

Memphians participate in global Park(ing) day

Memphis participates in global event of transforming parking spaces to unique installations

By Timberly Moore

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PHOTO BY BRANDON DILL

Debi Babb looks on as Jamie Harmon (center) and Tad Pierson pass the time in a parking space-turned-lounge created by Crosstown Arts during a PARK(ing) Day celebration on Peabody Place. PARK(ing) Day is a worldwide annual event in which artists, organizations and companies transform metered parking spaces into temporary public parks.



Mario Walker adds one more piece to the top of a giant Jenga game in a parking space taken over by Self Tucker Architects during a PARK(ing) Day celebration on Peabody Place.

Jenga transformed from a family game-night favorite into a life-size version that occupied a Downtown Memphis parking space Friday, with players standing on ladders and chasing after pieces that blew away in the wind.

Shane Donahue, 24, who moved to Memphis from Oakland, Calif. three weeks ago, left a parking space that was hosting giant mini tennis – tennis with giant rackets and a miniature net – sponsored by the Racquet Club of Memphis, to play life-size Jenga in the space across the street.

"It was fun and the wind just added another challenge," he said. "It made it more exciting. Its kind of surreal to play Jenga on a giant scale."

It was all part of Parking Day 2012, celebrated worldwide on the third Friday in September. From its beginning seven years ago in a parking space in San Francisco, the event has grown to more than 975 parks in more than 160 cities spread over 35 countries on six continents.

Matthew Passmore, 42, cofounder of Parking Day, said the goal was to see what other civic purpose a "place used for car storage" could serve.

"(Parking Day) is about getting people to think deeply about how much space is taken up by cars, by people, by

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parks and by concrete and get people to critically think about making some changes to that," he said. "It's pretty unbelievable (how it has grown). We were just testing to see what reaction we got from city government and the people."

Mario Walker, 28, project coordinator and designer at Self+Tucker, an architecture and design firm, said the firm worked with the Memphis Grizzlies, Home Depot, and the Downtown neighborhood association to bring Jenga to life with rectangular cardboard boxes.

"We wanted something more interactive, but it had to be recyclable and lightweight so if it fell on someone it wouldn't injure them," he said. "Next year we're going do Chutes and Ladders."

Parking spaces on Peabody Place featured a skate party (disco ball included), gardens, and a camp site with a green screen trailer, set up by Amurica Photobooth, which took free photos for participants placing them in various destinations, like Easter Island.

"At first I didn't want to come, but I'm glad I did," said Jeremy Williams, 24. "I was like, 'What's Parking Day?' but it's real cool and innovative."

"I think it makes people happy," said Jamie Harmon, 42, owner of Amurica Photobooth. "Life can be pretty mundane, and it's good when people can act silly."

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