



## FRIENDS OF GWYNN'S FALLS/LEAKIN PARK

1920 EAGLE DRIVE

BALTIMORE, MD 21207

[www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org](http://www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org)

Fall 2011

### Youth Conservation Workers Improve the Park

This summer two youth job programs—the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps and the Student Conservation Association—brought some 30 young people, along with staff members, to Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park for improvement projects. Both programs seek to provide meaningful outdoor work for Baltimore youth on park conservation, while also emphasizing skill development, a positive work ethic, teamwork, and a sense of responsibility. And both also involve an element of fun as well—on field trips or camping adventures.

Program staff point out that for many young people, this is their first job experience, so there is a great deal of emphasis upon developing positive work habits, learning how to work with others and how to relate to supervisors. For many, it is their first experience working in outdoor settings. In the programs they learn first-hand about conservation and the natural environment.

Most staff members are experienced school teachers, who have received extensive training in directing conservation work projects. They note that the student workers sometimes find their early work experience



*Youth workers improving trails.*

difficult—outdoor settings where they may not feel comfortable; new types of challenging and tiring tasks; the heat, humidity, and insects of summer days. But the satisfaction surveys of both programs find that by summer's end the evaluations are overwhelmingly positive, and return rate the following year is very high.

The Maryland Conservation Job Corps was established by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to work in cooperation with community youth organizations, providing conservation service opportunities for youth in parks throughout the state. It offers young people work experi-

ences that can lead to “career opportunities and a lifetime of healthy outdoor recreation and interaction with nature.” In Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park this summer's project involved substantial clearing of weeds and invasive species in the vicinity of the Jastrow Levin Shelter so that the area—once a frequent site for youth organization camping—might once more be used as a group camping site. Check out their good work by hiking the Jastrow Levin Trail (uphill from the Windsor Mill Road Trail-head of the Gwynns Falls Trail).

The Baltimore Conservation Leadership Corps is a partnership between Civic Works and the Student Conservation Corps, with grant funding

from Johnson Controls, a technology company committed to diversity and sustainability. Its goal is to engage student workers in “conservation projects necessary to protecting the city's parks, improving access for the community and restoring native habitats.” This summer in Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park two teams built water bars and diverters to prevent soil erosion along hiking trails. You can see the results of their hard work by walking the Carrie Murray Nature Center Trail (behind the tennis courts) or the Ridge Trail (accessed from either the Norman Reeves Trail in the Orianda House vicinity or the Stream Trail, near the Winans Meadow parking lot).

## New Leadership at Outward Bound

Outward Bound Baltimore Chesapeake Bay has announced the addition of two women to top leadership positions. Ginger Mihalik has been promoted as the first female Executive Director, and Liz Millhollen has joined as Program Director.

Ginger Mihalik joined the Center in 2010 as Development Director and quickly became immersed in the “culture” of Outward Bound. Upon returning from her inaugural Outward Bound expedition in Ely, Minnesota, she felt ready for the challenge of the recently vacated leadership position. Jeffrey S. Joy (Chair, Board of Trustees) asserts, “We knew that we needed a special person to lead us, someone with unbounded enthusiasm who can grow our programs, deepen our relationships with the community, and inspire the staff, donors and the people we serve.”

Ginger comes to the organization after serving as Executive Director of



*Ginger Mihalik and Liz Millhollen*

the Maryland Natural History Society. There she led the organization’s policy making and strategic planning initiatives in addition to guiding the organization’s visibility in support of ecological sustainability. She also has held key positions with the Junior League of Baltimore and served as President of the Overlea Community Association.

Liz Millhollen began her career at the Cornell Outdoor Education Program while pursuing her degree in Natural Resources. Over the next five years she split her time between the Ely wilderness base in summers and the Texas wilderness base in winters. In the summer of 2009, she came to the mid-Atlantic to experience the Outward Bound Urban Centers and instantly fell in love with the population, the mission, and how the

organization’s philosophy is specifically applied at the Baltimore and Philadelphia centers. “I believe that Outward Bound has the capacity to create young leaders and develop undiscovered potential in every student we serve.”

The Friends look forward to continuing cooperation with Outward Bound and its new leadership.

## Capturing a resource

*Marcus Griswold*



Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park may be one of the most valuable resources the City has to offer. Not only does this park provide solitude in a bustling, highly developed area, but the wide forest along the streams protects the water quality of the Baltimore harbor and the Chesapeake Bay. Once highly wooded and rife with healthy, clean springs and seeps, the Gwynns Falls Watershed now boasts a strikingly high population density, with 80 percent of its surface covered in pavement.

What does this mean for our streams and the Bay? Take a moment to share this activity with your children. Take a piece of glossy paper, hold it at an angle, and pour water down it. Now take a piece of felt and do the same. What happens with the glossy paper is what happens when we pave over green space, while the felt shows you what we can achieve with more trees and green space. Though flooding in the park valleys is common, things would be worse without the trees along the stream.

Even with the forested buffer, the Gwynns Falls, as well as its tributaries such as Dead Run, receives too much sediment, nutrients, and salt from runoff from roads, parking lots, and other paved surfaces—more than these waterways can process. Too much runoff overwhelms storm drains, and sewage overflows are not uncommon, carrying unsafe bacteria into the streams. Ultimately, these pollutants are sent downstream into the harbor and to the Chesapeake Bay, compounding the problems occurring throughout the Bay.

Though it may be hard to see, the insects and fish in the stream are telling us the story. Unfortunately the few fish and insects that survive in the stream only do so because they are adapted to high flows and unhealthy water.

We can heal our watershed if we are vigilant. Unfortunately, large tracts of land are no longer available, but baby steps from Glyndon to the harbor will make the streams more attractive and help in cleaning up the Bay. As a homeowner or business owner we all should only use native species in plantings; reduce runoff from our property by creating rain gardens, installing rain barrels or cisterns, limiting or eliminating use of fertilizer or pesticides; and properly disposing of chemicals and pet waste. We all should encourage planting trees on our property and along streams, where we can benefit water quality the most and encourage the removal of paved surfaces whenever possible. With a little thought, we all can heal the Bay and beautify the streams around us.

## Football in the Park

Football is alive and well in Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, with active programs at both Leon Day Park (Franklintown Road) and at Sloman Field (Windsor Mill Road and Forest Park Avenue). Both programs emphasize the value of helping Baltimore youth develop the skills of playing the game, but also the discipline, commitment, and dedication required. The programs reach beyond the players to become true community activities, involving volunteer coaches, cheerleaders, parents, and other spectators.

At Leon Day Park, the well-established Charm City Buccaneers, affiliated with and supported by the Leon Day Foundation, have combined with the football organization in Sandtown to become the Westside Baltimore Ravens. This fall the merged program consists of 230 kids in various age groups and 40 coaches. The coaches underwent training prior to the start of practices at the park's playing fields in August, and games take place at Leon Day Park and other venues throughout the metro area during October and November. FOGFLP Board member Dick Fairbanks speaks of how impressed he is with the motivation of the coaches and the success of the program.

At Sloman Field the Forest Park Black Hawks are affiliated with the American Youth Football and Cheer Association, a national organization with teams in all 50 states. Leader Curtis Covington, a military retiree, says that he and the volunteer coaches view the program as a way to help young people develop discipline, exhibit leadership skills, and learn conflict resolution—life lessons as important as the football skills. A distinctive ingredient is the participation of girls as cheerleaders, whose preparation and performance is demanding in its own right. In its 4th year at Sloman Field, the Black Hawks program enrolls 170 kids, ages 5 to 15, in five age brackets. The teams play 10-12 games each season, then travel to tournaments in locations like the New Jersey shore, Canton (Ohio), and Charlotte (N.C.). Team moms play an important support role for the program, and parents are very much involved.

Stop by either location on game day—you'll be impressed with the way the two programs engage young people in spirited competition, but also with the involvement of coaches and parents. And you might also find yourself lingering to watch some fun football on Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park's two playing fields.



## 2011 Photography Contest Winners



The second annual exhibit of the winning photographs in the BALTIMORE CITY PARKS, OUR PASSION contest was held Sunday, June 11, at the Orianda House. Heide Grundmann announced the winners and had brief comments from the judges' evaluation of each photograph before presenting the cash awards to first and second place winners.

Amateurs of all ages were eligible for the four different categories listed below. There was no limit on the number of categories a person could enter, but all photographs had to be taken in a Baltimore City park.

### BEST IN SHOW

Indy Lapointe

### YOUTH CATEGORY

Plant: Sara Goldsmith, First place  
Yoshua Yang, Second place  
People: Sara Goldsmith, First place  
Georgia Stolle-McAllister, Second place  
Animal: Georgia Stolle-McAllister, First place  
Jeremy Wilson, Second place  
Landscape & Structures: Indy Lapointe, First place  
Siena Rose Lapointe, Second place

### ADULT CATEGORY

Plant: Ela-Sita Carpenter, First place  
Patricia Daisy, Second place  
People: Jean Cedre, First place  
Sara Sergent, Second place  
Animal: Patricia Daisy, First place  
Ela-Sita Carpenter, Second place  
Landscape & Structures: Dave Hollander, First place  
Ela-Sita Carpenter, Second place

*Special thanks to Heide Grundmann and Katie Merkle for the hard work involved in coordinating this contest and preparing the exhibit.*



To become a member of the Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, please send this completed form along with your check\* to: Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, 1920 Eagle Drive, Baltimore, Md. 21207.

LEVEL: Individual \_\_\_\_\_\$10 Family \_\_\_\_\_\$20 Nonprofit \_\_\_\_\_\$25 Patron \_\_\_\_\_\$100 Sustainer \_\_\_\_\_\$250

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\*Contributions to FOGFLP are tax deductible.





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## Nature Art in Leakin Park

Heide Grundmann

Come and discover Art in the Park, presented by over twenty artists. Doug Retzler, well known Baltimore environmental artist and visionary, is the main organizer and curator of the show. Last spring, Doug invited prospective artists to Leakin Park and encouraged them to consider creating art made with natural materials and features. The result was a series of installations along four of the woodland hiking trails. In cooperation with the Carrie Murray Nature Center's Fairy Festival, the show opened in May and continued all summer.

Looking for the art makes us also alert to the art in nature itself. We admire an artistically woven spider web, follow the twists and turns of vines, see creatures and faces in the trunks of Osage orange trees, and touch mushrooms glistening like glass sculptures on logs.

The art work varies from whimsical and playful to thought provoking; it changes over time. Seeds, leaves, twigs and branches, vines, logs, pebbles and rocks are shaped into willful forms; gourds are growing skyward on a vector



*Natural materials form the face of Henry Thoreau*  
by Jill Storms

rope structure. New projects continue to appear. On the Carrie Murray Nature Center gazebo meadow are sculptures of a snake, praying mantis, a squirrel and the core of a tree.

During the summer, camp kids were guided to become spider web artists themselves. They built a tepee, a mini garden, an oversized eagle's nest, and, while learning about reptiles, they created a mosaic of a lizard with natural

materials. They invented a story for puppets made from natural material and performed their story on a natural green stage.

Since the exhibit opened artists have offered nature art workshops to visitors.

The Friends thank Doug Retzler for his vision and extraordinary hard work and the inspiring artists who have succeeded in bringing new visitors and artists to the Nature Center and Leakin Park.

**Join us on the Second Sunday, October 9, from 1 to 5 p.m. on the last day of Nature Art in Leakin Park for guided walking tours, music, performances, nature art-making at the Carrie Murray Nature Center gazebo—and look out for Henry Thoreau. Celebrate gourds in all shapes and sizes. Become creative and enjoy a light picnic with the artists.**