SUMMER 2020

What's Inside:
• COVID-19 Response at the Gardens
• Meet the New Board Members
• Tips for Photography in the Gardens
Greetings Friends,

During the last few months we have encountered daunting and extraordinary times which have changed the way we live, work, and view the world around us. We experienced a spring we never could have imagined. While we recognize that others are dealing with far more complex and impactful challenges than where we find ourselves, Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens continues to strive to do our part for the well-being of the community and Fellows Riverside Gardens. We are committed to being responsive and responsible with everyone’s safety in mind.

Our Friends organization had been eagerly looking forward to our summer events to celebrate our beautiful botanical gardens. When we learned on March 13, 2020 that the Davis Center was closing, all plans for our upcoming season’s events came to a halt: Friends Annual Meeting on March 24, Spring Plant Sale on May 7-9, Spring Open House in the Shop in the Gardens, spring and summer Garden Bus Tours, ‘On the Terrace at 5’ events scheduled throughout the summer; and finally, our largest fundraiser, the annual Friends Summer Garden Party. Fortunately, Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens has a long history of resiliency and creativity. Our board, staff and volunteers are an amazing group of innovative and resourceful individuals. Working together as a team, they went into emergency rescue and recovery of the hundreds of plants growing in our greenhouse, made countless calls and contacts to cancel existing events, and began to plan for an overhaul of the Shop in the Gardens, as the spring and Easter season would have to be skipped this year.

We are united in focusing on our purpose--the promotion, improvement and preservation of Fellows Riverside Gardens. While our efforts may not be as visible as usual, the continued generosity and support of our members and the community has kept our organization strong. During this time of increased isolation, the importance of the Gardens providing a refuge and respite for all who visit there has never been more pronounced. The beauty and comfort of nature is all around us. And, especially at this time, we and our visitors are grateful.

Denise Stewart

To become a member of Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens, visit www.friendsoffellows.org.
COVID-19 has been described as a once in a lifetime pandemic—and when the decision was made to close the Davis Center to the public on Friday, March 13th, it was a moment none of us could have ever imagined. 2019 was a banner year for the Gardens. Our café and catering partner had the strongest year on record, rentals were up 125%, and staff had just finished planting dozens of new roses in the Gardens. But everything changed in the blink of an eye.

As I processed the changes, some temporary, some perhaps permanent, I began to focus on the importance of the actual outdoor gardens to the public and our Friends members. I accepted that it was okay to hit the pause button in our Visitor Center. After all, Fellows Riverside Gardens has existed for over sixty years, and only twenty of those years were with our (present day) Visitor Center.

Perhaps fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, people began flocking to the Gardens to find solace, a place of familiarity, and a respite in this sea of unknown. Because after all, exposure to nature and plants has proven abilities to provide comfort to those in distress.

This summer I encourage to you to visit our outdoor gardens and reconnect with nature, plants and the beauty of Fellows Riverside Gardens, and if you see a MetroParks employee or volunteer, please thank them for their hard work in caring for what is truly Mahoning Valley’s greatest gem. I am looking forward to the day when we can return to normalcy, but until then, we have a free, beautiful Garden for you to enjoy!

Sincerely, Andrew C. Pratt, Gardens Director

Heating and cooling system automation improvement project

This spring, a team of engineers from a Youngstown-based company made a variety of exciting HVAC (heating, ventilation, and cooling) improvements to the D.D. and Velma Davis Education & Visitor Center. Our goals were several: to bring the Center’s heating and cooling system “online,” which will allow Gardens staff to make comfort changes via a computer or remotely via a mobile phone; to replace our antiquated thermostats with smart thermostats capable of determining room occupancy; to place sensors on various components of our HVAC system, which will send Park staff alarms during a mechanical failure; and finally, and perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to create heating and cooling “schedules,” which will provide substantial financial/energy savings by eliminating unnecessary run times of the heating and cooling system.

Another key component of this project was the desire to showcase the Center’s geothermal system in real-time, educating our many visitors about the benefits of geothermal technology. When the Davis Center reopens this September, visitors will find a monitor just outside of the Garden Café with various live-time data and educational graphics about geothermal technology.

We hope that you enjoy the new sustainable upgrades to Fellows Riverside Gardens! Andrew
Meet Katie Toth

Meet the new Visitor Services Manager for Fellows Riverside Gardens – an interview with Katherine “Katie” Toth.

Where were you born and name the most favorite city or state where you have lived?

I was born in Tokyo, Japan. My parents were serving in the United State Air Force and adopted me. My Father was a Master Sargent and my Mother a Lieutenant Colonel. Our family spent our lives stateside after my adoption. We did move around a lot with the Air Force. My favorite state we lived in was Mississippi. We lived in a small country town and had a home on 3 acres. It was the ultimate playground – I had go-carts and tractors and we were only about 15 minutes from the beach. I have lived approximately 20 years in NE Ohio.

Where did you go to college?

I graduated from John Carroll University in Cleveland with a BS in Political Science. I also have a BA from Youngstown State University in Hospitality Management.

What is your previous work experience and what drew you to a career in events management?

I worked for Anthem Health after graduating from John Carroll and started volunteering for planning various charity events. I loved it so much that I decided to get my degree in hospitality management at YSU.

From there I worked for various major hotel chains as well as Hollywood Casino and ran dining and bar events at the Youngstown Reserve Air Base. I mostly recently worked for the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce as the events planner.

What is the most challenging aspect of working as a visitor services manager during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Not seeing the smiles on people’s faces, hidden by masks, and not being able to greet people in person. I greatly miss human interaction and contact with the public. The additional challenge of the unknown regarding the Governor’s guidelines for large gatherings makes it difficult to guide or give advice for future events. I am looking forward to when the Davis Center is open again and we can resume our normal activities.

What famous person would you like to meet?

Gary Sinise. Not only is he a very talented actor, but I am inspired by the work he does with the Gary Sinise Foundation. This Foundation honors our defenders, veterans, first responders, their families and those in need. I have been especially moved by the work he has done for Gold Star Families – those families who have lost a family member in the line of duty.

What song do you like to dance to?

Anything with a good beat – when I am home cleaning or cooking, I am always singing and dancing.

What is your favorite aspect or feature of Fellows Riverside Gardens?

I feel so grateful and lucky to be here that it is hard to name just one favorite. I love walking the various garden paths. Prior to working at Fellows, my Mom and I would come here often to walk around the gardens, even as she was having a difficult time battling breast cancer. My mom is no longer with us, but as I stop at the various places that were our favorites, I can feel her with me.
We’ve all heard of animal rescue. Some of us have even stepped in to adopt abandoned dogs or homeless cats. The idea of plant rescue, then, shouldn’t be difficult to fathom: connect plants in need of homes with people willing to take them in ASAP, even under unsettling circumstances.

That was the notion put into motion when the Friends Spring Plant Sale, held every May, was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The decision to cancel the 31st-year sale and Gardens fundraiser was made in mid-March by Plant Sale Chair Deb Metzger and her committee---fortunately early enough for orders from nearly twenty greenhouses, nurseries and vendors to be rescinded with no financial charges incurred by Friends.

The only plants to be concerned about were those already growing in the greenhouses at Fellows Riverside Gardens. Twelve hundred! vegetable seedlings---mainly varieties of tomatoes and peppers, artichokes and leeks---had been transplanted into small 4-packs and were thriving in the greenhouse warmth. (Cucumbers, micro-greens, lettuce, squash and more hadn’t yet been planted.) 175 pots of morning glories, cardinal climber, scarlet runner bean, hyacinth bean, cup and saucer vines, along with 40 large pots of sweet peas and nasturtiums, had also been started, and trays for 400 sunflowers were prepped for planting. Plant Sale volunteers had also pitched in to plant 225 young succulents that had been shipped from Michigan.

In the usual course of events, the seven weeks that followed would have been busy with volunteers staking, pruning, watering and transplanting these hundreds of seedlings. The greenhouse growing conditions would coax the young plants into such lushness that, spilling from their pots, they could tantalize any shopper at the May Plant Sale!

But the MetroPark’s necessary COVID-19 restrictions halted all volunteer activity. The limited garden staff promised to keep all plants watered until restrictions lifted. Fast-forward to mid May, when park closures and restrictions were extended into the summer months. The Plant Sale committee was then asked to remove all its plants as safely as possible, using a minimum of masked and gloved volunteers.

What to do with hundreds of flourishing plants! Any gathering of people was unsafe to organize, so even the idea of ‘drive-by and give-away’ seemed risky to promote.

Carol Knock, the succulent expert on the Plant Sale committee, orchestrated a careful distribution of succulents to twenty or so succulent lovers willing to mail in a check for cost-only prices.

Vegetable volunteers Deb Metzger and Monica Parkhurst faced the challenge of finding community gardens that were operating, however meagerly, in those shelter-at-home times. They did discover three gardens---St. Patrick Church Urban Garden on Oak Hill in Youngstown, Garfield Community Gardens near Lincoln School in Warren, and the Jewish Community Center Urban Garden---all thrilled to accept Friends’ donation of trays of vigorous vegetable plants. And Janet Yaniglos, working with the team of annuals volunteers, managed to get the bounty of nasturtiums and most of the climbing, flowering vines into the hands and flowerbeds of twenty or so plant lovers.

The Plant Sale committee is very grateful to the Gardens staff (Sarah Spetsios, Marcy Dubec and Brandon Swad) for keeping the young vegetables, vines and succulents healthy and watered during the hectic weeks of spring garden prep. And to our loyal customers---you!!---who missed the plethora of plants, camaraderie and advice that comes with each Friends Spring Plant Sale----we’ll be back next year!!
Ten Tips For Photographing Flowers by Scott Lanz

Whether you are photographing one of the many photogenic subjects at Fellows Riverside Gardens or your own prize-winning rose, and whether you are using the latest DSLR or your cell phone, it is good to keep in mind some basic rules for photographing flowers. Here are ten tips for photographing flowers:

1. Avoid direct sunlight on your subject as this will generally cause excessive contrast and a confusing result. An overcast sky will generally make for better floral images. However, if photographing a wider garden scene, try to avoid including the overcast sky in the photo.

2. Avoid straight on, static compositions. Place your subject off-center or try different perspectives and angles to add interest. If shooting garden scenes, use a curved path or other object to add interest and lead the viewer’s eye into the scene.

3. Watch your borders. This means avoiding unwanted objects coming into the frame and likewise making sure that the edge of your subject is not “clipped.”

4. Fill the frame. Get close to your subject to avoid empty space or unwanted background.

5. Watch your focus. If using shallow or selective focus, put the point of focus on the front and center of the flower because this is where the viewer’s eye tends to focus.

6. Select photo worthy subjects. This means new or fresh flowers, or flowers with unusual, interesting, or compelling features. Flowers often look their best early in the day and just after blooming.

7. Pay careful attention to the background. In floral photography, the background is just as important as the subject. Avoid cluttered backgrounds and instead try to isolate your subject against a neutral or complementary background that will allow the subject to stand out.

8. Take advantage of the weather. Raindrops, dew, or frost will add an element of interest and artistry to floral subjects. If shooting garden scenes, attractive clouds or fog can add interest and provide better light.

9. Avoid frustration and blurred images by not photographing flowers when it is windy. Morning is usually the calmest time of the day.

10. Use a tripod to help frame your subject and avoid camera shake.

When it comes to photography, all rules are meant to be broken, but following these tips will generally improve your floral photographs.
FAVORITE PHOTO SUBJECTS AND WHEN TO PHOTOGRAPH THEM

Here are some of my favorite photographic subjects at Fellows Riverside Gardens and the best months to photograph them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late March–late April</td>
<td>Spring bulbs including daffodils, tulips, allium, and snowflakes; flowering trees including magnolia, crab, and dogwood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May–June</td>
<td>Flowering shrubs including azaleas, rhododendron, bleeding heart and peonies; Early perennials including iris, lupine, and primrose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June–July</td>
<td>Roses and perennials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July–August</td>
<td>Perennials including coneflowers and hibiscus; annuals; Insects including bees, butterflies, dragonflies, hoverflies and caterpillars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August–September</td>
<td>Dahlias; flowers covered with dew; spider webs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October–November</td>
<td>Flowers with morning frost; fallen leaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Winter Celebration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author is a longtime photographer of natural beauty, artfully capturing both intricate design and lavish color nuances in his remarkable photos. Scott travels to wilderness areas for inspiration, but spends many more hours in his hometown Mill Creek MetroParks, observing and photographing. His photo canvases are a popular draw at area art festivals, and his MetroParks calendars are a customer favorite at the Friends’ Shop in the Gardens. (He donates a portion of all calendar sales to the MetroParks). Scott has served three terms on the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens board. As a member of this newsletter’s editorial team, he brings Fellows Riverside Gardens’ beauty to readers through his photography in each issue. We’re lucky to have him as part of our team! (Scott’s day job, by the way, is as an attorney.)
Welcome New Board Members

Seven new members have joined the Board of Directors of the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens:

**Sophia Buggs**

Also known as Lady Buggs or Mama Sophia, Sophia is the owner and operator of Lady Buggs Farm, a 1.3 acre urban farm located on Youngstown’s South Side. Her mission is to revitalize her community by offering wellbeing from seed to table, all while creating a loving urban homestead with her daughter, Passion. Sophia shares her urban wellness and farming insight through plant medicine wisdom, farmers markets, oracle readings, cooking and gardening classes. She is the Mahoning Valley Food Access Coordinator.

**Emily Huggins**

Growing up in Poland and now residing in Struthers, Emily is a 2019 YSU graduate and an Associate Accountant at Packer Thomas, Certified Public Accountants & Business Consultants. She is pursuing an MBA, with plans to obtain CPA licensure. Fellows Riverside Gardens has been an important part of Emily’s life, and she looks forward to working with Friends in support of the Gardens.

**Jim Houck**

A lifelong Mahoning Valley resident, Jim is president of Houck Agency, a marketing and public relations firm in Youngstown. He has more than 25 years of experience in agency, corporate and non-profit PR/marketing environments in Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown/Warren. Jim is an officer on the board of directors for Potential Development School for Children with Autism, and members of St. Charles School in Boardman, where two of his three children attend. He treasures all that Mill Creek Park and the Gardens offer.

**Sarah Lowry**

Sarah is the Director of the Healthy Community Partnership at the Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley. She is active with her church, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Youngstown, and with the YWCA of the Mahoning Valley and the League of Women Voters of Greater Youngstown. Sarah served for nearly six years as U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown’s representative across northeast Ohio. She tries to balance civic activity with outdoor activity, especially in Mill Creek MetroParks.

**Mary Ann Navarro**

Married for 41 years, the mother of three married children and with four grandchildren, Mary Ann worked with the Vindicator’s sales rep team for 45 years. She supports and frequently visits the gardens, her ‘happy place’. Her community involvement includes 15 years as a Hospice volunteer and helping with Boardman Rotary’s functions.

**Gene Pusateri**

Gene established his podiatry practice on Midlothian Boulevard in 1975, remaining there for 44 years, committed to the city he loves. His ties to Fellows Riverside Gardens span many years—his son worked summers in the gardens, his mother enjoyed the accessible and beautiful walkways, and now he and his wife bring their grandchildren to its special events. Gene and his family have been longtime supporters and patrons of the Gardens, and he looks forwards to helping future generations enjoy them.

**Patrick Russo**

Patrick is a wealth advisor with LPL Financial, part of the Daprile Financial Group in Canfield. A YSU graduate, he has been in the finance industry for nine years and holds a Chartered Retirement Plan Specialist designation from the College for Financial Planning. He is a member of The Wolves Club of Youngstown and is very proud of the work they do providing scholarships for YSU students. Patrick lives in Boardman with his wife Maria, and is looking forward to giving back to his community in a new way by joining the Friends Board of Fellows Riverside Gardens.
As these new members begin their three-year terms, the Board wants to express its gratitude to five dedicated members now completing their Board service: Lou DiPaolo, Paul Hagman, Jamie Jamison, Debbie Liptak, and Carol Potter.

Lou has served as Board Treasurer for six years, and through it all has been an anchor and guiding force for Friends.

Debbie Liptak, completing a 3-year term, had also served two terms in the mid-2000’s, and brought much insight and experience to her most recent term.

Both Jamie and Carol drew from deep involvement and familiarity with the MetroParks to enrich their time on the Friends Board.

And Paul Hagman, completing three terms, tirelessly and selflessly shepherded Friends through a period of tremendous change during his four years as President.

We appreciate all their efforts! Their choosing to invest much personal time and passion into our nonprofit, independent organization has made Friends all the stronger a community organization. On behalf of the public and the Gardens, thank you!!

A Special Note to Members –

We Value Your Membership

Your membership is needed now more than ever! Taking steps to protect against COVID-19 has caused Friends to cancel our major fundraisers this year.

We appreciate the generosity of our members who continue to renew memberships, and we welcome those interested in joining the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens.

Membership renewal reminders will continue to be mailed out approximately one month prior to current membership expiration. If you have misplaced your renewal letter with brochure, you can renew online at www.friendsoffellows.org/membership. Or you can email us at info@friendsoffellows.org and request that a renewal brochure be resent to you in the mail. If you know someone who wants to become a member, or you would like to give a gift membership, please send information to the email address listed above.

We look forward to celebrating our love of Fellows Riverside Gardens in future events and will keep you informed when those opportunities to be together again become available.
Educational Programs and Events

This quarterly feature usually lists dozens of upcoming classes and programs offered by Mill Creek MetroParks at Fellows Riverside Gardens. Due to the current unusual challenges to educational programming, Dr. Jim Infante, Education Manager for Mill Creek MetroParks, has provided this information:

In support of the recommendations from the Governor’s Office, the Ohio Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to protect the health, safety and welfare of our employees, volunteers and visitors, Mill Creek MetroParks is extending the cancellations of all previously scheduled programs, tours, events, lectures and indoor facility rentals through August 31, 2020.

NATURE ROCKS

The Mill Creek MetroParks Education Department will be presenting a video snippet each week featuring various locations and programs of the Park. Dr. Jim Infante, Education Manager and Lynn Zocolo, Senior Educator will be coordinating the project. We hope that you enjoy our topics. Check out Mill Creek MetroParks’ Facebook page for prior postings.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Since we do not know how schools will be configured in the fall, we are preparing a Virtual Classroom so we can take our programs to the students in their own classrooms. Educators will be trained in various forms of technology in order to format and present the material in a professional manner.

Garden Tours Suspended for 2020

Though our Spring Newsletter announced three garden travel tours for this year, all have been cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic impact. There was much excitement in the planning of these three adventures, so we’ll be assessing the possibilities of rescheduling them for next year.

We’ve heard from past fellow travelers, wistful for the ‘good old days’ of carefree, friendly, guided exploration of the world of gardens. Our garden tours have been popular ways to discover beautiful gardens and horticultural settings throughout the region and into nearby states. Friends has sponsored nearly thirty Garden Tours since 2008! We’ll be watching how the travel industry evolves in this changing world, and hope to adapt successfully too.

To whet your appetite for 2021, keep in mind these possibilities, suspended from this year: A spring day trip to the Amish towns and greenhouses of Holmes County… a summer day trip to beautiful Kingwood Center Gardens in Mansfield and a private tour of Schnumeier Gardens in Gambier…and overnight travel to the Finger Lakes region, at harvest time in the early fall.

No dates are set, no plans made….but we can dream! Our planning usually begins in the winter months. We’ll let you know how our Board and volunteer committee size up the future of Friends travel, in upcoming newsletters.
Garden Therapy

We asked a few Friends members how they’ve been coping with the pandemic, and weren’t surprised to find that backyard gardening is an important part of their making sheltering-at-home more enjoyable.

Judy Carson, Poland  This year at my condo I’m experimenting with vines. I can’t say that I miss my yard—I have all these pots! I’m trying out different spots for my morning glories. I love the blue of their flowers.

Susan Russo, Liberty  I enjoy mixing the textures and colors of plants and flowers, and I enjoy experimenting with forms and designs in landscaping. Gardening and art have a lot in common!

Mary Lou Flere, McDonald  Staying close to home makes you become more observant of nature. I’ve seen hummingbirds, a slew of downy woodpeckers, eight pairs of cardinals, even two monarch butterflies in my yard. I’ve watched a pair of goldfinches light on dandelion stems to eat the puffball seeds.

Joe Fagnano, Canfield  I have a small landscaping business, and as I am shopping at nurseries I’ve noticed the stock of so many are depleted—flowers, vegetables, and other plants. People are spending much more time gardening and beautifying their yards while staying at home. (Joe just completed an internship at Disney World in Florida.)

Alicia Muzina, North Lima  Gardening is a good form of exercise, and very good for the spirit. Most of my money seems to go into landscaping...live flowers...new mulch...replacing shrubs! This year I’ve planted several tubs of petunias, so beautiful!

Gordon Vujevic, Burghill  The coronavirus caused me to cancel ‘Daffodil Day’, when I open my gardens to friends and visitors each year. For once, all that flowerbed edging wasn’t necessary to do—a more relaxing spring! But the weather has been full of surprises—such a warm March, and a May morning of 23 degrees.

Julie Downie, Poland  I can’t stay away from the garden centers—my solace during the pandemic! ….My artist-sister made me a beautiful mosaic birdbath. It’s the focal point now in our courtyard.

Gordon and Vivienne Dunn, Salem  We’re gardening as we always do—this weather has been wonderful. We’ve been out a bit, to the greenhouse, to the garden center, but we’re so glad to have our yard to spend time in. (These comments were from Vivienne, as Gordon was over at the Salem Historical Society, planting flowers!)

And from one of our Board members, Samantha Turner, Youngstown: COVID-19 has shown me that I was not prioritizing my passion for gardening and growing, because of work, life, meetings, advocacy and entertainment. I was putting EVERYTHING before my well-being, and I was not the better for it. So, I got out in the yard and started cleaning and clearing beds, taking down aggressive vines and thinning the lily of the valley. I’m devoting daily time now for my garden. I feel better, my environment looks better, and I am glad I made it a point to take this time for my passion.

SHOP IN THE GARDENS

On March 13, the Friends organization in conjunction with Mill Creek MetroParks took the unprecedented step of closing the Shop in the Gardens to protect the health and well-being of our employees, customers and community.

When we are able to open our doors again, things may look a little different. We will practice cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing guidelines recommended by the CDC and State and local authorities. What will remain the same is a selection of unique items for your home and gardens along with gifts for special occasions.

We look forward to welcoming you back to the Shop in the Gardens. A new selection of seasonal merchandise will await you!
HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A COVID-19 SUMMER

- Stroll through the Gardens every week (maintaining a proper social distance)

- Become a Friend or renew your membership (online or by mail)

- Check out each week’s Nature Rocks (see Mill Creek MetroParks website)

- Tend your own garden, whether in a pot, flowerbed, or hanging basket!