



**2021**

**Annual Report**

**Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc.**

## Dedication

The 2021 Annual Report of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) is dedicated to the memory of two true friends of the Riverbend Park community who passed away during the year. Michael Barry Phillips, died on January 26, 2021 at his home right next to Riverbend Park in Great Falls, Virginia. Michael and his wife, Yardena Mansoor, were long-time Members of the Friends of Riverbend Park, and Yardena served at one time on its Board of Directors. Over \$1,600 in donations were received by FORB in memory of Michael Barry Phillips.



Michael Barry Phillips



Marilyn Sue Kupetz

Marilyn Sue Kupetz, a long-time and very knowledgeable volunteer at Riverbend Park, died unexpectedly on June 12, 2021. She was well-known for caring for the turtles at the Visitor Center and would often take them outside to explore. She was committed to protecting wildlife and was always willing and happy to share her deep knowledge of nature with everyone around her. Again, many donations were received on FORB's website ([www.forb.wildapricot.org](http://www.forb.wildapricot.org)) in her memory.

## **Riverbend Park**

Riverbend Park is a natural resources park first established in 1975 along the Potomac River in Great Falls, Virginia. It encompasses 412 acres of woodlands, trails, riverfront and wildlife in Fairfax County and is one of five natural resources parks within the county and the only one which is a riverfront park. The park is a great favorite of many in Fairfax County and beyond, and enjoys an estimated 400,000 visitors per year. Riverbend Park is owned, operated and maintained by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), and is funded by both its own internally-generated revenue and by funding from the Park Authority. The park at present has four full-time staff and a number of part-time naturalists and maintenance employees. John Callow serves as overall Riverbend Park Manager; Kylie Starck is its Visitor Services Manager; Jordan Libera is the park's Senior Interpreter and Programs Manager; Matt McNeal is its Maintenance Crew Chief; and Casey Pittrizzi is the new Natural Resources Manager.

## **Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc.**

The Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc. (FORB) is an independent, non-stock, non-profit corporation, established in the Commonwealth of Virginia on August 5, 1999, with the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and preserving the physical, cultural, and natural heritage of Riverbend Park by educating the public to the value of environmental protection generally and of the park's wildlife habitat specifically; providing volunteer services to the park; channeling donations of money, property, and materials to the park; providing citizen input to plans that may be proposed for the park; and performing any other activities or services necessary or convenient to carry out such purposes, to the extent permitted by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Friends of Riverbend Park maintains a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fairfax County Park Authority and channels its

contributions through the Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) for the benefit of Riverbend Park.

## **Brief History of FORB**

FORB was founded in 1999 by Catherine D. Mayes who also served as its first President from 1999 through 2005. Paul Anderson became President in 2006 and 2007, while Serena Wilson occupied the position from 2007 through 2012. Tim Hackman served as President from 2013 until August 2016 when Hugh Morrow was elected and continues to serve in that capacity up to the present. Many persons have served on FORB's Board of Directors over the years since its founding, and have made major contributions to its growth and prosperity since 1999. Eleanor Anderson, for example, has managed FORB's annual Native Plant Sale, at times almost single-handedly, for many, many years. At present, FORB has ten Directors and three Officers – President, Vice President and Treasurer. The FORB Board meets once a month, traditionally on the third Tuesday of the month.

## **FORB's Officers and Directors**

During 2021, FORB's Board of Directors and Officers were as follows:

Hugh Morrow, Director and President  
Eleanor Anderson, Director and Vice-President  
Kevin Dillon, Director and Treasurer  
Jack Bowles, Director  
Cynthia Fisher, Director  
Cindy Gersony, Director  
Karen Hershey, Director  
John Hughes-Caley, Director  
Susan Keating, Director  
Frank Zeng, Director  
John Callow, Riverbend Park Manager, *ex-officio*

## **FORB-Supported Programs and Equipment at Riverbend Park**

Over the past twenty-two years of its history, FORB has supported many programs and provided funds for a great deal of equipment and supplies to Riverbend Park. A few of these items include:

- Interns for Riverbend's Summer Camps
- Scholarships for Title I Schools Field Trips
- Purchase of a New Bass Fishing Boat
- \$15,000 Funding for Patrol and Rescue Boat
- Purchase of Ten Mad River Canoes
- Support for Riverbend Park Forest Preschool
- Supplemental Funding for Staff Continuing Education
- Visitor Center Tabletop Displays
- Nature and Science Books for Children's Library
- Water Quality Measuring Equipment
- Support for Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Projects at Riverbend Park
- Support for Educational Pavilion Dedication
- Support for Riverbend Park Volunteers Luncheon
- Support for Riverbend Park Staff Program Scheduling Software
- Funding for Riverbend Park Native American Festival
- Funding for Riverbend Park Bluebell Festival
- Riverbend Park Telescope
- Major Equipment for Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility
- Portable Maintenance Tools and Equipment

A complete summary of the financial support provided to Riverbend Park by FORB from 2002 through 2021 is shown in the chart on the following page. Over the past twenty years, the Friends of Riverbend

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
1	FORB SIGNIFICANT EXPENDITURES ON BEHALF OF RIVERBEND PARK, 2002-2020																					
2																						
3	ITEM	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Totals
4																						
5	Summer Programs					\$1,920	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$4,800	\$6,800	\$7,200	\$16,800		\$12,000	\$12,000	\$14,400	\$14,400	\$14,400	\$14,400		\$12,000	135,920
6	Equipment+Supplies					\$1,478*	\$1,007				\$7,805	\$1,660	\$1,000		\$451	\$1,637	\$1,689		\$240	\$1,384		18,351
7	Grant-Related						\$1,100															1,100
8	Telescope								\$2,700													2,700
9	RBP Signs								\$1,380													1,380
10	Concerts/Plays/Events						\$833	\$783			\$100		\$500			\$250			\$825			3,291
11	Mastenbrook - Nature Center									\$2,080			\$4,570									6,650
12	Mastenbrook - New Canoes																	\$3,000				3,000
13	ESLI Workshop																				\$1,000	
14	Field Trip Scholarships										\$500		\$1,310	\$545	\$2,230	\$1,021		\$2,883	\$4,000			12,489
15	Forest Restoration Project																	\$5,000				5,000
16	Interpretive Signs in Meadow																	\$1,000				1,000
17	Public Education Grant												\$500									500
18	Staff Education													\$550				\$1,400				1,950
19	Fishing Boat / Patrol Boat														\$15,000						\$15,000	30,000
20	Scout Projects								\$60				\$240				\$550			\$428		1,278
21	Riverbend Furniture (in-kind)														\$500							500
22	Riverbend Carports (2)															\$3,267						3,267
23	Riverbend Forest Preschool																				\$3,000	
24	Water Quality Equipment															\$5,600	\$2,600					8,200
25	Bluebell Festival																		\$700			700
26	Indian Festival	\$5,325	\$5,038	\$5,746	\$6,747														\$2,400			25,256
27	General Support for RBP		\$11,000**	\$11,000**																\$818	\$5,000	27,818
28	Tabletop Displays																\$2,000					2,000
29	Visitors' Center Library Books																	\$300				300
30	Yearly Totals	\$5,325	\$16,038	\$16,746	\$6,747	\$3,398	\$5,340	\$3,183	\$8,880	\$8,940	\$15,605	\$18,460	\$8,120	\$13,095	\$30,181	\$26,175	\$21,239	\$27,983	\$22,565	\$2,630	\$36,000	\$292,650
31																						
32																						
33	*Leaf blowers																					
34	**Two checks to FCPA																					

Park has contributed almost \$300,000 for the benefit of the park and its programs and activities.

## **2021 Accomplishments of Friends of Riverbend Park**

The year 2021 continued to be a difficult one for Riverbend Park and the Fairfax County Park Authority, and many of its services remained closed for much of the year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Because some of the park's activities were canceled, many of the programs which FORB normally supports each year did not receive FORB funding in 2021. The summer camps, however, were opened in 2021 and, accordingly, FORB supplied \$12,000 in funding to underwrite the cost of 5 interns to help run these camps. However, the Bluebell Festival in April and the Virginia Native American Festival in September were both canceled in 2021, and therefore FORB did not donate monies to support these activities. The largest expenditure for Riverbend Park in 2021 was a donation of \$15,000 towards the purchase of a new Patrol and Rescue Boat, which was badly needed to replace the existing dysfunctional and irreparable one. The lack of an adequate Patrol and Rescue Boat often necessitated the use of the park's Bass Fishing Boat thereby compromising some of its summer camp schedules. A number of other, smaller amounts were forthcoming to support those activities which were carried out and which included:

- \$5,000 for General Riverbend Park Staff support which included scheduling software, volunteer luncheons, and continuing education;
- \$3,000 seed funding for the newly established Riverbend Park Forest Preschool;
- \$1,000 to underwrite the cost of an Environmental Student Learning Initiative (ESLI) workshop.

## Friends of Riverbend Park's Income and Expenses

The Friends of Riverbend Park's financial results for the past six years are summarized in the table below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
2016	\$31,105	\$28,211
2017	\$34,672	\$30,778
2018	\$35,567	\$38,627
2019	\$28,853	\$34,160
2020	\$36,831	\$10,625
2021	\$53,110	\$48,606

In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 and the curtailment of some activities at Riverbend Park, FORB enjoyed an excellent fundraising year. Income was at a record level due to several substantial grants during the year and record profit from its native plant sale. A total of 78 online pre-orders were placed for 1,260 plants with gross revenue of \$12,796. Eleanor Anderson and her volunteer crew sorted and organized all these orders and plants and, in many cases, delivered them to buyers' homes because of Covid-19 restrictions at the park. Thus, FORB's 2021 year-end bank balance increased to the point which enabled it to commit its support to major purchases and activities in both 2021 and 2022. Major expenses for 2021 included the Patrol and Rescue Boat (\$15,000), interns for the park's summer camps (\$12,000), Riverbend Park staff's discretionary fund (\$5,000), the Environmental Student Leadership Initiative workshop (\$1,000), Stock for the Native Plant Sale (\$5,000) and the Riverbend Park Forest Preschool (\$3,000). The principal administrative expense (\$2,244) came from FORB's Wild Apricot database.

FORB's specific sources of income may be broken down as follows:



	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Membership Dues	\$5,800	\$2,375	\$5,975
Native Plant Sale	\$9,204	\$8,393	\$15,916
Donation Boxes	\$4,899	\$3,612	\$3,793
General Donations	\$8,174	\$9,160	\$14,496
Foundation Grants	\$ 0	\$12,000	\$12,500
FORB-Logo Sales	\$ 0	\$1,120	\$120

FORB was able to realize high income from the Native Plant Sale due to its online sales, and was very fortunate to receive three sizeable grants during the year from the Munson Foundation, the Henry Foundation, and Great Falls Friends and Neighbors (now the Women’s Club of Great Falls). Many smaller donations ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 were also realized in 2021, bringing the grand total for general donations to almost \$15,000. Membership dues and income from the donation boxes were similar to the levels in previous years.

FORB’s annual Native Plant Sale is particularly remarkable for the manner in which it has grown over the past six years, mostly due to the introduction of online pre-orders in 2017 and the tireless leadership of Eleanor Anderson. A summary of its gross revenues and profits for the last six years is shown below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Gross Sales</u>	<u>Profit</u>
2016	\$6,600	\$3,500
2017	\$5,806	\$3,311
2018	\$7,554	\$3,862
2019	\$9,209	\$5,300
2020 *	\$8,393*	\$4,800*
2021	\$15,916	\$9,803

\*Sales and Profits Reduced due to Covid-19 in March 2020

FORB's expenses for 2021 as may be summarized as follows:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Administrative	\$1,106	\$3,669
Virginia Taxes and Fees	\$ 606	\$1,040
Native Plant Sale Stock	\$2,715	\$4,865
Insurance	\$1,101	\$1,129
Riverbend Park Support	\$3,086	\$36,762
FORB Logo Items	\$1,178	\$ 0
Eagle Scout Project Support	\$ 428	\$ 233
Village of Great Falls Support	\$ 405	\$ 405

Administrative expenses include FORB's Post Office box fee, the Wild Apricot website (\$2,244), office supplies, and PayPal and Square Register transaction fees. Administrative fees in 2021 were higher than the previous year because FORB paid its Wild Apricot database fee for July 2021 through June 2023 in 2021 to take advantage of a lower yearly rate. Virginia sales taxes and the cost of the native plant stock were both higher due to the success of the Native Plant Sale and the large numbers of plants sold. The largest difference between 2020 and 2021 expenses was the greatly increased funding spent on Riverbend Park projects which included \$15,000 on the Rescue and Patrol Boat, \$12,000 for the resumption of underwriting sponsorship of the summer interns, \$3,000 for sponsorship of the Riverbend Park Forest Preschool, and \$5,000 general support for the Riverbend Park staff. The levels of most other expenses remained similar to those in the previous year. No additional logo-items such as baseball caps and water bottles were purchased during 2021 although a few of the logo baseball caps remaining from 2020 were sold in 2021. Total expenses increased from \$10,625 in 2020 to \$48,606 in 2021.

## FORB Membership

The Wild Apricot database which FORB utilizes at present does not maintain historical data on the number of paid-up FORB Members. It does maintain a limit of 500 “contacts” which includes Members, Native Plant Sale buyers, and other interested parties who have been included from time to time to receive news and announcements such as FORB’s periodic newsletter, *The Riverbend Naturalist*. Unfortunately, because of the 500 contacts limit under our present plan, it has been necessary to archive old contacts or individuals who have not been active in FORB or contributed in the past five years. This system, however, may eliminate some individuals who are still very interested in the park and its activities.

At the present time, FORB Webmaster, Frank Zeng, is looking at the possibility of creating separate Native Plant Buyer lists and not having them included as “contacts.” What is known is that the FORB contacts in 2016 stood at about 250. Today, it is always right below the 500 contacts limit with the constant need to eliminate or archive some to avoid exceeding the 500 names limit. The high number of native plant buyers in 2020 and 2021 constantly increases the number of total contacts in the database. The next level in the Wild Apricot database systems is the “Professional” level of 2000 contacts but which is prohibitively expensive.

Ideally, FORB should have a database which separates Members into their specific categories, maintains information on membership dues renewal dates, and sends out renewal notices in anticipation of their renewal date. It should also have separate lists of all Native Plant Buyers and even separate them by the year in which they participated in the Native Plant Sale.

## Future Needs of Riverbend Park

The Conceptual Development Plan of Riverbend Park's April 2013 Revision of its Master Plan includes a number of eventual developments. These are:

- Improvement of Vehicular Entrances and Exits, Traffic Circulation and Parking Facilities
- Trail Network and Park Access
- Waterfront Activity Area and Visitor Center
- Interpretive Center
- Maintenance Facility
- Picnic Areas
- Picnic Shelters and Outdoor Classrooms
- Educational Pavilion
- Meadow Interpretive Area and Nature Watching Tower

FORB, along with the Riverbend Park staff, has been actively encouraging the ongoing fulfillment of the Riverbend Park Master Plan for many years now. In recent years, the Educational Pavilion / Outdoor Classroom was completed, and in 2022, the Maintenance Facility was finished and is now in operation. At the present time, however, severe financial constraints due to the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021 have made it difficult if not impossible for the Fairfax County Park Authority to implement many of the other projects outlined above for the park. Indeed, with five full-time staff members and two major projects completed under park bond issues in recent years, Riverbend Park is faring much better than many other Fairfax County parks.

It is equally true that our community population, the number of Riverbend Park's visitors, and the demands placed on the park and its staff will only increase in future years. FORB continues to advocate the development of a comprehensive plan for Riverbend Park that

considers all these factors and determines how the park will be managed in the future, how it might become more self-sustaining, what part FORB might play in helping the park be more self-sustaining, and, most importantly, how Riverbend Park can be maintained as a natural resources refuge in the face of increasing visitors and demands.