

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Winter 2016

My Pond is Our Pond: Early Youth Volunteering Begets Future Community Involvement

By Ruth Slotnick, Ph.D.



Arlington Swim Team volunteers raise their tools in jubilation

Every year, the Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) “Work Days” – days when we literally spend hours pruning overgrown hedges, sawing off dead tree limbs to create perfect views of the pond, gathering bags of recyclable yard waste, plucking invasive plants from their stubborn roots, and weeding between the cobblestones to perfection, join the less glorified tasks of trash pick-up and sweeping storm drains until winter arrives providing a much needed break from human hands. These monthly horticultural acts, performed by volunteers and led by a group of board members, many who have served the organization informally since the 1990s, help to preserve the delicate beauty of our glacier formed kettle pond in a Swiss-like fashion from late spring until early fall.

While seemingly small to most passers-by, many community members unknowingly enjoy the lasting benefits of the FSPP gardening collective. We share a communal love for our obsidian jewel quietly nestled between metro-Boston suburbia in the neighboring towns of Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge, which attracts an array of wildlife making cozy homes in the abutting shoreline. We want our pond to always be in good health for hours and lifetimes of enjoyment to come. As a result, the park requires the careful attention of a dedicated board and an army of volunteers, many who range from pre-teen to seniors. Volunteers

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Friends of Spy Pond Park Receives 2015 Best of Arlington Award

Friends of Spy Pond Park has been selected for the 2015 Best of Arlington Award in the Non-Profit Organization category by the Arlington Award Program. Each year, the Arlington Award Program identifies companies that they believe have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These are local companies that enhance the positive image of small business through service to their customers and their/our community. These exceptional companies help make the Arlington area a great place to live, work and play.

Various sources of information were gathered and analyzed to choose the winners in each category. The 2015 Arlington Award Program focuses on quality, not quantity. Winners are determined based on the information gathered both internally by the Arlington Award Program and data provided by third parties.

The Arlington Award Program is an annual awards program honoring the achievements and accomplishments of local businesses throughout the Arlington area. Recognition is given to those companies that have shown the ability to use their best practices and implemented programs to generate competitive advantages and long-term value.

The Arlington Award Program was established to recognize the best of local businesses in our community. The organization works exclusively with local business owners, trade groups, professional associations and other business advertising and marketing groups. Their mission is to recognize the small business community’s contributions to the U.S. economy.



Spy Pond Park in Autumn

PHOTO BY RUTH SLOTNICK



Digging up invasive plants

Volunteering in SPP

(Continued from page 1)

arrive, check in, and are placed on work teams led by members of the Beautification Committee, most who possess teaching experience in the K-12 or higher education sectors.

Youth volunteers are an essential part of the FSPP work-days. We look forward to their arrival, feed off of their abundant energy easily channeled into a variety of tasks, and find ourselves attached to them by the end of the day knowing that we will most likely not see them again. Our organization views the youth participating from local high schools as a win-win scenario. Where the organization greatly benefits from the en-masse style of athletic teams to tackle big projects, the high school students earn service hours towards graduation. Yet, FSPP board members also hope that volunteering at the pond, working side-by-side with adult community members, and becoming aware of environmental issues that threaten and keep the pond healthy, provides a useful learning experience. We model a “my pond, is our pond” attitude.

A recent study conducted by Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2012) found that high school community service participation is a strong predictor of future adult volunteering and also increases voting behavior¹. Naviance, an online company that helps high school students track their community service credit, notes that service learning can lead to “meaningful, diverse, and transformative volunteer opportunities” (para 1)². They outline the top four reasons for middle and high school students to volunteer: (1) gives students a sense of purpose, (2) has a positive impact on grades, (3) shapes the direction of a student’s life and changes the

way he or she views the world, and (4) has a positive impact on college acceptance. While we may never see these outcomes, we hope that we play a small role in inspiring a budding community volunteer. Sometimes coaches and even parents help supervise work teams while getting their hands “dirty.”

This summer both the Arlington High School Rowing and Swim Teams arrived on the ready in groups of 5-10 ranging from ages 13-17 to help. Because of their participation, we were able to accomplish large tasks in record time. As a team leader in charge of supervising the youth groups, I employ a learning centered approach to hook and motivate our high school volunteers. The process is rather easy as the teams who volunteer are already accustomed to working together for a common goal, to win. While we are not winning against another high school, I argue that we are wrestling with nature (e.g., purging the invasive plants, plucking tufts of unwanted grass, and clipping overgrown hedges) and contending with careless human behavior (i.e. cleaning up beer bottles, soda cans, cigarette butts, and plastic bottles).

I typically start by introducing myself, have the team members introduce themselves, state the task(s) of the day, and collect tools. Then we work together for half the day. Naturally, group leaders always emerge, but each participant has a “job” they instinctively gravitate towards and I encourage that behavior critiquing only to expedite the task when needed, such as curtailing the weeding between stones with dentistry like precision, as some students will do. We also fill yard waste bags with plant cuttings, branches, and leaves—all items the town can haul away and compost. Invasive plants have to be placed in garbage bags to be burned. In this case, we maximize the amount of refuse per bag while carefully negotiating thorny vines to minimize Band-Aids. In all of these seemingly mundane tasks, our high school participants develop a natural system of working together. I even catch them laughing and smiling when they are not looking.

At the end of the day we take a few minutes to admire the results of our handiwork and snap some group pictures. In just a few months we will start again and are already looking forward to the high school teams that will greet us for our spring-cleaning! Thank you, from your admiring Friends of Spy Pond Park. See you soon!



PHOTO BY RUTH SLOTNICK

Arlington/Belmont Crew Team volunteers fill bags with refuse

1. American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Mar., 2007), pp. 197-219

2. Source: www.naviance.com

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Although the weather has been mild, winter is officially here as we go to press. The wonder of this dark season was highlighted as I viewed the glory of the full moon tonight, traditionally called the "Cold Moon", although it was anything but cold today. The light ringed by the fluffy, white clouds shined encircled by the round glow that rose as the evening progressed. As it hung in the sky over Spy Pond mirrored in the water, it struck me how fortunate we are to be living so close to nature here in our densely populated suburb of Arlington.

Looking back over 2015, I am grateful to all whose support made the FSPP such a successful organization, either through a financial contribution or a donation of time and energy, or both. Please pay special attention to the board members listed on the back page of this newsletter. I want to send out my wholehearted thanks to them; most have attended bimonthly meetings and all have worked hard throughout the year to achieve our goals. The FSPP would not be successful without them! Special best wishes and thanks to Elizabeth Karpatti who has served the FSPP for so many years. And congratulations to FSPP Board members Sally Hempstead, VP for Communication and Outreach, and Marshall McCloskey, Treasurer, who got married in Spy Pond Park on November 14, 2015! Friendships and more grow and bloom through the FSPP.

We look forward to a year of possibilities via the Conservation Commission's application for Community Preservation Funds for contract work preliminary to permitting and construction that would curb and prevent erosion of the shoreline in the Spy Pond Park area. The Community Preservation Committee will define the details of this process on January 20. Cathy Garnett and I have been meeting with potential contractors and by February one of their proposals will be selected and described in the application that will be submitted. We will be seeking your support for this preliminary work that could lead to protection of the shoreline of our park. Stay tuned.

As always, please note the location of storm drains on your street, make sure they're clear after snowstorm plowing, have a good winter and we hope it will be easier than last year's. In February we'll be selecting the dates for our Work Days that will be published in the Spring 2016 Newsletter. Good health and good times in the New Year to you all!

Warm regards,



Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Friends of Spy Pond Park Open Positions

Fundraising Chair: researches possible avenues of funding—businesses and individual, grants and foundations and mounts a campaign for financing particular projects, when needed. Provides this service to FSPP with support of a committee.

Videographer: obtains necessary training at acmity to take videos of park activities linked to the FSPP website or presented on acmity, when of appropriate quality. Provides this support with the assistance of a helper to carry necessary equipment.

Editor's note: If interested in any of the above FSPP open positions, please contact fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org.

The Mystic River Watershed Association is Hiring

There is a new full time staff position available at MyR-WA: **Mystic Greenways Project Coordinator:** <http://www.mysticriver.org/employment-opportunity>. The Greenways Project Coordinator will advance park and trail development in the Mystic River Watershed. The candidate will work on a regular collaborative basis with partner groups, MyRWA staff and volunteers. Deadline January 30. There also are [spring and summer internships available:](http://www.mysticriver.org/internships) <http://www.mysticriver.org/internships>, deadlines January 19 and March 1. Please spread the word.

Report on Annual Goals

By Beverly Williams, Secretary

Standing Goals:

All Standing Goals were achieved.

2015 Goals:

All were achieved except that plans for putting down loam and planting in the middle and top of bed 6 were shelved because plugs for plants previously in this bed were not available. The two or three plants we might have taken a chance on were only available in large quantities and in a smaller plug size than we had originally hoped for. Plugs were suggested because they are much easier to plant, are planted at an earlier stage and require somewhat less watering. We decided to delay planting at the water's edge until discussions/plans for remediation and erosion control move forward. Also, traffic in bed #6 seems to have hampered the growth of plants there. We also did not assess the number and placement of trash barrels in Spy Pond Park although many extra barrels were used throughout the park all year.

2016 Goals:

1. Circulate a call for a Fundraising Chair and appoint someone to that position.
2. Aid in obtaining three-four estimates of cost of work needed to apply to the Community Preservation Committee for funds for a feasibility study, design, engineering, survey, and presentation to curb and prevent shoreline erosion in the area of Spy Pond Park.
3. Aid in applying for CPA funds for feasibility study, 30% design, engineering, survey, and presentation costs to curb shoreline erosion along Spy Pond Park area, etc.
4. Rally support for a presentation concerning Conservation Commission's request for CPA funds to Selectmen and Town Meeting.
5. Mount a campaign to raise money to cover rehabilitation costs, if necessary.
6. Help prepare and support application for funds for permits and construction from the CPC.
7. Plan and promote a Spy Pond Park Fun Day with the ALT in September.
8. Facilitate Kevin Duffy's making "Penny", the swan sculpture, permanent art in Spy Pond Park.
9. Follow up on replacement of one backless bench near Linwood Beach.

10. Continue to pursue replacement of Serviceberry to the right of second bench from Linwood.
11. Continue with planting bed maintenance.
12. Complete the job descriptions for officers and committee chairs.
13. Assess the number and placement of trash barrels in Spy Pond Park and determine if more permanent barrels should be purchased for the park.

The Arlington Parks Alliance

By Marshall McCloskey

It may surprise some of you to learn that there are actually 33 or more parks in our town that are under the auspices of the Arlington Park and Recreation Commission. The Arlington Parks Alliance, originally organized as the Arlington Friends of Parks in 2006, brings together community members interested in the use, maintenance, and support of our public parks, playgrounds, and other open spaces. Members of the Arlington Parks Alliance include the following groups:

- Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows
- Friends of Robbins Farm Park
- Friends of Spy Pond Park
- Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park
- Friends of North Union (Lussiano Field/Thompson School)
- Friends of Waldo Park
- Friends of Greeley Park at Stratton
- The Open Space Committee
- The Summer Street Neighborhood Association
- Turkey Hill Land Stewards
- The Vision 2020 Environment Task Group

One initiative of the group is to create a fund whose purpose is to raise money through voluntary, tax-deductible donations, which are used to supplement maintenance outside the Town's current scope of work and fund special projects in our parks, playgrounds, and open spaces that might not otherwise be funded through the Town's limited budget and labor resources. The objective is not to reduce the Town's obligation to maintain our public lands, but to provide additional funding that can enhance these resources. Representatives from the community and local Friends groups work collaboratively to assist the Park and Recreation Commission's efforts to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the parks and playgrounds in Arlington.

The last 2 Moonlight Beach Parties at the Reservoir Beach Park have raised ~\$5000 for this fund. The availability now of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds has changed the way the Park and Recreation Department will be seeking funds, as opposed to the previous method of requesting funds from the Capital Planning Committee. A Community Preservation Committee has been created to administer the CPA funds, which are supplemented by a substantial State contribution above and beyond the 1.5% surcharge on our property taxes. There is a learning curve for all involved, and possible competition for the funds among the Town departments, as well as gaining familiarity with the various regulations governing how the funds from the CPA can be used.

A list of Town of Arlington parks is provided here: <http://arlingtonma.gov/departments/public-works/parks-fields/list-of-parks> for those of you who are interested.

Community Preservation Funding

By Chuck Tirone, Conservation Commission's Designee on the Community Preservation Committee

Arlington voters approved adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in November 2014 and will raise an estimated 1.4 million dollars annually via a surcharge increase on Arlington residents' property tax and a percentage of earmarked state funds. Most incredibly, to become part of a CPA community the Arlington residents went to the ballot box and voted to raise their own taxes, just think of how hard that was to do, voting to invest some of our own money as taxpayers to get some of these projects done. Tax increases takes a majority of the town to vote for an increase and this just shows how important Community Preservation is to our community and just how much Arlington residents really care about our town.

In order to be able to buy land, build affordable housing or to preserve open space you need money and that's where the real power of the Community Preservation Act comes from. CPA legislation creates a dedicated state fund so that every time somebody buys, sells or refinances a home in the state of Massachusetts a small fee of 20 to 40 dollars is charged when they close on their house. That money goes into a special fund and only comes out for those communities that have passed the Community Preservation Act locally. If a community does not pass this Community Preservation Act, residents still pay at the Registry of Deeds, but don't get any of these state funds.

Tasked with evaluating open space, outdoor recreation, affordable housing and historic preservation, Arlington's newly formed Community Preservation Committee (CPC) receives applications and decides where to spend the money, seeking approval for their recommendations at Town Meeting. The CPC makes all decisions on the local level, the state has some guidelines on how to spend the money, but specifically we have control

of where the funds are allocated.

The basis of the CPA as approved in Arlington is a 1.5% charge on the property tax, or charge added to our property tax rate. The money goes into an account for Arlington and can only be spent by Arlington. Into this account the state would add money from the funds collected at the Registry of Deeds. When CPA projects are approved and funds are used, it reduces the needed revenue from Arlington taxpayers because the state pays part of our bill.

In the past Massachusetts provided 100% matching funds to every community that adopted the CPA, but every year more communities are adopting the Community Preservation Act so now there are too many CPA communities to give a full dollar-for-dollar match. At this point the state match is only around 29% of the statewide raised money, but there will always be state registry surcharge funds deposited into the local accounts as long as the CPA exists.

Each year a minimum of 10% or \$110,000 in Arlington of the annual CPA revenue must be allocated for each of the three main categories: open space & recreation, affordable housing and historical preservation. The remaining 70% could be allocated for any combination of those three categories or for the reserve account. The money does not have to be spent every year; it can be saved for future projects or borrowed against for large, long-term projects. This ability gives us the opportunity to determine our own priorities, plan for the future and have the funds available to make those plans happen. Also built into the Act there is a way to opt out of the CPA after five years if a community feels it's not working for them. We could repeal the CPA in its entirety if and when any outstanding bonds are paid off or reduce the surcharge low enough to only service the existing debt and repeal after it's paid off.

Every newly formed CPA community must develop a plan that identifies the CPC priorities for the funds with input from the four boards represented on the CPC and from the public by way of a public hearing. This meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2016 in the Town Hall auditorium at 7 PM. The plan will identify what's important and what priorities exist in Arlington. After the public input session, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) will finalize plans for the use of the funds and present those plans in the spring at Town Meeting for approval. On this and future projects the decision of Town Meeting is final; the state has no say as to how or when the funds are spent as long as it's within the four categories. Changes made to the legislation in 2012 have made it easier for densely populated communities to rehabilitate parks, playgrounds and ball fields; these are some of the areas where the real action is taking place.

The CPA will have a positive impact on the town and it's reasonable to assume that in the future as Arlington grows, we will continue to have these types of projects within our community. The CPA will fund town projects within the four categories and in return this will lower our future tax bills through the matching portion of the act. Without the CPA 100% of all projects would continue to be paid by Arlington taxpayers.

Open Space Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 14, at 7:00pm
Community Meeting Room at the Fox Library

The Open Space Committee will be holding a public meeting for community groups and Arlington citizens to provide feedback on the Connecting Arlington project.

For the past few months, the Town of Arlington's Open Space Committee has been working on a project to map out safe and interesting walking routes to connect significant cultural, economic, historic, and natural places across town. Starting with

routes in East Arlington, this Connecting Arlington project will include an annotated map so that everyone can enjoy walking to the best places in town.

Now, they want **your** input on the future of this project in East Arlington. What will it look like? What special places should be included? How will it help to build a stronger community? How can it help the FSPP mission?

Join in on Thursday, January 14 to see the growth of the project thus far and to provide your own ideas for future walking routes.

RSVP, or send questions and comments to Kelsey Cowen at kelseycowen@gmail.com.

Citation

*For your many years of dedication to Spy Pond Park
in your role as*

**taker of meticulous minutes for 8 years as Recording Secretary for The Friends of Spy Pond Park*

**expert advisor on plants to nurture and invasives to remove*

**tireless weeder, pruner, planter, identifier and teacher on work days*

**wise and knowledgeable Beautification Committee team member*

**contributor over the years to many planning meetings and improvement projects that have made Spy Pond Park the beautiful and welcoming place it has become for families and visitors who come from all over*

the Friends of Spy Pond Park

is proud to present this

Good Citizen Award
to

Elizabeth Karpati

December 6, 2015

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



Elizabeth Karpati shows off her Good Citizen's Award

PHOTO BY JAMIE CIOCCO



Watching the Spy Pond sunset

PHOTO BY RUTH SLOTNICK



Bags of natural debris from a Spy Pond Park work day

PHOTO BY FELIPE EGUIA



Sunset over Spy Pond

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



Sally Hempstead and Marshall McCloskey, FSPP Board members, after their September 17th wedding in Spy Pond Park

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meeting at Karen Grossman's Sunday, February 7, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. 32 Hamilton Road #402

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990
email 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
General Vice-President: Open
Treasurer: Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877
Recording Secretary: Beverly Williams (781) 316-1917
VPs for Communication & Outreach:
Sally Hempstead (860) 944-1370
Jamie Ciocco jamcio@gmail.com
Chair for Publicity: Elaine Crowder (781) 648-1927
Videographer: Open
Beautification Committee:
Betty Athanasoulas (781) 646-1343
Gail McCormick (781) 646-0614
Richard Norcross (781) 641-2404
Ruth Slotnick (813) 732-2639
Lally Stowell (781) 777-2759
Beverly Williams (781) 316-1917
Web Committee: Fred Moses fred@fmoses.com
Deepak Bidwai deepbidwai@gmail.com
Chair for Outreach/Park Events:
Betsy Leondar-Wright (781) 648-0630
Fundraising Chair: Open

Newsletter contributions and general comments can be sent to
fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Friends of Spy Pond Park • <http://www.friendsofspypondpark.org> • P.O. Box 1051 • Arlington, MA 02474-0021

We recognize those who have made contributions to the FSPP in 2015. This money has enabled us to pursue the mission of supporting the preservation, enhancement, and enjoyment of Spy Pond Park and Spy Pond as natural and community resources. We extend our sincere thanks for the generosity and commitment of these 145 individuals and households.

2015 Donations

\$500

Harvard Pilgrim Community
Grant via Laura Smith

\$100-\$200

Anonymous
via Schwab Charitable Trust
Kate Thompson & Daniel Calano
Lt Eric Hall Anderson
Margie Coffin & Chris Brown
Helena & Bertrand I. Halperin
Peter & Jane Howard
Sudie Marcuse-Blatz
James McSwiggen
Richard & Ruth Norcross
Robert & Harriet Tuttle Noyes
Mark & Joanie Walls

\$50-\$99

Swaroop & Suman Appadwedula
Cristin & Alex Bagnall
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Laurence Slotnick
Rajeev Soneja
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Speller
Susan D Stamps
Alicia Russell & David Stipp
William & Lynn Taber
Dick & Patience Terry
Amy & Jimmy Torres
Downing Cless & Alice Trexler
Adele C. Walsh
Jane A. Weingarten
Wallace & Beverly Williams
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\$5-\$24

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