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The Friends

VOLUME IV ISSUE I

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Paul Mickle Wins PPF Young Volunteer



Paul celebrates more than ten years of volunteering at RCSP

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park is proud to announce that our dedicated volunteer Paul Mickle is being honored with the Young Volunteer Award for 2012 by the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation (PPFF). This new award was instituted this year to recognize a significant contribution to a park or forest by a person under the age of 25. Every year, PPF gives numerous awards to recognize outstanding service and programs demonstrating the exemplary work being done in parks and forests by both staff and volunteers.

Paul is a familiar figure at Friends events and monthly trail work. Some people may not realize that Paul started volunteering with the Friends many years ago, starting as a trail worker. He was originally brought to the park by his father since Paul was not yet old enough to drive. He would work with the trail workers month after

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Original Mansion Stove Restored

For over a century, the kitchen in the mansion at Ridley Creek State Park has housed an original cast iron stove dated 1823. The stove matured with the mansion and went from being used by the maids while cooking meals for the Jeffords to simply being an historic ornamental artifact. The mansion has been stripped of many of its original fixtures, including a twin cast iron stove which sat next to the remaining one. Over the years the antique stove has garnered much attention from staff, volunteers, and visitors. It has always been a focal point on all the mansion tours.

Last year when then-Park Manager Roger McChesney announced that the kitchen was slated to undergo a complete renovation, it was believed that the stove would be lost, and with it the last major sentimental fixture of the mansion's history. The Board of the Friends

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The stove in its new location in the mansion foyer

(Paul Mickle: Continued from page 1)

month, all year round. Several years of trail work passed and eventually Paul became a driver.

While he continued his volunteer work with the trail crews, Paul also had a job with a local food bank. One of his tasks there was to pick up baked goods from a bakery at the end of the day and return them to the food bank for distribution. Since the trail work at the park was a charity as well, the same bakery agreed to donate an additional days worth of baked goods one Saturday a month. Paul would then bring pastries and day old bread to be shared with the trail workers after the work party was done. This activity still continues to this day.

Paul took photographs of the workers and projects accomplished over the years. This collection of photographs is now saved on disks and is a great source to show interested parties what the Friends accomplish over a "typical" trail work party.

Paul has also been active during the annual holiday party at the Mansion. We provide guided tours of the Mansion, and when the size of the tour groups became unwieldy, Paul agreed to help organize the timing and number of guests for each tour, thereby improving the tour experience for both the guides and guests.

In December 2011 at the Friends holiday dance, Paul was instrumental in arranging to save the man-

sion's antique stove when he talked to a guest on the mansion tour about the imminent scrapping of the stove. See the article in this newsletter about the stove restoration. Without Paul's intervention, which led to moving the stove for sand blasting, we would not have retained this historic artifact in the mansion. Paul even helped with the move and, of course, had the presence of mind to make a photographic record of the "moving day" event.

Our annual Photo Contest has provided great photographs for our park calendar. Once again, Paul took some initiative and copied some of the photographs and framed them. Some of them were used as prizes at the holiday party and others were put up for sale at a street fair in Media, which Paul assisted with.

It seems that Paul Mickle is at every Friends of Ridley Creek State Park event. Not always out in front, but certainly behind the scenes making sure everything is going according to plan and ready to jump right in when anyone needs a little help.

The Board members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park were delighted to nominate Paul Mickle for the Young Volunteer Award when PPF announced it, and we were thrilled when he was selected. The award will be officially presented at PPF's annual banquet in Harrisburg on May 1, 2012.

This article was contributed by Jack Miller, President of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park.

(Mansion Stove: Continued from page 1)

of Ridley Creek State Park wanted to try and salvage the stove and give it a new life someplace else in the mansion. However, the logistics of getting it moved safely in time posed to be a difficult task. After months of inaction, the stove's fate was beginning to look rather grim. The renovation plans were getting finalized and were scheduled to commence in December 2011.

As fate would have it, six days before the stove was to be demolished, the Friends held our annual holiday dance. One of the popular activities of the evening was historical tours of the mansion given by Friends historian Kay Ferrari. The tours follow a specific route that flows all through the mansion and ends in the kitchen. There, Kay concluded by announcing that the kitchen would be demolished the following week. This was taken with much displeasure by one guest on the tour, Stewart Rose.

Stewart asked Paul Mickle, the tour attendant, what would happen to the original cast iron stove. Paul said there was interest in salvaging it, but no plans had been made and if it wasn't moved in time, it would most likely be dismantled and scrapped. Stewart stated he would like to take the stove and would han-

dle all the arrangements, removing it before the deadline. Paul took Stewart's contact information and informed the Board that the stove could be salvaged, even if it wasn't kept in the park.

The Board then decided to keep the stove in the mansion. During the months of prior discussion, Board member Mark Kern had done some re-

search on antique stoves and found that in order for a move to be successful, the stove must remain in one piece and should be handled by someone with experience in handling fragile antiques. So Paul was asked



The stove as it is removed from the kitchen, showing the hole in the floor for coal ash waste

(Continued on page 3)

(Mansion Stove: Continued from page 2)

to contact Stewart and see if he would be willing to lend his experience and expertise in moving the stove. Stewart readily agreed and while he was offered payment for his efforts, he declined compensation and donated his time.



Tim and Stewart move the stove from the kitchen out the back door.

After a meeting with the new Park Manager, Mike Kutzmonich, the stove removal process commenced on Tuesday, December 6, 2011 with Mike, Stewart, Paul, staff member Jon Rigney, and Board member Tim Higgins lending their labor. It took over six hours to remove the heavy cast iron stove from the kitchen and load it onto a truck. It was taken to a professional facility that specialized in antique restoration, where it was sand blasted and prime painted. When the stove returned to Ridley Creek, maintenance staff member Pat Gallagher took the time to clean the inside, paint the stove and tea kettle, and replace or fix up all the worn out hardware. Friends Board President Jack Miller restored and added the final missing piece, the authentic and original thermometer.

The stove's final journey concluded when the Park's head ranger, Tony Mosloskie, suggested that it be put on display in the foyer in the main entrance of the mansion. That's where the stove sits today, where it will continue to provide the park's visitors with the same sentimental charm of historic value that it has for the last century. Be sure to stop by the mansion soon and see it, if you haven't already!

The Board of the Friends appreciates and commends all the above-mentioned people who brought this project to fruition. Park Manager Mike commented, "This was a nice joint effort between the Friends and the park staff, which shows the best in all of us and how we can pull our resources together."

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The stove is loaded into the park truck to be sent out for restoration

This article was contributed by Friends volunteer Paul Mickle, winner of 2012 PPF Young Volunteer Award.

Spring Flowers in the Park



Trout lilies, spring beauties, Dutchman's breeches, wild leeks, Jacob's ladder, bluebells (Virginia bluebells) are blooming at Ridley! These beautiful flowers start their life cycle in late winter/early spring.

Their underground parts - roots, rhizomes, and bulbs - stay dormant for most of the year storing energy. When the ground warms and sunlight starts reaching them, they sprout their above-ground parts - the woodland trees haven't yet developed their leaves to shade the ground. The spring flowers will bloom in a short six to eight week time period - until mid to late spring - first their green parts and then their flowers to attract insects to fertilize them.



They have developed over eons in our native environment and are very susceptible to non-native (invasive) plant competition.



The spring ephemerals of the eastern U.S. hardwood forests are unmatched in their diversity and profusion anywhere in the world. Bloodroot is one of the first and most prolific blooms (with large showy white blossoms). Just pick one

from the base and you'll see why it's called bloodroot. Another, less showy but occasionally prolific bloomer is dwarf ginseng. Finally, late in the season is jack-in-the-pulpit.

Visitors are allowed to pick edibles in the park, such as leeks, for personal consumption, but please collect these in moderation only where they are numerous. Another edible is the toothwort, where the flower stalk tastes very much like black pepper.



This article was contributed by Board members Tim Higgins and Gary Sawyer.

Open House and Hoagies at the Mansion May 9

Come to a Volunteer Open House at the Mansion on Wednesday, May 9, to learn more about what the Friends have been doing and where you can fit in. Hoagies, chips, and beverages will be served starting at 6:30 for those who RSVP, and presentations will start at 7:00, concluding at 8:00.

This year will mark the 40th year of Ridley Creek State Park becoming a Park. The Friends of RCSP and park staff are brainstorming ideas to celebrate this milestone with events in the fall and we'd like to hear your ideas: whatever you're good at or think the park could benefit from! We have a budget available to carry out some exciting projects.

If you have some time and talent, or just enthusiasm, we invite you to join the Board "team" of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park, so we can continue the programs that park users have enjoyed since our founding, such as trail work, tending gardens, the photo contest, and special events (dances and parties). We have openings for people to coordinate various events (let us know which ones interest you), gardeners, and trail work leaders. These volunteer jobs are working positions, not mere figureheads, and they are rewarding opportunities to serve the park and its users. In addition, the new Park Manager, Mike Kutzmonich, has many ideas for how the Friends could contribute to the betterment of the park.

If you are coming for the hoagie dinner, please RSVP by Monday May 7, so we can plan the food. Leave a message with Joan Nikelsky, Vice-President, 215-498-5346, jnikelsky@msn.com.



Winners of 2012 Photo Contest

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park held its annual Photo Contest on January 29 at the Mansion. As always, the entries were fabulous and the event was energetic!

Returning for his second year, Mitchell Davis won first place for his shot of an interesting tree in the youth category. Caitlin Dur also photographed a tree, this one with heart carvings, and won second place in the youth category. Caitlin is the youngest winner to date. Francesca Krivitsky showcased the red barn and for that she won honorable mention in the youth category.

"We love it when children get involved in the park through the photo contest. It helps them understand the beauty and importance of the park. These kids did a terrific job," said Carol Rubin, organizer of the event.



Carol Rubin congratulates Maggie Frick



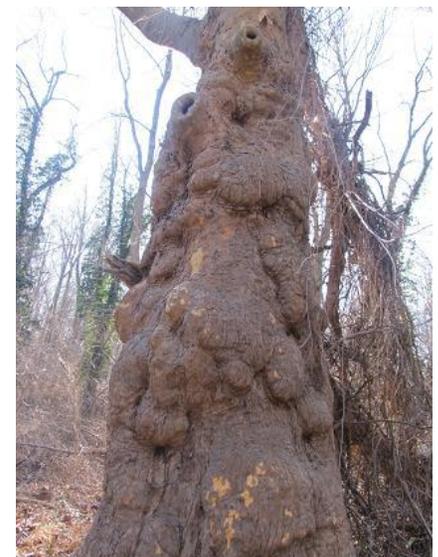
First Place Adult Winner by Carmen Smarglassi

Carmen Smarglassi won first prize in the adult category for his photo of the waterfall taken in autumn. Bob Flounders photographed a fence in snow and won second place in the adult category. Mary Blakinger captured birds in flight and also captured third prize for her work in the adult category, and Maggie Frick won honorable mention for her photograph of the spring house.

The Friends would like to thank Media photographer Mike Berman for volunteering his time to judge the photos in this event.

You can take a look at the winning photos and other entries in the contest on the Friends' website www.friendsofrcsp.org. Be sure to take lots of photos when you visit the park and save them for next year's photo contest!

This article was contributed by Pam Cloud, Publicity Chair for the Friends.



First Place Youth Winner by Mitchell Davis

Answers to the name the flower quiz
A=3; B=4; C=2; D=1

Wildflower Walk April 29

A medicinal wild flower walk will be held in the park to look for spring ephemerals on Sunday, April 29th, from 1-4 pm, led by Jean Gupta of the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Herbalist Guild. If you would like to attend, please e-mail Jean at jeangupta_785@hotmail.com, by Wednesday, April 25th so we can know how many people to prepare for, as there will be a handout. The walk will take place rain or shine and meet at 12:45 pm at picnic area #9 to walk the white and orange trails along the creek.

Appreciations for Alyce

We would like to thank our departing Grounds Chair, Alyce Zellers, Master Gardener, for her hard work and contribution to the Friends over several years – most notably, tending to the grounds and gardens around the mansion, and creating extraordinary decorations for special events like the Holiday Dance. Her sense of design and beauty has been appreciated by everyone who has seen her work. We will miss Alyce, but we know we will still see her around in the park.

Calendar of Events

- First Saturday of each month, 9 am – Monthly trail work. Meet at park office.
- Sunday, April 29, 1-4 pm – Wildflower Walk with the American Herbalist Guild starting at picnic area 9.
- Saturday, May 5 – 9 am - Annual Streams Cleanup – trail workday in conjunction with Chester-Ridley-Crum Watershed Association.
- Wednesday, May 9, 6:30 pm – Open house and presentation for all interested in participating in 40th anniversary celebration of the founding of Ridley as a state park. Meet in the Mansion ballroom.
- Saturday, June 2, noon – Free picnic for Friends members and trail workers at Pavilion 14.

Friends FREE Picnic June 2

We will have our annual member and volunteer appreciation picnic on Saturday June 2 at noon, after the trail workday. The picnic is open to all trail workers and members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and will be followed by a brief annual meeting for Friends members.

The location for the event is Pavilion 14, which is a sheltered site off Sandy Flash Drive South towards the end of the drive. The picnic will be held rain or shine and is compliments of the Friends: hamburgers, hot dogs, home-made coleslaw, beverages, and other picnic fare. People are welcome to bring a dessert or other dish to share. We have had many delicious offerings at past picnics.

The annual meeting will include highlights of the year's activities, appreciation of the trail workers 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.

The offices up for election or re-election this year are President and Vice-President, currently held by Jack Miller and Joan Nikelsky. In addition, the office of Recording Secretary is being vacated by Gary Sawyer because he is moving away.

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 215-498-5346 by Thursday, May 31, if you can.

We hope to see you there!

Name the Flowers

Do you know the names of the four images of flowers on page 3 ? They are all labeled with letters (A, B, C and D). Match them to the following names:

- ___ 1 = Jack in the Pulpit
- ___ 2 = Dwarf Ginseng
- ___ 3 = Blood Root
- ___ 4 = Dutchman's Breeches



The answers are at the bottom of Page 4!

