

Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, November 15, 2007

Office of the Parks Director

- On behalf of M-NCPPC, I accepted the 2007 Maryland African American Heritage Preservation Award for our acquisition of the Riley Farm/"Uncle Tom's Cabin" in a ceremony at the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis on November 4. Susan Soderberg was present at the event, and I brought the award back to Acting Planning Director Gwen Wright for display at MRO. I would like to acknowledge the work of Gwen, Susan, Joey Lampl, Bill Gries, our archeological staff and so many others who really deserve the recognition for protecting this important historic site.
- I attended Maryland Emancipation Day events on Saturday, November 3, including an open house at Oakley Cabin – excellent work by the interpreters, the archeology crew, and the Park Police volunteers with the many visitors who attended.
- I joined a work crew from the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club on a Saturday trail outing along the C & O Canal, and discussed with several of the members the possibility of an MOU for work on Montgomery park natural surface trails.
- I attended an evening meeting of the Countywide Recreation Advisory Board, and we explored ways our organizations might continue to work together.
- Sarah Phelps, Executive Director of Great and Small therapeutic riding program at Rickman Farm Park, was honored this week at the 13th Annual Toyota Tribute to Working Women, held at the National Press Club, sponsored by Toyota and WJLA.
- Park Police items include:
 - This weekend, passersby found a Latino man dead along Sligo Creek Parkway. Park Police are investigating with Montgomery County Police.
 - Park Police have been meeting with IMPACT Silver Spring to initiate a community partnership. IMPACT Silver Spring participants will ride along with officers to attain an understanding of officers' responsibilities and the group plans to co-sponsor community events throughout the Silver Spring area.
 - Six new Park Police officers have completed field training and are being assigned to patrol duties.

Two grant applications went forward in October for Commission projects that were unprecedented collaborations:

- With Rose Colby of Princes Georges Parks and Recreation, Grants Manager Tin-Mala of Montgomery Parks submitted a pre-application to the NCLI Child Health grant program for a joint bi-county project with the working title, "Nature Everywhere! Nature Discovery Playgrounds." Both counties' naturalists were enthusiastic about natural play areas, and Tin-Mala was able to use our naturalists' Nature Everywhere concepts. In February, 20 applicants will be chosen to submit the final proposal.
- Colby and Tin-Mala also collaborated on an application for John Henderson's digital archives project to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for a needs assessment project that will be a demonstration project for Commission-wide historical document assessment.

Events

- NOVEMBER 15— “Archaeological Perspectives on the Evolution of the Chesapeake Culinary Tradition,” presented by Archaeologist Dr. Henry Ward, Parsons, Inc., at Needwood Mansion, 7:30 pm. For more information, contact Parks Archaeologist Heather Bouslog at 301-840-5848 or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org.
- NOVEMBER 16—Opening night reception for the 2007 Brookside Gardens “Garden of Light’s” show from 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm.
- NOVEMBER 17—“Garden of Lights” opens to the public.
- NOVEMBER 17—Don’t miss the Department of Parks float in the annual Silver Spring Thanksgiving Parade! The parade starts at about 9:15 am and travels across Downtown Silver Spring on Georgia Avenue from Sligo Avenue to Silver Plaza on Ellsworth Drive ending at Fenton Street.
- NOVEMBER 23—“Drop, Shop & Skate” programs at the Wheaton Ice Arena and Cabin John Ice Rink. Interested families can take shop without the little ones by dropping them off at either ice rink from 8:00 am – 12:00 noon for ice skating, movies and snacks. See www.CabinJohnIce.com or www.WheatonIceArena.com
- DECEMBER 7—Watch as local skaters show off their skills at the Cabin John Ice Rink Holiday Show from 6:30 – 9:30 pm. Admission is free. Non-perishable food donations will be accepted. Great fun for the whole family.
- DECEMBER 22—Wheaton Ice Arena’s Winter Ice Show from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. Skaters will perform their routines. Free admission. Bring the whole family.

Property Management

- The park house located in Maydale Local Park, Silver Spring, is being demolished. The house, located within 15 feet of the stream, was heavily damaged during last year’s major flooding when the stream quickly jumped its banks, flooded the house and displaced the tenant.
- We have received draft architectural design drawings from the KCI group, contracted to evaluate the Darby Store and develop a stabilization plan. It includes moving the store back from the corner from 15 feet to 30 feet, which will provide a much safer and suitable location for future uses. The drawings will be shared with the appropriate staff for technical review and comment, as well as other interested parties.
- Site visits underway for the following new park acquisitions:
 - “Wolfarth” property, Chevy Chase—parks staff attended the Chevy Chase Village Managers’ Meeting on November 13, which included a brief agenda item on this new acquisition.
 - “Piotrow” property, Bethesda (Hillmead)—parks staff visited the property briefly last week to consider the immediate maintenance needs once the property is acquired on November 19. We have been directed by County Council to explore other uses for the house in lieu of demolishing it.
- “Barnett” property, Silver Spring (Hillandale area)—the department may soon receive a proposal from Montgomery County and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs for the short-term use of this building as interim housing for the homeless population. The homeless shelter off Gude Drive in Rockville is about to undergo major re-construction this winter. When the shelter is demolished, approximately 35-50 residents will become temporarily displaced. The proposed offer may contain a plan to retrofit the shelter, then return the property to a condition

with finished office space for M-NCPPC. We are interested in having finished office space for our employees at this property.

- November 1, parks staff in the Park Planning and Stewardship division assumed use of the recently vacated historic property—the Nathan Dickerson house located in the Lois Green Conservation Park.

Park Planning

- The Friendship Heights Community Recreation Center, part of the Wisconsin Place project, was advanced to the next stage of final development by the department's park development staff with Montgomery County Recreation Department. The center's construction is well under way by the New England Development Company, which is developing Wisconsin Place. The department will lease the community center building and make it available to the Recreation Department to operate, with a late 2008 opening. We continue to seek funding for the furniture, fittings and equipment.

Baseball and Softball

- Parks staff has completed all aerating/fertilizing and field seeding. Fence repairs and replacing of bench boards and other minor repairs are continuing.
- Parks staff is painting field signs in local parks.

Field Sports

- Parks staff is busy completing fall aeration and over-seeding of athletic fields and other turf areas.
- The soccer field at Jessup-Blair will be closed for renovations until fall 2008.
- Parks staff is cleaning out the park activity center building at Norwood Local Park for an historic lecture this week.

Equestrian Centers

- Parks staff is working on the Meadowbrook Stables project. The stables have been seeded, fencing scheduled and reforestation on the stream bed is to be completed this week.

Ice Skating

- We are extremely proud that our own local ice rinks are producing national champions:
 - Two figure skaters who train at Cabin John qualified in the regional competition for Junior Nationals, which will be held in Salt Lake City the week after Thanksgiving.
 - Cabin John's top competitive figure skater Kristine Musademba came in second place at the Junior Grand Prix Cup in Vienna, Austria in September. She placed fourth in the Junior Grand Prix John Curry Cup in Sheffield, England in October. She is one of eight Junior-level skaters from around the world who qualified for the Junior Grand Prix Final to be held in Gdansk, Poland December 6-9. Kristine also qualified to go directly to US Nationals in St. Paul, Minnesota in January.
 - The Wheaton Ice Skating Academy is sending four pair of skaters to the US Junior Skating Championship in Salt Lake City November 26 - December. 1.

- The Wheaton speed skating club is sending several of their skaters to US Junior Short Track Championship in November.
- The Parks Show's "Blades of Glory" July 2007 episode won the Gold Award from the MarCom 2007 Awards Competition. The winning episode featured Olympic Speed Skating Coach Dong-Sung Kim and Wheaton Ice Arena and Olympic-level figure skater Kristine Musademba and the Cabin John Ice Rink. The MarCom Awards are administered and judged by the Association of Marketing & Communication Professionals. More than 5,000 entries were received and *The Parks Show* was among 18 percent winning the Gold Award— “to those entries judged to exceed the high standards of the industry norm.”
- Cabin John Ice Rink has 979 students registered in its Learn to Skate group lesson program, which runs from November 2 – December 17.
- Wheaton Ice Arena has 280 students registered in its Learn to Skate group lesson program, which runs November 2 – December 17.
- Wheaton Ice Arena staff partnered with Montgomery County Recreation Department to provide an early release skating session on November 9—half day for Montgomery County Public Schools. Over 225 students from seven middle schools participated.

Trains, Carousels

- Park volunteers worked 130 hours at Wheaton's Haunted Train, “witch” was a big success with over \$24,000 in revenue generated and 1,150 cans of food collected for local food shelters.
- Parks staff is ordering a new train engine for the Wheaton Train.

Tennis

- Good news – the Wheaton Tennis bubble is being raised, hastening the return of indoor tennis to Wheaton Regional Park (see attached photo.)

Maintained Open Space

- All parks equipment is ready for snow and staff is training on the equipment.

Playgrounds

- WTTG-TV (the local Fox affiliate) aired a story on its 10 o'clock news about CCA-treated wood in playground equipment, schools and other consumer products, such as decks. Parks staff was interviewed by Fox about this issue at the Adventure Playground in South Germantown Recreational Park.

Park Activity Buildings

- Parks staff hosted a public lecture November 14 on the history of the main building at Norwood Local Park, known historically as the Office and Administration Building of the Bureau of Animal Industry's Bethesda Experiment Station. Wednesday's lecture was the first update and public dialogue on how the department is assessing the history of this building and the plans to move forward to its full utilization, as recommended in the study of the park recreation buildings (activity centers).

Trails - Paved Surface

- Parks staff is blowing leaves off the Capital Crescent Trail.

Arboriculture

- Parks staff planted 38 trees at the Shorefield parking lot and continues to remove leaves from various parks in the Sligo Creek and Rock Creek areas.
- Parks landscape staff is gearing up for tree planting season and removing dead trees along Beach Drive and Sligo Creek.

Horticulture

- Parks staff removed invasive weeds at Locust Grove Nature Center, and laying sod.
- Parks staff is filling ruts with soil and laying sod at Hillmead Neighborhood Park.
- Parks staff is planting pansies, removing debris from flower beds and preparing beds for the winter.

Natural Resources Management

- Parks staff has formed an encroachment committee to create standardized signs to inform the public of where park property begins, particularly in the stream valleys and other sensitive areas.
- Parks annual deer management operations are underway. Media coverage of the department's deer management program, including notices for drivers to take caution and park closures, in: Maryland Public Television's "Outdoors Maryland" show, WJLA-TV (ABC affiliate), WTTG-TV (Fox affiliate), *Washington Post* (Montgomery Extra), *Silver Spring Voice* and WTGB-FM (The Globe 94.7)
- During a November 10 workday in Rock Creek Stream Valley Park in Kensington, Weed Warriors removed large invasive vines and shrubs around large native trees that are being threatened.
- Parks staff worked with the IDENTITY Group during their Community Service Day project to clear invasive plants near Wheaton Regional Park's playground area.

Volunteers

- Volunteer groups helping out in our parks this October and November have contributed a grand total of 1,745 hours. Recent activities include:
 - Bethesda United Methodist Church completed a 60 hour volunteer cleanup project in Rock Creek.
 - Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church completed 2 cleanups in October and November at Beach and Cedar—an 81 hour volunteer project.
 - Neighbors of Dale Drive cleaned up/removed invasives along Sligo Creek—28 hour volunteer project.
 - Temple Shalom cleaned up around Winding Creek—34 hour project.
 - Shaare Torah Synagogue cleaned up around the Little Seneca Lake at Black Hill Regional Park—46 hour project.
 - Sligo Branview Community Association cleaned up along Long Branch, an 18 hour volunteer project with 6 people collecting 50 bags of trash.
 - Winchester Homes planted trees at Wheaton Shorefield—a 126 hour volunteer project.
 - Opal Daniels park neighbors spruced up the park (120 hours).
 - Bullis park neighbors spruced up Bullis (30 hours).
 - Montgomery County Democrats spruced up the Long Branch Community Center and cleaned the creek (60 hours).

- Burning Tree Elementary School volunteers cleaned up around the school and local park (312 hours).

Trails – Natural Surface

- Parks staff has begun implementation of the Little Bennett Regional Park master plan by expanding the Kingsley parking lot off Clarksburg Road—a wonderful addition to the park as many people have been out hiking and enjoying the fall season.
- The Hard Cider Trail and a portion of Froggy Hollow Schoolhouse Trail at Little Bennett Regional Park have been closed for safety and environmental reasons, the beginning of locating and eventually building sustainable trails throughout Little Bennett.

Agricultural Support

- Parks volunteers worked over 700 hours at the Harvest Festival.
- Close Encounters with Agriculture—a cooperative program which teaches students about the importance of agriculture in our society and its relationship to good stewardship of the environment—took place at the Agricultural History Farm Park this week.

Nature Centers

- Meadowside Nature Center held its annual Halloween Extravaganza. The program was filled to capacity with 75 participants. Families enjoyed numerous hands-on chemistry activities, such as making Ghost Goo and Wizard Wands, and featured guest “Dr. Blood” who wowed the children with a showcase of reptiles and amphibians. Parks staff received support from the Back-in-Time 4H Club who carved pumpkins for the event and approximately 25-30 volunteers, including 16 college students from a University of Maryland honors class.
- The park naturalists at the Locust Grove Nature center can find nature opportunities EVERYWHERE. Parks tree crew staff is making chain saw art out of two large downed trees on a hillside near the center, sculpting 3 bears and a snake. One of the nature center’s volunteers is also creating art by weaving natural materials into the deer fence around the nature center’s butterfly garden. Both the tree carvings and deer fence décor are causing quite an interest among visitors.

Public Gardens

- At the Friends of Brookside Gardens (FOBG) annual meeting November 4, the election of new President Betsy Thomas was announced. Ms. Thomas, a volunteer at Brookside Gardens since 1996, feels her organizational skills will be an asset to the Friends as they continue fundraising efforts to underwrite initiatives like the Horticultural Internship, Green Matters Symposium and the Master Plan. Retiring President Joan O’Rourke, who lead FOBG for twelve years, will continue to volunteer in the Fritz Greenhouses. Since the FOBG was founded in 1996, the organization has donated more than \$660,000 to Brookside Gardens.
- Nearly 100 volunteers from Brookside Gardens took part in the annual Volunteer Symposium, this year hosted by Mount Vernon. The event recognizes volunteers from public gardens across the Washington metropolitan area, provides volunteer training and an opportunity for like-minded area volunteers to network. The symposium is planned cooperatively by Brookside and McCrillis Gardens staff,

Hillwood Museum and Gardens, the Smithsonian Institution, Randall Farm, the National Gallery of Art, Green Spring Gardens and the U.S. Botanic Garden.

- On November 11, Maryland Public Television filmed a short segment for the “Outdoors Maryland” show at Brookside Gardens, focused on the success of the variety of exclusion methods Brookside has employed to keep out white-tailed deer.
- *The Gazette* featured Brookside Gardens Conservatory Manager Kathy Stevens in its “People” column on Wednesday, November 7.
- Four students from Poolesville High School’s Global Ecology Program will be working with staff from Brookside Gardens to build a biodiesel generator to convert waste cooking oil to biodiesel to help fuel trucks and backhoes at the Gardens. Guided by teacher, Jill Coutts, the students will research the latest equipment, visit similar set-ups at local sites, look for funding, build the generator and install the generator in the service area at the Gardens.

Archaeology and Historic Site Interpretation

- Parks staff provided support for the Maryland Emancipation Day events in the parks, including driving vans of visitors from Oakley Cabin to the Longwood Community Center. Archaeologists led an excavation at Oakley Cabin and participants were encouraged to help screen for artifacts as they learned in a hands-on way about how we learn about our past. Emancipation Day events were covered in *The Gazette* and *Washington Post* (Montgomery Extra).
- October 31, parks archaeologists Jim Sorensen and Heather Bouslog with program volunteers were invited by ICC archaeological contractors URS, Inc. to attend an informative tour of the 4,000 year old Anderson Branch prehistoric quartz quarry (18MO595) partially located on parkland in the Northwest Branch watershed.
- November 1, parks archaeologists Sorensen and Bouslog, with Meadowside Nature Center staff, co-hosted boy scouts for the Native American Month badge. The scouts heard a presentation about the prehistoric Indians in Montgomery County, completed an “archaeological pedestrian survey” of one of Needwood’s trails and tried out their hunting skills with a reproduction atlatl (spear-thrower). Also, on November 2, parks archaeology volunteer Jean Goertner gave a presentation for Native American Month to a troop of 30 Bethesda boy scouts, and on November 5, parks archaeologists gave a presentation to boy scout Troop 204, also Bethesda.
- Parks archaeologists held “Labnight” at Needwood Mansion, November 1. Five volunteers attended and processed artifacts from Needwood Mansion’s slave house.
- November 3 and 4, Montgomery College’s anthropology classes led by Drs. Gallagher and Robinson participated in the archaeological survey of Little Bennett Regional Park. In addition to working on the Tobacco Barn Trail area testing for prehistoric activity, the students tested the area around the bank barn. The students are working on this as part of their requirements for the Anthropology 105 class.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

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