



Autumn  
2024

Vol.6, No.4

# NEWSLETTER

## A SPOOKTACULAR...



Halloween Festival at Lakeside Park drew kids and parents into a **FANTASTICALLY** fun afternoon. (See more on page 5)

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-  Little League Softball comes to Lakeside Park
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## Community Meeting Offers Details for Royal Lake Parks' Trail Improvements

By Paul Gross

On October 30, 2024, Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) held a community wide meeting to discuss the trail and park improvements funded by the \$1.35 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and developer proffer money. The Fairfax County Park Authority trail project managers Tom McFarland and Beth Iannetta reported on the status of the projects with projected timelines for completion. A copy of their presentation with detailed drawings can be viewed at [www.friendsofroyallake.com](http://www.friendsofroyallake.com).

The trail improvement projects are:

**Trail connecting Commonwealth Blvd to Royal Lake Circuit Trail.** This project will establish an 1800 foot by 6-foot-wide paved trail from the Royal Lake Circuit Trail to Commonwealth Blvd. The Commonwealth entrance will be near DeQuincey Drive.

The **Lakepointe Community entrance** from the top of the dam to the Circuit Trail will be paved with approximately 200 feet of 6-foot wide asphalt.



Current deteriorating hillside

Cont'd, p.3

# Lakeside Park Hosts Fairfax Little League Softball!

By Lori Speidell

Fairfax Little League first established roots in Kings Park West during its eighteenth season of 1972-1973 when the County granted the league land for two playing fields. One of these fields is dedicated to the memory of Steve Cox and David Spiegler, who lost their lives to leukemia. More than 50 years later, Fairfax Little League players can still be seen practicing and playing games at **The Spiegler - Cox Ballfield at Lakeside Park**, enjoying the view of Royal Lake while making lifelong friends and memories on the diamond. In its inaugural season this fall, Fairfax Little League **Softball** joined this community tradition!

Until now, no Little League Softball program existed to serve residents of Kings Park West, or anyone else within Fairfax Little League boundaries. The successful launch of Little League Softball has filled this need, making Fairfax Little League's programs more inclusive and accessible to the children of our community. Fairfax Little League is partnering with Annandale-North Springfield Little League to offer Little League Softball for girls ages 7-12 (born January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2012) who live or go to school within the boundaries of Fairfax Little League or Annandale-North Springfield Little League.

Following a successful first season consisting of 56 players and 5 teams, Fairfax Little League will be expanding for the Spring 2025 season by offering three levels of play: Minors (AA & AAA) for girls ages 7-11 as well as Majors for ages 10-12. It is our hope that the Fairfax Little League Softball program will continue to grow in the coming years to include other levels of play in the same way our baseball programs have grown over the past 68 years.



Players enjoying weeknight practice

😊 **Registration** for the Spring 2025 Fairfax Little League Baseball & Softball seasons opens in **November**. Please visit <https://www.fairfaxll.org/> for registration details.

Further reflecting our commitment to inclusion and accessibility, financial assistance is available to ensure a child's ability to play is not determined by ability to pay. Information on financial assistance can be found at: <https://www.fairfaxll.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1004024>

If you have additional questions regarding Fairfax Little League's Softball program, please email [softball@fairfaxll.org](mailto:softball@fairfaxll.org)

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## FORL Team Members Attend Habitat Restoration Symposium

By Suzanne Doherty

**FORL** team members Mary Boyer and Suzanne Doherty attended the recent Habitat Restoration and Expansion Symposium at the National Wildlife Center. The event brought together numerous organizations from around Northern Virginia each of which works toward preserving and restoring our area's natural habitats.

Sponsored by the **Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (NVBA)**, the Symposium offered an opportunity for representatives from various organizations to share experiences, ideas, and concerns related to the challenge of habitat preservation and restoration.

The **Fairfax County Park Authority's Invasive Management Area (IMA)** program, with which FORL members have been very active, was represented by Patricia Greenberg, IMA Program Manager. (Cont'd, p. 4)



## Cont'd. Gross, Trail Improvements

The **Richardson Drive entrance to ball fields** will be raised at the bridge crossing and repaved and expanded to include paving of the trail to the field near the soccer equipment shed.



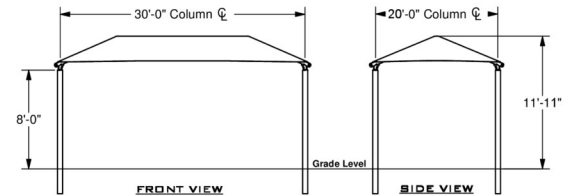
Site of Richardson Drive project



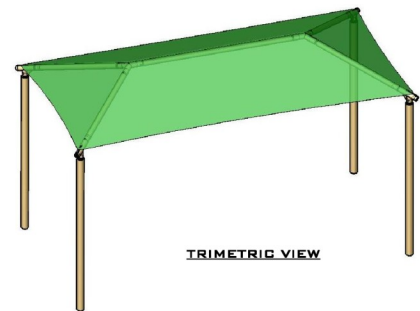
**Rabbit Branch Bridge to be replaced.** The current bridge, while safe, is nearing the end of its useful life. The new bridge will be a 45-foot x 8-foot fiberglass bridge.



Photo of sample bridge



A **Lakeside shade structure** (details pictured right) will be installed over the picnic area at Lakeside Park. This picnic area project is funded by developer proffer money. The project will include a shade structure, a concrete pad and three large 8-foot picnic tables. The shade structure will have a fabric covering that will be removed in the winter but will be up during the rest of the year.



Where are we in the trail improvement process?



The designs for each of the projects have been substantially completed.



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation is required for all projects funded by ARPA. NEPA Documentation is in progress. (The Lakeside shade structure does not require NEPA documentation since it is funded by another source.)



The project managers anticipate completion of NEPA documentation and building permit approvals by the summer of 2025. Construction will follow for the Richardson Drive, Lakepointe community, Rabbit Branch bridge, and shade structure projects.



A Minor Site Plan is required for the trail connecting Commonwealth Blvd to Royal Lake Circuit Trail. The Site Plan was submitted for review to county Land Development Services in September 2024. Approval is anticipated in late Fall 2025.

FORL will provide updates as they are available. Please see the [friendsofroyallake.org](http://friendsofroyallake.org) website or email [friendsofroyallake@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofroyallake@gmail.com) for updated information.

## Cont'd, Doherty, Symposium

She reported on the extensive volunteer work (more than 20,000 hours last year) in the fight against invasive species across Fairfax County parks. In many ways, this program (the only one in Northern Virginia associated with a county government department) is a model for volunteer activity in habitat restoration.

'**TreeStewards**' from Arlington, Alexandria, and Loudon counties reported on non-governmental groups' habitat restoration and conservation projects.

**National Capital Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM)** provided information about the problem of newly emerging threats to natural habitats. The concept of "Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) is critical to preventing habitat loss to invasive species that might be prevented when their presence is first detected in an area and eradication methods quickly implemented. Many of the invasive species now overwhelming our forests and parks (English ivy, porcelain berry vine, amur honeysuckle) are impossible to eradicate and can only be managed by constant attention to holding it in check.

Another critical concern among naturalists is loss of habitat that results in "islands" of natural spaces in which native animals are "trapped."

Road development is one of the culprits in this scenario. Virginia is 9<sup>th</sup> in the United States for wildlife/vehicular 'conflicts.' The representatives of the **Loudon Wildlife Conservancy**, **Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative**, and the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust** reported on efforts to enhance the public/private tree canopy and to create 'connectivity corridors' linking natural areas. Reconnecting habitats ("even with small bits") improves the genetic health of animals and the viability of native plant seeds.

NVBA reported on efforts to address habitat destruction and loss with its "Stretch our Parks" program and through providing homeowners the information necessary to create yard "Wildlife Sanctuaries" thereby improving, one property at a time, a viable habitat for native birds and insects.

Finally, a representative from the **Chesapeake Bay Foundation** described the current legislative initiatives in process to preserve the tree canopy throughout the state of Virginia.

Volunteers are the backbone of efforts to restore habitats to a healthy living space for our native plants and animals. The work is done in small groups or even solo—foot by foot, yard by yard—often to be repeated in the next growing season. Habitat restoration can be a lonely and futile seeming endeavor. The information shared at the symposium was important, but, says Mary Boyer, "the main takeaway is that we are not alone. It is uplifting to hear about all the work being done by so many groups over our region. So encouraging!"

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## Simple Steps YOU Can Take to Help Protect Natural Habitats

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

Many people love nature. Actions, such as picking up trash and reducing energy usage, are great ways to help neighborhoods and the planet. Folks may be shocked to learn that some of their other activities are akin to loving nature to death. This non-technical article shows ways that people can improve their behaviors while helping the environment and community. Let's walk that path to redemption! (Cont'd, p. 7)







Fun activities, great costumes, music, food, and lots of chat with neighbors mark the afternoon.



## COMMUNITY CANDYLAND HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL 2024

was sponsored by the Kings Park West Civic Association and by the Mary & Cathy (Property Sisters) Team. Keith Jodoin of KPWCA (pictured left), was instrumental in organizing this successful event.

Several neighborhood groups set up activities to promote their programs and offer treats for children and their families.



FORL joined the fun with a "Scoop the Poop" race

intended to promote pet walkers in the park cleaning up after their dogs. The young unicorn pictured above had to be persuaded that the "poop" to be scooped was a make believe product!

## OTHER ROYAL LAKE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

### WORK...Shanes Creek Cleanup



20 volunteers filled more than 10 large garbage bags of trash collected along the Shane's Creek Trail.

Veteran's Day brought 15 volunteers out to work cleaning up the Rabbit Branch trail. Photo on right: Four of the young people participating in that event.



And PLAY...Action on the Basketball Court



# Royal Lake Receives a Much Needed Picnic Area Facelift

By Tom McCook

Royal Lake Park recently received a wonderful facelift thanks to the hard work of a local Scout who focused his Eagle Scout project on renovating the park's picnic area. This project, led by Josiah Park of Troop 918 at the request of Mr. Tom McCook, involved the restoration of four picnic tables and the thorough cleaning of two BBQ grills, making the popular gathering spot more welcoming for families and park visitors.

Over the course of two weekends, a team of volunteers worked diligently to restore the picnic tables, which had weathered years of exposure to the elements. They replaced damaged wooden slats and bolts on the tables. The transformation was remarkable, and the tables are now not only more aesthetically pleasing but also safer and more comfortable for use.



In addition to the picnic tables, the team tackled two of the park's BBQ grills, which had accumulated rust, grime, and debris over time. They managed to restore the grills to their former glory through a combination of scrubbing, scraping, and removing ash. The grills are now fully functional and ready for park visitors to enjoy a summer BBQ or a weekend cookout.

The success of this project is a testament to the values of leadership, service, and community spirit that are at the heart of the Eagle Scout program. Josiah Park organized the project from start to finish, including fund-raising for supplies, recruiting and managing volunteers, and ensuring that all work was completed to the highest standards.

Parkgoers have already expressed their appreciation for the improvements, noting how much more inviting the picnic area looks.

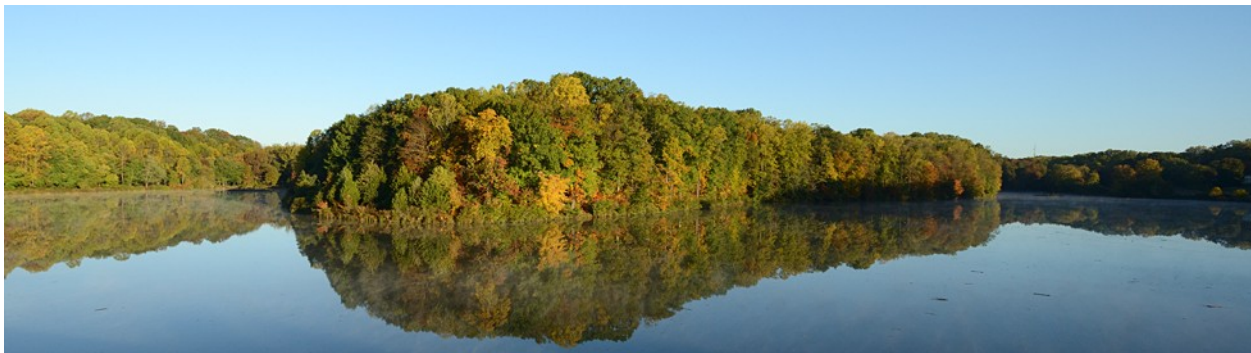
Cubmaster Brandon Fureigh for Pack 1967 had this to say about the project:

"Cub Scout Pack 1967 held our annual Pack Kick Off Event at Royal Lake Park. This is a long standing tradition. For years the picnic tables by the lake have been getting worse and worse. We even had several Scouts get splinters the last time we were there. This year, thanks to Josiah's vision and the hard work of his fellow Scouts to complete his Eagle Scout project, our young Cubs and their families had the time of their life in a safer space.



There is nothing more central to Scouting than ensuring our community can enjoy the outdoors safely and comfortably.

Josiah's project will benefit the lives of so many in our community by creating an inviting space that will help build a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts!"



**Leave no trace.** It's as simple as that. After visiting natural areas, nobody should know you were there. Respect nature. Most parks have rules that forbid disturbing animals, plants, and even deadwood, leaf litter, soil, or stones. If you already dumped or otherwise encroached on public land, clean it up and properly dispose of that junk and debris. It's the right thing to do. More is at <https://Int.org/> and <https://americanhiking.org/resources/leave-no-trace/>.

**Stay on official park trails.** When visiting natural areas, never stomp new routes or continue using unauthorized paths. With many factors to consider, new trail design and approval must go through park management. Some resources:

<https://www.wta.org/news/signpost/7-signs-your-trail-is-in-trouble-what-to-do-about-it>

[https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/idkt\\_bootbrush.htm](https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/idkt_bootbrush.htm)

**Place your trash into garbage cans or recycle bins.** When no receptacles are present, you bring it in, you carry it out, including tissues, cigarette butts, food and drink containers, fishing gear, and diapers. You can make a positive impact if you pick up trash on your walk.

**Clean up after your pet—and you!** Leaving dog or human poop is gross, unsanitary, and detrimental to the environment. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/dog-waste-scoop-poop/>

**Keep pets on leash.** Set a good example and follow the law, § 41.1-2-4.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code/animals-and-pets>

**Leave the leaves.** Keep those autumn leaves for wildlife, garden mulch, and soil nutrition.

<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2015/OctNov/Gardening/Leave-the-Leaves>

Use curbside recycling for woody branches and vegetable garden husks. Have this debris tied with biodegradable rope, placed in compostable paper lawn bags, or in a reusable container marked "Yard Debris" but not in plastic bags or tied with nylon twine. More tips are at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/yard-waste>

**Keep wildlife wild.** Never feed or disturb wildlife. Details are at

<https://www.fws.gov/story/2015-01/keep-wild-wildlife-dont-touch-or-feed> and

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-services/dont-feed-wildlife>

**Remove invasive plants from your yard.** Doing so is key to a healthy environment. It is more important than planting natives because those invasive weeds generate seeds that spread to neighbors and natural areas, thereby overwhelm native populations.

Find out more about the Mid-Atlantic's worst plant invaders and how to spot them at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/invasive-species/recognize>

Join an IMA workday and remove those invasive targets first hand:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/invasive-management-area>





Photo by Suzanne Doherty

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LAYOUT: Suzanne Doherty

Thank you from the FORL team for all your support

