



**FRIENDS OF BRIGHTWOOD PARK
QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER
June 2021**

Wow! What a spring we have had in Brightwood Park! Hundreds of people visited Brightwood Park this Spring – including many who had never visited before! Girl Scouts and their families came out in strong numbers for Birthday week, undaunted families celebrated a blustery Earth Day, preschoolers enjoyed nature classes, artists painted, and people attended yoga! All this, plus volunteers put in hours of labor revitalizing the park during the Green Team’s clean-up day and Westfield Parks Invasive Plant strike force operations. FOBP also paired with the Great Swamp Watershed Association to deliver native plants for local gardens.

As we move into the fun days of summertime, the sweet smells and sounds of nature can be experienced just blocks away.

In this issue you will find: Events Calendar, History Corner, updates from our various committees, an important lanternfly alert, notes from the FOBP President, and information on FOBP merchandise!

Events Calendar:

- June: 5** National Trail Day – take a themed hike with FOBP’s botanist or historian. Sign up through the Westfield Recreation Department
- 7** Girl Scout Brownie Troop nature walk
- 9** Nature classes for children: “*Nature Detectives – Exploring Clouds and Water.*”
 - 10-10:45a.m.- 2-to 3-year-olds with adult
 - 11-11:45a.m.- 4- to 5-year-olds with adults

3:30-4:30p.m.-6-to8- year olds

Sign up through Westfield Recreation Department, registration is limited.

- 19** Juneteenth Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield Trolley Tour stop in Brightwood Park. Register for the Trolley Tour at MLKWestfield.org.

July: 10 History walking tour. Sign up through Westfield Recreation Department

- 19** Nature classes for children: “*Nature Detectives – Mapping Skills*”

Class #1-10 a.m.: 3- to 5-year-olds

Class #2-11 a.m.: 6- to 8-year-olds

Sign up through Westfield Recreation Department

July and August: History and Ecology Walks, Look for dates on Facebook and our webpage, FriendsOfBrightwood.org.

September Family Event -Night Walk at dusk with story and walk. Sign up through Westfield Recreation Department.

One and Done Volunteers!

If you share our love of the park but are not ready to make a full commitment, please consider volunteering for our One and Done projects. Email FriendsOfBrightwoodPark@gmail.com.

For example, if you can help with greeting visitors to the park on June 19 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Trolley stops, please email FriendsOfBrightwoodPark@gmail.com.

Have you seen ... our stately fox?



Photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

History Corner:

From Virginia to New Jersey... from boarder to homeowner to lifetime tenant: Cordelia Belle Spencer Perry Manair – 1126 Fanwood Avenue

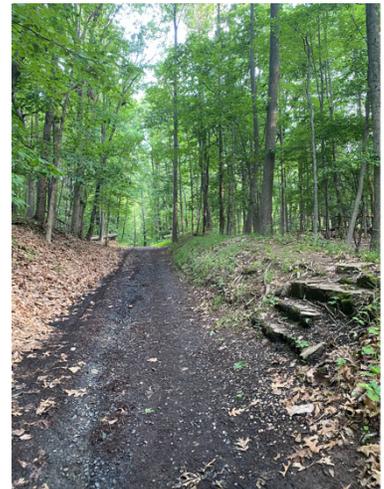
The life story of Cordelia Belle Spencer illustrates the perseverance of many of the African-American residents who lived at the future site of Brightwood Park. Although there is only scant information about her life, the details that are known underscore the trials and tribulations of African-Americans who, seeking opportunity to improve their lives, were part of the “Great Migration” to the northern states from the southern states between 1890 and 1930. Though we have pieced her story together through documentary evidence, between the pages is written a life of hard work, faith, love, and hope.

Cordelia was born in Virginia around 1886. By the 1900 US Census, she had moved north to New Jersey. That Census, taken when she was thirteen years old, listed her as a boarder in a residence on Broad Street in Newark, New Jersey. She lived at that home with, most notably, Mary Spencer, age 65. Ten years later, during the 1910 Census, Cordelia was living as a boarder in a residence owned by perhaps another family member, Alexander Spencer, on Clinton Avenue in Irvington. She had found work as a housekeeper. Cordelia lived in the Spencer home in Irvington at least five more years according to a 1915 State Census.

Cordelia made her way to Westfield working as a maid and living with a family on Elm Street in the mid-1920s. In 1924, she was able to purchase a lot in what is now Brightwood Park. At that time, this area was part of the “Big Woods.” Near the first black-owned Shady Rest Golf Course, this area held a vibrant African American community serviced by the St. Thomas A.M.E. Zion Church. Cordelia’s property was located on Fanwood Avenue close St. Thomas - though no house appears in the 1920s Sanborn maps at that location.

Interestingly, Edward Perry, purchased an adjoining lot to Cordelia’s that same year. Edward was a railroad worker who had moved into the area about 10 years earlier. He was a member of St. Thomas Church. Just four years later, Cordelia and Edward married in September 1928. She was 42, and he was 59.

Just before marrying Edward, in 1927, Cordelia bought a second property – 1126 Fanwood Avenue. This property included a house with 6 lots, located on the northwest corner of Fanwood and Netherwood Avenues, just one block west of the Church. The photo to the right depicts Fanwood Avenue with the steps of St Thomas in the right foreground. Cordelia’s home was a little further up the road on the left-hand side.



Sadly, eleven years after marrying Cordelia, in May 1939, Edward died at Muhlenberg Hospital in Plainfield. Reverend Collier, Pastor of St. Thomas A.M.E. Church, officiated at his funeral. Cordelia married a second time five years later to Mack Manair, a deacon at Metropolitan Baptist Church, located on Jerusalem Road in 1943. He passed away in 1958.

In 1968, Cordelia sold her properties to the Town of Westfield for \$14,000. As part of the sale, she was granted life occupancy of her house at 1126 Fanwood Avenue. Cordelia lived in her home in the woods for the rest of her life. She passed away in 1985 at the age of 98. Some of our members remember seeing her at her home in the park.

Education Committee:

People learn through play. Outdoor play promotes creativity/imagination, strengthens muscles, enhances social and emotional development and ultimately makes learning fun.



Wood ducks photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

FOBP's Education Committee has been busy this spring introducing nature programs for children, family events, fitness classes and artistic outlets for adults – all designed to bring the nature experience to all ages. Keep an eye on our social media and web page, FriendsOfBrightwood.org, and the Westfield Recreation Department for details and sign up information for future offerings!

Check out our new Brightwood Kids- Nature Detectives newsletter!

Nature Programming

Our spring classes brought new faces of wonder to the park!

In April and May, FOBP held nature education classes in the park for young children. At least half of the families had never been to Brightwood before and were very excited to experience nature close up just minutes from their homes.

While walking in the park, the children were treated to various wildlife sightings. We observed a fox walking along on the far side of the pond. We watched as an osprey flying overhead dove into the water. We saw deer browsing, turtles sunning on a log, a frog jumping in the pond, and a 15" snake slithering through the leaves. Of course, we always find lots of ducks and geese swimming peacefully along.

Needless to say, the kids and their parents were quite impressed and many have shared with FOBP how much they appreciated the nature experience!



Photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

Earth Day

On a blustery April 22, FOBP hosted a family celebration in the park for Earth Day. The event included an Earth Day themed story, **The Earth Book**, by Todd Parr. FOBP members guided families on a hike around the park's pond to talk about the plant and wildlife found in the park. Children made pine cone bird feeders that were hung in the forest or brought home.



To spread the word about native plants, families planted milkweed seeds to bring home and germinate. Milkweed's fragrant yellow, green, purple, pink or orange flowers draw pollinators. This species of plant is the sole host plant for our struggling monarch butterfly population that is at a critically low population level. Not only is milkweed a food source, but it also serves as habitat. These butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of the plant's leaves. Caterpillars then eat the milkweed leaves.

The event also included a recycling table with information and examples of what materials can or cannot be recycled. The Girl Scouts presented this information and identified some common mistakes people make with their recycling. FOBP thanks the Girl Scouts for their leadership role on this important topic.

Westfield resident, FOBP and Green Team member, Janette Spiezio, was present to display items available at her business Sustainable Haus Mercantile. The shop located at 221 Broad Street, Summit offers zero waste refill products that are eco-friendly, non-toxic, and package-free home goods.

Art in the Park

Paint en Plein Air at Brightwood Park

FOBP co-sponsored a Plein Air Painting Day with the Westfield Art Association at Brightwood Park on May 1. The inaugural event had about 12 to 13 painters accompanied by a number of supporters who came to see and enjoy the park on a perfect spring day. Painters had 2 ½ hours to create their art. Judge Jackie Civins of Evelyn Dunn Gallery in Westfield found that all the paintings were "worthy of prizes."

The event was a huge success! All agreed that Brightwood Park is a gem! New friends were made, and we all enjoyed seeing Brightwood Park through these artists eyes. 1st place prize: Heda Metiejunas of Clark for her oil painting

Thanks to all who helped out!



Wellness

FOBP/Westfield Recreation Department Fitness in collaboration with EXD Wellness:

Kate Hewson of EXD Wellness held Yoga Flow classes in May in the park for those 18 and over. The classes included sequences of traditional Sun Salutations and standing postures. Movement was linked with breath to help build strength and endurance while working on balance and flexibility.

If you are interested in Pilates, Restorative Yoga, or Children's yoga classes, let us know!

Park Health Committee:

Park Clean Ups

On May 2, FOBP members participated in the Green Team trash clean-up day in connection with the town's Earth Day activities. The event was very well attended, and volunteers removed an estimated 45 contractor size bags of trash.

For those walking along the trails in the park, you may wonder where all this trash was found. Many of us pick up stray trash discarded by recent users of the trails. However, you certainly won't see the volume of trash that was removed on May 2.

The truth is that many years ago, the park was used as a "dump." Additionally, when the houses described in our newsletter "History Corner" were acquired, they were torn down by the town. Debris from those houses remains in the park. The surface trash that we are now removing comes from these prior activities. We have found thousands of glass bottles of all kinds including from a Westfield Dairy of many years ago. We have removed tires, toilet bowls, shoes, pieces of metal, toys, and other remnants of lives lived long ago.

With each successive clean-up day, we are making progress towards restoration of the park to a more natural state.

Additional clean-up days will be organized as needed. For updates, please check the Clean Ups page under the "Preserve" menu on www.FriendsOfBrightwood.org

Invasive Plants

Powered by our own botanist, Phil Round, volunteers and other FOBP members, the Westfield Parks Invasive Plants strike force continues to battle invasive plants in the park. This spring WPIP has made significant strides with the Wisteria, Knotweed, Amur Honeysuckle, Barberry and other invasive plants.

If you walk through the park, you may notice the impact of these efforts. Severed Wisteria vines hang from old growth trees that must be sighing in relief. We have cut vines as thick as 7" in diameter that had snaked around trees strangling and diverting nutrients in the soil from them. We have also tackled invasive Amur Honeysuckle trees that have proliferated all over the park. You may see the skeletons of these fallen shrubs.

Since last Fall, the Knotweed FOBP cut down had resurged along the pond and in the forest. Known as a scourge in England, this plant's root system spreads widely and quickly blankets an area depriving any native plant an opportunity to grow. WPIP's work treating the sprouting Knotweed has some plants bowed into submission in some areas. However, the battle rages on as the Knotweed's resilience knows no bounds. Once the Knotweed is successfully and finally removed from the area adjacent to the parking lot, FOBP envisions a native plant garden with tree saplings along the pond shoreline and a wildflower garden on the embankment.

These invasive plant control efforts are designed to protect and support our native trees and plants and allow the forest's understory to recover. Unfortunately, given the extent of the invasive plant infestation, our goal will take years to achieve. Please bear with us as we work on restoring the balance with native plants that will support pollinators and, ultimately, the biodiversity that sustains us all.

Hikes

Weather permitting, we will have informative hikes on invasive and native plants for educational enjoyment. The hikes will be once a month on a Sunday and for a limited number of walkers. If you are interested, please email FriendsOfBrightwoodPark@gmail.com to arrange a mutually convenient Sunday.

The hikes are inspired by the work of Doug Tallamy, Ph.D. author of New York Times best seller, Nature's Best Hope. For more information on Dr. Tallamy's approach to conservation, watch his presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY4aV5hqkxY>.

Park Infrastructure Committee:

The town has tentatively agreed that FOBP can explore a few projects in the park.

The first project that we are undertaking is donation of an information message center – something similar to the photo at right. A durable and lockable display will allow the town to identify designated trails in the park, highlight park history, and present such other information as the town deems appropriate for the park. The Recreation Commission has given an initial green light for this project, and we will be working with the town to select a vendor shortly.

Hopefully soon, FOBP will be in a position to seek approval to create small gardens to showcase native plants in different park environments:



shoreline, woodland, and meadow. It is our hope that these gardens will be exemplars for what a restored park would be like with native plants flourishing.

At this time, the town is working with its pond contractor to determine proper aeration and treatment of the pond to prevent previous years' algal and duckweed blooms. There are currently four bubblers in the pond. Three of these have been somewhat functional this spring. The output of the fourth is not optimal. The bubblers are essential to properly oxygenate the pond water and sustain the fish life. The town also has a pond contractor that treats the water to reduce algae/duckweed. Recently, the oxygen levels in the pond, though low, were sufficient to permit treatment. When the oxygen levels are too low, there is potential for a fish kill if the contractor treats the water. Last year, the contractor was unable to treat the pond for this reason. FOBP remains concerned about the pond health. The town has asked its pond contractor to measure the pond volume to determine if the current bubblers are adequate. FOBP has been following up with the town to see if it could be of assistance to support these efforts.

Fund-Raising Committee:

Assuming the town approves the projects identified by our Park Infrastructure Committee, FOBP plans to begin fundraising soon. In particular, FOBP is looking at some potential grant opportunities. If you are interested in helping our fund-raising efforts, please email FriendsOfBrightwoodPark@gmail.com.

Lanternfly Alert!

Pretty bug...



Ugly infestation



Fortunately, that infestation photo was NOT taken in Brightwood Park, but unfortunately, last year, some lanternflies were seen in the park.

Lanternflies are invaders. They prefer invasive trees, and – in particular, they like Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). This fast growing tree can reach 80' and spread through seeds or roots. WPIP recently cut down several of these trees along the parking lot in the park. Unfortunately, the trees

had many egg masses from which many, many young nymphs hatched. The park has many more of these trees.

Lanternflies pose significant risk of economic damages. For example, in neighboring Pennsylvania, Penn State Agricultural Sciences economists project damages in the hundreds of millions of dollars to crops in that State. Lanternflies also raise quality of life issues as can be easily seen in the photo above.

You can help: **learn about this invasive insect and take action to stop infestation:**

1. Look for and destroy eggs:

Lanternflies lay eggs on flat surfaces between September and December. Egg masses can contain from 30 to 50 eggs. An egg mass can be about 1" long and look like this:



The best time to stop the spread is before the eggs hatch in May. If you find the eggs in the winter/spring, you can destroy the egg masses by scraping them with pressure as instructed in this video: <https://extension.psu.edu/how-to-remove-spotted-lanternfly-eggs>

2. Understand Lanternfly Life Cycle:

Nymphs:

There are four developmental stages of nymphs.

In the first three nymph stages from May to July, the lanternflies grow from a few millimeters to about 1/4." They appear as pictured in the top photo to the right.



From July through September, they grow to about 1/2" in size and become bright red as seen in the photo to the right.



In all stages, the nymphs are strong jumpers.

Adults:



The adults can be seen as early as July.

They can fly but prefer to hop or glide.



Although there are some predators such as spiders and praying mantises that will eat them, researchers have not found these predators to have had much of an impact on lanternfly proliferation. Birds do not seem to like them.

The Spotted Lanternfly feeds on the sap of a variety of trees. This stresses and can kill the trees on which it feeds.

While feeding, the Lanternfly secretes a sugary substance called honeydew that builds up and promotes the growth of sooty mold. This can cover the plant, the understory, and any other objects below the area where they are feeding. The honeydew also attracts bees, wasps and other insects.

3. Take action!

Should you see a Lanternfly nymph or adult, please destroy it and report it to the NJ Dept of Agriculture at its website: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/pests-diseases/spotted-lanternfly/#reporting-tool>

4. Learn more:

For more information, go to the NJ Department of Agriculture website: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/pests-diseases/spotted-lanternfly/>
USDA National Invasive Species Information Center
<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/terrestrial/invertebrates/spotted-lanternfly>

For information about economic damage to agriculture:
<https://news.psu.edu/story/604149/2020/01/15/research/scientists-examine-potential-economic-impact-spotted-lanternfly-pa>

Notes From the President:

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. —Albert Einstein

President Biden has announced an initiative to conserve 30% of the land and water in our country to restore America the Beautiful.¹ Rather than bringing this land under federal control, he is seeking to collaborate with private landowners, state and local governments. In accord with recommendations of scientists, this initiative reflects upon the significance of habitat and water protection for the future health of our planet.

FOBP's work dovetails with this presidential initiative, and we applaud the idea of restoring America, one park, one forest at a time. This is particularly important here in suburban New Jersey where there is so little land devoted to nature. As we have previously reported, our Park Health

¹ See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/> and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/news-updates/2021/05/06/biden-harris-administration-outlines-america-the-beautiful-initiative/>

committee is focused on protecting our old growth trees from invasive plants and restoring the native understory. We hope to save trees that absorb carbon emissions thereby positively impacting climate change in, perhaps, a small but not insignificant way. We are also advocating for wetlands delineation to protect this ecologically important feature of our watershed.

A word about the town's plans for the park:

Jenn Gilmann, Chair of the Recreation Commission, and First Ward Councilwoman, Linda Habgood, have confirmed that the town's current park priorities are:

- 1) protection of the environment;
- 2) safety;
- 3) improvements that can be enjoyed by all user groups, according to our Green Acres designation.

The town has identified **short-term projects** for the park including:

- Perimeter fencing repairs: this work will be staged over a period of years due to costs;
- Signage,
- Working on the park entrance to make it more "friendly."

The Recreation Commission is also looking at **long-term projects**:

- Perimeter fencing repairs;
- Parking lot re-pavement; and
- Pond health.

I am frequently asked about the status of the town's 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendation for development of a "mountain bike trail" in Brightwood Park. (See page 132 of Brandstetter Carroll Final Draft adopted by the Town Council).² The short answer is that the town has no immediate plans.

FOBP has been told that there is no current movement to develop additional trails for biking. Biking is currently allowed on designated trails in the park, and there is no plan to change this. While there is no current plan to add new trails in the immediate future, the town does plan to hire an expert at some point to study the trails and make recommendations.

In connection with the town's priority to protect the environment, the town has already consulted two ecologists. FOBP is hopeful that any future proposed trail maintenance/development will take into consideration the opinions of the two ecologists the town consulted in the Summer of 2020.

² See [https://westfieldnj.gov/office2.com/vertical/Sites/%7B57704CD8-22F3-44AB-BC43-B0B1CE80A3BB%7D/uploads/Final Draft - Westfield Parks and Recreation Master Plan 18157 with cover.pdf](https://westfieldnj.gov/office2.com/vertical/Sites/%7B57704CD8-22F3-44AB-BC43-B0B1CE80A3BB%7D/uploads/Final%20Draft%20-%20Westfield%20Parks%20and%20Recreation%20Master%20Plan%2018157%20with%20cover.pdf)

Two Ecologists Toured Brightwood Park in the Summer of 2020

1. Michael Van Clef, Ph.D. of Ecological Solutions, LLC

Van Clef authored the 2008 Brightwood Park Stewardship Plan prepared for the town and the Rahway River Watershed Association.³ That report laid out a blueprint of how to restore the park's health. Unfortunately, due to the 2008 financial crisis, the town did not implement the recommended action plan. FOBP has been using that Plan as a blueprint for ecological restoration of the park.

Last summer, Van Clef returned to the park to re-evaluate the ecological conditions of the park with an eye to its current restoration potential and to comment on the potential plan for mountain bike use. The good news was Van Clef believes that the park can still be rehabilitated.

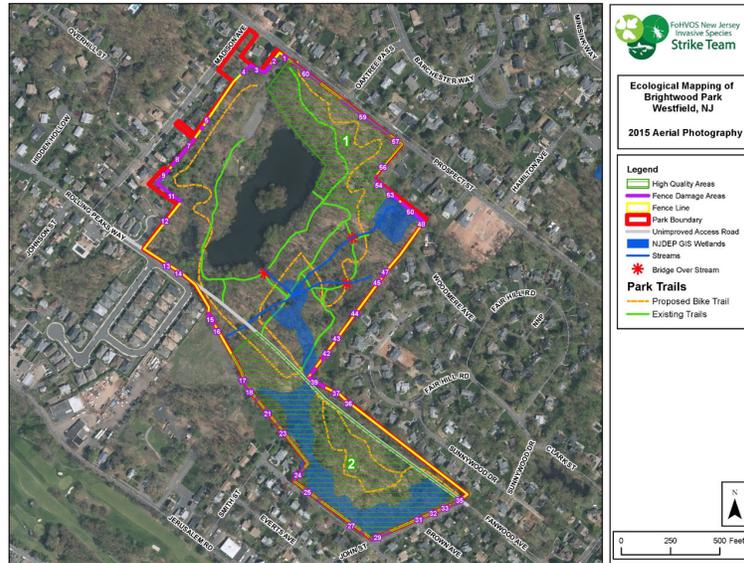
With respect to additional trails in the park, Van Clef wrote:

It is recommended that any new trails (regardless of use) not be placed within the two high-quality areas [See map below] to minimize disturbance/destruction of native plant communities and minimize the spread of invasive species such as Japanese Stiltgrass. Additionally, any new trails within the Park should avoid wetlands and stream crossings as these areas are sensitive to disturbance that would degrade wetland and stream health. The publicly available NJDEP GIS wetlands layer is only approximate (not determined through a formal wetlands delineation) - for example, there is a large unmapped wetland area (potentially a vernal pool) located just south of a mapped wetland patch along the eastern boundary of the Park.⁴

Van Clef shaded the high-quality areas in green stripes on a NJDEP GIS map. He specifically noted that the wetlands depicted on that map were only approximate and not a formal delineation. He recommended that the town contact the NJDEP with respect to the need for a permit if new trails are to be developed.

³ https://rahwayriver.org/images/Brightwood_Park_Files/Brightwood_Park/BrightwoodParkDocList.html

⁴ Brightwood Park Ecological Mapping Report – September 2020 prepared by Michael Van Clef, Program Director, New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team, p. 1-2.



Map1. Brightwood Park Ecological Mapping Evaluation – Entire Park⁵

Van Clef commented that the intensity of trail use dictates the trail maintenance required. Pedestrian use requires little trail maintenance. With respect to Mountain Bike use, he recommends:

- Minimize dual use (pedestrian/bike) to the extent possible – biking can reduce the quality of experience for hikers, dog walkers and nature enthusiasts
- Minimize new trail creation to the extent possible – the creation of trails inevitably reduces natural habitat. For example, utilize existing gravel road that traverses the southern portion of Park as opposed to creating new trails
- Avoid creating or utilizing existing trails with steep slopes to reduce erosion
- Avoid creating or utilizing existing trails with poor drainage to reduce rutting
- Avoid stream crossings without bridges to reduce rutting and impacting stream banks
- Monitor regularly and often for unofficial trail creation and modifications and remove as they occur. Several already exist at the Park and more might be expected if the Park is known for bike trails.⁶

2. Emile DeVito, Ph.D. , Manager of Science and Stewardship, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Member of Board of Directors of the Rahway River Watershed Association

⁵ Brightwood Park Ecological Mapping Report – September 2020 prepared by Michael Van Clef, Program Director, New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team.

⁶ Brightwood Park Stewardship Plan Update 2020 Prepared by Michael Van Clef, Program Director, New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team p.2.

Like Van Clef, Devito also found gem areas of the park that should be preserved. In particular, pristine forest areas have old soil that has not yet been infiltrated by invasive plants. Its carbon content and density are protective – provided it is not disturbed by land use.

DeVito recommends that active recreation be limited in the park to previously disturbed areas where invasive plants are already present. However, DeVito also noted that areas undergoing ecological restoration should not be used for active recreation. Such areas should be off limits except for very limited passive recreation on trails.

DeVito also suggested that streams only be crossed by NJDEP permitted bridges. Finally, he noted that the town should consider the small overall area of the park as it considers further trail development.

FOBP looks forward to a “bright” future collaborating with the town to develop a sustainable nature park.

FOBP is thrilled that the town’s number one stated objective is protecting the environment. We are looking forward to a collaborative effort to restore the ecology of the park while bringing programming to enhance the nature experience of park visitors. We hope to encourage all generations to come to the park, learn about the plants and wildlife it supports, and develop a life-long love of nature.

Peace,
Denise Ricci
President

Friends of Brightwood Park Merchandise

Caps and Tees:

FOBP has caps and T-shirts for sale on our website. To place an order, please visit: <http://www.friendsofbrightwood.org/shop.html>.





Lawn Signs

FOBP's beautiful green heron lawn signs are back in stock! If you would like a lawn sign, visit our webpage: <https://www.friendsofbrightwood.org/shop.html#/>

