

Riverbend Naturalist

Fall 2019



Riverbend Naturalist is the newsletter from the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls VA 22066. Phone: 703-759-9018

FORB Celebrates Its Twentieth Anniversary

The Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) was officially founded on August 5, 1999 when it was recognized and issued a Certificate of Incorporation by the Virginia State Corporation Commission. It was subsequently recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization. FORB was founded through the efforts of Catherine D. Mayes and other concerned citizens of Great Falls, Virginia, who were alarmed that funding was being cut for the park and its character as a natural resource for the citizens of northern Virginia threatened. Cathy and a dedicated group of local citizens founded FORB to ensure that Riverbend Park remained a sustainable

natural resource for the benefit of all its visitors. She also became its first President, and served in that capacity for the next five years.

On August 4th, 2019, many past and present Members, ex-Board members and Past Presidents of FORB, as well as representatives from the Fairfax County Park Authority and Fairfax County Park Foundation gathered at the Visitor Center to celebrate the occasion.



Hugh Morrow, FORB President; Tim Hackman, FCPA Board and FORB Past President; and Cathy Mayes, Founder and First President of FORB

The event was catered by The Old Brogue Irish Pub (Proprietor Mike Kearney) and everyone had a wonderful time catching up with all of their old friends who love Riverbend Park. Even though there was no charge to attend and all were welcomed, over \$1,000 in donations was realized that evening from Friends who recognized the continued importance of supporting FORB and Riverbend Park.

An added benefit from the occasion was the publicity received from the local media, emphasizing FORB's generous support (\$258,000 over 20 years) of Riverbend Park. Articles appeared in the *Sun Gazette* on August 1st, in the *Connection* on August 7th, and in an August 8th feature on local television station WDVM. Copies are available upon request.



The FORB Board of Directors celebrate. From left to right: Karen Hershey, Kevin Dillon, Eleanor Anderson, Nancy Waugh, Hugh Morrow, Kurt Laubinger, John Hughes-Caley, Cynthia Nordstrom-Fisher and Frank Zeng. Director Jack Bowles was unable to attend.

The Friends of Riverbend Park has been able to accomplish much in its first twenty years and hopes to continue to do as much again in the future. From our first years of annual donations of less than \$1,000 to our present levels of up to \$35,000, FORB has achieved a great deal and supported Riverbend Park with many of its needs and endeavors. The successes of Riverbend's summer camps, Title I Schools field trips, Bluebell Festival, and Native American Festival have all been assisted by support from FORB and will continue to be so in the future.

Riverbend Park's Native American Festival

The Riverbend Park Native American Festival was born in September 2000 through the efforts of Shirley Little Dove McGowan of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe in King William County; Marty Smith, Manager of Riverbend Park; and Cathy Mayes, Founder and First President of the Friends of Riverbend Park. The festival has been held on the first or second Saturday in September every year since then except for two cancellations due to very bad weather, including one hurricane. During the early years of the festival, FORB provided \$5,000 to \$7,000 of support, but since that time, the festival has become largely self-sustaining. This year's Native American Festival will be held at the park's Visitor Center on Saturday, September 7, 2019 from 10 AM to 4 PM. Admission is \$10 at the gate or \$8 by pre-registration online at:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend/native-american-festival/090719



The Riverbend Park Native American Festival is the perfect way to experience and enjoy the arts, crafts and culture of Virginia's original settlers. This year, the Rappahannock, Chickahominy, Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes will be participating in the festival. A regular feature each year has now become the Rappahannock Tribe dancers and drummers who perform sets of their traditional dances several times during the course of the day.



Vendors from the Chickahominy, Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes will also have their booths set up displaying their arts and crafts. Native American jewelry, pottery, leatherwork and other crafts have always been a big favorite at the Native American Festival, and are available for sale. In addition, a wide variety of food vendors are on hand to cater to everyone's tastes, whether they be hamburgers and hot dogs, popcorn, or falafels. There are many activities to occupy the kids as well, making the day one the whole family can enjoy. From making a

dugout canoe to ax-throwing and bow-and-arrow shooting, Native American skills and games are ones in which everyone can participate.



Riverbend Park's Native American Festival, along with its Bluebells-at-the-Bend Festival in April, is one of the park's two premiere events of the year, and one you won't want to miss. These two events draw their largest crowds of the year, and are major sources of revenue for Riverbend Park. So if you want to support Riverbend Park and experience an interesting and enjoyable day, come join us on Saturday, September 7th at the Visitor Center from 10 AM to 4 PM.



Pre-registration and further information is available online at:
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend/native-american-festival/090719

Fall in Riverbend Park



Riverbend Park turns from green to red and gold in the fall. The trails are carpeted with leaves, and the river calm and serene. The air is crisp

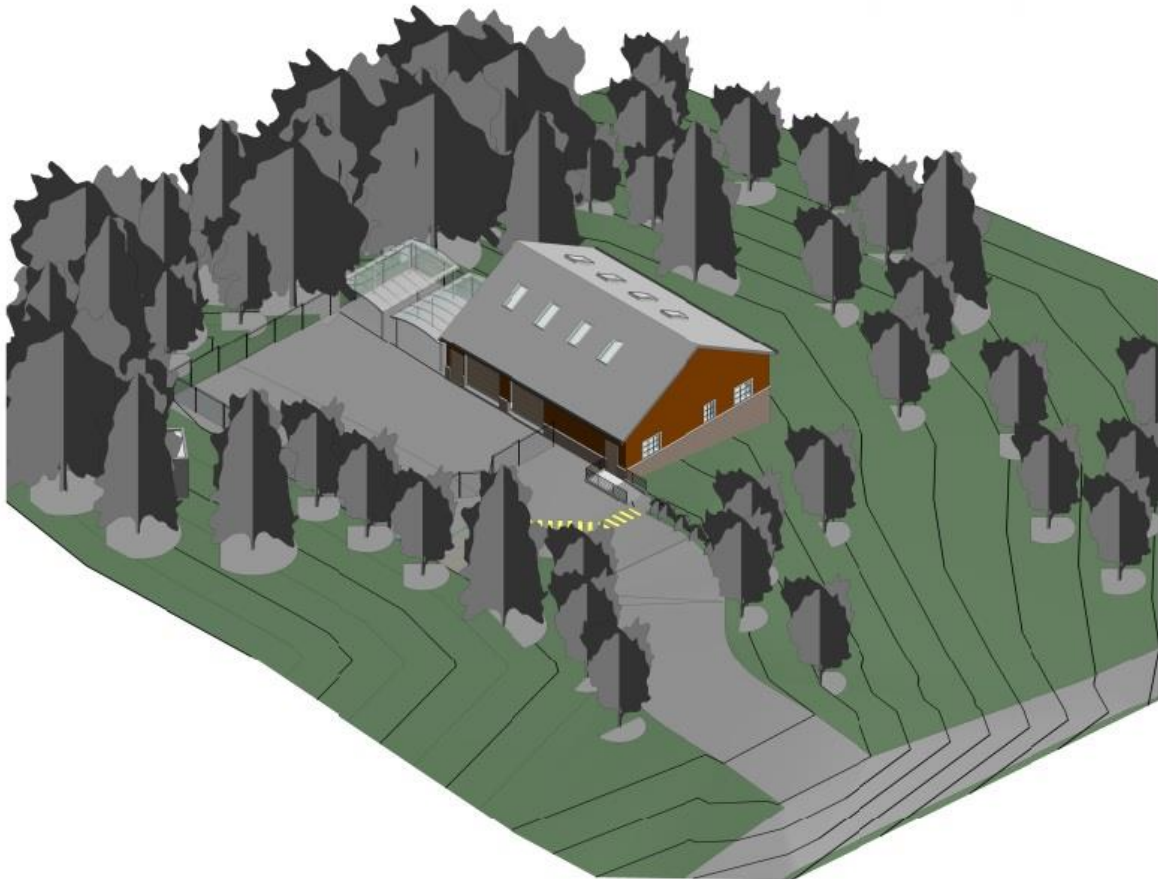
and clear, and a peaceful silence prevails. An ideal place for meditation. Photos courtesy of Paul Laurenza, Don Sweeney and Hugh Morrow.



The white bark of the sycamores stands out vividly against clear blue skies, and trees cast strong shadows across the Visitor Center (left) and Nature Center (right). Fall is a wonderful time to visit Riverbend Park.

Update on Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility

Riverbend Park is a park of over 400 acres and requires a great deal of year-round maintenance. For many years, the maintenance functions and equipment were scattered over several different locations, creating problems and occupying valuable space for other activities. In 2016, FORB was successful in persuading the Fairfax County Park Authority to place a new maintenance facility on the 2016 bond issue. Work on this project has now begun and construction of this new structure on Potomac Hills Street will soon become a reality.



Artist's conception of an overall view of the Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility. Potomac Hills Street is shown on the lower right.

In accordance with the Riverbend Park Master Plan, this maintenance facility will provide storage space for equipment, vehicles and a rescue boat; a work area for maintenance, carpentry and display creations; and a public restroom.



Artist's concept of maintenance building showing public restroom entrance.

The present building proposed is 41 ft by 51 ft. The final design will depend on the outcome of the present scoping phase study, and funding approval by the Park Authority Board. The present schedule calls for the scoping phase to be completed this year and the design and construction phases to be accomplished in 2020 and 2021. In

addition, design elements of the new maintenance facility will be incorporated to match those of the Outdoor Classroom and Picnic Shelter which was completed in April 2019 and which is located just across Potomac Hills Street from the site of the new maintenance facility.



Artist's conception of new maintenance facility from Potomac Hills Street with fenced facility yard and retaining wall.

Riverbend Park is indeed fortunate to have acquired both the new Outdoor Classroom and a new Maintenance Facility in such a short period of time. These additions will provide much needed additional space for park activities, staff offices and storage, and ultimately will help it generate self-sustaining revenue and ensure smooth-running maintenance operations.

FORB's 2019 Membership Drive

In mid-2016, FORB's database www.forb.wildapricot.org was able to accommodate 250 entries, and membership renewal was organized on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year. At that time, the FORB Board decided to switch membership renewals to a calendar year basis and to conduct concerted Membership Campaigns each fall from September through December. This strategy has largely been successful as we have shifted our database membership category from 250 to 500 entries maximum, and our contacts list has grown from 250 to now over 400 persons. We have also found that the timing of membership renewals, new memberships and donations have shifted markedly towards the last quarter of the year and have increased, thereby enabling FORB to start each new year over the past three years with a healthy bank balance.

In discussing how to increase FORB memberships, the Board has also embraced two concepts which are felt will help to keep FORB growing and thriving, and thus ensure the sustainability of Riverbend Park. The first idea is to reach as many Non-Members of FORB as possible. Much of our information goes to those who are already Members, have attended FORB events, or bought plants at our Native Plant Sale. Publicity directed towards more general, non-member audiences could be very valuable in obtaining new Members of FORB.

A second consideration is to concentrate on those households which are adjacent to Riverbend Park. These homes enjoy all the benefits of the park, and the value of their homes may very well depend on Riverbend Park being maintained as a stable natural resources facility. So, please renew your FORB Membership in our Fall Membership Drive.

Calendar of Coming Events at Riverbend Park

- Riverbend Park Native American Festival – Saturday, September 7, 2019, 10 AM to 4 PM at Riverbend Park Visitor Center.

Friends of Riverbend Park Contact Information

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