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Conserving the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley for 95 years

Photo by Charles Uniatowski
After 14 years as Friends of the Wissahickon’s Executive Director, I will assume the same position at the Fairmount Park Conservancy on January 1. Saying goodbye is never easy, but, thankfully, my difficult decision to step down was made that much easier for a number of reasons. For one thing, the Conservancy’s work strongly overlaps with the mission and values of this community that I so respect and admire. And my new role will enable me to continue working with FOW, while allowing me to expand the work I’ve been doing for a decade but on a citywide scale.

Fulfilling an era of true partnership with the City of Philadelphia, having a signage system installed in the Wissahickon, and embedding the values of watershed stewardship in the community at large are all projects I had only hoped to accomplish, but the strong association with our many friends, community, and civic partners helped make them a reality. I am confident that I’m leaving FOW well-positioned to continue carrying out its mission in the hands of an outstanding leader and strategic visionary – my friend and colleague Ruffian Tittmann.

Ruffian, who joined FOW in 2006, just a year after me, and has served as deputy director since 2017, is the natural choice to guide its future. We have worked hand in glove on all of FOW’s major Wissahickon Valley Park improvement projects, so we won’t miss a beat in the transition of leadership and continuation of FOW’s work, especially important as we head toward our centennial in 2024. Ruffian shares my love for our urban wilderness and watershed, and is more than ready to continue engaging the community in FOW’s stewardship. I cannot think of anyone better suited for and qualified to assume this role. Read more about her on p. 3.

We closed out the year and the end of my tenure on an especially high note, with our 95th Anniversary Celebration – the most successful anniversary celebration ever (p. 4), the completion of the Forbidden Driven Streambank Stabilization Project (p. 7), and the 12th annual recognition for our stupendous volunteers (p. 8), who this year achieved the highest ever volunteer hours, guided walks and talks, and number of trails improved in one year.

It’s been a joy and honor to be part of such a wonderful organization, and I know our paths will cross again as we continue to steward our woods and waterways. Wishing you all the best in the new decade.

Maura McCarthy, Executive Director

I am confident that I’m leaving FOW well-positioned to continue carrying out its mission in the hands of an outstanding leader and strategic visionary – my friend and colleague Ruffian Tittmann.

2020 PUBLIC MEETING

Friends of the Wissahickon will host its annual Public Projects Meeting on January 29, 2020, to share progress on its major projects over the past year and discuss upcoming projects for 2020. Visit fow.org/events for more details.
**MEET FOW’S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

On January 1, Ruffian Tittmann becomes FOW’s new Executive Director, ready to lead the organization into its next stage of growth. She summed up her goals for FOW in three words: momentum, intention, and impact.

In Tittmann’s early days of leadership, FOW will embark on several capital projects. The one with the highest profile will be the restoration of the Lower Valley Green Run and a pedestrian bridge that will be an architectural feature and cornerstone of a future fundraising initiative as FOW looks toward its 100th year. Extended priorities include operationalizing diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization, and providing innovative long-term strategies for managing the Wissahickon’s habitat and infrastructure, all with the goal of ensuring a welcoming and ecologically healthy park for everyone. With Maura McCarthy’s new role at the Fairmount Park Conservancy, Tittmann also plans to augment the existing relationship between the two organizations.

Having been closely involved with the planning and execution of FOW’s major land management and engagement projects, such as the three-year Strategic Blueprint and the Ecological Land Management Plan (ELM), Tittmann looks forward to leading them to their finish and taking advantage of the rich engagement opportunities they present.

“Our urban wilderness and watershed is extraordinary, and FOW’s work to conserve these woods and engage the community in our stewardship is more important than ever,” said Tittmann. She acknowledges that there are challenges ahead, but emphasizes that opportunities for impact are also greater, with more people truly understanding and appreciating what FOW does, and she wants to strengthen that connection.

“We want to build on Maura’s deep legacy of commitment to service and take it to a new level of stewardship that’s a reflection of who we are serving and why,” Ruffian explained.

Prior to FOW, Tittmann was Director of membership and annual giving at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. A member of the American Association of Fundraising Professionals, Tittmann has been a three-time volunteer reviewer for the J.M.K. Innovation Prize awarded by the JM Kaplan Fund for early-stage projects in the fields of the environment, heritage conservation, and social justice. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Drew University and lives in Fort Washington with her husband and son.

We want to build on Maura’s deep legacy of commitment to service and take it to a new level of stewardship that’s a reflection of who we are serving and why.

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**FOW’S NEW SUSTAINER MEMBERSHIP HELPS SUSTAIN THE PARK**

On this year’s Giving Tuesday (December 3), FOW launched its new Sustainer Program, a monthly donation program that allows you to continuously help FOW steward the Wissahickon. Members are our most reliable source of support. Your monthly donations enable us to keep the park clean, keep the trails clear, and provide free events, including Trail Ambassador hikes. Whether you give $5 or $100 a month, every donation makes the work we do possible. As a thank-you FOW is offering special Sustainer gift items, including a hat, travel mug, the third edition of our popular “schist shirt,” and a tote (to carry all your new Sustainer swag), in addition to our regular membership perks. Sign up for the Sustainer Program at fow.org/sustainerprogram and select your free gift today!

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**GIVING**

There are several ways to make meaningful gifts to advance FOW’s mission.

**STOCK**

Consider giving a gift of stock. Our DTC # is 0062 and our Vanguard Brokerage Acct # is 23501307.

**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.
For one night, and one night only, Erdenheim Farm’s magnificent equestrian facility was transformed into the farm-chic site of Friends of the Wissahickon’s 95th Anniversary Celebration Party.

It was a night to remember for so many reasons. More than 350 guests joined us for picture-perfect fall weather, twinkling white lights everywhere, the view of grazing horses in the setting sun, delicious food, a rousing live auction, dancing, and more, all of which would not have been possible without the generosity and support of the McCausland family. The event was a smashing success, far exceeding our expectations and any previous anniversary party in FOW’s history.

Erdenheim Farm was a particularly special venue because it speaks to FOW’s mission and vision in a unique way. Guests learned they were seated in the heart of the Wissahickon Watershed on a piece of property that was saved and preserved by a nexus of municipal cooperation, innovative nonprofit leadership, and bold individual philanthropy. “All three of these elements were needed to enact preservation of this farm. Without any one of them, the park you recreate in every day would be environmentally compromised, and the character of our community would be seriously, irrevocably damaged,” explained Executive Director Maura McCarthy.

She noted that FOW continues to be inspired by the work that was done to preserve Erdenheim Farm, and that it recognizes and celebrates those qualities within the FOW community, and especially through the achievements of two special honorees.
**WISSAHICKON AWARD: Cindy Affleck**

The long-standing Wissahickon Award is described in the FOW archives as an occasional award presented for extraordinary service to the Wissahickon. Cindy Affleck is only the fifth recipient of this award in FOW’s 95-year history.

A transformational force within FOW, she built and grew its first major donor program, revolutionized the organization’s understanding of partnerships, and broadened the vision of FOW’s work to include bigger issues such as fracking, climate change, and equity of access. In addition to serving as both board and development chairs, Affleck was a member of pretty much every committee at FOW before assuming her most recent role of Trail Ambassador. In presenting this award to Affleck, Maura McCarthy described her as visionary, kind, energetic, as well as a mentor who knows the value of investing in people.

**FOUNDERS AWARD: David Haas**

In his chairmanship role at the William Penn Foundation, David Haas has fostered the growth of hundreds, if not thousands, of nonprofits in this region, including FOW. To ensure the ongoing success of FOW’s mission, he made his extraordinary philanthropic gift to FOW in 2015 with the proviso that the organization grow its mandate and engage more of the community as financial supporters. Haas’s leadership and guidance, which inspired such growth, also inspired FOW to create its Founders Award. In introducing Haas as the award’s inaugural recipient, McCarthy said, “David’s firsthand knowledge of the great passion for the Wissahickon that lives in this community encouraged us to tap into that passion and raise those resources we desperately need to survive and thrive in the Wissahickon Valley.”

McCarthy added that the FOW founders would have been astonished by the scope of work that’s now before us, but also would have been comforted by the presence of what she called catalytic philanthropists like Haas and the dozens of other people he inspired to answer the call of the growing needs of the Wissahickon Valley.

Speaking on behalf of event sponsor James Corner Field Operations, James Corner urged everyone to think about the Wissahickon of the future and what it will take to keep it wild and robust. “We all need to continue to love the park and think about how we can do better in terms of financing and helping the park function at an international scale of excellence,” he said. “Most other cities would kill to have a chunk of nature like the Wissahickon in the middle of their city.”

In thanking the joyous crowd, co-chair Will Whetzel said, “We couldn’t be here without all of you, especially those who went deep into their pockets and made this event more meaningful to us than just a celebration.”
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FORBIDDEN DRIVE STREAMBANK STABILIZATION PROJECT COMPLETED

Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) is excited to announce the completion of its extraordinary Forbidden Drive Streambank Stabilization Project in October.

The RiverLogic Solutions and Applied Ecological Services (AES) crews have hauled their equipment off-site, removed all barriers, replaced all split rail fencing, and planted each location, leaving the three collapse site locations stable and ready to face the future.

Each of the once-eroded streambank sites—approximately 1,000 feet downstream from Valley Green Inn, up- and downstream from the Mt. Airy Avenue pedestrian bridge, and immediately downstream from the Kitchen’s Lane Bridge—is a great example of FOW’s conservation-driven construction practices. They were all stabilized using soil lifts (similar to terraces) and materials that will integrate into the natural view scape. The AES crew populated the completed soil lifts with native seeds, small young trees, and shrubs. Over time, these plantings will become established growth, support the engineering techniques, and naturalize the streambank.

Although all three locations have much in common, the Kitchen’s Lane project site has two distinct features to ensure that future erosion is limited. The first one, known as rock armoring, connects to the second feature, a stormwater drainage channel leading to the creek. A dip in the trail was dug out and large stones were laid flat to create the first feature. Rock armoring allows water to quickly be moved from the trail while trapping sediment between the stones and keeping it from entering waterways. It also inhibits gullies from forming and gouging the trail as water flows downhill to the creek. With this improvement, the water is directed across Forbidden Drive, over the rock armor dip, to a stormwater management drainage channel made of cascading stone to the Wissahickon Creek, which allows for optimum water quality and overall creek health by removing sediment.

FOW would like to thank RiverLogic Solutions and AES for their expertise, hard work, and dedication to this project, and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Philadelphia Water Department for their support and guidance. We also appreciate our park users’ patience during the construction process. Finally, we are indebted to the private donors and funders whose generous support made this important work possible, including the Community Conservation Partnership Program, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and Pennsylvania Commonwealth Financing Authority.

Rock armoring on Kitchen’s Lane restricts future erosion.
FOW board and staff celebrated the tremendous contributions of FOW volunteers on November 21 at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

Kicking off the evening, Volunteer Manager Shawn Green expressed overall gratitude for the corps of Crew Leaders, Structures Crew, Sawyer Crew, Trail Ambassadors (TAs), and Bluebird Box Monitors, as well as the individual and group service day volunteers, and the many community and city partners that support all their efforts. “I often tell people I have the best job at FOW because I get to work with selfless, giving, beautiful people who regularly come together to make our corner of the world better. We may be lucky to have the Wissahickon, but the Wissahickon is lucky to have you.”

FOW volunteers do it all for the park and its 1 million+ users. From planting, building, painting, and clearing, to education, first aid, and so much more. Besides the many individuals who regularly volunteered on Thursdays and Saturdays over the year - and worked on special service days - more than 30 corporate and school groups came out to help clear out trash, put in plants, and restore and improve trails.

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A SAMPLING OF GOOD DEEDS DONE
• Almost all 50+ miles of trails improved
• More than one acre of invasive plants removed
• Over 250 native trees and shrubs planted
• Quarry Loop Trail built
• 81 down trees removed
• 10.8 tons of trash removed (compared to six tons in 2018, reflecting more removal efforts)
• 152+ fence rails installed
• 115 public guided walks and talks
• Supermega Volunteer Service Day – 10 locations, 300+ volunteers

We may be lucky to have the Wissahickon, but the Wissahickon is lucky to have you.

It’s been a big year for FOW volunteers in the Wissahickon:
• Largest classes of TAs and Crew Leaders
• Largest volunteer numbers
• Most guided walks and talks
• Highest number of trails improved in one year

Over 16,333 total volunteer hours (a nearly 33 percent increase from 2018!)

More than 1,060 individual volunteers
(As of November 30, 2019)
SPECIAL AWARD: Ed Stainton Award for Exceptional Volunteer Service

This new award is named in memory of former FOW Board President Ed Stainton, who passed away last year. Ed was an integral part of the Wissahickon and FOW. Even after leaving the board, he continued working with volunteers. He is often referred to as the first face of FOW for engaging the community and laying the foundation for our volunteer programs. Ed started the Structures Crew, which he ran out of his garage for many years, working to restore the old WPA (Works Progress Administration) structures in the park.

Recipient: Richard Berman

- Member of FOW’s Board of Directors from 2003 to 2013, serving as Secretary for nine years and on various committees, including Conservation, Wildlife, and Outreach.
- Co-developed FOW’s Map of the Wissahickon.
- A long-standing member of the Structures Crew, he continues to work on restoring many of the WPA guardhouses and other park structures.

Volunteer of the Year: David Bower

A true mentor, Bower sets a standard for project organization, timeline, and volunteer outreach. An all-around nice guy, he is adored by everyone. “It makes me feel better just knowing that the Wissahickon has a champion like him. David is a superhero,” said Green, who made Bower a superhero cape to go with his award.

- Has been volunteering and working in the Wissahickon for several decades.
- Extremely active across the board:
  - As a Crew Leader, he leads a variety of different service day groups (kids, corporate, Thursdays, Saturdays), often proposing and coordinating projects.
  - A wealth of information, he often leads hikes as an honorary TA.
  - Leads History of the Wissahickon presentation at volunteer training.
  - Independently cleans trash.
  - Even helps with mailings in the FOW office.

CALLING ALL STEWARDS!

FOW is Recruiting for its 2020 Class of Volunteer Trail Ambassadors, Crew Leaders, & Sawyer Crew

Applications Due January 3, 2020

For more information, email Volunteer Manager Shawn Green at green@fow.org.

2019 HONOREES

(Pictured left to right)

DAVID STEHMAN
- Potentially the most active volunteer we have – he attends every Thursday and Saturday service days.
- He’s a machine, who doesn’t shy from exhausting tasks.
- When he’s not volunteering, he’s hiking and reporting down trees and other park damage.

TRISCH BETCHE
- Became a Crew Leader this year and is already an integral part of the crew.
- Eagerly jumps into projects all while balancing a busy work schedule.
- Volunteers at many Thursday and Saturday service days, as well as with corporate groups.
- Coordinated weekly hikes for the Crew Leaders.

DEBBIE HOELLEIN
- Trail Ambassador since 2018.
- Co-leads popular fitness hikes with fellow TA Andi Wingert.
- Enthusiastically volunteers for everything: service days, leading hikes (especially with groups of kids), FOW’s Engagement Committee, outreach tables, and trail shifts.
- Recently trained to be a Master Naturalist to enhance her TA role.

JIM CHARNOCK
- Volunteer since 2013.
- Structures Crew - works every Tuesday, specializing in painting.
- TA - known as THE outreach table guy.
- Independently reorganized & refreshed the Valley Green Inn shed last year.
- History photo installation at Cedars Café and the Tree House.
late in December, as the frost covers the ground with a glittery, crunchy crust, eight wooden reindeer suddenly appear in a forest clearing high above the Tree House. With their branch-like antlers and stumpy bodies, they settle in and wait for the arrival of Woodland Santa. Soon after, with a tinkle of sleigh bells mounted on his hiking stick, he arrives. Dressed in a muted green suede and fur embellished coat, he blends in with the forest and animals.

Later that morning, groups of children and their parents who have gathered at the Tree House begin to follow the trails lined with greens, bows, and holiday ornaments to the clearing. Lanterns and tea light candles light the way. “Ho, Ho, Ho!” can be heard before Santa can be seen. The reindeer are frozen in their spots. Children cautiously approach the reindeer first and then Santa, moving closer as they are charmed by his big voice and even bigger smile.

Once in the clearing, children can visit with Santa and make ornaments to hang for the birds in the forest. Each child leaves with a small woodland gift from Santa. After their visit, families can return to the Tree House to enjoy hot chocolate and gingerbread cookies.

Parents and children loved the event, too. We expect the visits from Santa will continue for years to come. Photos from this year will be available on our social media pages: @treehousewec.

Woodland Santa’s first visit to Andorra in 2018 was sparked by the imagination of the Tree House staff and the years of Santa experience by Verland Wayns, grounds maintenance worker at the Tree House. Laura Kennedy, Recreation Specialty Instructor, got busy building reindeer in the Tree House woodshop, while I created and sewed the Santa costume; Christina Moresi, Environmental Education Planner, conceived and organized all the details of the event. Santa even started to grow out his beard.

Because of the event’s popularity last year, Santa visited two days this year—one in the morning and once in the afternoon for children to visit after school.

According to Woodland Santa, his favorite thing about the day was seeing the smiles on the children’s faces and getting to know his new team of reindeer.

“Ho, Ho, Ho!” can be heard before Santa can be seen. The reindeer are frozen in their spots. Children cautiously approach the reindeer first and then Santa, moving closer as they are charmed by his big voice and even bigger smile.

Trish Fries is the Environmental Education Program Specialist at the Wissahickon Environmental Center.

Trish Fries, Wissahickon Environmental Center
After 21 years working with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR), John Smeltzer is happy to be working from “home.” To John, a lifelong resident of Blue Bell Hill, home is Wissahickon Valley Park. In February 2019, after two decades as District 3 Grounds Maintenance Supervisor for PPR, Smeltzer was appointed Manager of Districts 3 and 4, adding the Wissahickon to his many areas of responsibility.

“It’s nice to work in your own backyard,” said Smeltzer, who grew up within walking distance of Kitchen’s Lane and played in Blue Bell and Clifford Parks. He fondly recalls peaceful times trout fishing by the Red Covered Bridge.

Currently, Smeltzer is responsible for 34 full-time employees, 39 recreational centers, 68 different parks, two ice rinks, three older-adult centers, and a library. Every day brings new discoveries—and that’s just how he likes it.

Smeltzer sees working with Friends of the Wissahickon as a major perk of his expanded role and looks forward to forging an even stronger relationship with the organization. “FOW is a big help for the park; everything they do benefits us, and I want to coordinate our efforts with them to help in any way possible,” said Smeltzer. “Whether it’s equipment, materials, or manpower, PPR has the resources that can contribute to and accelerate FOW’s work in the park.”

His everyday responsibilities of maintaining trails, fences, and other park structures put him in close contact with many FOW staff members, but especially Cindy LaRue, Trails Crew Coordinator. She noted that as a lifetime local resident, park employee, and outdoor enthusiast, Smeltzer brings a set of well-honed skills and knowledge, motivated by his love of the Wissahickon, that make him a vital partner on FOW’s diverse projects.

“In the field, many unforeseen issues can occur. John is quick thinking and a true solution-driven individual,” LaRue said. “When John is leading, I never feel like there’s an issue that cannot be overcome.” She admires his sense of humor and ability to keep situations light with a positive attitude—and a good joke.

Caring for overlooked areas of the park is important to Smeltzer. One of his pet projects is removing accumulated dead wood off Forbidden Drive. Whenever his crews have some spare time, he sends them with a crane to remove it. One day, he’d like to bring back some of the trails that have been in his family’s neighborhood for seven generations, like the grounds in Clifford Park, which have been neglected over the years.

“My favorite part of my job is when I finish a project,” said Smeltzer. “There’s a sense of accomplishment in that.” Luckily for FOW and Wissahickon Park, there are always new projects waiting to be finished.
As the Outreach Coordinator for Weavers Way Co-op for the past seven years, I am always meeting new residents of the communities we serve. All of these neighborhoods share a close connection to the extraordinary natural landscapes of the Wissahickon Valley. Easy access to miles of trails and woodlands is often an important reason people move to this area. This large expanse of natural area in the midst of densely populated urban communities is a rare asset that brings opportunities for healthy recreation, but also for expressing civic responsibility and for inspiring environmental awareness.

Responsibility is a core concept at the Co-op, where our democratic governing structure dictates a commitment to a triple bottom line: People, profit, and (last, but certainly not least) planet. We aspire to offer all of the services associated with being a community-owned grocery store while exercising social, financial, and environmental responsibility in everything we do. It isn’t always easy. Luckily, we have our Ends (or long-term goals) cooperative model to guide us, as well as the oversight of our board of directors. But, ultimately, to be successful in our endeavors, key community partnerships are critical.

Surely it is a testament to the character of our community to have a resource like Friends of the Wissahickon in our midst, leading residents for the past 95 years on the path of environmental stewardship. Of the Co-op’s seven Ends (see http://weaversway.coop/pages/weavers-way-ends), the sixth states, “The local environment will be protected and restored.” Therefore, joining forces with FOW to deepen the breadth of our collective appreciation and sense of responsibility to the local environment clearly promises to promote a substantial common good.

The Co-op, via our optional working member program, has long offered working member credits for volunteering for FOW on service days and for special projects. In recent years, we’ve sought to increase the energy and impact of our collaborations. In 2019, we offered a series of specially conceived introductory new member hikes, bringing together dozens of members, new to both FOW and Weavers Way, to explore our woodlands together and share in the missions and concerns that align our organizations. By granting Weavers Way working member credit to participants, and promoting shared events, we believe we are helping to fuel an informed and engaged populace that recognizes the value of public access to nature, grasps the responsibility of public ownership, and takes the notion of environmental stewardship seriously.

In 2020, we hope to take our collaborations further. Look for more new member hikes, more well-defined Weavers Way working member opportunities in service to FOW, and close creative partnering on select events. We’re excited to unveil new, innovative, and impactful ways over the course of the new year to work productively with FOW and propel informed action in the sensitive care and preservation of our shared, natural environment. Stay tuned, keep reading our newsletters, and feel free to contact the Weavers Way Membership Department at any time, to ask questions or get involved in joint events through the Co-op. As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions at outreach@weaversway.coop or 215-843-2350 x 118.

Bettina de Caumette is Outreach Coordinator at Weavers Way Co-op.
Outside Valley Green Inn, chestnuts were roasting on an open fire like a holiday postcard, but inside, families and friends adorned wreaths with decorations from the woods at the annual Winter in the Wissahickon event on December 7. This year, crafters had the choice of also making a faux decorative winter terrarium. Children also made natural treats for wintering birds. Thank you to Bredenbeck’s for sweetening the event with a donation of a tray of delicious cookies, and to T & F Farmers’ Pride for the chestnuts and apple cider.
Registration is recommended for all walks (required if indicated) so that participants can be informed of weather or other emergency cancellations. Unless otherwise specified, Trail Ambassador 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, snow, or icy conditions. For more information, contact Shawn Green at green@fow.org. Visit fow.org for updates.

WALKS

Frosty Fungus with Faith Watson
Sundays, January 5, March 11 10 am–12:30 pm
Meet at Lower Bells Mill Parking Lot (East side of Creek)
We’ll explore the Orange and White Trails to find evidence of fungus frutating bodies (aka mushrooms) that we can photograph, identify, and ponder. No dogs. Children 12+ with adult.

Kid Friendly Hikes with Mary Schwartz
Saturdays, January 25, February 15, March 28 11 am–1 pm
Meet at Valley Green Inn
This hike takes participants along Forbidden Drive and on rocky, wooded trails, with interesting geologic formations. Visit the Livezey Dam, Gorgas Creek Cave, and Fingerpalm Bridge, and continue to Devil’s Pool and Pee Wee Rock. Level: moderate. Distance: ~2.2 miles.

Fitness Hikes with Andi Wingert and Debbie Hoellein
Tuesdays, 10 am–1 pm
January 21 – Meet at Cedars House Café
February 18 – Meet at Wizard Avenue Trailhead
March 17 – Meet at Valley Green Inn
We will hike at a brisk pace but pause to visit points of interest. Hiking shoes or boots are recommended—there will be some hills. Bring water, snacks, and sunscreen. Ages 12+ with adult welcome. Level: strenuous. Distance: ~5–6 miles.

Hiking Mindfully with a Full Moon with Irene Lotka
Monday, March 9 7–8:15 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café
Join us as we hike silently and mindfully, with help from the light of the full moon, celebrating the coming of spring. We will circle the meadow and walk down through the woods. Bring a headlamp or flashlight. Level: adapted to the group.

Skunk Cabbage Hike with Don Simon
Thursday, March 12 10 am–1 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café
We will hike the Lavender Trail (conditions permitting) in search of skunk cabbage. This fascinating plant blooms toward the end of winter or early spring, often appearing through the snow. No dogs, please. Level: moderate.

Spring Equinox in the Wissahickon with Kris Soffa, PA Master Naturalist
March 28 • 11 am–1 pm
Meet at Cedars House Café
We will hike the Lavender Trail (conditions permitting) in search of skunk cabbage. This fascinating plant blooms toward the end of winter or early spring, often appearing through the snow. No dogs, please. Level: moderate.

Meanderings in the Wissahickon with Shelly Brick
Friday, March 27 1–3 pm
Meet at the Hartwell Lane Trailhead
Come explore a variety of locations and “talk story,” a Hawaiian tradition. All ages. Pace, distance, and difficulty to be determined by the group.

TALKS

Roads, Bridges, & Roadhouses with Sarah West
Sunday, January 19 3–4:30 pm
Cathedral Village, Classroom 2 (600 E. Cathedral Rd., Phila., 19128)
A veteran teacher, West shares her knowledge of the historic roads, bridges, and structures of the Wissahickon’s past.

Backpacking in Pennsylvania with Lisa Myers, PA Master Naturalist
Sunday, January 26 2–3:30 pm
Wissahickon Environmental Center
An avid backpacker, Lisa will present an overview of some of the most popular backpacking trails in Pennsylvania and the wild public lands that contain them.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN THE WISSAHICKON

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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, grade overgrowth, and stone work, narrowing widened trails, and making emergency trail repairs. Meeting at different locations each week. Visit fow.org/volunteer for location details.

SATURDAYS
There's no better way to be friends than to help FOW in the park with trail maintenance, invasive weed removal, planting, and general cleanup from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Visit fow.org/volunteer for more information.

THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
Join Friends of Cresheim Trail to improve the trails in the Cresheim Creek area. Meet at the entrance of Lincoln Drive and Allen's Lane at 10 a.m. Wear sturdy shoes, long pants, and long sleeves to protect against poison ivy. Tools and gloves provided, and coffee and snacks will be served. For more information or to volunteer, contact Friends of Cresheim Trail at info@cresheimtrail.org or 215-715-9159.

WISSAHICKON ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

All programs are FREE, REQUIRE REGISTRATION, and begin at the Tree House (300 W. Northwestern Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19118) unless otherwise noted. Please register at WISSAHICKON.COM.

WINTER BIRD WALKS WITH MARTIN SELZER
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28 8:30 AM
Meet local birder Martin Selzer for a two-hour walk to observe wintering birds along Forbidden Drive and to Andorra and Rapheen Meadows. All ages.

KIDS EXPLORE: WINTER WONDERLAND
SATURDAY, JANUARY 25 10 AM–12 PM
Bring the kids out into the forest this winter to discover what is still active during the cold winter months. Ages 5–12. Drop-in optional.

CAMPFIRE COOKING • SATURDAY, JANUARY 25 1–3 PM
Enjoy the warm campfire on a cold winter’s day and make your own lunch cooked on an open fire. Learn some new recipes to try on your next camping trip. $7 per family.

STONE SOUP • SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 10 AM–12 PM
A part of the story Soup Soop as we create a vegetation soup over the campfire. All participants are asked to bring a vegetable to contribute to the soup. While the soup simmers, we’ll take a short hike to explore the different rocks in the area. Afterwards, warm up around the fire with our Stone Soup and bread. If you require special dietary considerations, please provide your own alternative. All ages.

FAMILY & ADULT FULL MOON HIKES
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 5:30–7 PM
Families will join us for a short night hike around the Tree House with their children, while all adults hike through the woods to the meadow. Both groups will hike by the light of the full moon and discover the tree silhouettes against the moonlit sky. Maybe hear the hoot of an owl and warm up around the campfire. All ages.

RUNNING CLUBS

EVERY THURSDAY
Wissahickon Wanderers Trail Run. 4.5 miles. Starts 6:30 p.m. 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 wissawrunnersclub.org.

EVERY SATURDAY
Shawmont Running Club. Starts at Northwestern Ave. & Andorra Rd. (north entrance to Forbidden Drive). From the 2nd Saturday in May through the 2nd Saturday in October, start at 7:30 a.m. From 3rd Saturday in October through 1st Saturday in May, start at 8 a.m. Distances are at the discretion of runners. All levels welcome. Emphasis is on fun! More info at shawmontrunningclub.com.

HISTORIC RITTENHOUSE TOWN

Habilitación Rittenhouse Town offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other aspects of colonial life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead. Located at 12 Morris Rd. in Ambler. More info at www.habitacionrittenthal.com.

 FRIENDS OF THE WISSAHICKON

PUBLIC PROJECTS MEETING JANUARY 29 • P 2

WISSAHICKON VALLEY WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

WVA 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 Valley. Located at 12 Morris Rd. in Ambler. More info at wvwa.org.

MAPLE SUGAR DAY • SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29 11 AM–3 PM
Join us on Forbidden Drive (near Northwestern Ave.) for our annual MAPLE SUGAR DAY. There will be ongoing maple sugaring demonstrations, pancakes with real maple syrup, a taste test of different pancake toppings, and freshly made maple candy to taste. Pennsylvania Maple Syrup products will be available for purchase. All ages. NO registration necessary; just stop by. FREE.

WOODCOCK WALK WITH MARTIN SELZER (HOUSTON MEADOW)
TUESDAY, MARCH 3 5:30 PM
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at Houston Playground to listen and watch for woodcocks, affectionately called “two-sounders.” All ages. Space is limited.

THURSDAY TREKS • THURSDAYS, MARCH 5–MAY 21 7:30 AM
Join us at the Tree House on Thursday mornings for a different hike each week throughout the Andorra Natural Area and beyond. We split into two different-paced groups: moderate & education. Registration suggested. All ages. Check Facebook or contact us at wvwa.org or 215.685.9295 before coming out Thursday mornings.

NATIVE BEE HOUSE WORKSHOP • SATURDAY, MARCH 28 10 AM
Native species are vital to our forest and neighborhood ecosystem. This is the first workshop in a new series that will help you to create a better “natharborhood” for your nature neighbors. Here you will create a bee house for our native mason bees and learn other tips to protect insects outside at home. This program is designed for adults and youth ages 12 and up. FREE to learn, $10 to take home a bee house.

PAPER KITE BUILDING WORKSHOP • SATURDAY, MARCH 30 1–3 PM
Celebrate spring by making and flying a kite! After creating your kite from recycled materials, we’ll go to Andorra Meadow and try it out! Ages 6 & up. Registration required.

THURSDAY TOTS
Bring your little one for an hour of discovery (1–2 pm) at the Tree House. Each month we will explore a new topic that celebrates the season. Ages 3–5. Parents stay with their child. $5 per child, per lesson.
• January 23: Sher Boot Hike
• February 20: Maple Trees & Treats
• March 26: Kites & Wind Wands

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

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND INSTAGRAM

FUTURE CALENDAR DATES

Winter 2019

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<td>Kites &amp; Wind Wands</td>
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Friends of the Wissahickon • Winter 2019
FOW CALENDAR

FOW’s 2020 calendar is now available at shop.fow.org.

It’s full of beautiful seasonal photos from our Instagram that will give you daily motivation to head to the woods and enjoy our beautiful park whenever you can.