

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST:

Join us for trail work
the first Saturday
of each month.
Contact
Gary Sawyer,
Trails Director,
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The Friends

VOLUME IV ISSUE I

SPRING/SUMMER 2011

Ridley Park Manager Retires



Roger McChesney, Ridley Creek State
Park Superintendent, now retired

Roger McChesney, Superintendent/Manager of Ridley Creek State Park for the past 11 years, retired in April 2011. Roger had been the Park Manager since May 2000. During his tenure many improvements and changes have occurred in the park: The Friends volunteer group was organized, the park office at Hunting Hill Mansion was totally refurbished, new hiking trails were opened, picnic facilities were expanded, the wedding program was established, the horse stables were extended, and the park's infrastructure was improved.

Our group, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park, owes its existence to the vision of Roger McChesney, and for this we are most grateful. It was at his insistence, and

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Spring Open House at the Mansion May 15

The Friends will host the 3rd annual Open House at the park, featuring information about activities and groups in the park. It will be on Sunday, May 15, between 1:00 and 3:00 pm. If the weather is nice, look for us on the circular driveway in front of the Mansion. In case of inclement weather, we will be in the ballroom of the Mansion.

The Friends will have a table offering trail maps, free water, copies of the Friends newsletters, flyers about upcoming events, and membership forms for people considering joining. We will have T-shirts for sale. Our Gardens Chair Alyce Zellers will have a tree ready for planting, to be given as a prize in a

drawing for current members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park who attend the Open House and new people who join on the day of the Open House. Come and sign up for the drawing!

Among the groups to be represented at the Open House are the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation, the Craft Guild Foundation, the Delco-Manning Trout Unlimited Chapter #320, the Delco Anglers, and the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association, which will display a natural history exhibit. In addition, an artist who resides in the park, Letitia, will be showing her paintings of various scenes at Ridley.

Friends 2010-2011 Photo Contest Winners



Carol Rubin, Photo Contest organizer, awarding 1st prize, Adult category, to Angela Peso.

The 2010-2011 Photo Contest award ceremony was held on Sunday, January 30th, at the Hunting Mill Mansion. Over 50 entries were submitted by talented local amateur photographers. The judge for the contest was Patti Kelly, an experienced newspaper photographer who now teaches adults and children. She is familiar with the park and applauded all the participants for their vision, talent, and creativity with their photos.

While all of the works showcased the talent of the photographers, Patti decided to award several Honorable Mentions in addition to the major prizes in Adult and Youth categories. The winners of this year's contest are: Adult category: 1st prize, Angela Peso; 2nd prize, Lucille Pardo; 3rd prize, Valerie Furlan; Honorable Mentions, Lauren Remaley and Sandy Thompson; Youth category: 1st prize, Julian Maurer; 2nd prize, Willa Thompson; Honorable Men-

tion: Mitchel Davis. Congratulations and thank you to all who shared the beauty of the park with us!

Honorable Mention winner in the Youth category, Mitchel Davis, shared his experience in an article he wrote for his school newspaper: "I love nature, so we traveled out to Ridley Creek State Park, and I took a lot of pictures. My camera battery died halfway out on the trail, but I had already taken a really good picture of a street sign in the park. I was thinking that the signs looked really old...like they had been there forever just like the trails in the park. I bet those signs could probably tell a lot of stories!" After the contest, park historian Kay Ferrari gave a Mansion tour to interested attendees. Refreshments were served during the event. The next photo contest will be held on January 29, 2012... so you have plenty of time to get your pictures ready!

Furthermore, because of the outstanding photos from this year as well as years past, we will be selling calendars in the early fall and they may include YOUR photo if entered in our contests.



Mitchel Davis holds his photo that won Honorable Mention in the Youth category.

This article was contributed by Friends member Meghan Daily.

Friends Annual Meeting/Picnic : June 3



Last year's joint picnic between the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and the Trail Work Group was so successful, we are doing it again -- a FREE member and volunteer appreciation picnic on Friday evening June 3 starting at 6:00 pm, followed by a brief annual meeting for members of the Friends, and finishing with a bonfire and s'mores for people who stay afterwards. Those who enjoy camping will have the opportunity to pitch a tent and camp out overnight. The next morning, trail workers will be treated to breakfast

before their June work projects.

The location for the event is Pavilion 17, which is a sheltered site off Sandy Flash Drive South. The picnic and other events will be held rain or shine. The picnic is compliments of the Friends: hamburgers, hot dogs, home-made coleslaw, beverages, and other picnic fare. People who can bring a dessert or other dish to share will be much appreciated. Last year we had many delicious offerings. The annual meeting will include highlights of the year's activities, appreciation of the trail workers'

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Coming in Fall 2011: Talk on Herbal Medicine

If you are interested in herbs, look for this special event scheduled for Sunday, November 6.

Author and food historian William Woys Weaver will be speaking at the Mansion about his 2001 publication, *Sauer's Herbal Cures, America's First Book of Botanic Healing* (published by Routledge). This event is sponsored jointly by the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Herbalists Guild.

Mr. Weaver resides in Devon and specializes in the history of American cuisine and foodways. He is a three-time winner of the Julia Child Cookbook Award. His books include *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening, Pennsylvania Dutch Coun-*

try Cooking, and Sauerkraut Yankees. He is well known as an heirloom gardener and seed saver.

Sauer's Herbal Cures is a translation of the text from Pennsylvania Dutch, originally assembled by Pennsylvania apothecary and printer Christopher Sauer (1721-1784). Sauer grew up in the German immigrant community and his German was riddled with syntax and terminology borrowed from colonial English. As a skilled ethnobotanist, Mr. Weaver added footnotes and edited segments to the translation to clarify historical details for the reader.

There will be a nominal charge for this event. More details will be on our website and in our next newsletter.



Annual Meeting *(Continued from page 2)*

volunteer contributions to the park, and officer elections. Current members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and newly signed up members will be able to vote.

Last year, we elected Jack Miller President and Joan Nikelsky Vice-President, both for 2-year terms. Jack had previously been serving on the Board as Vice-President and Joan has been serving on the Board as Membership Chair and newsletter editor. The offices up for election or re-election this year will be Treasurer and Recording Secretary, currently being held by John Kennedy and Gary Sawyer, respectively.

An RSVP for the picnic is not required, but would be helpful so we can plan the food. Please e-mail members@friendsofrcsp.org or call Joan at 610-498-5346 by Thursday, June 2, if you can. We hope to see you there!



Ridley Benefit Run Set for October

Did you know that Ridley Creek State Park is home to about 30 benefit runs per year? It's no wonder, with the beautiful multi-use trail and picnic areas where runners can gather afterwards.

Well, our park needs help, too, so mark your calendar! We are pleased to announce that the first ever "Run for Ridley" will be held on Sunday, October 2nd, 2011 to benefit the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park. This event is being held in conjunction with the fall Great Pennsylvania Outdoor Challenge sponsored by PPF (Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation). We are still in the planning stages.

If you, or someone you know, has experience organizing an event of this nature, please contact Run coordinator, Pamela Cloud at 484-883-8231 or publicity@friendsofrcsp.org. Stay tuned for more details as plans progress!

Volunteers Needed to Help Produce 2012 Ridley Calendar

We're seeking someone with knowledge of digital photography (compression, dpi, pixels, etc.) to offer technical support in choosing, scanning, and preparing pictures from the photo contest for use in a new Ridley Creek State Park calendar for 2012. Please contact Carol Rubin at 610-565-3877.

Manager Retires

(Continued from page 1)

against much negative advice, that the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park became the first volunteer Friends group organized under Pennsylvania Parks and Forestry Foundation in the Commonwealth. All Pennsylvania state parks are now entitled to have one Friends group, which is the official volunteer organization for each park. Most Friends groups are organized under Pennsylvania Parks and Forestry Foundation (PPFF) which provides their 501(c)3 charitable status and many support systems for the Friends chapters.

Roger directed the revitalization of the Hunting Hill Mansion, which was expanded from the original farmhouse by the Jeffords family in 1915. The roof was replaced using the original type of roof, cedar shingles. Asbestos was removed and the entire HVAC system was replaced. The ballroom was repaired and upgraded and a bridal room was created. These improvements and many others led to the expansion of the popular wedding program, which creates a positive revenue stream for the state's parks program.

With the encouragement of Roger McChesney, our Friends group has been able to make many contributions to the park, including trail maintenance, a laptop computer used in the park's educational programs, an automatic electronic defibrillator (AED), picnic tables, playground equipment, and



The Board honored Roger at a farewell dinner held at local restaurant La Locanda

other needed tangibles not included in the Commonwealth's budget. The Friends take care of all maintenance of the very popular trail system that encompasses over 10 miles.

The equestrian program - Hidden Valley Farms - has grown and improved under Roger's direction in the past 10 years. Picnic facilities have expanded with the addition of two pavilions, resulting in increased revenue to the state. The park's infrastructure has been maintained and expanded despite numerous budget contractions.

Roger left with mixed feelings. During his time here he grew fond of the park and the public who enjoyed it. He valued and appreciated working with his staff and felt a deep sense of pride in his accomplishments. On the other hand, he left looking forward to his new life as a gentleman farmer in western Pennsylvania.

Roger McChesney will be greatly missed by the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and especially the Board of the Friends who have worked closely with him. He always had time to listen to our requests and give them serious consideration. In his gentle sage way he would give advice and guidance rather than issuing directives or edicts. His limitless body of knowledge will be hard to replace. We have all been enriched and benefited from Roger's tenure in Ridley Creek State Park!

This article was contributed by Board member and past President Tim Higgins.

Special Trail Work Day

Saturday May 7

May's trail work will be held in conjunction with CRC's (Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association) Stream Clean Up Day. UPOS (Upper Providence for Open Space) will also participate. Plans include working on Ridley Creek around Rose Tree Road to remove the trash that accumulated after the flood and by passersby over this past year. Trail workers should meet as usual at the park office at 9 am.

Calendar of Events

- First Saturday of each month, 9 am – Monthly trail work. Meet at park office.
- Sunday, May 15, 1-3 pm – Open House at the Mansion.
- Friday, June 3, 6 pm – Free picnic for Friends members and trail worker volunteers at Pavilion 17.
- Sunday, October 2, time TBA – Run/Walk in the park to benefit the Friends. Details to come.
- Sunday, November 6, time TBA – Talk about herbal cures by William Woys Weaver at the Mansion.
- Saturday, December 3, 7 pm – Winter holiday dance in the Mansion ballroom.
- Sunday, January 29, 2012, 1 pm – Photo Contest award ceremony in the Mansion ballroom.