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**RIVERBEND VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

MAY 2019

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## OUR ROOTS

Riverbend and its surroundings have a rich and varied history. In the 16th and 17th century, the local residents were a band of Lenape Native Americans who were part of a loose confederation of the Algonquin Nation. Known as the Unami Tribe, these Lenape established their "summer station" in the curve of the Schuylkill River that gives Riverbend its namesake. The last written record of Native American activity in the vicinity of Riverbend was an encampment at Black Rocks in 1740.

From its inclusion in the 1682 William Penn land grant of 5,000 acres to British settler Joshua Holland, Riverbend was eventually transferred to Welsh Quaker Morris Llewellyn, Sr., a farmer with huge land holdings called "Indian Fields." Bryn Mawr, Gladwyne, and Bala Cynwyd reflect this period of Welsh influence. At this time, Spring Mill Road was said to lead to a ford and later to a ferry crossing the Schuylkill River and eventually joining up with Spring Mill Road on the Conshohocken side. Although remnants of the old road are still visible on Riverbend's property, access to the river was cut off by the 1950's construction of the Schuylkill Expressway.

Many visitors are curious about the lovely dry masonry stone walls that intersect both Riverbend and surrounding property. When clearing new land for agriculture, it was common practice for farmers to remove large stones from the ground as they prepared for planting, and these stones were often used to construct walls. Walls like this are still found at Riverbend and at many of the surrounding properties.

In 1864, the Union Army leased land from farmers on the south side of Spring Mill Road to establish Camp Discharge. This camp housed Union soldiers released from Confederate prison camps before they returned to civilian life. A sentry house from "Camp Discharge" still stands near Riverbend's entrance.

In the post-Civil War era of America's Industrial Revolution, the land surrounding Riverbend caught the eye of Conshohocken's leading steel and iron manufacturer, Alan Wood Jr., whose 300 acres of "Woodmont Farms" came to include the fantastic Woodmont Estate. In 1884, Alan Wood, Jr.'s younger brother, Howard, acquired the adjacent 92-acre farm including "Camp Discharge," gradually amassing almost 400 acres, including the future site of Riverbend.

In December of 1974, Howard's grandchildren, Alice Grey Wood Read, Phoebe Wood Conger and Howard Wood III, in their desire to preserve some of the open space that defined so much of their family history, set aside 26 acres in memory of their parents, thus creating Riverbend Refuge a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The first environmental education programs began less than a year later in September 1975. Four acres was eventually added to the original 26, thus creating the 30-acre preserve we now call Riverbend Environmental Education Center.

In the 1980's, Riverbend continued to evolve structurally and programmatically. Riverbend Refuge was changed to Riverbend Environmental Education Center and classroom space was added to the barn. Our summer camp program was instituted, and school field trip programs continued to expand. Program and funding diversification led to an increased need for office capability; thus, from 1998-1999, our barn underwent a complete renovation, enabling Riverbend to better serve more children and families.

In 2004, Riverbend completed a Master Site Development Plan to guide our course of site and habitat improvements. A momentous gift to help fund those projects from The Snider Family Foundation changed the course of Riverbend's future. Thus, in 2005 Riverbend's signature building, a 1923 Sears Roebuck Catalog Barn building was named The Snider Barn in recognition of Ed Snider's generosity. Since that time, many significant



facility and habitat related improvements have been invested in Riverbend's preserve including the aquaponics greenhouse, bird observation area, stone story circle and pavilion.

Programmatically Riverbend has grown tremendously since 2005 as well. Of significance, school programs have quadrupled in size from 5,000 to 20,000 school visits annually, with 50% serving children from low-income, urban communities. Riverbend launched its' signature Building STEM Skills through Aquaponics in 2015, creating an opportunity to work with middle school students. Currently, Riverbend has 35,000 program visits annually through school, scout, camp and family programs, with approximately 50% taking place at offsite locations.

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## STAFF

### Permanent Staff

- Laurie Bachman, Executive Director | Extension 109 | [lbachman@riverbendeec.org](mailto:lbachman@riverbendeec.org)
- Erin McCool, Director of Education & Strategic Initiatives | Extension 112 | [emccoll@riverbendeec.org](mailto:emccoll@riverbendeec.org)
- Mary Kate O'Brien, Development Manager | Extension 111 | [lmkobrien@riverbendeec.org](mailto:lmkobrien@riverbendeec.org)
- Rhonda Viscusi-Babb, Communications and Marketing Manager | Extension 104 | [rbabb@riverbendeec.org](mailto:rbabb@riverbendeec.org)
- Rosie Arnold, Education Programs Manager | Extension 108 | [rarnold@riverbendeec.org](mailto:rarnold@riverbendeec.org)
- Peter Sturtevant, Education Programs Coordinator | Extension 106 | [psturtevant@riverbendeec.org](mailto:psturtevant@riverbendeec.org)

### Permanent Part-Time Staff

- Lorna Atkinson, Habitat Management Coordinator | Extension 110 | [latkinson@riverbendeec.org](mailto:latkinson@riverbendeec.org)
- Mike Barcus, Aquaponics Greenhouse Manager | [mbarcus@riverbendeec.org](mailto:mbarcus@riverbendeec.org)
- Pam MacCormick, Administrative Assistant | Extension 113 | [pmaccormick@riverbendeec.org](mailto:pmaccormick@riverbendeec.org)

In addition, we employ approximately 40 per-diem and seasonal employees to staff our education programs and summer camp.

### Board of Directors

- Doris Del Tosto Brogan, Esq., Chair
- Michael Haines, Vice-Chair
- Glenn Barenbaum, Treasurer
- Ellen Jordan, Secretary
- Angela Allevi, MD
- Monica Alston
- Gretchen Cooney
- David Copas, Esq.
- Bryan Franey, Esq.
- Simon Herriott
- Jimmy Owens
- Neal Shah

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## MISSION, VISION, VALUES

### **Mission**

Riverbend Environmental Education Center teaches environmental principles to children in Southeastern Pennsylvania through a direct connection with nature, inspiring respect for our natural world and action as aware, responsible and caring citizens.

### **Vision**

Riverbend Environmental Education Center will be recognized as the model environmental learning resource for children in Southeastern Pennsylvania known for our superior educational programs and as a unique and significant destination.

### **Values**

- Excellence in environmental education for all children.
- Connecting children to nature is a vital component for their well-being.
- Being good stewards of the environment and the land we own.
- Collaboration and partnerships with other organizations to fulfill our purpose.
- Responsible governance and management to ensure a stable financial foundation.
- Fun - our work is recreational, creative and educational.

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## PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

Riverbend's purpose is to deliver environmental education programs for children that increase their appreciation of the natural world, foster a joy of science learning and advance environmental stewardship. Currently, Riverbend serves 20,000 people annually with 35,000 program visits through our diverse educational offerings.

### **Camp**

Summer Exploration Camp: Riverbend's popular and well-known program serving local families with children aged 3 to 13 runs 11-12 weeks each summer for 60-85 children weekly.

Year-Round Camps: As an extension of our summer camp program, Riverbend offers days of camp on school holidays.

### **School Programs**

Riverbend offers a wide array of standards aligned programs for school students. Designed to connect students with the natural world and bring STEM to life through the lens of nature, these experiential learning opportunities enrich the school's science curriculum and address the Pennsylvania State Standards for Science and Technology, Environment and Ecology. Riverbend's educators are trained to deliver programming that is developmentally appropriate and relevant to children from all backgrounds and abilities.

Field Trips take place on our preserve in Gladwyne with full and half day options available.

Riverbend on the Road take place at school during regular school hours.

After-school Nature Clubs occur on school grounds for one hour and typically last 8 weeks.

Building STEM Skills through Aquaponics is Riverbend's award-winning aquaponics program. It is a comprehensive, yet flexible program designed to offer teachers the tools and skills they need to deliver innovative STEM-based curriculum. It includes professional development and a curriculum guide for teachers; a 20-gallon classroom-sized system and a full day aquaponics field trip to Riverbend.

Access Programs are programs serving students living in lower-income, under-resourced communities with few opportunities to connect with nature. Programs are designed to meet specific needs of the school or school district served. In addition to the distinct programs outlined below we work directly with several schools and other organizations in the Greater Philadelphia area.

Philadelphia Children Access Nature (PCAN) Is a comprehensive two-part program serving teacher and students in grades three to five: 1. a week of professional development for teachers that takes place in the summer focused on science inquiry learning and 2. a year-long "fellows" program that provides a curriculum guide, ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and a field trip for students.

Headstart is an interactive 3-part program that provides educational and developmental opportunities for underserved children, consistent with national Head Start goals to improve school readiness.

Norristown Area School District Partnership serves every third and fourth grade student in the District, approximately 1,200 annually with a 3-part program including a pre-visit, field-trip experience and post-visit.



## **Scouts**

Local Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups visit Riverbend in order to complete badge requirements, participate in night hikes, campfires and overnights (either in the barn or in tents in the field)

## **Birthday Parties**

Birthday Parties are one of Riverbend's most popular programs, and a great way to introduce Riverbend to new people.

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## VOLUNTEER POLICIES

### **Background Checks**

Volunteers that do not work directly with children and are supervised for the duration of their visit are not required to have background checks. This generally applies to corporate work groups and individuals who do not volunteer more than one time.

All volunteers, aged 18 years or older, working directly with children are required to have the following certifications:

- Criminal Background Check (PA state police)
- PA Child Abuse History Clearance

Volunteer clearances are free through the State of PA.

Volunteers under the age of 18, with the exception of EIT (Education in Training) are not required to complete background checks.

### **Discrimination**

While all forms of discrimination or harassment are prohibited, it is Riverbend's policy to emphasize that any form of discrimination or harassment based upon race, religion, color, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, pregnancy, disability, or military status is expressly prohibited. Riverbend will not tolerate verbal or physical conduct which harasses, disrupts or which creates an offensive or hostile environment for any member of the Riverbend community, including other volunteers, employees, and/or visitors.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual abuse and molestation include any conduct or activity leading to, or resulting in, sexual arousal or gratification of one, or all, of the parties involved. It includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate touching, inappropriate physical contact, titillating or romantic conversations. Sexual misconduct includes violation of boundaries. Boundaries are the critical issue reflecting the actual underlying intent of a non-erotic action.

It is the expressed policy of Riverbend that staff and volunteers shall not engage in sexually oriented activity, including sexual conversation with program participants or visitors, nor allow such conduct to exist between participants themselves.

Any person associated with Riverbend who violates this policy, as noted above, will be discharged, reported to the proper authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Sexual abuse, molestation and misconduct are crimes. As mandated reporters, any person associated with Riverbend who fails to report such activity will be discharged, reported to the proper authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

### **Whistle Blower**

Riverbend seeks to ensure that the organization complies with the highest standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. It requires its board officers and directors, employees, volunteers and independent contractors to report an action or suspected action that is illegal, fraudulent or in violation of any adopted Riverbend policy to the Executive Director and/or Board Chair or Board Vice-Chair, so that Riverbend will have an opportunity to investigate and correct any violations that are found or suspected to exist.



Reported violations will be investigated, addressed promptly and treated confidentially. No one reporting, in good faith, an actual or suspected violation of Riverbend's policies or other unlawful act will be subject to retaliation of any kind. In addition, false and malicious complaints as opposed to complaints which, even if erroneous are made in good faith, may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

### **Working with Children Policy**

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers of Riverbend to do their best to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children, and to report any abuse, alleged or suspected.

Riverbend will respond without delay to any complaints made that a child or young person, for whom Riverbend is responsible, may have been harmed.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteer files that include your application form, health records and emergency contacts are maintained as personal and confidential. Access to volunteer records is restricted to the following: Volunteer Coordinator, Executive Director, and/or Direct Supervisor

Volunteers may come into contact with certain confidential and proprietary information. Volunteers understand and agree that such confidential and proprietary information may not be disclosed to any third party unless expressly authorized by the Board or the Executive Director.

### **Dress Code**

Volunteers should dress in attire appropriate to the day's specific schedule, weather, and anticipated public contact. In general, when working in the office, volunteers should dress in neat, casual clothes. Volunteers who are working or teaching outdoors should dress appropriately for the weather and in clothes that can take the punishment of mud, thorns, grease, etc.

The following is a sample list of attire that is not appropriate for any volunteer or staff at Riverbend. This list is not inclusive, but should be considered a guideline for types of inappropriate attire:

- Clothing with wording or art which could be considered derogatory, negatively provocative, or otherwise offensive
- Short shorts or revealing tops
- Visible undergarments such as underwear, bras, etc.
- Tops that do not cover the midriff
- Ripped clothes or cut-offs.