

Fall/Winter 2017

Nature Connect

A Newsletter for Special Friends & Donors of Riverbend Environmental Education Center



Riverbend
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Nature is Our Classroom

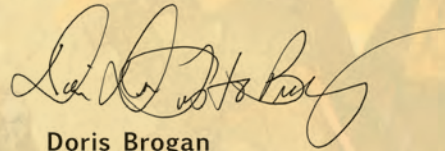
The outdoors truly is the greatest classroom there is.

Over and over nature inspires and teaches us. It is a reliable companion that sustains us for a lifetime. Riverbend students and campers learn science and deepen their understanding of the natural world through guided hands-on exploration and nature-based curriculum. All of Riverbend's programs are infused with elements that can spark curiosity and ignite a path of lifelong learning about the environment and how to steward our natural resources.

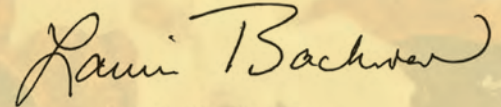
Knowing the importance of this mission, we increasingly seek to gather the data that helps us evaluate the impact of Riverbend programs. Whether it is measuring the retention of key scientific concepts in Building STEM Skills with Aquaponics or observing growth among summer campers in attitudes toward nature, we want to understand the best ways to engage those we serve.

Riverbend's Spring Mill Road preserve is a stimulating classroom as well as a quiet respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Although not easily quantified, we can all relate to that feeling of ease and restoration of spirit that simply being in nature provides.

Thank you so much for your investment in this important work and the services Riverbend provides to casual visitors, school students, teachers, families, campers and scouts. With every gift of support, volunteer time, and program enrollment, we're honored to share the multitude of ways nature can be our classroom.



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Riverbend's Philadelphia Children Access Nature:



Students from Thomas K. Finletter School in Philadelphia Visit Riverbend

Lays STEM Foundation, Incorporates Aquaponics as Vibrant Platform

“This year, another 90 students will receive hands-on environmental science learning. The best part is that I am not the only teaching fellow. Each of my colleagues in this program will reach an additional 30-90 students in their schools. Every year that we teach, a new group of students will have the benefit of inquiry science teaching. This program keeps giving by laying an incredible foundation for Philadelphia school children in need of STEM resources.”

When 4th Grade Science Teacher, Suzanne Blatstein, at Thomas K. Finletter School signed up for Riverbend's Philadelphia Children Access Nature program (PCAN), she didn't quite know what to expect – for herself or her students. The school where Suzanne teaches is in the North Philadelphia neighborhood of Olney. “Most of my children have not been encouraged to explore nature and I wondered if they would they feel out of place. Maybe they would even they feel too old or too cool.”

She says that the first field trip to Riverbend was a magical day. One of her students was a quiet girl who avoided participating in the classroom. When we were down by the stream looking for water insects with Riverbend's educators, the kids were reluctant to explore. This student was the first to scoop her cup into the water. She collected some May fly larvae and showed everyone else. Amazed, soon they were all scooping and exploring.

“What was exciting about the PCAN program, says Suzanne, was seeing a change in my students, even a whole new side. Before PCAN they would never be encouraged to turn over a log to see what is underneath. Now they know that finding worms, roly polys and other decomposers is a good thing. Asking questions and showing curiosity about nature is encouraged. Through this program my students have developed a sense of wonder and confidence about nature.



Suzanne Blatstein, second from right, with PCAN colleagues in Riverbend greenhouse

Philadelphia Children Access Nature (PCAN)

engages formal classroom teachers in underserved communities to build foundational skills in inquiry-based learning and environmental education. Teachers build confidence in using the environment and nature to provide relevant cross-curricular instruction that is exciting to students.

Through PCAN, vulnerable students have access to high quality instruction and daily exposure to nature in their classroom and through field trip experiences, like their suburban counterparts in more affluent districts. The structure of the program includes a week of professional development in the summer combined with a selective year-long fellowship program. Aquaponics was added in 2017-18 as a vibrant platform.

Riverbend's Educators Pursue Exciting Paths

Landscape Architect Hannah Thomas says, "One of the great things about Riverbend camp is simply getting kids outdoors. That's what kids should be doing and Riverbend prioritizes that!"

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree – or in this case the landscape architect. When Hannah Thomas followed her mother Lisa Thomas, also a landscape architect, to Riverbend's Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area a new world opened up to her. She learned that landscape design could be much more than planning streetscapes. It can combine aesthetics with ecological concerns and even history, one of Hannah's other passions.



Having traveled to a national park almost every summer as a kid and also working as an assistant camp counselor at Riverbend in 2013 and 2014, Hannah followed this up as a conservation service intern at Natural Lands. Hannah is at home in nature and her parents Lisa and Jeffrey Thomas have been terrific role models who advance the Riverbend mission through their committee and board leadership positions.

Currently based near Washington D.C., Hannah works for LandDesign, an urban design, civil engineering, and landscape design firm. She says ultimately she would like her career to focus on landscape preservation – a field involving the preservation of historic landscapes such as those she grew to love during her summer visits to our national parks.

Friends Celebrate at Riverbend's Annual Red Barn Gathering



Long-time supporters, some with yearly gifts going back more than 30 years are honored alongside newer donors. Riverbend volunteers plant native trees in honor of our donors throughout the year. At the gathering, we learned why our gifts are needed and how contributions are used to advance environmental education.



Dee & Nick Adams with Executive Director Laurie Bachman and Board Chair Doris Brogan celebrate the naming of the Nick & Dee Adams Pavilion in honor of the Adams' generosity.

Stewarding the Preserve with Capital Improvements

Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area Nurtures Nature Education



New cedar railings with iron balustrades and a restored pond with moving water features now grace this education hub thanks to a grant from The Merion Foundation. The bird observation area is a shady spot used for education programs for students, campers, scouts and the community. These two projects improve the Alec Williamson Bird Observation Area as a haven for wildlife that is enjoyed by children and visitors.



The Charles Lieberman Outdoor Classroom Improves Access to Environmental Education

When the existing “utility pole” steps leading down to the Charles Lieberman Outdoor Classroom began to deteriorate, Riverbend needed a long-term solution to ensure safe access to our open air learning center. Enter State Senator Daylin Leach and his team who assisted Riverbend

in applying for a \$10,000 leg grant from the PA Department of Education. The substantial bluestone steps installed by **Texada Landscaping** provide a durable solution that ensures better access to our environmental education programs.

Financial Report 2016

Year Ended December 31, 2016

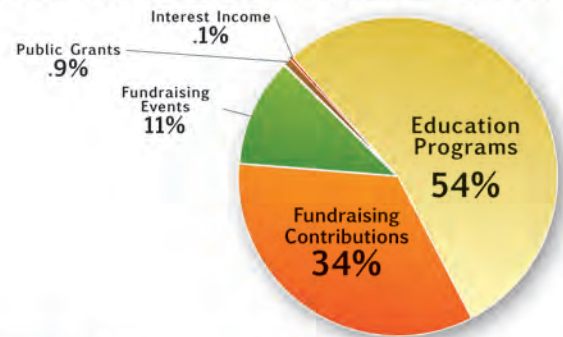
Statement of Financial Position

Property & Equipment.....	\$1,874,334
Current Assets.....	\$420,965
Other Assets.....	\$10,729
TOTAL Assets.....	\$2,306,028

Statement of Activities

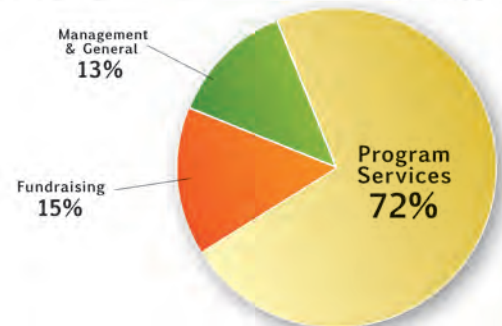
Revenues & Other Support

Education Programs.....	\$499,769
Fundraising Contributions.....	\$311,876
Fundraising Events.....	\$103,127
Public Grants.....	\$8,238
Interest income.....	\$977
TOTAL Revenues & Other Support.....	\$923,987



Expenses

Program Services.....	\$709, 874
Development.....	\$145,895
Management & General.....	\$125,250
TOTAL Expenses.....	\$981,019



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“The woods were my Ritalin.
Nature calmed me, focused me,
and yet excited my senses.”

Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods:
Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*

