

THE FRIENDS OF
RIDLEY CREEK
STATE PARK



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NEW EDUCATION DIRECTOR SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND INCREASE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As Friends of Ridley members and users, we know what makes our park special — forest, streams, trails, wildlife. But not everyone does. New Education Director Gary Stolz seeks to increase the knowledge and enjoyment of these and many other aspects of Ridley through partnerships with community members, community groups, and beyond.

Leading public trail walks, training people about native plant species, observing the Fall and Spring migrations of more than 200 bird species that move through Ridley, and teaching children how to fish for trout in the creek are just a few of the activities that will enhance the community's enjoyment of the

outdoors, according to Gary.

These activities are the tip of the iceberg at Ridley, which is one of 121 state parks. For example, Gary would like to see more organized groups use the camp site at Area 13 and more attention given to Ridley's unusual areas, like the old feldspar quarry and the State Champion Black Oak tree. He sees bat monitoring and stream monitoring as activities that can help Ridley diversify its programs and increase people's appreciation for nature. And he believes that appreciation will lead to conservation.

"The goal is to get people to understand and enjoy nature so they preserve and

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FRIENDS OF RCSP VOICEMAIL

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR FRIENDS AT ANY TIME WITH YOUR COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS.
LEAVE A MESSAGE AT 484-442-0223, AND SOMEONE WILL GET BACK TO YOU ASAP!

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protect it," said Gary, a retired biologist, who will offer programs at Ridley starting in April and running through Thanksgiving.

Community groups already engage with Ridley Creek State Park through educational programs and volunteer service projects: Immaculata University recently sent 30 students to Ridley for trail maintenance activities; a half-dozen Boy Scout Troops hung signs and installed new picnic tables; SAP employees regularly complete service projects in the park; and home school groups take nature and stream walks. Gary recently visited White Horse Village to establish some educational programs there. He's taking nature education to the community and having community members and groups visit the park for

hikes, learning activities, and volunteerism.

Current affiliations include The Student Conservation Association and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which stocks Ridley with trout for top-notch fishing. The possibilities are endless for someone who has spent his life facilitating scouting, birding, and environmental programs, now that Ridley Creek State Park has a dedicated Education Director after the position was vacant for eight years.

Some of the immediate challenges that could be tackled with volunteers are: Helping with the gardens around the Mansion or re-establish a butterfly garden there, organizing and filing historical photos at the Mansion, removing invasive species around historical buildings throughout the park, and

getting people to spread the word about how great nature is.

Gary welcomes anyone with an interest in interpretive and educational programs to call the park education office at 610-892-3908, April through November. You also may check out Ridley Creek's offerings by visiting its state park website at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/ridleycreek/index.htm>.

This article was contributed by Friends member Sandy Farnan.

PARK MANAGER LEAVES RIDLEY

Mike Kutzmonich has announced he has taken a new position as Park Manager of Pennsylvania's Pine Grove Furnace State Park, leaving Ridley Creek State Park on September 16. Alexa Zimbicki from the Bureau of State Parks

Regional Office will cover Ridley as interim manager until a new manager is selected. We would like to thank Mike for all his work with Ridley and his support of the Friends. We wish him much success in his new position.

NEW BRIDGE ON YELLOW TRAIL

During the May 2016 trail workday, volunteers erected a foot bridge over the small creek behind the mansion. This bridge connects the walkways around the mansion to the Yellow trail. It was a replacement for an old bridge that was demolished by a fallen walnut tree, and washed away during a heavy rainstorm last year.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT THE PARK

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park is an all-volunteer group that welcomes and encourages local park users to help out in our mission to preserve and enhance the beauty and integrity of the Park.

We sponsor monthly volunteer maintenance of the park's forested trails. We meet the first Saturday of every month, at 9 am at the park office. Work is complete by noon, when we have refreshments. There is no need to register. Tools are provided, although it is good to bring your own gloves and eye protection. Work depends somewhat on the season. In the growing season, the effort is focused on cutting back vegetation that crowds the trail. We also work to control erosion by building and maintaining simple water "bars." Storm damage can leave blowdowns in the trail that need to be cleared as well. There are occasional

construction projects such as rebuilding of a foot bridge. If you would like to be added to an e-mail notification list of what's coming up from month to month, or have other questions, you can contact Gary Sawyer (Trails Co-chair) at muddyboots@comcast.net. Typically we will have 10-20 volunteers, some as "regulars" and some as occasional supporters.

There is also an "adopt-a-trail" program coordinated by the Friends. You would be provided with some basic hand tools, and given a section of trail to maintain and report on any problem areas. Your section of trail would need attention a couple of times during the spring and summer, at your convenience and schedule. If you're interested in adopting a section of trail, contact Tim Higgins at timhiggins2@msn.com.

The Friends are also interested in volunteers who would like to take an active

leadership role, including organizing educational or other events, as approved by the Friends Board and the Park. In the past, the Friends have hosted holiday parties at the Mansion, educational speakers, and photo contests, among other things.

In addition, you can make your interest known to the Park directly. Gary Stolz is the Education Director at the Park who also coordinates volunteer requests. If you have special interests, or are looking for a large group one-time project, contact Gary at gastolz@pa.gov. Gary is a seasonal employee available to take your requests during peak seasons.

We appreciate your interest in the Park. It's your Park as well as ours, so join us in helping it flourish!

This article was contributed by Trails Co-Chair and Board Secretary Gary Sawyer.

FRIENDS PARTICIPATE AT SENIOR FAIR

Friends Board members Paul Mickle and Joan Nikelsky staffed an information table on June 17 in Plymouth Meeting sponsored by State



Representative Mary Jo Daley (148th Legislative District). We represented the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation (PPFF), as well as the Friends of Ridley. Over 150 constituents attended and many of them passed by our table, picking up literature and photo pins of state parks and forests.



ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST FEATURED VARIETY

On June 24, summer had officially begun, the trees were fully cloaked in green, and the Friends held a reception to celebrate amateur photographers who paid homage to Ridley Creek State Park in the Friends annual photo contest.

Attendees viewed dozens of photos on display and enjoyed conversation, refreshments, and a pleasant breeze on the Hunting Hill Mansion patio while making new acquaintances and honoring contest winners.

Winners in the Adult Category (age 18 and over)

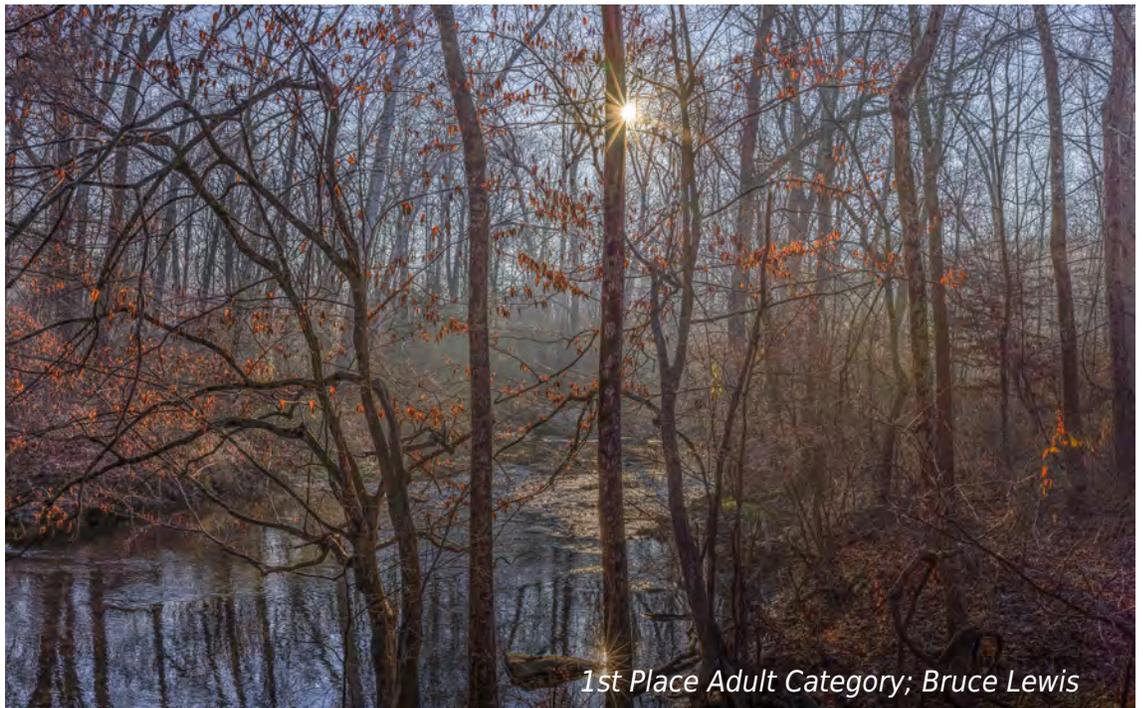
First place was awarded to Bruce Lewis of Upper Darby for *Winter Leaves at Sunrise*. It depicts a coy morning sun peeking around tree trunks at its own reflection in the creek, illuminating crisp red leaves in its wake. This is the second year Lewis, who works in the graphic arts and print industries, was awarded top prize. His greatest love has always been photography and he takes photo hikes in many parks, but winter in Ridley is his favorite. "There is a magic, especially at sunrise along the creek," he said. "There are new and different images every time I visit."

Second place was awarded to Susan Brooks of Upper Providence for *Miller's House* which provides a worm's-

eye-view of the Sycamore Mills property. It offers a rare perspective of this popular section of the Multi-Use Trail and its historically-significant scenery. Brooks, a retired reading teacher who currently volunteers at Media Elementary School, walks her dogs at the park with her husband daily. She takes many pictures of people she sees at the park - like fishermen with their catches - and often tracks down her subjects to offer them a print-out of the picture. To pick a prospective

with his wife every week. They've been members of both Friends of Ridley Creek and Tyler Arboretum for years. While he photographs all seasons, he finds the winter scenes most interesting and even won third place last year for another photo depicting winter. He enjoys participating in the contest to see how other talented photographers interpret the park's beauty and wildlife.

Elizabeth Duckworth of Media received Honorable Mention for *His Majesty*, a blue



1st Place Adult Category; Bruce Lewis

contest winner from her collection, Brooks selects a photo she'd like to see on a calendar and that represents Ridley Creek Park.

Third place was awarded to Kenneth Rose of Media for *Ridley Creek Winterspace*. In this black-and-white photo, Ridley Creek meanders through a layer of ice, while bare forest trees peacefully observe. Rose is a retired chemist who hikes at Ridley

heron. Duckworth followed the bird to capture the perfect shot; the heron is a striking shade of electric blue which makes him pop out against his watery background. An aspiring photographer who will attend Tyler School of Art in the fall, Duckworth has had award-winning pictures every year she's contended and has volunteered as an event

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photographer for the MS Walk at Ridley Creek in the past.

Winners in the Youth Category (under age 18)

First place was awarded to Lisa Evans of West Chester for *Splash of Spring*. Her picture focuses in on reddish-pink



1st Place Youth Category; Lisa Evans

television/video production for 30 years and was impressed with all the submissions this year. When he judges the entries, he looks for composition, subject, lighting, depth of field, and the emotion the photograph evokes. He said, "Has the photographer captured something someone walking by might miss? Can this artwork offer an experience for the person looking at it, take them someplace else? These are things that make a great shot and the criteria I use when making my decisions."

Contestants and their families and guests enjoyed the outdoor display of all entries and previous winners. In this year's collection, in addition to many pictures of the creek itself and

its lush forest surroundings, were snapshots of vultures, frogs, a snake, a splashing dog, a caterpillar, mushrooms, and blooming crocuses.

"We changed the submission deadline (from January) to June in hopes of getting more submissions depicting spring and summer scenes and so we could create a display that mimics the outdoor art displays in Paris," said Friends President Jack Miller of the annual contest, now in its 12th year. "We were delighted by the many diverse submissions this year."

Congratulations to the winners and all the contestants who shared their love of this beautiful park and local natural resource. Visit www.friendsofrcsp.org to see all the entries from this year's contest, and also previous contests. Maybe you'll be inspired to submit a picture next year!

This article was contributed by Friends member Sandy Farnan.

Next year's photo contest will be held in June!

blooms against bare branches and a blue sky highlighting Ridley's spring awakening.

Julia Archdeacon of Aston was awarded second place for *Biking*. Depicting a tree in partial bloom, viewers were surprised to find the cyclist riding under its outstretched branches along the Multi-Use Trail by the cornfield.

Television photographer David Case returned for a second year as contest judge. Case has been in the field of

