

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2026

A Score for Spy Pond Park

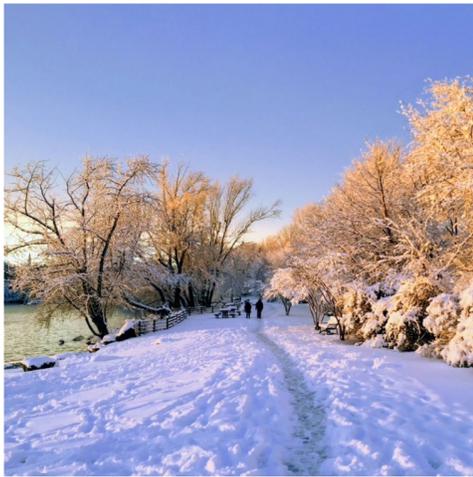
by Jenny Babon

This year in spring marks twenty years since Spy Pond Park reopened after a significant shoreline restoration project completed in 2006. The renovation stabilized 1,700 feet of eroded shoreline, enhanced ecological health, and improved recreational access by integrating resilient plantings, paths, and open spaces.

Spearheaded by the Town of Arlington and supported by the Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP), the project balanced environmental needs with community use. The landscape design by architect Carol R. Johnson and Associates featured paths, plantings, and open areas that were carefully integrated to preserve views of the pond while strengthening the shoreline.

Ongoing maintenance—including further erosion control in 2019 and playground upgrades in 2022—has kept the park healthy and accessible. These efforts demonstrate that successful public parks require thoughtful planning and consistent stewardship that has continued throughout the twenty years that have followed the park restoration.

PHOTOS BY JENNY BABON

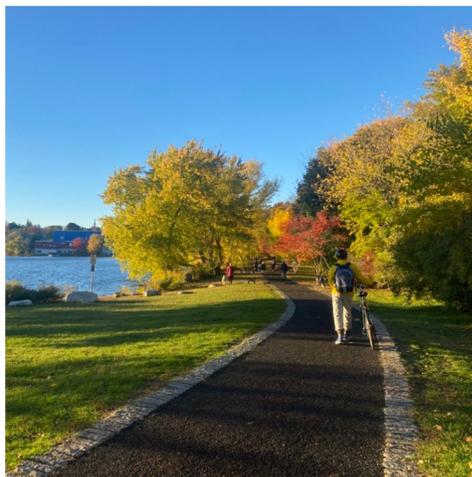


Four seasons in Spy Pond Park

FSPP 2026 Saturday Work Days

By Lally Stowell

The FSPP monthly Saturday Work Days begin on May 16 and will continue through October 24. We encourage all who enjoy Spy Pond Park to come and join our efforts to maintain and preserve this unique spot for the many families and visitors



who come from all over throughout the year. We need your help pulling weeds and invasive plants, removing fallen branches, assisting with new plantings, clearing the beaches and playground, and picking up trash. Our Work Days are scheduled for two hours, but any amount of time is greatly appreciated. A lot can be accomplished, even in a short amount of time. This is an opportunity to meet and work side by side with others who love the park and enjoy helping to keep it looking beautiful. It is also an opportunity to learn more about native and invasive plants.

For each monthly Work Day, members of the Stewardship Team will be available to assign tasks, work together with volunteers, answer questions and welcome suggestions. All workers must let us know of their interest and bring a signed liability form (parents must sign for under-18yr. olds). *See waiver information below. We have a limited supply of tools so If you have gloves and/or clippers, they would be greatly appreciated. Please bring water, also.

(continued on page 3)

Spy Pond Garden (Shoreline) Improvements

By David Morgan, as recorded by Christopher Wilson

PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA



David Morgan gave a PowerPoint explaining all the flowering shrubs that will be planted in in SPP planting beds in 2026

FSPP 2025/26 Annual Meeting

You can see photos and descriptions of each of the suggested plantings mentioned below for the Spy Pond Park shoreline beds in David Morgan's presentation. Click here for the

link to the presentation <https://www.canva.com/design/DAG-DYPpyYE/U5RXdtmd68ujSse1IGm3ig/edit>

Garden improvements for 2026:

- Improved staffing at Conservation Commission
- Rain garden contract
- Still seeing a lot of the invasives, but a few species seem to be gone.
- 2018 shoreline project for erosion control has been successful.
- Trees shade the beds, but no irrigation is available.

Suggestions for the beds:

- Bed 1: Red Dogwood and Winterberry (spread readily and control erosion, also fruit for birds)
- Beds 3 & 4: Virginia Sweetspire and Black-eyed Susan (native varietal, not the cultivar)
- (Alt: Nanny berry, Lo-grow sumac, Black chokeberry)
- Beds 4&5: Switchgrass at edges to keep people out of the beds, Summersweet
- Beds 6&7: Arrowwood Viburnum and Buttonbush, maybe Cranberry
- Bed 8 (near picnic area/parking lot): Creeping Juniper, Rhus aromatica "Gro-lo" (Fragrant sumac)

FSPP Goals for 2026 and Standing Goals

- Monitor and influence as much as we can the Park Director and Recreation and Conservation Commissions' efforts re: shoreline rehab, path improvement, and tot lot play area in our best interests.
- Coordinate with Hardy School 4th grade re: a unit for study of the Spy Pond Park environment and field day in SPP involving parents, the DPW, and Charlotte Milan from Arlington Recycle – this was done in 2018 and will be investigated for 2027.
- Determine the need for alternatives for handling litter/trash/discarded fishing line and investigate what other towns do.
- Integrate the General Vice-President into doing some Presidential tasks, as needed, whenever possible.
- Monitor the Town's approving signage with QR codes linked to our website describing the purpose of SPP rain gardens and identifying the plants in them with info from the maintenance contractor, A Yard & A Half <https://ayardandahalf.com>.
- Monitor the Town's pursuing funding for permanent fencing for the ends of the planting beds along the shoreline.
- Explore additional art for the park and investigate what is being done in other parks – investigate themes with connections to Arlington history and indigenous peoples.
- Identify and award 1-2 worthy citizens for outstanding service to the FSPP.



PHOTO BY STROKER ROCOVIN

The Spy Pond Tusk: A 46,000-Year-Old mystery

Tuesday, March 31 @ 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Arlington Historical Society, 7 Jason Street, Arlington, MA

George Parsons, Arlington Historical Society (AHS) Vice-President and project researcher, will delve into the comprehensive research project on the infamous Spy Pond tusk. For decades, this enormous fossil, discovered right here in our town, has captivated imaginations and fueled local legends. How did an ancient piece of megafauna end up nestled in the muddy bottom of Spy Pond? Find out on March 31. AHS members: free | Non-Members: \$10 Registration at door.

Work Days 2026

(continued from page 1)

Below is a list of Work and Fun Days for 2026. They will be held on the Saturday mornings listed below from 9-11am. We encourage you to come as often as possible for whatever length of time you can give. We also hope you will encourage your friends, family, members of your community groups and colleagues at work to participate. High school students can earn community service credits. We look forward to having many eager volunteers work with us this year. Contact Jenny Babon to volunteer at fsppvolutner@gmail.com. For information about registering a group to help on a Work Day, please contact Lally Stowell at lallystowell@icloud.com.

FSPF 2026 Work Day Schedule

May 16, 9-11 am (rain date May 17, 1-3 pm)

June 13, 9-11 am (rain date June 14, 1-3 pm)

July 11, 9-11 am (rain date July 12, 1-3 pm)

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://friendsof-spypondpark.org/pdf/liability-waiver.pdf> from the FSPF 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.

President's Letter

Hello Friends,

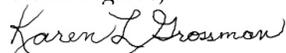
Thanks to the Mystic River Watershed Association for hosting us at their offices on Maple Street where we held the FSPF 2026 Annual Meeting once again on January 11. It was a big success, with our speaker, David Morgan, Arlington Environmental Planner/Conservation Agent presenting "Spy Pond Park Garden Improvements 2026". Our Treasurer, Sandip Agarwal, reported FSPF finances are in good shape. Soon we will send out our annual solicitation for dues and donations (in May). You will be able to view the January meeting's minutes after approval at the meeting on March 8. They will be posted on our website along with other minutes and newsletters since 2006 when we began our online presence.

As I am composing this letter to you, I can hear the rumble of a snowplow moving the February snow that is accumulating. It's the second snowfall since the major one of 23" in the area in January. And it's been colder than usual, getting below 0° F for several days! Spy Pond has been frozen over for a couple of weeks and human activity abounds on the surface ice. Wildlife, too, survives above, but hardy species such as fish, turtles travel through the cold waters below. Snow covers the park and visitors venture out to explore the wonderland. New England has been spared these conditions for some years and many rejoice in their return!

Even so, we prepare for warmer days to come and the arrival of spring. We look forward to collaborating with a contractor who will do work in SPP planting beds. We also hope to create information on our website about the SPP rain gardens, detailing their purpose and what is planted in each. This year, A Yard & a Half Landscaping Collaborative <https://ayardandahalf.com> will be maintaining all Arlington's rain gardens, so they could help us with that goal. There will be work in the shoreline planting beds and the rain gardens as the year progresses, the perennials sprout and flowers bloom.

We anticipate the park's transformation from the winter starkness to warm-weather beauty will please us all with many surprises! We hope those able to join us on our Work Days will come to assist the Stewardship Team as the snow covered park comes back to observable life. Or you can come just to stop by our outreach table on Work Days. We'll have t-shirts with our colorful logo in all sizes from which you can choose one that fits.

Warm regards,



Karen L. Grossman, President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Stewardship Team Report

By Adrienne Landry

The big news for 2026 is that we will have a new landscaper to help us with purchasing and planting of 12-14 new shrubs in the beds at Spy Pond Park. The new landscaper has yet to be determined definitely.

We aim to continue in the direction we have taken over the last six years of eradicating invasive plants and replacing them with native plants as well as securing the shoreline from further erosion. Ultimately, we aim to restore a more robust ecosystem after years—and in some cases decades—of encroachment by non-native, invasive plants.

Stewardship Team member, Adrienne Landry, visited a Girl Scout troop to talk about what we do regarding invasive plants and native plants and why we do it. She used actual clippings and slides from the invasive plants as evidence.

Another highlight for Spring, 2026, is the promise of flowering pollinator plants which were seeded in the fall by a new member of our Team, Christopher Wilson. He gathered seeds from a pollinator garden at his workplace, mixed them into soil from the beds at the Park, and spread them throughout the Park beds where he had gathered the soil. We look forward to seeing what comes up!



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE LANDRY

Christopher Wilson spent a weekend in November seeding new species of flowering plants conducive to the Spy Pond Park environment



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER WILSON

Some seeds came from the Tufts Pollinator Initiative gardens



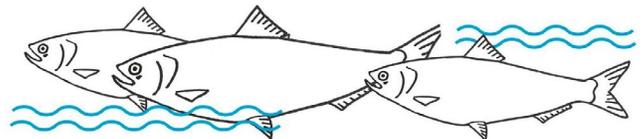
PHOTO BY VANESSA PORTER-REAUJEU

Adrienne Landry with Girl Scout Daisy Troop #63201

GO FISH Painting Workshops

Want to plan a fun painting day for your friends, family, or coworkers? Host a FREE fish painting workshop for GO FISH! – the Mystic River Herring Mural project!

We're excited to partner with ArtsArlington on a fun public art project to celebrate our favorite fish—river herring! We're looking for groups interested in hosting a GO FISH! Painting Workshop to help us get to 1,000 painted fish. All ages and experience levels welcome—you bring the people and we bring the fish and painting supplies! Email Cecily Miller at cecily.apa@gmail.com with questions and to sign up.



Host a free fish painting workshop for GO FISH! – the Mystic River Herring Mural

This Spring, 2026, participate in ArtsArlington's public art project celebrating valiant fish, a healthy ecosystem, clean water, and Arlington's vibrant community!



Every year, a major animal migration moves through the heart of Greater Boston, invisible to most people. More than 500,000 river herring from the Atlantic Ocean return to the Mystic River, where they were born.

In the past few years, something remarkable has happened. The population of river herring that spawn in the Mystic River has more than tripled. From 200,000 in 2012, to 640,000 in 2024!

– Mystic River Watershed Association

How was this amazing recovery achieved? Our project partner, the Mystic River Watershed Association, can share the story of this success and what you can do now at a GO FISH! painting workshop!

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!
All ages and experience levels. YOU bring the people! WE bring the fish and the paint!
Imagination & creativity does the rest!



SIGN UP & QUESTIONS: Cecily Miller, ArtsArlington
cecily.apa@gmail.com • 617-331-1715 • www.ArtsArlington.org

It's Glorious Out on the Ice!

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

When Spy Pond freezes solid, people head out to experience that winter fairyland.

There are skaters and hockey players, cross-country skiers, hikers and dog walkers, people pulling kids on sleds, people ice-fishing—and occasionally an ice sailboat.

Elizabeth Island's silhouette shows through the bare trees. Tromping around on the island, everything looks so different than in summer.

The sky seems bigger without the leafy trees. Hawks, eagles and gulls fly overhead. The bare trees look like lace against bright blue sky.

I feel so blessed anytime I have free time on a sunny day after a cold snap and can walk or skate or ski on the beautiful vast expanses of the pond.



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Preparing for Olympic competition



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

The moment the dog stole the puck



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Better keep moving on Spy Pond ice in the cold

But isn't it dangerous?

Yes, it is.

People have fallen through the ice.

So, choose your moment and your mode carefully:

- Don't go out unless the temperature has been far below freezing for a week or more.
- Don't go alone. Don't let kids or dogs go out alone.
- Don't go out after dark.
- Avoid thin spots and holes left by past ice-fishing.
- Carry something long, like ski poles or a broom to catch you if you fall or break through.
- If you're careful in all those ways, you can safely enjoy the Spy Pond ice.

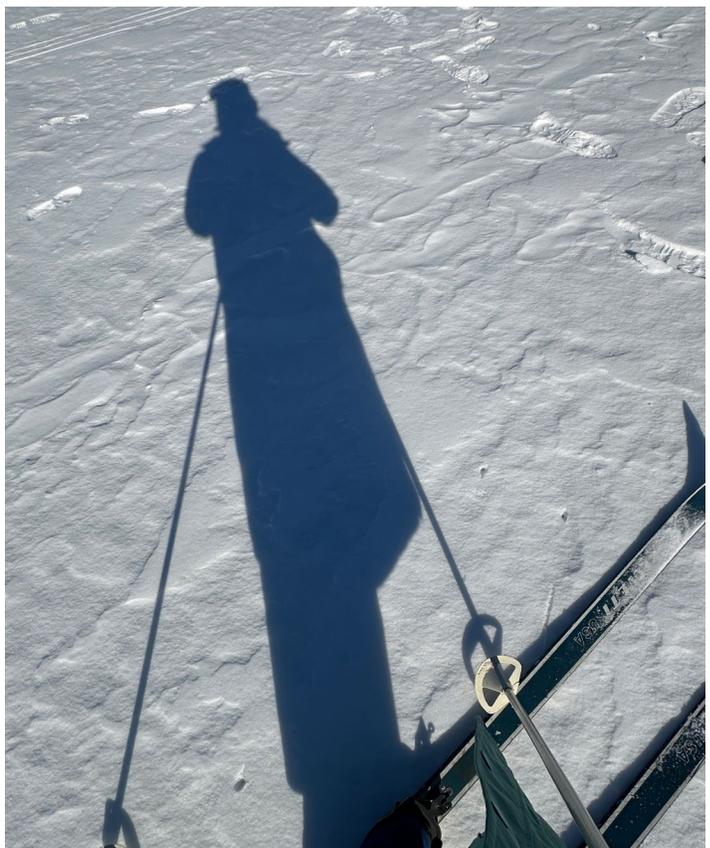


PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

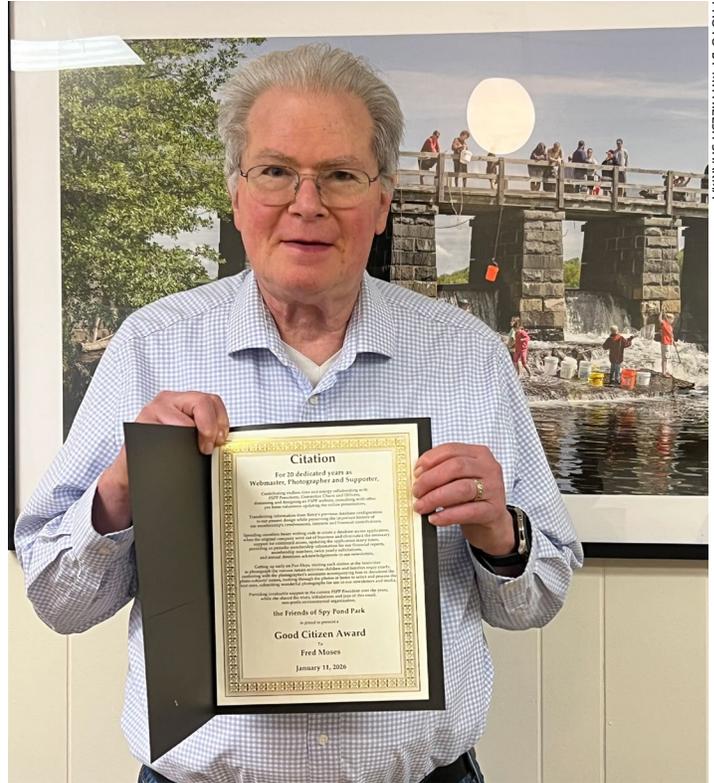
I carried ski poles

PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA



FSPF presented our Certificate of Appreciation to Maya Chakrabarty in recognition of her hard work, commitment to community service and participation in five FSPF Work Days in 2025

PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA



At FSPF's Annual Meeting Fred Moses received FSPF's Good Citizen Award for 20 years as Webmaster, Photographer, and Supporter

PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA



Christopher Wilson received our Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of his hard work, commitment to community service, and participation in four FSPF Work Days in 2025

Citation

**For 20 dedicated years as
Webmaster, Photographer and Supporter,**

Contributing endless time and energy collaborating with
FSPF Presidents, Committee Chairs and Officers,
discussing and designing an FSPF website, consulting with other
pro bono volunteers updating the online presentation,

Transferring information from Betsy's previous database configuration
to our present design while preserving the important history of
our membership's involvements, interests and financial contributions,

Spending countless hours writing code to create a database access application,
when the original company went out of business and eliminated the necessary
support for continued access, updating the application many times,
providing us periodic membership information for our financial reports,
membership numbers, twice yearly solicitations,
and annual donations acknowledgements in our newsletters,

Getting up early on Fun Days, visiting each station at the festivities
to photograph the various nature activities children and families enjoy yearly,
conferring with the photographer's assistants accompanying him to document the
photo subjects' names, looking through the photos at home to select and process the
best ones, submitting wonderful photographs for use in our newsletters and media,

Providing invaluable support to the current FSPF President over the years,
while she shared the trials, tribulations and joys of this small,
non-profit environmental organization,

the Friends of Spy Pond Park
is proud to present a

Good Citizen Award
To
Fred Moses
January 11, 2026

PHOTO BY DIANA MAGGINI



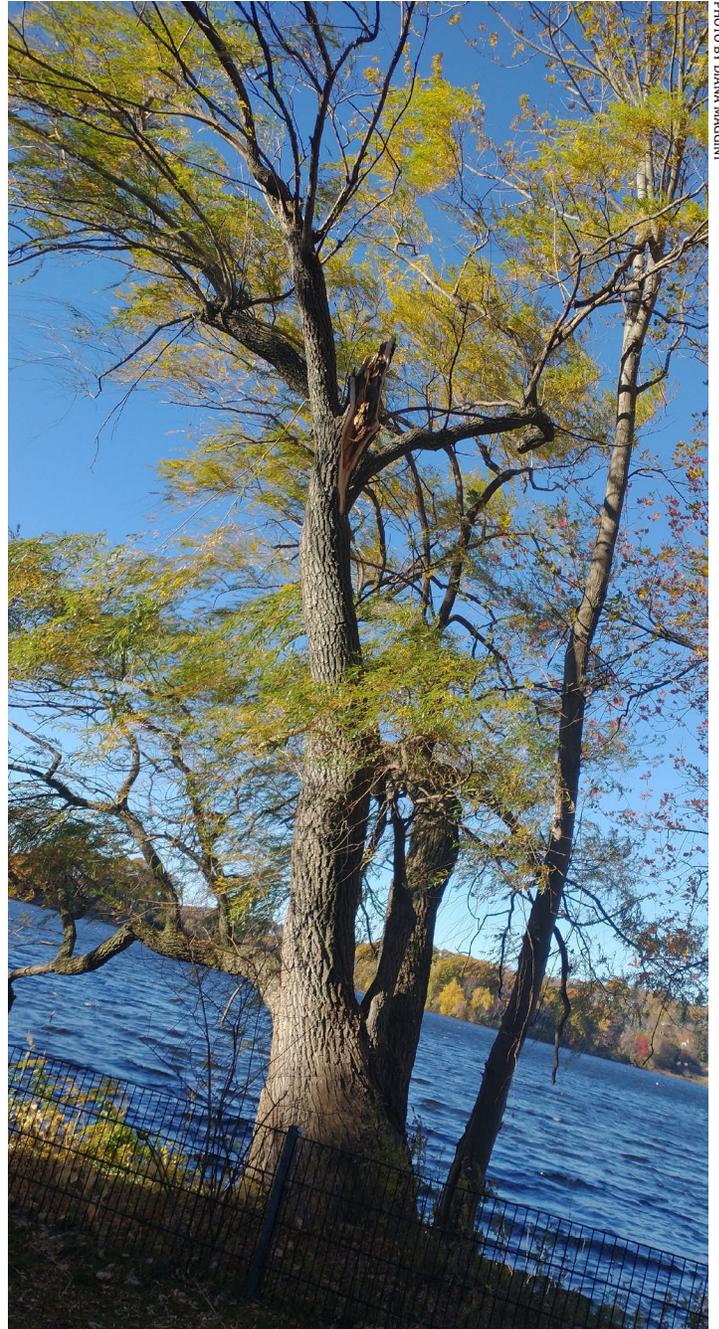
This poor willow branch came crashing down on a very windy November 2 and removed shortly thereafter, a great loss to the old tree from which it was separated and to the park.

PHOTO BY DIANA MAGGINI



The Department of Public Works cut up the downed branch and fed the pieces into their wood chopper after the gale windstorm

PHOTO BY DIANA MAGGINI



The tree is still massive and stately in the SPP planting bed

Correction

In the Fall/Winter 2025 Newsletter, the caption to the top photo on page 2 in the 2nd column, Maggie Carey was misidentified as Maya Apfelbaum. The caption should have read “Maggie Carey guided the children as they solved the puzzles.”

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

Please Note Time Change

**Sunday, March 8, 2026
5:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,**

**&
Sunday, May 24, 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.

- President: Karen L. Grossman (781) 646-5990
- General Vice President: Arnav Gupta (484) 707-1176
- Treasurer: Sandip Agarwal sandip.fspp@gmail.com
- 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
- Communication, Outreach and Publicity Committee:
 - Anne Ellinger (781) 646-1705
 - 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:
 - Sharon Green
 - Adrienne Landry
 - Diana Maggini (337)-704-1873
 - Lally Stowell (781) 777-2759
 - Christopher Wilson (617) 784-9449
- 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

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

We recognize those who have made contributions to the FSPP in 2025. This money enables us to pursue our mission of supporting the preservation, enhancement, and enjoyment of Spy Pond Park and Spy Pond as natural and community resources. We extend sincere thanks for the generosity and commitment of the 112 individuals, households, and foundations involved in this effort.

2025 Donations

\$1,000

Vivien Gattie
Julie Anne Meadows

\$500

Rob Kanzer

\$400-\$450

Anonymous
Brad Barber

\$300

Lt Eric Hall Anderson
Maria Cook
Jess Leber
Katherine Shields

\$200-\$250

Katherine Conn
John Lemly &
Cathy Melhorn
Paul Lipsky
Shawn Szturma

\$100-\$199

Jenny Babon
Sue Bass
Carolyn Boettner
Robert & Elaine Bowes
Nancy Brown
Roger Dempsey &
Linda Chase
Lisa Fredman
Sharon Green
Judith Grisham
Fred Moses &
Karen Grossman
Dave & Lauren Kopans
Ellen V. Robertson
Wendy Rundle
Donald & Barbara Vitters

\$50-\$80

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Mimi & Kevin Barbera
Leslie Bennett
Susanne Schuster & Colin
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Lionel Fergus &
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Judy & Patrick Hanlon
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Betsy & Gail
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Diana Maggini
Margaret Marks
Kathy & Glenn Murphy
Megan Chrisman &
Christopher Semisch
Emily Snyder
Alicia Russell &
David Stipp

Willa & Lynn Taber
Ingodwe Trust

\$25-\$40

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Richard Rubinstein
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Martin Schrage
Mithilesh Sharma
Susan D Stamps
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\$5-\$15

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