

# Trust provides funds for popular spring's upkeep

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By: Kathryn Caggianelli

TROY - A spring that has supplied area families with water for generations is in need of a serious facelift, according to city native Julie Westfall.

Over the last several months, she has been soliciting donations from area businesses and organizations in earnest for such things as erecting a retaining wall, leveling the area where people crowd around each other to collect water in their bottles and jugs, replacing a rusted underground pipe and planting a perennial garden.

What Westfall didn't realize when she began her fund-raising campaign was that the city of Troy receives annual payments for just that purpose from a trust fund established in 1958 by the Chuckrow family, who dedicated the springs to the founders of a well known River Street poultry business, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Chuckrow.

"There shouldn't be a need for citizens to make donations. This is my family's legacy and it's a shame the city has not taken care of it," said Ben Chuckrow, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Chuckrow's great-grandson. Joseph Chuckrow died in the early 1900s while his wife died in the mid 1900s.

Annual payments in the mid-1970s to the city from the trust fund for both the upkeep of the spring and a memorial monument in Chuckrow's honor were between \$198 and \$205.

More recently, the city received \$72.13 in 2005 and \$72.95 in 2006, according to City Auditor Mary Beth Quinn.

In April 1978, then-City Comptroller Thomas Evans sent a memo to then-City Manager Steven Dworsky, recommending the Recreation Department assume permanent responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of both. He further advised that Chuckrow's Trust Fund money be diverted to the general fund to help with ancillary costs of the Recreation Department.

Since then, the Department of Parks and Recreation has overseen the spring's upkeep.

Chuckrow said he and his family would be willing to put some of their own muscle into making improvements, mowing grass and whatever else it would take to restore and beautify the spring to the beautiful resource that it once was. But he and Westfall are reportedly prohibited from doing so because the land is owned by the city.

"In the 28 years I've been working here, we've never had a complaint other than an occasional one about ice (build-up) in the winter," said Department of Public Works Commissioner Bob Mirch.

Mirch confirmed that the land and the spring are owned by the city.

The Parks and Recreation Department keeps the area around the spring mowed and weed-whacked, and the Sanitation Bureau picks up garbage on the site, he said.

"Realistically, 40 people go there every day to get water," Mirch said. "But \$72 a year isn't going to pay for much more than plowing out the parking lot after one snowstorm."

Over the years, he and his staff have repaved the parking area several times.

"If anyone wants to come in and plant flowers, all they have to do is call me and tell me, and I'll let them in. We couldn't OK them building a retaining wall or anything like that unless we know for sure it was going to be safe," he said.

Westfall, a visiting nurse, said a former city engineer warned her that the hillside where the spring is located is unstable and not safe for people to tread on.

"I told him that I and many other people have been coming here for years and that I even had the water tested. It's perfectly safe to drink, but is a little high in iron," Westfall said.

She currently has eight five-gallon jugs of the spring water on hand at home and routinely uses five gallons every week.

"I drink it, I use it to make my coffee, and I cook macaroni with it," she said.

But drinking the spring water is not something condoned by the state Department of Health, said city Water and Sewer Engineer Neil Bonesteel

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## **Plaque on way back to Monument Square**

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TROY - The Soldiers and Sailors Monument downtown in Monument Square is a focal point for city life.

The monument was designed by James Edward Kelly, a sculptor and illustrator, and sits in the triangular square downtown. The square also was home to a 1-by-3 foot plaque and monument on the northwest side of the square honoring Benjamin Chuckrow, who was chairman of the Rensselaer County Board of Supervisors, a founder of the predecessor to Hudson Valley Community College and a commander of the Jewish War Veterans Society. The Chuckrow monument was installed in a ceremony on Veterans Day in 1961.

Chuckrow's monument was there for about 40 years before it was removed. When the memorial was taken out is not apparent, but it's believed it occurred in 1999 when the Soldiers and Sailors was renovated.

Ben Chuckrow has been talking to the city again about getting his great-uncle's monument reinstalled. It's been two years since he first pushed to get this done.

"Based on my last conversation, I felt we had made some progress," Chuckrow said. "Monument Square is Monument Square for a reason. This is where the monument was and should be placed."

Chuckrow contacted city hall after his father, Joseph Chuckrow, died in May.

The city put the plaque in storage after locating it two years ago at the behest of Chuckrow family members who want it restored. It's been off the square since the administration of Mayor Mark Pattison. Mayor Harry Tutunjian's staff has promised the Chuckrow family a spot will be found for it.

"We have found the memorial," Deputy Mayor Dan Crawley said. "I have met Mr. Chuckrow and given him my assurances that the memorial will be resurrected."

- Kenneth C. Crowe II