

Media Contact

Lisa Matthews, Senior Marketing Specialist

Tel. 610-527-5234 X 104

lmattthews@riverbendec.org

**For Immediate Release**

Riverbend Environmental Education Center's Bird Observation Area receives refurbishment thanks to Merion Foundation Grant

August 7, 2017

Gladwyne, PA –Riverbend Environmental Education Center recently utilized \$5,000 in generous funding from the Merion Foundation to complete renovation projects in the Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area. These essential projects included new railings along the tiered garden pathways and a pond restoration with a moving water feature.

Created in 2008, the Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area is situated between Riverbend's Snider Barn and the Charles Lieberman Outdoor Classroom. The bird observation area features tiered gardens, an outdoor meeting space, a small pond, birdhouses and more than 120 varieties of native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. "This space is a special part of Riverbend's preserve," says Habitat Management Coordinator, Lorna Atkinson. "It is a secluded sanctuary for wildlife to thrive and it's important to maintain it."

The Merion Foundation's gift allowed for two needed improvements to the area. First, stronger railings were fitted along the path. Installed in 2009 the original cedar railings were deteriorating creating a safety hazard. The funding allowed Riverbend to replace the original railings with iron balustrades with cedar handrails. This allows the natural aesthetics to remain with the balustrades lasting for decades.

The Merion Foundation's grant also provided a new pond liner and pump with a running water feature. A key part of a bird observation area is a water feature. Water attracts more birds than food sources alone. In addition to rebuilding the pond, Riverbend also planted additional native plants in and around the area, adding to the wildlife habitat and enhancing its natural beauty.

Used heavily for education programs for students, campers, scouts and the community, the grant for refurbishing Riverbend's space came at a perfect time. These two projects together restore the Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area to a fully functioning haven for wildlife that can be safely enjoyed by children and visitors of Riverbend Environmental Education Center for many years to come.

ABOUT RIVERBEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER -- Riverbend Environmental Education Center is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in 1950 Spring Mill Road Gladwyne, PA. Our preserve is located on 30 acres, open 7 days a week for visitors. Riverbend offers a full menu of environmental education programs including school curriculum, teacher training, school field trips, exploration camp, public programs, weekly nature classes and special events.

#