

OPEN SPACE CHRONICLES

A newsletter by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Eames Preserve
Photo by Barbara Krivda

AVOIDING PANDEMIC FATIGUE: THE PARADOX OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Pandemic Fatigue is real. It is draining to stay on high alert month after month (after month!) Couple that with unending polarizing political dialogue, and let's face it... Who wouldn't feel exhausted?

Early in the year when we first learned about Coronavirus, it felt almost patriotic to follow Stay-At-Home orders knowing that your actions (or inaction as the case may be) were keeping yourself and others safe. But soon the novelty wore off.

It is a challenge and a paradox. We need to take precautions like distancing to stay healthy, and yet prolonged social isolation can cause loneliness which has a tangible impact on mental and physical health.

As the second round of Coronavirus hits Hopewell Valley harder than the first, braving the weather and getting outdoors with a small number of friends and family may be your best defense.

According to the CDC, COVID is most commonly spread by people in close contact with one another. The odds increase with prolonged contact and poor ventilation (i.e. indoors.)

FoHVOS is doing our part to make your outdoor experience enjoyable. We kept our trails open even as others closed. Plus, thanks to grants from Church & Dwight, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, and Bristol Myers Squibb, FoHVOS preserves will be upgraded with many new and interesting features. Our free 2020 trail guide, available now, features 100 miles of walking trails throughout the Hopewell Valley. Our newest properties will further extend those opportunities. FoHVOS trail monitors ensure the trails are well-groomed and safe for your use.

In addition to getting out on the trails, read about other popular and safe community activities on page 2. 🌳

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"To All Trees with Thanks"
ArtSpire by Anne Nixon- Ellery



#OPTOUTSIDE

NOVEMBER 27TH 2020, 9AM & 11AM

#OptOutside with RomYoga & Mercer County Park Commission on Black Friday

Socially Distanced!

COVID-Safe!



- What: #OptOutside
- Where: Baldpate Mountain - Titusville, NJ
- When: Friday, November 27th
- Guided hikes at 9AM or 11AM
- Self-Guided hike map available at mercercountyparks.org
- Event is *FREE*, but registration is required at FohVOS.org



Three Hikes to choose from. Visit Page 3 for details.

Be mindful to dress according to weather. All hikers are required to wear a mask.



WELCOME JAQUAN LEVONS



The FoHVOS Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the addition of Jaquan Levons who brings unique knowledge and enthusiasm to the board.

Jaquan Levons lives in Titusville, NJ and is passionate about encouraging people of color to embrace the outdoors and discover nature. You can find him bicycling with his wife and three daughters on trails in the area. He recently self-published a children's book about his kids learning to ride their bikes.

Jaquan frequently explores FoHVOS trails with his family and he believes that being a trustee is a great opportunity to give back and invest in outdoor spaces. "Working with FoHVOS is a great opportunity to perpetuate the excellent work preserving the lands in our area, to be an example to others in my community of the relevance to people of color, and to highlight amazing spaces for kids and families of color to come together and embrace the outdoors," said Jaquan.

Jaquan Levons has worked at Bristol Myers Squibb for 17 years, and is currently a Principal Scientist leading a team focused on exploring how digital technology can be applied to tomorrow's drug products. Jaquan received his bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Princeton University and holds several formulation patents in drug product development.

Jaquan also serves as an Elder at Central-A Christ Centered Church and was the most recent Director of Men's Ministry.

When not on the trails you'll find Jaquan spending time manicuring his woodlands with his chainsaw, as well as camping, making s'mores, and building his children's chicken coop.

"We are so fortunate to have Jaquan Levons join us," shared Dan Rubenstein, President of the FoHVOS Board of Trustees. "From connecting children with nature, to promoting community conservation stewardship through building Outdoor Equity Alliance initiatives, Jaquan's background adds valuable insight to shaping the future of FoHVOS programs." 🌳

SAFE OPTIONS FOR STAYING CONNECTED

2020 has been a crazy year and personally, I will not mind seeing it in my rear-view mirror. However, from a FoHVOS perspective, it was a fairly successful year. One of the metrics on which we judge ourselves, using both qualitative and quantitative measures, is our ability to connect people to local lands. We did well in this area, even if it took COVID to jumpstart the move. The pandemic really got our community outside and thinking about their health and more.

Ever wonder how FoHVOS members spend their time? The most common activities were -- Getting outside for health and fresh air, spending time with family, hanging out online, completing household projects, finding artistic outlets, contemplating current events and often taking civic-minded action. Interestingly, FoHVOS played a role in every one. Here's how:

Getting outside for health and fresh air: Our Board of Trustees prioritizes community access to our lands, so we put in extra efforts to safely open our preserves. Even when the state, county, and other conservation organizations closed their trails, FoHVOS lands stayed open excluding two trails that weren't conducive to distancing. We made the remaining loop trails one direction and we have enlisted and trained 10 volunteer trail monitors to ensure trail safety.

Finally, we opened new preserves and purchased new lands to provide even more options. In late August after Hopewell Township completing the long-awaited parking area, D&R Greenway Land Trust, FoHVOS and Hopewell Township formally opened the Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve which features interesting terrain and amazing vistas. In addition, FoHVOS purchased our new Harbourton Preserve and plan to build trails that connect it to Woosamonsa Ridge. Learn more on about the Harbourton Preserve on page 3.

Spending time with family: Some of our categories overlap and it turns out that hiking outside is also a fun family activity. Wondering where else to hike? Check out the 2020 edition of our new trail guide. Details are on page 3. There are lots of great new features including GPS information to ensure you don't get lost. Still, if you are more comfortable going out on a guided hike, check out page 7 to learn about family-friendly, COVID-safe Force of Nature hikes.

Then check page 3 for #OptOutside, our upcoming Black Friday alternative. Find the perfect hike! There are three levels from which to choose.



Hanging out online: FoHVOS reformatted many activities from in-person to online. Like so many organizations, we offered Zoom workshops, but we also got a bit more creative with our online presence. Those tuned in to FoHVOS enjoyed a "Botanical Briefs" social media campaign and Hopewell Valley Hug-A-Tree featuring photos of your favorite community leaders. Our most notable online event was the Virtually Together gala shown on pages 4 and 5 -- a fantastic experience! Not only was there a band, fun trivia, honorees, and the regular auction feature, but also, unlike our traditional event, everyone could focus on video clips of our most exciting initiatives. We encourage you to check out the HV-Hug-A-Tree and the gala features on our YouTube channel.

Completing household projects: In our spring newsletter titled, "Maintaining Connection Amid the Distance," FoHVOS documented our many at-home activities including build-at-home bee abode habitat and native gardening. FoHVOS wholesale native plant efforts were wildly successful as the community purchased and planted thousands of native wildflowers, more than doubling previous years. Check out the Community Conservation video on page 5.

Finding Artistic Outlets: FoHVOS took the opportunity to get involved with many community art projects. See Arts in The Valley on page 6.

Civic-Minded Action: Many current events brought attention to both environmental and equity issues throughout the country. FoHVOS has taken a leadership role in both areas and is pleased to work with so many dedicated partners. Learn more about the Outdoor Equity Alliance on page 6.

Though FoHVOS has made great strides in 2020, it came with the incredible cost and stress brought on by COVID-19. I hope 2021 lifts the cloud of this pandemic and grants Hopewell Valley health and prosperity. 🌳

Lisa Wolff
Lisa Wolff

FoHVOS Executive Director

#OPTOUTSIDE 2020

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

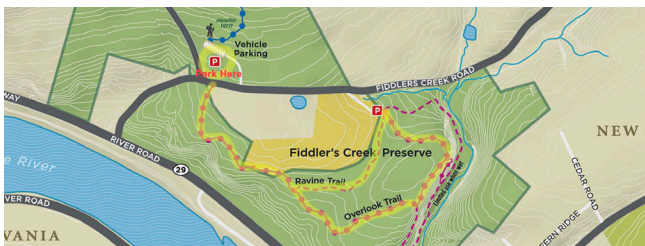
Force of Nature



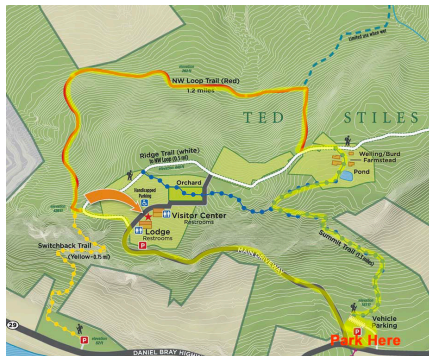
FoHVOS, RomYoga & Mercer County Park Commission partner for #OptOutside on Black Friday, November 27th! Hike with us at Baldpate Mountain. Choose your hike distance up to 7 miles! This event is FREE, but please register on our website so we can ensure COVID safety. Hikes are limited to 20 people each with three different hiking options. Masks are mandatory. Please keep weather in mind and dress accordingly. To register, visit fohvos.org. Any additional questions, please contact Logan, lhorvath@fohvos.org.

HIKE OPTIONS

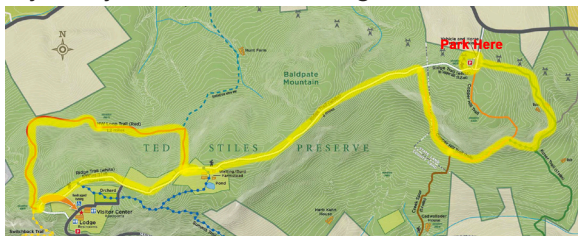
Easy Loop (1.75 miles) - Departing at 9am from the Lower Baldpate Mountain parking lot, this hike will take you on a nice level loop around our Fiddlers Creek Preserve, lead by Jim Weber.



Moderate Loop (4 miles) - Departing at 11am from the Lower Baldpate Mountain parking lot, this hike will take you up Baldpate Mountain with a detour to the pond, across the ridge, and back down the driveway. Lead by FoHVOS Program Manager, Logan Horvath.



Challenging Loop (7.5 Miles) - Departing at 9am from the Pleasant Valley parking lot, this start off on the Copper Loop, across the ridge, through the Northwest Loop Trail, a visit to the pond before returning back via the ridge. Lead by Romy Toussaint of RomYoga.



NEW

INTRODUCING

THE HARBOURTON PRESERVE

Located at 144 Harbourton-Woodsville Road, the 31-acre Harbourton Preserve sits north of The Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve. Purchased with funds from Green Acres, Mercer County and Hopewell Township, The Harbourton Preserve will extend the reach and add extra dimension to Woosamonsa Ridge.

Neighbors surrounding our latest acquisition were appreciative that the land preservation assured that no new development would go in. Other acquisitions to extend Woosamonsa Ridge trails are planned.



& IMPROVED!

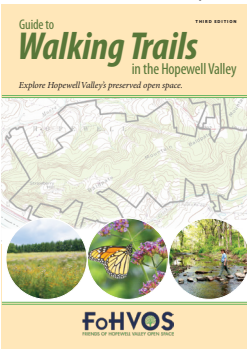
2020 EDITION: GUIDE TO WALKING TRAILS IN THE HOPEWELL VALLEY

Hot of the press! The 2020 Trail Guide is available both online and in print form. The Guide is chock full of new information. Over 100 miles of trails are open to the public at the 25 locations included. Land manager information is shown for all trails to report problems or comments. A QR code for every FoHVOS preserve links to the most current trail information, deer hunting schedule, and an interactive GPS map.

Scan here:



Use **FoHVOS Interactive GPS** maps for directions to preserves and parking locations and to find special features including interpretive signs, benches, and more. Most importantly, you will always know where you are on the trail (or if you have wandered off-trail.) GPS maps work on Android and iOS-supported mobile devices. Load the GPS map onto your phone to use the interactive map while out on the trails -- even with no signal or internet access.



Funding for the trail guide was made possible by a grant from Church & Dwight.



The FoHVOS Virtually Together Gala was held on Saturday, September 26, 2020. As our first online gala endeavor, it was wildly successful. Our event sponsors gave generously and are shown on this page.

FoHVOS sought to make the gala as enjoyable as our in-person event and even included fun trivia with prizes. However, unlike gatherings where people entertain themselves by mingling and noshing on catered cuisine, a virtual event demands that the host furnish all the entertainment. We rose to the challenge by including auction items and a band commonly seen at galas, but spent the lion's share of our time showing video clips of many cool activities that FoHVOS supports.

Another unusual feature of the event was our partnership with local restaurants. We felt it was important

to give back to COVID-ravaged restaurants. They donate to us every year. This year we encouraged gala guests to order that evening's dinner from local restaurants. A generous donor bought restaurant giftcards at full price and donated them to the FoHVOS auction.

In addition, we honored Bloomberg with corporate recognition, Paul Kuehnert with individual recognition, and Tom Ogren with the Jack Gleeson Lifetime Achievement Award. The Gleeson presentation included short comments from about 30 community leaders

The great thing about a virtual gala is that you can revisit the good times again. We encourage you to visit the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space YouTube channel and watch a short video from the event, or if you are more ambitious, you can watch the whole thing.

"I hadn't been around this many people since we've all been quarantined, but we did so safely. It was joyous."
- Anita, Hike Participant

HONOREES

Jack Gleeson Environmental Award
Tom Ogren



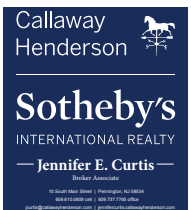
FoHVOS Friends Organization
Bloomberg
Divina Tucci & Mike Hastings



FoHVOS Friends Volunteer
Paul Kuehnert



GALA SPONSORS



The Gleeson Family - John & Carol Jackson - Lisa Wolff & Paul Kinney - Mayor Kristin McLaughlin
Carol Kleis & Rex Parker - Vanessa Sandom & Carl Seiden - Mimi & Chuck Turi

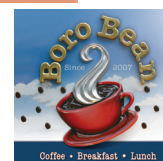
DINING TOGETHER PARTNERS



Peasant Grill



Entrata



MERCER COUNTY NATURE FOR ALL

Outdoor Equity Alliance

Building Conservation through Diversity and Teamwork

FoHVOS Community Conservation RESTORING VALLEY LANDS TOGETHER

HVRSD Outdoor Learning

Community Conservation Land Owners

Erica Johanson
Maricel and Michael Hermann
Pascale Poussart and Adam Maloof
Moira and Jack Lawrence
Sharyn Magee
David Voorhees
(and many more not featured in this presentation)

Partners

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
Nectars Landscape and Design
Weatherwood Design
Wild Ridge Plants

Credits

Interviews: Mike Van Clef, Ph. D.

Production and Video Design: Logan Horvath

Editing and Content: Lisa Wolff
Logan Horvath

Photos By: Girish Pandit
Pascale Poussart

Force of Nature

Join us for our next hike!

November 27th #OptOutside

For more info, visit FoHVOS.org or email lhorvath@fohvos.org

In addition to honoree presentations, here is a sample of some of your choices:

Building Conservation through Diversity & Teamwork (6:41) – explores our Outdoor Equity Alliance work assembling a partnered internship program between HVRSD and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County. Includes an excerpt of NJTV coverage of the internship along with comments from some of the partners, as well as Additional commentary by Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

Community Conservation in HVRSD Schools (5:11) – Superintendent Tom Smith, Asst. Superintendent Rosetta Treece, and 2020 Mercer County Teacher of the Year Helen Corveleyn discuss the benefits of outdoor education in times of COVID and look at the outdoor learning areas FoHVOS has helped install over the years.

Residential Community Conservation (5:41) – is narrated by FoHVOS Stewardship Director, Mike Van Clef, discussing FoHVOS conservation work throughout Hopewell Valley. It features a wide array of some of the most beautiful native wildflower gardens in the area. Gala attendees requested a post-COVID in person garden tour.

Force of Nature Hike Series (2:03) – features Romy of RomYoga explaining the components of a Force of Nature hike. It was filmed after our July 2020 hike. Participant Anita Williams shares, “I got to spend some time with my sister and my daughter, which is rare. I hadn’t been around this many people since we’ve all been quarantined, but we did so safely. It was joyous.”

Honorariums and Tributes (1:03) – Anne Nixon Ellery narrates why the FoHVOS tribute program was so important to her.

In 2021, we are considering doing a hybrid gala to combine the best of our virtual and traditional galas. We hope to see you there. 🌿



OUTDOOR EQUITY ALLIANCE MERCER COUNTY NATURE FOR ALL

FoHVOS is pleased to house the Mercer County Outdoor Equity Alliance, a group of over 20 organizations including The Mercer County Park Commission, community service, conservation, school district, and companies that partner to provide a wide array of activities in all seasons for families and people of all ethnicities, ages, and abilities. The coalition pays special attention to removing barriers to participation. The OEA is developing a framework that encourages any organization to build programs that provide equitable access and opportunities for underserved populations.

OEA partners initiated a 2020 internship that teamed Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County with HVRSD students to understand and perform land stewardship. They have received funding for a 2021

internship to track and study birds. NJTV, Next City, and other media outlets have run stories about OEA programs. The Watershed Institute included OEA co-chair, Lisa Wolff, in its November 5th panel discussion, 'Helping Environmental Organizations Prioritize and Normalize Racial Justice.'

In addition, the OEA hired its first dedicated staff person. "Our work helps the youth of marginalized communities to see that involvement in all aspects of the environment is not only important to their health and their local communities, but also is a viable vocation with many avenues open to them," shared Renata Barnes, the newly hired Outdoor Equity Alliance coordinator. "We repeatedly hear that in the year 2050, the population of this country will overwhelmingly be of color, so

preparing a future generation to take on the increasingly intricate issues of the environment is paramount. Our priorities include conveying the importance of the symbiotic relationship between people and nature and maintaining that balance through stewardship. Creating a growing passion in young people of color for their natural surroundings is the first step." 🌳



Interns visit Grounds for Sculpture October 2020

ARTS IN THE VALLEY



Anne's 2020 "The Moon" Pumpkin with the jumping cow



"To All Trees With Thanks" ArtSpire by Anne



Local community member and longtime FoHVOS supporter, Anne Nixon-Ellery, has repeatedly donated her talents to represent us in local Hopewell Valley Arts Council Events. Each year Anne volunteers her time to represent FoHVOS in the Amazing Pumpkin Carve and this year was no exception. Thanks to the HV Arts Council, the Amazing Pumpkin Carve was hosted as a COVID safe drive through event. Anne created a beautiful "The Moon" pumpkin which incorporated a jumping cow (shown at right).

Anne also created a one of a kind ArtSpire as part of the HV Arts Council "Out of the Ashes"

Project. The ArtSpires project memorializes the loss of native ash trees from the harmful effects of the emerald ash borer beetle. ArtSpires were milled from American ash wood felled by Hopewell Township and PSE&G. Anne's spire includes a handmade sea glass tree, charms and encouraging quotes as a tribute to our earth. Have you found her spire in Hopewell yet? (answer below)

Anne regularly donates the use of her barn at Glenmoore Farm to host our annual gala, although unfortunately it was necessary to hold a virtual event this year. (See more information about this year's gala on pages 4 and 5.) 🌳

Answer: Anne's ArtSpire is located at the HVRSD Admin building on South Main St.

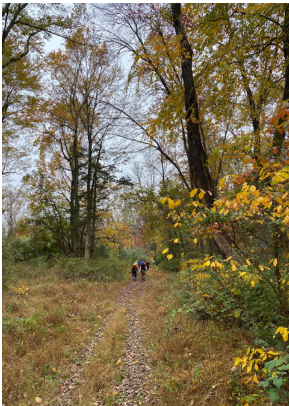


FORCE OF NATURE HIKE SERIES

The importance of outdoors has been highlighted in 2020 more than ever before. As COVID encouraged us to stay safe in our homes and secluded from others, the outdoors welcomed solace with fresh air, sunlight, and comfort. To counteract anxiety and stress levels rising as we adapt to this new normal, Mother Nature has unwaveringly shown us her calming grace.

Our Force of Nature Hikes series capped out quickly when we announced its launch in June. Hikes were limited to 20 attendees to ensure safe distancing and masks were mandatory.

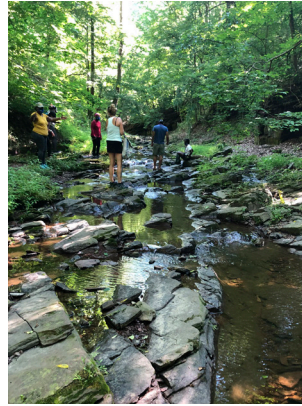
Attendees received custom FoHVOS masks at our inaugural hike at Mt. Rose Preserve. Subsequent hikes were also well attended and took place at Fiddlers Creek Preserve, Heritage Preserve and the Woodsville-Eames Preserve. Romy Toussaint of RomYoga led the majority of our hikes. She began with light stretches, infusing the walk with a yoga and meditative twist.



Woodsville/ Eames Preserve
October 2020 Hike



Fiddlers Creek Preserve
July 2020 Hike



Heritage Preserve
September 2020 Hike

TRAIL MONITOR VOLUNTEERING



Volunteer Trail Monitors keep the preserves safe for visitors.



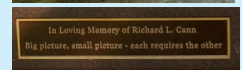
In an effort to keep our trails safe, FoHVOS began a volunteer trail monitoring program. Trail monitors are trained to use FoHVOS interactive GPS so they can share the exact location of downed trees or any other points of interest. In addition, they are loaned loppers to remove branches or sticker bushes growing into the trail path. Trail monitors sign up for 2-hour timeslots and work in pairs.

Trail Monitors must attend training, receive service hour credit, and "earn" an athletic orange FoHVOS knit cap after 5 hours of service.

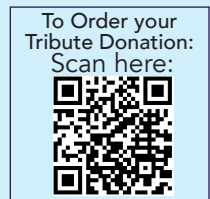
Our program has been so successful that we will offer another trail monitor training on December 5. Email lhovath@fohvos.org for information.

CUSTOM TRIBUTE DONATIONS

FoHVOS is now offering customized tributes to honor or memorialize your loved ones. Custom tributes start at \$1,000 and combine art and nature for a lasting memento that also gives back to the land. Recent tributes have included the bench pictured beside a native wildflower garden, and a memorial dogwood tree with a one-of-a-kind sandblasted stone tribute marker designed by Anne Nixon-Ellery in consultation with the donor.



To give the gift of nature for a budget that fits your pocketbook, choose from standard native flower and tree local plantings that range from \$25-\$600 and include an elegant frameable card to notify your recipient of the gift.



or visit fohvos.info/tribute-donations/

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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