

FRIENDS OF GWYNNS FALLS/LEAKIN PARK

1920 EAGLE DRIVE

BALTIMORE, MD 21207

www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org

Summer 2012

Discover Nature Art in the Park 2012

Artists and visitors celebrated the opening of Nature Art in the Park on May 20. At least 50 visitors, including participating artists and their extended families and friends, discovered impressive artistic sculptures, each made for specific sites using natural materials. A 'Winged Gator Head' is about to swallow you, 'Stickarus' is flying overhead, an owl is cuddled in a big nest. Last year's well-preserved Henry Thoreau welcomed John Muir into the park, and the playground is growing with natural play spaces. A roof-covered art bench invites dreaming and contemplation. These are just some examples of this year's works created by imaginative regional artists who volunteer their time bringing this genre of art to the public in the inspirational setting of Leakin Park.

On Second Sundays, artists will conduct Nature Art-making workshops, and they will lead guided Art Walks. Thanks to a small MECU



Janet Pihlblad assembles John Muir's profile (top)
 Fred Merrill –Winged Gator head

grant three classes from the Inner City were able to come by charter bus to ex-

plore the sculptures, visit the Carrie Murray Nature Center, make some simple art themselves, enjoy their lunches in nature and romp around for some plain play.

The goal of the Nature Art Show is to bring new people to the Park. There will be special events throughout the summer and early fall to highlight the exhibit until its closing on October 21. This unique show, the only one of its kind in the region, would not be possible without the vision, endless commitment, and hard work by environmental artist Doug Retzler, his friends, volunteer efforts and a supporting grant by the Parks & People Foundation.

The Nature Art show is marked with signs and self-guided brochures are available at 3 locations along the woodland trail loop. It begins near the Eagle Drive gazebo. Follow signage to the Ridge Trail. For

updates and special events, visit www.Natureartinthepark.org

Come See the Improved Parking Lot!

A priority by the Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, three years in the planning process, came to fruition this spring with the completion of the redeveloped parking lot near the Eagle Drive entrance. Instead of the barren, bumpy, dusty, and erosion-plagued facility, the new parking lot features a smooth surface, lined with

flush edges to direct water run-off into bio-swales. Plants and trees in these islands not only absorb water, but over time will provide greenery and shade, making an inviting entrance for visitors to the Crimea section of the park.

The improved lot was designed and built by the Capital Development Division of the Department of Recreation and Parks, with Valerie McGuire serving as project planner. She worked closely with

representatives of the Friends at every step of the way.

Friends volunteers watched with pleasure as visitors for the Second Sunday activities in May pulled their cars into clearly delineated spaces and drivers navigated the lot without the difficulties posed in the past. And tennis players and regular trail users express appreciation for the improvement to this important gateway to the park.

Rangers Bring a Friendly Presence to the Park

With the coming of summer and the increase of events and people in the parks, the Park Ranger program gets underway. These seasonal employees of the Baltimore Department of Recreation and Parks bring a friendly presence to the parks, as they provide information, monitor activities, and see that the rules are observed. In the view of team leader Nick Brightwell, the Rangers feel that they are park ambassadors, helping users to have good experiences and to respect the city's public parks.

The rangers serving Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park cover the park system's western district, which extends from the western city/county line all the way to Federal Hill at the Inner Harbor and includes neighborhood parks of varying sizes in between. It is an 11-mile direct bike ride from the I - 70 Park and Ride to the Inner Harbor, but by the time they have checked on the neighborhood parks en route they may have covered as many as 30 miles on their bikes a day. Along the way they have the duties to determine that proper permits have been secured and are valid for any special events or activities and that park rules of safety and consideration of others are being maintained.

The rangers are friendly and energetic college-age young people. They said that once they were hired the first hurdle was getting themselves in shape for the biking. All have experience working out of doors, but the mode of transportation required some time to build endurance.

Park Ranger Tyliah McDonald says that she hopes to instill



Park Rangers

in Baltimore residents the same kind of appreciation for the parks that her job has provided her—experiences like her enjoyment with bike rides around Druid Hill Reservoir. The Rangers expressed similar delight about the time that they spotted a very large snapping turtle perched on a log in the stream while they were riding the Gwynns Falls Trail.

These young ambassadors will be involved with park duties until the end of October.

Take Me Out to the Ball Game!

The Forest Park Little League is back on the Soman athletic fields along Windsor Mill Road this 2012 season with 12 teams ranging in age from 5 to 12 years. No one is happier to begin each new season than Warren Wilson who has been associated with the league for over 40 years as player, coach and board member. The joy of serving kids keeps him exclaiming that each new season they “run to me like they run to the ice cream man. That is my real pleasure.”

There are four teams within each two-year age grouping: 4-6 years, 7-9 years and 10-12. Both boys and girls are eligible to play. During the first half of the season, the emphasis is on skill development, then the coaches select



players for an All-Star team which represents the league in tournaments with the eventual winner having a chance to go to the championships at Williamsport, PA.

Forest Park Little League President, Derrick Dickerson, said that each year new coaches must be recruited -- men or women-- to continue the baseball program that has existed on these fields for many years. Coach Wilson feels that interest in baseball is waning because of competition from other year-round sports. But, with the commitment of dedicated coaches, the tradition of the Forest Park Little League lives on in the lives of youngsters who come to play on the ball fields of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park.

The English Ivy Infestation

by Alvera Winkler

English ivy is an increasing presence in forests like those in Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park and a serious threat to the park's tree canopy. It is a climbing vine that has been declared an invasive species in 18 states. The ivy is a great ecological threat, killing trees, choking out plants, and destroying the habitat for native wildlife, and as one authority puts it, "leaving 'ivy deserts,' suitable only for rodents." English ivy was brought to the United States from other countries probably for ornamental purposes. For many years, it has enjoyed popularity as a groundcover among gardeners and landscapers because it is an easy-to-grow, care-free and attractive evergreen, and it has no natural predators here. However, ivy is difficult to contain in gardens and landscapes and has found its way to park lands and forests, where it destroys trees in a slow and insidious way.

English ivy is a master of disguise. It is most easily recognized in its juvenile stage, when the vine first begins to climb the tree trunk, decorating it with green three-lobed leaves. At this stage, it is easy to remove with little effort, but many are fooled by its beauty and it is left undeterred to enter its next stage. It is then that the ivy leaves drop from the portion of the vine that is covering the bottom 3 feet of the trunk. The leafless vine becomes wood-like, making it difficult to distinguish from the tree trunk. At the same time, the portion of vine entering the canopy of the tree morphs the ivy leaves from three lobes to lobeless, making the ivy leaves more difficult to distinguish from tree leaves.



Mature tree covered with Ivy

Meanwhile, the ivy continues its slow quest in search of sunlight, wrapping around branches as it moves upward. The lower branches are the first to die as the ivy prevents sunlight from reaching the tree's leaves. To the casual observer, the thinning of the tree's canopy, camouflaged by the lush green ivy growth during this stage, may go unnoticed. By the time the ivy reaches the top, the tree may have only a small cluster of leaves remaining. Severely weakened, the tree dies, or, top heavy with vines, is easily downed by heavy wind, rain, or heavy snow.

Early prevention of ivy infestation can save a great deal of time and money. Removal of ivy can take just a few minutes if it is removed promptly. Heavily infested trees may require up to 10 hours each to remove ivy. Ivy removal will not save trees too heavily infested and weakened from loss of limbs.

Trees weakened or dead from ivy should be removed to prevent personal or property damage. Removal of trees can be costly. The cost of removing one badly infested 70-foot tree was reported by a local tree removal company to be a whopping \$18,000.

How to remove English ivy: Cut a vine - save a tree. It is as easy as that, if nipped in-the-bud, so to speak. The vines should be left on the tree to prevent pulling of bark accidentally. Cut vines will eventually rot and drop off. Roots should be pulled from the ground, ideally within 2 feet of the base of the tree. This is more easily done when the ground is moist.

Other methods of ivy removal can be found on the National Park Service web site at www.nps.gov/plants/alien (select Fact Sheet).



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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Concert at the Edge of the Park in the Rognel Heights Neighborhood

On May 25 the sun was dropping below the tree tops, the temperature was perfect, the stage was aligned, the band began to warm up, and the neighbors from Rognel Heights had either taken their seats or were in the process of drifting down their streets with their chairs to the athletic fields that border the southern edge of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park.

Since 1840 the Bureau of Music of the Department of Recreation and Parks has entertained the citizens of Baltimore with the Outdoor Summer Concert Series, featuring contemporary and traditional jazz and R&B artists. However, as local residents stated at their arrival, it had been a long time since they had had Music in the Park in their own neighborhood setting. It did not take long for David Bach and his band to have the audience clapping and swaying with a variety of musical numbers. It was a perfect summer evening.

The Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park acted as sponsor for this event and requested a location for a neighborhood that bordered the park. With emphasis on taking advantage



of the proximity to the park, the Friends provided an information table to promote summer activities in the park and to encourage residents to take a biking or walking map for a personal adventure into the woods.