



FRIENDS OF GWYNNS FALLS/LEAKIN PARK

1920 EAGLE DRIVE

BALTIMORE, MD 21207

www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org

Fall 2013

Family Fun Day

Sunday, October 13, 11:00-3:00

Trains to ride

Pogo sticks and hula hoops

Nature Art Workshop

Labyrinth to walk

Games, Games, Games

Windsor Hills Festival

Saturday, October 19, 11:00-4:00

Enjoy a drum line

Face Painting

Guided walk on the
W.H. Conservation Trail

Scavenger Hunt

Tuesday A.M. Work Crew

Every Tuesday, 10:00-12:00

Help with park projects

Trail maintenance, bulb planting

Tree pruning and garden weeding

Call 410-566-2230 for information



Family Fun Day and Docs in the Park

Sunday, October 13, 11:00–3:00

Eagle Drive off Windsor Mill Road (21207)

The Friends have joined with our close neighbor, the University of Maryland Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Institute, and with Docs in the Parks—a partnership of Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, physicians, naturalists and educators—to sponsor a day filled with activities that promote the health benefits for children and families as they explore and play in the outdoors.

Along with the usual Second Sunday running of the steam trains, there will be pogo sticks, hula hoops, frisbees (for tossing with a friend or for a game of frisbee golf), hopscotch and jump rope (with one or two ropes). If you so dare, you can try your skill at double-dutch or give advice to a youngster standing on the sidelines wishing for an opportunity to try.

At the labyrinth, a spokesperson will be available for exploration and guidance. The historic Orianda House will be open for visitors to learn about the recent renovations and for viewing displays of the collected memorabilia of the Winans Family and the 1850s house.

A naturalist will lead a short hike, pointing out items of interest in the woods and fields.

Nature Art in the Park will have an art workshop, using natural materials, as well as a guided tour of the exhibit along park trails. And not to be forgotten, a truck featuring nutritional food will be selling soups and breads. Or folks can just meander about the grounds, watching the fun activities and listening to the music of Sau Au Lait, a Dixieland band.

The purpose of sponsoring an event with games, games, games is to encourage families to return to a local park and enjoy activities like these on their own. Sixty minutes of daily active outdoor time allows children to have healthier weights and lower risk of heart disease and diabetes. As schools decrease the time spent in daily physical activity, parents must step forward to fill the void. With Family Fun Day, the Friends and the other sponsors hope to demonstrate recreational opportunities for families that are close by and involve little expense.

HACK THE PARKS

This past spring, the Mayor's office, in partnership with the Department of Recreation and Parks, announced the "Hack the Parks" grants initiative, providing seed funding to "new, innovative, feasible projects which aim to improve Baltimore's parks."

Friends' board member Ed VandenBosche saw this as a great opportunity to address the concern about the invasive infestation of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park which was explained when he was featured in last winter's newsletter article, "Sustainability of the Forest." Ed and others developed a proposal for an innovative way to map the invasive vines in the park, using GPS technology as a first step toward a systematic process for the evaluation and remediation of the problem. The grant funded development of a GPS-based map which divided the entire park into square-acre sections. These manageable sections are the vehicle for the next step in the process –



Ed VandenBosche and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

eliminating the vines. Good news: the proposal received funding.

Over the summer the grant money was used to hire a small technology company to work on the mapping project by collecting data on smart phones with the use of an ArcGIS Collector application. A grid was created where a dot represented the center of one acre of the park. Each acre was then carefully evaluated by a technician

to assess the existence of invasive vines. Using accepted criteria descriptions, each quarter acre was given a rating on a scale of 0-5 to illustrate the extent of vine growth for that area, and the sections were then colored-coded to show variation in the density of the vines.

Ed presented the findings at a ceremony recognizing the Hack the Parks projects, hosted by the Mayor at the Orianda House on September 24. The technology produced in this first part of the process provides a basis for the Friends to develop a plan to address the problem of invasive vines in Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, and Department of Recreation and Parks staff members recognize its value as a tool that can be used in similar settings throughout the city's park system.

Addressing the problem will require a great deal of work, but with Ed's leadership and innovative idea the process has gotten off to a great start.

TRAIL IMPROVEMENT

Two years ago the Friends adopted a goal to increase the number of sustainable walking trails that would attract a greater variety of users. The initiative came in response to a sobering report from a trail expert hired by the Department of Recreation and Parks about the poor conditions of some of the trails in the park. Significant improvements that were needed included closure of some sections because of erosion problems and replacing those sections with alternative routes that were more user-friendly and sustainable.

Once again this summer, during July and August, two Baltimore City youth groups, each with eleven 16-18 years olds and two counselors, worked for six weeks to replace a portion of the Ridge Trail that for years has been badly deteriorating. On another section existing water bars were cleared and new ones installed to divert storm water.

The summer project was conducted by the Student Conservation Association, a nonprofit group whose mission is to give young people training and experience working in the out-of-doors as a prelude to possible career choices. Having a young, strong, well-managed work group is a perfect match for making the improvements that are needed on the trails. This was the third year that SCA has placed youth workers in Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park,

and they have been always welcomed back by the Friends who greatly value the skills of the counselors. It is not easy to motivate and relate to teens during the hot humid days of summer in Baltimore, so the counselors receive extensive training by the national SCA organization in both trail building and leadership skills in order to create a favorable working relationship.

Preparation for a new trail project requires advanced preparation by Friends' volunteers as well. In early spring the alternative route needs to be carefully sited and flagged before new undergrowth appears. To prevent water running down the path, the new route must have an incline of no more than eight degrees, which frequently requires a meandering route to avoid a steep downhill slope. In cutting the new trail, the young workers often have to angle it so that water runs across rather than straight down the path. The new sections of the Ridge Trail are now completed, so come enjoy a better walk through the woods.

The Friends also just received word from the State Highway Administration Recreational Trails Program that we are the recipient of a grant that will allow us to have a partnership with the Student Conservation Association again next summer. That will be the third in our list of improvements to multi-use, sustainable park trails.

BGE NATURAL GAS PIPELINE

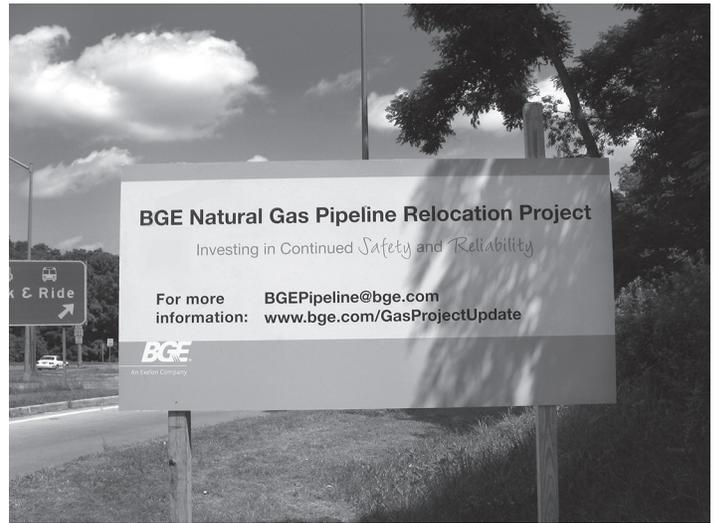
The possibility of a natural gas line running for two miles through the park came as quite a surprise in early June when a Friends member and sole property owner within the park boundaries received a letter from BGE stating that a portion of her property would be needed for a 75 foot easement for a replacement pipeline.

Board members decided to act quickly to try to determine who knew about this project which seemed to be well along in the planning. At a Recreation and Parks Citizen Advisory Board meeting, no members present said that they had received a notification despite the fact that the department is the land holder. Councilwoman Holton was contacted and asked about City Council knowledge, and she also said that she had had no notification. A subsequent call was made by Ms. Holton's office to a BGE employee who replied that such a plan was true.

A committee of Friends then sent a lengthy statement to BGE, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Mayor, City Council members and other elected officials. The paper explained who the Friends are, our history of advocacy for the park, and our environmental concerns about the pipeline. Councilwoman Holton convened a meeting in early September for the three groups. At that meeting, the project manager explained in detail three possible routes. Much discussion followed, and this meeting led to an agreement for a joint walk along the proposed alternative routes with all parties.

The walk along the routes with BGE officials, staff from the Park Division of Recreation and Parks, and Friends was held on Friday, September 27th. The walk explored the three options – one parallel to the existing pipeline through the valley, an upland route which was BGE's first choice and a modified upland route developed after earlier consultation with park staff. Friends and park department representatives expressed regret that at a much earlier point in the process, BGE had not considered options that did not involve park property.

Walking with BGE staff, the group considered the option of extending the new pipeline beside the existing one, which



runs through the valley and crosses the stream at several points. BGE representatives pointed out difficulties with the route, including the fact that the current pipeline would need to continue functioning until replaced. Wetland permits also present challenges to this option.

The group then explored the modified plan which had been developed by BGE in response to park department concerns to try to reduce damage. Unlike the original BGE proposal, the modified plan would take less woodland, but still would go through a substantial portion of beautiful woods. A benefit of the modified plan is that it would go along the edges of the park for a greater distance, reducing damage to trees: the downside from our point of view is that it still would bisect a substantial portion of forest. For BGE, routes that avoid wetland restrictions and close location to other public utilities are most advantageous for their construction.

BGE officials listened to a suggestion from the Friends for consideration of a northern route through parts of the park where the pipeline could be placed beneath portions of roadways with the prospect of less habitat damage. BGE agreed to study that option.

The walking session ended with an agreement that the group reconvene in 3-4 weeks when the latter proposal could be carefully examined, along with other considerations regarding the optional routes.



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

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

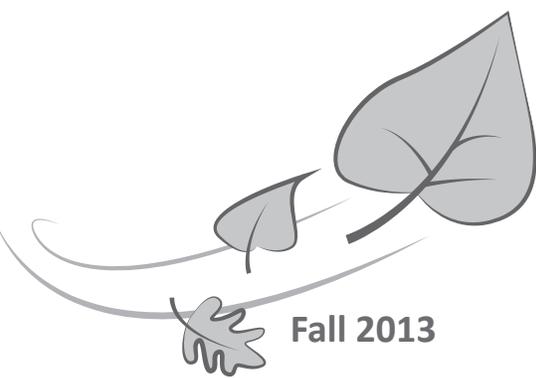
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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*Contributions to FOGFLP are tax deductible.



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Celebrate Windsor Hills Festival

On Saturday, October 19, Windsor Hills, a neighbor of the park along Windsor Mill Road, will have a festival at the intersection of Clifton and Fairfax Roads (see the box for event details) celebrating its unique history with a variety of events.

The special occasion for the event is the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the creation of the Windsor Hills Conservation Trail, originally developed by environmentalist Steven Lee to preserve the unique natural character of the woodland adjoining the community along the Gwynns Falls. Under the leadership of Elaine Yamada and with the help of numerous volunteers the trail was completed. Officially opened in 1998, the mile-long trail follows an old street car right-of-way that extended from the community to the



Early Stalwarts of the Trail

stream, then it makes use of the route of a former mill race to reach Windsor Mill Road. Continuing efforts have resulted in creation of a map, trail signage, and volunteer work on trail improvements.

Windsor Hills originally was developed as one of the area's early "streetcar suburbs," located on a trolley line that ran from the city to

Lorraine Cemetery. Leading residents championed it as a community open to all—early welcoming Jewish residents and later advocating open occupancy for African Americans. From the beginning, the natural environment, with its hills and woodlands, was a major appeal for settlers, and that character remains a strong attraction for residents today.