

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2024

Fun Day Took A Village

By Betsy Leondar-Wright, FSPP Activities Chair



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Leah, the Faery Troupe leader, recruited 2 family members to help, but still couldn't keep up with the massive demand for fairy house decorating

For the 22nd year, the Friends of Spy Pond Park hosted a large nature-themed festival in the park - and for me, it was my 20th anniversary of coordinating Fun Day. Once again, more than 500 kids and adults enjoyed the activities and the music.

Fun Day was a success due to more than 35 hard-working volunteers:

- Teresa Keh and Sharon Green painted faces for over 3 hours without a break, with long lines of kids waiting for their creative services - and Sharon also did both set-up and clean-up, a super long day.



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Teresa's steady hand transformed this patient youngster into a wonderful, whiskered tiger-face

- Diana Maggini and Lally Stowell came early, stayed for clean-up, and in between helped so many kids make leaf prints.
- Leah Cincer-Stark was assisted by her parents Rachael and Michael as well as Aiman Zehra, but still couldn't keep up with the massive demand for fairy house decorating.
- Steve Greer, Lynn Horman and Michael ran out of bark, there were so many boat-creators - and the creativity of the varied bark boats seemed to be an all-time high.
- Brad Barber always had lots of people with him at the pond's edge learning about the water quality and aquatic plants.



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Children and their parents launched bark boats onto Spy Pond, and learned about its aquatic plants from Brad Barber

- Jan Lonzarić (creator of two super-creative new paper activities, animal sudoku and de-coding environmental threats), Sarah Hager and I never had a slow moment at the puzzles and scavenger hunts table, with a record number of families doing the leaf hunt.
- Jenny Babon and Maggie Carey kept scads of toddlers happy with coloring and toys and gave away a record-breaking number of stuffed animals.
- Karen Grossman (FSPP President) was often solo at the information table, but managed to sell t-shirts, collect donations, and log in volunteers.
- Gail Leondar-Wright spent all year gathering prizes, and all morning helping everyone set up.
- Byron Yi and Ross Pogoda as well as Danielle Popyk did heavy lifting of furniture and materials.
- Sandip and Avi Agarwal set up the canopy and the bubbles-and-squirry-fish wet activities.
- Mithilesh Sharma and Fred Moses took tons of photos, and Ana Marques graciously got everyone's names and permission signatures.

(Continued on page 2)

Fun Day 2024

(Continued from page 1)

The musical performers were stellar. Big appreciation to the 6 members of the LBE Brass Band who played such rousing classic brass tunes; to the tight rock combo Aunt Mimi that threw some of us back to 70s memories; and to the delicious blues and jazz of Cousin Louis.

Fun Day got great publicity this year, with Georgia Hoffmann designing the very bright, colorful, and eye-catching poster, and lots of PR and outreach by Jenny Babon, Karen Grossman, and David Nejezchleba.

As the photos show, it was the children who were the stars of the show.

Editor's Note: Many thanks to our fantastic FSPP Activities Chair, Betsy Leonard-Wright, for organizing this year's Fun Day and to all the volunteers who made this event so spectacular once again!



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

The tight rock combo "Aunt Mimi" threw some of us back to 70s memories



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

"Cousin Louis" performed delicious blues and jazz

Equipment loans made all the difference: Judy Weinberg again graciously offered her canopy to shade the musicians, and Robin Shaw and Nelson Tetrault lent their big van that transported everything.



PHOTO BY JENNY BABON

Joyce and her dad displayed the pictures of animals that live at Spy Pond



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Sangit Khadka gave his spider face a thumbs up



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Kush and Sage listened to Lally Stowell's directions for making leaf prints as they decide what color paint to use

July 27 Work Day Report

By Adrienne Landry and Lally Stowell

On July 27, there were 14 volunteers who signed in at the welcome table, 4 FSPP members, plus 5 people who came with People Making a Difference®.

This Work Day was particularly productive with all people working up to and some after the time allotted. According to the Boston Globe, in April, we had over 200% of the regular rain fall for the Boston area. As a result, there is an abundance of plant growth, both with the invasive plants and the native plants. However, our June rainfall was 0.3” versus the average rainfall in Boston in June of roughly 3,” leaving us to water plants for the first time since we started planting 2020. The ferns did not do well in these conditions. They turned brown and were cut down.

PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE LANDRY



Brian W. managed to take out a 5” wide mulberry stump in pieces; the roots spanned roughly six feet!

Other work that day entailed pulling out several mulberry tree saplings. They are aggressive plants whose roots grow vertically and horizontally. Volunteers mostly pulled out saplings. There was one 5” mulberry wide stump. There are some large mulberry trees on the bike path and the slope area leading down to the park that produce berries that seed themselves in the park and on the bike path.

In addition, we focused on digging out Queen Anne’s Lace (beautiful, but invasive), mugwort, suckers growing on willow trees, and the ferns. There were a few new invasive plants that have arrived: phragmites and purple loosestrife. Six members of People Making a Difference, including leader Lori Tsuruda, took on our new project of significantly lowering and pruning overgrown hedges that were blocking most of the view of Spy Pond at Linwood Circle for visitors sitting on the lawn or nearby benches.

PHOTOS BY DIANA MAGGINI



Trimming the bushes near Linwood Circle will allow park visitors to have a better view of beautiful, glistening Spy Pond

Open soil around new plants often invites weeds that encroach on the new plants. Volunteers cleared away the weed growth from shrubs planted in 2023. We hope to put a native ground cover around them in the fall.

All in all, it was a very productive day with enthusiastic and concerned volunteers. For the record, since 2020, we have planted 35 shrubs and 18 flowering plants.

President’s Letter

Dear Friends,

It’s been a busy time for Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) volunteers, as it is every year, with our monthly Work Day, annual Fun Day, and annual Town Day outreach all in September. To create a short break in activity, I moved the FSPP September meeting to October 6. Coming up in November is the end-of-year solicitation and we are lining up a speaker for our Annual Meeting in January. This all keeps us jumping!

We are seeking a new Treasurer, while thanking Susan Saw who has faithfully served us in that capacity for over 2 years. Beginning January 2025, she will gladly guide her replacement through the Treasurer’s responsibilities. If you have questions or know someone else who might be willing, please let us know via email: fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org. We don’t need a CPA; even I assumed this role for a while when we couldn’t find an immediate replacement. The responsibility can provide a satisfying way to serve FSPP.

Speaking of volunteers, we are pleased to announce that David Nejezchleba has joined to help with publicity, creating a presence for FSPP on Instagram. We hope such publicity will stimulate awareness not only of our beautiful park, but also the activities and volunteer opportunities we offer. As always, we can use more volunteers and attendees at our meetings. Please spread the word for us.

If you watch your USPS mail or email, you’ll find our end-of-year solicitation early in November. We appreciate all the support you can give, both financially and by volunteering in the park. Thanks so much for your interest in our organization; we hope to see you at our upcoming December 1 meeting and the Annual Meeting in January, date TBD.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Grossman

Karen L. Grossman

President

Friends of Spy Pond Park

Stewardship Team Report

By Adrienne Landry and Lally Stowell

We continue to have very productive monthly Work Days at Spy Pond Park. The Stewardship Team meets the Wednesday before the Saturday Work Days and does a bed-by-bed survey to see what needs to be done. We decide what tools and how many volunteers are needed for the tasks, such as digging out mulberry saplings and clearing around recently planted shrubs.

Along with the Team, hard-working volunteers have planted 38 shrubs throughout the Park since 2020. They are all native to this area. Some are wetlands plants that grow best near the shoreline such as buttonbush. Some need a regular, level land formation such as red-twig dogwood, and winterberry. Others are those that do best on a slope like rosa Virginiana. We have planted all those types, as needed, in the planting beds.

As a result of the over 200% of the regular rain fall for the Boston area in April, there is an abundance of plant growth, both with invasive plants and native plants. However, we proceeded to have very dry weather for the next few months and the volunteers needed to water through the summer.

We want to thank the many individual volunteers who did such a great job digging holes, preparing the soil, and helping to plant these 38 shrubs along with uprooting and removing invasives. These volunteers included scouts and their parents from Troop #306 who also helped weed between the cobblestones lining the path through the park. Elementary School members of “Kids Saving the Earth” and their parents also helped with the weeding and with sweeping the main path through the playground. In addition, volunteers from People Making a Difference® trimmed and pruned a row of overgrown hedges at Linwood Circle that were blocking a popular and beautiful view of Spy Pond for the many visitors who enjoy this and the many other beautiful views of the pond.



Grooming the cobblestones lining the path through the park

Despite the unpredictable weather, the asters and goldenrods are doing magnificently. Goldenrod is not only booming in the park, but all over, as can be seen on the bike path. We hope they will still be in bloom on our last Work Day on October 19.

FSPP 2024 Remaining Work Day

Oct. 19, 9-11 am (rain date Oct. 20, 1-3 pm)

Liability waivers are required for all participants in Work Days. Please download the form <https://friendsofspypondpark.org/pdf/liability-waiver.pdf> from the FSPP website, fill it out and bring it with you. Children below 18 years of age must have parental signature to participate in Spy Pond Park Work Days.



PHOTO BY DIANA MAGGINI

Removing grass between the cobblestones around the picnic table and putting it in the mini-wheelbarrow was a family affair for Adam, Sara, and 4 yr. old Isaac Siegel on the September Work Day

FSPP Annual Meeting Sunday, January 12, 2025

Mystic River Watershed Association
23 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476

Potluck Dinner – 5 pm
Speaker & Annual meeting – 6 pm

Parking on Maple or Academy Streets and behind the building;
ADA access ramp in rear

Agenda Highlights

- “Arlington’s Plan Integrating Nature and Community”
David Morgan, Environmental Planner, and Kate Davies,
Tufts University
- Review 2024 accomplishments
- Elect slate of new officers
- Set FSPP goals for 2025

Bird-Watching on Spy Pond

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

Many beautiful, large carnivorous birds graced Spy Pond this past summer. I had a great time trying to photograph them from a kayak.

I often saw a pair of ospreys circling far overhead, including this one.



Osprey spotted at Spy Pond

PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Photographing the great blue herons in flight was my unattainable holy grail for years, finally achieved in this sequence in September.



Great blue heron takes flight

PHOTOS BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

And, of course, Spy Pond is rich in cormorants.



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

The pond is a nurturing environment for so much wildlife - turtles, frogs, waterfowl, songbirds, gulls, and predator birds - as well as for humans.

Sweet Sounds in Spy Pond Park

By Anne Ellinger

Have you ever heard flute music in Spy Pond Park?

Te Liu has been making music in the park, more days than not, since 2021. Guitar and flute are his main instruments, but sometimes he plays other instruments as well.

I asked him what he gains by playing in the park, compared with playing at home. He said, "Being out in the open, fresh air, the water, the sun, the moon, the birds and the flowers—and also chatting with people." I



asked whether he gets positive comments, and he said, Yes, lots, "but it's not my intention' to be praised".



He prefers to play when the park is mostly empty of people. I asked him how he overcomes the self-consciousness of playing in front of passersby. He said he just focuses on the process of playing and enjoys making the music. "The flute breathes and sings with me."

So next time you hear those beautiful sounds wafting across the park, you'll know you have Te Liu to thank.

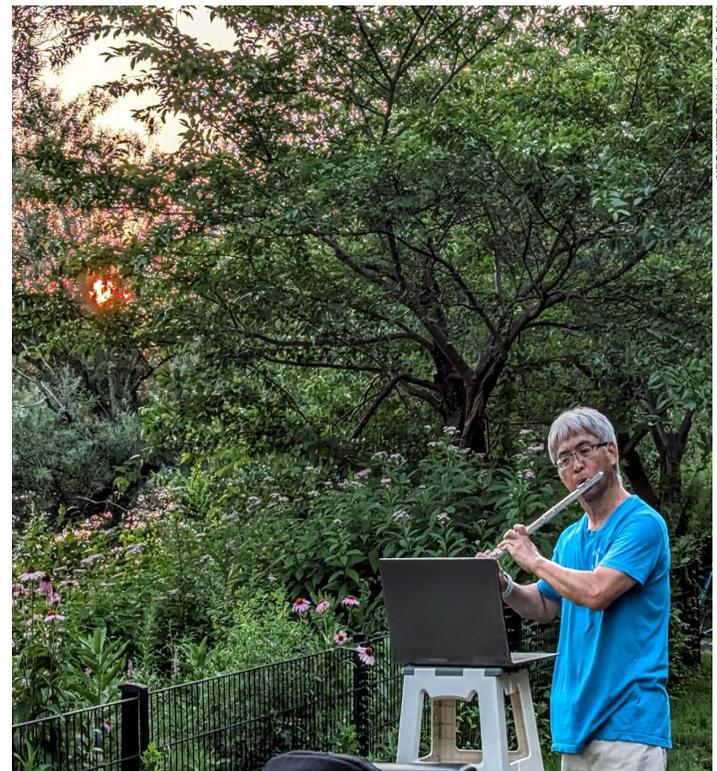


PHOTO BY ANNE ELLINGER

As the sun sets over Spy Pond, Te Liu fills the Park with beautiful flute music

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024
7:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,

&

Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025
5:00 p.m. Potluck dinner,
6:00 p.m. Speaker & Annual Meeting
MyRWA, 23 Maple St., Zoom link TBA

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

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: Susan Saw (781) 439-1490
 - Recording Secretary: Megan Chrisman (760) 604-8384
 - Membership Secretary: Daniel Jalkut (617) 276-6672
 - VPs for Communication, Outreach, & Publicity:
 - Jenny Babon (774)-253-6325
 - Jamie Ciocco jamcio@gmail.com
 - Georgia Hoffmann (781)-879-3841
 - Communication, Outreach and Publicity Committee:
 - Anne Ellinger (781) 646-1705
 - Diana Maggini (337)-704-1873
 - David Nejezchleba emnej22@gmail.com
 - Chair for Outreach/Park Events:
 - Betsy Leonard-Wright (781) 648-0630
 - Bulk Mailing Coordinator: Anna Doctor (615)-686-0328
 - Stewardship Team:
 - Adrienne Landry (781) 777-2759
 - Lally Stowell
 - Web Developer: Julie McBride
 - Photographers and Videographers:
 - Jenny Babon (774)-253-6325
 - Fred Moses fred@fmoses.com
 - Mithilesh Sharma (617) 233-9218
 - Photographer's Assistant: Open
 - Post-processing: Mark Sandman
- Newsletter contributions and general comments can be sent to fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

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



Julie McBride (l.) and high schooler, Maya Chakrabarty, weathered the rain to volunteer, at the FSPP Town Day booth on September 21 as did Sharon Green and Jenny Babon (not pictured)



A new bike rack was installed at SPP thanks to the generosity of the late Dick Norcross, longtime faithful FSPP volunteer

Volunteer Spotlight

Diana Maggini

Diana is a relative newcomer to Arlington. She moved here to be closer to family and has volunteered with the Friends of Spy Pond Park ever since. Diana has helped signing volunteers in on Work Days and assisted the Stewardship Team, whenever asked. The latter includes working in the planting beds adjacent to the Pond and joining the watering rotation to water new plantings over their first few months. This year she has joined us for 6 Work Days, Fun Day and FSPP meetings. Diana made known her willingness and availability to help from the beginning and we are pleased she has!



PHOTO BY ELIO MAGGINI

PHOTO BY CYRIL COMINOS

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON