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# Pond parade shows off the wonder of water

By **Kellie B. Gormly**

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Saturday, September 9, 2006

Members of the Spallek family in Pine say their yard, with its 5,000-gallon water garden, offers them a nice escape without an admission price.

"We call it our paradise," says Heiko Spallek, 40. He is a dentist and an assistant professor for the Center for Dental Informatics at the University of Pittsburgh in Oakland.

"We don't have to go on vacation; we're on vacation every day here," he says.

The Spalleks' pond will be one of 22 featured on this weekend's Third Annual Parade of Ponds, sponsored by Soergel Landscapes and Aquascapes. The self-guided tour, which raises money that will go to six Western Pennsylvania charities, allows visitors to visit their choice of locations at their own pace. The properties, most of which are private homes, are mostly located in Allegheny and Butler counties, but some also are in Beaver and Westmoreland counties.

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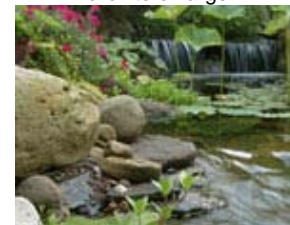
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family day together, traveling around and seeing ponds," Soergel says. "There's a lot of different scenarios, and a lot of very nice landscaping features. People are going to enjoy the diversity by seeing a bunch of

### Photo Gallery

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Parade of Ponds

JASMINE

GEHRIS/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

### Details THIRD ANNUAL PARADE OF PONDS

**When:** 10 a.m.-8 p.m.  
today and noon-6 p.m.  
Sunday

**Admission:** Minimum  
donation of \$20 per  
family

**Where:** The tour is  
self-guided and  
features 22 properties.  
The tickets will earn  
admission to any of the  
places today and  
Sunday.

**Details:**

724-444-7663

or

[www.yourescapes.net](http://www.yourescapes.net).

Tickets can be  
purchased online or at  
Soergel Orchards, 2573

**AP Podcasts**

different water gardens."

Water gardens -- which usually include fish, waterfalls and lush plants -- tend to draw their owners outside more, Soergel says.

"People will go out and sit by a pond who wouldn't go out and sit by a flower garden," Soergel says.

For the Spalleks, their outdoor pond, which sits on a one-acre property with a circular, two-story house, serves as their social center. During the spring, summer and parts of the fall, the family often eats outside on the patio table near the pond, which cost about \$25,000 to build. The Spalleks -- who are from Berlin, Germany, and moved to the United States a decade ago -- often head out to the pond at night and light candles and torches to illuminate the setting.

"It's really cozy at night," says Gisela Spallek, 39. The ophthalmologist has a home-based business that provides Web sites for health-care professionals.

The couple's two daughters -- Alexandra, 8, and Sophia, 5 -- enjoy feeding the large supply of koi and goldfish in the pond.

The tour, which drew about 400 visitors last year, will raise funds that will be divided among the following organizations: VOICe, a comprehensive services agency in Butler County; Contact Pittsburgh, a suicide crisis hotline; St. John Specialty Care Center, a senior-care facility in Mars; Sierra Club; Mars Public Library and Golden Treasures Retriever Rescue.

"I like to give back to the community. ... I think they're all good causes."

*Kellie B. Gormly can be reached at [kgormly@tribweb.com](mailto:kgormly@tribweb.com) or*

 (412) 320-7824

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