

OPEN SPACE CHRONICLES

A newsletter by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

RESTORING VALLEY LANDS TOGETHER



(From Left to Right) Michael Ruger- Hopewell Township Deputy Mayor; Lisa Wolff- FoHVOS Executive Director; Chris Turnbull- Principal; Patricia Watts- Janssen Pharmaceutical Senior Analyst gather to unveil the Community Conservation meadow sign at Bear Tavern Elementary School.

"Restoring Valley Lands Together," the Community Conservation tagline resonates with Hopewell Valley. On Earth Day 2019, we completed two Community Conservation school project grants and a third is slated to conclude this month.

"As one door closes, others open," said Lisa Wolff, FoHVOS Executive

Director, "We wrap up grants by handing the projects off with plans for their continued success. Fortunately, we already have our plates full with new Community Conservation grants for Tollgate and Timberlane Middle School. Also, in the pipeline is an American Chestnut partnered project to be rolled out throughout the entire school district."

We finalized our Bear Tavern Outdoor Learning Area and the Stony Brook Elementary/Brandon Farms meadow by celebrating with large student Earth Day ceremonies. FoHVOS joined Bear Tavern Principal Chris Turnbull, Deputy Mayor Michael Ruger, and Janssen Pharmaceuticals Senior Analyst Patricia Watts as they officially unveiled their interpretive sign.

"It's amazing how far we have come in a year and it just keeps getting better," said Principal Christopher Turnbull.

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PLUS MEET OUR NEW LAND STEWARD, INTERNS, AND BOARD MEMBERS!



SAVE THE DATE! SEPTEMBER 28TH 2019



FoHVOS ANNUAL GALA

Jack Gleeson Award: *Vanessa Sandom*
Organizational Recognition: *Janssen Pharmaceuticals*
Volunteer Recognition: *Anne Nixon-Ellery*

This year's event will again be held at the beautiful Glenmoore Barn.
(More information and details to follow in mid-August)

WELCOME OUR
NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

HELEN CORVELEYN
Trustee

Helen Corveleyn brings creativity and dedication to environmental sustainability. She is a skilled project planner and excellent educator to the FoHVOS Board. Ms. Corveleyn leads by example as the STEM facilitator at Hopewell Elementary school, empowering students to effect change and make substantial progress on the path to sustainability.



Ms. Corveleyn was recognized as the 2019 NJ Governor's Educator of The Year, and her groundbreaking hydroponic garden project earned Hopewell Elementary the Best in New Jersey Farm to School Award.

Helen Corveleyn is also a mother of three, Girl Scout leader, and currently working on her Masters Degree in Conservation Biology in a program at Miami of Ohio.

MIMI TURI
Treasurer



Mimi Turi joins the Board as a new member and Board Treasurer, a role perfectly suited to her leadership expertise and

financial acumen. She is an avid supporter of open space, and lives on the border of Curlis Lake Woods, the preserve FoHVOS originally formed to protect.

As senior director of Program Financial Management at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Ms. Turi oversees the program financial management department, providing high-quality and efficient financial support to staff, grantees and contractors while promoting good stewardship of financial resources.

She holds an MBA from Pace University, is a CPA, and a recipient of the YWCA Princeton Tribute to Women in Industry Achievement Award. Ms. Turi has two adult children, and lives in Pennington with her husband.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2019- POISED TO LEAP



There is a saying that we often quote when partnering on new meadows...

The first year it *sleeps*...
Second year it *creeps*...
Third year it *leaps*!

The underlying message is that the beauty of native wildflowers won't appear overnight. Patience, tending, care, and a little help from Mother Nature will achieve your goals. In the case of our native plant meadow, goals include introducing biodiversity that can improve the health of our water, land, and air we breathe. Additionally, those new plants reduce the carbon footprint and provide wonderful habitat for flora and fauna.

Interestingly that same saying seems to apply to FoHVOS as well. Back when I started in early 2017, FoHVOS was a *sleepy* nonprofit that had accomplished tremendously more than its persona might indicate. It had great bones but needed some planting and seeding to reach its future potential.

In 2018, FoHVOS *creeped* along -- removing rocks, adding nutrients and nourishment to its foundational soil. We weren't afraid to bring in experts to plant the seeds of our future. FoHVOS earnestly worked with new auditors to improve our process. We engaged specialists to create a strategic plan for the newly acquired FoHVOS Invasive Species Strike Team project. We brought in accreditation professionals to ensure we were engaging in best practices for land use. We established our Community Conservation program to ensure proper partnership structures were in place to strengthen our stewardship mission work. We

honed our FoHVOS Force of Nature programs to help inspire people to connect to our lands and mission.

In 2019, FoHVOS is poised to *leap* to new levels as our earlier seeds are beginning to bloom. FoHVOS received national Accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance. FoHVOS Invasive Species Strike team is fulfilling its plan, had another successful annual professional conference, and is executing a \$200k+ Forest Service grant. We have received critical acclaim for our Community Conservation and Force of Nature programs that have led to additional land stewardship work, grants, and more rewarding partnership programs. In addition, we are thrilled to proceed with additional Open Space land collaboration and acquisition.

As part of our efforts to raise awareness about invasive species and best land stewardship practices, FoHVOS is hosting the first annual Community Conference on Sunday June 2nd at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Everyone is welcome to join us for a day of learning and fun.

Please check out this newsletter and read about the exciting blooms of our 2019 season. As always, we invite you to be a part of our ever-expanding ecosystem to *Preserve* land, *Protect* natural resources, and *Inspire* the next generation of conservation. 🌳

See you on our lands,

Lisa Wolff
Executive Director

LAND TRUST ALLIANCE ACCREDITATION



Last February FoHVOS announced it has achieved national recognition – joining a network of over 400 accredited land trusts across the nation that have demonstrated their commitment to professional excellence and to maintaining the public’s trust in their work.

“Accreditation demonstrates FoHVOS’s commitment to permanent land conservation in Hopewell Valley,” said Daniel Rubenstein, FoHVOS Board President. “We are a stronger organization for having gone through the rigorous accreditation program. Our strength means special places – such as the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain – will be protected forever, making Hopewell Valley an even greater place for us and our children.”



(From Left to Right) Jay Watson- Vice President of D&R Greenway Land Trust, Lisa Wolff- Executive Director of FoHVOS, Renee Jones- NJDEP Green Acres Program, and Anne Heasley- Sustainable Jersey.



District 15 Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson and Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli offer their congratulations...with Lisa Wolff- FoHVOS Executive Director, center.

The real power behind FoHVOS is our desire to inclusively partner with the greater community to achieve lasting results. For example, our last two major preservations – Mount Rose and Woosamonsa Ridge – were led by NJCF and D&R Greenway, respectively, and both accredited land trusts. Under FoHVOS Community Conservation, we have joined forces with local municipalities, corporations, NGOs, and homeowner associations. Collaboration is our secret to success. Partnering with LTA on accreditation is a crowning achievement.

On April 18th, FoHVOS held an Earth Day celebration at Gravity Hill Barn in Titusville, NJ that recognized all who helped with the accreditation process. Specifically honored were Jay Watson, D&R Greenway Land Trust, Renee Jones, NJ DEP – Green Acres, and Anne Heasley, Sustainable Jersey. The evening was capped off with many municipal leaders as well as District 15 Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson who came out to offer their congratulations. 🌱

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“I love that we are leading by example – both as environmental stewards and successful collaborators. The sign is the perfect addition to not only reinforce ecological lessons learned at school, but also to facilitate sharing our great work that can be duplicated by families. It’s not hard to convert a plot of lawn to meadow and extend the same ecological benefits at home. It has been a wonderful experience working with all of our partners and adding on to the project.”

Principal Steve Wilfing unveiled the Stony Brook Elementary School interpretive sign along with Kristin McLaughlin, Hopewell Township Mayor, Peter Sandford, Brandon Farms Property Owners Association, Lisa Wolff, FoHVOS, and Vanessa Sandom, Project Benefactor.

“This 10,000 square foot meadow is so helpful for the environment,” shared Principal Wilfing to hundreds of surrounding students. “Some refer to a lawn as ‘green concrete’ due to its shallow roots. New native wildflowers and grasses will increase biodiversity

and introduce a deep root structure that helps filtrate, clean and replenish groundwater.”

Mr. Wilfing thanked the partners and added, “Nature also teaches us patience. The meadow doesn’t have many flowers right now, but it will continue to get better with time. They say the first year it sleeps, second year it creeps, third year it leaps. This sign will remind us what to watch for.”

As we look to the future, FoHVOS continues working with the Hopewell Township Environmental Commission to bring back the American chestnut tree, nearly wiped out by a blight over 100 years ago. In addition to the hundreds of chestnuts FoHVOS has planted at our preserves, we invited the school district to join this burgeoning Community Conservation partnership.

Mike Aucott, American Chestnut project leader, explains, “This work will extend into the future, so it’s important to involve young people. Superintendent Tom Smith and the Hopewell Valley Regional



(From Left to Right) Community Conservation sign unveiling with Pete Sandford- Brandon Farm Property Owners Association, Kristin McLaughlin- Hopewell Township Mayor, Lisa Wolff- FoHVOS Executive Director, Steve Wilfing Principal Stony Brook Elementary, Vanessa Sandom- Project Benefactor.

School District STEM team leaders will contribute to the project. Demonstration plantings of several varieties of chestnut trees are planned at all four elementary schools for the fall. Through these plantings, students will gain understanding of ecology and genetics and will become part of the effort to bring this iconic and important tree back to our forests.” 🌱

To learn more or start your own Community Conservation project, visit FoHVOS.com.



WELCOMING THE AMERICAN KESTREL IN THE HOPEWELL VALLEY



*Baby Kestrel
Photo by Gemma Milly*

This spring, FoHVOS Community Conservation put American kestrels in the spotlight, and focused efforts on recovering the kestrel population in the Hopewell Valley. In March, we hosted nest box-building workshops. In April, we installed boxes in suitable habitats throughout the Hopewell Valley, and in May, we have kestrels nesting. FoHVOS land stewards and volunteer monitors have already reported successful nests in some of the fifty kestrel boxes, and are actively monitoring the nests.

are inconclusive, but land use changes have reduced or degraded the available grasslands, meadows, and open fields where kestrels hunt and nest.

This project was made possible by a grant awarded by NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife Conserve Wildlife Matching Grant Program. FoHVOS partnered with enthusiastic organizations like Bloomberg, Calvary Church, Cambridge School, Cub Scout Troop 1776, Hopewell Elementary, Painted Oak School, Pennington School, and community volunteers to construct 50 new boxes. Private landowners in the FoHVOS Community Conservation program and conservation partners such as the Mercer County Park Commission, D&R Greenway Land Trust, and New Jersey Conservation Foundation accommodated new kestrel boxes on their preserves.



Local community members gathered at the Calvary Baptist Church to assist with constructing the Kestrel Boxes.

The American kestrel is a vibrant falcon found in grassland habitats across the country, and FoHVOS is invested in fostering better kestrel habitats here in New Jersey, where populations have steeply declined in recent decades. This bird will adapt to man-made boxes, making kestrels a strong contender for nesting boxes.

With the help of our partners and community volunteers, we will see continued success in recovering the declining population of these tiny grassland falcons in the Hopewell Valley. 🌳

Learn more about our project at <https://www.fohvos.info/kestrel-nesting-boxes/>



Pennington School students assist with Kestrel Box building with activities led by Beth Craighead.

According to data from NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program, counts of migratory kestrels indicate a pattern of declining populations in the northeast; in 2012, New Jersey listed the American kestrel as a threatened species. The precise causes for the depleted population in New Jersey



*Cub Scouts Troop 1776
Photo by Pete DiDonato*



Board Member Courtney Peters-Manning's sons, Seamus and Conor Manning, built Kestrel boxes at the Cambridge School.



Tagging was done on a female Kestrel by Bill Pitts from NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program located at Mercer Meadows.



Volunteer monitor Sarah Crosby, along with other volunteers throughout the Valley, make the rounds to check boxes once every two weeks to monitor for nesting activity.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES



Students from Central High School and Boys and Girls Club help clean up Mount Rose Preserve



Students participate in leadership activity at Central High School.

FoHVOS makes it a priority to encourage equitable access to all public lands. Everyone should have opportunities to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors and nature. Through partnerships with Global Connections in Hopewell and the Boys & Girls Club of Mercer County, FoHVOS has helped connect communities in service, engagement, and active stewardship.



(From left to right) David Angwenyi- Global Connections Executive Director, Lisa Wolff- FoHVOS Executive Director, David Anderson - BGC President & CEO, Zoubir Yazid - BGC Chief Operating Office.

In April, our first joint program included raising Global Connections scholarship money by participating in Clean Communities at Mount Rose preserve, followed by a pizza party at Hopewell Valley Central High School.

FoHVOS helped Boys & Girls Club with their community garden in Trenton and were thrilled to attend the official opening on May 14th. We have more activities queued up and welcome Mercer County Parks to join our next program. 🌱



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

FORCE OF NATURE 2019

It's hard to believe that this is our third year of Force of Nature hikes. Attendees, led by Romy Toussaint of RomYoga, explore different FoHVOS preserves. Past hikes were women only, but this year we have opened Force of Nature to anyone that enjoys a forest immersion experience.

Spending time outdoors has been scientifically proven to improve health. The Japanese refer to the practice as Shinrin-yoku or "Forest bathing." Hopewell Valley is particularly conducive to forest bathing since we have an amazing selection of beautifully preserved forest trails from which to choose.

The key to forest bathing is simply to be mindful. Immersion in the forest will help clear your mind and open your senses to connect with nature. Many people find the experience meditative and notice their breathing while walking through the forest. Tuning into the sights, sounds, smells, textures and tastes, they are immersed in a very visceral reaction to their surroundings. Romy adds yoga stretches to complete the experience. 🌳



Pre- Hike Warmup



Meditation by the pond



Climbing the Rocks



Upcoming Hikes

**National Trails Day:
Happy Hour with Romy**
Sunday June 2nd 1-3pm
Bear Tavern Outdoor Learning Area
Titusville, NJ



Paws in the Preserve
(in conjunction with HV Come Outside & Play)
Saturday June 8th 9am
Fiddlers Creek Preserve
Titusville, NJ

June FON Hike with RomYoga
Saturday June 22nd 9am
Thompson Preserve
Hopewell, NJ

July FON Hike with RomYoga
Friday July 12th 9am
Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve
Pennington, NJ





WELCOME GEMMA MILLY!
Staff Land Steward

FoHVOS gives a renewed welcome to Gemma Milly as a permanent Land Steward. Gemma joined the FoHVOS team in 2015 in a consulting capacity, specializing in wild plant stewardship. Since then, she has expanded monitoring and stewardship of over a dozen rare plant species, designed restoration projects, and led outreach hikes. As a professional botanist, Gemma's deep knowledge of and attentiveness to natural plant communities bring a valuable perspective to our conservation and restoration projects. Gemma earned her BS degree in Ecology from Rutgers and previously worked with the NJDEP Natural Heritage Program.

WELCOME OUR SEASONAL LAND STEWARD INTERNS!

- Nick Alpeza
- Jackie Gouris
- Matthew Hamilton
- Joanne Hong
- Cory Snyder
- Samantha Stefanoni

RENAMING THE PRESERVES

BY TOM OGREN



For many years FoHVOS typically named its preserves after the previous land owner. This may have occurred to anyone using the FoHVOS Guide to Walking Trails or looking up preserves on the FoHVOS website. With the planned printing of a third edition of the trail guide later this year, the FoHVOS board recently agreed to give some preserves with trails new names relating to their approximate location or historic connection. In doing so, FoHVOS was following the lead of Hopewell Township which recently changed the name of Alliger Park to Woolsey Park, after George Woolsey, the first settler on the land in the early 1700's.

One of the preserves with a new name is the Thompson Preserve located on Pennington-Hopewell Road. Renamed the Marshall's Corner Preserve, the preserve is named after the historic Marshall's Corner area in which it is located, as well as the stone Marshall's Corner Schoolhouse circa 1850 which is adjacent to the preserve entrance. The renaming was especially appropriate given the Hopewell Valley Historical Society's recent recognition of the history of Marshall's Corner by erecting a large display sign near the 18th century Furman-Larison house. The sign notes Washington's route through the area on his way to the battle of Monmouth in 1778.

A second preserve which has been renamed is the Eames Preserve on Harbourton-Woodsville Road. Renamed the Woodsville Preserve, the preserve takes the name of the nearby historic hamlet of Woodsville and a natural feature along its trail, the Woodsville Brook. The name also relates to the road which provide access to the preserve, the Harbourton-Woodsville Road.

A renamed third preserve is the Nayfield Preserve on Route 518, about a mile west of Route 31. Given the historic use of the preserve as a dairy farm operated by its previous owner, the new name simply adds the word "farm" making the new name, the Nayfield Farm Preserve. The large open fields of the preserve near the trail entrance help to bring back to life the farming history of the site. The new name appropriately recognizes the often forgotten rich agricultural heritage of the Hopewell Valley.

In recent years, FoHVOS has named its preserves after a place name, road and/or natural feature. Its most recently acquired preserve, the Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve, illustrates that policy. The preserve is named for both its location on Woosamonsa Road and a prominent natural feature, a high ridge which one of its trails ascends. By using a Native American name, the preserve name also recognizes the original inhabitants of the area. 🌳



LIVING TRIBUTE PLANTING DAY

Most non-profit organizations offer opportunities to donate money in someone's honor or memory, but FoHVOS took the concept one step further by providing a living tribute, a new Community Conservation stewardship initiative. Tribute choices include native wildflowers, saplings, and 7-foot trees. Several FoHVOS preserves feature a fenced restoration area to keep deer from eating newly planted native wildflowers and saplings. 7-foot trees can be outside deer enclosures since the height is taller than deer graze, however we place a protective sleeve around the base of the tree.

Susan Michniewski, of Hopewell NJ, said, "Last year I made tribute



Anne Nixon-Ellery with her Tribute planting for her late father, Captain Peter Nixon.

"Participating in the planting really added to our experience and made the FoHVOS tribute a truly unique gift to my husband."

-Randee Teng

donations. Planting native trees and wildflowers on land that will be preserved forever is a perfect way to appreciate and respect the lives of the seven people that I wanted to honor. Although there are no plaques placed on the land, I knew I would be able to visit and remember them since FoHVOS preserves are so close to my home."

Community volunteers assist FoHVOS on semi-annual tribute planting days. Donors and recipients alike also appreciate the option to participate in planting their tribute. For our spring tribute planting, dedicated corporate partner Bloomberg sent a team of 20 people to Hopewell to help.

"I very much appreciated being included in the planting of the memorial trees/wildflowers at the Thompson Preserve," added Ms. Michniewski, "When Lisa Wolff, FoHVOS Executive Director, read the names of those to be remembered and honored it made the Planting Day all the more special!"

Chris Teng of Ewing, NJ received tribute donations from friends in honor of his birthday.

His wife, Randee Teng, shared,

"When celebrating Chris's birthday with our friends and family, we



Bloomberg volunteers came out on Friday, May 3rd to join our semi-annual Tribute planting day.

requested charitable donations instead of gifts. It was a pleasant surprise that the living tribute gifts included the opportunity to meet up with friends again to help plant the donated trees. Participating in the planting really added to our experience and made the FoHVOS tribute a truly unique gift to my husband."



(From left to right) Christopher Boland, Eric, Chris, and Randee Teng with Chris Teng's tribute birthday tree.

To Order your Tribute Donation:

Scan here:



or visit

fohvos.info/tribute-donations/

All Tribute Donations include:

- Locally planted native wildflowers or trees
- FoHVOS Charitable Contribution
- A personalized hand written note
- Framed card wrapped with a "Tree of Life" Charm
- Tributes offer a variety of options to meet your needs.



FoHVOs

FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE

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OUR MISSION:

*Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is an accredited non-profit land trust that is dedicated to preserving the Valley's character by partnering with the community to **preserve** land, **protect** natural resources, and **inspire** a new generation of conservation.*



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