Photo by Brian Mudri
FIRST PLACE, Structure
Biennial Photo Contest
See all the winners, p. 10
Today, our group of concerned citizens is a lot larger (2,600+), but we're still working together to manage tree falls and other problems impacting our beloved park.

FOW was founded in 1924 when a group of concerned citizens came together to restore Wissahickon Valley Park after a winter storm destroyed more than 200 trees. Get ready to help us celebrate this exemplary beginning and our 95th anniversary in 2019 with two main events—a mega volunteer workday and a celebratory gala—and much more.

Today, our group of concerned citizens is a lot larger (2,600+), but we're still working together to manage tree falls and other problems impacting our beloved park. In “Watershed Watch” (p.6), you'll learn about the biggest threat to the health of the Wissahickon Creek and what a unique partnership is doing about it, and also how an impressive team of young community-based scientists is monitoring the issue.

Another group of involved individuals rose to the third annual All Trails Challenge and, as they were exploring all 50 miles of the park's trails, raised $31,000 to benefit FOW's conservation mission. See highlights from this increasingly popular fundraising activity on p. 4.

Speaking of popular activities, we received more than 430 images from over 150 photographers in the Biennial Photo Contest, including “Snowy Covered Bridge,” the first-place entry in the Structure category, which graces this newsletter’s cover. Check out the other winning photos from our most successful contest yet on p. 10 and enjoy more photos capturing the fun from FOW’s most recent family events: Whispers Along the Wissahickon (p. 16) and Winter in the Wissahickon (p. 18).

As we say hello to a new year, we say goodbye to two friends who are no longer with us, but whose impact on the park lives on. We will remember the contributions of FOW’s Structures Crew founder Ed Stainton, who passed away in the fall, in a future issue of the newsletter. In this issue, we fondly recall the legacy of Sioux Baldwin at the Andorra Tree House (p. 17).

We proudly honored our 1,112 volunteers (p. 12) for the more than 11,688 hours they worked during 2018. It takes a lot of effort to care for Wissahickon Valley Park and there are many ways to contribute. Our 2019 calendar is on sale now, as are fun FOW and Wissahickon-related items, like T-shirts, books, and maps (which make great gifts). If you’re not a member, please consider becoming one or giving an FOW membership as a gift. On behalf of everyone at FOW, we are grateful to all our friends. Wishing you and yours all the best in 2019!

2019 PUBLIC MEETING
Friends of the Wissahickon will host its annual Public Meeting on January 23, 2019, to share progress on its Sustainable Trails Initiative and other projects, and discuss upcoming projects for 2019. Join us at the New Covenant Church of Philadelphia (7500 Germantown Avenue) from 6-8 pm. Visit fow.org/ events for more details.
VALLEY TALK NOTES

FOW hosted three Valley Talks this past fall. In September, Pouné Saberi, MD, MPH, president of the board of directors of Physicians for Social Responsibility, presented “What the Catfish Saw: Climate Change in the Wissahickon. Climate change has been impacting human health and is now recognized as one of the greatest public health threats of our time. In the lecture, Dr. Saberi discussed ways climate change makes us sick.

An estimated 360 million to one billion birds collide with windows annually in the United States, making it one of the most significant conservation issues affecting birds today. In November, Valley Talk participants learned the causes of bird-window collisions and how to prevent them during a presentation by Keith Russell, Program Manager for Urban Conservation for Audubon Pennsylvania.

In December, Delaware Riverkeeper and environmental activist Maya van Rossum presented “The Green Amendment: Securing Our Right to a Healthy Environment. Currently advancing The Green Amendment movement nationwide, she discussed her new best-selling book by the same name and how members can become more engaged with environmental and water advocacy related to the Wissahickon Watershed.

SPRING 2019 VALLEY TALKS

SAVE THE DATES!

MARCH 19, APRIL 16,
MAY 14, JUNE 11
6 PM AT VALLEY GREEN INN

Thank you to PECO for investing in Wissahickon Valley Park! Their donation will help finance one of FOW’s Sustainable Trails Initiative projects, and will be used to stabilize tread and improve sustainability along the Yellow Trail. We are so grateful for their support!

As part of PECO’s 2018 Green Region Open Space program, which provides grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations to plan for, protect, and improve open land in our area, they awarded $10,000 grants to three Philadelphia-based organizations. The other organizations were the Fairmount Park Conservancy and Riverfront North Partnership.

HELP FOW CELEBRATE ITS 95TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2019

Mega Volunteer Workday
June 1 (National Trails Day)
Gala Celebration on October 11

...and much more!
Over 200 Challengers participated in FOW’s All Trails Challenge (ATC) 2018. They hiked, walked, ran, and rode on bikes and on horseback throughout Wissahickon Valley Park to raise $31,000 for the continued conservation of this beautiful and important asset. For the third year, the ATC was an exciting months-long event that encouraged people of all ages and fitness levels to explore all 50 miles of its scenic trails, and invite their friends, family, and coworkers to sponsor them. Challengers hiked more miles and raised more money for the Wissahickon than in the previous two years.

The 2018 Challenge began on September 4 and ended (appropriately) on November 27, Giving Tuesday. It included fun kickoff and closing parties at Wissahickon Brewing Co., mileage and fundraising incentives, lots of give-aways, and scheduled hikes and walks with great prizes, including exclusive vacations for the top mileage and fundraising participants.

Thanks to all the participants and our sponsors, as well as the FOW Trail Ambassadors who led ATC hikes and volunteers who helped at Challenge events. “FOW is grateful to everyone involved in the ATC. We can’t care for the Wissahickon without your support,” said Executive Director Maura McCarthy, who also led several hikes during the Challenge. Funds raised will help restore historical park structures, eliminate invasive plant species, monitor watershed management issues, and make trails sustainable. Plan now to join us for the All Trails Challenge 2019!

**TOPPING THE CHARTS**

**Top Individual Fundraiser** - Susan Schewel (The Philly Special) - $2,690

**Top Team Fundraiser** - PC Hikes/William Penn Charter School Team - $2,030 (700+ miles total)

**Top Individual Mileage** - Johan Anestad (Cypres and Johan ATC Challenge) - 456 miles
At Univest, we’ve dedicated ourselves to supporting the communities we serve for more than 140 years, holding true to the values and principles that helped shape us. It’s why wherever you are in life or business, you can bank here to get there.

Building community together
FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS
FOR YOUR LIFE

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COMMITTED TO CARING FOR YOU WITHIN 30 MINUTES OF YOUR ARRIVAL.
The Wissahickon Creek may be shallow but its problems run deep. In October, several hundred concerned individuals packed an auditorium at Springside Chestnut Hill Academy (SCH) to learn about the complex reasons for the creek’s problems and what a unique group of experts—the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership—is doing about it. It was the third such “upstream/downstream” gathering on water quality since 2012 co-hosted by Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) and the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA). The event was sponsored by Green Mountain Energy, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and the William Penn Foundation.

“Communities Connecting for a Clean Wissahickon” continued the regional conversation about the current conditions in the Wissahickon Creek in terms of water chemistry and biodiversity, and the relationship between land use and watershed health. The following panel of stakeholders shared highlights from the Partnership’s work and discussed the watershed-wide research and planning that will result in a new holistic approach to protecting and improving the quality of the essential Wissahickon Watershed:

- **Patrick Starr**, Executive Vice President of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, provided background on the regulatory framework that made this collaboration possible.
- **Laura Toran, Ph.D.**, the Weeks Chair in Environmental Geology at Temple University, teaches and conducts research on hydrogeology and urban hydrology. She leads a team of experts who are providing support to better understand the Wissahickon Creek through monitoring, computer modeling, and assessment.
- **Ellen Kohler, JD, MS** is Water Quality Program Manager at the University of Maryland’s Environmental Finance Center. Her projects focus on water resources, particularly water quality issues facing communities in the Delaware River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.
- **Mark Grey**, a Lower Gwynedd Township Supervisor, serves on several subcommittees including the Environmental Advisory Council. He also co-chairs the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership.

- **Jay Cruz** is an environmental scientist at the City of Philadelphia’s Water Department. He has directed many watershed assessment, water quality modeling, and green infrastructure monitoring projects. Cruz extensively studied the physical, water quality and ecosystem-level changes that occur in small watersheds due to urbanization, as well as the water quality and hydrologic performance of stormwater management best practices.
- **Mary Aversa**, Ambler Borough Manager, brought her broad operational knowledge about stormwater management and wastewater treatment from the Borough-owned Water Company and Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) and the Water Company, which serves several municipalities.

Community property values and quality of life are dependent on having a clean watershed and open surrounding green space for all to enjoy. The streams that flow throughout the 64-mile Wissahickon Watershed downhill to the Wissahickon Creek are home to multiple species of birds, fish, and other wildlife. With 1.2 million visits each year, the Creek is an extraordinary destination for recreation and escape from the city's bustle. Perhaps most important, Wissahickon Valley Park meets a significant public health mandate in preserving a source of drinking water for nearly one-third of all Philadelphians.

Under the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Wissahickon Creek is considered to be impaired, meaning it has been negatively impacted by pollution, exceeding an established threshold, and thereby decreasing its water quality. Decades-long challenges to the health of the creek and its tributaries through both the upper (Montgomery) and lower (Philadelphia) portions of the watershed are getting worse due to pollution, but also climate change, flooding, threats to habitats, development and, perhaps the biggest concern, stormwater runoff.
Comprised of 13 distinct municipalities and four wastewater treatment facilities, the Partnership is working together on a creative long-term management solution to the fallout from years of urbanization. Trying to protect a creek that runs through so many different communities is no easy feat, but the Partnership is united by common goals: to ensure that local interests are emphasized and that no municipality is alone in combating pollution. It also aims to help individual communities, sewer authorities, and taxpayers see reduced costs down the line.

Just as the creek’s health is influenced by a combination of factors, the proposed solution will also be multifaceted, with several models being developed for consideration, including education and outreach support from FOW and WVWA. The Partnership’s recommendations will be strongly rooted in science, which will give the townships equal footing in negotiations with the EPA and other government entities and help justify funding investments.

Scientists involved with the Partnership are using data from extensive monitoring and assessment to calibrate a model conveying stormwater and chemical runoff sources, and how they affect water and flow in the creek. Thus far, they have determined that dialing down the use of phosphorus, a recognized pollutant, doesn’t make a difference over time, but that reducing the stormwater that conveys phosphorus, including that in wastewater treatment plants, can in turn reduce creek pollution.

The heavy rain events occurring more frequently in the Wissahickon area are exacerbating the problem of stormwater management in the Wissahickon Watershed’s communities, prompting efforts to contain it. For example, the Ambler Environmental Advisory Council started a residential rain garden campaign in 2012 to encourage the development of landscapes designed to collect and infiltrate stormwater runoff.

Through the Philadelphia Water Department’s Rain Check program, homeowners can obtain rain barrels and downspout planter boxes to collect stormwater runoff sources from roofs and reduce the water volume going into streams. WVWA will be piloting a project this year to help residential home owners convert their impermeable surfaces to absorbent ones.

A recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that in the United States, watershed groups have had a positive impact on their local water quality. If the creek is to exist for future generations, it is incumbent upon those who love this special place to take care of it. “Communities Connecting for a Clean Wissahickon” was an important step in urging citizens to take a sobering look at the issues, better understand them, and learn how their voices can influence decisions.

**Here are some ways you can make a difference:**

- Send a thank you note to municipal influencers for their leadership with the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership. For email addresses, visit wvwa.org/cleanwater.
- Municipal environmental advisory councils have influence. Find out when and where your township’s EAC meets and get involved.
- Single home, residential properties are the biggest source of stormwater runoff. If you own a home, contact your township or local EAC about how to make it more “stream smart” and absorb rainwater. Private landowners living along the creek or any of its tributaries can have a great impact on the health of the creek, and can slow down and filter some of the stormwater making its way into the creek during storms. Actions like planting native trees and shrubs along the stream banks, installing a rain barrel or rain garden, or minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides before storm events can go a long way toward protecting the creek from pollutants, downstream flooding, and erosion. Visit wvwa.org/protectourcreek for more information.

**Photos by Charles Uniatowski**
SCH STUDENTS TAKE DEEP ANALYTICAL DIVE INTO THE WISSAHICKON

(Excerpted from a September 2018 SCH news article)

For the past 25 years, Springside Chestnut Hill (SCH) Academy students have been testing water samples, evaluating stream biodiversity, and analyzing the surrounding riparian zone along the Wissahickon Creek, which supplies drinking water to one-third of Philadelphians.

From their earliest days at SCH, students are taught to be thoughtful stewards of the Wissahickon Creek and surrounding woods. In the fall, science teacher and Department Chair Scott Stein, along with fellow science teachers, took the Grade 11 biology classes to the Wissahickon to survey macroinvertebrate species and conduct chemical testing of the water. The students also examined the stream habitat using the same EPA Stream Habitat assessment that stream survey groups use nationally. This assessment looks at factors such as the condition of the banks, fine particle sediment levels, and litter.

Luna Moskal ('20) said some of her major takeaways from the lab were how human activity can have such a large impact on rivers and streams, and how heavy rainstorms can then lead to changes in nitrate levels, which affect the oxygen in the water, and then affects the creatures in the water.

Stein and science teacher Lisa Queeno said the water quality of the creek has fluctuated over the years and can even change day-to-day. They found many pollution-tolerant species (leeches and snails) and only a handful of species that are sensitive to pollution, such as mayflies.

In the fall, students also looked at the turbidity (cloudiness) of the water and conducted pH, phosphate, dissolved oxygen, and nitrate testing. In addition, they tested for fecal coliform, which may come from animal waste or human waste emanating from wastewater treatment plants upstream. SCH’s science teachers noted that fecal coliforms are expected to be present, but in low levels; high levels mean that there may be pathogens in the water. (They advised students not to swim in the water or even enter knee-deep.)

Students also used the EPA’s Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool to analyze land use and population density in the Wissahickon Watershed. Using this software, students were able to plug in the school’s zip code and view sites around the Wissahickon that are water dischargers or handle hazardous waste, and sites that report to the EPA for toxic releases and air pollution. Areas with high population density are a sign of probable high stormwater runoff.

“It just shows that we need to do a better job as a community to help clean it,” Abbie Rorke (20) said. “As a school, we do try to limit all the runoff that goes to it, like [with] the rain gardens. However, just from around Chestnut Hill, and the school as well, there is runoff that will always get into it.”

The science teachers sent students on a scavenger hunt on campus to identify the many ways SCH reduces stormwater runoff through its rain gardens, the Stacy Levy downspout sculpture, permeable parking lots, underground stormwater dry wells, and rain barrels. The playing fields were also constructed with special water drainage and retention capabilities, so that stormwater can infiltrate and make its way into the groundwater below. (For more information see FOW Newsletter, Spring 2013, p. 6.) Stein said that the school has specific plans to reduce runoff from the future McCausland Lower School & Commons, situated at the edge of Wissahickon Valley Park and slated to open in fall 2019.

Students also analyzed water flow at their own homes and consulted with their parents on how to reduce runoff. The final piece of the analysis was a Wissahickon Creek Report Card written by each student, giving letter grades to individual factors tested and the creek’s overall health, and making a specific recommendation on how to improve any factor that earned a low grade.

Saying Thanks for Helping the Wissahickon

In September and October, FOW’s Executive Director Maura McCarthy recognized the upstream municipalities in the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership for their important work in helping to improve the Wissahickon Creek’s water quality.

Pictured at a Lansdale Borough Council meeting are (from left): Dan Shinskie, wastewater treatment plant Superintendent; Chris Kunkel, Lansdale’s Manager of Code Enforcement and Community Development; and McCarthy.

Photo by Dan Sokil, Digital First Media
CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE WISSAHICKON

The big story in the field this year is the increase in volume and frequency of rain events as a result of climate change. A report on climate change recently released by the United Nations revealed that even climate scientists are surprised by the rate and magnitude of climate change underway. Impacts are being felt around the globe, and Wissahickon Valley Park is no exception.

By mid-September, the park had already received the average annual rainfall (in Montgomery County, the closest gauge, totals were 49.1") with still a quarter of the year remaining. Storm-related impacts to the park are numerous and significant.

The Andorra Stormwater and Sediment Reduction Project has proven to be up to the task since its completion in June. But heavy rain canceled several volunteer workdays, delaying much of FOW’s scheduled fieldwork. Due to weather-related contractor delays, construction of the Forbidden Drive Trail and Streambank Stabilization project was rescheduled from fall 2018 to summer 2019.

Saturated soil on steep slopes is a recipe for slides and tree falls. Portions of Forbidden Drive and many segments of the upper trails have become increasingly eroded, causing gullies and washouts. Here are just some examples of the impact of such conditions in the Wissahickon:

- An onrush of stormwater flowing off Livezey Lane onto the Upper White Trailhead caused a mini landslide.
- Livezey Lane, like many of the park’s access roads, has degraded significantly this year.
- The gravel access road from Pachella Field washed away and ended up in a heap on Forbidden Drive. (See photo below.)
- The rock-armored outflow of the “frog pond” at Mt. Airy Avenue was washed out.
- As of mid-November, FOW’s volunteer Sawyers Crew has removed more than 120 fallen trees from the upper trails.
- Near Northwestern Avenue, wind shear from a summer microburst toppled many large trees, including the Pennsylvania State Champion 76-foot cucumber magnolia, which stood next to the Cedars House Café. (See photo above.)

In response to these challenges, FOW is increasing coordination and partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Philadelphia Water Department to improve response time and resiliency of park infrastructure. We’re focusing even more on prevention through a regimen of performing trail maintenance and clearing the Forbidden Drive drainage system. A critical component of our success is developing our corps of volunteer Crew Leaders. Park users can play a significant role in this essential work by reporting problems to FOW with a photo and Google map pin location, volunteering, and becoming a member of FOW.

Note: When choosing plants for your landscape, please think about our natural parklands and let your local nursery managers and landscape companies know that you want to beautify your property with native species. A great place to start learning more is Douglas W. Tallamy’s book Bringing Nature Home (2007).
The 2018 Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest was the most successful to date, with more than 110 photographers submitting 300+ photographs. Photos were taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon Trail, and on WVWA managed preserves. Friends of the Wissahickon presented the contest in partnership with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) and, for the first time, the Woodmere Art Museum.

To everyone who submitted photos, thank you for participating and supporting the Wissahickon Watershed. Special thanks to the judges: Brad Maule, Coeditor of Hidden City Philadelphia, creator of Philly Skyline, and FOW’s Instagram Editor; Jamie Stewart, a nature and wildlife photographer and WVWA event photographer; and Christina Warhola, Woodmere Art Museum’s Director of Communications.

A gallery opening celebrating the winners was held in November at the Morris Arboretum, where their photos were on display through the end of the year. Below are the winners by category.
**First Place Landscape**

Rachael Balascak, *Crossing the Wissahickon*
(Forbidden Drive footbridge by Lincoln Drive. There is nothing better than the changing of the leaves in the Wissahickon.)

**Best in Show**

Loren Berckey, *Finger Bridge*

**First Place Junior Submission**

Sarina Smith, *Froget by the Creek*
(Near the Orange Trail next to the Wissahickon Creek.)

**First Place People’s Choice**

Rachael Balascak, *Wissahickon Supergirl*
(Forbidden Drive at Cedars House Café. Audrey striding to the finish during a wonderful community event along the Wissahickon Creek.)
FOW board and staff celebrated the contributions of FOW volunteers on December 5 at Valley Green Inn. During the program, Volunteer Coordinator Shawn Green expressed gratitude for the Crew Leaders, Structures Crew, Sawyer Crew, Trail Ambassadors (TAs), Bluebird Box Monitors, and all the individual workday volunteers who he said are the heart and soul of Wissahickon Valley Park. He emphasized that it takes a community of stewards to protect this special place, and expressed how meaningful it was to know that everyone present was there because of their love and passion for it. Green also noted that FOW would not have been able to keep up with the many challenges that extreme weather and park use brought in 2018 without the support of volunteers. “Together we are strong and powerful,” he said.

FOW volunteers do it all, from building, painting, planting, and repairing, to performing first aid, rescuing ducks and snakes, and so much more to protect the park and keep it clean and beautiful for everyone.

Below are highlights of the broad range of impressive achievements that FOW volunteers accomplished in 2018 (figures reflect totals as of November 30):

- Completed nearly six miles of trail maintenance, helping to ensure that the trails in the Wissahickon are more resilient.
- Held more than 85 educational walks and lectures and shared FOW’s conservation mission with 721 park visitors.
- Celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Trail Ambassador program. These volunteer park docents have helped countless park visitors enjoy a safer, more enjoyable visit to the Wissahickon.
- Planted more than 450 native trees and shrubs through the Andorra Stormwater Management and Sedimentation Reduction Project around the Wissahickon Environmental Center and at the White Trail closure near Mt. Airy Avenue. An entire acre of invasive plants was removed in the Andorra Natural Area, near Monastery Stables, and at the Hermitage.
- Cleared 120 downed trees to keep the trails clear and safe for all visitors. Without the training, proficiency, and patience of the mighty Sawyers Crew, this dangerous, vital work would not happen.
- Removed more than 9,902 pounds of trash and 2,233 pounds of recycling (more than 6 tons of waste!) from the Wissahickon, along with our Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and Philadelphia Streets Department partners.

In addition to the many individuals who regularly volunteered on Thursdays and Saturdays—and worked on special work and clean-up days, more than 20 groups came out to public and corporate workdays to help trash, plant native shrubs, and restore and maintain trails.

*1,110 individual volunteers
*10,628 volunteer hours

*As of November 30, 2018
Structures Crew: John Dixon

Dixon, who has been volunteering only since 2017, put in more than 63 volunteer hours in 2018. He actively scouts out maintenance needs, proposes projects, and understands how work needs to be accomplished. He also helps with projects at the Wissahickon Environmental Center—the beautiful new fire pit is his handiwork.

Trail Ambassador: Bruce Wagner

Contributing nearly 300 hours in 2018, Wagner topped the volunteer charts. He has been an FOW volunteer for nearly a decade and continues to propose ways to improve the TA program. The TAs can thank Wagner, an extraordinary nature photographer, for their attractive new shirts, which will make their debut later in 2019.

Crew Leader: Lisa Stout

Stout is entering her seventh year as an FOW volunteer. She co-led numerous workdays, plans projects, and has taken an active interest in habitat restoration. Stout recently offered to be secretary for the Crew Leaders Advisory Committee.

Sawyer Crew: Kenn Rymdeko

An FOW volunteer since 2009, Rymdeko was a Crew Leader before joining the Sawyer Crew and has been instrumental in its growth. Sawyer Crew leader Chuck Kirkland refers to Rymdeko as his “right-hand man.”

Bluebird Box Monitor: Jenny Prince

Prince, a TA since 2016, came to FOW through the PA Master Naturalist program. Monitoring both Andorra and Houston Meadows, she is known for submitting fantastic data and photos. She led her first two TA guided hikes this past year.

Volunteer of the Year: Gerry Schweiger

You can’t drive through Mt. Airy or hike in the park without running into Schweiger. A TA since 2011, he led 14 hikes (the popular “Trails Less Travelled” series) and volunteered for 18 trail shifts, completing a total of 118 hours in 2018. Schweiger loves contributing and often provides feedback on the TA program and trail signage. Always willing to organize groups, he enjoys familiarizing visitors with the park in which he spends so much time, as well as connecting them to nature. FOW presented Schweiger with an historic print of the Wissahickon’s initial park boundaries. “It’s an amazing example of the forethought shown by our city planners at the time, and a tribute to the forethought that Gerry puts into every walk and talk he does,” said FOW Executive Director Maura McCarthy.

Enjoying the celebration are (from right) public workday volunteer Eddie Romito; TAs Lisa Myers and Jackie Kent; guest Isla Kent (Kent’s daughter); and TAs Jenny Prince and Janet Wasser. Prince was honored for also being a Bird Box Monitor.

Top volunteers for 2018 are (from left) Kenn Rymdeko, John Dixon, Bruce Wagner, Gerry Schweiger, Lisa Stout, and Jenny Prince.

Photos by Charles Uniatowski
Celebrating 10 years of the Trail Ambassador Program are some of its original members (from left): Patty McMenamin, Merritt Rhoad, and Sarah West.

Both of these important volunteer groups share a love of working outdoors, learning new skills, and meeting with people who share their interests, but perhaps most important, they love the Wissahickon and want to be part of FOW’s conservation mission.

**Deadline for applications is January 18.**

**Training runs from February to April 2019.**

Visit fow.org to complete the volunteer application. For more information about volunteer programs, contact Volunteer Coordinator Shawn Green at green@fow.org.

### CREW LEADERS

The Crew Leaders are a special corps of stewards who play an integral role in tackling the constant human and natural stressors on Wissahickon Valley Park. Working directly with FOW staff Volunteer and Field Coordinators, they become skilled in planning and leading volunteers on workdays, and sharing their knowledge and expertise with others. After intensive training, Crew Leaders can choose to focus on removing trash and graffiti, building and maintaining trails, removing invasive plants and planting native species, or repairing structures. Then they have an opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise with others.

Crew Leaders selected to join the team will be trained in the following areas:

- FOW mission and the Sustainable Trails Initiative
- Human and natural history of the Wissahickon valley
- Ecology of the Wissahickon
- CPR and first aid
- Volunteer leadership
- Trail maintenance and tool safety
- Habitat stewardship and plant identification

At the end of training, Crew Leaders are prepared to lead small groups on maintenance projects throughout the park. Along with learning new skills and making great new friends, one of the best parts of being a Crew Leader is completing a task—whether it’s building a new trail, removing invasives and planting natives, or improving existing trails—and being able to look back at the positive impact you’ve had on the park.

### TRAIL AMBASSADORS

Trail Ambassadors (TAs) are the docents of the Wissahickon. They assist park visitors with anything from directions and first aid to teaching them about the park’s history, flora, fauna, and geology. With only a few park rangers on duty in the park, TAs serve a much-needed role in the park: as FOW’s eyes and ears on the ground, they help us better serve the public and protect the park. TAs patrol the trails, lead hikes, and staff information tables in the Wissahickon and the surrounding community.

For those who have experience with and love the outdoors, being a TA provides wonderful opportunities to delve deeper into personal nature-related passions to share with others through guided hikes and outreach events.

TAs selected to join the team participate in a thorough training session that covers the following areas:

- FOW Mission and our Sustainable Trails Initiative
- Human and natural history of the Wissahickon Valley
- Ecology of the Wissahickon
- CPR and first aid
- Trail shifts, interacting with the public, and how to identify maintenance needs
- Leading guided hikes and staffing outreach tables

At the end of training, TAs will be prepared to get on the trail and share their knowledge and love of the Wissahickon with the community.
**A Poem about Trees and Self**

When you go out into the woods, and you look at trees, you see all these different trees. And some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreens, and some of them are whatever. And you look at the tree and you allow it. You see why it is the way it is. You sort of understand that it didn’t get enough light, and so it turned that way. And you don’t get all emotional about it. You just allow it. You appreciate the tree. The minute you get near humans, you lose all that. And you are constantly saying “You are too this, or I’m too this.” That judgment mind comes in. And so I practice turning people into trees. Which means appreciating them just the way they are.

—Ram Dass

**RAMBLE ON**

**A History of Hiking**

How did hiking evolve from the upper-class European sport of alpinism and a form of travel, into a recreational activity with millions of participants all over the world?

The answer is in hiking expert Jeffrey Doran’s new book *Ramble On: A History of Hiking*, which chronicles the societal trends that fostered the growth of hiking, the development of the first trails built specifically for recreational hiking, the formation of the first hiking clubs and their quirky traditions, and more.

The book also discusses the history and evolution of hiking gear and apparel, including the mores of the Victorian Era, which dictated strict fashion standards for women “who dared to venture into the mountains.” Doran explores the current and future impacts of overcrowding and social media on hikers, and some of the solutions that public land managers are currently considering, while offering a few of suggestions of his own.

Doran, who lives in Louisville, Kentucky, worked in marketing for several Fortune 500 companies before starting his own online hiking trail guide business. He is the founder of HikingintheSmokys.com, RockyMountainHikingTrails.com, HikinginGlacier.com and TetonHikingTrails.com, which provide detailed trail information, as well as historical anecdotes from Doran’s years of hiking in some of America’s most beautiful national parks.

*Ramble On* is available on Amazon.

**MAPLE SUGAR DAY**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2019 • 11AM – 3PM**

**FORBIDDEN DRIVE, ACROSS FROM THE CEDARS HOUSE CAFÉ**

**GIVING**

If you’re not an FOW member, please consider becoming one by completing the membership form at the end of this newsletter or online at fow.org. There are several ways to make meaningful gifts to advance FOW’s mission. Thank you!

**UNITED WAY DONATIONS**

Friends of the Wissahickon can receive donations through the United Way. If your employer offers United Way giving and you would like to designate Friends of the Wissahickon as your beneficiary, please use our option code #9882.

**AMAZON SMILE**

If you shop on Amazon.com, use AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) and select Friends of the Wissahickon as the nonprofit organization you would like to support. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to FOW.

**STOCK**

Consider giving a gift of stock. Our DTC # is 0062 and our Vanguard Brokerage Acct # is 23501307.
Friends of the Wissahickon hosted the popular fall celebration Whispers Along the Wissahickon on October 12. Held at the Wissahickon Environmental Center (WEC) in the Andorra Natural Area, Whispers featured hayrides, face painting, circus performers, and fireside bluegrass music.

Whispers Along the Wissahickon was presented by

FOW is also grateful for the additional support from Love City Brewing, Chestnut Hill Hospital, Univest, and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, as well as the WEC staff and our many enthusiastic volunteers.

More information at fow.org

Member tickets:  $45/adult | $20/child | $100/family (2 adults & 2 children)

Non-member tickets:  $90/adult | $175/family (2 adults & 2 children)

(Prices include a one-year membership.)

Tickets will be sold on a first come, first serve basis to FOW members and include food, beverages, beer, and wine. Buy your tickets early! Tickets are limited and will sell out.

No tickets will be sold on site. This is a rain-or-shine event.

Presented by

A whole new way of looking at change

www.bestnesthome.com
Sioux Baldwin, the first teacher-naturalist and founder of programming at the Tree House, passed away last year from leukemia, but her legacy lives on in the impact she had on Wissahickon Valley Park and on the people who remember her frequently and fondly.

Her career at the Tree House spanned 20 years, beginning in 1980 when it first opened as a visitor center. Sioux was asked by Dick James, then executive director of the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center, and Eleanor Houston Smith, who sold the former Andorra Nurseries property to Fairmount Park, to start a nature center on the new grounds known as the Andorra Natural Area.

“The concept was to hold free programs for people of all ages. She eagerly took on the job and was soon leading daytime and nighttime walks on the trails near the Tree House, using her prodigious knowledge to educate the public about nature,” said Judith Gratz, Sioux’s longtime friend.

“Sioux was an outdoorswoman of the first order. She knew all the area’s mammals, the flowering and nonflowering plants, the trees, the fungi, the birds, the reptiles, the amphibians. She was thorough in her knowledge, even being able to show people where these could be found. She would teach about the special niche that flora and fauna held in the natural world, and why that is important to us.”

In 1980, when Philadelphia was about to drop its purchasing option on 22 acres of Andorra Meadows, Sioux was instrumental in rescuing this parcel of old farmland from development. She also persuaded the city to purchase additional land extending to Bell’s Mill Road, increasing the Andorra Natural Area from 100 acres to the current 210 acres.

Sioux founded one of our most popular events, Maple Sugar Day. This was probably the first one to be held at a nature center in this region, and it continues to this day. Thousands of children and adults have learned that real maple syrup is made from the sap of the maple tree. The many old tapholes in the trees we tap each year tell a tale of 35+ years of tapping.

She held “unspooky” Halloween walks in the woods, gave talks at libraries, historical societies, conferences, other nature centers, and much more. She led the trolley tours along Forbidden Drive that ran for many years, during which she taught the history of the valley through her skilled use of storytelling. All this and she sang with the Philadelphia Singers as well!

When her husband’s post-polio syndrome advanced, Sioux decided to retire. According to Judith, they moved away to the Endless Mountains for a simpler life. She became active in that community, volunteering at local nature centers and continuing to sing with various groups: an opera company, a Russian chorus, and a madrigal group.

In 2017, Sioux passed away from leukemia. She is sorely missed by her many friends who know they will never again go hiking, birding, paddling, exploring, or just sitting and reading with this remarkable woman.

Everyone seems to have stories about Sioux. Even today, 18 years after her retirement from Fairmount Park, visitors to the Tree House relay their memories of her. When I started working here, I was asked, “Are you the new Sioux?” A woman larger than life. No, I cannot be compared to Sioux.

“Many children who are now adults were positively influenced by Sioux’s knowledge and programs and all that she shared through the years,” Judith said.

And for the children and visitors that still find the Tree House a special place to this day, I say thank you to Sioux for starting it all 38 years ago.

Tries Fries is an Environmental Education Program Specialist at the Wissahickon Environmental Center. Judith Gratz has been an environmental educator for many years and was a longtime friend of Sioux Baldwin.
Chestnuts were roasting on an open fire outside the always picturesque Valley Green Inn, but inside, families and friends adorned wreaths with decorations from the woods at the annual Winter in the Wissahickon event on December 1. Children also made natural treats for wintering birds.

Photos by Brother IB Photography
Trail Ambassador
WALKS & TALKS
Registration is recommended for all hikes (required if indicated) so that participants can be informed of weather or other emergency cancellations. Unless otherwise specified, walks may be on rocky, rugged trails that may be wet and slippery. Wear sturdy shoes or boots with socks. Long pants are recommended for protection against occasional poison ivy and possible ticks. Bring water and a snack if desired. Unless otherwise noted, children over six are welcome if accompanied by a responsible adult. Walks are cancelled in heavy rain or icy conditions. Visit fow.org to register and for updates.

Kid-Friendly Hikes with Marv Schwartz
Saturdays, January 19, March 23
12–2 pm
Meet at Valley Green Inn.
Participants hike along Forbidden Drive and on wooded trails with interesting geologic formations. Visit the Livezey Dam, Gorgas Creek Cave, and Fingerspan Bridge. Level: easy to moderate. 2.2 miles.

Apocalyptic Wanderings with Tom Rickards
Saturday, January 5 • 12–2 pm
Meet at Historic Rittenhouse Town.
On this hike to Hermit’s Cave, explore the history of the apocalyptic group led by Johannes Kelpius, the Women of the Wilderness, nations of religious toleration, and the mystique of early Philadelphia. Children 12+ with adult welcome. Level: moderate. 2.5 miles.

Frosty Fungus with Faith Watson
Sundays, January 6, February 3, March 3
10 am–12 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café (Note: GPS does not work for this location).
Explore the hills near Andorra Meadow and learn about the role underground fungi play in helping trees grow and communicate. Wear sturdy boots. No dogs. Children 12+ with adult welcome. Level: moderate.

Wissahickon Winter Mindfulness Walk with Irene Lotka
Wednesday, January 23 • 11 am–1 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café (Note: GPS does not work for this location).
Experience the seasonal transformation of the landscape and its beauty. This hike goes up to the Andorra Natural Area, loops around the meadow, and back. Children 12+ with adult welcome. Level: moderate.

Fitness Hikes with Debbie Hoellein
Mondays, January 28, February 25 • 10 am–1 pm
Meet at Forbidden Drive and Northwestern Avenue.
The trails in the northern part of the park are beautiful in the winter when the trees are bare and you can see clear across the creek. This hike offers a steady pace, some hills to stay warm, and a little history of the park. Hiking shoes or boots are recommended. Depending upon conditions, consider bringing ice grippers. Children 12+ with adult welcome. Level: moderate to strenuous. 5 miles.

Trees in Winter with Jenny Prince
Saturday, February 9 • 10 am–12 pm
Meet at McCallum Street Bridge Trailhead.
Explore the trees of the Wissahickon in winter and learn how to identify different tree species when their leaves are gone by observing their branch and bark characteristics. Level: easy.

Meanderings in the Wissahickon with Shelly Brick
Friday, March 29 • 1–3 pm
Meet at Kitchen’s Lane parking area.
Join Trail Ambassador Shelly Brick for a hike through our beautiful park. We will explore a variety of locations and “talk story,” a Hawaiian tradition. All ages are welcome, and the pace will be set by the group. Distance and difficulty to be determined by the group.

Winter Wonderland
Wednesday, January 30 • 10 am–12 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café (Note: GPS does not work for this location).
On this hike to the Covered Bridge and back, learn fun facts about what’s happening in the winter woods. Dress in layers for cold weather hiking; fitness or ski poles and nonslip footwear recommended. Level: moderate. 2.5 miles.

Valentine’s Day Sweetheart of a Hike
Thursday, February 14 • 10 am–12 pm
Meet at the FOW Kiosk at 4900 Ridge Avenue (across from the Parks & Recreation parking lot).
The Wissahickon is for lovers. Grab your sweetheart and join this heart-healthy hike. Learn fun facts about the romantic lower Wissahickon Valley. Dress in layers for cold weather hiking; fitness or ski poles and nonslip footwear recommended. Level: moderate. 3.5 miles.

Spring Equinox Walk
Wednesday, March 20 • 10 am–12 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café (Note: GPS does not work for this location).
Welcome spring with a walk along the Wissahickon Creek and discover the signs of new growth and the echo of birdsong in the woods. Dress in layers and wear sturdy boots for this energizing walk. Level: moderate. 2.5 miles.

Historic Structures of the Wissahickon with Sarah West
Sunday, March 10 • 2-3:30 pm
Cathedral Village, Classroom 2 (600 E Cathedral Rd, Philadelphia, PA 19128)
A veteran teacher. West shares her knowledge of the historic roads, bridges, and structures of the Wissahickon’s past.
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
VISIT FOW.ORG/EVENTS FOR UPCOMING VOLUNTEER TRAINING SESSIONS • DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR CREW LEADER OR TRAIL AMBASSADOR POSITIONS: JANUARY 10, 2019.
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OF SERVICE • JANUARY 21
TUESDAYS
Join us for structure repair and construction from 9 am to 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Field Operations Manager Ioan Tran at tran@fow.org or 215-351-2947.
THURSDAYS
Join FOW on Thursdays for a morning of trail maintenance in the park! Work will consist of regular trail maintenance projects, including repairing drains and grade reversals, repairing stone work, removing fallen trees, and emergency trail repairs. Meet at Pachella Field (6751 Henry Ave.) at 9:30 am and plan on being on the trails starting at 9:45 and back at Pachella by 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Volunteer Coordinator Shawn Green at green@fow.org.
SATURDAYS
There’s no better way to be friends than to help us in the park with trail maintenance, invasive weed removal, planting, and general cleanups from 9 am to 1 pm. No experience needed, just show up and be ready to share your park experiences, as well as point out any recent improvements by FOW. Wear your hiking shoes and be ready to share your memories of winter birds, while all other adults hike through the woods to the meadows. Both groups will discover the tree silhouettes against the light of the full-moonlight sky, maybe hear the hoot of an owl, and warm up around a campfire.

WISSAHICKON ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
Programs are FREE and begin at the Tree House (300 W. Northwestern Ave., Philadelphia), unless otherwise noted. Registration required for most programs; registering early is recommended at treehousewcevents.fow.org. An * indicates a program at which children are welcome, but the content is not tailored to them.

WINTER BIRDS WITH MARTIN SELZER
Saturday, January 26 8:30 AM
Observe wintering birds with local birder Martin Selzer on this two-hour walk along Forbidden Drive and in Andorra and Harpers Meadows. All ages.

ZEN BIRDS WITH KIM SOLES
Sunday, January 13 1 PM
“Zen Birds,” a lovely poetic illustrated book by Vanessa Sorensen, will be the inspiration for a winter workshop with Kim Soles. After a silent hike to catch sight of winter birds, participants will return to the Tree House to capture the images on paper using Sorensen’s simplistic watercolor style, and perhaps craft a short poem or words to describe their own “Zen birds.” $16 per person (includes refreshments & materials). Adults only. Space is limited.

KIDS EXPLORER: WINTER WONDERLAND
Friday, January 18 10:30 AM–11:30 AM
Join us for a morning of winter fun! Activities will include making craft projects using winter imagery, exploring the wonders of the tree through games and activities, and making and taking home a new winter-themed craft.

FAMILY & ADULT FULL MOON HIKES
Tuesday, February 19 6:30 PM–9:30 PM
Full Moon Hike: This hike will begin near the Tree House and explore the trail system surrounding the park. Meet at the Tree House before starting your hike. The hike will last approximately 90 minutes and return to the Tree House.

THURSDAY TOTS
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at Houston Playground (900 Grakyn Lane) to listen for woodcocks, (affectionately called woodbirds). All ages. NO pre-registration necessary.

WINTER BIRDS • JANUARY 24
Maple Trees & Treats • February 21
Search for the special sugar maple tree and taste its fresh sap, watch how the sap turns into maple syrup and taste your handmade syrup on pancakes. Tots will explore the lines of birds in the winter and make a mini-snowflake!

FOR A LISTING OF MORE EVENTS, VISIT FOW.ORG/EVENTS.

WISSAHICKON VALLEY WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
WVWA offers many public programs as part of its mission to protect the quality and beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the Wissahickon Watershed. Located at 12 Morris Road in Ambler. More info. at wvwa.org.

RUNNING CLUBS
EVERY THURSDAY
Wissahickon Wanderers Trail Run. 4-5 miles. Starts 6:30 pm sharp at Valley Green Inn. No Fees. All runners, speeds, skill levels welcome! Fun food and cash bar afterwards courtesy of the Valley Green Inn. For updates and more info visit wissahickonrunclub.org.

EVERY SATURDAY
Shawmont Running Club. Starts at Northwestern Ave. & Andorra Rd. north end of Forbidden Drive. On the 2nd Saturday in May through the 2nd Saturday in October, start at 7:30 am. From 3rd Saturday in October through 1st Saturday in May, start at 8 am. Distances are at the discretion of runners. All levels welcome. Emphasize is on fun! More info: visit shawmontrunningclub.org.

WISCONSIN VALLEY EQUINE NETWORK
WVIN is a nonprofit organization spearheading the effort to protect and restore the Wissahickon Valley Park. For updates and more info visit wvin.org.

HISTORIC RITTENHOUSE TOWN
Historic Rittenhouse Town offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other arts of Colonial life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead. Located on Lincoln Drive at Rittenhouse Street. Info. at 215-438-5711, programs@rittenhousetown.org, or rittenhousetown.org.

- Friends of the Wissahickon Membership Form –

YES, I/We want to help conserve and protect the Wissahickon.

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

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*Choice of:

- Hat
- Good Night Wissahickon Valley Park
- Please keep the premium and use the entire membership fee for the Park.

T -Shirt (circle size)

- Children: S M L
- Map (black): S M L XL
- Covered Bridge (red): S M L XL XXL
- Adult Frog (white): S M L XL XXL

- Trial Repair
- Community Outreach
- Fundraising
- Education
- Wildlife
- Freemont
- Vines Removal

Method of Payment

- Check Enclosed (payable to Friends of the Wissahickon)
- Charge my
- VISA • Mastercard • AmX • Discover
- Auto-renew my membership annually (credit card info required)

Card Number____________________________
Expiration Date_________________________
Signature________________________________

Please return to: 40 W. Evergreen Ave., Suite 108, Philadelphia, PA 19118-3324 • tel 215-247-0417 • office@fow.org • fow.org

Contributions to Friends are tax deductible as permitted by current laws.

The official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll free, within Pennsylvania (800) 732-0999.

Future calendar listings for the newsletter may be placed by contacting Friends of the Wissahickon at 215-247-0417 or office@fow.org. The Calendar of Events in the Wissahickon may also be viewed at fow.org/events, which contains updates on our events, including cancellations.