



# The Friends

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SPRING/ SUMMER 2026

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

First Saturday of each month, 9 am, meet at the Mansion

### FRIENDS ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, June 6, noon at Area 8

### PHOTO CONTEST AWARD CEREMONY

Wednesday, June 17, 6 pm at the Mansion

### MANSION TOURS

July at the Mansion, date to be announced

### EDGMONT TWP COMMUNITY DAY

Sunday, September 13, Arasapha Farms

### FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor..... Joan Nikelsky  
Design.....Mark Dougherty

## PPFF Honors the Friends of Ridley with 2 Awards

Every year, the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation (PPFF) gives awards to recognize outstanding service and programs demonstrating the exemplary work being done in parks and forests by both staff and volunteers. In previous years, the Friends of Ridley won the Infrastructure Improvement Award (2010) and Paul Mickle won the Young Volunteer of the Year Award (2012).

2026 is an extra special year with the Friends of Ridley Creek receiving - not one, but two PPFF awards – the Volunteerism Award and once again, the Young Volunteer of the Year Award. All award winners will be recognized at PPFF’s annual awards banquet in Harrisburg on May 14 at Little Buffalo State Park near Harrisburg (where PPFF’s office is located).

Details about each of these awards follow.

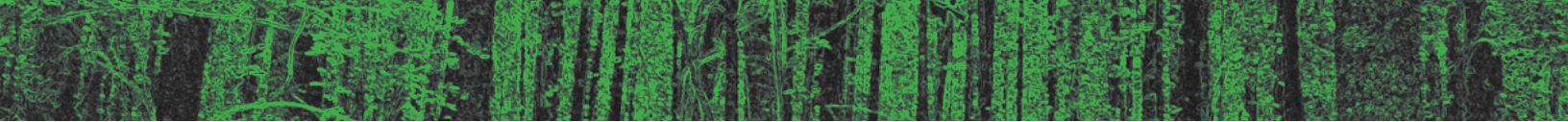
### 2026 VOLUNTEERISM AWARD

**(NOMINATED BY GARY SAWYER, BOARD SECRETARY AND TRAILS CHAIR)**

For over 20 years, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park have sponsored and fostered volunteer efforts at the park. We have regularly organized, open invitation work parties each month, led by Gary Sawyer, with turnout averaging two dozen or so participants. Work parties last up to 3 hours with refreshments and time to socialize afterwards (roughly 850 volunteer work hours per year).

Although our focus is on routine trail maintenance of 13 miles of designated trails, we do occasionally support special projects. These include: construction of a sensory playground with equipment purchased by the Friends, demolition of dilapidated picnic tables and assembly of their replacements, and construction of simple foot bridges and turnpikes for trails in the park.

Simply put, our volunteers unburden the park maintenance crew from the need to attend to trails, where seasonal overgrowth, treefall, and soil erosion and water table concerns are a constant issue. Our volunteers consist of seasoned regulars who help mentor and lead newcomers, as well as occasional participants and groups from local schools and businesses. We also have two volunteers who are certified to do chain saw work as needed.



Volunteers construct a turnpike on the yellow trail in April 2022



Eric Torikian

*Awards continued*

The volunteers – especially younger folk or those from a more urban area – gain valuable experience such as: working with hand tools for vegetation control and erosion control, learning about important and seasonal flora in the park and identifying invasive species from native plants, and communication and teamwork on group construction projects.

The Friends of Ridley provide tools, gloves, and eye protection so volunteers can work safely. The Friends communicate closely with park management, including a seasonal Education/ Volunteer Coordinator. We remind newcomers to register as a Conservation Volunteer with the State of Pennsylvania. To the best of our knowledge, over the last 15-20 years there have been only three incidents that involved a visit to urgent care, which resulted in release.

Congratulations are in order for the hard-working and dedicated trail work volunteers!

**2026 YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD  
(NOMINATED BY PAUL MICKLE, BOARD MEMBER)**

The Young Volunteer of the Year Award was instituted in 2012 to recognize a significant contribution to a park or forest by a person under the age of 25. This year, Paul Mickle nominated Eric Torikian, a senior at Marple Newtown High School.

For the last several years, a group of Marple students have made volunteering with the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park a monthly routine, led by Eric Torikian. Eric and his friends/work crew started volunteering early in their junior year by coming to the Friends of Ridley’s monthly trail work events. Eric comes each month and his friends rotate through regularly. They are now all seniors at Marple Newtown High School in Marple, Pennsylvania and will be graduating in June 2026.

Eric is a born leader and if asked to describe him, Paul considers him an old soul with a level of respectful maturity that is not often found in teenagers today. He has a way of easily motivating his peers and getting them involved without sounding demanding or bossy. It is great that Eric chose us as a place to contribute and as an organization worth supporting. He has become more dedicated and is now interested in continuing to help the environment beyond high school.

As an organization, the Friends of Ridley is incredibly grateful that Eric and his friends chose to volunteer with us and we’re very proud of Eric for consistently returning. Lastly, a very special thanks to the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation for honoring and encouraging youth volunteerism.

Congratulations to Eric and thanks again for choosing to be a part of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park family.

## HAPPY EARTH MONTH! SUPPORT THE FRIENDS!

April: A time to appreciate nature and participate in outdoor activities and do what you can to preserve the natural resources of the earth.

In light of our double award from PPF (Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation), this would be a great time to donate to the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park if you haven't contributed yet this year. Everyone who makes a donation or volunteers with us (or does both!) is considered "A Friend of Ridley Creek State Park."

Donate online on our secured app <https://ppff.app.neoncrm.com/forms/ridleycreek>. If you would rather donate by check, please send a check made payable to "PPFF/Friends of Ridley Creek State Park" and mail it to 1023 Sycamore Mills Road, Media, PA 19063-4398.

We thank you for your support and invite you to attend any of the events advertised in our newsletter.

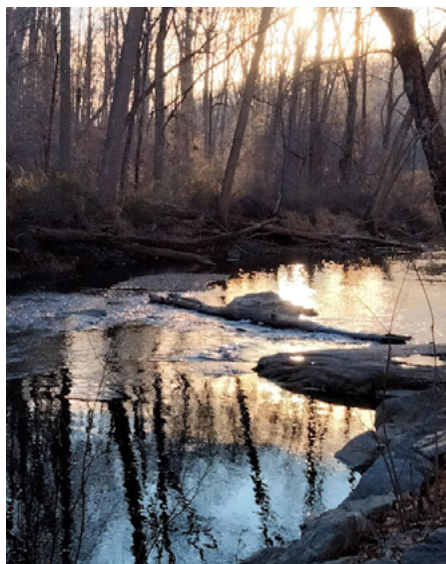
## Enter to Win an Award at Our Photo Contest!

by Paul Mickle, Photo Contest Coordinator

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park are happy to see another popular tradition live on with the 2026 Photo Contest. Coming this summer, this event will continue to add to the many beautiful park photographs and perspectives collected over the years. It is always neat to see the park through the lens of other park enthusiasts. Two decades of past entries can be seen on the website [www.FriendsofRCSP.org](http://www.FriendsofRCSP.org). Photos from past contests also appear at various events and make occasional newsletter appearances, as you can see here.



Honeysuckle by Michelle Wood, 2025 Photo Contest



Early Morning Peace by Marian Hetherington, 2025 Photo Contest

There will be a display of all submitted entries and an award ceremony on Wednesday, June 17, at 6 pm in the ballroom of the Hunting Hill Mansion. Cash prizes will be given for first, second, and third place, and for honorable mention. If there are youth entries (under age 18), prizes will be given for that category as well. If you know or have a child who takes photographs, be sure to encourage them.

The deadline for submitting up to 3 photos is Wednesday, June 10, to allow time for judging. Please bring your photos to the park office, which is inside the Hunting Hill Mansion. The hours of the office are Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm. When the time gets closer to the deadline, we usually set up a box outside the building for off-hour submissions.

You can submit photos as late as Tuesday, June 16 to be displayed, but they will not be eligible for judging. The rules and entry form are available on the website [www.FriendsofRCSP.org](http://www.FriendsofRCSP.org). Also, flyers have been posted in boxes on the Multi-Use Trail. Please direct questions to [photocontest@FriendsofRCSP.org](mailto:photocontest@FriendsofRCSP.org).

Have fun and good luck!

# Earth Day / 250 Celebration Trail Project

by Gary Sawyers, Trails Chair

In celebration of Earth Day and the Nation's 250th Anniversary, the Friends are planning a major trail improvement project for our regularly scheduled monthly trail workday on May 2. Unlike trail maintenance such as cutting brush, keeping erosion control clear, and painting blazes, trail improvement involves some light construction projects such as building foot bridges or raised gravel foot paths. We are deciding on what specific project to do for Saturday, May 2. Look for an announcement on our Facebook page or our website when the time gets closer. We meet beside the Mansion, ready to work promptly at 9 am.

Also, note that volunteer registration with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is required. A new registration system has been implemented. Please go to [dcnrvolunteers.pa.gov](https://dcnrvolunteers.pa.gov), click SIGN UP at the top, and enter your information. Eventually you'll get to a page that shows OPPORTUNITIES on the left. Do a keyword search for Ridley and Trail Work will pop up. Click, and then click Register. If you run into trouble, bring your smart phone and come early and we'll help you register.

## Mansion Tours in July

by Jack Miller, President

The Friends of Ridley plan to reprise our popular Mansion Tours this summer to give people who missed them another opportunity to learn the history of this beautiful building and the park surrounding it. We are listing this event for our participation in the Delco 250 celebration of the Nation's 250th Anniversary.

We will set up advance registration to ensure we keep each tour group to a manageable size so everyone can see and hear the tour guides. We will have displays of historical photographs and information about the land, which is now our Ridley Creek State Park. We will also offer self-guided tours of the outside grounds so people can see how the Mansion was able to provide indoor plumbing for a kitchen and 10 bathrooms.

Many of the farms on the Jeffords estate were established prior to the 1776 founding of the United States. After the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777 we know that Washington's army retreated towards Chester along the Edgmont Great Road, which we now call Middletown Road. As the British army followed the retreating Colonial army, they raided at least three farms that are now within the Ridley Creek State Park boundary.

## YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR ANNUAL FRIENDS PICNIC JUNE 6

We will gather on Saturday June 6th at noon, rain or shine, after the trail workday. It's also National Trails Day, so that adds to the celebration. We invite all contributors and volunteers to come.

We will be back at our usual location – Area 8 -- a sheltered site off Sandy Flash Drive at the top of the hill, next to the horse farm building. Follow signs for Area 8.

The picnic treats are compliments of the Friends: hamburgers (both meat and meatless), hot dogs, potato salad, coleslaw, beverages, and other fare. If you wish, you may bring a dessert or other dish to share.

Please RSVP for the picnic so we can plan the food, especially if you are vegetarian. E-mail [members@FriendsofRCSP.org](mailto:members@FriendsofRCSP.org) or call Joan at 610-352-5685 by Wednesday, June 4, if you can. We hope to see you there!



Photo of the Mansion by Tom Brumbaugh, 2023 Photo Contest

This is history that can be shared along with the Mansion Tours.

There will be a pre-registration process so individuals and families can sign up ahead of time. Stay tuned for details (date and times), which will be announced on our website [www.FriendsofRCSP.org](http://www.FriendsofRCSP.org) and Facebook page when the time gets closer. We hope to see you there!



*Volunteers at the 2026 CRC Streams Clean-up*

## CRC Spring Streams Clean-up

Every year the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association holds a spring clean-up. The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park recruited a group of volunteers to participate this year on March 21st, led by Jack Miller, Friends Chair.

Jack reported, “We had a small but very dedicated group join us in cleaning the banks of the Ridley Creek from the Gradyville Road Bridge to the Colonial Plantation and back. We visited the Russell cemetery and pointed out the Russell homes along Gradyville Road. The weather was great and we were able to get along the banks in areas that will soon be closed off by vegetation.

We were also able to clearly see some of the golden trout that were stocked in Ridley Creek for the fishermen for April 4 opening day. The views along the creek with the sun shining down made us all realize what a treasure we have here in our backyards. A big thanks to all those who volunteered to help us!”

## Come to the Edgmont Township Community Day

*by Carol Fanelli, Friends Publicity Chair*

The Friends of RCSP are proud to support our neighbors in Edgmont Township. Join us for the celebration at their 5th Annual Community Day event on Sunday, September 13 from 10 am to 3 pm at Arasapha Farms. This fun-filled event is perfect for the entire family and offers over 120 food, business, and craft vendors.

Bring the kids for pony rides, face painting, inflatables and a petting zoo. Adults will enjoy the pie baking contest, flower crafts and the Antiques Appraisal Fair. Arasapha Farms is located at 1835 Middletown Road in Glen Mills. For further information, go to [www.edgmont.org/communityday](http://www.edgmont.org/communityday).

Edgmont Township is one of the oldest townships in Delaware County, with roots stretching back to the 1680s. Official incorporation of the township occurred in 1687. The region was inhabited by the Lenni Lenape, specifically the Okehocking Clan, nomadic hunters whose territory included the Ridley and Crum Creek watersheds. Edgmont Township contains the entire 2,606 acres of Ridley Creek State Park along its borders and interior.