

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Summer 2020

Plarn Art

By Michelle Lougee, Arlington's Artist in Residence

It's mid-June and I'm sitting in my studio surrounded by soft, colorful sculptural shapes created by community members during my 8-month residency with the Arlington Commission for the Arts & Culture. Diverse volunteers – some accomplished crafters and others complete beginners – have crocheted more than 250 pieces – blue “bowls”, orange and green tubes, multi-colored funnel shapes, and large base forms. They used “plarn” – yarn created by cutting up single use plastic bags, and the pieces are components for larger sculptural works that I have started to assemble for installation on the Minuteman Bikeway.



Michelle Lougee

I wasn't sure what to expect when Cecily Miller, Arlington's Public Art Curator, approached me with a proposal for a collaborative public art project for Pathways 2020. My current work was prompted by learning about the horrors of ocean plastic pollution 15 years ago. It is also inspired by the qualities of natural forms – whether seed pods, nests, and ocean creatures or the microscopic organisms found in a drop of water. I transform plastic bags into biomorphic forms that draw parallels between plastic use and its effect on our environment. This is a labor-intensive process, and I am used to working alone. An artist-in-residence model offered an energizing opportunity to enlist a whole community in order to expand both the scale of my artwork and the impact of the message that we must reduce plastic to protect the environment.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, so many people have generously joined in. The project enlisted a wide spectrum of community members. For many, participation was simply collecting and donating their plastic bags- over 1000 when we lost count! Others became plarn experts, meticulously cutting bags into loops and stringing them together into neat skeins and balls. For another group, it was learning to crochet for the first time, following a simple pattern and having the success of making specific shapes. Finally, a group of accomplished crafters were essential partners; they not only made elements for the sculptures but taught their neighbors how to crochet. I am grateful to everyone who contributed!

When the pandemic hit, all of the community building and programming that Cecily and I worked so hard on was canceled and everything was put on hold. People have adjusted and are still producing parts for the sculptures. I've been able to deliver pre-pandemic plastic bags from my own stash to some people, and both Cecily and I have picked up completed work from all



Thompson School students at the Science Expo making plarn

over the town. I've been designing the final structures. Part of my process is to make custom wire supports for each soft component so that it holds its three-dimensional shape. Once wired, the components can be assembled into the sculptural pieces ready for installation.

Recently I've been walking on the Bikeway with Cecily and project advisor Lorri Berrenberg to determine which specific trees will “host” the finished sculptures. Many of the forms are inspired by freshwater microorganisms that are in Spy Pond. I have selected twelve sites along the Minuteman near Spy Pond, between The Kickstand Cafe and Linwood Street.

I hope that all of the participants and contributors will take pride in the end result of this long-term project. I am so grateful for all of their time, effort, and support. This vibrant community and process has taught me a great deal, and I will miss working with everyone, but hope the finished installation will offer a happy reminder of our collaboration and a hopeful message of what we can accomplish working together.

Michelle's Artist-in-Residence project was funded by grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Friends of the Fox Library, the ACAC Grants Committee as well as individual contributions and funds raised from the 2019 Chairful Where You Sit. Join us for an artist talk at 13 Forest Gallery, date to be determined. For more information: <http://artsarlington.org/artist-in-residence/>



Installation of Michelle Lougee's work at the Fox Library

PHOTO BY CECILY MILLER

PHOTO BY CECILY MILLER

PHOTO BY LORRI BERRENBERG

Geocaching in and Around the Park

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

Have you ever heard of geocaching? It's my new hobby since quarantining at home made me stir-crazy this spring.

All over the world, people have hidden millions of containers for others to search for, by using the GPS in their phones to geo-locate them. Some caches contain trinkets for kids to take; some only hold a paper log for finders to sign. But all are at interesting spots that you learn about as you hunt. The cache-hider writes a description of what's special about the hiding place online at www.geocaching.org.

I was pleased to discover a geocache right in Spy Pond Park! (It was very difficult to find, as it is the very smallest type, just a fingernail long.)

The location description is enthusiastic about how wonderful the park is, and it provides a link to the FSPP website. I wonder if the cache-hider is a member of our group!

Besides that geocache in the park, there are other interesting ones nearby. The Cyrus Dallin Quest is a 4-part scavenger hunt that takes you to some of his sculptures in Arlington Center, and teaches you about his life story as you solve the puzzle. (While most geocaches are free to hunt for, this elaborate set of caches is only available to those who pay \$10 for premium membership.)

There's a cache near the Veteran's Memorial on Broadway Plaza, one in Menotomy Rocks Park, and one where the two Mystic Lakes meet. There used to be a cache on Elizabeth Island, but it has been taken down.

Perhaps one of these days there will be more geocaches in Spy Pond Park? We have so many natural and historical wonders to draw visitors' attention to.

If you like rambling off the beaten path and joining a grass-roots network of enthusiasts who will teach you nature facts and history lore about locations wherever you are, I encourage you to take up geocaching!



Park visitors can relax, fish, and hopefully, allow a wheelchair to pass onto the overlook

Mystic River Virtual Events

The Mystic River Watershed Association hopes to "see" you at these virtual summer events.

June 26 | Herring counting day (you can still participate after this date)

Take part in the Mystic River Watershed Association's "Day of Virtual Herring Counting." You can help count the herring swimming from the lower Mystic Lake to the upper Mystic via the fish ladder through your web browser at MysticHerring.org. Videos range from 20 seconds - 1 minute and the data collected is indispensable for their herring monitoring and preservation program.

Details: <https://mysticriver.org/calendar/2020/6/18/herring-counting-day-data-sprint>

June 29 | Invasive Plant Removal 101

Details: <https://mysticriver.org/calendar/2020/6/29/invasive-plant-removal-101>

July 7 | Policy committee meeting

Details: <https://mysticriver.org/calendar/2020/7/7/policy-committee-meeting>

July 22 | Mystic Trivia

Details: <https://mysticriver.org/calendar/2020/5/21/mystic-trivia>



Ferns planted along the Spy Pond shoreline for erosion control gradually erupt from the earth that enclosed them all winter

Arlington Arts Virtual Events

Find out about arts-oriented information including how you can celebrate the Fox Festival at home:

<https://mailchi.mp/0b09c1bbaca4/june-2020-artsarlington-newsletter-8017846?e=08ce2f3f3f>

Without Fun Day, We Will Still Have Fun!

By Betsy Leondar-Wright, Park Activities Chair

Sadly, pandemic precautions will prevent us from congregating for Fun Day, as we have for the last 19 summers. Instead, FSPP will sponsor activities that kids and adults can do in the park on their own time, learning about the history and ecosystem of the park in a safely dispersed way. Watch the FSPP website and Facebook page for details.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

I hope this finds you well and hopeful about our futures, despite the restrictions of the past few months. Much has been happening since we published the FSPP Winter/Spring 2020 Newsletter. There were new accommodations during sequestration: attending Zoom meetings and watching virtual entertainment. However, we walked in the park, saw new plants growing in the planting beds, the new overlook, blooming trees and bushes, and welcomed the summer weather, and the playground re-opening with social distancing.

The FSPP has rescheduled the times for SPP Workdays and is anticipating Fun Day activities the whole month of September (details TBA). Hopefully, soon we'll soon hear from Emily Sullivan, Conservation Commission Agent, to find out more about completion of the Spy Pond Edge Protection and Erosion Control Project and definition of our future maintenance role.

There are a couple of park projects that we have addressed. We met in the park and welcomed Joe Connelly who, happily, has come back to Arlington to be Parks and Recreation Director. He said the Park Commissioners have agreed to order and pay half of the cost of replacing the mildewed, locked bulletin board off Pond Lane. The FSPP will reimburse the Town for the other half. Marshall McCloskey, FSPP Beautification Committee, has kindly consented to remove the old boards and replace them with the long overdue new ones sometime in July.

Secondly, since the colorful, painted bench in the Spy Pond Park playground needed to be touched up, Adria Arch applied new paint in a small area that had chipped away and polyurethane to prolong the durability of Tony Vogel's design. Thanks so much, Adria, for providing that service once again for Arlington's public art!

I look forward to the installation of plarn art (made of recycled plastic bags) on the Minuteman Trail near Spy Pond Park. I crocheted a small part of it and am eager to see the result. I hope you are enjoying as much of nature as you can in a safe, healthy way.

Finally, we mailed our annual dues/donations solicitation in May and hope that those of you who are able to do so will make a contribution to FSPP to support the mission of keeping Spy Pond Park looking beautiful.

Thanks to those of you who have done so already. Perhaps we'll see you on one or more of our upcoming Workdays. Please note the requirements since, unfortunately, we cannot accommodate last minute volunteers or those who don't fulfill the Town's additional guidelines this year.

Thanks and warm regards,



Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meeting on Zoom August 2, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990
email fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Details and login information to be announced via email.

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: Joanie Walls (703) 881-1109
- Recording Secretary: Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877
- Membership Secretary: Daniel Jalkut (617) 276-6672
- VPs for Communication & Outreach:
 - Sally Hempstead (860) 944-1370
 - Jamie Ciocco jamcio@gmail.com
- Outreach Committee: Anne Ellinger (781) 646-1705
- Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877
- Chair for Publicity: Jenny Babon (774) 253-6325
- Publicity Committee: Pinal Maniar
- Beautification Committee:
 - Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877
 - Richard Norcross (781) 641-2404
 - Lally Stowell (781) 777-2759
 - Beverly Williams (781) 316-1536
- Web Developer: Julie McBride (617) 823-8084
- Chair for Outreach/Park Events:
 - Betsy Leonard-Wright (781) 648-0630
- Fundraising Chair: Open
- Photographers and Videographers:
 - Laura Homer (617) 953-0743
 - Milthlesh Sharma (617) 233-9218
 - Ram Subramanian ramkumar@gmail.com
- Photographer's Assistant: Puneet Syal
- Post-processing: Mark Sandman

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

2020 Work Days in Spy Pond Park

By Lally Stowell, Beautification Committee

The Friends of Spy Pond Park will hold scaled down, monthly workdays in July, August, September and October so that we can maintain areas of the park enjoyed every day by visitors who continue to visit from all over, especially in these challenging times. The workdays will be held on Saturdays at an earlier time, 8-10 am. The main task will be weeding between the beautiful cobblestones that line the walking path that extends the length of the park. Raking the children's playground and picking up litter will be two additional important tasks.

We will adhere to the Town's requirements, directing workers to keep a 6' distance and wear masks and gloves they bring. We will supervise these social distancing and safety measures. Workers will also be required to pre-register, sign waivers available on our website by 6 pm the night before, bring their own water, old metal fork or other tools for weeding between the cobblestones, carry their water and a small plastic bag, and be in groups of no more than 10 people in the park.

We encourage volunteers to come for any length of time from 8-10 am to help us maintain this beautiful park for the many families and visitors who come throughout the year.

- July 11, 8-10 a.m. (rain date July 12, 8-10 a.m.)
- Aug. 22, 8-10 a.m. (rain date Aug. 23, 8-10 a.m.)
- Sept. 12, 8-10 a.m. (rain date Sept.13, 8-10 a.m.)
- Oct. 17, 8-10 a.m. (rain date Oct. 18, 8-10 a.m.)

In case of inclement weather, we will notify you by email on Saturday by 7 a.m. of postponement to the rain date.

Liability waivers are required for all participants in the above Work Days. If you are volunteering to work please let us know via the email on our website, download the waiver form from the FSPP website <http://www.friendsofspypondpark.org/NewsLetters/liability%20waiver.pdf>, clearly fill it out completely, sign it (parental signature for under 18 yrs.), send a scan or photo of it to the volunteer email link on the FSPP website: fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org by 6 p.m. the Friday before the scheduled Work Day.



PHOTO BY JONATHAN SPILLER

Up to 12 beautiful swans found their home in Spy Pond this year