

# Riverbend Naturalist

*Riverbend Naturalist* is the newsletter from the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB)

Riverbend Park is located at 9700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls, VA

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park) 703-759-9018

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**Come to the Virginia Indian Festival on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, from 10 AM – 4 PM. Admission is \$6 in advance, \$7 at the gate.**

Meet representatives from Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Chickahominy and Upper Mataponi tribes.

- See dance performances, dug-out canoe demonstrations and more
- Try atl atl spear throwing and bow-and-arrow shooting
- Choose from pottery, jewelry, flutes, dream catchers and other American Indian crafts for sale, plus music CDs and T-shirts

**Friends of Riverbend Park has been chosen to receive the Elly Doyle Park Service Award by the Fairfax County Park Authority Board.**

**Tim Hackman, immediate past FORB President, has been nominated to the Fairfax County Park Authority Board. Hugh Morrow is the new FORB President. Nicki Costa is the new FORB Vice President.**

**The Great Falls Bluebell Benefit, hosted by John and Caren Backus on April 6<sup>th</sup> was a tremendous success. FORB's May 2016 Native Plant Sale broke a record. Women Unplugged is back on September 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>. See *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* on August 25<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM at the Visitor Center.**



# Virginia Indian Festival

The Virginia Indian Festival is an annual celebration of the customs and crafts of the first Virginians. Discover the interesting history and tribal cultures of Virginia Indians. See how the Indians of Fairfax County lived nearly 400 years ago. **Admission is \$6 at the door, \$7 at the gate.**

The festival is enjoyed by all ages, but there is a special focus on activities for grade-school children who will be studying Indians in their Virginia and American history classes this year. The program will consist of the following demonstrations.

The Rappahannock tribe performs and explains traditional dances. Indians used dance to celebrate special occasions and as a diplomatic gesture. The Rappahannock drummers mesmerize visitors with their rhythms, drawing people from all over the park to the circle where the dancers gather.

The Pamunkey tribe brings their beautiful pottery and explains the symbols in the decoration and uses of the various pieces.

A traditional Chickahominy story-teller shows how the tribe's history and values were passed down in stories. Craftsmen show how Indians made canoes, fire and tools and how they tanned deer hide. Children can try throwing spears (atl atls), shooting with bow and arrow and knapping flint.

## Historical Significance

*-By Cathy Mayes, Past FORB President*

Of approximately thirty tribes who lived in Virginia when Jamestown was settled, 8 survive today. In addition to the four who put on the festival, there are the Eastern Chickahominy, Monacan, Nansemond and Upper Mattaponi. Most of the tribes have fewer than one hundred members living on the reservations, primarily in the Middle Peninsula.

When Captain John Smith first glimpsed the Potomac River in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the banks were lined with native fishermen and the water teemed with shad, sturgeon and herring. The trail that still hugs the riverbank through Riverbend Park provided Indians and colonial settlers access to fishing holes and was a well-established trade route. Virginia Indians traded with the Seneca nation, who lived north of the river, crossing just upstream of today's park boundaries.

Although a large part of what we know about Virginia Indians at the time of the English settlement comes from archaeological digs and diaries like that of Henry Fleete, the native people who put on the demonstrations and exhibits at the Indian Festival dedicate their lives to preserving the oral, handicraft and spiritual traditions of their ancestors, ensuring that their children and the children of their fellow

tribesmen can in turn carry on the traditions in generations to come. Their trip to Riverbend Park is symbolic of their ancestors' trips to fish and trade.

## **Thank you, John and Caren Backus! The April 2016 Bluebell Benefit was a wonderful event and a huge success**

After fees and expenses, Friends of Riverbend Park netted almost \$10,000 from the Bluebell Benefit. Neither the event nor this amount could have been achieved without the gracious hospitality of John and Caren Backus who not only provided their lovely home for the evening, but also absorbed the expenses of the food and beverages. Caren spent countless hours organizing email lists, preparing the announcement and following up with friends and nearby neighbors. Caren also had to prepare for the evening. We greatly appreciate their generosity. The receipts from the Bluebell Benefits have been a significant factor in the level of support that FORB has provided Riverbend Park.

Also thanks to Lesley Hackman and Hugh Morrow for manning the front desk.

**COME SEE THE TRAVELING PLAYERS ENSEMBLE ON AUGUST 25<sup>TH</sup>** – These young performers will be performing *Snow White & the Seven Dwarves* from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM at the Riverbend Park Visitors Center. FORB is supporting this performance with a donation of \$250.00.

# **FORB Native Plant Sale Breaks Record Again**

On Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Friends of Riverbend Park sponsored its annual Native Plant Sale at the Grange in Great Falls Village Center. FORB Board Members organized and ran the Native Plant Sale with the able assistance of Great Falls veteran garden experts Eleanor Anderson and Robin Rentsch. This year's event even exceeded the record-breaking sales in 2015. Total gross sales receipts exceeded \$6,600, for a profit of more than \$3,500. These funds were used toward the salaries of summer interns who helped run children's summer camp programs at Riverbend Park.

Once again, the Virginia Bluebells proved to be the best seller. Two hundred of these perennials were sold in less than two hours, in addition to many other colorful flowers, plants, trees and shrubs native to Virginia. Sheets showing the plants in full bloom and describing their size, soil and preferred light conditions were also provided to help buyers select the best choices for their gardens. A new feature this year the opportunity to preorder plants for pickup because many items sell out quickly. FORB will expand the preorder feature of the Native Plant Sale for the 2017 event, so please keep track of your gardening needs. We will send an email to FORB Members, and to those who provided their emails at the 2016 event, in the first quarter 2017 with available plant listings for preorder.

## **TIM HACKMAN IS THE NEW MEMBER OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY BOARD**

Tim Hackman has been a Fairfax resident since 1993. He is a retired IBM executive, having been with the company for 34 years in legal and public affairs positions.

Tim just resigned during his second term as President of Friends of Riverbend Park and is a member of the 2016 Park Authority Bond Green Team. His resignation as a FORB officer is necessary to avoid a conflict of interest

Tim's other previous affiliations include the New York and North Carolina Bars and the Board of Amadeus Concerts. He was a co-founder and Board member of the International School of Stuttgart, now in its 31<sup>st</sup> year, and a founder and Board member of the Danbury CT-based Housatonic Habitat For Humanity.

Tim has also served as senior warden of his church, a volunteer for ESOL, a tax assistance volunteer, invasive plant management, homeless shelters, food kitchens, hurricane relief, and the Dranesville District Citizens Task Force on the County Budget. He was named Dranesville volunteer of the year in 2006. He has also been involved in several business professional associations.

Tim holds a B.S. in electrical engineering from Bucknell University, and a J.D. from Yale Law School. He and his wife, Lesley, reside in Great Falls, VA.



## **HUGH MORROW IS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF FRIENDS OF RIVERBEND PARK**

Hugh Morrow is a metallurgist with degrees from M.I.T. and has distinguished himself in his field. He holds several patents and has chaired many scientific and technical committees over his impressive career. Nicki Costa is the new Vice President of Friends of Riverbend Park. Many thanks to John Hughes-Calley for serving as FORB Vice President and Secretary. He will remain on the Board, but has too many commitments to continue as an officer.

## **FRIENDS OF RIVERBEND PARK IS CHOSEN FOR AN ELLY DOYLE PARK SERVICE AWARD**

After a vote by the Fairfax County Park Authority Board, it has been decided that FORB will receive the Elly Doyle Park Service Award in November 2016. This is a “once in a lifetime” award. FORB is a non-profit citizens group dedicated to the support of Riverbend Park, situated on the Potomac River, and to the safeguarding, preservation and responsible stewardship of its undisturbed natural beauty as an inspirational outdoor “classroom” for the enjoyment and education of all park visitors.

FORB’s membership is generally fewer than one hundred people, but it has been an active organization, providing an incredible \$125,000 in support for Riverbend Park, just since 2007.

In 2016, and for the first time, FORB’s historical funding of the highly successful Riverbend Park summer programs will permit Riverbend to fill six college-level summer-intern positions. (As recently as 2008, there was only one paid summer intern at Riverbend Park.) These

summer programs are well received, provide employment for local students, and bring in substantial program revenue for the Park. The summer and other programs, put on by these interns and Riverbend Park staff, have generated hundreds of thousands of user-paid dollars over the years. This income offsets the costs of park operations.

The 2016 college-level summer interns were high-caliber and enthusiastic leaders and were well received by staff, children and parents. They were paired with other staff for the summer camps, so the interns learned skills from the more seasoned employees and the staff learned collaboration and management techniques.

In addition, in 2016, one of the interns was dedicated to the Primitive Camps and Riverbend's fishing programs. The latter capitalizes on the new \$15,000 sixteen foot fishing boat which FORB bought for Riverbend Park late in 2015. (Some of the FORB funds for the purchase of the boat were provided by a grant from the Munson Foundation and an additional \$1,000 was contributed by FCPA.)

FORB's summer intern program also provides interns with a career path to employment with the FCPA. As a consequence, a number of former interns have been hired by FCPA, either as merit employees or as seasonal staff.

In addition to generating an expected 40% Return on Investment annually, the fishing boat, dedicated summer intern and Riverbend staff are expected to expand Riverbend's educational offerings regarding river and stream health, water quality, bird watching, fishing and fishing sustainability and the environment. All are issues of

relevance to Fairfax County, FCPA, FORB, and the Great Falls community.

FORB's support for field trip scholarships has expanded greatly in recent years, and over the past five years has provided scholarships totaling almost \$5,000. These scholarships enable Title I schools and students to have outdoor natural education and enjoyment experiences they would not otherwise have and provide incremental revenue to Riverbend Park. Without these scholarships, field trips by some Title I schools would not be taken to Riverbend.

In early 2014, FORB helped subsidize educational expenses for Riverbend staff to attend industry workshops to better learn how to maximize opportunities for the park. The Riverbend park naturalist has done an amazing job of putting together the educational programs and generating enthusiasm among staff and students.

FORB has also in recent years:

- Purchased and installed a donation box at Riverbend for under \$1,700, which is currently bringing in revenue of \$2,500-\$3,000 per year.
- Purchased a snowplow and other maintenance equipment for Riverbend Park.
- Obtained a donation of 10 canoes and related equipment from LL Bean.
- Received a \$10,000 grant from an automobile manufacturer.
- Bought a high-end telescope for Riverbend's wildly popular astronomy nights.

- Renovated part of the Nature Center and installed new exhibit cases.
- Donated \$5500 for new storage structures to get some of the capital equipment under roof.
- Provided over 50 pieces of executive-grade used furniture for Riverbend Park offices and facilities, thanks to a donation of used furniture to FORB from Bechtel National.

FORB also contributes to discussions in the FCPA Federation of Friends, an organization of various Fairfax parks' Friends groups. The Federation of Friends offers a venue to network and share ideas on valuable programs, member activities and fund-raising, and work collaboratively on items such as local and county-wide budget issues.

With respect to budgets, FORB has lobbied successfully to protect proposed reductions, both monetary and staff, to Riverbend Park's budget. FORB has also, through its President, participated with a Parks & Libraries focus in a citizens' budget task force with its local Fairfax County Supervisor.

FORB is looking ahead to continuing to implement the facilities called for in the Riverbend Park Master Plan Revision (April 2013). FORB has also sought to include funding for a permanent maintenance facility in the 2016 Park Authority Bond.

Over the horizon, FORB would like to work with FCPA to begin planning the design and implementation of a new, relocated Visitors Center, since the current Visitors Center is on a designated Potomac River flood plain and could at any time face catastrophic damage.

In the interim, FORB seeks new sources of revenue for its support of Riverbend Park. This includes revenue that is significant, such as that which will be generated by the new fishing boat and related programs, but with minimal incremental community impact.

FORB has used its position and credibility to find ways to strengthen FCPA's and the community's support for Riverbend Park, while keeping Riverbend a sustainable, outdoor space and classroom for the enjoyment of all.

## **Women Unplugged**

Sat.-Sun. September 3-4, 2016

Unplug and spend the weekend outdoors! Saturday we'll kayak from Algonkian Park to Riverbend and have an outdoor dinner with a bonfire. Spend a night under the stars in your tent or in our Nature Center. Sunday explore birds, edible plants, and learn to shoot a bow and arrow. Most meals are provided. Meet at Riverbend at 8am on Saturday. Program ends at 2 PM on Sunday. Women only. \$200

Visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/calendar.htm>  
for more information or to register