Progress in the Park – p. 3
Future of Park Restrooms – Part 2 – p. 7
2022 Biennial Photo Contest – p. 10
Partner Profile: Saul School – p. 13

Blue tree swallows in Houston Meadow. Photo Credit: Bradley Maule
I know you have it; Friends of the Wissahickon has it too: Spring fever. We’re all embracing the renewed energy and excitement this season brings, as we welcome the warming sun, the sweet air, and a new round of relaxed COVID restrictions. FOW has returned to the park in full swing.

If you missed our annual Public Projects Meeting in January, read about our latest significant capital projects scheduled for this year on p. 3. Of note is the Valley Green Run Restoration and Pedestrian Bridge, which will create a signature environmental park feature that will say, “Welcome to Wissahickon Valley Park!” We will soon be launching a capital campaign for this significant investment in the beauty and resilience of our beloved urban forest.

Speaking of significant investment, progress continues to advance on our Restroom Facilities Master Plan (p. 7). The second and final public meeting in February provided a detailed look at types and locations of facilities being considered but revealed some numbers that speak volumes about this project’s need. According to trail counter results, Wissahickon Valley Park visitorship is now estimated at two million—about the same as Valley Forge National Historical Park, which has nearly twice the acreage and almost four times as many restrooms!

New growth is everywhere this time of year, and FOW is no exception. I am proud to report increases in membership and volunteer support, for which we are grateful.

New growth is everywhere this time of year, and FOW is no exception. I am proud to report increases in membership and volunteer support (p. 6), for which we are grateful, and an increase in staff: FOW has hired three new employees. As we grow, I often reflect on the vision and contributions made by our dear friends throughout the year. Someone who would have celebrated this progress is our dear friend and former board member Gene Caffrey, who passed away in January. On p. 9, we remember his life and many contributions to FOW’s growth and financial health, which opened opportunities for even greater park stewardship.

Springtime in the Wissahickon may be beautiful, but every season offers something special to see. Why not capture those images and enter FOW’s Biennial Photo Contest, which fittingly opened on the first day of spring. Read how to enter on p. 10.

You can also sign up for spring cleanup events. Learn how to build a native bee house (p. 11), go on a hike, or enjoy a fun, family-friendly activity (p. 12 and 15).

Let’s continue to be great friends. I hope to see you at the Annual FOW Members Meeting on June 7.

Ruffian Tittmann, Executive Director
SAVE THE DATE

VIRTUAL ANNUAL FOW MEMBERS MEETING

TUESDAY, JUNE 7
6 PM

FOW members are invited to review the last year, elect members to the Board of Directors, and learn about upcoming projects at this annual event. Register at fow.org/events to receive a Zoom link to attend the meeting.

PARK PROJECT UPDATE:

LINCOLN DRIVE TRAIL BRIDGES

The timeline for the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Lincoln Drive Trail Bridges Project has been updated and is now scheduled for completion in May 2022.

Park visitors and commuters should continue to:
• Follow the posted detours.
• Use alternate modes of transportation.


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TRAIL CLOSED PLEASE USE DETOUR

A section of the Yellow Trail between Summit Avenue and Cathedral Road is closed due to a footbridge closure. Follow the indicated detour along Forbidden Drive until further notice.
LOWER VALLEY GREEN RUN RESTORATION AND PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Years of worsening erosion on both sides of Valley Green Run caused the natural trail to collapse along with the elevated wooden boardwalk, which necessitated the area’s closure to traffic.

FOW is investing more than $1 million in two simultaneous projects to stabilize the streambank, reduce the speed and force of water flow, and restore an essential trailhead link along Valley Green Road. This complex project, similar in scale to the Forbidden Drive Streambank Stabilization, will feature a new pedestrian bridge that will move visitor foot traffic off the road as people head down to this central area of the park. While designs are still being finalized, beautiful black locust wood has been selected for the decking, and galvanized steel has been chosen for the main structure due to its long-term durability.

The extended walkway will be approximately 200 feet long and gently undulate across the newly restored streambank with an added observation platform, allowing park visitors a better view of the Wissahickon’s signature schist outcrops and the historic Valley Green Bridge. Much of the stream restoration design is complete with early designs for the pedestrian bridge underway. When it is completed, sometime in the fall or winter of 2023, the bridge is expected to become another iconic park feature, like Fingerspan or the Red Covered Bridge. FOW will soon announce ways that the community can contribute to the bridge and boardwalk project through fundraising and recognition opportunities.
GERMANTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION PROJECT

This project, which will focus on rehabilitating 1,600 linear feet of crumbling sidewalk on Harvey Street (along the edge of the park), will create safe pedestrian access to the park from Wissahickon Avenue near Rittenhouse Street for neighborhood residents, who currently must cross heavily trafficked Lincoln Drive. FOW is developing a proposal for the scope of services and key design elements with neighbors, contractors, and other stakeholders for an expanded trail network to improve entry to the main stem of the park, as well as newly defined signage and wayfinding. New plantings will help restore the native habitat. FOW and park neighbors anticipate that these amenities will beautify the area, discourage illegal dumping, and ultimately encourage more recreation. The project is funded in part by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and Sensodyne, and Councilmember Cindy Bass, in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR).

EAST FALLS REROUTE AND HABITAT RESTORATION

The mixed-use trails in this area have long been identified as unsustainable. This project will close an eroding trail, reroute it along the contour, and restore the habitat with native plantings to mitigate stormwater runoff as part of FOW’s Sustainable Trails Initiative completion plan. Updated signage and wayfinding will add to this popular area’s increased accessibility.

If you missed the Public Projects Meeting, watch the full recording here to learn more about FOW’s work in the Wissahickon.
In addition to PPR, FOW is proud to partner with the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD). At the Public Meeting, we welcomed Ashley Ebrahimi, Environmental Engineer and Project Manager, and Rick Howley, Ecological Restoration Manager/Green Stormwater Infrastructure Unit, who discussed two stream restoration and asset protection projects that PWD is performing in the park.

**PWD WORKS IN THE WISSAHICKON**

Infrastructure improvements in the park have a direct impact on the quality of the Wissahickon Creek, a source of drinking water for one in three Philadelphians. For more than a decade, PWD has taken a leadership role in restoring the Wissahickon and other Philadelphia watersheds from the harmful impacts of uncontrolled stormwater. Its groundbreaking Green City, Clean Waters initiative uses green infrastructure solutions to restore Philadelphia’s more than 200-year-old water systems. The increasing impacts of climate change, such as more frequent and heavier storms and flooding, are exacerbating the problems. When such storms overwhelm this aging infrastructure, treatment plants can reach capacity, and combined sewers may overflow, releasing sewage and stormwater into local rivers and creeks. Construction began in February to patch damage to the stone and brick masonry wall of a concrete culvert on the White Trail at Park Line Drive that brings water to a small tributary. A second project will repair large cracks and fissures that have formed on a concrete stormwater chute on Gorgas Run.

**RESTROOM FACILITIES MASTER PLAN**

This project is so important, it requires its own meetings. The ongoing Restroom Facilities Master Plan is one of FOW’s major strategic projects, developed to provide accessible restroom facilities to the growing number of visitors to the park. In partnership with PPR, the plan is the initial step of a longer process that will responsibly guide any future development of restrooms in the park. When it comes to restroom facility types, locations, and preferences, no one size fits all. But everyone wants them to be clean, open, and accessible. Public meetings are a key component of this pilot project to guide the master plan’s development. Read recaps of the first public meeting held in October 2021 on p. 3 of FOW’s winter newsletter, and the second public meeting in February 2022 in this newsletter on p. 7. Recordings of these restroom meetings are also available on the YouTube and can be linked the public project meeting is on the previous page.
The winter months are when FOW enters recruitment and training mode. There were more than 60 applicants to the 2022 Class of Trail Ambassadors and Crew Leaders, and those selected to join these volunteer corps will go through multiple training sessions and learn about park history, watersheds, and wildlife to share with visitors. At the end of training, this new class of stewards will be ready to hit the trails to co-lead service projects, patrol trails, lead hikes, assist park users, clear fallen trees, and engage park users in discussions about the significance of Wissahickon Valley Park.

Even the cold can’t keep a dedicated steward away from the park. While FOW’s Saturday Volunteer Service Days were on hold for the winter, longtime volunteer David Bower continued to run his recurring Wednesday Service Days. Trail Ambassadors provided assistance to park visitors along the trails and led guided hikes in the park, while FOW’s Crew Leaders worked with staff on refreshing trail signage throughout the park.

Beginning at the end of March, our Saturday Volunteer Service Days return in full swing. No prior experience is needed—FOW provides the tools, work gloves, and instruction. These fun, informative sessions provide much needed improvements in the park. Sign up to join us at fow.org/volunteering.

**FIELD UPDATE**

While the winter was too cold for invasive plant clearing or Structures Crew projects in the park, FOW staff and volunteers kept working, focusing on wayfinding and signage improvements on the upper trails.

Nearly six years old, the system is showing “signs” of age with peeling directional tiles and damaged posts. Select volunteers worked with FOW staff throughout February and March, replacing damaged directional tiles and painting posts to assist park users with their exploration of the Wissahickon.

In the winter of 2015, FOW installed over 125 trail markers, each featuring useful information, such as designated use (hiker, biker, or equestrian), primary trail location (Yellow, White, Orange, or Lavender), and distances to park landmarks, nearby streets, or “help location addresses.” This signage system was developed as part of the Sustainable Trails Initiative (STI) to balance protection of the park as a vital ecological resource with the use of the park as a recreational resource in the Philadelphia area. As FOW works to protect the quality of the trails, the park habitat, and the Wissahickon Creek, delineation of official trails and clarity of trail use is an important component. Help FOW in this effort by staying on-trail and always remembering trail etiquette: Bikes yield to horses & hikers, everyone yields to horses, when in doubt, yield.

**SUPER SERVICE DAYS**

FOW is seeking volunteers to help beautify the park on the following annual, specially designated service days in April. Please visit our events page to sign up!

**APRIL 2**
PHILLY SPRING CLEANUP

**APRIL 23**
EARTH DAY

**APRIL 30**
ANNUAL CREEK CLEANUP

**VOLUNTEER UPDATE**

By Shawn Green, Field Stewardship Director

Crew Leader Bill McGeeney replaces damaged tiles on a trail marker.
Last month, FOW held the second public meeting of the Restroom Facilities Master Plan as a follow-up to the first one in September, with updates about the headway that’s been made over the last five months. It may seem like it’s taking a long time for something as seemingly simple as installing toilets, but Rosa Mannion, project manager with NV5, explained that the process is deliberately slow and promised that’s a good thing. “We don’t want to make casual, gut decisions about a complicated park of this size,” said Mannion. “There’s a lot that needs to be decided before the project is blueprint ready. We want to go slow and steady, be careful, and take the time to get all the information.”

That’s where the master plan comes in. Mannion described it as a forward-looking road map for making intelligent, responsive decisions and setting priorities.

Greatly contributing to this process has been robust public feedback. Comments obtained from meetings, social media, and online and in-person user surveys, which have generated more than 1,000 responses, providing information about where visitors would like to see permanent facilities, amenities they’d like included, and more.

Attendees saw their comments reflected in the latest preliminary designs for 16 potential restrooms to be situated in up to seven different locations, as Mannion walked them through the options, outlining the opportunities and constraints for each. Besides location and accessibility, considerations presented ranged from type of toilet to the need for flood proofing, whether an existing structure can be adaptively reused, and the need to avoid large toilet openings to reduce confusion with litter bins.

Expected restroom use is estimated to be approximately 43% of counted visitors. This percentage was derived from survey responses. It is calculated using 100% ALWAYS respondents + 60% FREQUENTLY respondents = 43% of all survey respondents.

**Average Projected Daily Restroom Use By Counter Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counter Number and Name (from south to north)</th>
<th>Avg. Daily Visitor Traffic</th>
<th>Avg. Daily Visitors Expected to Use a Restroom (43%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - SOUTH (near the 100 steps) (limited to 4/30/21 - 8/28/21)</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - RITTENHOUSE TOWN (at trailhead)</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - BLUE STONE BRIDGE (at Forbidden Drive)</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - KITCHENS LANE BRIDGE (at Orange Trail and bridge intersection)</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - JANNETTE STREET ENTRANCE (at entrance connector trail)</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - PACHELLA FIELD (at intersection of Yellow and connector trails)</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - GLEN FERN (on Orange Trail north of Livezey Lane)</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - VALLEY GREEN INN (on Forbidden Drive south of the inn)</td>
<td>1,031</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - VALLEY GREEN ROAD (at entrance to Orange and White Trails)</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - RED COVERED BRIDGE (Thomas Mill Bridge)</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - BELL’S MILL at FORBIDDEN DRIVE</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - NORTHEASTERN AVE./CEDARS HOUSE</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in red indicate areas of highest use.
Park Comparison

Valley Forge National Historical Park
3,500 Acres
Approx. 2 Million Annual Visitors (per NPS.gov)
55 Permanent Toilets

Wissahickon Valley Park
1,800 Acres
Approx. 2 Million Annual Visitors
15 Permanent Toilets

But perhaps the most eye-opening information that underscored the need for more restroom facilities in Wissahickon Valley Park came from data collected from 12 trail counter boxes in the park. They were installed last spring in high-use areas to record volume of visitor traffic that would inform the master plan.

The metrics suggest that current park visitation has increased to more than 2 million people per year. To put this number in perspective, consider the following:

- Data generated from the last comprehensive automated user count in 2011 estimated 1.1 million annual visits to the Wissahickon.
- Wissahickon Valley Park has approximately the same number of visitors as Valley Forge National Historical Park, which is nearly twice its size, but only 15 toilets (just seven year-round and accessible) compared to their 55.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, NV5 recommends that whatever is chosen in the end, the facilities should meet these broad criteria:

1. Disturb as little of the natural landscape as possible:
   - Use existing impervious (paved) areas
   - Stay out of the floodplain as much as possible
   - Adaptively reuse existing structures where possible

2. Ensure that each facility:
   - Includes at least one wheelchair accessible cabin, more where possible
   - Includes diaper changing tables
   - Includes hand-washing sinks where possible (most requested user amenity)
   - Where possible, provides additional amenities such as water bottle filling stations, bicycle racks, and dog-hitching posts
   - Can be open year-round by using heat-traced utilities
   - Is accessible for maintenance trucks

Of course, a project of this scope does not come cheap. The average cost per toilet is estimated at $120,000, with another $185,000 per year to clean and regularly maintain all the facilities in the park. Therefore, a key next step is to secure additional funding for the restrooms and ongoing maintenance staff costs. Currently, there are no full-time, year-round custodial staff employed in the Wissahickon (Valley Forge has four, with plans to hire more).

“In the end, we’re championing the addition of more clean, accessible toilets,” said FOW Executive Director Ruffian Tittmann. “We all love the park and want to do the best decisions with all involved on how best to spend limited resources.”

If you missed the second and final public meeting, view it here. And read this coverage of the meeting by Philadelphia Inquirer environmental reporter Frank Kummer, published on February 21.

Get updates on the Restroom Facilities Master Plan on the FOW website. For any questions about the project, contact Pauline Berkowitz, capital projects coordinator, at berkowitz@fow.org

Speaking of Toilets

A Glossary

Vault: A permanent restroom that sits above a “vault” or pit. It doesn’t require plumbing or electricity but does need regular waste servicing.

Composting: Aerobically biodegrades waste by adding wood chips (FOW uses pine bark) and having a blower that runs continuously. This works at the Kitchen’s Lane restroom because the use is sufficiently low enough that waste can break down. All the locations under consideration for new restrooms in the master plan are in such high-use areas that the waste wouldn’t be able to biodegrade before the chamber fills up entirely.

Portable: Does not meet the volume of park visitors and, therefore, requires frequent maintenance. Consider that one vault toilet can hold the equivalent waste of 16 portables (1,000 gallons of waste vs. 60 gallons). Suited for temporary/seasonal applications, portables are expensive over the long term (e.g.. Four portable units at Valley Green cost $2,856 in August 2020 alone).
With sadness and fondness, the Friends of the Wissahickon family says goodbye to former board member and friend Gene Caffrey, who passed away on January 9. According to his obituary in the Chestnut Hill Local, “Since Gene’s death, many friends and the children of friends – in Chestnut Hill and beyond – recalled how often they had turned to him for advice.” FOW was no exception.

His knowledge as a longtime leader in the Chestnut Hill business community and as a real estate entrepreneur were valuable assets to FOW throughout the 14 years (1998–2012) he devoted to the organization. Gene served as treasurer as well as on many board committees, from Budget and Finance and Advocacy to oversight committees for the Sustainable Trails Initiative and Valley Green Inn. Beyond his business acumen, he loved to play sports and wrote a series of mystery novels.

“Gene had so many skills, talents, and interests, along with community spirit and love of the park, and he brought it all to FOW,” said Ruffian Tittmann, executive director at FOW. “He was high energy, enthusiastic, and fun.”

Gene, who spoke often and fondly of his family, especially his grandchildren, is survived by his wife Mary Ellen Caffrey, PhD, his son Michael, and daughter Kate, as well as three grandchildren and a brother.
It’s Time for

THE BIENNIAL WISSAHICKON PHOTO CONTEST 2022

One of the things that makes Wissahickon Valley Park so special is that it never looks the same from one visit to the next, no matter the weather, time of day, or season. If you’ve ever been inspired by the sights in the Wissahickon, like so many artists have before, capture those images and enter them in FOW’s Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest!

Returning as co-sponsors with FOW are Wissahickon Trails and the Woodmere Art Museum.

Contest Rules:

• **Note this year’s new categories:** Since the Wissahickon is a park for all seasons, the four categories will be: spring, summer, fall, and winter.

• All photos entered must be taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon Trail, or on one of the Wissahickon Trails managed preserves.

• Enter only photographs taken by you, the entrant.

• You may enter up to four photos, in one or separate categories, that have been taken within the past three years.

• Location of the photo must be included in the description of each photo.

• Photos should be high resolution (at least 300 dpi) and in one of the following file formats: .tiff, .eps, .jpg, .png, or .gif.

• File names should follow one of these two formats:
  - `last_name_category_submission number`
  - `last_name_youth_category_submission number`

  Example: `smith_spring_1.jpg` or `smith_youth_winter_4.jpg`.

• Provide a current phone number, email, and mailing address.

• Any of the three co-sponsoring organizations may feature the winning photos in their printed materials, online, or on social media.

• Paper copies of photographs will not be returned.

• Entries that do not comply with the above rules will be disqualified.

The contest kicks off on **March 20** (the first day of spring) and the deadline for submissions is **October 14**. **Winners will be announced on October 28.** Prizes will be awarded: $150 for Best in Show, $75 for People’s Choice, and $50 for First Place in each of the categories.

Visit [fow.org/photocontest2022](http://fow.org/photocontest2022) for complete rules and details, and to submit your entries.

**INSPIRATION IS ALL AROUND**

The contest is a wonderful way to experience the Wissahickon with an artistic eye. Try exploring new areas. Sometimes just sitting down and taking in the view is all you need. Be patient and wait, the scenery is always changing with movement and light. Opportunities for some of the most beautiful shots can appear in the early morning or evening. And try a different perspective: look up, down, and all around. You never know what you might see!

Some lovely spots for photos: In the lower Wissahickon, there’s Houston Meadow in late summer teeming with golden rod, the white pine grove along Cresheim Creek, and the spectacular lookouts from the Toleration statue or Livezey Rock. In the Upper Wissahickon, there’s the historic and picturesque Evans-Mumbower Mill and beautiful views of the creek and its tributaries from the Four Mills Nature Reserve, also a birding hotspot. The possibilities are endless.

If you need further inspiration to get your creative juices flowing, visit FOW’s [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/fow组织/), check out our [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/fow组织/), visit FOW’s Instagram, check out our Facebook page to view past contest entries and winners, or take a look at the work of these accomplished artists:

**Melvin Chappell.** An award-winning photographer, Chappell’s book *The Wissahickon Valley: The Photography of Melvin A. Chappell* (2015) contains 28 of his favorite photos of the park. His work has been used by FOW and other organizations, such as Historic Rittenhouse Town and the Morris Arboretum. His photograph of the Tedyuscung statue won Best in Show in FOW’s Biennial Photo Contest in 2008. Many of his photographs can be found in numerous private and public collections around the world, including the permanent collections of the African American Museum in Philadelphia and the Woodmere Art Museum. [www.melvinachappellphotography.com](http://www.melvinachappellphotography.com)

**Walter Elmer Schofield** (1866–1944). Born in Philadelphia, Schofield attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and is well known as one of the great American impressionists. After spending time in France, he returned to his home to paint the Pennsylvania countryside. [www.fow.org/walter-elmer-schofield/](http://www.fow.org/walter-elmer-schofield/)
With each consecutive warm day, nature awakens and spring announces its arrival. One of my favorite “early risers” of the season are mason bees (*Osmia lignaria*). Also called orchard bees, they are vital to the Tree House’s Food Forest fruit production, which should begin this year. Mason bees emerge with the early blooms and can pollinate them when other pollinators have yet to emerge.

Mason bees are just one of over 400 native bee species in Pennsylvania, which include bumble and carpenter bees. Too often, the non-native, domesticated European honeybee is the face of the Save the Bees movement. Although they are pollinators, bees are just one small part of a team of pollinators that are crucial to food systems, and the ecosystem as a whole.

Unlike the honeybee, most of our native bees are solitary. Individual queens work to gather nectar and pollen to feed their larvae in their mostly underground nests, or nests in existing holes. You may see them nesting close to each other, but they are working solely on their own nests.

While honeybees have an important niche in agriculture as hives are managed for honey and other products, when it comes to pollination, native bees, such as mason bees, are significantly more efficient pollinators. Mason bees collect pollen and nectar to eat, but they do not store them as part of a community. They also have a smaller foraging range, so they can use their efficiency to pollinate more plants in a specific area, like a managed orchard.

Mason bees do not have a corbicular, or pollen pocket, on their back legs to hold their collection, and are instead covered with hairs that capture pollen as they plow into flowers with little grace. Covered in pollen, they visit a variety of flowers, including fruit trees, in the early spring. Because the bee is carrying more pollen freely on its body, the exchange rate inside the flowers is greater.

In another efficient practice, the mason bees utilize existing holes for their nests, making it easier to build and manage houses for them. Last spring at the Tree House, we created basic mason bee houses to place in the orchard and hosted a building workshop. Both the workshop and the nests were successful for all. Our houses and some of our learner’s houses were used by mason bees.

How did we know these were mason bee nests? A mason bee gets its name from using clay soil to fill in the gaps between the egg chambers it makes in a hole and to seal the end. In a hole or a tube, as in many man-made houses, the mason bee queen will seal the back with clay, deposit pollen with an egg, then create a thin clay wall, before continuing the process through the tube. Inside, the egg will hatch, and the larva will grow throughout the spring and summer. In late summer, the mason bee will spin a silk cocoon in which it will go through complete metamorphosis. The bees overwinter as fully formed adults and emerge from the tube in early spring, males first (laid in the front of the tubes) and then the females. After mating, the queen bees begin the cycle again.

As I dive deeper into native bee management, the Wissahickon Environmental Center will be adding more houses to the Food Forest and workshops to the calendar to further encourage nesting by the native bees in our orchard and to support neighbors doing the same at their homes. These workshops will cover building, management, native bees, native plants, and habitat creation for all. Our first in-person Native Bee House Workshop will be held on April 9. Register at TreeHouseWEC.Eventbrite.com. In the future, we hope to also make the workshops available online.

Christina Moresi, M.Ed., is an Environmental Education Planner at the Wissahickon Environmental Center.
April

Wednesday Meditations
Wednesdays, April–June | 10:30 a.m.
In this six-week program, we will explore various modalities of meditation, which has many benefits. It can reduce stress, help control anxiety, improve sleep and emotional health, and may reduce blood pressure and help control pain. Bring something to sit on such as a pillow, bolster, or mat. Consider bringing sunscreen, insect repellant, and water bottle. This program is in partnership with the Andorra Library. Adults & older teens. Please bring a mask.

Baby Animals with Montgomery County SPCA
Monday, April 4 | 11 a.m.
Spring is here and baby animals are everywhere. Learn about how our pets are the same as and different from the animals we see outside in nature, and how we must care for them in special ways. In partnership with Montgomery County SPCA. Ages 3–5. $5 per child.

All about Birds for Homeschoolers
Tuesday, April 5 | 1 p.m.
Discover the birds that call the Wissahickon home, as early spring migration is beginning. Learn all about birds and how you can help them in your own backyard. 2nd grade & up. $5 per person.

Native Bee House Workshop
Saturday, April 9 | 10 a.m.
Native species are vital to our forest and neighborhood ecosystem. This is the first workshop in a new series that will help you create a better “naturehood” for your nature neighbors. Create a bee house for our native mason bees and learn other tricks to support insects outside at home. Adults and youth ages 12 & up. FREE to learn, $10 to take home a bee house.

Recycled Paper Workshop
Saturday, April 9 | 1 p.m.
Families are invited to join us as we learn about recycling and how to turn your trash into treasures. $5 per family, up to 6 people.

Andorra “Nursery”
Thursday, April 21 | 10 a.m.
Bring your little one for an hour of discovery 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.

Tree House Tots
Thursday, April 21 | 1–2 p.m.
Bring your little one for an hour of discovery 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.

Recycling and Making Paper for Homeschoolers
Tuesday, April 19 | 1 p.m.
In preparation for Earth Day celebrations, learn about recycling and how to turn your junk mail into art. 2nd grade & up. $5 per person.

Spring Migration I (Houston Meadow)
Saturday, April 30 | 7:30 a.m.
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at Houston Playground (900 Grakyn Lane) to catch an early wave of spring migration in Houston Meadow. All ages.

May

Mommy, Me, & Nature: Flowers in the Meadow (Houston Meadow)
Wednesday, May 4 | 1 p.m.
Meet the staff of Wissahickon Environmental Center at Houston Playground (900 Grakyn Lane) and join us on a short walk to discover the flowers of Houston Meadow. Includes a craft and games. Ages 2–5 with a caregiver.

Spring Migration II (Houston Meadow)
Saturday, May 7 | 7:30 a.m.
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at Houston Playground (900 Grakyn Lane) to catch another wave of spring migration in Houston Meadow. All ages.

Watershed Exploration for Homeschoolers
Thursday, May 19 | 1 p.m.
Learn what a watershed is and discover the wildlife that live in and near the water’s edge. Wear shoes you don’t mind getting muddy or wet. 2nd grade & up. $5 per person.

Pets in the Park with Montgomery County SPCA
Monday, May 16 | 11 a.m.
Wildlife is all around us. Join us as we learn how to keep our pets and the wildlife safe when we are visiting the park. In partnership with Montgomery County SPCA. Ages 2–5. $5 per child.

Breeding Birds of Andorra
Saturday, May 28 | 7:30 a.m.
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at the Tree House to observe breeding birds in Andorra and Harpers Meadows. All ages.

June

Breeding Birds of Houston Meadow
Saturday, June 11 | 8 a.m.
Meet local birder Martin Selzer at Houston Playground (900 Grakyn Lane) to observe breeding birds in Houston Meadow. All ages.
Many people might see an overgrowth of vines on a fence as just an eyesore, but Gregory Smith saw it as an opportunity. The fence separated Wissahickon Valley Park from the cow pasture at the W.B. Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences in Roxborough, where Smith teaches natural resource management to senior class students. Aware that Friends of the Wissahickon welcomed volunteers, he contacted FOW’s field coordinator, Cindy LaRue, in 2019 with an idea for a partnership.

Smith proposed that the students who were studying watershed conservation could remove the invasive vines from the fence line, and LaRue could teach them how to master the use of specific tools for the job. As FOW volunteer stewards, they would learn about environmental sustainability as they enhanced the community by beautifying public spaces. In this outdoor classroom, the students would develop practical hands-on skills and much more.

LaRue, who previously led youth programming and community outreach with the Student Conservation Association and now oversees the Saul High School students’ work in the Wissahickon, is thrilled about the collaboration. “There is a huge lack of programs that engage high school youth in conservation activities and get them familiar with basic flora and fauna,” she said.

Of course, spending time in nature is worthwhile for anyone at any age, but especially for these students. “Our school gets kids from urban environments all over Philadelphia who are growing up surrounded by cement,” said Smith. “For a lot of them, the only greenspace they have is a potted plant or the overgrown vacant lot next door.”

Every Friday, weather permitting, the group of 16 students grabs their hard hats, orange vests, and eye protection, ready for the day’s tasks. LaRue assigns projects that expose the students to invasive plant removal, the impact of soil erosion and trail restoration, water quality, and the importance of keeping pesticides and herbicides out of stormwater infrastructure. The students learn about sustainable land use practices, composting, and even how to use fish to fertilize and feed crops.

After this labor-intensive work, the students go home tired but with a stronger work ethic and sense of purpose and accomplishment that will stay with them beyond graduation. The students also leave with résumé-worthy experience, not only in community service but also in real skills that Smith, a Career and Technical Educator (CTE), notes are at the level you would expect to acquire through an internship, all of which can translate into future jobs or college.

Being outdoors makes for a more relaxed atmosphere than the traditional classroom, but LaRue’s strict attention to safety as the students work with sharp tools, along with clear direction and instruction, makes them focus and take their time. There’s also plenty of fun. And the students have enjoyed every minute of the experience.

“Before we left for winter break, we had hot chocolate and s’mores, made the way they’re supposed to be—over an open fire. Most of the kids had never had it that way,” said Smith.

After being sidelined for a while due to COVID-19, the Saul High School partnership with FOW resumed last year, and the students returned in March for the spring semester.
HABITAT MONITORING CONTINUES

FOW would love your help in capturing the reawakening flora and fauna this spring. Andorra and Houston Meadows are great areas to scout early insects and pollinators, flowering shrubs, and emerging grasses using iNaturalist. For birders, there’s the eBird app to identify early breeding birds. Take a look at the map to help guide your spring habitat monitoring and consult FOW’s new habitat monitoring page on our website for more details and instructions.

SPECIES SCAVENGER HUNT

What lives in Wissahickon Valley Park? Help us find out!

Use eBird to find:  Use iNaturalist to find:

Baltimore Oriole ~ Icterus galbula
Oxalis Fern ~ Matteuccia struthiopteris
Mayapple ~ Podophyllum peltatum
Northern Bumble Bee ~ Bombus fervidus
Pileated Woodpecker ~ Dryocopus pileatus
Common Garter Snake ~ Thamnophis sirtalis
Blondetree ~ Sanguinaria canadensis
Tulip Tree ~ Liriodendron tulipifera
Flowering Dogwood ~ Cornus florida
Horse Chestnut ~ Aesculus Hippocastanum

The Spring 2022 Habitat Monitoring Zones are Andorra and Houston Meadows. Check out fow.org/volunteering/habitat to get started on citizen science!

SAVE THE DATE

ONLINE SPRING VALLEY TALKS

WEDNESDAYS • 6-7 P.M.

Join FOW for informative presentations for members and the public on relevant topics of public land use, environmental advocacy, Pennsylvania wildlife, and more. Valley Talks are a great way to stay informed while supporting FOW’s mission “to conserve the natural beauty and wilderness of the Wissahickon Valley and stimulate public interest therein.” Feel free to invite a friend and get them involved, too! Register to attend a Valley Talk at fow.org/events. Registrants will receive a Zoom link for these free virtual lectures.

APRIL 13
UPDATE PENNSYLVANIA’S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY
with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

MAY 10
THE LENAPE NATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
UPCOMING, FREE VIRTUAL AND/OR IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

Watershed Education Lessons

These lessons are best for third graders and up. They can be presented virtually or safely distanced in person.

General Watershed and Book-Based Lessons

Table-top model shows how pollution enters our waterways.

Drinking Water Treatment or Sewage Treatment

Learn how water from our rivers is cleaned and made safe for drinking, and how dirty water is cleaned and sent back to the river.

Community Programs for Everyone

These free, family-friendly programs offer a way to explore new parks and green spaces and engage in fun activities. Registration is requested but not required, and an adult must attend with children. Programs are offered from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on the following Saturdays:

• April 16 – Decorate Flowerpots at Pleasant Hill
• April 23 – Community Event at Houston Meadow (Rain Date: April 30)
• May 21 – Community Event at Blue Bell Park (Rain Date: June 4)
• June 18 – Archery at FDR Park

Story Times

It’s All About Water

Water-related stories for school children up to grade five.

Little Friends of the Wissahickon

For children in kindergarten through second grade. Participants receive a Certificate of Participation and a prize pack that includes of copy of the Little Friends of the Wissahickon board book.

Register for these programs at: https://www.letsgooutdoors.net/lgo-fow-community-engagement.html

Building community together

At Univest, we firmly believe in giving back to the local communities we serve. For over 145 years, it’s been our way of making a difference each day, through helping to improve the quality of life for our friends and neighbors. Because local values are as important to us as they are to you.
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.

**JOIN FOW’S SUSTAINER PROGRAM**
Support ongoing stewardship through our monthly membership program (and receive a special thank-you gift). Visit fow.org/sustainerprogram

**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.

**SECURE THE WISSAHICKON’S FUTURE: MAKE IT PART OF YOUR LEGACY**
As a membership-based nonprofit, Friends of the Wissahickon depends on gifts and grants from individuals and organizations to continue important work throughout Wissahickon Valley Park. One of the most transformational ways individuals can make a lasting contribution to FOW is through The 1924 Society.

The 1924 Society is a group of committed individuals who have included FOW in their wills or have named FOW in their estate planning. Created by the late Albert Neff (1929–2005), a Philadelphia resident with a passion and love for the wilderness of the Wissahickon, The 1924 Society honors and recognizes the commitment of our friends to ensure that the Wissahickon Valley Park is here for generations to come.

Contributions from members of The 1924 Society make a lasting impact. Over the past decade, these friends have invested over $500,000 to help fulfill FOW’s ongoing stewardship mission in Wissahickon Valley Park. Support from these thoughtful individuals helps provide the robust educational programming and stewardship efforts needed to protect the water quality of the Wissahickon Creek and preserve the native habitat throughout the 1,800-acre park.

Members of The 1924 Society, who include FOW in their estate plans or will, receive a lifetime membership, invitations to special events, and advanced information about FOW programs and projects. Learn more about The 1924 Society at fow.org/1924society or contact Sarah Marley at marley@fow.org.
Down:
1. summer, fall, winter, ________
3. Birds lay their eggs in a ________.
6. The color of grass and leaves is ________.
7. Baby ________ are fluffy, yellow and hatch from eggs.
8. A caterpillar transforms into a ________.
10. It might rain; don’t forget your ________.

Across:
2. ________ puddles
4. “You are my ________” (song title)
5. A tadpole grows into a ________.
9. “Mary had a little ________; its fleece was white as snow.”

KIDS’ VALLEY
Games, Puzzles, Crafts, and more.

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COLOR
1. summer, fall, winter, __________
2. RAIN
3. Birds lay their eggs in a __________.
4. SUNSHINE
5. FROG
6. The color of grass and leaves is __________.
7. Baby __________ are fluffy, yellow and hatch from eggs.
8. BUTTERFLY
9. “Mary had a little _ _ _ _______; its fleece was white as snow.”
10. UMBRELLA

**POPCORN CHERRY BLOSSOM**

Decorate the tree with painted popcorn.

**SUPPLIES:**
- Paper plate
- Pink Paint
- Small paintbrush
- White school glue

**Directions:**
Place about 3 Tbs. of pink paint on one side of the paper plate and the same amount of white school glue on the other side. Dip popcorn in the pink paint or use a small paintbrush to apply the paint. Then dip the popcorn in the glue and stick it to the tree. Repeat until your tree is in full bloom.

**FOX’S SCAVENGER HUNT**

Go for a hike this spring in Wissahickon Valley Park and help Fox find everything on his list.

- NEW LEAF
- GREEN GRASS
- MUD
- TRAIL KIOSK
- FIDDLEHEAD
- ROBIN
- JOGGER
- CANADA GOOSE
- TADPOLE
- FLOWER
- INSECT
- TREE BLOSSOM