

# Focus on Bryan Park

Winter 2009



## FoBP Sponsors Tree Root Seminar

**T**he Friends of Bryan Park in conjunction with Joel Koci, a certified arborist who holds a Masters in Ornamental Horticulture from Virginia Tech, and the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities presented an educational event which taught the updated and correct way to plant a tree. Current nursery practices mean that planting the root ball or container even with ground level is leading to weak, short lived specimens not only in Richmond, but throughout the U.S. and Europe. This problem has been described as "an underground epidemic."

Using a group of trees in the park as examples, Joel and volunteers dissected the root systems of specimens which were installed the way we are typically taught. Participants then observed methods used to attempt to save these trees.

On November 1, 2008, starting at 8:30 and continuing well into the afternoon, FoBP provided the community with a free opportunity to learn how to identify and, if possible, rectify problems with trees in our yards, neighborhoods, planned communities and business parks.

Right now, the metro area is losing trees because of incorrect planting. Many specimens are being cut down and not replaced, leading to public outcry. But what if we could stop those trees from dying in the first place? What if we can learn how to plant trees so that they will thrive for generations?

Want to know more? Here is the web address for a thorough, illustrated and easy to understand resource. It is worth a visit to [http://www.forestry.umn.edu/extension/urban\\_com/sgr%20book%20sm%20file.pdf](http://www.forestry.umn.edu/extension/urban_com/sgr%20book%20sm%20file.pdf)



*Joel Koci points out malformed roots; as they grow they will choke this maple*



*Air spading clears soil from the root system with minimal damage*



*Roots have been recovered loosely with a shallower topping of soil; special nutrients are sprayed on the surface*



*Spread around the tree is 1 to 3 inches of high quality mulch*

## City Delivers on Historic Street Signs throughout Park!

**F**our or five years ago, it dawned on us that lots of people get lost in Bryan Park, including police and emergency vehicle drivers, soccer families, visitors and VIPs. Why? Because none of the Park's internal streets had names, and signage was minimal. Plus, all the maps of the park showed only a maze of unnamed streets.

Drawing on early park history and its founding families' contributions, FoBP brainstormed to come up with appropriate road names. Parks and Rec was receptive, gathered community input and started accumulating the funding.

In early February the signs were installed, and they are beautiful – cast iron reproductions of historic street sign posts, replica sign frames with an azalea motif, and easy to remember names: Joseph Bryan Lane, Azalea Garden Loop Road, Jordan's Branch Lane, Rosina's Lane and a few more. Explore a little more and see what else you can find...



**usaservice.org Park Cleanup**

**O**n January 17, 2009, fifteen hearty folks cleared twenty-seven bags of trash from the upper and lower edges of the ponds in the park. Their commitment was a national one. Thousands of people signed up to volunteer for projects across the United States via the usaservice.org initiative. Never mind that the temperature was in the mid-twenties that day!



For the many of us who feel the impact of our struggling economy and other issues, an afternoon event with fifteen people who gave from their hearts - working freely to care for Bryan Park—was proof positive that there is plenty of good to focus on. Despite the weather, the only complaint heard was that some trash along the pond shores was irretrievable that day—stuck in the ice!

Thanks go to the Richmond Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Facilities who provided hand held trash pick ups and hauled away our filled bags. And, of course, thanks go to all the people who turned out to make the park an even lovelier, more special, place to visit.

**Knock On Wood**

*by Sue Ridd*

**B**ryan Park is home to 7 different woodpecker species. The most commonly heard species are the Red-bellied, Flicker, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers followed by the Red-headed, Hairy, and winter visitor, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

All these Woodpeckers search for grubs or food by pecking at tree trunks. They also peck holes into trees for nesting cavities and to advertise for a mate. Most of the mating rituals begin in March when trees have no leaves so sound travels faster and louder. Sometimes woodpeckers use rainspouts or gutters to make even louder sounds as any homeowner who has been the recipient can tell you. "The drumming was so loud at dawn, it knocked me right out of bed!" said one disgruntled homeowner. This mating ritual lasts fortunately for just a few weeks. One thing you can do, as a homeowner, is to put up plastic figures of owls or snakes to deter the male woodpecker from drumming on the rainspout or gutter.

You would think that the woodpeckers would have huge headaches during the mating season, but because of several adaptations, this does not happen. Composed of strong bones, the bill is covered by a horny beak with a chisel-shaped tip. While the nostrils are reduced to slits and shielded by lateral ridges and feathers, longitudinal ridges on the bill give it added strength. And woodpeckers close their eyes when they drill.

The woodpecker's brain is protected several ways from the drilling process. It is smaller in size and the surface area is greater so the shock from the drilling covers a greater area of the brain. A small subarachnoid space holds very little cerebrospinal fluid between the brain and the skull. Spongy bone tightly packs the brain inside the skull. Two other shock absorbers are that 1) the beak is held in place by powerful muscles, and 2) the tongue muscle extends around the back of the skull, over the dorsal area of the head and finally is inserted into the base of the beak. It acts as a sling reducing the shock of each beak-to-tree impact. Powerful neck muscles, strong legs with sharp claws and stiff tail feathers of woodpeckers all serve to brace the body against the tree trunk. A long sticky tongue with barbs at the tip serves to trap insect grubs. The 7 different woodpecker species of Bryan Park aid in helping keep the trees healthy in their own way!

**Bryan Park Walks in 2009**

**Meet At Shelter #1**

First Sunday	Start Time
Mar.1	7:15
Apr.5	7:15
May 3	6:45
June 7	6:30
July 5	6:30
Aug.2	6:45
Sept.6	7:15
Oct. 4	7:30
Nov.1	7:15
Dec.6	7:45

Come see Bryan Park from a different point of view. Each season has its own cast for your birding interests! For more information, call 270-5365.

**CVSA Working on New Bathrooms for Bryan Park**

**T**he Central Virginia Soccer Association (CVSA) plays a key role in operating and maintaining the five soccer fields in Bryan Park, and have make the BP soccer complex the most desirable soccer venue in the Richmond region. VCU's men's and women's soccer teams practice there. The City children's leagues learn there and play tournaments on Saturdays, while the CVSA adults play there on Sundays. Parents and grandparents, kids and visitors, love the park, but are dismayed by the poor condition of the bathrooms which are far away, near Shelter # 1.

Cary Wright, the dedicated CVSA complex manager (volunteer and hard working Friend of Bryan Park) has been discussing the need for a new bathroom facility closer to the fields and near the main parking lot. With input from City staff and an architect, a rough plan has been developed which would provide a year-round, clean and secure pair of restrooms, storage space and a snack vending stand. The sketch rendering looks attractive, appearing as an asset rather than an eyesore.

Friends of Bryan Park and the City support this much-needed improvement in the park. The preliminary estimate for the project is close to \$200,000, but we hope that the City can contribute some manpower and equipment, with the CVSA soliciting donors and foundations for about 2/3rds of the funding. Please spread the word among your friends and business associates. Bryan Park is being transformed for the new century, thanks to its many friends!

**Friends of Bryan Park Accomplishments, 2008**

- Friends of Bryan Park held three cleanups in the fall and late winter, cleaning trash out of the Jordan's Branch flood plain, weeding and re-mulching the wildflower garden.
- Disc Golf course so successful, second nine holes installed early. Pro-Disc Tourney on April 26th attracts huge crowds. (See Photo)
- VCU Grad students do Lakeside Business Study, meet with FoBP, sees strong connections between park visitors and business opportunities. Lakeside expanding Farmers' Market, new businesses are coming!
- FoBP helps get more Bulletin Boards in Park.
- City promotes Azalea Garden Bed Adoptions; FoBP adopts triangle at northwest end of Azalea Loop Road. Note new benches there!
- Three Winter Tree Plantings – FoBP, volunteers from CVSA and City Urban Forestry Division help plant 30 hardwood trees in Park, and kept them watered! Thanks to Cary Wright, Norm Brown & Tree Stewards, and those who helped fund the project (including the Moncures)
- FoBP perseveres with IRS and completes 501(c)3 validation documentation; renewed for five more years.
- FoBP cleans up upper pond riparian area and Ned Rennolds native plant garden each quarter. In March, volunteers from Hatcher Memorial Baptist Church clean up "Better Together" garden. FoBP donate cobblestones & establish borders around most planting beds.
- FoBP co-sponsors Tree Risk/Hazard Assessment workshop with Urban Forestry's Norm Brown, Tree Stewards and regional arborists to teach new Urban Forestry policies.
- FoBP Tree Committee examines alleged problems with Norman Grove maples (roots wrapping around trunks, possibly reducing tree lifetimes). FoBP hires regional tree expert Joel Koci to rehab tree root systems, sets up scientific experiment to test "best practices."
- Sponsored Tree Root Seminar on Nov. 1, with help from Parks and Rec, Urban Forestry, Andy Mason at Arborscapes and several Tree Stewards
- FoBP holds third Annual Ice Cream social in July
- Discussions on Upham Brook Watershed & Trash continue
- Annual VEGGIEFEST in Bryan Park on June 21 a huge success!



**FOBP MEMBERSHIP**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Email addresses will ONLY be used to alert you to upcoming events/Bryan Park issues which may interest you. We'll also alert you by email when our latest newsletter is published and viewable on this site.)*

Please list your areas of interest in Bryan Park: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in volunteering for FoBP events? \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my Membership Gift:

- \$0       \$10       \$15       \$25       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment:  Check     Money Order    Checks are payable to Friends of Bryan Park. Please send to FoBP, P.O. Box 15481, Richmond, VA 23227-5481. Thanks.

*Friends of Bryan Park is a 501 (c) 3 organization. All donations are tax-deductible.*



### Norma Bryan Brawley Memorial Contributions

**S**adly, another member of the Joseph Bryan clan passed away in the fall of 2008, at 93. Mrs. Brawley was the last remaining family member of her generation of Bryans from Richmond, the daughter of Thomas Pinckney and Helen (McGill) Bryan. She was married to Francis Poe Brawley from Greenville, South Carolina. They lived in Richmond for 18 years, then moved to Charlottesville in 1956.

She was an avid golfer, gardener, conservationist, and a lover of many types of music and singing. She truly embraced life, her family, and her friends, was always in motion, traveled extensively, and was an active volunteer for many civic organizations.

Several family members and close friends have contributed memorial gifts which will be used to create a circular sitting area made of Richmond cobblestones. The City has donated four benches which will complete the sitting area, located in the Helen Bryan Norman Memorial Grove. Thank you, Patsy Murray and Isobel Spink, Norma Dugger and Frances Foster, and Linda Denton, for your generous gifts in honor of Mrs. Brawley.

### Parks and Recreation Department Expands Uses in Bryan Park

**N**otice more activities in the park? Fundraising walks and exercise groups? Bikers and hikers and dogs, oh my! This last summer did you try to make it to Astronomy Night? The Ice Cream Social? Did you enjoy the sheer pleasure of a long walk in the woods?

Along with the Department's restructuring (consolidating all park operations under one manager and all recreation operations under another), the new Parks and Recreation Director JR Pope observed that William Byrd Park was getting all the City's special events and was disintegrating due to overuse.

Wisely, now special events are being distributed between the City's four flagship parks and some of the smaller ones. In fact, many citizens are "rediscovering" parks they might not have seen in decades. Benefits to Bryan Park include more activities and increased park usage. More people in the parks make them safer. Renewed interest in parks justifies spending more money on improvements and support staff.

Another bonus to Bryan Park: the Park's Operations Manager, Mary Lois Mitchum, has moved her office into the Gatekeeper's House and has consolidated a dedicated staff (including Wyn Price, a true environmentalist!).

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**Does Richmond Need a Citizen Tree Commission?**

by Elizabeth Barrett

**F**riends of Bryan Park has provided stewardship for the park and its trees for 15 years. Citizens have organized “Arbor Days” during which professional arborists pruned mature trees in the Azalea Garden and along the soccer fields. Numerous trees have been planted over the years. Educational events have been sponsored, such as the recent hands-on planting demonstration by certified arborist Joel Koci. Yet public trees, both in our parks and on our streets, continue to suffer from neglect and sometimes poor care. One organized and effective way to increase awareness of the critical role that trees play in our green infrastructure and to help shape policies and procedures that will have long term impact on the livability of a municipality, is through a citizen Tree Commission.

A tree commission is a group of people charged by ordinance with improving and maintaining the urban forest. Within the next couple of months, City Council will be voting on whether to establish a citizen tree commission. A number of Virginia localities, including Manassas City, Fairfax County and Leesburg have active tree commissions. Core functions include policy formation, education, and advocacy; the commission may be advisory or administrative. Generally, members are appointed by city council and include persons with expertise in areas such as tree care, urban forestry, landscape design, as well as individuals with business interests and citizens interested in the beautification and health of their city.

**Key responsibilities proposed for the Richmond Tree Commission include:**

- Serving as an advisory body to council regarding legislation and policies regarding public trees.
- Facilitating the development and passage of a tree maintenance and management plan for Richmond.
- Improving the level of public understanding of urban forestry issues, City tree-related policies, and proper tree care.
- Conducting fundraising for city tree projects and supporting increased funding for Urban Forestry programs.

Yes, Richmond needs a citizen Tree Commission to protect and maintain our existing trees and to work towards a goal of increased tree canopy. We need a group with vision to set priorities based on the value of trees for all citizens and neighborhoods. Please contact your City Council member and ask him to support Ordinance 2008-306. This ordinance will go to the Land Use, Housing and Transportation Committee on March 17 and could be up for vote by Council as early as March 23. For further information, including how to reach Council members, please contact Elizabeth Barrett at 264-4079 or lizbarrett22@yahoo.com.

**Philip Morris USA Community Service Days Huge Help to Bryan Park**

**F**or the past three years Philip Morris USA and several of its Richmond-based divisions have worked with Richmond’s Parks and Recreation Department to identify annual Community Improvement Projects within a City park. In 2006 almost 100 Philip Morris volunteers planted several hundred trees in Forest Hill Park, and in 2007, even more PMUSA volunteers worked in William Byrd Park, painting the Round House, cleaning out the “Gillette Gardens” behind Dogwood Dell, rehabilitating the old Cemetery, and sprucing up the playground and Ha’Penny stage. Did I mention that their assistance each year also includes a donation of \$10,000 to \$12,000 for the building materials and supplies, a hearty lunch, and a great day of “giving back?”



Princeton Creek near I-95 (which the disc golfers love), and major rehab work on the Tourist Camp House building (1922) above the sledding hill.

The Tourist Camp rehabilitation work, inside and out, is astonishing to see if you knew the building in the past or remember the huge oak tree broken through the roof, courtesy of Hurricane Isabel. Parks and Rec has offered use of the building for community groups, so keep an eye open for the opportunity to visit and enjoy. Thank you, City of Richmond, Parks and Recreation Department (especially Larry Miller and Mary Lois Mitchum), and Philip Morris USA Marketing Department volunteers!



In Fall 2008, the PMUSA Marketing Department offered its wonderful volunteers, and another generous contribution of building materials, supplies and skilled labor to Bryan Park. The Parks’ Operations Manager, Mary Lois Mitchum, jumped at the offer and identified three big projects for them: two covered picnic bench pavilions, a pedestrian bridge crossing

**The History of Bryan Park**

**T**his book takes readers on a journey into the hidden history behind one of Richmond’s premier landmark parks. Along the way it explores the people and events behind the over 260 acres that were once the site of a planned slave rebellion, an early settlers’ plantation, grain and lumber mills, an ice business, a Confederate cavalry camp and a popular 1920’s auto-tourist camp.

Through the generosity of the family of Joseph Bryan in 1910, this property is now one of Richmond’s finest recreational areas, noted for its picturesque landscapes, legendary azalea garden, walking and jogging trails, soccer fields, picnic shelters and playgrounds, as well as remarkable wildlife habitat.

The story of Bryan Park invites readers to discover the people and places behind its rich history and fascinating evolution from rural estate to grand urban park. Our book is available by mail. The cost for each book is \$5. Shipping is an additional \$4.95 for a USPS Priority Mail flat rate envelope.

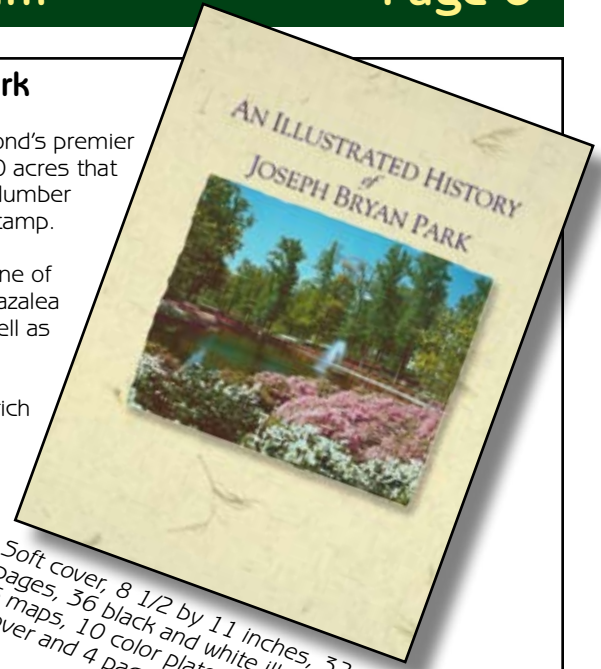
You can mail your order to

**Friends of Bryan Park**

P.O. Box 15481

Richmond, VA 23227-5481

or for a faster response, e-mail [ReBryanPark@aol.com](mailto:ReBryanPark@aol.com)



*Soft cover, 8 1/2 by 11 inches, 32 pages, 36 black and white illustrations, 6 maps, 10 color plates. Color cover and 4 page insert.*

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Bryan Park Manager Mary Lois Mitchum: 646-0199; cell: 514-8478

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**Let Us Hear From You!**

Your suggestions and comments about the Park are important to FoBP. Send comments to [ReBryanPark@aol.com](mailto:ReBryanPark@aol.com). Use this email too if you’d like to be added to our server list. Also visit our website at:

[www.friendsofbryanpark.org](http://www.friendsofbryanpark.org)

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