



## Carillon Fund is Music to our Ears

*It can be easy to take the music for granted. It's part of the fabric of Washington Park. Sunny days, clear skies and the melody of bells ringing across the park in downtown Springfield.*

That music is the product of the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon, a unique musical instrument that scales more than 100 feet in the air and helps set the perfect park atmosphere.



"It is one of the largest carillons in the world," Springfield Park District Executive Director Derek Harms said. "However, the Carillon is much more than a musical instrument. The Carillon is rich with life. Through a strong partnership with the Rees Memorial Carillon Society and the Carillon Bells, we offer educational, instructional and recreational programs and events that serve tens of thousands of people within our community and draws enthusiasts from throughout the world. Too often, we take for granted the things that are usual and customary in our lives. It's important to take the time to step back and recognize this great institution in our community and the incredible gift from Thomas Rees."

In order to make sure future generations are able to enjoy the music, education and recreation programs, the Park District recently assisted in the transfer of the **Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon Fund** to the Community Foundation.

"Establishing a fund at the Community Foundation encourages individuals to leave bequests to the Rees Carillon," Harms said. "The administration and investment costs are lower at the Community Foundation than where the funds were previously housed."



The Carillon was the product of the vision of Senator Thomas Rees. The longtime publisher of the *Illinois State Register* became enamored with carillon music while visiting Europe in the 1900s. Upon his death in 1933, Rees left a \$200,000 bequest to build the Carillon. He left specific instructions on size and location of the instrument. Those instructions were followed carefully by the Springfield Park District.

As a result, the Springfield Park District now provides a world class Carillon right here in our local community.

The Carillon is the fifth largest in the world and consists of 67 cast bronze bells that cover a range of five and a half octaves. The largest bell, which plays a G-flat, weighs seven and a half tons. The smallest weighs a mere 22 pounds, all located in the 12-story tower that oversees the park.

Making the bells ring on most days from the carillonneur's cabin is Carlo Van Ulft, director/ carillonneur of the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon. Van Ulft was appointed to the position in 2015. He is also the founder of the North American Carillon School, which is now housed in Springfield.

"All of this was made possible through the generous gift and strong vision of Mr. Thomas Rees himself," Harms said. "Not only did he donate funds to support the upfront construction costs but he also established this endowment to help offset future operational costs as well."

For generations the endowment has helped bring musical interludes at the park. Concerts are held at 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday and 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday from May 1 to September 30.

The Carillon has also hosted the International Carillon Festival since 1962. The event brings internationally renowned carillonnists to play each night.

A museum is located on the third and fourth levels of the Carillon, which provides a unique glimpse into the instrument's history.