

# Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

## Spring 2012

### Five Good Reasons to Attend FSPP Work Days in 2012

by Doris Birmingham



BU's 2011 Global Day of Service volunteers gather piles of leaves

In our last Winter *Newsletter*, Anne Ellinger wrote about her “Ten Impossible Wishes for Spy Pond Park.” One of these was a wish “that without any organizing work, hundreds of volunteers would magically appear every Spy Pond Park Work Day and gaily tend to the park’s every need.” Thank you, Anne, for that lovely wish, and while it might be a little unrealistic to wish for *hundreds*, I can easily list five good reasons why at least *dozens* might magically appear at each work day this season—and why they will be glad that they did.

1. Spy Pond Park is truly a jewel of which our town is justifiably proud, and everyone should want to maintain and preserve it for the pleasure of current and future generations of visitors.
2. The words of appreciation that we often receive from park users go a long way towards relieving the minor aches and pains acquired on a warm summer’s day of picking up trash, pulling weeds, and chopping out invasive species.
3. The joy of working in the soil with our hands surrounded by the beauty of the Pond and Park is good for our minds and bodies.
4. The companionship of other workers who likewise love the park enriches our lives.
5. The opportunity to learn more about native and invasive plants helps us become more educated stewards of our environment.

Seven FSPP Work Days are listed in this *Newsletter*. Make a firm commitment now by choosing at least two dates on which you promise yourself that you will work for at least one hour—and mark those dates on your calendar! Also, consider encouraging friends and fellow members of your church or another community group to join you. Tell high school students whom you know about this fun opportunity to earn community service credits. In short, please do everything you can this year to make Anne’s impossible wish come true.

### 2012 FSPP Work & Fun Days

April 14: 1-4 p.m. (rain date April 15 1-4 p.m.)

May 19: 1-4 p.m. (rain date May 20 1-4 p.m.)

June 2: BYO Picnic in the Park FSPP 20th Anniversary Celebration 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (rain date June 3 noon-3 p.m.)

June 23: 1-4 p.m. (rain date June 24 1-4 p.m.)

July 21: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (rain date July 22 1-4 p.m.)

August 18: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (rain date August 19 1-4 p.m.)

Sept. 8: Work & Fun Day 1-4 p.m. (rain date Sept. 9 1-4 p.m.)

Oct. 13: 1-4 p.m. (rain date October 14 1-4 p.m.)

### For questions:

Work Days-Doris Birmingham, Beautification Committee, 781-641-2392, [dabirming@gmail.com](mailto:dabirming@gmail.com)

Fun Day-Betsy Leondar-Wright, Chair Park Events, 781-648-0630, [betsy@classmatters.org](mailto:betsy@classmatters.org)

### Available for purchase at the FSPP booth

- *Spy Pond Stories* by Eva Balazs
- Friends of Spy Pond Park T-shirts in all sizes

# Falling Through the Ice

by Betsy Leondar-Wright

I was walking onto Linwood Street on the dark evening of January 22 when I saw a full procession of emergency vehicles coming up from the pond, including the Fire Department's boat. "What happened?" I wondered.

The next morning I found the answer in *The Boston Globe*. Two adults and a 3-year-old had fallen through the ice. Their friend who hadn't walked out as far called 911. Firefighters rescued them and took them to the hospital. They're all OK.

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Let me pause here so that we can all take a deep breath, clutch our chests and stop ourselves from having a heart attack at the horrifying thought that A 3-YEAR-OLD FELL THROUGH THE ICE!

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OK, moving on.

My sister has a morbid fear of people falling through ice. She wishes I didn't walk out onto Spy Pond, and that her children didn't; she shudders when I mention it. I reassure her that we only go out when the ice is obviously thick and solid, and when other people are already skating all over the pond. I remind her that horses went out onto the ice in the 1800s and dragged huge blocks of ice back to the icehouse pier to be loaded onto railroad cars. Ice is stronger than a wooden floor, and we step on those. I've also reassured her by saying, "It's been decades since anyone fell through." So much for that reassurance!

A few years ago at a FSPS annual meeting, our guest speaker was Eva Balazs, author of *Spy Pond Stories* (a wonderful

book available at the Book Rack on Medford St.). We had asked her to tell us some stories from her 50 years living on the shore of the pond. She chose to tell us about the time her young son fell through the ice, alone in the middle of the pond.

Luckily he had been taught what to do to rescue himself, and he got home fine, cold and wet but unharmed. Here's the method she said he used. Most importantly, don't grab the edge of the ice. It will just break off. Instead, float on your back and spread your arms. Point your head towards the strongest-looking edge of the ice, kick your feet hard and paddle with your hands so that your head slides up onto the ice. Keep kicking until your shoulders are up too, then your body. Don't stand up. Remain flat on your back, with your arms and legs as far apart as possible to distribute your weight evenly. Scrunch your spread-eagled body towards the nearest shore.

But much better than self-rescue is prevention. A little common sense will prevent any of us from ever falling through the ice.

Here are a few tips based on my experience:

1. Don't judge the thickness of the ice only from what you can see from shore. The thinnest ice is over the springs that feed the pond, most of which are out in the middle. Only go out if the ice you can see is double the minimum thickness needed to support you; assume you'll run into some thinner spots farther out. I feel comfortable when I see frozen leaves 8" down; at 6" I tread carefully.
2. Always keep your eyes on the ice. There may be holes left from ice fishing; there may be open water created by birds; and there are usually thin edges and open water near the island, the Linwood beach, the condo docks, and some other high-wind shoreline areas.
3. Don't go out onto a snow-covered pond unless you're absolutely sure that, before the snow fell, the ice was thick and solid, and that the temperature hasn't risen above 32 degrees since then. Even then, the risks are greater when there's snow; you can't see holes or thin spots. It's safer to go out on skis than in boots.
4. Never, ever step onto the ice in the dark. You may think it's safe from earlier observations, but conditions may have changed since then.

The near-tragedy in January happened because the people ignored those last two precautions. The thin ice was covered in snow, and they went out after dark.

Since the climate began to change, safe days to skate on Spy Pond have become less frequent, which is sad. It takes weeks of below-freezing temperatures to build up that 6+ inches of ice. But most winters have a few safe days, and to stay safe we've just got to have the patience to wait for them to come.



Leap Day snow in Spy Pond Park

# Pretty Poison

by Elizabeth Karpati

Garlic mustard is doubly repulsive to one who doesn't like garlic anyway, even if it does look pretty when in bloom. Someone wrote derisively about it being spread by "the Julia Child crowd," but a 2006 article in the Harvard University Gazette reported that it was brought in as a kitchen herb a century earlier, by immigrants in the 1860s.

Garlic mustard is a biennial with an odd characteristic. In the first year it grows just a rosette of roundish, scallop-edged leaves somewhat resembling the leaves of violets. The rosette overwinters, and the next year the plant sends up a stalk, knee-high or more, with alternate leaves which are clearly triangular in shape with toothed edges. It starts blooming in late April with clusters of tiny four-petaled flowers at the top of the stalk. These are followed in the summer by seedpods which look like miniature string beans standing up like candles instead of hanging down.



Photo: Jeffrey Evans

## Flowers-garlic mustard, an invasive plant

seedpods belongs in the trash to be burned, but one that has no seeds yet can be simply yanked and left on the ground to rot into impromptu compost. Some years ago there was a large stand of garlic mustard along the path on the south side of Spy Pond, near the Lake Street end. During the "Trails Day" cleanup that spring, yours truly partnered with a high school girl and went on the attack. By the end of the cleanup, swaths of garlic mustard plants lay beside the path; only a small patch near what was once the St. Jerome's parking lot was left standing. The next year, garlic mustard was back with a vengeance in that patch, but there were few new plants in the area that had been cleared.

At present there is no garlic mustard infestation in Spy Pond Park, but there are plenty of plants lurking along the bike path, so vigilant eyes are needed to exterminate any would-be invaders. They are easiest to spot when they are blooming, in late April and early May.

In recent years Harvard researchers have discovered that garlic mustard makes a place for itself by waging chemical warfare. It produces substances that harm the soil fungi which have a helpful symbiotic relationship with the roots of many trees. Thus, it is double trouble, not only displacing undergrowth plants its own size but even interfering with the growth of trees.

Garlic mustard does have one virtue: it is flimsy enough to be easy to pull and dispose of. A plant with maturing

# President's Letter

Hi Friends,

As I write this we are having the first snowstorm of 2012 on Leap Day, February 29th! The pond hasn't frozen over this year, so we haven't been able to walk to the island, skate, or do any of the enjoyable activities on the ice. Spring is right around the corner and plans are underway for work in Spy Pond Park via the efforts of our Beautification Committee. People have had more opportunity to walk through and survey the scene and we find that there will be plenty to do, especially on the first Work Day, April 14.

We've been busy all winter, too. Thanks to your generous contributions, we hope you'll see a portable toilet placed in the gravel parking lot on Pond Lane for visitors' use July 1-October 31. You may also have access to a portable toilet that the Little League hopes to have at Scannell Field near the Linwood Circle end of the park sometime in April-June 30. We have received permission for us to place a shed near the park for convenient, permanent storage of our equipment. We are so grateful for your help in achieving these two goals.

There are many ways you can get involved with the Friends of Spy Pond Park. Gear up for grooming the park and join us, if you can. Come to our next meeting on April 15th to hear our plans and offer your opinions. In order to continue producing such wonderful newsletters, we need to have a new Editor by the end of this year since Eric Berger is resigning. You could solicit articles from our amazing writers four times a year. Please give strong consideration to assuming this vital role and get in touch with Eric.

Did you know this is the 20th Anniversary Year for the Friends of Spy Pond Park? Well it is! We look forward to a Picnic in the Park on Saturday, June 2. Set aside the date for some fun and community building that day. We are also looking forward to seeing the blooms in the new rain garden next to the playground. Look for the signs designed by the Hardy School art students labeling the plants there. Hopefully, they'll be erected by the picnic. 2012 will be a wonderful, active year in Spy Pond Park!

Sincerely,  
*Karen L. Grossman*

Karen L. Grossman, President  
Friends of Spy Pond Park

**Friends of Spy Pond Park  
next meetings  
at  
Karen Grossman's  
Sunday, April 15, 2012 &  
Sunday, June 10, 2012  
both at 7:00 p.m.  
32 Hamilton Road #402**

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990  
email [fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org](mailto:fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org)

Park on Linwood Street off Mass. Ave. or on Lakehill off  
Lake St. at the far end of the complex.

### To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...

Send your annual dues (\$15 individual, \$25 household, \$5 low-income) to:  
FSPP, P.O. Box 1051  
Arlington, MA 02474-0021  
For more information, call a Friends officer.

President: Karen L. Grossman	(781) 646-5990
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Betsy Leondar-Wright	(781) 648-0630
Outreach Coordinator: Sally Hempstead	(860) 944-1370
Fundraising Chair: Jason Fligg	(781) 724-7638

For newsletter contributions, contact [berkshire2@juno.com](mailto:berkshire2@juno.com)  
General comments can be sent to [fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org](mailto:fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org)

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## Editor in Training

by Eric Berger

I will be resigning as the Editor of our newsletter effective when our Fall 2012 issue is published. I have enjoyed very much serving for five years as Editor and working with our very talented newsletter writers. I've also appreciated a lot the support and guidance of our fine President, Karen Grossman, and the beautiful layout artistry of Jamie Ciocco.

I request that anyone interested in becoming the Editor in Training please contact me by email ([Berkshire2@juno.com](mailto:Berkshire2@juno.com)) or by phone (781-859-5096). I welcome the opportunity to discuss the specific responsibilities of the Editor and design a simple collaborative training process.

### Mystic River Watershed Association's 16th Annual Herring Run and Paddle Sunday, May 20, 2012

Participate in this fun event as a runner, paddler or biker.  
Pre-registration encouraged.

<http://mysticriver.org/herring-run-paddle/>

## Save the Date!

### Picnic in the Park with Family & Friends

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Friends of Spy Pond Park

June 2, 2012 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

June 3, 2012 rain date 12-3 p.m.

## Spy Pond Trails Day 2012 Saturday, May 12

by Eric Berger

Sponsored by the Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee, the wonderful Spy Pond Trails Day 2012 is not far off. It will take place on Saturday, May 12 from 9 am - 1 pm along the path paralleling Rt. 2, between Pleasant Street and Spy Pond Parkway. Registration for this event will occur at the tent near the middle of the path on that day. Volunteers are needed to help beautify the trails by pruning and by removing litter and invasive plants.

Volunteers are requested to bring work gloves and pruning tools. Trash bags will be provided. It is also recommended that volunteers bring lunch. Water will be available.