

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Summer 2026

Stewardship Team Report

By Christopher Wilson

Early on in May the Stewardship Team was able to lead a huge group of volunteers to clear Linwood Beach of the winter's accumulated debris, improving the appearance (and the odor!) of the entire beach in one morning. The Team is off to a great start this year!

We are undergoing a significant transition, as Adrienne Landry departs the lead role and Christopher S. Wilson steps in. The Team's first priority is to maintain the great progress toward native plant systems in our beds and beyond. That means continuing non-native removal and patiently cultivating native growth. The latter includes the nineteen new shrubs and grasses Wild Indigo Gardening planted in early May. Those plants are already establishing themselves with the help of the many fabulous volunteers who have stepped in to water the plants three times per week.

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON



It is a tedious job digging out the grass between the cobblestones, but it keeps the path border looking good over time

Several of our beds are already thriving with natives and pollinating flowers, and the stewards are taking a mostly hands-off approach to these areas to ensure less disturbance to the soil below. Other beds still need some work; stewards and other volunteers have already stepped in during Work Days to remove the most aggressive non-natives and allow space for native plants to establish themselves. The stewards will also plant or seed those spaces this fall or next spring. We are thankful for all the volunteers who have helped and are happy to see the planting beds looking so beautiful.

Many Ways You Can Help with FUN DAY

By Betsy Leondar-Wright



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Jan Ionzaric and Sarah Hager were totally amused at the answers the puzzle solvers and game players offered during Fun Day 2025

For months before Fun Day, I find delightful little surprises on my front porch at 21 Belknap Street: sheets of birch bark, large feathers, Kleenex boxes and other fairy house materials, bird guidebooks, compasses and magnifying glasses, and toys and stuffed animals that are species who live in and around the pond.

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



A larger-than-life puppet called the "Spirit of Spy Pond"

Might you have some treasures to contribute? (The Swap Shed and tag sales are great sources of prizes and craft materials.)

Your time and creativity are also needed. Would you like to paint faces, teach an environmental skill, or help kids do crafts or puzzles? We need more music acts. We need lots of strong-backed people to set up and clean up. Whatever you can give, I hope you'll consider offering it to Spy Pond Park's Fun Day: Saturday September 26, 10 - 1 (rain date Sunday 1-4).

Memories of 3 FSPP Members Who Are No Longer with Us

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

So many wonderful volunteers with the Friends of Spy Pond Park have passed away. Here are a few of my memories of three of them.

Elizabeth Karpati (1928-2021) was a tiny woman with a soft voice, and she didn't say much at meetings. But she was the best notetaker any voluntary group has ever had. Back in the days before AI notetaking, the Friends of Spy Pond Park, the Spy Pond Committee of Vision 2020 and other local environmental groups got incredibly exhaustive, well-organized minutes of every single meeting, thanks to Elizabeth. She hand-wrote them in her tiny, neat handwriting, but promptly typed them up afterwards.



Elizabeth Karpati shows off her Good Citizen's Award from the FSPP

I learned some of Elizabeth's life story when my neighborhood held a family history evening, and she described how when she was young, she and her family had crawled through the forest during many nights to cross the border out of Hungary.

I could tell stories about Enid Caldwell (1926-2003) all day, and maybe in a future newsletter I will write about her endless quest to thwart the goose-sign vandal. But to be brief, Enid was an Englishwoman of immense dignity who was a leader of FSPP for many years. Knowing what it was like to arrive in a foreign country, she hosted a dinner every Thanksgiving for international students and other recent immigrants.



Enid Caldwell hosted many FSPP meetings in her condominium overlooking Spy Pond

In the 1990s, before the park renovation, FSPP always planted fall bulbs in the park, and woe betide any hapless person who picked a spring flower and got a sharp tongue-lashing from Enid. Her innovation was to plant bulbs behind the playground fence where kids could see them but not reach them. When she knew she was dying, she asked me to promise that I would plant bulbs behind the fence the next fall, which I did.

When we created a play to advocate for park renovations, of course we cast Enid as the majestic voice of the giant puppet representing the Spirit of Spy Pond. I will always remember her eloquently intoning the opening lines, in her British accent, "I am Spy Pond. I am older than your grandmother's grandmother's grandmother..."

Éva Balázs (1922-2019) literally wrote the book: "Spy Pond Stories," and then later "More Spy Pond Stories," based on her half century of living on the Pleasant Street side of the pond and raising her kids boating, swimming and skating there. Those irresistible books (out of print but available from the library) tell the pond's history all the way back to the ice harvesting days.

One year we invited her to be our annual meeting speaker, thinking that she might talk about pond history or her books, but in fact she just told us one harrowing story of the time her son fell through the ice, and gave us detailed advice on how to save ourselves as he did, by lying on our backs in and slowly slithering up onto the ice inch by inch.



Eva Balazs rejoices at Fun Day in Spy Pond Park's 2006 opening 20 years ago

Éva was a jazz pianist, and a psychotherapist who had a regular advice column in the weekly newspaper, the Arlington Advocate. She had so much human insight, and she asked such good questions – never just "how are you?" but quirky questions about your life and spirit – that those conversations with her always went in surprising directions.

We were enriched by the lives of these three incredible women. Many other active FSPP members are also no longer with us. Of whom do you have cherished memories?

Spy Pond Fishing Line Entanglements

By Laura Kiesel, Save Arlington Wildlife

PHOTO BY LAURA KIESEL



One example of the fishing line entanglements that Laura Kiesel, Save Arlington Wildlife, has removed near or in Arlington's ponds

In early June I cleaned up a significant amount of fishing line along both the shoreline by the main green at Spy Pond yesterday where the water table has receded, as well as cut off a bunch of line dangling down from tree entanglements to the tree to the immediate left of the wooden dock. There were several lines spiderwebbing down into the water. I watched as a mother mallard and her ducklings repeatedly criss-crossed through this and almost got caught up a couple of times. I couldn't leave it there knowing the imminent risk. I went home to get my waders and tools and got into the water. Unfortunately, some of it was too high up in the tree and entanglement too deep in the muck of the pond floor to remove completely. So, there still was quite a bit left in the muck and in the trees where they pose hazards to birds (the Eastern Screech owl last fall favored that exact tree). At least the immediate threats to the ducks and herons wading through that corridor was removed. In some cases there was a fishing line receptacle nearby. I asked Natasha Waden if DPW or Parks & Recreation could remove the remainder.

In another email later in June, I emailed Natasha saying I hope that Parks & Rec and the Tree Committee will understand the seriousness of these situations and consider pruning. However, I do want to also offer the disclaimer that pruning will have limited impact unless more is done to address the underlying behavior. In our experience, pruning often enables people to just cast their lines higher, so that entanglements then occur so high up, to the point where essentially a cherry picker or mechanized equipment would be required to remove it. Wildlife that get entangled on line that high also require something like that as well, such as the screech owl who was entangled at Spy Pond last fall. We've already seen the higher entanglements at Menotomy Rocks Park where one tree was dramatically pruned back.

Save Arlington Wildlife would like to see some signage at least discouraging folks from fishing behind the fenced barriers of SPP, and in general, encouraging them not to fish directly under or in close proximity tree overhang and vegetation to avoid entanglements. I hope this is something the Parks Commission can consider.

It is only a matter of time before an eagle, osprey or owl are killed by fishing line entanglement at one of our waterways. Some remediation must occur.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Summer is here and volunteers have been doing a great job of watering the new native plants and older plants that needed it, cleaning up Linwood Beach, picking up litter throughout the park, and clearing out or cutting back remaining invasive growth. It's fabulous that so many dedicated individuals follow the Stewardship Team's guidance to curb erosion along the shoreline of Spy Pond and Spy Pond Park. We couldn't do it without community support.

There are other individuals and groups who want to help during the week, but with the assistance of Wild Indigo Gardening this year, FSPP volunteers are limiting our work to one Saturday each month. Unless you have approval for each time you'd like to help independently, please do not walk in the planting beds or do any unsupervised work, except for picking up litter elsewhere in the park. There are certain goals we have set and welcome you to join us on our Work Days.

Those on our mailing lists should have received our Annual Solicitation letter in May. Thanks to Anna Doctor, FSPP Bulk Mailing Coordinator, for preparing the labels and setting up the mailing with USPS. Volunteers for "Helping Hands" from the Calvary Church, near SPP on the corner of Linwood St. and Mass. Ave., contributed their invaluable assistance in stuffing 475 envelopes.

FSPP is in good financial standing; we appreciate your contributions. If you have not donated yet this year, we encourage you to do so to help further the goals outlined in the FSPP Winter/Spring 2026 Newsletter.

I hope to see you in the park, especially on Fun Day or our Work Days.

Thanking you for your support,

Karen L. Grossman

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President

Friends of Spy Pond Park

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

Please Note Time Change

**Sunday, July 26, 2026
5:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,**

**&
Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026
5:00 p.m., 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.

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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

Remaining 2026 Work Days

By Lally Stowell

Below is a list of remaining We look forward to having many eager volunteers work with us this year. Contact Jenny Babon to volunteer at fsppvolunteer@gmail.com. For information about registering a group to help on a Work Day, please contact Lally Stowell at lallystowell@icloud.com.

FSPP 2026 Work Day Schedule

Aug. 22, 9-11 am (rain date Aug. 23, 1-3 pm)

Oct 3, 9-11 am (rain date Oct 4, 1-3 pm)

Oct. 24, 9-11 am (rain date Oct. 25, 1-3 pm) (tentative)

Sept. 26 Fun Day 10am-1pm (rain date Sept. 27, 1-4pm)

Fun Day involves children's activities in Spy Pond Park; it is not a scheduled Work Day.

** Liability waivers are required for all participants in these Work and Fun Day activities.*

If you are working, please download the form <https://friendsofspypondpark.org/pdf/liability-waiver.pdf> from the FSPP website, fill it out and bring it with you or send them to Jenny Babon. Children below 18 years of age must have parental signature to participate in Spy Pond Park Work & Fun Days.



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Ducklings swim from Linwood Circle to the overlook deck

New Arlington Initiative: Amp Up!

Town of Arlington has adopted "Amp Up!", a town-wide comprehensive plan that includes "enhancing green spaces, tree canopy, parks and native species"

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/Home/Components/News/News/16002/2651>