

Focus on Bryan Park

Spring 2014



The Newsletter of The Friends of Bryan Park - Dedicated to the Preservation and Improvement of Bryan Park

Official Opening of Bryan Park Nature Center Tuesday, May 20th

After more than a decade of planning, several years of City funding and construction, which enclosed and upgraded the old Shelter # 2; almost two years of site improvements, and after acquiring the basic scientific equipment and educational materials, the Friends and the City's Parks and Recreation Department are ready to officially open the Nature and Environmental Education Center.

Please bring your family and friends to the opening celebration, which starts at 6 pm and will run until 7:30 pm on Tuesday, May 20. City officials and VIPs will be attending; partner groups who use Bryan Park will have information tables there; refreshments will be served.

If you drive, you are requested to park at Shelter # 1. If you are unfamiliar with the Park's layout, signs will direct you to Shelter # 1. Please plan on arriving a little early, and walk over to the Nature Preserve to enjoy its peace and tranquility. Note: only cars with handicap permits and the elderly will be allowed to cross the Jordan's Branch Bridge to park near the Nature Center. Ride your bikes, or plan on car-pooling with family and friends.

Bryan Park Nature and Environmental Education Programs Started in March

Did you know that we have been offering nature programs for families with children (and everybody else) every 2nd and 3rd Saturday of the month, since March? Sue Ridd, a long-time FoBP member, has been coordinating and leading some of these programs. They start at 10:30 am at the Nature Center and are lead by experts in each particular subject. These are the topics we have already covered: mammals, astronomy, amphibians, birds, and fishing. Would you believe that we have already had over 95 adults and children attend these first 5 programs? That's a smashing success, in my book. Please pre-register at bryanparknaturecenter@gmail.com. On the day of each event, people are welcome to take part if there is still room in the class. Park at Shelter 1 and take the short 10 minute walk to the Nature Center. We ask for an optional donation of \$3-5 per adult, and there is no charge for children. Don't worry, we won't turn anyone away - this is more about nature education, having great experiences in the park, and fun outdoors!

Here's a very brief schedule; Please check our website under the Nature Center menu for more details on each topic:

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| May 17 | Reptiles |
| June 7 | Purple Martins |
| June 14 | Compass Class and Orienteering |
| June 21 | Edible Plants |
| July 12 | Cycling and Bike Maintenance |
| July 19 | Disc golf |
| Aug. 9 | Wildflowers |
| Aug. 16 | Gone Fishin' |
| Aug. 23 | Butterflies |
| Sept. 13 | Soccer |
| Sept. 20 | Trees |
| Oct. 11 | Jordan's Branch & the Chesapeake Bay |
| Oct. 18 | Environmental Ethics |



A huge thank you to Sue, for putting all these programs together!

One last comment on the Nature Center: Jim and Helen Hamilton have been long-time Friends of Bryan Park and regular, generous donors to FoBP and Bryan Park. In December, they sent us a large gift as an Endowment specifically for the Nature Center and our education programs. We are thrilled, and humbled by their philanthropy and their steadfast belief in our mission and annual work on behalf of Richmond's citizens and its children!

In March, we used approximately 10% of this wonderful gift to purchase basic outdoors and science equipment, field manuals and reference books geared towards younger users, and SOL-tailored learning modules. Many of the programs listed above, and many of the Blue Sky Fund children's activities will be using this equipment, which we hope will inspire many of them to learn more about nature and our environment. We think the future quality of life in the US truly depends on the willingness of these children to get involved and help solve many of the natural resources problems we will face in the next few decades. Jim and Helen, thank you so very very much for this wonderful endowment!

And lest we forget, Nancy Baker's mother, Nancy Fish Baker of North Carolina, was so inspired by Bryan Park and the Friend's efforts to save the park in the mid-1990s that she gave a very substantial gift to kick-start the idea of making the entire "Shelter # 2" peninsula a Nature Preserve! It is amazing and awe-inspiring how the generosity of individuals and families can make such a big difference over time

"Large streams from little fountains flow; Mighty oaks from little acorns grow."

Meet our New Partners, Blue Sky Fund!

This is an exciting, break-thru partnership! In early May, Blue Sky Fund, a non-profit nature-education organization based in Church Hill, will be bringing urban youth into Bryan Park and the Nature Center to explore the outdoors, four days a week, for three weeks running. Blue Sky Fund's partnership with the City's School system, aims to provide transformational experiences for 3rd graders, 5th graders, and 7th graders from Southside and the City's east end. We hope to expand our partnership with them further in the fall, include more City schools and expand programs to more include affordable extended hours camps, hands-on nature education, science, outdoor skills and crafts, gardening programs, and active and passive recreation activities, in a mentor-based esteem-building environment. You can learn more about the Blue Sky Fund at www.blueskyfund.org/



Good News and No New News from the Henrico Side of Bryan Park

The latest news on the two developments proposed for the private property at the end of Byrd Hill Road, adjacent to the Park's northwestern boundary, is both encouraging and discouraging. To review, Hank Wilton filed for rezoning of the Byrd Hill Press/Cadmus/Cenveo property from light industrial to 48 townhomes. The request was withdrawn presumably because of the excessive development costs due to the wetlands and groundwater recharge area on the property. FoBP has written to Cenveo, asking them to seriously consider donating the wooded 8 acre property as parkland, since it is substantially undevelopable and its value is considerably diminished.

However, it appears that the plans to develop Shirley Subdivision are proceeding, although in April Mr. Motley said he had a contract on the property. As you remember, the layout of the subdivision - placing about 36 modular homes on tiny, 1924-sized "camping" lots (45 ft wide x 125 ft long, in 4 tightly-packed rows) - is "grandfathered" in. This will necessitate clear-cutting the property and makes no provision for community amenities or open/play space.

We wrote to Mr. Motley in mid-April, after the Cenveo rezoning application was withdrawn, saying that we would like to discuss the various development and conservation options available, including a discussion of our potential purchase of the property. We have not yet heard back from him. To be frank, we estimate it would cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million to purchase the property outright, but there are other options, such as our compensating him for some of his engineering costs and him getting tax credits for donating the property to us, or the City, or a Land Conservancy group.

We have also talked to City and County leaders and have suggested that the best use for the property would be to transition it to parkland, since it has substantial development obstacles and it is at the end of a dead end street, with only one means of access and egress - especially problematic for fire and police. We have formally asked Henrico County to acquire the property and turn it into parkland, since the environmental issues are significant and costly (probably more trouble than the project is worth) but the County prefers to see the land developed.

We will keep trying to find a winning solution. Several Friends are willing to contribute substantially (up to \$50,000 each, or so...) to help acquire the property! If you also feel

strongly about preventing the development of this high density subdivision adjacent to our Nature Preserve, please contact John Zeugner immediately, at 288-5005. Your donation will be fully tax-deductable. This could be a great legacy gift or a memorial gift, and naming rights are also a possibility. Please consider this opportunity seriously, and don't hesitate to call if you would like to discuss the options. You will be protecting Richmond's Historic Joseph Bryan Park and enhancing its invaluable and increasingly rare green space, woodlands, and wildlife habitat!



Parks and Recreation Perseveres

Even the old Shelter # 2 bathrooms are being “fast-track” rehabbed for the New Nature Center. No one remembers when they were last opened (mid-1980s?, ugh!), but the previous Parks and Rec Deputy Director made sure that there was money in the budget to completely renovate the bathrooms and make them ADA compliant.

Last week we discovered Mike, a Parks and Rec facilities Maintenance plumber, working hard between the plumbing walls to get the facility done before mid-summer. We asked him about the condition of the men’s and women’s bathrooms, so he gave us a brief tour. I expected the worst, but it had been thoroughly cleaned, painted, outfitted with new stainless steel fixtures, partitions, fluorescent lights, and heat. It will be first rate, just as the Nature Center building is. Kudos to the Department again!

City of Richmond Parks and Recreation Department Update

Meet the City’s new Parks and Rec Department. Significantly, it has moved out of City Hall into a handsome building at 1209 Admiral Street (a block from the Old Post Office on Brook Road. The move allowed the various divisions to be consolidated, and the back half of the building is a huge storage warehouse. Brilliant!

The “new” Director of the Department is Dr. Norman Merrifield, (pictured) who has been here for almost two years, and is doing a great job of managing some big transitions. Larry Miller, the Department’s Deputy Director, retired in December after 32 years of service with the City - and his institutional knowledge, fiscal wizardry, and ability to get almost anything done will be greatly missed. Furthermore, he was, and still is, a great friend of Joseph Bryan Park and a steadfast supporter of FoBP and other City friends groups. His geniality, willingness to help, and commitment to make the Department the best it could possibly be will be long-remembered. Best wishes always, Larry !

The new Deputy Director of Parks is Mr. Barry Russell, who is passionate about parks, trees, Parks’ Friends groups, and people who love to give back to them. The new Parks Operations Manager is Ms. Marlaine Smith (Marlie), who comes from James City County (a state leader in local government Parks and Recreation) who brings youthful energy, mature management, and a fresh commitment to bring out the excellence in her workers. And, even better for us, she is keeping her office in Bryan Park’s Keepers House. On the Recreation side, the Department recently hired Ms. Debora Morton, who had worked for the City a decade ago, but now is a key player in upper management. We appreciate her leadership and drive - welcome back to Richmond!

If I could use a sports analogy, we now have an all-star management team. Let’s work with them, and help make all our parks, our sports programs, our cultural arts, our special enrichment programs for City children, and Parks and Rec’s programs to help with After School programs, aim for excellence !

Azalea Garden Update: by Marilyn Erickson

A huge thank you goes to the Azalea Bed adopters and other volunteers who have contributed to this year’s wonderful display.

Nature’s rains have been kind so far, but remember that azaleas, with their shallow roots, need an inch of water each week when rain is absent. Three inches of pine needles or pine bark mulch will help to retain soil moisture, as well as control weeds.

If you must prune your azaleas either for appearance or size, the only time that it should be done is within a few weeks after blooming. Azaleas begin to set buds for next year’s growth within a month or so after bloom; if you prune later, you are likely to cut off next year’s bloom.

Although not necessary in an adequately acid soil, you can apply Hollytone in April and May after blooming.



Learn How to Help Protect Our Watershed!

Upham Brook is the creek that runs into the western end of Upper Young's Pond in Bryan Park. From Lower Young's Pond it spills over the Park's dam to run back into Henrico County and eventually the Chickahominy River.

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is conducting RiverWise assessments in the Upham Brook Watershed. For free, an assessment team will come out to your property and look for ways you can reduce stormwater runoff leaving your property, increase native habitat and have a positive impact on water quality. You will receive a report with personalized recommendations. Information: <https://allianceforthebay.org/our-work/healing-the-land/riverwise-communities/upham-brook-riverwise-community/>

Sign Up form: <https://secure.jotform.us/form/40995551174158>



River City Disc Golf Players Make Course Improvements

It's very rare, these days, to come into Bryan Park and not see disc golf players scattered throughout the eastern part of the park. The course is used constantly, from early morning to late dusk. The areas of heaviest use are at the tee-off areas, which erode and have to be relocated regularly, to prevent depressions from forming.

Recognizing the problem, the River City Disc Golf Club has been systematically improving each tee-off location by building permeable pads made of rough-textured bricks set in sturdy wooden frames. They are also creating and adding mosaic-type signs to indicate the par and the distance to the next basket. What a great idea!

Providing the pavers, the City has been very supportive of these improvements with Disc Golf Club members providing additional supplies and sweat equity. Friends thank them for this new contribution to the Park! Way to "give back, ladies and gentlemen!"



Volunteers Needed for Bryan Park's Two Big Sporting Events

It is becoming an annual tradition: sponsoring water stations in the Park for the Anthem Moonlight Ride and the American Family Fitness Half-Marathon.

The first event, the Anthem Moonlight Bicycle Ride, will occur on Saturday evening, August 16th. Riders start at the Diamond, and are routed into the park after dark, so they ride along Jordan's Branch Lane from Shelter #1 to the southern lane of the Azalea Loop Road (beside I-64). Since the back road is pitch-black dark, volunteers place dozens of glowing light-sticks on each side of the road so riders can stay on track. Riders have said that it is the coolest part of the entire fun ride! The water station is near the Bellevue Bridge, and we will need at least 10 volunteers, all of whom will receive a beautiful volunteer T-Shirt.

Three months later, the American Family Fitness Half Marathon will come through Bryan Park on Saturday, November 15th. We'll need closer to 25 volunteers for this event, but we'll put plenty of publicity in the park as November comes closer. A handsome volunteer T-Shirt comes with this event too.

Please, sign up when the email calls go out and invite your friends to help us too!

Did You Know?

FoBP receives emails from people who tell us that they won't come to the park because in the past they, and often their babies in their carriages, have been threatened by unleashed dogs. Some have reported that their leashed dogs have been attacked by unleashed ones. Volunteers find dog paw prints, and yellowing or damaged plants, in the garden beds they work hard to care for.

Friends of Bryan Park stands firmly behind the "No Unleashed Dog" regulations in Bryan Park. Please be considerate of other park users. There are several dog parks in the area which are the appropriate places for your dogs to run. Don't misunderstand. We love dogs. But we also hear the horror stories.

If these words are not enough, remember, injury caused by unleashed dogs equals a lawsuit waiting to happen. Please respect other park users. Keep your dog on a leash. (And for those of you who do not pick up after your dog, please do. We have a watershed to protect!)

See an unleashed dog running through the park? Call Richmond Animal Care and Control at (804)646-5573. For an Animal Control Officer on weekends or for after-hour emergencies call (804)646-5123.



The Altius Cycling Team Update

For over 40 years, local bicycle racers have been coming to Bryan Park on Tuesday nights for the Bryan Park Training Series. The best road racers in the area hone their skills and fitness on a 7/8 mile course.

This year's races will begin on Tuesday, May 20 and runs each Tuesday through September 2. Preparations for the races begin at 5 p.m. The races usually end about 8 p.m. For safety reasons, we ask that the race course remains clear of any use other than racing. The cyclists typically average above 25 mph and ride in a tight group called a peloton. This race has a permit from the City of Richmond to use the Bryan Park roads for the sole purpose of racing.

This series attracts riders from all over Central Virginia and include some racers who have gone on as professionals, even competing in the world's biggest races including the Tour de France. There is a good chance you'll see Bryan Park Training Series alumni racing at the 2015 UCI World Road Cycling Championships being held right here in RVA.

All levels of cyclists are welcome to come out and talk to racers, team leaders, promoters and coaches. The series is an opportunity for anyone to grow as a cyclist!

The Altius Cycling Team is the proud steward of these races. Search Bryan Park Training Races / Richmond Festival of Cross on Facebook to learn more.



www.friendsofbryanpark.org
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(email addresses will ONLY be used to alert you to upcoming events/Bryan Park issues which may interest you. We'll also alert you when the latest issue of this newsletter is published and downloadable on our site.)

Please list your areas of interest in Bryan Park: _____

Method of Payment: Check Pay Pal

Checks are payable to Friends of Bryan Park.

Please send to FOBP,

P.O. Box 15481,

Richmond, VA 23227-5481

Would you like to Volunteer for events? _____

*FoBP is an IRS-certified 501(c)3 non-profit.
All donations are fully tax-deductable!*

Friends of Bryan Park Board Members:

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Other Important Contacts:

Third District Councilman - Chris Hilbert, City Hall: 646-5400

Police 4th Precinct Switchboard: 646-4105 • Police Non-Emergency: 646-5100

Director of Parks, Rec. and Community Facilities - Norman Merrifield 646-5717

Deputy Director II - Barry Russell: 646-5944

Parks Operations Manager - Marlie Smith: 646-9199

Bryan Park Gatekeeper's House: 646-0194 • Animal Control: 646-5573

Let Us Hear From You!

Your suggestions and comments about the Park are important to FoBP. Send comments to info@friendsofbryanpark.org. Use this email too if you'd like to be added to our server list. Also visit our website at:

www.friendsofbryanpark.org

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