

The Friends

VOLUME II ISSUE III

FALL / WINTER 2009

SPECIAL POINTS OF IN- TEREST:

Join us for trail work
the first Saturday of
each month. Contact
**Gary Sawyer, Trails
Director, at**

**Muddy
boots@comcast.net**

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HOLIDAY DANCE DECEMBER 12



Where can you go to a party and dance in the ballroom of a genuine historic mansion? Why, Ridley Creek State Park, of course. The Hunting Hill

Mansion is the venue of choice for the Holiday Dance set for Saturday December 12, sponsored by the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park. The beauty of the ballroom will be enhanced with festive holiday decorations, and home-made appetizers, treats, and beverages to please everyone will be offered to guests beginning at 7:30 pm.

The evening will open with choral selections from the Ambassadors, an a capella choir from Penncrest High School under the direction of Sherre Gaertner.

The main event will be dancing to live music from an outstanding local band, the Highballs, all great singers and players, including guitar, bass, full keyboard sounds, drums and percussion.

The Highballs have gotten rave reviews for the weddings and parties where they have played and now they will be entertaining us.

To top it off, tours of the mansion will be offered during the evening by our historian Kay Ferrari. She will share her knowledge of the history and architecture of the building, as well as relate stories about the Jeffords family, their prize-winning horses, and their connections with Sam Riddle and other Philadelphia area community leaders.

The cost of the party is \$25 per person, and \$20 for members of the **Friends of Ridley Creek State Park**. Guests who join the Friends on the evening of the party can attend at the discounted rate. We are also offering the \$20 rate to members of the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association.

Don't miss this popular event. For reservation or further information, contact the Holiday Dance organizer, **Carol Rubin, at 610-565-3877**.

CALENDAR 2010 ON SALE NOW!



The 2010 Ridley Creek State Park calendars are available for sale now. The calendar is filled with pictures of the park taken by amateur photographers who submitted entries to last year's Photo Contest. Some of the calendar photos were prize winners. There are scenes of the creek, waterfall, foliage, and animals, among others. The photographers featured are Susan Brooks (2nd prize, Adults), Tom Brown, Charlotte Derrickson (2nd prize, Youth), Christopher Farmer, Scott Grapin, Marianne Jenkins-Wramble,

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2010 Calendar Available!

Tom Jordan, Charles Protesto (3rd prize, Adults), Peter Smyth (1st prize, Adults), Robert Talone, Rebecca Warda, and Matt Whitney (3rd prize, Youth). Much appreciation goes to the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park Board members who brought this project to fruition: Tony leradi, Joan Nikelsky, and Carol Rubin. The calendar is selling for \$12 to the general public and \$10 for members of the Friends. They make great holiday gifts for nature lovers. Buying a calendar helps to support the work of the Friends, an all-volunteer group. Be sure to get yours before they sell out. See our website www.friendsofrcsp.org for locations and dates that the calendar will be available for sale. Or call Carol Rubin at 610-565-3877.



2009 PHOTO CONTEST

The 2009 Photo Contest award ceremony was held on Sunday, November 8, at the Hunting Hill Mansion. Over 60 entries were submitted by local amateur photographers who enjoy capturing the natural beauty of the park on film. The

judge was Bob Coffey, Board member and Education Director of the Delaware Photographic Society in Wilmington. There were so many wonderful photographs, the judge decided to award several Honorable Mentions in addition to the 3 major prizes in Adult and Youth categories. The winners of this year's contest are: Adult category: 1st prize, Hollie Riley; 2nd prize, Hank Fisher; 3rd prize, Susan Brooks. Youth category: 1st prize, Lauren Remaley; 2nd prize, Lisa Joy Meyer; 3rd prize, Dominic Papa. Honorable Mention: Joseph Aliano, Steven Kopf, Ann McGarrity, J. Adam Tarsia, and Steve Tessler. Congratulations to all!



The 1st place winner in the Adult category, Hollie Riley, commented, "It was a big thing for me to enter, so winning was beyond amazing. Today is my 7 year wedding anniversary so winning the award was the second best thing that happened to me on this day!" After the award ceremony, Richard Johnson, a local professional landscape photographer, was on hand to offer brief individual consultations for amateur photographers wishing advice and tips on their work. Later, park historian Kay Ferrari gave a Mansion tour to interested attendees. Refreshments were served during the event. The new 2010 park calendars were available for sale, featuring photos from last year's contest (see related story).

Photo Contest organizer Carol Rubin awarding 1st prize, Adult category, to Hollie Riley holding her daughter Piper, who is featured in the winning photo.

The next Photo Contest will be held in January 2011, so you have plenty of time to get your pictures ready!

Friends Annual Meeting Held

On June 14, 2009, the Friends held our annual meeting at Pavilion 14. It was preceded by a hike led by Gary Sawyer, and a picnic with expert grilling of hot dogs and hamburgers by Tim Higgins and Tony leradi. A bylaws change was

adopted, which allows Board members to serve additional 2-year terms if no other candidate is available to fill their vacancy. We re-elected Jack Miller as Vice-President and Gary Sawyer as Recording Secretary. Membership Co-chair Joan Nikelsky gave a special presentation of appreciation to Park office worker Bernice Webb for her dedication and service to the Friends and to the park, awarding her a lifetime membership in the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park.



In addition to following us on our website www.friendsofrcsp.org, you can now visit our group page, The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park if you have a Facebook page! Join us there and keep up with our current and future events.



BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF MILE-A-MINUTE WEED IN PARK



mile-a-minute weed

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 United States License. Photographer: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, United States

You may be familiar with mile-a-minute weed (*Persicaria perfoliata*), hereafter referred to as MAM, both in the park and possibly in your own yard. We know that it is an aggressive, fast-growing annual vine that will cover any surrounding vegetation. Since MAM's inadvertent introduction from Asia to North America (starting in York County, Pa.), it has spread up and down the East Coast and as far west as Ohio. Other than using herbicides or mechanical techniques, which have their own drawbacks, this noxious vine has been difficult to manage.

We can see the impact of MAM throughout the park – on the multi-use trail, the hiking trails, and in gardens near the park office. Wherever the ground has been disturbed, MAM is quick to seize the opportunity to move in. Since it is not native to this area, it has no natural enemies and can “outcompete” the plants that are indigenous to the park.

One possible way to manage MAM is to introduce an organism that is known to selectively and exclusively feed on the MAM weed, thus controlling it and re-establishing the ecological balance of the areas affected. This organism is a weevil (*Rhinocominus latipes Korotyaev*), hereafter referred to as the MAM weevil.

So when a PhD graduate student at the University of Delaware, Ellen Lake, contacted Ridley Creek State Park in the spring of 2008, asking if we had a problem with MAM and if we would participate in a biological control experiment involving the MAM weevil, Park Manager Roger McChesney responded “Yes!” He invited Tim Higgins, who heads the Invasive Plants Project, to join a tour he was giving Ellen. To their great surprise they were unable to find any substantial, suitable stands of MAM in areas where it had been abundant during the previous growing season. This may have been due to the cold wet spring last year -- because later in the 2008 growing season, MAM returned, more prolific than ever.

Although Ridley Creek State Park couldn't qualify as an experimental site, Ellen agreed to introduce a small population of MAM weevils at two sites greater than a mile apart to try and see if such a small population could be successful.

There was little early evidence of weevil growth, but the introduced population successfully overwintered and started producing new generations in the early summer 2009. By the end of the summer, the situation had radically and favorably changed to having much larger populations of the MAM weevil with considerable dispersal range – about a mile – as reported by the Park Manager.

Other areas that have had weevils introduced in recent years, such as in the Brandywine Conservancy, have shown significant reduction in the health and spread of MAM. This is enabling native plants to compete with MAM and hopefully lead to a more balanced ecosystem. Attempts to control MAM at Ridley Creek State Park will continue during the coming months.

References for mile-a-minute and weevil studies can be found at <http://ag.udel.edu/enwc/research/biocontrol/mileaminute.htm>. See also an excellent newspaper article by Sandy Bauer of the Philadelphia Inquirer on August 26, 2007, or Google *Rhinocominus latipes Korotyaev*.

This article was contributed by Friends Board member Tim Higgins.



Would you like to volunteer your time to the park in a meaningful way? Please contact any one of the Friends' officers listed on our website at www.friendsofrcsp.org to find out more.



INVASIVE PLANTS CONTROL UPDATE

Following up on the highly successful Invasive Plants Control Project carried out in the Spring of 2009, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park continued our work on controlling invasive plants within the park on August 25th and 26th. Under the direction of Rachel Wagner of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, a group of 9 Friends and volunteers targeted three invasive plant species: Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Princess Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), and Phragmites. These species were selected because of their current emerging populations at the park and their ability to spread rapidly if growth is not addressed. Volunteers worked in seven different locations where significant stands of the named species were cut and treated, or frilled and treated, whichever method of elimination was deemed most appropriate. The work was difficult and the weather hot, but by the end of the work session, we accomplished our objectives.

Our invasive plant control efforts will continue throughout 2010 and hopefully beyond. If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Tim Higgins – 610-355-9208 timhiggins2@gmail.com.

TRAIL WORKERS BUILD FOOTBRIDGE



The next time you take a short stroll on the Orange trail from Gradyville Road, you'll notice a footbridge over a small tributary to Ridley Creek. And nearby, under an old hickory tree, is a wooden picnic table from which you can enjoy a snack and watch Ridley Creek flowing by. Remember to take out any picnic trash you bring. The bridge and picnic table were purchased by the Friends and constructed on a Saturday morning by enthusiastic volunteers during the monthly trail workday.

Pictured here left to right are Jack Miller (below), Larry Andersson, Deborah Samans, Mark Kern, Ann Hodgdon, John Kennedy, John Walters, Tim Higgins, Gary Sawyer, and Ted Uhlman.



SAP SETS A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR VOLUNTEERISM

It was a crisp and sunny October day at Ridley Creek State Park. If you had been there that day, you would have seen groups of happy volunteers with rakes, clippers, and saws in hand. No, Ridley Creek State Park didn't expand its workforce, it was the lucky recipient of a day's worth of work from 55 volunteers from local business software company SAP of Newtown Square. October was the month of service for all SAP employees, where every employee is encouraged to donate his/her time to the cause of their choice. This tradition of volunteerism began years ago as the vision of Bill McDermott, then President and CEO of SAP America, who created the "Month of Service Program." Bill is now President of Global Field Operations and a member of the Executive Board of SAP AG (SAP's global parent company), but the tradition continues and is embraced by thousands of employees at the company. This group at the park was only a fraction of the 3400 employees who volunteered their time in October.

"Observing the group, you could see that the spirit of the volunteers was definitely there—this was not an obligatory act, they were genuinely happy to be there, and we were appreciative that they chose Ridley Creek State Park" said Tim Higgins, Board member and past President of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park, who helped coordinate volunteers. The volunteers cleared invasive plants, raked leaves, and assisted in general cleanup around the mansion for most of the day.

"Many SAP employees live around the park and use it quite frequently, which makes them eager to participate in any way they can," stated David Brennfleck, SAP's coordinator for this event. "What makes it even sweeter for the park is that through SAP's Dollars for Doers program, SAP matches each employee work hour with a financial donation to the qualified non-profit" -- in this case, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park (through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundations).

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SAP SETS A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR VOLUNTEERISM

“Funds generated by the Friends stay local and help fill the gap between the state budget and the needs of the park,” added Pamela Cloud, spokesperson for the Friends.

“Each fall, the workforce at Ridley Creek State Park is reduced, but the visitors to the park stay the same and the need for maintenance continues. With the help of the SAP employees, we were able to accomplish many needed activities. We are very grateful,” said Roger McChesney, Park Manager.

“Additionally, the support that SAP and other volunteers provided for state parks during the budget crisis apparently paid off. There were to be additional funds cut from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) budget and additional staff layoffs, but a last minute compromise was reached and no additional funds and staff were cut last week. The efforts of many groups and individuals - including the ‘Friends’ at the local and state level - were interpreted as strong support for DCNR – so strong that it surprised many people in the legislative and judi-

cial branches.” This goes to show that individuals can have more of an impact than they may think!



(left to right) David Brennfleck (SAP), Roger McChesney, Park Manager, and Tim Higgins, Board member of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park.

Would you like to volunteer your time to the park in a meaningful way? Please contact any one of the Friends’ officers listed on our website at www.friendsofrcsp.org to find out more. If you would like to see pictures of the SAP volunteer day, become a Friend on Facebook and stay current on ongoing events

Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 12, 7:30 PM – Holiday Dance at the historic Hunting Hills Mansion.

January 2010 - kick-off for the photo contest. Get an early start on a Friends favorite event..

First Sat each Month– Trail workers meet at the mansion.

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Remember

We are a qualified 501c3 organization and if you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, it should be made out to PPF- Friends of Ridley Creek State Park.

The Friends Thank You for Your Continued Support and Wish You A Happy and Healthy 2010!