



Honorees Chris Davies (left), Keith Austin, and JoAnn Stern

16th Annual Peony Celebration Honors Gardeners Keith Austin, Chris Davies and Jo Ann Stern

By M. Evelyn Hadad

This year marks our 16th Annual Peony Celebration and we are extremely excited to be honoring the chief and master gardeners, Keith Austin, Chris Davies and Jo Ann Stern. They work tirelessly every year, and have for many years, to coax our peony blossoms to be more brilliant than the year before!

The event will be take place on Thursday evening, May 9, 2024 in the Visitor Courtyard from 6pm-9pm

continued on page 2

Three Cheers For Our Youth Volunteers!

By Jessika Creedon

If there is one thing we can be certain of, it is the enthusiasm our younger generation shows for our much-loved Preserve. From school visits and program attendees, to our most energetic volunteers – the future of the Preserve is in good hands.

If you've attended Hulda's Night, a full moon hike or the monarch butterfly program, then you know RSPG Guardian Hailey Schott. Hailey's passion for the Preserve is unmatched. Not only does she give hours of her time, she has spun her artistic talents into a fundraising art auction, which has raised over \$10,000 for the Preserve. Hailey, with the support of her equally involved parents, Shayla and Mike, is a year-round presence in the Preserve.

Held yearly, on the first Saturday of May, I Love My Park Day (ILMPD) is a state-wide day of volunteerism that welcomes all ages to give back to their local New York State Park. ILMPD2023 had our largest youth

continued on page 4



NYS President Pro Tem and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Festive Friends Gala on Saturday, June 29, 2024

By Sara Jameel Hadad

We are very pleased to announce New York State President Pro Tem and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins will receive the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Park Preservation Award presented by the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve at its gala on Saturday, June 29 at the Rockefeller Playhouse in Pocantico Hills.

Board President George Gumina remarked, "A longstanding partner to the Friends group and a vanguard of environmental justice, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins has been a vocal supporter of the

continued on page 3

Image: Detail from Symphony by Radu Serban

Peony, continued from page 1

with a cocktail and light cuisine reception, flower arrangements from the local garden clubs (Chappaqua Garden Club, Little Gardens of Tarrytown, Parkway Homes Parkway Gardens and Pleasantville Garden Club) and an exhibit of fine art. The exhibit, "East/West Interpretations" will feature revered Japanese artist Kiriyo Ori Kuchina and prominent artists Anne Bell, Peggie Blizard, Susan Cember, Radu Serban and Jarvis Wilcox.

Keith Austin, the former mayor of the Village of Briarcliff Manor, has worked on the garden practically from the beginning when it was planted in 2003. He will readily admit that there are master gardeners in the program but he is only "a master enthusiast." Austin said the peony flower trees require the pruning of dead wood, two doses of fertilizer and the removal of dead foliage to prevent a disease called fungus botrytis. "Otherwise, the trees are highly tolerant, the deer don't eat them, and they can outlive you and me," Keith has said.

Chris Davies, who started working in the garden only a couple of years after Keith, is a self-professed "weedaholic"! Shortly after she retired, she was walking past Keith and another gardener in the Visitor Courtyard, and she overheard them say they could use more volunteers. Chris couldn't resist offering to help with an activity she already loved and the rest, as they say, is history. Her picture here from 2020, with her mask on for Covid protection, reminds us that these stalwart gardeners worked all during the pandemic.



Chris Davies, like all the volunteer gardeners, tending to the flowers in the courtyard, even during the Covid pandemic.

Photo: Michael Garber

Jo Ann Stern had also just retired as a horticultural therapist at the Hebrew Home for the Aged when she learned the Preserve needed more gardeners to tend the beautiful peonies. She thought, "I'm in!" Her working in the Japanese garden keeps fulfilling her calling as a therapist since viewing these stunning flowers is therapy for everyone's soul who visits.

The garden was created after 9/11 as a gift from the Japanese people in a small town called Yatsuka Cho, Shimane Prefecture, Japan. They sent the 500 peony trees to the Preserve to show solidarity with the grieving people of the United States, their friends. (Another 500 peonies were donated to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.) The peony is the signature flower from this area and is considered Japan's "most noble of flowers." The placing of Japanese flowers on American soil symbolizes the blending of two culture and two peoples. It was meant to help with our country's healing.

The Friends organization, under Board President George Gumina, spearheaded a fund-raising campaign and contributed \$100,000 to complete the landscape design of the courtyard. The remainder of the design also called for American wildflowers and native trees, completing the picture of unity. Please come and enjoy this event with your friends and with the magnificent flowers!

For information, please consult our web site, www.friendsrock.org. Ticket price begins at \$150.



Photo: Herbert Hadad

Peonies in full bloom at the Preserve.



Gala, *continued from page 1*

work of our board and community, turning concern to action in the New York State Senate. We could not have a better representative for this award, and we're thrilled to present it to her at this year's gala."

Since 2007, Leader Stewart-Cousins has represented New York's District 35, encompassing a portion of Southern Westchester that includes our beloved Rockefeller Preserve and neighboring towns. Originally from New York City, she moved to raise her family in Yonkers in 1979. Always a trailblazer, she entered government in 1992 when she was appointed by former Yonkers Mayor Terry Zaleski as the city's Director of Community Affairs, making history as the first African American to hold that position. She has continued to break barriers throughout her legislative career – becoming the first woman to lead a party conference in the New York State Legislature in 2012, and then being elected the first woman Senate Majority Leader for New York in 2019.

Throughout her tenure, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins has sponsored many bills around preservation and accessibility of parks. She was critical to New York State finally taking real action on climate change by establishing the Climate

Leadership and Community Protection Act and ensuring that disadvantaged communities receive at least 35% of all benefits. In addition under Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and with great assistance from her advocacy, the Environmental Protection Fund has provided over \$10 million for environmental justice projects since 2020.

"I am deeply honored to receive this recognition from the Friends of the Rockefeller State Preserve for our collective efforts in environmental stewardship and unwavering support of New York's cherished parks. As we celebrate the

Centennial of New York State Parks, it serves as a poignant reminder of the legacy we are entrusted to uphold and the future we must safeguard. Under my leadership, the Senate Majority has championed critical legislation, enhancing transparency in parkland use and introducing innovative programs like the state parks passport and resident curator programs. These initiatives aim to enrich our connection to nature and deepen our commitment to education and inclusivity.

"Furthermore, we have enacted historic legislation, including the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, and made significant investments to combat climate change, ensuring count-

less more generations of New Yorkers can enjoy places like the Rockefeller Preserve. This accolade belongs to all New Yorkers who value our natural heritage and strive for a greener, more sustainable future. Together, we continue to fortify our dedication to preserving the natural beauty and environmental integrity of our great state."

Funds raised during this year's gala will continue to support a

major beautification and structural project at Rockwood Hall. The plan is to have a formalized entrance that will welcome park enthusiasts, complete with a much-needed entry courtyard, informational kiosk and restroom facilities, along with expanded parking. This will be the first time this section of the park will have a dedicated official entrance and the design includes many aesthetic and useful improvements.

Sara Jameel Hadad is Chief Programs Officer for Run for Something, which operates nationally.



Andrea Stewart-Cousins being sworn in as the first woman majority leader in the history of the New York State Senate.

Tickets for the upcoming Peony Celebration and Friends Gala may be purchased online at www.friendsrock.org

Youth, *continued from page 1*



participation to date. Last year, fourth graders from **Girl Scout Troop 2862** donned work gloves and wasted no time jumping into action at Rockwood Hall. Garlic mustard did not stand a chance against their ambitious pulling and friendly competition. Troop 2862 is part of the greater Heart of the Hudson Valley chapter, which celebrates Girl Scouts Love Parks every September at Rockefeller State Park Preserve.

Tailwind Track Club (TTC) joined ILMPD for the second time, and not only did they spend their morning volunteering, but fit in their usual training run afterward. Representing youth athletes from the greater Westchester area, TTC has been running in the Preserve for over 10 years. They show their appreciation to the Preserve through volunteering, donations, and event participation.



Their team regularly competes at Rocky's 5k. You can find Tailwind on the carriage roads most weekend mornings.

This year in October we welcomed **Tarrytown Cub Scout Pack 22** to the Rocky's 5k water station. The intrepid scouts were undeterred by the rain and

provided not only water for the athletes but high fives and lots of positive energy. As runners of the Rockies know, sometimes it's the cheering section that gives you the boost you need for the next hill. The scouts gave it their all, and we know it was appreciated by the runners.



To learn more about Hailey's art auction, the youth groups and ILMPD2024 (this year's date is June 4, 2024), please visit: www.haileyschott.com
www.girlscoutshh.org
www.tailwindtc.com
www.facebook.com/pack22tarrytown
www.friendsrock.org/love-my-park-day



Pictured left: Hailey Schott (left) with Natural Resource Specialist Joshua DiPaola. Pictured right: Hailey Schott (left) presented Preserve Manager Peter Iskenderian with a check for the Preserve from her art show earnings.

An Exuberant Volunteer Party

The Friends sponsored a Volunteer Party for the hard-working people who donate their time and effort at the Rockefeller Preserve all during the year. The event was held on Wednesday evening, March 20th, at the Casaletto Restaurant.

Friends President George Gumina thanked everyone and said, "If it weren't for all of your efforts, half the work at the Preserve wouldn't get done!" Ranger Sue expressed appreciation for all those present and for those who couldn't make it and said, "You're the best of the best when it comes to volunteers! And you're all very good people."

Guests were served an appetizer, a salad, a pasta dish, an entrée and a dessert, accompanied by a satisfying array of drinks. Needless to say, a good time was had by all!



Photo: Ranger Sue

From the Friends President

By George Gumina

Dear Friends,

Very glad the warm weather is coming! It's been a tough winter but we have many exciting events taking place at the Preserve.

On March 20th, we celebrated the Preserve volunteers at a dinner at the Casaletto Restaurant. The Preserve couldn't run half as well without the aid of the volunteers – whether it's working in the gardens, patrolling the trails, doing administrative work, helping to clear invasives, you name an activity at the Preserve and there is always a volunteer in the middle of it. How blessed we feel to have our volunteers and welcome an opportunity to say "Thank You!"

With the coming of Spring, the blooming of the peonies arrives and our 16th Annual Peony Celebration takes place. We are particularly pleased this year to recognize Keith Austin, Chris Davies and Jo Ann Stern for their many years of gardening skill and labor. Each year the flowers get more beautiful because of their leadership and the people who work with them. *(Please see article on page 1.)*

We take great pleasure this year in honoring New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her strong environmental support of the Rockefeller Preserve and New York State parks. The Friends will present her with the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Park Preservation Award at a ceremony at our gala on Saturday, June 29 at the Rockefeller Playhouse. *(Please see article on page 1.)*

There is an interesting article about the upcoming Saturday, June 1 Rockwood Ramble 10K race on page 10. And in the Fall, there is the Pace and the Rocky's 5K on Saturday, October 5. Please consult our web site, www.friendsrock.org, closer to the dates for more details.

I sincerely hope to see you out on the carriage roads, walking, running and enjoying life!



From the Cover: Symphony by Radu Serban

Board of Directors

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve

George Gumina, *President*

M. Evelyn Hadad, *Vice President*

John Nonna, *Secretary*

Carol M. Lyden, *Treasurer*

Benjamin H. Cheever

Francesca Connolly

Brian Geary

Patrice Ingrassia

Patricia Jones

John N. Manuele, *Executive Board*

Stella Medina

Clare M. Pierson, *Executive Board*

Kimberly K. Rockefeller

Donald W. Stever

Ron Vogl

Administrative Director: Jessika Creedon

Spotted Lanternfly

By Devyani Mishra
Conservation Steward



We've now seen two seasons of spotted lanternfly in Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Many park patrons have become landing strips for these clumsy fliers and have done their part stomping them off the trails in hopes of limiting their encroachment on the Preserve.

Beyond causing a nuisance to hikers who enjoy their personal space, these insects cause adverse effects to the trees they feed on, as well as the understory where they excrete mold-attracting honeydew. Here in the Preserve, we use traps to monitor population density of spotted lanternflies, and have chemically treated a population of host plants near structures and parking lots, so they don't hitchhike on cars, swarm inside buildings, and attract wasps and mold through honeydew. The good news is that spotted lanternflies are not expected to have severe forest health impacts, though they pose a threat to agriculture, and we work with our partners at Stone Barns to monitor their populations there.



Isn't there more we can do than stomping on the few we catch?

Many of us have walked the lanternfly-strewn streets and trails of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and don't want this for the Preserve. Nonchemical methods like vacuums and traps are better suited for small areas that can regularly be maintained. Chemical methods are used very selectively in the State Parks system to prevent impact to non-target species.



Adult spotted lanternfly

Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

Spotted lanternflies are not flies at all. Rather they are planthoppers in the order Hemiptera, or true bugs, and are more closely related to cicadas, brown marmorated stink bugs, aphids, and leafhoppers. All insects in this order have piercing-sucking mouthparts that allow them to drill into the phloem of a plant to feed directly on the sugary sap.

Predators of the spotted lanternfly include praying mantises, chickens, garden spiders, gray catbirds, yellowjackets, wheel bugs, garter snakes, and koi fish.



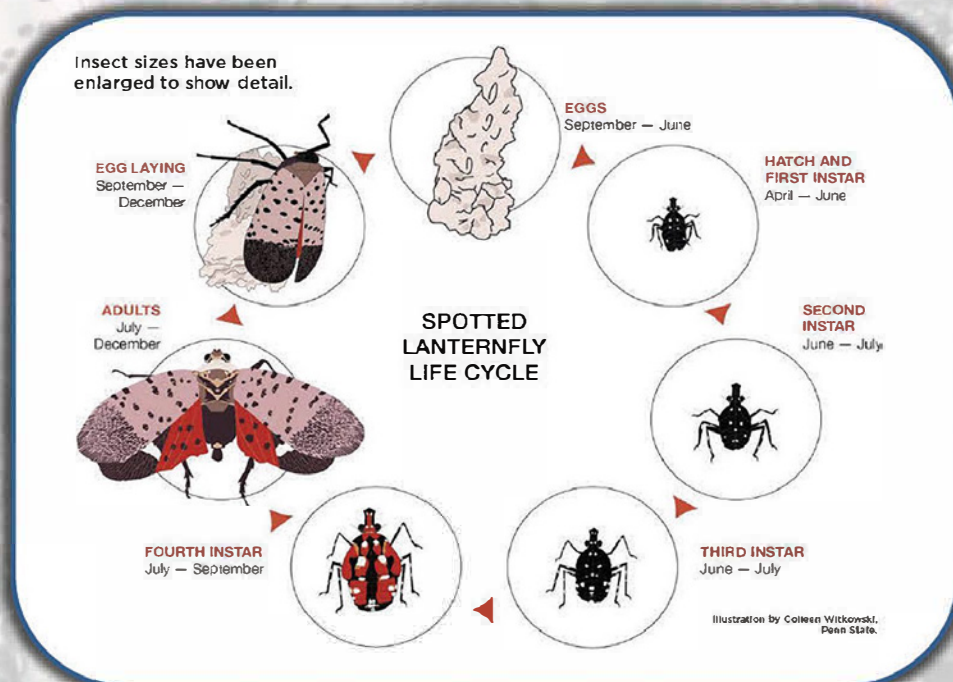
A black and yellow orb-weaver spider spins a web around its current victim - a spotted lanternfly

Photo credit: Shutterstock



A praying mantis eating a spotted lanternfly outside of Race Hall and the adjacent Library Learning Terrace.

Photo credit: Scott Dunham



4 Facts About Spotted Lanternflies

1. The Spotted Lanternfly *Lycorma delicatula* is native to China and was first detected in Pennsylvania in September 2014.
2. Spotted lanternfly feeds on a wide range of fruit, ornamental and woody trees, with tree-of-heaven being one of the preferred hosts.
3. Spotted lanternflies are invasive and can be spread long distances by people who move infested material or items containing egg masses.
4. Juvenile spotted lanternflies, known as nymphs, and adults prefer to feed on the invasive tree-of-heaven *Ailanthus altissima* but also feed on a wide range of crops and plants, including grapes, apples, hops, walnuts and hardwood trees.



Lanternfly honeydew honey collecting on a frame with a plastic yellow foundation to show the color.
Photo: Robyn Underwood, Penn State

Honeydew honey is safe for both bees and humans to consume. Preliminary results of laboratory testing show that the levels of pesticides from lanternfly treatment efforts found in honeydew honey are exceedingly small and well below any level of concern. In addition, beekeepers in areas where lanternflies have been established for several years see that honey bees overwinter very well on this type of stored food. Source: PennState Extension



Honey produced via bees that ingested honeydew from spotted lanternflies.

❖ Gallery Schedule at a Glance ❖

EAST/WEST INTERPRETATIONS

May 9 - June 30, 2024

Opening Reception:

Thursday, May 9, 2024, 6PM - 9PM

“East/West Interpretations”, featuring revered Japanese artist Kiriyo Ori Kuchina, also includes well-known artists Anne Bell, Bonnie Sackoff, Peggie Blizard, Chris Ross, Susan Cember, Radu Serban and Jarvis Wilcox.

Kiriyo Ori Kuchina’s creative weavings are the result of hundreds of hours of devotion. Once complete they have the faceted radiance of precious jewels woven on a small hand loom into compositions of florals, landscapes, and abstractions. This unparalleled level of perfection by Mrs. Kuchina has been accomplished by studying with Asia’s greatest master weavers for 22 years.

Kiriyo Ori works can be viewed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the White House, courtesy of Mrs. Hillary Clinton. Collectors include Mrs. Clinton, the empress of Japan, the Queen of Brunei and Mrs. Spyro Skouras.



Kiriyo Ori Kuchina:
Arabesque II (Prayer)



Kiriyo Ori Kuchina:
Dynasty of Heian Period



Chris Ross: *Floral*



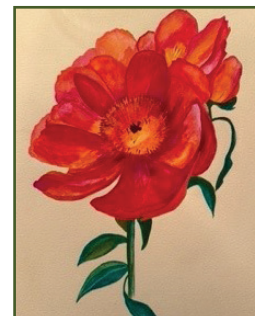
Chris Ross: *Floral*



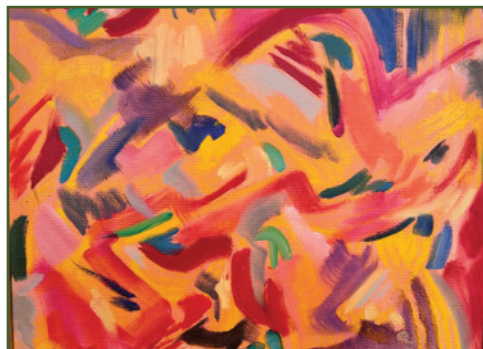
Radu Serban: *In the Thicket*



Radu Serban: *Capitol Lilies*



Bonnie Sackoff:
What's in a Name? That Which We Call a Rose



Anne Bell: *Dancing with Color*



Anne Bell: *Morning Garden*



Bonnie Sackoff:
A Rose is a Rose is a Rose

From the Preserve Manager

By Peter Iskendarian

Some of you may have heard that we lost a great lady recently. I speak of our "Grand Dame", the 300-plus-year-old Oak that stood on the Lower Trail of Rockwood.

Losing such a venerable resident of the Preserve got me thinking, remembering really, what it is we are all about here at the Preserve. We are here primarily to provide a safe home to all our residents, where they can thrive and peacefully coexist with their human neighbors. Our purpose is also to provide you, the humans, an exceptional experience each and every time you visit the Rockefeller Preserve.

This Grand Dame epitomized the concept of coexistence, our adopted park brand. She lived a healthy existence (with responsible maintenance on our part) and provided shade and visual glory to all who passed by.

Her fall was also quite natural. High winds (over 48 miles per hour) took her down, revealing a great deal of death and decay on her inside. Now our team is busy removing her fallen body from the grounds. It is an example of coexistence at its finest.

Our 4-person maintenance team has been working for nearly 2 weeks since she fell, cutting, cutting and more cutting. We removed so many truckloads of wood, we lost count. What do we do with all that wood? We move it to a dump site in the Preserve where it will decay and provide shelter and food to our diverse types of residents for many generations to come. Of course, we have plans to plant a new Red Oak very near to where the great lady stood.

As a telling end note to this story, when the Grand Dame fell, she did significant damage to her neighbor. This also happens and is quite natural. The neighbor now had so much



Photos: Peter Iskendarian

damage done that she could not be saved as she provided too much danger to visitors due to her extensive broken limbs. It's a great example of nature and her stewards working together to live in balance. CoEXIST.



Rockefeller State Park Preserve Staff

Operations

Peter Iskenderian, Preserve Manager
 Laurence Gill, P&R Supervisor / Director of Operations
 Linda Parker, Office Manager
 Tom Starr, Parking Lot & Patron Services

Conservation & Stewardship

Joshua DiPaola, Natural Resource Specialist
 Devyani Mishra, Stewardship Crew Leader
 Kim Fendrich, Environmental Educator
 Susan Lewenz, "Ranger Su", Conservation Communicator
 Collin Sugrue, Steward

Maintenance

Maso Robinson, Head of Buildings / Grounds
 Jack Gandolfo, Buildings / Grounds Keeper
 Stacy Robinson, Buildings / Grounds Keeper
 Edwin Gonzalez, Buildings / Grounds Keeper

Art Gallery

Audrey Leeds, Gallery Curator

Ruminations on the Rockwood Ramble 10k

By Estella Medina

On Saturday, June 1st, 2024 Rockwood Hall will be filled with runners and spectators for the annual Rockwood Ramble. This 6.2 mile challenging race will once again wind its way through trails like Peggy’s Way, Big Tree, and Witches Spring, to name a few.

Every year is different, from weather to trail conditions. One mainstay, however, is our volunteer crew. Without them, our events simply would not take place! We owe them all a huge thank you.

This year, we have an especially poignant reason to salute our volunteers. Last August, we unexpectedly lost our dear friend and volunteer, Joe Golden. These pictures were the last photos he took for us at the Ramble. A full-length article about Joe and his contributions to the Friends and the community will be published later this year. The following are reflections from three of our volunteers on their reasons for helping. Please enjoy them and see you at the Ramble!

Michael Rubinfeld, Race Course Marshal (and runner of 85 marathons):

In 1990 my wife questioned how I could give up Central Park when we moved from Manhattan to Westchester. After a couple of years, Andy Kimerling at Westchester Road Runners told me about Sunday morning group runs at Rocky’s - I didn’t know the preserve existed. I was immediately smitten.

Within a couple of weeks I was off on my own, varying each run slightly so that I wouldn’t get too lost, slowly expanding my internal compass enabling me to feel at home in every nook and cranny offered. Every season, and even every month, gives up new vistas and experiences, in addition to providing an unbelievable array of well-groomed carriage roads that protect my aging joints. Traffic to consider now consists of cattle moving from pasture to pasture, herds of deer, rafters of wild turkeys, gaggles of geese, occasional red fox and coyote. Actually the distractions include endless varieties of domesticated animals, birds and flora. “WHAT CENTRAL PARK”!



Photos: Joe Golden

I so enjoy and look forward to volunteering at Rocky’s running events. Certainly the opportunity to return a little of what the Preserve gives me personally is part of it, but also sharing the excitement and anticipation of the participants as they prepare, engage and celebrate their efforts. In addition, I look forward to greeting fellow veteran

volunteers, catching up on personal activities as well as interacting with the newbies trying to anticipate what will transpire. Of course the final gathering after the finish displays broad smiles on all, volunteers and runners alike - another smile and “See you next year” wave ends a few hours well spent. Thank you for the opportunity to give back in a very small capacity.

Jeanie Jee, T-Shirt Coordinator:

Volunteering is my contribution to support the runners in an active manner rather than being just a spectator. I have enjoyed the behind-the-scenes activities at the various RSPP events.



My husband, Buck is the athlete at these events. I enjoy the enthusiasm shown by the many families and friends who cheer on their loved ones! It is especially warming to watch the children and newbies achieve their goal of completing the event. Their personal satisfaction supports the many community organizations that support the Friends of RSPP.

It is heartwarming to see the smiles on their faces as they register, pick up their bibs, and t-shirts at each race, despite the uncontrollable weather. I remember one year when the prediction was snow and the winds held out till the runners completed the race and then the snow flurries began to sprinkle the runners and spectators!



Such a healthy sports activity that the 5 & 10Ks offer are more than a lifetime experience, which can be easily

continued next page

Ramble, *continued from page 9*

modified by the athletes themselves as they appreciate their achievements.

I enjoy giving back to the community and being a volunteer at the Rocky events...It is addictive!

Pat Richards. Race Course Marshal and Hulda's Volunteer:



Both my husband Jim McEvoy and I volunteer on a regular basis at the Preserve. We have volunteered for the Rockwood Ramble, the Rocky 5K and the Pocantico Hills Marathon and Half Marathon. They are all great events and we have met a lot of other wonderful volunteers.

The Preserve became a refuge for us during the pandemic when we decided that we would walk on every trail since there weren't many other things to do when the world was closed down. We met Ranger Su and the Dude numerous times on the trails, which offered a peaceful respite from the uncertainty we all faced. When we had the chance to volunteer we were happy to give back to the place that means so much to us!



Photos: Joe Golden



**Solar Eclipse Watch Party at the Preserve
April 8, 2024**



Photos: Ranger "Su" Lewenz, Guardian Melissa Rinzier and Margaret Fox



Reaching the Friends
 Friends of the
 Rockefeller State Park Preserve
 P.O. Box 8444 • Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591
 (914) 762-0209

The Preserve Observer
 E-mail: Friends@friendsrock.org
 Website: www.friendsrock.org
 facebook.com/rockyspark
 instagram.com/ friendsofrsp
 Editor: Evelyn Hadad
 Letters and submissions are invited.
 Please contact us c/o the Friends.



The Preserve Observer

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve
P.O. Box 8444
Sleepy Hollow, New York 10591
www.friendsrock.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
White Plains, NY
Permit No. 3151

friendsrock.org

HERE TO ENJOY...OURS TO PRESERVE

I LOVE MY PARK DAY

Saturday, May 4, 2024

8:00 AM – 1:00PM

Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Everyone's favorite day of volunteerism is back! The state-wide day of pitching in to help the parks is organized by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and local Friends groups, to celebrate and enhance New York's parks and historic sites and bring visibility to the entire park system and its needs. This annual event is a volunteer opportunity for people of all ages to give back to our precious Preserve! This spring, join Rockefeller State Park Preserve (RSPP) staff and the Friends of Rockefeller State Park Preserve to build up our Preserve and our community. Pictured here are scenes from last year's volunteers - so many children and you can be one of them this year!



Photos: Jessika Creighton