

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, June 5, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- Over Memorial Day weekend, our facilities (Little Bennett Campground, Black Hill Boats, Lake Needwood Boats and the Wheaton Train and Carousel) saw record revenue increases compared to Memorial Day weekend 2007. Black Hill Boats was up \$4,521.95 over last year, Needwood Boats up \$2,393.39, Wheaton Train and Carousel up \$3,324.05 and Little Bennett Campground saw an \$885.83 revenue increase. Park staff reports running out of boats and long lines for rentals and snack bar.
- The votes are in and a ParkStar is born -- Reuben Jacobson, a 15-year-old freshman at Winston Churchill High School, won the competition with 43.7 percent of more than 8,000 online votes. As the teen host this summer of *The Parks Show*, our 15-minute monthly program airing three times daily on County Cable Montgomery, he will begin with the show June 12. *The Gazette* and *Washington Jewish Week* interviewed the teen and so did our staff. To read what he shared with us, visit www.ParkStarSearch.com.

Events

- NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 21—The 11th season of the Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit is open at Brookside Gardens, featuring butterflies from Asia, Costa Rica and North America flying freely among tropical flowering nectar plants.
- JUNE 6—County Executive Ike Leggett throws out the First Pitch at opening game of Bethesda Big Train Baseball League, Shirley Povich Field, Cabin John Regional Park.
- JUNE 3-7—Public planning charettes for the proposed SilverPlace project will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Silver Spring.
- TUESDAYS IN JUNE—Summer Concert Series at Brookside Gardens, Gude Garden, from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm, includes rockin' American roots music by Ruthie and the Wranglers on June 10; contemporary folk with R&B and jazz flavor by LEA on June 17; and Los Angeles-based Latin guitar world fusion music by Incendio on June 24.
- JUNE 28—"Meeting Josiah Henson" event, 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm, a special viewing of Uncle Tom's Cabin and panel discussion led by Dr. Cheryl LaRoche and Dr. Dianne Swann-Wright at the Tilden Center/Francis Scott Key Middle School, 6300 Tilden Lane in Rockville from 12:00 noon – 1:15 pm followed by tours of the house and cabin from 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm. For more visit www.JosiahHensonSite.org.
- JUNE 28 & 29—The 11th annual Heritage Days weekend, from 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm. Six parks sites will be open for the celebration: Civil War Blockhouse and Outpost Camp, Bussard Farm at Agricultural History Farm Park, Underground Railroad Experience Trail, Woodlawn Manor House, Josiah Henson Site/"Uncle Tom's Cabin," and Oakley Cabin. See www.HeritageMontgomery.org for more.

Capital Improvements

- Parks staff has selected a contractor to renovate Broadacre Local Park. The renovations will include a new soccer field, basketball court, circuit trail and a plaza area. Broadacres Elementary School is providing student art work for the plaza.

- Construction has begun on ADA accessible ramps to connect the community to the boardwalk section of the Crystal Rock Trail in Black Hill Regional Park.

Management/Administration

- Parks staff installed a new alarm system at Parkside headquarters.

Partnerships

- WSSC has finished all sediment control and drainage channel work on Jones Mill Road caused by a water main break adjacent to Rock Creek.

Property Management

- Parks staff replaced about 700 feet of pipe at the Ovid Hazen Wells property and installed and upgraded HVAC system at Shorefield.

3rd Party Support (including pools)

- For the second year in a row, the Walk for Water event was held at Lake Frank in Rock Creek Regional Park. Once again this year, the event was a great success.
- The Recreation Department has cancelled all its summer concerts in the parks this year so parks staff will not be providing support for annual summer concerts series.
- We are meeting with the Recreation Department and other County officials to determine the level of support we can provide for a scaled-back version of the 4th of July Fireworks at South Germantown Recreational Park. This event appears to be one of the first casualties of everyone's greatly reduced budgets for FY 09.
- The Special Olympic Torch Run was held at the Rock Creek Regional Park on May 28.

Baseball and Softball

- Parks staff is making final touchups to the Blair ballfields for annual summer play—the Thunderbolts begin playing next week.
- Povich Field at Cabin John Regional Park was closed for two weeks to prepare for the summer Big Train season. Exhibition games began on Saturday, May 31 and continued June 1 – 4. Opening season is Friday June 6 and the Big Train season ends July 26 with playoffs schedule for July 29 – August 2.

Field Sports

- The Potomac Soccer Association tournament was held Memorial Day weekend on most of the fields in the Black Hill Area and all the fields at the Soccerplex in South Germantown Recreational Park.

Tennis

- Parks staff has installed lights at the entrance of the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park.

Boating

- Both Lake Needwood boats and Black Hill enjoyed record crowds and revenue over the Memorial Day weekend, and new this season at Lake Needwood are single and tandem kayaks available for rent.

Ice Skating

- The NHL and studio rinks at Cabin John Ice Rink will be closed from June 10 – 21 to replace board and paint and maintain the ice.
- Summer camp registrations at Cabin John Ice Rink are strong this year—4 out of 12 sessions being offered are already full.
- Both the Cabin John Ice Rink and Wheaton Ice Arena will offer Summer Chill Out sessions, with special lighting and music, for teens Friday evenings this summer starting June 20.

Trains, Carousels

- New manager at the Wheaton Train and Carousel is Gino Tomasello, previously at Cabin John.
- The Cabin John Train and party room were very busy over Memorial Day weekend.

Maintained Open Space

- Construction has begun on the access road at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park. More than 2,700 feet of concrete curb and gutter are being poured.
- Parks staff has upgraded the parking lot lighting at Meadowood Local Park.
- Parks staff is continuing to repair the drainage system at the pond at Kemp Mill Urban Park, complicated by recent heavy rains.
- Due to the heavy rainy season, parks staff has been challenged in keeping up with mowing of the parks, but we are getting back on a regular schedule with increased sunny days.
- The Lake Needwood Dam remediation project is now complete. Many thanks to Andy Frank, Jim Humerick, and the entire park staff.

Picnic Shelters

- All the picnic shelters at Black Hill Regional Park were permitted and in use over the Memorial Day weekend, with huge crowds enjoying the park.

Playgrounds

- Construction has begun on the new playground at Flower Valley Local Park.
- Parks staff has installed a new play lot at the Parklawn Group Picnic Area.
- The Wheaton Regional Park playground is being worked on to extend the life of various sections of the play equipment until the entire playground is replaced later this fall/winter.
- Parks staff has installed a new playground at Olney Square Local Park.

Dog Parks

- Wheaton Regional Park managers are meeting with individuals interested in becoming a friends group for the dog park.

Park Activity Buildings

- Park staff has installed four window A/C units at Garrett Park Activity Building.

Event Centers

- Parks staff installed an upgraded HVAC system at Woodlawn Manor.

- Parks staff coated with sealant the exterior of Seneca Lodge.

Trails - Paved Surface

- We have been awarded a grant of \$1,558,907 in additional Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) funding for the Rock Creek Hiker Biker Trail Bridge over Veirs Mill Road. This brings the original TEP award of \$2.36 million to a total of \$3,956,907.
- Parks central maintenance staff has begun repairing Sligo Creek Trail. The project is approximately 25 percent complete. Parks staff is making needed repairs from Piney Branch Road to Colesville Road.
- Safety improvement work began on the Capital Crescent Trail this week and is scheduled through June 13. The work includes marking, signage, and posting speed limits. Parks staff may perform some of the work in-house due to contracting issues. We have received media coverage about the safety improvements to the Capital Crescent Trail in *The Washington Post*, *The Gazette*, WTTG-TV (Fox 5) and WUSA-TV (CBS 9), and both criticism and support from members of the trail and biking community.

Arboriculture

- Parks staff has finished cleaning up after the storms May 11 and 12. More than 45 trees fell in 12 parks across the county. Even more storm-related recovery work is underway as a result of this week's rain and wind storm events. The entrance to Black Hill Regional Park was fully blocked yesterday due to fallen trees.
- Four trees were taken down in cooperation with the community at Northgate Local Park.
- Parks staff coordinated Gypsy Moth Spraying in 11 parks with Maryland Department of Agriculture and Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. Parks sprayed included Black Hill Regional Park, Rock Creek Regional Park, Sligo Creek Parkway and Olney Family Neighborhood Park.
- Parks arborists provided Best Management Practices for Arboriculture on 6 projects, including the White Oak Recreation Center, Takoma-Piney Branch, Long Branch Bridge, Fairland Regional Park, Mathew Henson Trail and lighting projects at Olney Manor Recreational Park.
- Parks staff has completed annual tree inspections at 13 parks.
- The Historic, Significant and Champion Tree mulching program is under way, with 12 trees receiving maintenance.

Horticulture

- Pope Farm Nursery updates:
 - Provided 159 container shrubs for Brookside Gardens for use in the Woodland Park, 1511 office/ house, Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Show and Beech Hill house;
 - Provided 103 container shrubs to Little Bennett Campground as part of their ongoing effort to reforest an area in the campground. This program was also a partnership with the local elementary school whose students did the planting of the shrubs for Earth Day;
 - Donated 3 shrubs to the Friends of Agricultural History Farm Park for planting around the historic barn;
 - Donated annuals to the Black Rock Arts Center;
 - Parks landscape crews making headway in planting out the summer annuals;

- Approximately 20,000 annuals have gone out to the parks so far, including nature centers, McCrillis Gardens, South Germantown, Little Bennett Campground and the regions;
- In addition, 2,400 annuals were grown and picked up for McCrillis Gardens;
- Provided plants for the stage for the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center dedication;
- Provide 56 shrubs, assorted perennials and annuals for the Capital Crescent Trail Earth Day event;
- Grew and sent out approximately 1,000 perennials so far;
- Perennials were produced for and taken by Brookside Nature Center, Locust Grove Nature Center and Black Hill Visitors Center;
- Continuing with the new season production of container shrubs, including transplanting, spacing, pruning and fertilizing;
- Over 2,500 liners planted in the field, about 50 percent have been staked;
- Spring pruning has begun;
- Tree planting season was wrapped up with a total of around 1,100 trees provided; and
- The large tree contract move has been completed. Over 60 trees too large for our equipment were moved to several parks countywide.
- County-wide Horticulturist:
 - Conducted inspections of native plant material for quality assurance at a local nursery for contractual installation at the developer built Woodcrest Bioretention facility adjacent to Little Bennett Regional Park;
 - Conducted a one-year warranty inspection of plant material of the Sligo Creek Tributary Restoration Project (located at Sligo Golf) with parks inspector and contractor for determination of plants to be replaced;
 - Met with parks inspector and construction manager at Arora Hills Park to inspect progress of landscaping plan and to address discrepancies in plant layout and to oversee the installation of plants by a contractor;
 - Joined local tree advocate, Joe Howard to locate several significant and champion trees in the Northwest Branch and Olney parks area for examination and beginning research on propagating seedlings at Pope Farm from the trees. Interest stemmed from a discussion of highlighting significant trees in the Northwest Branch Recreational Park Master Plan;
 - Conducted tree planting team meeting with park managers and landscape supervisors countywide;
 - Reviewed the landscape plan for the renovations of East Norbeck Local Park, Takoma Piney Branch Park, and Dowden's Ordinary/Gateway Commons; and
 - Field inspected several trees at Llewelyn Fields for discussion of opportunities for their preservation.

Natural Resources Management

- On May 24, 12 certified Weed Warriors helped us remove invasive vines and shrubs at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park. Working in the mixed habitat areas adjacent to Red Wiggler Farm, they removed large amounts of oriental bittersweet, multiflora rose and garlic mustard.
- Twenty large bags of garlic mustard were filled by local groups along the Sligo Creek parkway over the weekend.

- Volunteers cleared 4 tons of trash and 1 ton of recyclable materials in Little Bennett Regional Park on Marriott Cleanup Day on May 21. The volunteers were able to clean up part of an old farm dump off Clarksburg Road -- a great contribution to Little Bennett Regional Park.
- Canada Goose Management has been completed at Lake Needwood.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- Parks staff completed the historic area work permit for Poole's House and Store accessible ramps.
- Parks staff is working with A/E Consultant to finalize Darby Store stabilization drawings, and Black Hill Regional Park staff participated in the successful kick-off meeting regarding emergency stabilization with Darby Store consultant, who is to make recommendations on how best to stabilize the crumbling building and the possibility of moving it in the future.
- Parks staff attended the workshop on Green Building techniques in Historic Preservation.
- Parks staff removed newer paneling and exposed original log room at Ziegler Log House.
- We received the final draft chapters of the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Historic Structure Report.
- Parks staff received dendrochronology date on the Perry Browning House.
- Parks volunteers hosted 29 visitors on the Underground Railroad Experience Trail hike over the Memorial Day weekend.

Streams

- Stream restoration work has been completed for the Bel Pre Stream in the vicinity of the Matthew Henson Hiker-Biker Trail.

Agricultural Support

- The Agricultural History Farm Park held the Back in Time 4-H Family Day on May 17.

Nature Centers

- Cabin John Regional Park staff met Monday at the Locust Grove Nature Center to discuss "dedication garden" issues.
- Brookside Nature Center updates:
 - The "Nature Everywhere" committee continues pilot programs to reach out to seniors, teens and middle and high schoolers both on- and off-site;
 - Gearing up for summer camps and ensuring compliance with state regulations on summer camps;
 - Working with various middle school and high school volunteers from both the Bullis and Barrie schools on invasive plant removal and trail projects this month;
 - By mid June, many parts of the nature center will have new looks: a plexiglass wall in the small animal room area is complete, new flooring and carpet squares in auditorium, new audio visual equipment, new animal cam exhibit, new butterfly/hummingbird gardens planted and signed and walkways in parking lot; and
 - Reached over 200 Title 1 students through offsite-programming efforts.

Public Gardens

- As part of Brookside Gardens' volunteer appreciation, two events took place in May with many of the volunteers "green" with envy. The first was the annual Volunteer Plant Exchange on May 16. More than 52 volunteers gathered together in the rain to exchange

annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs, vines, bulbs, cuttings and seeds out of their own gardens. The other event was the 6th annual Volunteer Garden Tour on May 28. Approximately 60 volunteers visited five volunteers' gardens.

- Brookside Gardens had an information booth at The Taste of Wheaton on May 18.
- Verizon Fios Channel One filmed a short video about Brookside Gardens' Wings of Fancy live butterfly exhibit and the gardens in general on May 23. The piece is expected to air on the Verizon Fios Channel One starting in the month of June.
- Maryland Public Television's Outdoor Maryland program filmed a segment at Brookside Gardens on the impact that community gardens have on a community, and how volunteers are critical to the gardens' existence.
- Brookside Gardens is working with a fellow in the Longwood Graduate Program at the University of Delaware as a master's thesis case study: the development of a public garden natural disaster plan model, guidelines for public gardens with outdoor collections of living plants to prepare for and recover from natural disasters. As a benefit of participating, Brookside Gardens will receive a site-specific disaster plan based on FEMA templates.
- The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection donated \$2,000 to purchase plants for the recently installed rain garden adjacent to the Conservatory at Brookside Gardens.

Park Police

- Park Police officers Harrington, Hodo, Long-Blanton, Meara, Murphy and Paulsen have successfully completed their Field Training and Evaluation Program and are now patrolling independently.
- Officers from both divisions participated in the National Police Challenge 50K relay race hosted by the US Secret Service.
- Officers and command staff attended the Prince George's division's annual awards ceremony at the Newton White Mansion.
- Park Police officers are actively involved in the nationwide Click It or Ticket campaign promoting occupant and traffic safety. All Commission staff is encouraged to buckle up and abide by the rules of the road, while at work and in their personal lives. Officers will be conducting educational and enforcement details throughout the park system.
- Park Police are working with park staff, the Office of Park Information and Customer Service, and the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail to develop educational materials for the new safety improvements on the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Park Police Officers are also currently involved in countywide DWI and Underage Drinking Enforcement Initiatives.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks