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FRIENDS OF ROYAL LAKE

NEWSLETTER



Photo by John Gratz

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DONATION OF TREES AT LAKESIDE PARK: How did this come to pass?

by Sarah Lennon

In late November last year, some new additions came to Lakeside Park – 12 new trees, all native species: river birch, black gum, and Eastern redbud! I hope you've had the opportunity to enjoy them. Perhaps you've wondered how they came to be there, seemingly out of the blue. Well, it's a long story...

During the course of 2019, Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) leadership visited several other communities that border Royal Lake to try to garner more FORL

(Con't, Lennon)

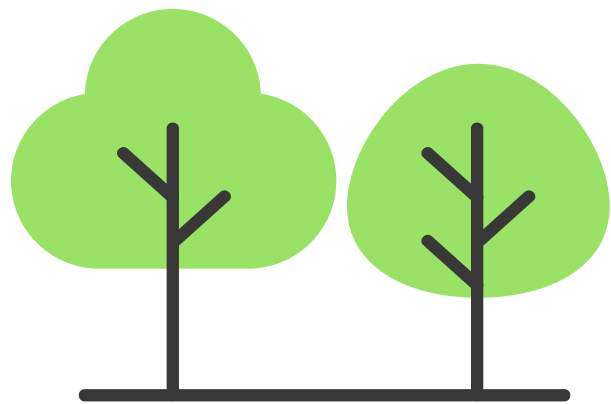
(Lennon, Con't)

members and interest in the work we are doing to protect and preserve the lake and surrounding parkland. One such meeting was the HOA meeting for New Lakepointe in March. At that community meeting, New Lakepointe resident Michael Schindler heard the discussion. He introduced himself to us with his proposal that the company he works for, Balfour Beatty US, volunteer as part of its community service program.

Balfour Beatty US (BB) is an industry-leading provider in the United States of general contracting, at-risk construction management and design-build services for public and private sector clients across the nation. BB has a program called Balfour Beatty Spirit, in which BB employees give back to the local community and volunteer their time.

Michael received a Bachelor in Civil and Infrastructure Engineering from George Mason University (GMU) in 2018. At GMU, he was very active with student organization Engineers for International Development (EFID) and travelled to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua to build a water supply for a local orphanage. While at GMU, he worked at the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and established a connection with the Urban Forest Management Division (UFMD). Michael offered to act as middle-man and reach out to UFMD.

UFMD's core responsibilities deal primarily with land development, reviewing rezoning cases and development plans and working with site inspectors after projects begin construction. Additional important services include education and outreach to raise awareness of and encourage conservation of the county's urban



forest. Tree canopy loss to development is one of the main stressors impacting the urban forest. Continuing to plant new trees is necessary to maintain the county's percentage (about 55 percent) of land area currently under tree cover.

The UFMD administers the county's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and coordinates tree planting at public schools, parks, and other county properties. Volunteers have been an integral part of this tree planting program.

Firms and organizations like Balfour Beatty, EFID, and FORL are valuable contributors that can be relied upon to implement tree planting projects.

(Trees, Con't)

The trees were paid for through Fairfax County's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund. The UFMD coordinated the species selection with Fairfax County Park Authority to ensure that the trees selected were appropriate for the venue. On November 23rd, with the labor provided by volunteers from the KPW community, FORL, Balfour Beatty, and George Mason student members of GMU Engineers for International Development, the trees became permanent residents of Lakeside Park. They will contribute to the quality of the environment and, as they grow, provide welcome shade in the hot sunny months as visitors use the park.

If you have questions or comments, contact Sarah Lennon at sarahjlennon@gmail.com or parks@kpwca.org. See you at the parks!

ANOTHER LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT IN LAKESIDE PARK

by Paul Gross

Have you noticed the landscaping changes at Lakeside Park? In addition to the new native trees planted between the baseball field and the basketball court, the juniper bushes next to the soccer field are being removed.

What brought about the planting of the trees and the removal of the junipers? Several years ago, FORL developed a "Royal Lake Vision Plan" and a companion document "Royal Lake Proposed Upgrades and Enhancements" which is a list of proposed capital and mainten-



ance improvements to the Royal Lake parks. These documents were developed with input from the FORL community. The upgrades and enhancement list is modified on a periodic basis and presented at the FORL community meetings. Both the tree planting and junipers' removal have been on the list for a long time.

The planting of new trees is described in detail in the previous article written by Sarah Lennon who was the FORL lead on this project, an excellent example of various members of the community coming together to make a difference.

(Junipers, con't)



Why were the junipers on the list for removal? Many in the community expressed an interest in removing the junipers for a variety of reasons. These bushes, a series of small, individual plants, were planted near the soccer field for landscaping purposes 30+ years ago. My personal recollection is that they were an attractive addition 30 years ago. As time passed, the junipers grew to a huge size and were intertwined with a number of non-native plant species and poison ivy (which is a native species). The Park Authority informed us that with the

the number of parks it oversees and its limited staff, they cannot do the kind of landscaping that we do at home. These junipers were way past normal landscaping. The input from the community was in favor of removing the junipers.

The jumper removal was a major task beyond our volunteer effort capability. We want to thank Walter Wesley, Acting Area 4 Maintenance Manager, for his leadership and the Park Authority maintenance staff for all their efforts in achieving one of our long-standing maintenance goals.

Questions? Comments?

Contact Paul Gross at friendsofroyallake@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MLK DAY OF COMMUNITY SERVICE: 1/20/20 begins at 9 am. Meet at (?) to help clean up Rabbit Branch Park.

FORL COMMUNITY MEETING: 1/23/20; 7pm at Laurel Ridge Elementary School, CSS Multipurpose Room . Please come! FORL needs your help!

TRAIL MAINTENANCE WORK DAY: 3/21/20, 9 am to noon. We can use all the help we can get, so please join us even if only for part of that time. If you can, bring shovels, rakes, tampers, and wheelbarrows. Hope to see you there!

ROAD RAIDERS meets every second Saturday of the month. For details, contact Tom McCook at trmccook@gmail.com.

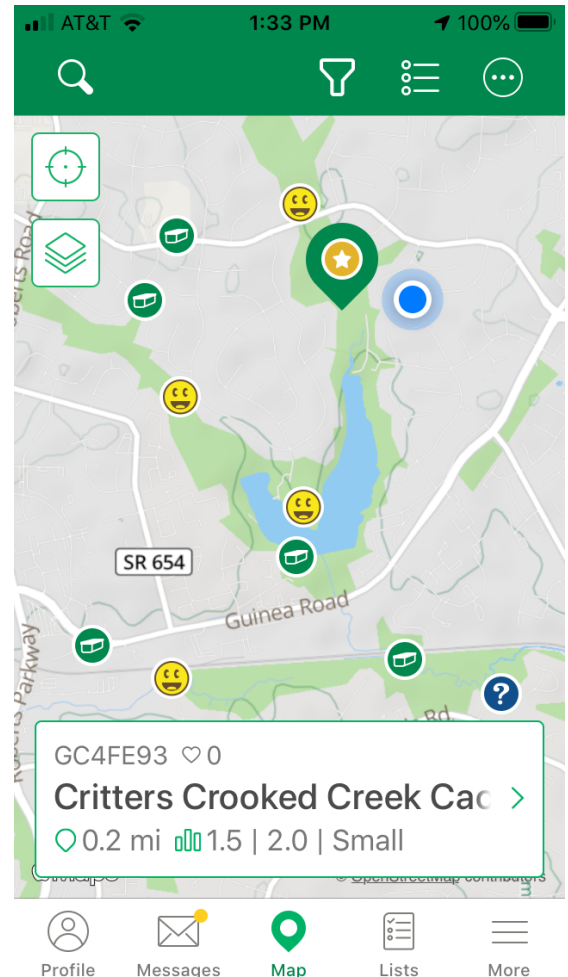
GEOCACHING: Technology in the Park

by Janet O'Lare

I challenge you to find someone who is in the park without a phone! Did you know, however, that your phone can enhance your park experience beyond listening to music while you run or to an audiobook while you get in your steps? There are apps available that can add to your experience and make it more goal oriented.

One popular app is called Geocaching, also referred to as “stash hunting.” Geocaching is a game in which players are given the geographical coordinates of a cache of items which they search for with a GPS device. It was first played in Beavercreek, Oregon in May, 2000. Geocaching began when the technology that supported GPS (Global Positioning System) improved to allow for a small container to be specifically placed and located. My family and I started playing in 2011 and to date have found 150 caches.

The Geocaching website describes the activity as an “any day, any time adventure that can take you to amazing and beautiful places,” such as our wonderful Royal Lake parks. You can either use your phone or a GPS device.



Go to www.geocaching.com to create your free Geocaching account, download the app, and you're ready to go. With the app open on your phone, choose a geocache you'd like to navigate to from a map. What you're looking for varies in size and difficulty. The app gives other information, such as how far away the cache is, the last time it was found, a brief description of content. Some caches have small items in them that you can trade for an item you've brought with you (kids really like this part). For some caches, all you can do is sign the log book (bring a pencil). You also log your find on the app or online. It's a great activity to do with school aged children. Due to its connection to orienteering, this activity is very popular with scouting.

(Geocaching, Cont'd)

There are currently six geocaches around Royal Lake alone. I myself have hidden a geocache called “Critters Crooked Creek Cache” (star on the screenshot on previous page). Let me know if you find it!

There are three steps to hiding your own cache for others to find. First, you need to inform yourself about geocaching policies and procedures in order to pass a quiz posted on the website.

Step 2 is to hide a cache that would include a logbook and items for trading and stored in some sort of waterproof container. A container might be an ammo box, an air-tight plastic box, or it could look like a rock or a log. I once found one that was a bird decoy.



A summertime "find"

The 3rd step is submitting the information about your cache to the website for review to ensure that it meets the guidelines and regional policies. Once approved, it will show up on the app. It took about a week for my cache to be approved and somebody found it that very morning! A first time find is kind of a big deal in the Geocaching community.

Although the map coordinates get you close (usually with about 15-20 feet) you need to use your senses to

find the actual container. Sometimes you can get hints from the cache owner or by reading the log of previous finds. The geocache might be hidden under a log, in the hollow of a tree or even up in a tree. It can be done any time of year including on mild winter days.

In addition to the satisfaction of bagging a cache, the geocache website awards you with additional virtual souvenirs that can be displayed on your profile. They may denote the state where you've found a cache, a milestone you or the community has reached, or tie into an event put together by the Geocaching community volunteers.

For more information on Geocaching, please check out their website at www.geocaching.com or Facebook, www.facebook.com/geocaching/

AN ECHO ACROSS THE MILLENIA

by Suzanne Doherty

When we walk the trails throughout our park system, can we imagine others that may have created trails through our woods many millennia ago? In fact, technicians conducting the survey of Shanes Creek in preparation for its upcoming restoration (described in the Fall 2019 issue) found evidence of ancient stone making tools in the creek bed. The implication is that the land under and around our lake was once at least a wayfare for ancient peoples. Who might these people have been?

European explorers arriving in Virginia in the 1600's were likely greeted by native people whose ancestors had inhabited the land for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence of Paleo-Indian culture in North America was found in Clovis, NM, where stone "points" dating from more than 11,000 years ago were uncovered. "Clovis" became the term by which this prehistoric culture is known.

There are several Clovis archaeological sites identified in Virginia. These ancient people lived in migrating bands that moved with the seasons to hunt and forage. By 4000 BC, they had mastered life in the Eastern woodlands and had begun to alter their environment to pave the way to a more settled existence. By 2000 BC, tens of thousands of people were living in what would be Virginia. In the quest for food and raw materials, they ventured into every part of this area. They began to organize themselves into small hamlets, social groups that took on simple tribal identity and eventually grew into vibrant communities.

The terrain of Northern Virginia looks very different from that of its first inhabitants. Brick and mortar homes replace their temporary shelters, paved roads obliterate ancient trails, and the forests are largely gone. But the small piece of preserved space that is Royal Lake and its parks connects us to the history of the land that sustained the earliest cultures. The ancient remnants found in our creek bed is an echo across the millennia to remind us that we are a thread in a much bigger tapestry. Reverence for our parks' environment is to honor those who may have cherished it before and continue the legacy for those who will walk the trails generations from now.



Photo by John Gratz



Photos by Lynn Cline



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