

**FRIENDS OF RIDLEY
CREEK STATE PARK**

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF IN-
TEREST:**

**Join us for trail work
the first Saturday of
each month. Contact**

**Gary Sawyer, Trails
Director, at**

**Muddy
boots@comcast.net**

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The Friends

VOLUME II ISSUE II

SPRING / SUMMER 2009

Open House at the Mansion

The Friends hosted an Open House at the Hunting Hill Mansion on April 19 starting at 1 pm. Rain had been threatened, but the weather actually turned out quite nice. With the help of advance publicity by Pam Cloud and park signs by Jack Miller, about 150 people passed through during the 3 hours of the Open House. It was an event that will be remembered for its warmth, information, and fun!

glers were there, with Steve Kosiak answering questions about fishing in the Park.

Carol Rubin offered information about Hidden Valley Farm, the horse stable concession that resides in the park. A tour was given of the beautiful barn, office, and party room, as well as an opportunity to observe a riding lesson given by Ellie Chidester, Hidden Valley Farm's owner,

along with her husband, Tom. Trail rides, pony rides, pony parties, horse boarding and riding lessons are all part of what makes Hidden Valley Farm special. In addition, trails running along

Ridley Creek into the park are beautiful every season of the year. Participants enjoyed the tour of this jewel that is Hidden Valley Farm.

The Ridley Creek State Park's Education Department, led by Stacey Karen Bamash, Environmental Education Specialist, used the opportunity to meet people and discuss upcoming park events. They are always looking

for suggestions to improve programming and encourage people to call the park at 610-892-3908 or email

ra-nrspridlenved@state.pa.us to share their ideas. Interested people can also ask to get on their mailing list for park events.

The Friends had our own table. Joan Nikelsky, Tony Ieradi, and John Kennedy alternated shifts at the membership end of the Friends table, offering information to people considering joining the Friends, selling T-shirts, and giving out free trees to those who joined, courtesy of Master Gardener Alyce Zellers. We gained 12 new members and one renewal. New members had a choice of trees: blue spruce, Fothergilla, and Viburnum.

At the other end of the Friend's table, Tim Higgins and Alyce Zellers acquainted guests with gardening tips and information about invasive plants. There was a slide presentation for identifying many of the invasive plants in our area, along with samples of some of the more common ones: multiflora rose, winged euonymus (burning bush),



**Visitors at one of the
exhibits**

In addition to the various groups that are part of what makes up Ridley Creek State Park, the afternoon had various opportunities for guests to learn about what is available to the community. The Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation had a table of information and handouts, hosted by June Palomba. The Delco An-

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Open House at the Mansion

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and Japanese barberry. Many people were surprised to learn that winged euonymus is an invasive plant problem, because it is still being sold in certain garden stores (as a primarily cheap and attractive plant in the autumn). Slides were also shown of the recent work week (April 6 – 10) for removing invasive plants from a high value area of the Park. Publications were available of native alternatives to invasive plants that can be used in different soil and sunlight locations, courtesy of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

In addition, a video was shown of some of the recent trail work done by a very active and dedicated group of volunteers that convenes in the Park the first Saturday

of every month to maintain trails, build bridges, and do other work projects. The video was photographed and produced by Friends member Jim Phelan. His film featured the reconstruction of a new bridge on the blue trail.

A popular event during the Open House was the tour of the Mansion, led by our historian, Kay Ferrari. At least 40 guests participated on four separate tours that included the first floor and part of the second floor. Kay related stories about the Jeffords family, their prize-winning horses, and their connections with Sam Riddle and other Philadelphia area community leaders. She also spoke about some of the history and architecture of the building itself.

Last but not least, delicious refreshments

were prepared by Paul Mickle. Everyone appreciated the fruit and home-made cupcakes that Paul provided!

A special thanks also goes to Bernice Webb, the Park's receptionist, who responded to callers and helped promote the event.



Kay Ferrari, park historian, leads a group on a guided tour of the mansion.



Friends Annual Picnic June 14th at the Park

On Sunday June 14, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park will hold a picnic and annual meeting for all members and interested Park users from 10 am-1 pm. The location for the event is Pavilion 14, which is off Sandy Flash Drive South. The picnic and meeting will be held rain or shine; Pavilion 14 is a sheltered site and was erected and dedicated just last year. The day will begin at 10 am with a walk on the trails for those who are interested, led by Gary Sawyer, Trails Chair. At the same time, there will be games and sports activities near the Pavilion.

The picnic will be at 12 noon, compliments of the Friends: hamburgers, hot dogs, home-made coleslaw, beverages, and other picnic fare. Following lunch, we will report briefly on the year's activities, vote on bylaw changes, and conduct elections for Vice-President and Recording Secretary. Current members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and newly signed up members will be able to vote.

An RSVP is not required, but would be helpful so we can plan the food. Please e-mail members@friendsofrcsp.org by June 11 if you plan to attend. We hope to see you there!



CALENDAR 2010?

Wouldn't you love to have the opportunity to buy a 2010 calendar full of pictures of Ridley Creek State Park? We are looking for someone to help make it happen again, as we have done twice in the past. We have many beautiful photos of the Park that were entries in our annual Photo Contest. If you have any interest in this project, give a call to Board member Tony Ieradi at 610-742-7252 or email anthony_ieradi@hotmail.com



Friends on the Trail & In the Community

When the weather is nice on the weekend, you might see a table set up on the Multi-Use Trail with information from the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park: hiking trail maps, brochures, and membership forms. We may even offer your dog a biscuit. We try to get out and meet Park users a few times a year to let them know of our activities and services. This is one way we gain new members. We welcome your support and participation!



Friends Board members Carol Rubin, John Kennedy, and Gary Sawyer talk to a Park visitor.

This year The Friends participated in the annual Middletown Township Community Pride Day event held May 9, 2009 on the grounds of Williamson Trade School. Board Members John Kennedy and Tony Ieradi manned a table and provided passers-by with information about The Friends, and all that the park has to offer. The event was a great opportunity to educate the public, and solicit a few donations. We plan to participate in this event in 2010 as well.

Grounds & Gardens Volunteer Day

Starting this summer, on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 9 AM to 12 noon, volunteers will have the opportunity to do light gardening work and help clear invasive plants at various areas around the park. If trail work is not your thing and you want to help preserve the beauty of the park, join the Grounds & Gardens Volunteer

Day, headed up by Board member and Treasurer John Kennedy. Gloves and tools will be provided. Just show up at the Park office on June 20th or contact John at www.friendsofrcsp.org/admin/officials.htm if you have questions, or want to sign up for e-mail reminders of future G & G Days.

Art at the Mansion

If you've been in the Mansion lately, you have probably noticed some new decorations on the walls – mainly, some of the photographs that were entries in the Friends' Annual Photo Contest. Thanks to the generosity of Bernice Webb, who purchased frames, and then mounted and hung the pictures, eight photographs now grace the walls in the office and hallways. In addition, an original charcoal drawing of a stone bench in the Mansion garden area has been donated by the artist, Peter Smyth, and can be seen in the hallway leading to the ballroom. We hope you enjoy the photos, and who knows, maybe one day your photo from the contest will be hung on our walls or appear in a calendar.

Volunteer Bonfire Event & Special Trail Work Day

Many volunteers show up the first Saturday of every month to help maintain the Park's trails. To express our thanks, the Friends provided a Thank You cookout on Friday, April 3. Ann Hodgdon organized the feast of hot dogs, baked beans, fresh grilled vegetables, and other picnic fare. Unsettled weather deterred a few people, but those who did join us at Pavilion 17 were also treated to a spectacular rainbow with the meal. As dusk turned to evening, we enjoyed a bonfire and every kid's favorite campout dessert, 'smores. Some of us spent the night in cozy tents, to be treated the next morning to Ann's blueberry pancakes. Well, there is no such thing as a free breakfast, so it was off to work Saturday morning to replace a small footbridge on the Blue Trail. About 15 volunteers carried the tools and lumber through the woods to the site, where we removed the old bridge and re-used some of the parts in good shape to secure a foundation for the new bridge. Hammers and nails flying, we finished the project by lunch time. Here again, Nature offered a pleasant surprise: a crayfish working its way up the little stream was spotted by an alert volunteer. Thanks to the many volunteers who made this and all our other gatherings an enjoyable way to help the Park together.



Invasive Plants Work Week

During the second week of April 2009, the Friends of Ridley Creek and other concerned volunteers participated in a Work Week for eradicating encroaching invasive vegetation in



a high value area of Ridley Creek State Park -- below picnic area 9. The work was

supervised by Resource Manager Rachel Wagoner of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The location for the work was based on the recommendations of Ann Rhoads, PhD, and Timothy Block, PhD, of the University of Pennsylvania and Morris Arboretum. Drs. Rhoads and Block studied Ridley Creek State Park for a year and then published their report "Vegetation of Ridley Creek State Park". Invasive plants such as winged euonymus, obtuse-leaved privet, Japanese barberry, Ori-

ental bittersweet, and some multiflora rose were targeted. These plants are shade tolerant and can outcompete native plants due to heavy deer browsing and an accelerated growth cycle. Native plants, having evolved over centuries of a stable ecosystem, are slow to recover so human assistance is sometimes needed.

During the Work Week, an area of approximately 40 acres was treated. The area is considered high value because much of it is, as it naturally should be, populated primarily with native plants. The shade tolerant invasive plants are just beginning to move into this area. By addressing their encroachment now, we will significantly reduce problems in the future.

The invasive plants were removed by cutting, mechanical removal (pulling them out), and with herbicide. Dr. Rhoads commented a couple weeks after the completion of this program that she considered it very worthwhile. Approximately 15 volunteers contributed over 150 hours of volunteer time during

the Work Week.

There will be a follow up program of invasive plant removal in the last week of August. We will continue working in the above mentioned area and in other areas where Paulownia, Japanese hops, and other invasive plants have been identified.



This article was contributed by Friends Board member Tim Higgins. Contact Tim at 610-355-9208 if you are interested in this project. The report from Drs. Rhoads and Block is posted on our website www.friendsofrcsp.org. The invasive plants project was discussed in the Fall/Winter 2009 newsletter.

Astronomy Event at The Park

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy, as 400 years ago Galileo and Kepler made their amazing discoveries. To mark this occasion, the Chester County Astronomical Society will be hosting an observing event on June 27, 2009 at Ridley Creek State Park during the Great American Backyard Campout. The event will begin at 9 PM in area 11, which is off Sandy Flash Drive South. The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park welcome all interested members and other Park users. Members of the CCAS will have their telescopes set up and pointed at various interesting objects in the sky. The moon will be visible, as will Saturn, clusters, double stars, and maybe even a meteor or a passing satellite. It promises to be an interesting and educational event. Should the weather be cloudy, some members of the CCAS will be there to talk about astronomy topics of interest, including the different types of telescopes, and how to find one that will work well for a beginner.

Anyone who is interested in astronomy or would like to learn about astronomy can visit www.ccas.us for more information.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 14, 10 AM – Member picnic and annual meeting at Pavilion 14.

Saturday, June 6, 9 AM – National Trails Day! Regularly scheduled trail work, first Saturday of each month. Meet at Park office.

Saturday, June 20, AM – New Grounds & Gardens Day to be held the third Saturday of each month. Meet at Park office.

Last week of August, exact date TBD – Invasive Plants Work Project to continue. Contact Tim Higgins, 610-352-9208.

2009

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