



FRIENDS
OF THE
WISSAHICKON

BEHIND THE SCENERY

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Photo by Kyle Kielinski



Behind the Scenery of Wissahickon Valley Park, a landscape whose beauty is only matched by its ecological vitality, are thousands of hours of invisible care.

The fallen tree that once stretched across the trail is gone.

In a familiar clearing, a grove of newly planted saplings now stands, each one carefully protected in wire.

While navigating a season of change, during Friends of the Wissahickon's (FOW) search for our next permanent Executive Director in 2025, FOW's incredible team of volunteers, board members, and staff never wavered in their quiet care for Wissahickon Valley Park. That steadiness, work done without fanfare and repeated day after day, is what allows the Wissahickon to feel both timeless and alive. It also positions FOW to evolve.

As we steer the organization into our second century of stewardship, we are investing in innovative models of care and deepening the ways our community can participate in shaping the park's future.

The Zone Stewards Program has transformed a vast 2,000+ acres of parkland into six manageable sections, each supported by its own team of volunteer Crew Leaders to regularly steward their trails. These trusted volunteers have significantly expanded FOW's capacity for stewardship—in 2025, FOW volunteers and staff removed 177% more invasive growth than we did in 2024. With additional support from the William Penn Foundation, we will continue to grow the program by increasing volunteer participation, investing in additional training and tools, and developing a Zone Stewards field guide in 2026.

The Year-Round Youth Crew Program was designed to create hands-on opportunities for Philadelphia School District students to care for the Wissahickon while building skills and connections to the natural world. This work extended into a Spring Break Youth Crew experience, offering students a meaningful alternative to time away from school, one rooted in stewardship, teamwork, and exposure to green career pathways. These programs are not only providing opportunities to protect the park today; they are cultivating the next generation of its stewards.

The Wayfinding Gap Analysis, in partnership with the National Park Service—Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA), built a framework to improve navigation across Wissahickon Valley Park. After surveying more than 150 visitors, we learned that only 10% primarily rely on park signage. In response, we've begun closing that gap—adding blazes, installing kiosks and posts, and repairing trail posts—while continuing to invest in tools and education that help every visitor feel confident navigating the Wissahickon.

On behalf of FOW, thank you for an incredible year of service. Whether it's a restored trail, a volunteer workday, or a landscape renewed for the future, this is the care that lives just beyond the scenery.

Sara Stevenson
Executive Director

Garrett Trego
President



Photo by Kyle Kielinski



TREASURER'S REPORT

2025 was a year of thoughtful growth and steady progress for Friends of the Wissahickon, reinforcing the foundation for the park's future.

Following the extraordinary pace of our centennial year, 2025 provided an opportunity to strengthen the systems, partnerships, and financial stability that support the long-term stewardship of Wissahickon Valley Park. Support from our community remained exceptionally strong across a broad range of revenue sources, from individual giving and foundation support to earned income generated through the Valley Green Inn. Particularly encouraging was the continued growth in major gifts, including donor-recognized planks and benches throughout the park, reflecting a deepening investment in both the Wissahickon and the organization's future.

At the same time, several significant grants received this year positioned Friends of the Wissahickon to advance major restoration, engagement, and infrastructure initiatives in the years ahead. As some project timelines extended into 2026, related expenditures were deferred accordingly.

This disciplined approach, combined with continued donor confidence, allowed FOW to end the year in a strong financial position. Total net assets increased to more than \$1.5 million, including \$910,000 in unrestricted net assets supporting operations and reserves. Cash and investments remained strong at more than \$1.3 million, and both lines of credit, totaling \$450,000, were fully available at year-end.

Just as important as the numbers themselves is what they make possible. Financial stability gives Friends of the Wissahickon the ability to respond to emerging needs in the park, sustain the daily work of stewardship and education, and undertake ambitious projects that protect the Wissahickon for future generations.

Behind every trail improvement, restoration effort, school field trip, and volunteer day is a community of people who believe this landscape matters. Thank you for continuing to invest in the care, resilience, and future of the Wissahickon.

Submitted by

Darium K Poke

Darium Poke, Treasurer

Notes:

During 2024, revenue from Special Events, Net primarily consisted of proceeds generated from the Centennial Gala, a one-time milestone event. No gala was held in 2025.

At December 31, 2024, Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses consisted of outstanding costs related to the completion of the Valley Green Run Pedestrian Bridge project, these were substantially settled during 2025.

ASSETS		
ASSETS	2024	2025
Cash	\$403,035	\$508,322
Investments	\$1,172,424	\$830,319
Contributions & Grants Receivable	\$1,226,602	\$621,294
Operating Lease Right-of-Use Asset	\$156,627	\$244,109
Other Assets	\$110,439	\$116,623
TOTAL ASSETS	\$3,069,127	\$2,320,667
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
LIABILITIES	2024	2025
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$1,214,782	\$68,099
Operating Lease Liability	\$156,627	\$260,454
EIDL COVID Loan Payable	\$497,766	\$484,848
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,869,175	\$813,401
NET ASSETS	2024	2025
Without Donor Restrictions	\$889,343	\$910,051
With Donor Restrictions	\$310,609	\$597,215
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$1,199,952	\$1,507,266
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$3,069,127	\$2,320,667
REVENUE & EXPENSES		
REVENUE	2024	2025
Membership	\$283,253	\$300,074
Contributions & Grants	\$2,700,720	\$1,816,866
Special Events, Net	\$441,617	\$17,361
Donated Services	\$24,698	\$85,976
Other Income	\$339,218	\$312,228
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,789,506	\$2,532,505
EXPENSES	2024	2025
Programs	\$4,076,081	\$1,401,079
Development & Marketing	\$384,476	\$329,547
Management	\$429,793	\$494,565
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,890,350	\$2,225,191

**Includes donated services.
Note: All 2024 and 2025 figures are audited



Thank you for getting your hands dirty with us this year! The dedication of our volunteers enriches the experience of every park visitor.

Photo by Stacey Gray

Engagement

VOLUNTEER SERVICE DAYS:

- 1,427 individual volunteers
- 200 service days
- 19,073 volunteer hours
- 83 Wissahero shifts
- 77 Zone Stewards work sessions
- 13 corporate groups

TRAIL AMBASSADORS:

- 230 outreach shifts (28 more than last year!)
- 61 Walks & Talks (728 attendees)
- Welcomed 22 new Trail Ambassadors (12 more than last year!)

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- Junior Stewards program
- 9 school groups, including:
 - ◊ Building 21 Philadelphia
 - ◊ Episcopal Academy
 - ◊ Greene Street Friends School
 - ◊ Multicultural Academy Charter School
 - ◊ Norwood-Fontbonne Academy
 - ◊ W.B. Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences
- Little Friends of the Wissahickon
 - ◊ 812 K-2nd graders
 - ◊ 21 field trips
 - ◊ 14 class visits

Forbidden Drive is breathtaking across all four seasons, but in the fall, it truly shines. We stepped out into the scene with Hike+Heal at one of our partner hikes. Photo by Stacey Gray



Our volunteers come out early on Saturday mornings and on chilly days like here, on our Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day, to beautify the park on behalf of every park user.

Photo by Stacey Gray

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Outreach event attendees: 841 attendees

FOW tabling events:

- ◊ Pretzel Park Farmers Market (Manayunk)
- ◊ GreenPhilly Ecofair (Center City)
- ◊ Disability Pride (Center City)
- ◊ Academy of Natural Sciences
- ◊ Dinos After Dark (Center City)
- ◊ REI Member Day (KOP)
- ◊ Chestnut Hill Fall for the Arts
- ◊ Germantown Night Market

Park users and neighbors engaged with FOW online:

- FOW.org – 393,000 page visits
- Facebook – 26,700 friends
- Instagram – 31,600 followers

Infrastructure

TRAILS IMPROVED:

- **42 miles of trail improved**
 - ◊ Much of this was completed by our volunteer Crew Leaders, who have been participating in our Zone Steward initiative, heading out in groups to trim the corridor, clear drains, remove debris, and report issues to us.

VOLUNTEER & STAFF PROJECTS:

- **Houston Meadow trail improvements**
 - ◊ Staff and volunteers completed a variety of work along the Houston Meadow trail to improve sustainability, including a 275-foot reroute from a highly eroded section of trail.
- **White Trail reroute at Livezey Lane**
 - ◊ Responding to an emergency gully formed by intense stormwater runoff, staff completed a 200-foot reroute at the trailhead along Livezey Lane to provide safer passage for trail users.

CREW LEADERS:

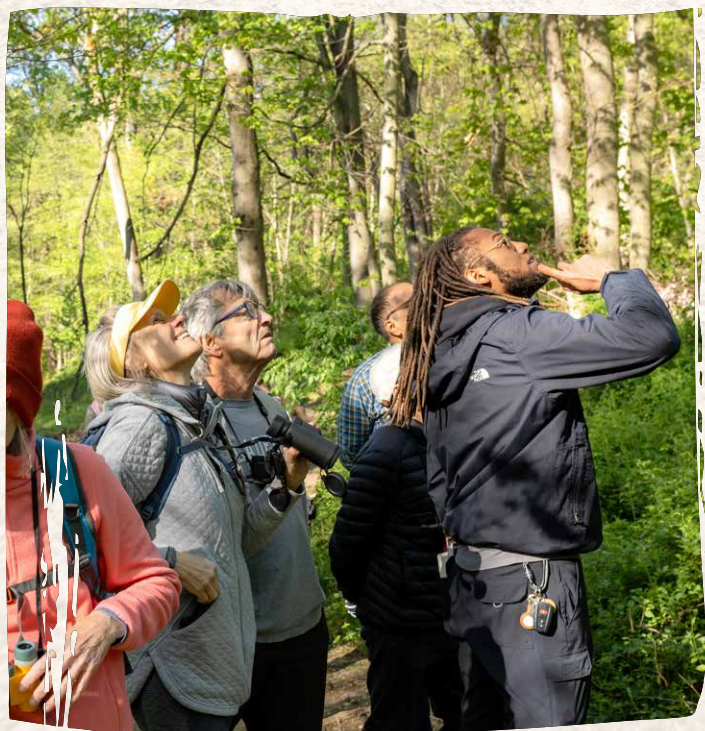
- **91 downed trees removed from the trails**
- **Welcomed 21 new Crew Leaders!**

STRUCTURES CREW:

- **Improved the snack bar at Valley Green Inn**
 - ◊ Replaced a support post on the pergola in the snack bar at Valley Green Inn that had been damaged from a fallen tree.
- **Reshingled the roof of the Kitchen's Lane structure**
 - ◊ Replaced the damaged cedar shingle roof on the historic WPA structure at the Kitchen's Lane Bridge.



FOW's longest-running trained volunteer group, the Structures Crew, repaired the Kitchen's Lane structure this year to its original glory. Photo by FOW staff



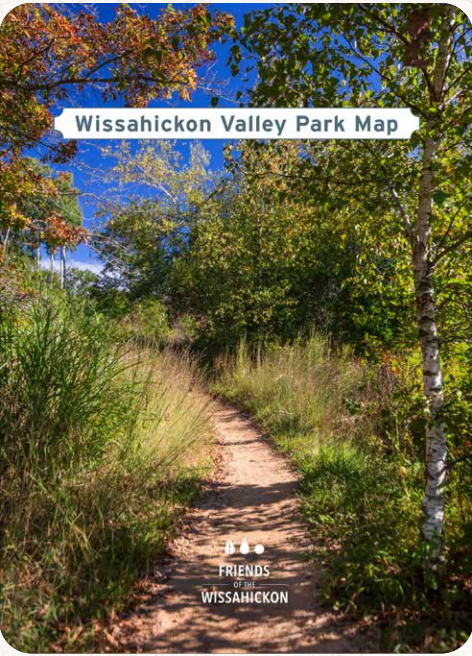
Learning to identify birds by sight and sound with Troy Bynum of TB Wildlife Photography at his brand-new Bird Walks Along the Wissahickon series. Photo by Stacey Gray

Habitat

- **352,600 square feet of invasive plants removed (177% increase from 2024)**
- **550 native trees and shrubs planted at:**
 - ◊ North of Red Covered Bridge
 - ◊ Yellow Trail near Kitchen's Lane
 - ◊ Hermitage Mansion
 - ◊ Houston Meadow
- **16 tons of litter removed**
- **Habitat Boxes installed (young, fledged):**
 - ◊ 14 Eastern Bluebirds
 - ◊ 2 Carolina Chickadees
 - ◊ 32 House Wrens
 - ◊ 39 Tree Swallows



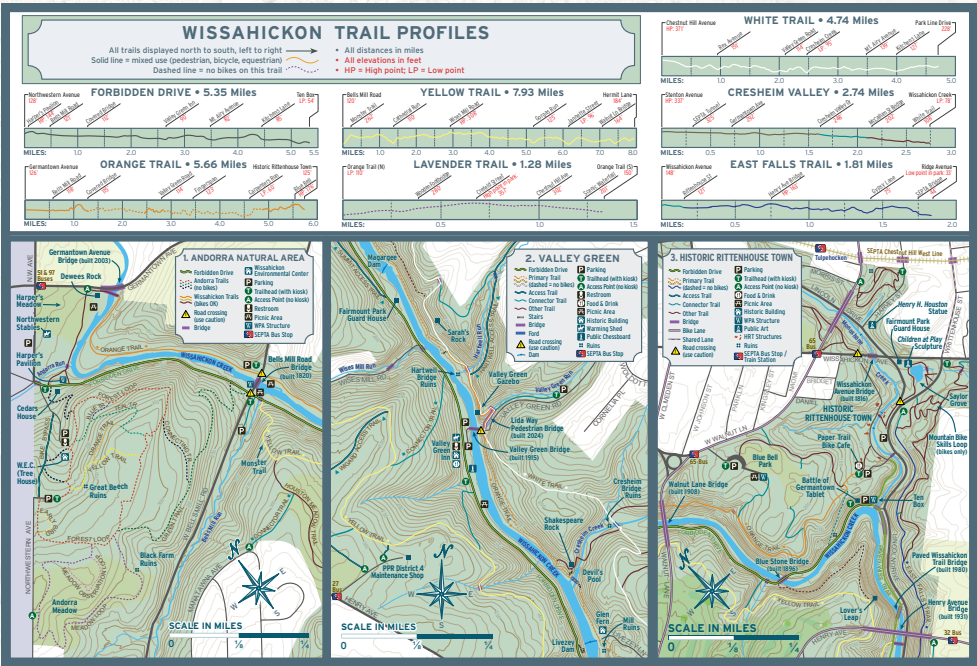
Native plantings support wildlife, filter runoff before it enters our drinking water sources, reduce erosion, and cool the air on hot days-plus, they're beautiful! Photo by Stacey Gray



OUR NEW POCKET MAP

In 2025, FOW released the newest edition of our signature member benefit: the Wissahickon Valley Park pocket map.

This update marks the most significant redesign since 2016. In addition to reflecting recent trail reroutes and new landmarks like the Lida Way Pedestrian Bridge, the map features two new insets to provide additional detail on the greater Valley Green and Historic Rittenhouse Town areas.



What else is new?

On the map side, we introduced an elevation change scale (shown to the right) to illustrate the range of terrain visitors may encounter along the trail. This helps increase accessibility for individuals with varying abilities as they are better equipped to plan their visit.

Visitors of Forbidden Drive and Cresheim Trail will enjoy more gentle grades, while those on the White, Yellow, and Orange Trails will see greater hills and changes in elevation.

On the flip side, you'll find a freshly streamlined points-of-interest section that connects visitors with all the park has to offer: works of art, bodies of water, WPA structures, and more, each marked with its own icon on the map side.

As a part of our continued commitment to Leave No Trace, we've included the seven principles on the information side, so visitors can easily reference them while enjoying the park.

This project was designed by our partner and friend, Brad Maule, Executive Director of Friends of the Cresheim Trail (FOCT), which also displays his stunning photography.

Visitors of Forbidden Drive and the Cresheim Trail will enjoy more gentle grades, while those on the White, Yellow, and Orange Trails will see greater hills and changes in elevation.

WORKS OF ART

Public art is found throughout the park and includes *Toleration*, a depiction of William Penn (Herman Kirn, 1883); *Henry H. Houston* (J. Massey Rhind, 1900); *Looking West* (Rhind, 1902); and *Children at Play* (Peter Rockwell, 1978). Jody Pinto's *Fingerspan*, a bridge installed in 1987, subtly references Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel.



BODIES OF WATER

Wissahickon Valley Park was created in the 1860s as part of the original vision for Fairmount Park to protect Philadelphia's water supply. With headwaters in Montgomery County, 7 of the Wissahickon Creek's 23 miles flow through the park. It's fed by dozens of tributaries, including larger ones like Wises Mill Run and Cresheim Creek, and smaller ones without names.



DONORS

Friends of the Wissahickon wishes to extend thanks to all those who financially supported our work in 2025. Many individuals, foundations, and corporations have donated generously to help fund FOW's programs and operations. We are grateful for every gift we receive and are pleased to list the following contributors whose cumulative donations were above \$500.

◆ Current members of FOW's Board of Directors

◆ Current members of the Society of Generous Friends who have contributed \$1,000 or more. These major gifts are unrestricted and support the mission of Friends of the Wissahickon.

◆ Deceased

With special recognition to our national, state, city, and nonprofit partners:

Commonwealth Financing Authority
Fairmount Park Conservancy
Friends of the Cresheim Trail
Friends of Carpenter's Woods
Hike+Heal
Historic Rittenhouse Town
Let's Go Outdoors
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
PAPERtrail Bike Cafe
Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Philadelphia Department of Streets
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation
Philadelphia Water Department
Philly Queer Birders
PowerCorpsPHL
Photography Without Borders
School District of Philadelphia
TB Wildlife Photography
Weavers Way Co-op
Wissahickon Restoration Volunteers
Wissahickon Trails
Wissahickon Wanderers

\$10,000 and up

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Debra Rogers ◆
Doug Schaller & David Barquist ◆
Robert & Judith Sturgis Family Foundation Trust
Lane Taylor Jr. & Virginia Clark ◆
Meredith & Garrett ◆ Trego ◆





Brandi Aulston of Hike+Heal lending a hand to hike participants at the June installment of our partner family-hike series. Photo by Stacey Gray

\$1,000-\$2,499

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Elizabeth Vaughan
Samuel Vrooman
Rich Walk
Sophia & James Walker
Jon Weinstein
Ammie White
Robert White
Christine ◆ & Reed Wilmerding
Mark Winicov & Marie Ford

61 volunteers rolled up their sleeves at this year's Earth Day clean-up. Photo by Stacey Gray





This year, we installed signage at Devil's Pool to encourage park users to Leave No Trace. Photo by FOW staff

Tributes

In honor of Jack Allahand

Doff Meyer
Jonathan and Andrea Moselle

In memory of Dr. R. Andrew Anderson

Barbara and W. J. Culbert

In honor of Zoe Bagenstose

Maeve Pollack

In memory of Michael Bailin

J. Michael Dzuba
Karen and Handsel Minyard
Mary and Donald Pritchard

In memory of Jerome Balka

Christie Balka

In memory of Bo Bo

Christopher Hertneky

In memory of Emilie Rivinus Bregy

Carol Reznikoff

In honor of Tia Burke and Jeremy Heep

Louisa and Mauricio Garrido

In memory of Victoria McQuaide Clark

Victoria Kauffman

In memory of Mary Cooper

Theresa Paone

In memory of Deanna

Ronald Kravitz

In memory of Kevin Dougherty

Amy Dougherty

In memory of Sergio Esperdy

Sandra Koulouris
Anne Savarese
New Jersey Institute of Technology,
Hiller College of Architecture of Design

In memory of Joan Feeny

Beau Feeny

In memory of Rick Fine

Anne and Andy Stevens

In honor of Jay Flaherty

Nanie Flaherty

In honor of William Ford

Jacqueline Ford

In memory of Michael Freedman

Ann Davis
Ruth and Jules Mermelstein

In honor of Chrissy Goodbody and Omar Sherbini

David and Anne Horn

In honor of Adam and Kristina Green

Stephanie Hawley

In memory of Daniel Halevy

Susan Stewart

In memory of Gordon Henderson

Brendan Curran
Margaret Mund

In honor of Anna Herman

Donovan Hayes

In honor of Al Hoffman's 90th Birthday

Jacqueline Doerr
Darren Hoffman
Susan Hoffman

In honor of Jayne and Rocky's Anniversary

Jim and Marlene Jacono
Ida Marie Kelleher

In honor of Katharine Jones

Jan Fernback

In memory of Zoey Kinniry

Emily Murphy

In memory of Teddy Kradzinski

Joyce Wojtowicz

In honor of Nancy Fuchs Kreimer and Seth Kreimer

Frances Kreimer
Rena Kreimer

In memory of Jane and Joseph Levitt

Sam Levitt

In honor of Sarah Marley's Extraordinary Leadership of FOW and Service to the Wissahickon

Anonymous
Ruffian Tittmann and Kyle Dunleavy

In memory of Nicholas T. Marudas

Stephanie Marudas and Dimitri Pappas

In memory of Jerry Matt

Jeff and Janine Cabot

In memory of Eva Mayro

Anonymous

In memory of Gina Michelle Mazzitelli

Elizabeth Pecoraro

In honor of Ruby Davis McCollum

Susan and Legrome Davis

In honor of the McDevitt Family

Eleanor and Charlton Ames
Isabel and William Schoenberg

In memory of Michael McKeever

James and Barbara Cassidy
Joan McIlvaine
Celeste McKeever
Rosemary McKeever
Elaine Packer
Joseph Taylor

In honor of the McWilliams Family

David Wolf

In memory of George R. Mihalik

Alexander Dybowski

In honor of Mary Margaret Monser

Kate Henry

In memory of Paul Myers

Sharyn and Michael Vergare

In honor of Ruth Neifeld

Deborah Davis

In honor of Neil O'Brien

Marjorie Fitzpatrick

In honor of Principals of Thriven Design

Ryan Wolfe

In memory of Robert Przywieczerski

Suzanne Quinn

In honor of Rachel and Daniel's joyous wedding

Rebecca Sax

In memory of Otto E. Reichert-Facilides

Christina Reichert

In honor of Jennifer Rezeli

Barbara Gorka

In honor of Bonnee and Jeff Richer

Judith Price

In memory of Loretta Seiden

Kathleen and Frank Seidman

Elaine Wilson and Cynthia Masitti

In memory of Dena Sher

Fay Menacker

In memory of Mary Sinis

Amanda Shields

In memory of Shannon Sori

Jacqueline Keepers

In honor of Beth Stearman and Jake Kriger

Rob Garfield and Sandy Whipple

In memory of David Stein

Ilene Brill

Linda Comers

Robin Eisman

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Aaron Freedland

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Susie and Chuck Gettes

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Suzanne and Crawford Hill

Deborah Hoellein and James McClory

Todd Jones

Frances LaRosa

Mary and Frank Longbottom

Lois Millner

Dan Moscow and Sharon Strauss

Louis and Laura Romano

Michelle Scolnick

Lenore Steinmetz

Pam Vinocur

Mara Wai

Marvin and Lillian Weilerstein

In memory of Laurel Stell and Zepplynn Milici

Kara Milici

In honor of Jen Tanay

Kathleen McGuffin

In honor of Sibyl and Paul Thomas

Elizabeth Quigg

In memory of Trevor John Tierney

Stephen Tierney

In memory of Richard Curtis Ulstad

Stephanie Marudas and Dimitri Pappas

In memory of Dr. Vasant and Nancy Dhopes

Praful Mainker

In memory of Herman Vinokur

Ellen Atkins

Carol Barash

Dorothy Bates

Mary Lee Broder

Helene Hernandez

Wendy and Gary Lubin

Ed Martino

Ellen Nolff

Dori Pavel

Andrea Reid

Marlene Vegter

Sandra Wechsler

In memory of Sarah West

Anonymous

Shelagh Cummings

Ann Dunipace

Deborah Hoellein and James McClory

Carolyn West

In honor of the Winsten Family

Maddy Winsten

In honor of John and Rose Zuknick

J. Scott Laughlin

While great care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of these lists, mistakes can occur. Please accept our sincere apologies for any discrepancies, and let us know if you are listed incorrectly.

FOW staff at our annual Halloween service day, dressed to the theme: flora and fauna of the Wissahickon. Photo by Stacey Gray





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