FRIENDS OF RIDLEY
CREEK STATE PARK

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

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Protecting our |

Friends Need 2 your Help!

Remember us 2
Tax Time!

2008 Photo 2 Contest

Holiday Party 3

New Pavilion 3
Dedicated

Park Reserva- 3 tion System

SAP Volun- 3

# The Friends

VOLUME II ISSUE I

FALL/WINTER 2009

## **Protecting Our Turf**

Have you ever noticed how the deer population loves to dine on your rhododendron and specialty plants while simultaneously snubbing their noses at plentiful grasses, multiflora rose and other invasive plants? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the reverse were true? The deer could turn their attentions to the invasives, keeping garden weeds at bay while filling their tummies at the same time and everybody would be happy.

Unfortunately this isn't the case, giving the unappetizing, invasive plants a huge advantage over native plants. Nowhere is this problem more apparent than in Ridley Creek State Park.

When thinking about projects at Ridley Creek State Park, it is easy to focus on the obvious projects that give immediate gratification such as the mansion, the formal gardens, the hiking trails. But because the impact of invasive plants is not readily apparent, we are content to hike the trails and fish in the creek, maybe even admiring the web of green these dangerous plants weave over the lush landscape. It's just because we don't know any better.

Mile-A-Minute, Japanese Stilt Grass, Japanese Knotweed, and Multi Flora Rose are a few of the plants that are taking over the Park. Native fauna and insects don't recognize the plants as food so they don't feed or prey upon them. Without human intervention, the damage caused by deer together with the invasive plant "takeover" will eventually force the extinction of the native plants, causing a biological collapse of our late succession hard-



Japanese Stilt Grass is an annual that can reach 5 feet in height.

wood forest because there are no seedlings maturing to replace the old growth. If you look under the canopy of mature hardwoods, you will see the only native saplings coming up are American Beech saplings, as the deer have browsed down most other native saplings. Years down the road, hikers will not be protected by the shade provided by these beautiful trees, but instead will hatchet their way through heavy vines, scratchy grasses and stinging thorns. Not to mention the imminent collapse of the food chain as a result of the destruction of our native woodland landscape.

A few people are passionate about invasive plants and have made it their business to eliminate them, or at the very least reduce the impact of their harmful effects. A plan is currently underway to educate the public about invasive plants while also seeking experienced trail workers to assist in the Park's plan to deal with the plants.

If you are interested in reading more about this issue, please read the recent report by Doctors Ann Rhoads and Timothy Block from University of Pennsylvania and Morris Arbore-Rhoads and Block were hired by DCNR to do a study of the vegetation of Ridley Creek State Park and develop recommendations for the control of invasive plants within the Park. Their report is posted on o u r website www.friendsofrcsp.org.

Multi Flora Rose—looks pretty, but can choke out native plants.



VOLUME II ISSUE I PAGE 2

# The Friends Need Your Help!



Join the Friends - visit the park!

Did you ever wonder how this newsletter gets printed, or who arranges the Holiday Party and other events? Well it's the volunteer Board of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park! The board relies on membership dues and donations to help fund these functions. Without you, our Friends, and your dues, there is no way we can help enhance the park and hold the fabulous functions like

the Photo Contest. So, if you're reading this newsletter, we could use your help! Joining the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park not only feels good, but it provides you with some benefits such as reduced entry fees for many Friends programs, discounts from some of our merchant sponsors, a vote for the Board of Directors, and the knowledge that your membership fees are directly spent on supplies and equipment to support the programs of the Friends.

If you would like to see these events continue, please consider joining or renewing your membership to the Friends. It's easy, inexpensive, and feels good!

For more information or to join, please contact us at

Membership@FriendsOfRCSP.org. -

#### **Contact Us At**

Friends of Ridley Creek State Park Ridley Creek State Park 1023 Sycamore Mills Rd. Media, PA 19063-4398

- OR -

#### Visit us on the Web

http://www.friendsofrcsp.org/



### Remember us at Tax Time...or Any Time!

As an affiliate member of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation (PPFF), the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park is a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization, which means that your contributions are tax deductible! In addition, any money that you donate to the Friends will benefit Ridley Creek State Park directly. It is a little known fact that money dropped off in the office or

checks made out to the Park itself goes directly into the "General Fund," of PPFF which may or may not be redirected back to Ridley Creek State Park. Some people prefer to donate stocks or similar commodities. PPFF has a method established with a broker who will

convert the stocks to cash and deposit the funds into the appropriate PPFF account. For more information on stock donations, contact John Kennedy from our website or Roger McChesney, Park Manager at 610-892-3900 for "how to" details.



The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park is a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization,

#### 2008 Photo Contest

In November, 2008, The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park had our annual photo contest award ceremony in the historic and beautiful Hunting Hill Mansion. Over 45 entries were submitted, all reflecting the beauty and diversity that makes Ridley Creek State Park the special place that it is. Our judges had a difficult time deciding the winners but eventually they all agreed.



In the adult division, first place went to Peter Smith, 2nd to Susan Brooks and 3rd

to Charles Protester. In the youth division, first place went to Larry Galloway, 2nd to Charlotte Derrickson, and 3rd to Matt Whitney. As always, delicious refreshments were served which added to this always

pleasant Sunday in the Park. It is not too early to start taking photos of the park for next years contest! The Friends are hoping to publish a calendar for 2009 featuring some of the photos that were entered in the con-



test. Watch your emails, the website and the papers for information regarding this project.

VOLUME II ISSUE I PAGE 3

### Holiday Party 2008





On Saturday night, December 6, the Friends hosted another exciting evening in the Hunting Hill Mansion. Alyce Zellers, Master Gardener, brought her talented crew of Master Gardeners to decorate the mansion with natural greenery.

The mansion looked especially beautiful that night aided by the beauty of a dusting of snow! Once inside the ballroom, The Ambassadors from Penncrest High School entertained us with their a cappella voices and two dance numbers. Sherri Gaertner, choir director, played the piano, and had a smile on her face like a proud parent. Steve Kurtz, the well-known Delaware County radio personality and D.J. spun the music for the rest of the night and actually led guests in line dances.

A mansion tour was led by our park historian, Kay Ferrari, who enjoys sharing her knowledge about Walter Jeffords, Mrs. Jeffords, Sam Riddle, and the lifestyle of that period. Great food and drinks were served to appreciative guests as the night drew to an end.

We hope to repeat this event the first weekend in December, 2009. We thinks it's a wonderful way to get into the holiday spirit!

#### Holiday Party 2009

Would you be interested in helping with the 2009 Holiday Party? Drop us line, let us know



#### New Park Pavilion Dedicated

On Oct 19, 2008 the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park, along with park management represented by park manager Roger McChesney dedicated the park's newest pavilion at picnic area 14. The pavilion will be available for public use on a first come basis or through the reservation system. The pavilion has 3 grills available for cooking and 20 tables. The pavilion was erected in the late summer

and early autumn. The Friends contributed 10 picnic tables to the park to help furbish the new Pavilion.



# Park Reservation System Would you like to reserve one of the pard do so by going online at www.dcnr.sta

Would you like to reserve one of the park's pavilions? You can do so by going online at <a href="www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/">www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/</a> or calling the toll free number 888-PA-PARKS (7 AM - 5 PM Mon - Sat) All pavilions include charcoal grills and are located near rest rooms. The online system shows what pavilions are available for a specific date, and what facilities are close to that pavilion. The cost of the pavilion rental is \$79 non-electric or \$85 electric (only Picnic area 17). After you select the site you want, you'll be asked a couple questions and informed if the site is available. If that site in not available, an alternative will be offered. Then simply enter your payment information and the pavilion is reserved for you!

#### Volunteers - Where would we be without them?

Volunteers and volunteer activities are what the Friends are all about. We rely on our volunteer membership to form our Board, and lead our activities.

On October 19th, 2008, at the newest park pavilion in picnic area 14, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park held their 4th Annual Members Meeting and election. As in the past, members were offered hamburgers, hot dogs, beverages and snacks at no cost. Members of the Board did the cooking and a good time was had by all. Following the meal and socialization there was a brief meeting and election for Board openings conducted by retiring President Tim Higgins. There were two offices, President and Treasurer to be filled. John Kennedy was elected to a second term as Treasurer. The office of President was left unfilled.

And speaking of volunteers, on Oct 27th, 2008 about 50 volunteers from SAP America donated their, time, energy and muscles to help the park. These ambitious volunteers helped spread wood chips on the gardens around the mansion, and cleared much brush in area 13 to create a new picnic area and create a space for

new trees. Thanks SAP!





Volunteer Today!

### Open House at the Mansion April 19th



The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park are hosting an Open House at the Hunting Hill Mansion on Sunday, April 19, from 1 to 4 pm.

There will be scheduled tours (first come-first served) of the Mansion led by our "resident historian" Kay Ferrari, who will entertain all with Looking pool in the garden at Hunting Hill stories about the Jeffords family, their prize-winning horses, and their connections with other well-known Philadelphia area community leaders.

Kay can also speak about the architecture and history of the building.

Other groups located in or associated with the Park will have informational tables at the Open House. These include Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation, Hidden Valley Farm horse stables, and the Chester

Ridley Crum Watershed.

Visitors will hear about recent Park improvements, the activities of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park, and opportunities for community involvement. The Invasives Plant Committee will have informational materials about invasive plants that are often sold for landscaping.

Anyone who joins the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park during the Open House will receive a small tree as a bonus.

Free refreshments will be served.

## **Upcoming Events**

March 28, 2009 Red Cross CPR & First Aid Training. 8AM – 2PM. Time Tentative \$10.00 for each certification. At the Mansion.

April 19, 2009 I PM – 4 PM Ridley Creek State Park Open House – in the Mansion. Each group represented in the Park will have a table of information and tours of their areas in the Park. Refreshments served.

**April 26, 2009** Ann Rhoads Nature Walk – afternoon. Reservations required:

www.crcwatersheds.org

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### A Few Good Volunteers Wanted

The highly successful Adopt-A-Trail is entering its third year. This program matches up a volunteer with a section of trail. The volunteer keeps the trail free from encroaching vegetation and litter (seldom in the Park) and reports any major problems such as blow-downs or trail erosion problems to the trail chairman – Gary Sawyers – or the Adopt-A-Trail coordinator - Tim Higgins. The volunteer is provided tools to accomplish their task or they are free to use

their own tools. The maintenance can be done any time the volunteer has time and feels like getting in the outdoors and doing something good. The program has been a major factor in having the Park manager, Roger McChesney, comment that he has never seen the trails in better shape. The monthly trail work group, which meets the first Saturday of each month, is then free to do more technical work such as removing blow-downs, alleviating erosion problems, and doing necessary repair work on trail

structures. We are seeking volunteers who would like to spend time in nature and are willing to give back to the community. No technical experience is necessary. If you are interested please contact Tim Higgins at timhiggins2@msn.com or 610-355-9208.