



Friends of Gulf Branch Nature Center **2012 Annual Report**

Friends of Gulf Branch Nature Center came of age this past year. Financial support of GBNC for weekend hours is no longer necessary as Arlington County is again providing funding. County funding resumed July 1, 2012 with the start of the new fiscal year. Our last quarterly payment, \$1,810, was made in June.

Two dedicated naturalists supervise GBNC programs and events in natural and cultural history as well as organizing work parties to remove invasive plants and promote trail maintenance. Additional staff would be a blessing but are not provided for in Arlington County's budget plans.

FOGBNC again participated in a number of special programs during the calendar year 2012 through both financial and volunteer support. While general operating expenses increased modestly last year, current reserves together with anticipated revenues should provide sufficiently for activities.

Accomplishments during 2012

- Weekend birthday parties remain available for kids ages 3 and up, a 2 hour party with a 30 minute presentation by a naturalist. Parties will take place on Saturdays only in 2013.
- GBNC was provided with several amenities during the year including stack baskets to hold t-shirts and a sidewalk sign with letters helping to promote ongoing activities.
- Communications with members was enhanced with the initiation of a quarterly newsletter.
- A FOGBNC member's reception on March 10, 2012, recognized the new resident of the owl house. During the reception we planted a dogwood tree in memory of Mr. Tom Richards, in the company of his family. Mr. Richards provided the incentive leading to the establishment of GBNC in 1966. Our resident owl continues to survey the nature center from her outdoor home.
- We sponsored GBNC's 46th birthday party in June. The Robert Walker Cabin and Blacksmith's Forge were open for the party. Music was provided by the New Old Time String Band. In addition to crafts opportunities and face painting, roving naturalists helped our guests learn more about trees, frogs, insects, snakes, rocks and turtles. Everyone enjoyed the birthday cake. Attendance at the party was the highest since the celebrations began in 2009.
- Pioneer Day, also known as the Fall Heritage Festival, was held October 13 and included support from FOGBNC volunteers. Pioneer Day is a popular annual event enjoyed by the Arlington community. Widespread publicity and community outreach helped bring the number of attendees to record levels.
- A Volunteers Appreciation Coffee was held November 10 to recognize our most important asset, volunteers helping with birthday parties and GBNC activities.
- FOGBNC volunteers were again present in December to assist Santa's visits. Three days was not enough for the local community with Santa fully booked and sizeable wait lists.
- Toby Hayman and Marlene Risney were appointed to the Board of Directors during the year. Tricia Meeks Schnell, Larry Finch and Lillian Prins are not continuing as board members in 2013. Other directors were reelected at

the December 2012. The only change in officers is Heather Willis as Vice President. D & O Liability insurance was obtained in support of directors.

Plans for 2013

- Updating the Native American Heritage Exhibit was delayed in 2012; however, we expect to have a plan in place next spring. Improving the exhibit will be our primary focus in 2013.
- Heather Willis assumed responsibility for coordinating birthday parties in February 2012 and was succeeded by Marlene Risney in September.
- Long Term Planning Committee – The Board appointed a Long Term Planning Committee in October. Board Members Burt Bostwick and Heather Willis will serve on the committee assisted by Park Naturalist Jennifer Soles. Other members will come from neighborhood civic associations.
- The Board plans to expand its outreach to neighboring civic associations in the coming year. Efforts will be focused on strategic planning with the long term planning committee developing a plan for programs and activities for the next five years.

Our fundamental purpose is to enhance, through public and private sector resources, support for Gulf Branch Nature Center. We will continue to work with Arlington County to assure nature center hours and programs are adequate to meet public needs and that programming supports and complements the Natural Resources Management Plan adopted in November 2010.

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