

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, March 25, 2010**

Highlights:

- **Central Maintenance Relocation**
- **Department of Transportation's Maryland Trails: A Greener Way to Go**
- **Grant Funded Rachel Carson Greenway Interpretive Signage**
- **Brookside Gardens Starts Online Giving Program**
- **Volunteer Services Explores Donations Program**
- **Volunteers Contribute Estimated \$700,000+ Service in First Half of FY10**
- **Vision 2030**
- **Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center**
- **Northwest Branch ballfields**
- **Miracle League status**
- **Warner Circle Special Park**
- **Historic sites progress**
- **Proposed Agricultural Incubator on Park Lands**
- **Parks Matter**
- **Go Ape**
- **Black Hill Regional Park Trail Work Underway**
- **New Lights at Olney Manor Recreational Park**
- **Horse Waste Facilities**
- **Lessons Learned at Randolph Hills: Countywide Dog Park Study**
- **Luxmanor Local Park Signage**
- **Property Management: Park Houses**
- **Persian-American Festival at Black Hill Regional Park**
- **MRPA Awards**
- **Park Police Updates**
- **CIP**
- **Events calendar items**

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- Park Development staff is working with Northern Region, Central Maintenance, and Horticultural Services to examine facility and space requirements related to the relocation of the Central Maintenance Facility from Crabbs Branch Way, Shady Grove, to the Webb Tract.
 - We are coordinating with the Maryland Department of Transportation on its statewide trails plan, Maryland Trails: A Greener Way to Go. This plan establishes a statewide vision for trails, focusing on their transportation value. Although our mission focuses on recreational use, we recognize that many of our trails, particularly the Capital Crescent Trail, provide bicycle commuters with an excellent off-road, non-motorized travel option.
 - This winter, parks staff completed the installation of 18 cultural and natural interpretive signs along the Rachel Carson Greenway as part of a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust.

- Brookside Gardens took another step forward in diversifying its fundraising efforts with a secure, convenient online giving program. It went live on the Brookside Gardens website on Thursday, March 18, and the first online gift was received on Sunday, March 21.
- Our Volunteer Services Office is working to create a program for donations to fund volunteer park cleanups. Public donations would go to pay for gloves, bags and tipping fees at the transfer station.
- In the first half of FY 2010 (July 1 – December 31): 2,531 people volunteered 37,994 hours of service to Parks, adding an estimated value of \$769,994; 965 individual volunteers worked an average of 31 hours each for a total of 29,625 hours in 26 facilities performing 123 jobs; and 57 groups (1,566 people) put in 8,369 hours of service in 40 jobs averaging 5.3 hours per person. We recently held volunteer recognition events for our cultural resources and archaeology volunteers, nature center volunteers, Pope Farm Nursery volunteers and natural surface trails volunteers. Many of these volunteers received awards for 5, 10, 15 and even 20 years of service to Montgomery Parks. (We get by with A LOT of help from our friends.)
- We began Vision2030, a strategic plan for park and recreation services in Montgomery County, in January to: develop a comprehensive inventory and analysis of parks and recreation physical assets and service offerings; identify core services and gaps in needed services, resource allocation and provision strategies; and implement short and long-term strategies that enhance our service delivery, efficiently and effectively utilize the community's investment for critical parks and recreation needs, and promote cooperative efforts. This is a cooperative effort between us and the Department of Recreation and is being coordinated by GreenPlay, LLC. Parks staff across the department has been actively participating in this process. Thus far, we have held two public meetings, a Summit and begun focus group meetings as part of this project, including several this week.
- Parks staff has hired a consultant to begin converting the Woodlawn Barn to a visitor center. The projected opening of the Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center is in 2013. This project is being funded primarily through SHA as part of the ICC project.
- The design for phase 1 of Northwest Branch Recreational Park ballfields is completed and ready for construction, which will take approximately 18 months. Phase 1 is being funded by the State as part of the ICC mitigation. Completion date is late 2012 or early 2013.
- For the Miracle League field, a partnership at South Germantown Recreational Park, staff reviewed the 90% design plans and gave the consultant our comments to address. The consultant is trying to obtain a sediment control permit before May.
- The Department of Parks is being awarded \$250,000 in state bond bill funds for Warner Circle Special Park. Parks staff is developing the easement with the Maryland Historic Trust. Schematic design and a landscape master plan are underway for Warner Circle Special Park with a schematic design kick-off meeting on April 14.

- Final architectural drawings (permit set) for Darby Store Stabilization and Relocation received; the short-listed A/E and exhibit design candidates for Josiah Henson Site Facility Plan interviewed; and grant-funded training of Oakley Cabin and Underground Railroad docents by professional Colonial Williamsburg re-enactors is underway.
- On May 13th, we will seek Planning Board comments on our preliminary program of requirements and site selection criteria for a potential agricultural incubator on parkland, in response to a recommendation in final report of the County Executive's Green Economy Task Force. The County Executive publicly released the report this week.
- We are asking county residents to lend their faces to protecting, preserving and enjoying our parks through a photo display on our new website www.ParksMatter.org. From the site, we're encouraging parks users to: 1) Download the "Parks Matter" sign; 2) Take a picture of themselves (or their children) at a favorite Montgomery County park or facility holding the sign; and 3) Submit their photos to us. In exchange, we're giving park fans a "Parks Matter" button and complimentary "Come Play in the Parks" pass. We're also putting their photos online to show that even in tough fiscal times, it's important to remember that Parks Matter.
- Course construction for the Go Ape partnership project at Rock Creek Regional Park started on March 16. After the course construction is complete and a building permit is obtained from the Department of Permitting Services, a pavilion and path leading to the parking lot will be installed.
- Construction of a new hard surface trail in Black Hill Regional Park is underway. The trail will be eight feet wide approximately 6,000 feet long and consist primarily of asphalt. The construction area is from the Lake Ridge Drive loop along Picnic Lane to the existing bridge at Little Seneca Creek and connecting to the existing trail near Spinning Wheel Drive. Completion of the work is anticipated in November 2010. This project was initially planned in 2002 when the Black Hill Master Plan was approved.
- New ballfield and tennis lights have been installed at Olney Manor Recreational Park. Rewiring the facility for new lights started on March 18. Lighting will also be installed in the parking lot.
- Horse waste facility at Wheaton Stables in Wheaton Regional Park is completed. Similar facility for Callithea Farm Special Park to begin construction next month. These facilities protect water quality and are funded in part by the Maryland Department of Agriculture with technical assistance from Montgomery Soil Conservation District.
- The Randolph Hills Civic Association (RHCA) asked us last fall to study the possibility of a dog park at Randolph Hills Local Park. After analysis and with parks staff coordination, we identified a potential location, which would have been very close to adjacent homes. These residents opposed the project, which led to RHCA rescinding its request for a dog park at Randolph Hills Local Park. This was the first dog park we've studied for a local park and parks staff learned a great deal during the process that should help as we revive the countywide dog park study later this spring. The dog park study will develop site selection

criteria and a preliminary program of requirements for dog parks primarily in local and neighborhood parks downcounty and closer to where people live and work.

- At Luxmanor Local Park, we met with MCPS, PP&D, AMT Eng. Firm to discuss solutions to provide adequate access to the public park behind the school. We hope to have something designed this spring and implemented over the summer break.
- Park houses are currently at 100 percent rental capacity with leases out to 37 tenants in the park house program.
- The annual Persian-American Festival will be held at Black Hill Regional Park, Sunday, April 4, 7:00 am to dusk. Unlike in previous years, vehicle entry passes to the park for this year's festival will be sold for \$25 per vehicle. The park will be open at no charge to the public not attending the festival. Once vehicular parking capacity is reached, Park Police will not allow vehicles to enter the park.
- We were big winners in the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) awards: Best Special Event Publication, Brookside Gardens' Children's Day 2009 Passport; Best Activity Guide, Fall 2009 Guide; Best Program Logo, combined nature centers logo; and Best Photograph, boys fishing at Kids Fishing Day at Little Seneca Lake. Our park development staff and other Parks Department professionals have won the statewide award for "Planning and Design With Environmental Protection in Mind" for the Waverly-Schuylkill Stream Restoration Project. Finally, MRPA also awarded the Maryland Community Volunteer award to Joan O'Rourke, a long-time Brookside Gardens volunteer and founding president of the Friends of Brookside Gardens, who works in the Fritz Greenhouse growing and training specialty horticultural crops and teaching classes.
- Maintenance crews, the mason crew, and the asphalt crew are doing major work at the Blair Complex and at parks in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Park area, including walls, drainage systems, erosion control, and turf/infields.
- Park Police Updates: Four officers represented the division by volunteering at the Maryland Special Olympics Winter Games in Wisp. The Chief's Challenge, Smooth Operator for safe driving and safe passenger laws on our parkways has begun. With the Montgomery County Recreation Department, Park Police hosted the Keith Joseph Annual Youth Basketball Tournament at the Germantown Recreation Center, with 23 Park Police staff coaching, refereeing, keeping score and cheering on seven teams from area recreation centers. The Bi-County Park Police Mounted Color Guard took part in the Washington, DC Annual St. Patrick's Day parade and the unit won the trophy for the 2010 Best Equestrian Unit.
- Our Parks' CIP program was well-received by the full County Council this week, and park staff won much praise for both current management of the park system and the high regard and value our parks and open spaces hold among the citizens of Montgomery County.

Events

- MARCH 27 ---Cabin John Train opens for weekend operations, Cabin John Regional Park. 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and during the MCPS holiday 3/29-4/2; then weekends through 5/31, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- APRIL 3—Underground Railroad Experience Trail hikes open for the season, www.HistoryInTheParks.org
- APRIL 4 --Persian-American Festival, Black Hill Regional Park, Sunday, 7:00 am to dusk.
- APRIL 10—Oakley Cabin African American Museum and Park opens for the season, www.HistoryInTheParks.org
- APRIL 10—Tilden Woods Local Park Playground Renovation Celebration, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Tilden Woods Local Park, 6800 Tilden Lane, Potomac, MD 20852.
- APRIL 10----14th Annual Gas & Steam Engine Show, Agricultural History Farm Park, 1-5
- APRIL 18—40th Anniversary of Earth Day Celebration at Brookside Gardens, 8:00 am – 9:00 pm, www.BrooksideGreen.org
- APRIL 10—Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, www.PotomacCleanUp.org
- APRIL 13–15 ---Maryland Recreation & Parks Association (MRPA) Conference, Ocean City www.mrpanet.org
- APRIL 17 & 18—Sweep the Creek, www.FOSC.org
- APRIL 22 ---Bring Your Child to Work Day (special park activities for all, several locations)
- APRIL 23 – Chairman and Commissioners “THANK YOU” Picnic Lunch for Parks Snow Crews, 11 a.m., Wheaton Regional Park
- APRIL 24—Anacostia Watershed Society Earth Day Cleanups, www.AnacostiaWS.org We have over 40 cleanups scheduled in Montgomery Parks.
- APRIL 24—Green Thumb & Arbor Day Festival, 10:00 am – 2:30 pm, Locust Grove Nature Center, www.LocustGroveNature.org
- APRIL 24 --- White Oak Community Center Groundbreaking Ceremony, time TBD
- APRIL 24 & 25—Garlic Mustard Challenge, www.WeedWarrior.org
- MAY 1—Marion Clark Memorial Dedication, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon, North Four Corners Local Park, 211 Southwood Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901.
- MAY 1—Archaeology Day, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Needwood Mansion, www.ParksArchaeology.org
- MAY 1—Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly & Caterpillar Exhibit opens at Brookside Gardens, www.BrooksideGardens.org
- MAY 15, 16, & 23 ---Georgetown Running Co., 3 8-K Races on the Capital Crescent Trail
- MAY 29—Olney Manor Dog Park Grand Opening Celebration, 9:00 am - 12:00 noon, Olney Manor Dog Park, 16601 Georgia Avenue, Olney, MD 20832.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks
