school to earn a degree in Psychology (Avila) and a Master’s in Social Welfare (KU). She spent the next 16 years as a therapist, the last five at the *House of Hope* counseling teenage girls and their parents. (We’re thinking sainthood here!) Today she serves on the *House of Hope* Board as well as KCRS.

In her free time, Martha likes to play tennis and pickleball, walk 3-4 miles several times a week and lift weights. But her favorite thing to do is spend time with her five adorable grandchildren.

What a woman!

Top 2021 Rose Show winner and Certified American Rose Society Rosarian **John Riley** is a man who knows roses!

John was active in the Johnson County Rose Society before becoming a KCRS Rose Garden groomer. He’s now in his third term on the KCRS Board, which has included serving as past Garden Committee Chair and Rose Show Committee consultant. As Board Secretary, John records the minutes of the Board and Executive Board meetings and has acquired an institutional knowledge that’s invaluable. (If he doesn’t have an answer, he knows where to find it!)

John was also recently elected Director of the American Rose Society Central District and will serve on the ARS Board of Directors. The Central District includes Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. “Kansas City is one of the largest chapters and we want to help grow others,” he adds.

John was born in Omaha and grew up in Liberty, where he became an Eagle Scout. After earning a Mechanical Engineering degree at University of Missouri-Rolla, he moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he designed nuclear reactors for submarines. He then moved to KC to join Black & Veatch’s power division, working first on a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma. When the Three Mile Island accident occurred, he shifted to the design of coal-fired, gas-fired and solar-power generation power plants. His B&V job took him to several countries, including Cairo, Egypt, where he attended an associate’s End of Ramadan family feast. Reminiscent of the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding’s* many cousins named Nick, he smiles, “My friend and his three brothers were all named Mohammad. But they called each other by their middle names!”

When he’s not growing roses, John is a major soccer fan, Lyric Opera supporter and volunteer usher at the Folly Theater. He’s been married to his wife Sally for 51 years and has two sons and a grandson who’s his namesake!





Laura Dickinson and John Riley

## Rose Show Success *By Laura Dickinson*

With just a few adjustments for exhibitors and room layout to comply with COVID guidelines, we put on a great 2021 Rose Show, with 24 exhibitors who brought 324 roses and 101 rose photos. **John Riley** won the Grand Prize, **Queen of Show**, with his rose *Marilyn Monroe* and Second Prize, **King of Show**, with a *Tahitian Sunset* rose.

The **Queen of Photography** was awarded to **Glenn and Carolyn Hodges** for *Perle d'or*, which also received the **American Rose Society Gold Medal** for a rose grown in the photographer's own garden.

Many thanks go to the wonderful rose show committee: **Glenn Hodges, John Riley, Devan Hartnett, J.J. Jensen and Martha Comment**, for their hard work and commitment to making the show a fun and happy event. Thanks also to the many **board members, rose garden groomers, exhibitors and other volunteers** for setup, Show Day support, and teardown. Many hands made light work!

See all [show winners](#) and rose show [photo winners](#) on our website.



Rosebuds Shannon Dougherty and Derek Landrum-Vetter

## Rosebuds Update *By Taylor Smith*

The Rosebuds - Young Friends of the Kansas City Rose Society - is a new branch of our organization. Its mission is to spark and steward interest in influential young people who share a passion for roses, parks, preservation, and civic engagement.

Find upcoming Rosebuds events [here](#). These include weekend grooming opportunities on the second and fourth Saturday of each month and other social and educational events for all members.

To become a Rosebud or receive emails about Rosebud events and opportunities contact [Taylor Smith](#).



## New Rose Garden Library and QR Codes

*By Lauren English*

KCRS has launched a [new website](#) that features all rose varieties in the garden by name, color and classification, along with photographs and interesting information and notes. Garden visitors can access it with their phones by scanning the new QR code stickers placed on all rose signs in the Rose Garden. Each rose has a unique code that accesses its information and an audio narrative.

This project was a labor of love by a very small committee led by KCRS Garden Chair and Project Manager **Lauren English**. Committee members included Garden Committee member **Martha Negley**, who served as co-editor and co-researcher, Head Rosarian **Judy Penner**, and KCRS Consulting Rosarians **Laura Dickinson** and **John Riley**. **Devan Hartnett** helped revise our pink Garden Guide Map and content and printed the QR code stickers. Local public radio professional and KCRS member **Martha Lally** generously provided the audio. Many thanks to all, including **Greg German** who created the new website.





## Groomers Update *By Lauren English*

The May 13<sup>th</sup> Groomer Training session welcomed 41 experienced groomers and 15 new groomers. Head Rosarian **Judy Penner** and KCRS Garden Chair **Lauren English** split the training into two sessions: veterans and new groomers. After reviewing the Park and KCRS rules/regulations, all went into the garden for grooming instruction.

Many thanks to Garden Committee member **Martha Negley** for providing delicious Covid-friendly treats for our groomers!

This is the second year that the groomers will work on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Rose Garden. Grooming will continue through mid-September.



## Ask a Rosarian

The Consulting Rosarian program is administered by the **American Rose Society** to provide experts in rose care to local rose societies. We now have six CRs in Kansas City to support community rose information needs. KCRS Consulting Rosarian **Laura Dickinson** (on right) recently presented groomer **Jennifer Jensen** (on left) and Loose Park Director **Judy Penner** (center) with their newly-earned Certified Rosarian certificates.

Want to become a Rosarian? Click [here](#) to learn more.

Want to ask a rose question? Click [here](#).

## We're Growing!

Please introduce yourself and help welcome our new members.

Charles Ballew  
Jenny Chapin  
Alena Colby  
Bernie Colby  
Kristen Comment  
Rachel Comment  
Nicole Dingley  
Margaret Fisher

Joan Gastinger  
Mary Grignon  
Katy Hamilton  
Patricia Hornbeck  
Macon Jacobson

Kathy Kelly  
T.J. Kilian  
Nina LaFavor  
Nicole LaPlante  
Ellen Lloyd

Dana Moriarty  
Isabel Paxton  
Carli Sommerla  
Luke Sprowls  
Karen Stallard

Donald Schultz  
Samuel Stepp  
Chesney Thompson  
Brandi Torre  
Elizabeth Walters  
Jillian Wenburg  
Katherine Whitson  
Brian Williams

## 2021 KCRS Board of Directors

Have a question? Give us a call.

Martha Comment	President	816-210-5241
Kandi McCasland	Vice-President	816-810-4022
John Riley	Secretary	913-341-2853
Sean Huges	Treasurer	816-719-9896
Betsy Beasley	Betsy Parker	
Maria Coughlin	Margie Paxton	
Laura Dickinson	Linda Rostenberg	
Lauren English	Joan Sherman	
Ann Greene	Taylor Smith	
John Holswade	Julie Spaeth	
	Marylou Turner	

## Save these Dates!

**SEPT** 12 - Jazz in the Roses - Rose Garden – 5-7 pm  
23 - Wine in Roses - Rose Garden – 5:30-7:30 pm  
30 - Groomers Luncheon – Rose Room – Garden Center – 11:30 am - 1 pm

**OCT** 2 - Fall Rose Demo – Garden Center – 10 am-Noon  
12 - Photography Workshop - Garden Center – 10 am-noon  
23 - Rose Garden Readings - Garden Center – 2-3:30 pm

**NOV** 3 - Annual Meeting & Fall Luncheon – Indian Hills Country Club – 11am-2pm

Please check [here](#) for updates.