

## Ballwin woman wins tall award

By BRIAN MCDOWELL

A Ballwin woman came up head and shoulders above the competition at the recent Tall Clubs International (TCI) convention in Seattle, Wash.

Ballwin resident Roberta Mueller, who is 6'1" tall, was awarded the Kae Sumner Einfeldt Lifetime Achievement Award, which is known also as the TCI Woman of the Year Award.

The prize is presented each year to the TCI member who has contributed the most to the not-for-profit TCI, to tall awareness in general, and to her local tall club. Judgment is based on the member's overall association with Tall Clubs International and not just the current year's contributions.

Mueller, now 61, has been a member of TCI since 1989. She was single then and joined the club for social reasons.

"Every woman wants to dance with someone they can look up to," she said.

Mueller said more women belong to the local chapter than men, and she met her husband through TCI. Now, the couple helps maintain the club's local and national websites.

In 1990, Mueller served as Miss Tall International, which earned her an appearance on Geraldo Rivera's TV talk show, working to bring national awareness to TCI.

A professional musician, Mueller recorded the vocals for TCI's official song, "Tall Clubs International," and performed the song live at the group's 1991 convention.

Locally, Mueller coordinated participation of the St. Louis Tip Toppers in the Robert Wadlow Memorial Plaza in Alton, Ill. Wadlow, known also as the "Alton Giant," stood 8'11" tall and holds the Guinness World Record for the tallest man who ever lived.

Mueller said her affiliation with TCI and St. Louis Tip Toppers has been rewarding.

"I like the social aspect of it," she said of her affiliation with the groups. "I've made so many good friends, and I've helped tall



Roberta Mueller

people have a bigger footprint within the community."

TCI works to bring attention to a variety of issues that affect tall people, such as the lack of leg room on commercial aircraft. The organization currently is lobbying for airlines to offer more exit row seating for taller people so they can fly in relative comfort without having to pay extra money. The group also raises awareness about Marfan syndrome, a tissue disorder that affects some tall people.

Mueller lamented the lack of retail outlets in St. Louis that sell clothes specifically for taller people. She said she has to either travel to a faraway outlet store to find appropriate evening wear in her size or order it online.

But she conceded that being tall does have its benefits.

"It's a great icebreaker," Mueller said, "and I can always see above the crowd at every concert I go to."

Besides her Tall Club duties, Mueller performs locally as a musician. She does gigs at nursing homes under the name "Tall Berta" and plays '60s pop classics with the trio MUSYC.

The minimum height requirements for the TCI are 5'10" for women and 6'2" for men. The local branch, the St. Louis Tip Toppers, meets on the second Monday of every month at Growlers Pub in Sunset Hills. More information on the group can be found at tall.org.