



Garden Club and FHSP Events

We welcome both experienced and novice gardens alike to our upcoming garden club and Friends of High School Park events listed below. For more up-to-date information, check out our website, www.highschoolpark.org or contact Marc or Nancy Cortez at 215.470.5890. If you are interested in receiving e-mail reminders about garden club events, please submit your current e-mail address to membership@fhsp.org. Please visit our website for information about our Spring events.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Ecological Restoration at High School Park

Steering Committee Kick-Off meeting. Learn about the project and tell us your hopes for the park.

WHERE: Elkins Park Library at 563 Church Rd, Elkins Park, PA. WHEN: 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23

Fall Flowers - The Amazing Aster Family

Presented by Hildy Ellis, Education Coordinator for Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. We will discuss the morphology of these unique flowers, tips for identification, and the birds, butterflies and other creatures that depend on them for food and shelter.

WHERE: Elkins Park Library at 563 Church Rd, Elkins Park, PA. WHEN: 7 p.m.

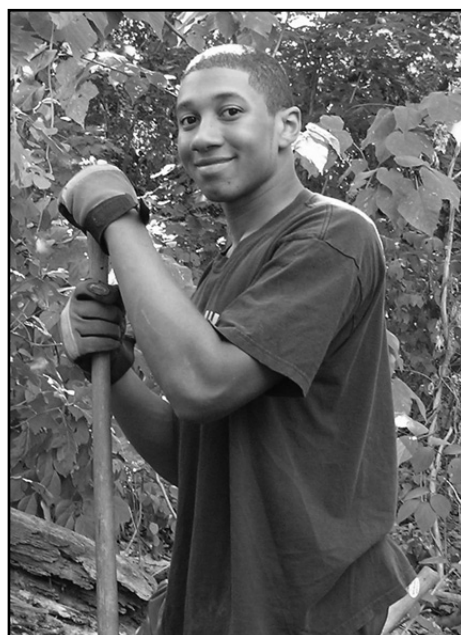


**Montgomery Ave & High School Rd
PO Box 11263
Elkins Park, PA 19027
215-782-8082**

www.highschoolpark.org

MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of High School Park is a non-profit volunteer organization whose mission is to create, manage and preserve a viable native ecosystem in High School Park for the enjoyment of the community, in cooperation with Cheltenham Township. We are dedicated to inspiring the community to connect with others and the natural environment through service and learning connected with the park.



Brian Littlepage, a hard-working Cheltenham High School student, helps plant trees in High School Park.

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NEWS

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TO REACH FHSP

www.highschoolpark.org

215-782-8082

INSIDE:

- In Your Backyard
- Volunteer Spotlight
- Amateur Naturalist Finds Treasure
- Native Plants in the Landscape
- Wilder Woodland
- Garden Club Dates
- And more...

ARTS IN THE PARK

Our Own Woodstock *By Cliff Bassman*

I wouldn't say it's a modern-day Woodstock, but there is something special that starts to build each spring when Arts in the Park rolls around.

It could be the strong sense of shared purpose that begins with volunteer recruiting, planning sessions, artist mailings, and musician auditions. Or the buzz of excitement as pre-event signage and press coverage spark conversations in our neighborhoods about the upcoming festival. Or the incredible feeling of community that is evident in people's smiles as they arrive at High School Park on that first Sunday in June.

This year was the 12th annual Arts in the Park, and hundreds of men, women and children began pouring into the park from all directions as the day's first live bands began playing onstage. From a cappella to rap to jazz, young musicians from area schools would take their turn in the spotlight, delighting the crowd and creating a musical backdrop for the day's activities.

Fifty talented artists displayed their unique and diverse work, confident that Arts in the Park would again live up to its reputation as one of the most successful shows in the region. The artists' booths were arrayed with colorful displays of everything from silk scarves and Judaica, to floral photography and ceramics. Several new art forms were added this year, including gourd crafts, wooden bowls and blown glass.

Between musical acts, veteran Master of Ceremonies Ben Laden (and his accordion) made announcements, thanked corporate sponsors, and shared Park statistics. He reminded us all that the proceeds from this celebration would benefit the Friends of High School Park, our own non-profit dedicated to restoring this 11-acre native plant preserve.

This year, one more Woodstockesque component was in the cards—the promise of rain. And like the 1960's festival in upstate New York, despite overcast skies and threatening forecasts, the park was packed with enthusiastic attendees eager to seize the day regardless of inclement weather due to pass through by mid-afternoon.



Artist Ralph Beam of Rock and Scroll Wood displays his Intarsia Wood Craft at Arts in the Park.



Vocal ensemble Up the Octave perform at Arts in the Park.

As always the activities were plentiful – plant sale, face painting, kids' crafts, hayride, moon bounce, raffle, among many others. The 2007 corporate sponsors included Albert MossRehab of Elkins Park, Elkins Park Pharmacy, Union One Insurance Group, Juicy Juice, Philadelphia Inquirer, and others.

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President's Letter

By Amy Steffen

After another immensely successful Arts in the Park, spring and summer progressed with typical steadfast restoration and maintenance of the park. We were happy to have Noel Beyer return for a 5-week stint as a part time intern to help in this effort. But, as always, our volunteers played a particularly critical role. We offer a big thank you to all the school, scouts, church, and synagogue groups for removing invasives, clearing and mulching trails, installing a gutter and rain barrels at the shed, and so much more. A big thanks also to the Park Restoration and Maintenance Committee, led by Jo Fagan and Diane Ehrich, for planning and supervising our volunteer work parties. Caroline Stritzinger also deserves enormous praise for chairing Arts in the Park again. We also appreciate the outpouring of volunteers that set up and ran this fun-filled fund-raiser.

It's hard to fully capture all the amazing volunteerism that supports High School Park. In this issue, we begin a column to spotlight one or two volunteers and their generosity. While it was difficult to choose from among so many for this first column, we hope you enjoy reading about two star volunteers, Marc and Nancy Cortez.

Many people quietly enjoy the serenity and natural wonders of High School Park. This spring I met Mary Amar, an amateur naturalist and birdwatcher who regularly walks through the lower woodland. She showed me the Baltimore oriole nest high in a tulip poplar and together we spied an adult flicker feeding its young. You'll read more of her observations in her article in this issue.

This fall, we are embarking on an ambitious and exciting planning process for High School Park. When complete, we will have a detailed blueprint for restoring the native ecosystems of our beloved preserve. The plan will also specify amenities such as trail improvements, signage, and more inviting entryways. A well-qualified firm, Forbes Environmental & Land Use Planning, will facilitate the process and provide restoration and landscaping expertise. You are invited to participate by attending a kick off meeting on Wednesday, November 28 at 7:00 p.m. at the Elkins Park Library. During this meeting, we will collect your observations about the park and your suggestions for its future. (By the way, all the firms that interviewed for this project were duly impressed by our progress to date and were very enthusiastic about working with us. Some suggested that the restoration of High School Park serve as a poster child for such efforts.)



Some of our amazing volunteers.

The ecological restoration planning is a joint effort of the Friends of High School Park (FHSP) and Cheltenham Township. A big thanks to Bryan Havir, Assistant Township Manager and our township Commissioners for securing \$25,000 in funding for this planning from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Cheltenham Township. John Hoover, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Joe Baxter, Superintendent of Parks, will be closely involved in the planning. We are very pleased to enhance our cooperative relationship with them through this effort. A steering committee made up of FHSP volunteers, township personnel, business owners and other neighbors and residents will work closely with the Forbes consulting team we chose to draw up the plans for the park. This company has a well-rounded team familiar with native plants including a landscape architect, a Global Positioning System (GPS) and mapping expert, graphic designer, and an ecological restoration specialist. This firm especially seemed to appreciate the community involvement in the park and was eager to work with us to promote it more. We encourage you to get involved in the planning of our park by attending the public meeting(s) we will have on it. (See accompanying box.)

Finally, we thank you, our loyal members, for your continued support. Your financial contributions fund our on-going operations, our internship, and the park restoration. Your volunteer efforts--in the park, for Arts in the Park, behind the scenes operations and outreach, and for the garden club--connect us as a community of people, plants and all the critters in between. It's a pleasure to serve in such good company.

★ SAVE THE DATE! ★

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AT HIGH SCHOOL PARK

Wednesday, November 28 • 7:00 p.m. • Elkins Park Library
Steering Committee Kick-Off Meeting

Learn about the project and tell us your hopes for the park.

The Friends of High School Park invite you to begin or renew your membership. Join our efforts to beautify and appreciate our 11 acre, native species park at High School Road and Montgomery Avenue.

NAME _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

\$20 Annual Membership Dues Enclosed New Membership Renewal Cash
 Additional Contribution Enclosed: \$10 \$35 \$75 \$100 Other Check

This gift is in honor or memory of _____

This gift is given anonymously, please do not list my name in the newsletter.

Thank you very much! You will receive our newsletter announcing events and activities in the park.

Members and volunteers enjoy the camaraderie of working together and of attending educational programs. Please check any activity in which you have interest:

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

- Planting, Weeding and Park Maintenance
- Arts in the Park
- School & Community Outreach
- Fundraising
- Newsletter & Communications
- Education Program Planning
- Other _____

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

- Gardening Seminars
- Environmental Workshops
- Bird Walks
- How to Restore Park Habitats
(Meadow, Woodland, Stream Corridor)
- I can offer a program on _____

MAIL YOUR DUES AND/OR CONTRIBUTION TO:

FRIENDS OF HIGH SCHOOL PARK
PO BOX 11263 • ELKINS PARK, PA 19027

Please make checks payable to:
Friends of High School Park

All contributions are tax-deductible.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE:

A. Date Rcvd: _____ By Whom: _____ Date Sent to Corresp. Sect.: _____

B. Form CC'd: Membership Chair Database Manager Treasurer (w/ Payment)

Check CC'd: Corresponding Secretary File

FHSP Member List*

We are grateful for the tremendous support from our individual, family, and now business members. Members who recently joined or renewed are:

NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Cele Blumenthal
Shelley & David Chamberlain
Greg Joseph & David Flaks
Julie Kring-Schreifels
Michael Livingston
Karin McGarry-Rosen
Harriet McGraw
Steve Monahan c/o The Rink
Goktug & Tulin Morcol
Judith Myerson
Matthew Naylor
Kathleen Pearle
Rachel Polisher
Gila & Randy Robinson
Irene Rudnytzky
Neil Saladoff
Aleister & Nomi Saunders
Elizabeth Sperling & Stephan Rosenfeld
Theresa Spiegel
Janet Starwood
Donna Tretina
Carolyn Vivaldi
Babette Zemel

NEW BUSINESS MEMBERS

Elkins Park Square
FineCare, Inc.
Hydro-Loc
Robert A. Kravis, PsyD
Seeger Glass Art

The Frame House
Yu's Oriental Food Market

RETURNING MEMBERS

Christina Ager & Deborah Waxman
Mary Amar
Adriene Antkowiak
Irene & David Baker
Barbara & Thomas Bale
Amy, Rick & Nina Bedrick
Annika Bernstein
Marcia Bronstein
Beth Brooks & Robert Waterston
Barbara & Jeffrey Brown
Greta Bunin, Andrew & Susannah Gale
Susan & Adam Corson-Finnerty
Beth & Peter Denitz
Gloria Detweiler
Robin Eisman
Jo Fagan
Goldie & Harry Goodman
Harriet & Juan Gottschalk
Christie Gunter & Scott Glasser
Ayala & Hanoch Guy
Ruth Heiges
Eric & Joy Hershman
Debra & Thomas Isser
Johnston Family
Joanne & Steve Karpowitz
Patricia & Roger Kohn

IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF:

*In Honor of Amy Steffen
In Honor of Cliff Bassman
In Honor of Florence and Joseph Mandell
In Honor of Cynthia Malara*

Timothy Kolman & Rebecca Landes & Family
Deborah Kotzin & Jerome Verlin
Ronald & Lisa Krader
Ruth & Lester Krawitz
Sharon Lauzus
Michael & Caryl Levin
Ellen Matz
Mike & Lucinda McCann
Rebecca Meyer & Rabbi Kevin Bernstein
Claire & Edward Newman
Lisa & Michael Oswald
Erica & Bill Peruzi
Julie Phillips
Loretta Raider
Robin & Michael Rifkin-Silverman
Lorna & Murray Rosenberg
Sandy & Stuart Rosenberg
Randy & Don Sable
Brenda Samara
Miriam & Christoph Seeger
Barbara & Steve Shotz
Debra Silberg & Mark Newman
Chana Simon
Claudia & Mickey Simon
Janis Smith & Shimon Waldfogel
Caroline & John Stritzinger
Ronit Sugar & Robert Schiowitz
Marie Valoris
Nancy & Morton Wallerstein
Arlene & Herbert Wartenberg

SUBMITTED BY:

Margot Bradly
Cheryl and Barry Magen
Risa Mandell
Margaret Mulligan

Thank you also to the several people who made contributions in honor or memory of a loved one:

*Please note that membership mailings are now mailed twice per year. If you're not sure of your renewal date, please check the bottom of the mailing label on this newsletter, the date you last renewed will be indicated. You may renew at anytime!

Amateur Naturalist Finds a Treasure Trove of Wildlife in High School Park

By Mary Amar

Amateur naturalist Mary Amar lives in Elkins Park and is particularly observant of all the native plants and animals she can find there. One of Mary's favorite haunts is High School Park, so we asked her to write an article for us about what she's seen there. We think you'll be amazed to see in the article below the wide variety of birds and other wildlife that Mary has seen in the park and noted in her journal.

Over the years, my interest in the natural world has taken me into forests, meadows and the borders of creeks and streams, all of which are present at High School Park. Despite its small size, the park has yielded many species of birds, plants, animals and fungi for me to ponder over and attempt to identify.

Springtime is a good time to see flickers, and red-bellied or downy woodpeckers pounding away at dead wood, and the phosphorescent-orange and black Baltimore oriole. House wrens and tree swallows favor the nesting boxes on the upper meadow. The many migrant birds that wind their way through the park in spring as they head to their northern summer abodes have included the yellow-rumped warbler, yellow-breasted chat, yellow warbler, palm warbler, ruby-crowned kinglet, yellowthroat, blackpoll warbler and even the iridescent blue indigo bunting.

But these birds aren't the only signs of spring. In the wooded areas, many early spring flowers can be found. I look for bloodroot, spring beauty, adder's tongue, trillium, bellwort, May apple, Virginia bluebell, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Solomon's seal, Jacob's ladder, violet, foamflower, and columbine. The flowering trees and shrubs are abundant and cheerful after dull winter – horsechestnut, dogwood, sweetshrub, magnolia, and redbud are just a few colorful examples.

The early spring, before there is a thick cover of leaves in the woodland, is also a good time to see animals. One early spring day I saw a raccoon dragging himself in and out of a puddle. Another day a groundhog was carrying a wad of dead leaves to its burrow. From time to time there are black water snakes to be seen in the creek under the Harrison Avenue bridge. I once surprised one by treading on its tail, which had been hidden by dead leaves. I, too, was quite startled! One May, I was very surprised to come across a large turtle on the lower path. Its shell must have been a foot long and its toothed tail was positively Mesozoic! It



The meadow mushroom (Agaricus campestris).

seemed to have been trying to dig a hole to drop its eggs in. It turned out to be a snapping turtle.

Summer brings a wealth of plant and animal species. I counted 17 different types of grass and sedge in the upper meadow one year. Our backyard birds all enjoy the food and shelter that the park provides. The red-tailed hawk is a frequent visitor, and I have seen it being harassed by a flock of crows until it gave up trying to perch in their territory. Denizens of the creek include the incredibly large and prehistoric-looking great blue heron, the white egret, and the belted kingfisher with its distinctively large head crest. Oriole nests numbered two this past summer. Tiger swallowtail and red-spotted butterflies also abound in the park during the summer, and the iridescent emerald damselfly is especially appealing for its brilliance.

In the fall, I particularly enjoy coming across the varieties of fungi that crop up after rain along the wood-chipped paths, on logs and in the upper meadow. I have been able to identify a few: furrowed ink-cap (*Coprinus campestris*); the meadow mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) or death cap (*Amanita phalloides*) – these are often confused; dog stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*); bird's nest (*Crucibulum leave*); giant puffball (*Calvatia gigantean*); *Bisporella citrine*; *Lepiota cristata*; carmine coral; and unidentified others.

IN YOUR BACK YARD: Bring On the Birds Naturally

By Margie Patlak

After the last of a long line of supposed “squirrel-proof” bird feeders was thoroughly sabotaged by these rodents with fluffy tails, I gave up on seeing purple finches and cardinals dining on birdseed out my kitchen window. And even though I bought a hummingbird feeder, I never got around to refilling it with that gross sugar water, so it too went to the way-side.

Alas, I resigned myself to a bird-free backyard.

But then I realized I was seeing more birds than ever. Goldfinches regularly alighted on my purple cone flowers and sunflowers, and I often spotted hummingbirds buzzing around my salvia and bee balm. And these birds weren’t the only regulars—palm and other warblers seemed to be drawn to something in my yard in the fall as they migrated south, Baltimore orioles made an occasional brilliant appearance, a nuthatch could always be found creeping down our fir tree, and cardinals, chickadees, titmice, mourning doves, and house wrens were frequent visitors.

It literally took a birdbrain to lead me to the brilliant realization that I no longer had to battle squirrels or sticky sugar water to see birds in my backyard. All I had to do was plant a few of their delicacies and provide enough green cover, and they would be sure to visit. My personal realization was confirmed by a number of “birds in your backyard” websites I found while perusing the Internet. From this Websurfing, I compiled a list of commonly grown plants that you might want to consider putting in your backyard to attract more birds:

- Garden flowers such as zinnias, sunflowers, purple cone flowers, and marigolds. Don’t discard the seed heads of these flowers after they bloom because birds love to dine on them, especially finches. Hummingbirds are attracted to nectar-producing flowers, especially if they are red and have tubular corollas. Hummingbird favorites include bee balm, butterfly weed, hibiscus, foxglove, dahlia, petunias, flowering tobacco, and cosmos.
- Berry- or fruit-producing shrubs, vines and trees, such as Viburnums, dogwoods, crabapples, spicebush, mountain ash, Virginia creeper, and mulberries. A wide range of birds depend on these berries and fruits for food, especially during the fall and winter. Shrubs also provide nesting sites for some birds.
- Evergreen shrubs and trees, such as junipers, pines, yews, and firs provide protection from predators, winter



cover, and/or food and nesting and perching sites for birds.

- Deciduous trees, such as oaks, maples, and hawthorns, provide birds with nesting and perching sites, nuts, seeds or fruits, as well as places to forage for insects.

With the right plants and positioning, you don’t have to have a large backyard to attract a decent selection of birds—my backyard is about the size of a swimming pool, yet I often see more than the usual suspects flitting about my yard. The greater the diversity of plants in your backyard, the more diverse your backyard bird population. Consider native species as your first choice because they are generally more adapted to the area, tend to be disease-resistant, and are more familiar and beneficial to birds, butterflies, and the native insects that many birds need as food. Exotic (non-native) plants, such as Japanese honeysuckle and Russian olive, which were introduced to attract songbirds, later proved disastrous as they crowded out native species. Try to avoid trees or shrubs, such as forsythia and lilacs, which offer little or no food value for birds. Keep in mind that many plants offer both striking beauty and wildlife benefits. And, if possible, plant shrubs in clumps or hedgerows so birds can observe the yard while safely hidden away from cats and other predators.

Before you take down a dead tree, consider that you may be taking away valuable nesting sites for chickadees, woodpeckers, tree swallows, owls, and others. If the deadwood is in a location

Cont on pg 7

Help Us Police the Park *By Gina Craig*

Many of us have grown to appreciate and take advantage of the natural oasis that High School Park offers us. But like all secluded spots, the park has been subject to vandalism and can harbor those who don’t always have the good intentions of the park and its visitors in mind. Recently, graffiti was sprayed on the shed and paved driveway, and a sun dial in the park was stolen. (Thanks to the diligence of community and Board members, the graffiti was removed promptly by the Township’s Parks Department.) There were also two known cases of indecent exposure in the park this past spring and summer.

Please help us keep High School Park safe and free from vandals and sexual predators. If you notice something or somebody suspicious at the park, please don’t hesitate to contact the Cheltenham Township police. They are very responsive and do regular patrols near the park to ensure the safety of all. Don’t wait for someone else to report something, do it yourself!

In enjoying this public space with many private nooks, it’s also important to keep general safety tips in mind:

- **Be aware of your surroundings at all times.**
- **Look people in the eye as you pass them. This lets others know you are aware of their presence.**
- **Don’t wear headphones while walking in the park. Being able to hear your surroundings will allow you to notice someone you don’t see.**
- **Wear shoes and clothing that allow freedom of movement.**
- **Carry a cell phone in case of emergency.**
- **Carry a whistle with you.**
- **Vary the route you take. Do not take the same route every day.**
- **Walk or jog with a companion, especially at night.**

If you notice anything out of the ordinary, call the police and contact the Friends of High School Park at 215.782.8082 or via email at info@fhsp.org to make sure the damage or threat of damage is rectified promptly. This is our park. Let’s continue to make it an enjoyable and peaceful place!

Wildlife Treasure Trove

from pg 3

In the fall of 1998, I had the good fortune to spot a great blue heron in the creek across from the park. As I approached, it flew under a bridge and alighted on a rock behind Mill Road, where I found it standing stock still. The sight was so arresting, I could not move for many minutes. He blinked his yellow eyes twice. With its streaked breast, apricot-colored thighs, and greenish-yellow legs and feet on dark gray stone, he was a photographer’s dream. I, alas, had no camera with me. Another year I was strolling on the upper meadow and there before me was a flock of flickers (there must have been seven or eight) feeding on the ground before me. As I came near, they flew up into the bare-branched tree that overlooked the parking lot on Montgomery Avenue. They perched there uttering “pinking” sounds and made a remarkable spectacle, for flickers are large and colorful. I could have been looking at an early Yuletide decoration!

One October day I was walking along the lower path and the sun was lighting up the various spiders’ webs. One of these was the creation of the marbled orb weaver, a handsome large, golden creature with hieroglyphic-like markings. It appeared to be drawing up strands of web and bundling them up on a sere stalk. Another early morning in the fall, I was delighted to see that thanks to the dew catching in spider webs, many low-growing meadow plants were wearing gossamer veils. These were double-layered and their appearance brought to mind what fairy UFO’s might look like!

My visits to the park are fewer in winter but I enjoy watching bird behavior at this time. Crows take advantage of any pool of water in the upper meadow for bathing and drinking. One January when wet snow still lined the ground, flocks of robins and pigeons were intermingling in the upper meadow and adjacent backyards, creating quite a stir as they flew in and out of the trees and over the rooftops.

Our park is a wonderful space for those who enjoy communing with the natural world, and those seeking a quiet bench to sit and read—or just sit. I want to thank the members of Friends of High School Park, who give so much time and thought and energy to keeping its many aspects in good order.

A Wilder Woodland

By Diane Ehrich

We continue to provide more berries for the birds, more colorful fall foliage for your photos, and a more pleasing array of scents and blossoms in the spring in our woodland section of the park. This ecosystem, which starts at the creek and works its way up the hill to the upper meadow, is actively being restored, thanks to a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources TreeVitalize grant that has paid for more than 500 native trees, shrubs, ferns and wildflowers. Since the fall of 2006, Friends of High School Park along with volunteers from the Cheltenham community have dug and tugged to give these plants a permanent home along the creek and on the hillside in the park.

It's been a lot of work, but we think it's worth the effort to restore our forest to its former glory, complete with a colorful fall canopy of red oaks and sugar maples, a beautiful collection of flowering dogwoods, shadbush, and sassafras, and such bird attractants as the berry-laden shrubs spicebush (also host to swallowtail butterflies), elderberries and viburnums, as well as the witchhazel shrub, which surprisingly blooms in October. We tried to duplicate the "layer" effect you would see in a natural woodland. In such an ecosystem, there is a top layer of tall trees, such as oaks, a middle understory layer of shorter trees, such as dogwoods, and than a shrubby lower layer. Along the creek we installed plants which can tolerate wetter soils and occasional flooding. These plants include winterberry, redstem dogwood, and buttonbush. Together, this new flora in the park will create a diverse and healthy ecosystem that will sustain birds and other wildlife. Our park will become an even more beautiful and inspiring sanctuary for all of us to enjoy!



CHS student Brian Tino is happy about his workday achievements in the park.



CHS student Molly Kaplan is hard at work preparing the ground for tree planting.

Our Own Woodstock

from pg 1

By mid-afternoon, as the rain came, the day was already successful on all fronts. People didn't want to leave, but begrudgingly said their good byes and trickled out of the park even as the skies darkened and opened, providing the meadow and woody fields of High School Park with the one ingredient that only nature can provide.

Perhaps at next year's event, in honor of Woodstock, Ben Laden should lead the crowd in a rousing spelling of Friends of High School Park. Can't you just hear him yell out "Give me an F!"?

THANK YOU TO OUR ARTS IN THE PARK VOLUNTEERS!

Our 2007 Arts in the Park would not have been such a success with-out the time and talents of these dedicated volunteer coordinators:

CLIFF BASSMAN, *who was in charge of sponsorships and signage*

CAROLINE STRITZINGER, *who chaired both the Arts in the Park and the Artist Selection committees*

CINDY BLACKWOOD & RYAN HEISNER, *who set up and ran the children's crafts*

CJ SMITH, *who commandeered our plant sale*

RONNA KASSEL & NANCY CORTEZ, *who were charge of volunteer sign ups*

MARK KAPLAN, *who oversaw the musical entertainment*

LINDA STERN, *who coordinated the food vendors and raffle*

SUE CHIRLIN, *our fearless face painting leader*

SUE HARVEY/VIGNETTE VISUAL MEDIA, *our graphic designer for publicity*

GAIL KOROSTOFF, *our lady of the lemonade stand*

GINA CRAIGO, *our pinch hitter extraordinaire*

DAVID KAPLAN, *our logistics juggler*

MARC CORTEZ, *our set-up/check-in man and logistics planner*

BEN LADEN, *our Master of Ceremonies*

SUSAN WEINBERG/KARIN KAPLAN, *who were in charge of financial matters*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Marc and Nancy Cortez *By Gina Craigo*

Anybody familiar with High School Park probably knows Marc and Nancy Cortez. These vital Friends of High School Park (FHSP) volunteers moved to Melrose Park about a decade ago after raising their family in Northeast Philadelphia. Not long after they arrived, their love for gardening and desire to connect to their new community brought them to the Garden Club and then to its sponsor, FHSP. They quickly became instrumental in the group's growth and achievements.

Fortunately for FHSP, although Nancy and Marc are supposed to be retired, they have been busier than when they were employed. A finish carpenter by trade, Marc not only has the creativity, but also the skills to put his ideas to work. He's built several things for the park including the shed's front deck and basically every shelf and hook on the inside of the shed that helps keep the tools and supplies so organized. He also installed irrigation systems on both the upper and lower meadows. Most recently, he instructed a group of Arcadia University students on how to install a gutter on the shed's roof to create a rain barrel system that helps water the park's plants.

Marc's help in the park does not stop with building things. Around *Arts in the Park* time, Marc can be found plotting the layout and aiding in the logistics. His thoughts and ideas have greatly improved the flow of the event over the past few years. On the day of the event, Marc is at the park at the crack of dawn directing the artists to their assigned spots and keeping everything moving.

A skilled artist, Nancy has also never turned down the opportunity to help out where she sees a need. Her oldest daughter was attending elementary school when the art program was



cut. When asked if she'd volunteer her time to lead the children in some art projects, she didn't hesitate. She later went on to become an art teacher at Our Lady of Ransom School in Northeast Philadelphia.

Nancy is a former Board member of the Friends of High School Park. She's also been extremely instrumental in pulling off *Arts in the Park* as she and Board Member Ronna Kassel secure over 150 volunteers for the setup, day-of and breakdown of our cherished community event. "A warm and kind person, Nancy is extremely easy to work with," said Ronna.

Marc and Nancy are in their second year of chairing the Garden Club. They find the speakers, arrange the meeting place, and publicize the gatherings. A recent favorite of garden club members was Marc's slide show of his photos of community member's gardens. Members loved sharing their gardens and exploring those of their friends. Featured at this presentation were photos of the beautiful garden oasis Nancy and Marc created in their own backyard. Nancy has that green thumb we all desire, and Marc helps the garden grow with the complex rain barrel system he developed to water it during those dry days of summer.

In addition to being extremely generous of their time, Nancy and Marc display that "can-do" attitude that has contributed to High School Park's success in so many ways. And in the process of volunteering for the park, the couple has made several new friends in their new locale. But that's no surprise because after meeting them both, you feel as if you've been good buddies for years. According to Ronna Kassel, "they are both extremely dedicated talented members, who truly appreciate nature, adore gardening, and enjoy the friendship of neighbors and community." We appreciate and salute all their hard work and efforts over their many years of involvement with High School Park.

Thanks Marc and Nancy!



Marc teaches Arcadia University students how to install gutters to be used for rain collection.

And Now From Our Summer Intern...

By Noel Beyrer

I spent another interesting year interning for High School Park. Once again, the summer started with a quick clean up for Arts in the Park and progressed to maintaining some of the progress we made last year with the bench beds at the main entrance of the park and the rotary garden next to the shed. In response to feedback we received last year from many park users, I made it a priority to work on making the paths throughout the park more accessible and attractive. A hard-working boy scout and various other volunteers helped start some of this work for me by creating more paths in the lower level and cribbing the steepest paths. Unfortunately, high winds during a particularly dramatic summer storm led to fallen trees that interrupted some of my wood-chipping and clearing work on the paths.

Another focus for this summer was clearing the usual invasive plants in the park, especially the knotweed along the banks of the Tookany Creek, the privet along the Alumni path and the garlic mustard, which can be found nearly everywhere in the park. The Friends of High School Park board members are currently debating better ways to combat these problem plants. Late

in the summer I helped the hard-working Calvary Baptist Church volunteers remove an incredible amount of invasive Norway maples and Asian tree-of-heaven from the hillside along the Alumni path. It was great to see these 20 young people do in day what it would have taken me a few weeks to do!

It was not all tugging and pulling work this year, though. I was also asked to help name the paths in the park for markers that are to be made sometime in the near future. And the best part of my summer was installing some of the herbaceous plants that the park bought as part of our almost \$14,000 TreeVitalize grant. It was so nice to plant something after all of the time I spent pulling weeds!

Unfortunately, this was my last year at the park, since I will be graduating school in May. I will miss the park tremendously and I will be sure to visit whenever I get the chance. My only hope is that the next intern develops half of the appreciation I have for the park and its wonderful volunteers.

Thank you Noel for being such a hard and knowledgeable worker at the park. We'll miss you!!

Name That Native Plant!



Do you know the common or Latin name for the native plant featured in this photo of a plant that grows in High School Park?

(HINT: this plant was used by Native Americans to help heal poison ivy rashes.) You may submit your answer via the website at www.highschoolpark.org. The first person to submit the correct answer will win a pair of official Friends of High School Park gardening gloves. Please make sure to complete the entire form, as we will mail the prize to the winner.

We will close the contest on November 30, 2007 and post the winning answer on the website.

For those members without access to the Internet, you may submit your answer to FHSP, PO Box 11263, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Please remember to include your full name, mailing address and telephone number.

Native Plants in the Landscape—It's all connected.

By Amy Steffen

Experienced gardeners don't just plant a hodge-podge of flowers or shrubs in their yards. Instead they consider the overall affect of what they are planting first, whether it be a balance of colors in a bed, or a steady flow of cut flowers throughout the growing season. At High School Park, the effect we strive for is to mimic the natural environment as much as possible, so as to create a natural oasis for wildlife. The more we do this work, the more we've come to appreciate the complexity of connections in the natural world..

For example, when choosing plants for High School Park, we consider which plants will best support bird life. We often favor shrubs that produce berries that provide food for birds. But at this year's Native Plants in the Landscape Conference at Millersville, PA, I realized it's not just about the berries. In early spring, when birds are rearing their young, most plants are not adorned with berries. After all, the berries are the product of flowers and generally take several weeks to more than a month to arrive after a plant has bloomed. So what do new bird parents feed their young? Why, bugs of course. Caterpillars are among the most favored and nutritious foods. We can choose plants for caterpillars in order to support the birds.

Douglas Tallamy, Univeristy of Delaware Professor of Entomology and Applied Ecology presented fascinating research in his talk "Restoring Balance and Diversity to Your Garden." Doug and his graduate students had compared landscapes of primarily native trees and shrubs with landscapes of primarily exotic trees and shrubs to see which supported more insect life. They focused on caterpillars, literally counting all they could find in the otherwise similar plots. The native landscapes contained 30 times the number of caterpillars. That's 30 times the amount of food for birds and their young. Once you think about it, it all makes sense--more native plants, more native bugs, more food for birds.

Think about it some more and you realize there's the added benefit of also providing more food for butterflies. These insects spend a good percentage of their life cycle as caterpillars, most of which are very picky eaters. Most butterflies have co-evolved with plants, so that only one or two host plants are suitable food for their emerging larvae (caterpillars). Monarch caterpillars only eat milkweed and related species. Spicebush swallowtail, an elegant black and iridescent blue flyer lays its eggs only on the spicebush shrub. The large, yellow and black-striped tiger swallowtail favors the sweet bay magnolia and the tulip poplar. The white clover and violets that grace your lawn respectively support bright yellow clouded sulphur and variegated fritillary butter-

flies. Some plants are hosts for a few kinds of butterflies. Willows host the red-spotted purple and the viceroy butterflies. Most of these plants have been added to High School Park.

As an ecologist, this sounds like a win-win situation. Enjoy beautiful, easy to maintain native flora, and support abundant bird and butterfly life in the process. As a gardener, one pauses to wonder if one's plants will be stripped bare by voracious insects. Doug cautioned that some holes will appear in some leaves when gardening for caterpillars, however, plants remain vigorous and healthy. Native bugs do not cause the devastation that exotic pests do – precisely because the exotics are without their natural predators. As you attract more birds to your backyard, they will keep the caterpillar population in check. Yet another example of that mutually supportive web of connections we see in natural ecosystems.

Here are a few resources for those eager to attract more birds and butterflies to their backyard:

1. *Bring on the Birds Naturally* article on page 2.
2. *The Life Cycles of Butterflies* by Judy Burris and Wayne Richards
3. *The Native Plants in the Landscape Conference*, which is held every June in Millersville, PA. For more information see www.millersvillennativeplants.org.



In Your Backyard

from pg 4

where it might cause a safety or other concern, consider cutting it about 15 feet above the ground. Leaving the tall stump will provide nesting and foraging spots for cavity nesters. And before you pull out weedy berry-laden bird favorites, such as elderberries, consider that you may also be pulling out the birds that plant draws to your backyard. Another thing to keep in mind is that birds need a source of water. You can probably double the number of bird species in your yard by providing a birdbath, fountain, or fish pond.

It may be more effort to plant your garden with flowers, trees, and shrubs that attract birds, than to put out a birdfeeder, but it may be more effective in the long run. And besides, a Viburnum is much more fragrant and attractive than a pile of seeds that most likely will feed squirrels rather than birds...