

# ***Riverbend Naturalist***

Summer 2019



***Riverbend Naturalist*** is the newsletter from the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls VA 22066. Phone: 703-759-9018

## **Outdoor Classroom / Picnic Shelter Dedication**

Riverbend Park's new Outdoor Classroom and Picnic Shelter on Potomac Hills Street was officially dedicated and opened on Saturday, April 27, 2019. Fairfax County Park Authority Board Member for the Dranesville District, Tim Hackman, presided over the ceremonies, while Supervisor John Foust, FCPA Executive Director Kirk Kincannon and FORB President Hugh Morrow added their remarks on Riverbend Park and the importance of the new structure to the future of the park.

The Outdoor Classroom and Picnic Shelter is an attractive and spacious facility for conducting Riverbend's many camps and events, including FORB's Native Plant Sale which was held there on Saturday, May 4,

2019. The shelter will also be available for rentals to private parties and can hold up to 60 participants. It is expected to see considerable service for field trips for school children, and greatly increase the park's ability to carry out large programs in an attractive setting surrounded by the forest. Parking is provided for about 20 cars and a school bus. A trail is also planned to connect the Outdoor Classroom directly with the parking lot and picnic areas at the Visitors' Center.



FORB Members, Riverbend Park personnel, and Fairfax County Park Authority staff at the ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the Riverbend Park Outdoor Classroom and Picnic Shelter.

Left to right: Kory Mead, Eleanor Anderson, Karen Hershey, Rita Peralta, John Callow, Hugh Morrow, Kirk Kincannon, John Foust, Dave Bowden, Heather Lynch, Tim Hackman, Bill Canis (Great Falls Citizens Association) and John Hughes-Caley.



# Field Trip Scholarships Program at Riverbend

Title I is America's largest federally-funded educational program, and provides supplemental funds to school districts with the highest concentrations of low-income students. There are 45 Title I schools in Fairfax County, Virginia which provide services such as free or reduced-cost lunches and other necessities to their students which often means that these schools cannot afford the costs of a field trip to Riverbend Park. For the past nine years, the Friends of Riverbend Park has awarded scholarships to help these schools fund their trips to the park. Since 2011, Friends of Riverbend Park has provided almost \$10,000 in scholarship funds to Title I Schools to enable them to bring their classes to Riverbend. The amount of the scholarship award is based on the school's need, but generally FORB has provided up to 50% of the cost of the field trip.



Field trips to Riverbend Park give students first-hand experiences with Nature and learning by observing the environment and how to care for it. Shown above are Riverbend Park staff members Alyssa Janes (left) and Marijke Gate (right) as they instruct eager students at the Visitors'

Center on aspects of animal and plant life in Riverbend Park. Below left, an enthusiastic busload of elementary school students embarks on their Riverbend adventure at the Visitors' Center, while Riverbend Park Naturalist Sue Becker (right) instructs students in the finer points of Native American archery skills.



In the future, FORB is determined to expand this program from its current budget of \$2,000 per year. In 2019, we have applied for and received a Capacity Building Fund grant of \$1,000 from the Fairfax County Park Authority which FORB will match with another \$1,000, bringing the total funds available for Title I Field Trip Scholarships to \$4,000 for the year.

FORB is also interested in seeking corporate sponsorships for this very worthwhile cause. Local businesses or companies willing to support Field Trip Scholarships for Title I Schools to visit Riverbend Park should contact FORB President, Hugh Morrow, at [hughmorrowiii@gmail.com](mailto:hughmorrowiii@gmail.com) or [forbpark@gmail.com](mailto:forbpark@gmail.com). You may also donate for this cause online at FORB's website, [www.forb.wildapricot.org](http://www.forb.wildapricot.org). Educating children about caring for the environment is one of FORB's prime objectives.



# FORB's Native Plant Sale a Huge Success

The Friends of Riverbend Park's annual Native Plant Sale was held on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at the park's newly opened Outdoor Classroom and Picnic Shelter on Potomac Hills Street. The new structure proved to be perfect, both for the pickup of preorders on Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and for the sale itself the next day. Six FORB Directors were on hand to make sure that customers received their proper orders, to give planting advice, and to ensure that the sale was a great success.



Preorders sorted and awaiting pickup



Eleanor, Karen, Nancy, Kevin and Hugh

There is no doubt that preordering native plants in January and February proved to be the wisest way to guarantee getting the plants that were wanted. Some selections which were thought to be available at the beginning of the year proved to be not available in March and April. By far, most of the plants sold at this year's Native Plant Sale were ordered online as preorders at the beginning of the year. As usual, the Virginia Bluebells were a very popular seller, and virtually all of the 288 plants ordered were sold. The three varieties of Phlox available were also best sellers, particularly at the sale on Saturday.



Orders for native plants ranged from as few as 4 plants to as many as 54. A total of over 1000 native plants were ordered from the nursery, with about 700 sold as preorders and the remaining 300 sold at the May 4<sup>th</sup> sale. Total profit for FORB from the sale was over \$5,300.



Nancy helps a customer



Eleanor and Nancy offer plant advice



Eleanor explains all about Phlox



A happy Native Plant Sale customer



## Summer Camps at Riverbend Park

Summer is a very busy time at Riverbend Park. The trails are crowded with hikers, the river is filled with kayakers and canoeists, fisherman are found along the banks and out in their boats, and dog-walkers and picnickers are everywhere. However, the most important part of a successful summer at Riverbend Park is its booming summer camps. These camps are week-long adventures for kids ages five and older which immerse them in nature and engage them in a variety of educational experiences incorporating the principles of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and emphasizing outdoor recreation, environmental sustainability, natural history and cultural history. Of great importance to Riverbend Park is the fact that the summer camps are the largest single source of self-generated revenue for the park, and thus support its resource management projects and other non-revenue producing programs which are necessary for the sustainability and future of Riverbend.



Kids enjoy the Doggone Fun! Camp



Fishing on the Potomac River

Camps are conducted at the Visitor Center, the Nature Center, Turner Farm Observatory Park, Great Falls Grange, on the Potomac River, and all through the woods and trails of Riverbend Park. They are available at Spring Break as well as throughout the summer, and cover an enormous variety of subjects and skills. Tabulated below are the camps currently available for various age groups during the summer of 2019:

Adapted Potomac Adventures (13-20 yrs)
Anglers and Archers (6-9 yrs and 9-12 yrs)
Animal Vets
Dig It! Archeology Adventure (8-12 yrs and 10-14 yrs)
Dinosaur Days Camp (4-6 yrs at Great Falls Grange)
Doggone Fun Camp (9-14 yrs)
Fishing Adventures (12-15 yrs)
Forces of Nature (5-8 yrs)
Freshwater Fishing Fun Camp (8-12 yrs)
Geology Rocks (6-9 yrs and 7-11 yrs)
Junior Potomac Adventure Camp (8-12 yrs, Meet at Dranesville Tavern)
Native American Survival Skills (8-12 yrs)
Paddle Away Camp (12-15 yrs)
Potomac Adventures (12-15 yrs)
Potomac Archers (9-12 yrs)
Primitive Beginnings (6-9 yrs)
Primitive Teachings (8-12 yrs)
Primitive Teachings – Advanced (11-14 yrs)
River Explorers (9-12 yrs)
STEAM Nature Fun (5-9 yrs)
Summer in Space at Turner Farm Observatory Park (4-6 yrs and 6-9 yrs)

Most of these camps are offered several times during the course of the summer, but some of the more popular camps are available as many as five times. All of the camp teachers are experienced park naturalists, educators, college interns or volunteers, and all camps maintain an adult-to-camper ratio of 1:8 or better. Most camps also offer pre- and



after-camp care options. Riverbend Park is the only riverfront staffed park in the Fairfax County Park Authority.



White Water Rafting on the Potomac River



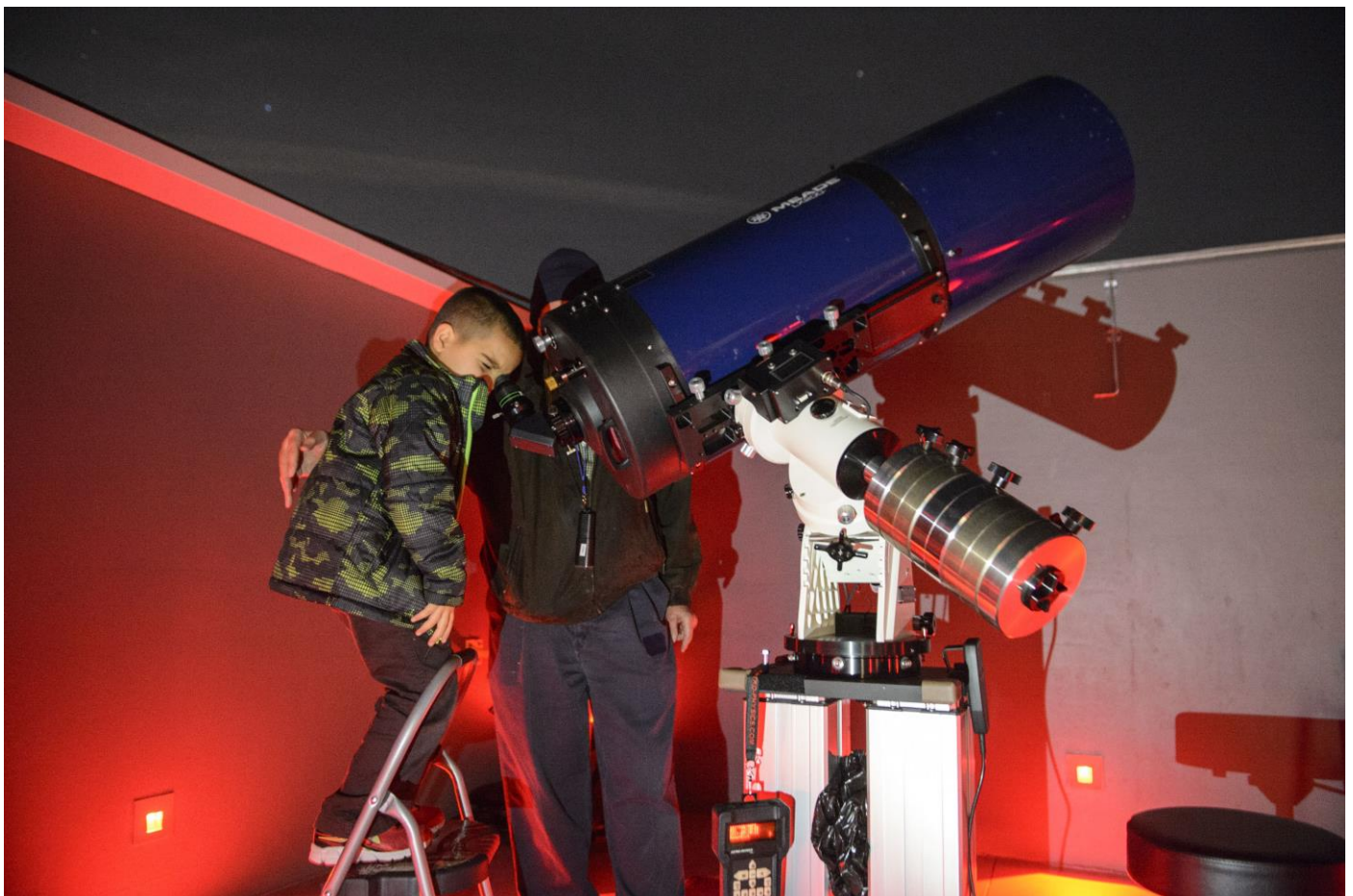
Learning Native American Archery Skills

Detailed information on the summer camps at Riverbend, including dates camps are available, costs and registration information, are all available online at the Riverbend Summer Camp website at:

[https://fairfax.usedirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?category\\_name=CAMPS&place\\_id=7977](https://fairfax.usedirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?category_name=CAMPS&place_id=7977)

Further information is also available at the Fairfax County Park Authority's Camps Website and Riverbend Park's website:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/camps>  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park>



Exploring the Heavens at Turner Farm Observatory Park



# FORB To Celebrate Its Twentieth Anniversary

August 5, 2019 marks the Twentieth Anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). FORB was founded by individuals who loved the park, and who were concerned for its funding and its future. Over the twenty years since its founding by Cathy Mayes in 1999, FORB has donated over \$250,000 for programs, equipment, supplies and events to the park. It was instrumental in initiating the Native American Festival which is today entirely self-sustaining and one of the premiere events of Riverbend Park's year.

When there have been tight budgets at the Fairfax County Park Authority or when major capital expenditures have been needed for inclusion in a park bond issue, the Friends of Riverbend Park and all its supporters have been there to make sure that the park received the funding it needed to keep it sustainable. Cutbacks have been averted, funding and staffing restored, and major improvements realized at the park thanks largely to the continuing hard work and dedication of many FORB members over many years.

To celebrate its Twentieth Anniversary, FORB will be sponsoring a thank-you reception (beer, wine, and light hors d'oeuvres) on **Sunday, August 4<sup>th</sup> from 5 to 7 PM** at the Riverbend Park Visitor Center. All FORB Members and all those who have ever purchased our native plants, attended Riverbend's summer camps or programs, donated to FORB, or simply love Riverbend Park are invited to attend. There is no charge, but donations of any amount are encouraged and certainly will be accepted for the benefit of the park. If you do plan to attend, please send an email to [forbpark@gmail.com](mailto:forbpark@gmail.com) with the names of the guests and an email address so we can determine the numbers to plan for.

# Calendar of Coming Events at Riverbend Park

- FORB's Twentieth Anniversary Celebration – Sunday, August 4, 2019, 5 to 7 PM at Riverbend Park Visitor Center.
- Riverbend Park Native American Festival – Saturday, September 7, 2019, 10 AM to 4 PM at Riverbend Park Visitor Center.

## Friends of Riverbend Park Contact Information

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