

## ST. LOUIS/TWIN CITIES

### Metropolis St. Louis/ Twin City Transplants

Amanda Doyle of St. Louis, says, “All of a sudden, there seems to be a rush of organizations focused on young working professionals.... I know of ...groups in Ohio, California, Iowa, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Kansas, and Minnesota. Maybe it’s because small town people move to the cities and are lonely....maybe it’s because so many people...raised in the suburbs – like my husband who was never really allowed to go into the city – are finding themselves living inside the cities and wanting to make them better....“When I left college,” says Laurie Kersten, of Roseville, Minnesota, “I lost my friends. I was in Chicago and very alone. I would walk past a café or restaurant and hear people laughing together, and I would stand near the door and cry. Then I moved to the Twin Cities, where people already had lots of social capital, but were spending it among...[their long-time] friends and neighbors.... So in 1990 I put a notice in a local paper that announced a gathering of young professionals. I was a bit tricky; the notice implied that the organization already existed, and announced our ‘next’ meeting. At about 6:00 p.m., thirty people showed up. We were still going strong at 10:30. A little activity together makes a bridge...[to] really talk with each other.” Twin City Transplants (TCT) was launched, an informal social organization “to help transplanted professionals...create a circle of friends, a *real* circle of friends, that builds community.”

TCT now has over 500 loosely “professional” members, from their mid-twenties to their mid-forties. A large, informal group event (“Come Alone or Bring Friends”) is scheduled every four to six weeks. Members are encouraged, and helped, to start sub-groups or arrange their own one-time events. A recent six-week schedule listed 23 events including restaurant outings, happy hours, game nights, bike tours, lectures, brunch after Mass, and a car pool trip to the State Fair. TCT organizes using post cards, e-mail, and a web site/electronic message board. Mindy, a relative newcomer to TCT, organized a “Saturday Night At The Movies Group.” Forty-one people signed up on the Internet in three weeks; every Friday, they are e-mailed the film choice and directions to the theater. For some people, says Kersten, “the first step, and sometimes the hardest, is just to admit that you need people, that you don’t have friends.”

In the 1990’s, a handful of young people returned from college to St. Louis, mostly to take jobs. They saw that almost all their high school friends hadn’t come back – St Louis seemed to be a place that lots of young people avoided. So, in 1997, the returnees founded Metropolis St. Louis, to help make new friends and attract young people to the city and retain them. Now 1500 members strong, Metropolis is defined by president Doyle, as a “large civic organization with an edge...” that aims “to be as flexible and spontaneous as we can, while still pursuing serious civic projects.” Doyle adds, “We created *Celebrate the City Week*. We organize voter registration drives and throw a big Halloween party. One...popular program is The Walk – a Thursday night pub-crawl that keeps St. Louis from rolling up the sidewalks at 5:00 p.m. But we also have a very heady...Metropolis Forum...to inform and create St. Louis’ future leaders. We...get young professionals onto the boards of art groups, ...corporate, civic and educational organizations. Our growth...has been almost exponential, partly because...[o]ur website is a huge part of who we are, and we get a ton of hits every day. If I saw a park clean-up that needed to happen fast, or [if I] suddenly needed more volunteers to help out at the public elementary school..., I can...e-mail...800 people and get the numbers I need. But, the downside is, we now need to start working harder to reach the people who aren’t computer savvy or don’t have access.”

#### Contact:

Metropolis St. Louis: <http://www.mstl.org>

312-206-3246

Twin City Transplants: <http://www.Imnotfromhere.com>