

Nature Connect

Winter/Spring 2022



For Special Friends & Donors of Riverbend Environmental Education Center



A letter from Riverbend Leadership...

Dear Riverbend supporters,

Less than a year into our tenures as Riverbend's new Board Chair and Executive Director, we want to take this chance to say **THANK YOU**. Your unflagging support over these past two pandemic years saw Riverbend through a perilous time and onto solid ground again. Because of you, we are proudly carrying out Riverbend's commitment to equitably connecting young students to the healing effects of time spent in nature.

2021 was a year of change in which Riverbend bid a fond farewell to Executive Director Laurie Bachman, who transformed the organization over 15 years. The outgoing Board Chair, Dave Copas, spearheaded the effort to successfully transition leadership while maintaining operational stability. While connecting children to nature on Riverbend's idyllic Gladwyne preserve has been our mission for 47 years, under Laurie's leadership Riverbend also expanded programming offsite to become a regional environmental education powerhouse, providing elementary and middle school teachers in hundreds of elementary schools with the latest skills and tools they need to foster students' interest in STEM and improve academic outcomes.

For a decade, Riverbend has been fiercely dedicated to children living in neighborhoods with nature deficits. During the pandemic, we pivoted to deliver our inquiry-based nature education outside on school yards, on Zoom, and via video. Our environmental educators are thrilled to once again be teaching children in-person in their schools and at our Gladwyne preserve.

Because this is a critical decade for the future of our children and our planet, Riverbend now is harnessing environmental education as a platform for civic action on behalf of the natural world via our Nature Based STEM Community of Practice program. In Kensington's Elkin Elementary classrooms, Riverbend is supporting third graders in exploring indicators of ecological health on their own school grounds and to present solutions to school leaders. In Northwest Philadelphia, students will venture out to observe the flow of water on their schoolyard, consider watershed impacts, and present a plan to the local water department. These educational programs for students -- the majority of whom are low-income -- are 100% funded by dedicated donors and partners like you.

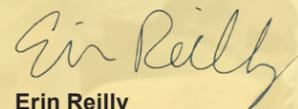
2022 will mark the return of a full schedule of public events at Riverbend's Gladwyne preserve, like "Earth Day Tree Planting" and "Tadpole Transformations." Recognizing the challenge of parenting in the era of climate change, these events offer families a fun chance to bond in nature and provide parents with tools for teaching kids to be aware of their impact on the environment. Riverbend hopes to empower families to proudly embrace the important role they can play as advocates for the natural world.

Your charitable gifts in 2020 and 2021 made these Riverbend programs possible for thousands of children. And with your help we can reach many thousands more this year. Together with our partners and donors—and with equitable access as our guiding light—we have educated and will continue to educate the environmentalists of the future across the greater Philadelphia region.

With gratitude,



Bryan Franey
Chair, Board of Directors



Erin Reilly
Executive Director



2022 Board of Directors

Bryan Franey, Esq., Chair
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Julia Boyer, Environmental Coordinator
Danielle Curley, Environmental Educator
Pamela MacCormick, Office Administrator
Erin McCool, Director of Education & Strategic Initiatives
Taylor McClain, Development Coordinator
Jill Shashaty, Education Specialist
Filmon Tsegai, Facilities & Maintenance Coordinator
Rhonda Viscusi-Babb, Communications & Marketing Manager

Education Programming Update

Evolving Riverbend's Education Outreach

Riverbend and Partners Help Pass Stronger Science Standards

The pandemic brought unprecedented change to Riverbend's schools, children, and families, hitting hardest for students of color and those attending schools in low income zip codes. As schools and families struggle to build a new vision for the future, we believe connecting with nature will be an integral part of the path forward.

Riverbend has created the Nature Based STEM Community of Practice to bring together Riverbend's strengths in education and expertise in sustainability to engage students in environmental education that is authentic, meaningful, and nature connected.

The Community of Practice prepares schools and environmental education centers to transform classrooms, using local environmental issues as a platform for project-based, equitable education experiences. We launched the program in August 2021, with teachers and environmental educators from Philadelphia, Upper Darby, and Montgomery County. Teachers spent three days in an intensive summer institute focused on nature-based learning and equitable instruction. Since September, 17 teachers have convened monthly and this spring, Riverbend environmental educators will reach their 525 students through visits to their classrooms and a watershed education experience at their school.

A second program, Riverbend's Nature Based STEM Series program, directly reaches students through multiple visits to classrooms, environmental education resources, video content, and outdoor field experiences in school yards. Classroom visits are implemented in person, virtually or through pre-recorded video when necessitated by pandemic surges. Outdoor field experiences are designed to engage students in local environmental exploration and problem solving at their school. Students receive much needed outdoor time connected to their curriculum.

The pandemic shined a light on the importance of connecting with nature and shifting to a more sustainable world. Our vision is that children will build environmental literacy and resilience, and grow up better prepared to face complex environmental issues and solve the world's greatest challenge ahead.



Educators in a break-out group at the Community of Practice Summer Institute in August of 2021.

Last summer, Pennsylvania was poised to adopt new standards in the state-wide science education curriculum. Here at Riverbend, we welcomed the much-needed update to science standards that were 19 years old and outdated. The newly proposed standards featured greater integration between science and technology and an emphasis on deep content knowledge, however environmental concepts like watersheds were eliminated. Academic standards are the framework that ensure students graduate with specific skills and knowledge and therefore it is critical that they explicitly include environmental concepts like watersheds, ecology, agriculture, and climate change. Environmental education in schools builds content knowledge through authentic investigation, hands-on learning, and field trips to ensure that students explore and understand the world around them, beyond their classroom walls.



Erin McCool leads an inquiry lesson at the Community of Practice Summer Institute.

Riverbend joined thousands of educators, concerned citizens, and elected leaders to participate in the public comment period regarding these standards. Riverbend pulled together our partners, including parents, board members, elected officials, and local school board members to sign a letter submitted through public comment. In January, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education voted to approve the standards with the addition of an environmental literacy domain. We are hopeful that this will pass through the legislative process to final approval and implementation in schools in the next few years. This change will ensure that all students in Pennsylvania build environmental literacy in their classrooms and graduate prepared to thrive in the face of complex and changing environmental conditions.

To learn more about the new standards and legislative process visit www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Curriculum/Science/Pages/Science-Standards.aspx or scan.



Educators walk through the beautiful John James Audubon Center.

Impact in 2021

5003

students + several thousand visitors to the preserve



140

ShiverQuest boxes sold to local families



635

summer campers enrolled ages 4 to 10



186

trees planted on Riverbend's preserve

140

individual volunteers giving

765

hours - mostly teens restoring the native habitat



17

educators enrolled in our Teacher Professional Development community of practice



525

students served by community of practice teachers

2047

students in Norristown, Philadelphia, and Upper Darby learned through Riverbend's videos and nature journal project



←93%

of those students attend Title I schools lacking resources, including equitable access to nature



365

days of the year that Riverbend's preserve was open to the public

150

Additional students reached through programs at Wetherill & Perkiomen Valley as well as Year-round Camp and Virtual Learning Center



Aquaponics is Back!

We are happy to report that Riverbend's Aquaponics greenhouse is back up and running. During the beginning of the pandemic, Riverbend shut down the greenhouse to reduce costs and save energy. Now, through a generous grant from Constellation as part of their *Energy to Educate* program, we are returning the greenhouse to a fully-operational state. The grant was co-authored by Riverbend and Cupola Academy as it benefits young learners from both organizations.

As of this writing, we are restoring the greenhouse with a "Grand Re-opening" planned for spring. In addition to restoring the greenhouse to full operation, we are upgrading the experience for visitors through the addition of interpretive graphics and for students through an app based self-guided field trip.



Special thanks to Constellation and Cupola Academy!



Riverbend, TreeVitalize, and Young Volunteers

Since 2008, Riverbend has been working with volunteers to plant over four thousand trees, remove destructive invasive vines, and improve the habitat at our preserve for wildlife, students, and the health of our stream. We have been fortunate to have been supported in this work by the TreeVitalize Grant program, managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener program, PECO, and Aqua PA for projects located within its source water protection zones.

Throughout 2021, young people from our community and nearby schools and universities came to Riverbend and gave over 700 hours of volunteer time. *For our TreeVitalize project, these young volunteers planted 226 trees, and 93 shrubs, as well as native perennials and seeds, restoring an area of woodland that is losing canopy due to death of many ash trees caused by the Emerald Ash Borer as well as the impacts of invasive vines.*

During the summer, we welcomed teen volunteers once a week who kept our trails clear, cleaned up after storms, and worked together with our summer Habitat Interns to pull invasive vines and plant a pollinator garden.

After more than a year of living through the pandemic when our programs were largely shut down, it was wonderful to welcome so many young people and work together safely outside on such impactful projects. **We thank all of our young volunteers who gave their time and hard work to help sustain and care for Riverbend during the past year. If you wish to support Riverbend's native habitat, please scan here to make your gift.**



Summer Camp 2021

A look back at this past Summer Camp season at Riverbend



Riverbend is cherished in the hearts of children and families on the Main Line. Summer camp has been integral to the healthy growth and development of children for 40 years. Canceling camp in March of 2020 was a low point, but we have since reached hundreds of camp families successfully and without COVID transmission for two seasons.

“My son really enjoyed connecting and learning from the counselors. After a year of isolation, this camp brought a lot of joy and lightness to his summer.”-Annie Liu

For this upcoming summer, we have added a new Counselor in Training (CIT) program for children ages 11-13 years. This leadership experience introduces campers to experts in environmental issues, service learning and career exploration—all while spending their days fully outdoors, immersed in nature. CITs visit regional environmental centers for weekly field trips and work directly alongside counselors, developing experience working with younger children.



Farmhouse Renovation Complete!

An update from Riverbend Board Secretary, Gretchen Cooney



Contractor Chris Hanson of Hanson Fine Building inspects paint condition pre-renovation.

In 2021, Riverbend successfully completed the renovation of the historic farmhouse on the preserve property. The goal of the project was to add additional space for education programs and provide a critically needed home for an onsite caretaker. Having a caretaker live onsite will improve the safety and accessibility for all who visit Riverbend for education and recreation. The farmhouse was neglected for many years, and had fallen into a state of significant disrepair. The renovation of this historic structure included the demolition of the interior walls, reframing, new electrical and plumbing for two bathrooms and a kitchen, a new HVAC system and additional insulation and deep cleaning. We are excited about this worthy and necessary investment in Riverbend’s future.

Thank you to the William Penn Foundation and McLean Contributionship for generously underwriting this project.



Signs of disrepair and mold in the farmhouse prior to the 2021 renovation are seen here.



Here is a view of the updated full kitchen space in the farmhouse.



A full three-piece bathroom was added.



Wide plank floors in the hallway were restored.



This is a view of the updated stairway and fireplace mantle.

Welcome to Our New Board Directors



Sarah Collier

Sarah is a Global Quality Leader at DuPont and is responsible for developing and deploying a quality assurance strategy that supports DuPont's Water and Protection business purpose to create water, shelter, and safety solutions for a more sustainable world. Sarah has a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Stanford University and has worked in a variety of areas in the chemical and manufacturing industry including research and development, manufacturing, and human resources.

Sarah feels that Riverbend is a great asset for the community providing beautiful open space and nature for everyone to enjoy. More importantly, Sarah believes that through their mission of teaching environmental principles to children in our area, Riverbend is also providing critically important environmental awareness and STEM skills for the next generation.

Sarah became familiar with Riverbend when her family moved nearby about 11 years ago. Her two boys have grown up hiking, playing in the stream, and attending camp at Riverbend. Besides attending lots of fun events at Riverbend over the years, some of her favorite memories are from the many times her family has met up with friends at the preserve to hike through the stream, look for tadpoles and frogs, and catch Poke'mon!



Patrick Ryan

Patrick Ryan is a CPA and serves as the Chief Financial Officer of Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union. Franklin Mint is the largest financial institution headquartered in Delaware County Pennsylvania and provides financial products and services to its members in the greater Philadelphia region since 1970. Patrick started at Franklin Mint in 2010 as the Accounting Manager and progressed into his current role. As the Chief Financial Officer, Patrick has responsibility over Finance & Accounting, Information Technology, Loan Servicing, Member Solutions, Risk Management & Compliance. Prior to Franklin Mint, Patrick spent more than 5 years at a regional Public Accounting Firm.

Patrick discovered Riverbend through a referral from another board member. He believes that Riverbend's mission to teach children through direct experiences with nature resonates strongly with him due to the way the mission is carried out. Patrick further notes that it is a unique time as the world is rapidly changing and there are many changes and transitions occurring at Riverbend. He is impressed at the changes that have already taken place and excited to see the many new ways that Riverbend will continue its mission and reach more children.

Per Patrick, *"Any opportunity we can provide a unique and intimate learning experience with children will leave lasting, memorable impacts. I have always had a passion for children and learning and am proud to support Riverbend, which so carefully fosters the learning experience for children."*

Thank you to Laurie Bachman

With deep gratitude, we said a fond farewell last year to Laurie Bachman, Riverbend's longtime Executive Director. Since 2005, Laurie had been the heart and soul of Riverbend and an integral part of the growth and success of the organization. Her fifteen years of dedicated service included a significant list of accomplishments. Laurie stabilized Riverbend's financial situation when she took the reins in 2005, made numerous capital improvements to the preserve, rehabilitated the farmhouse, oversaw the restoration of the preserve's natural habitat, launched the award-winning Aquaponics and Nature-based STEM programs, and provided thoughtful financial stewardship through the 2020-21 pandemic. The fruit of her work was felt by thousands of students throughout the region, and other friends of the 'Bend who visited the preserve, attended camp here, hiked our trails or shared a picnic on the grounds. Laurie left an indelible mark on Riverbend that will serve the organization for years to come.

Thank you, Laurie! We wish you the best as you embark on the next chapter of your story.



Laurie Bachman and Erin Reilly in July 2021



Financial Report 2020 & 2021

2020

Total Ordinary Income.....\$634,050
Total Expenses.....\$792,016

2021

Total Ordinary Income.....\$947,113*
Total Expenses.....\$752,112

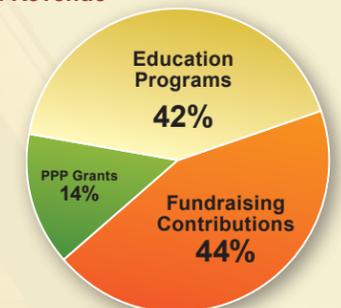
*Riverbend also received \$144,380 in Federal PPP grants in 2021.

Year Ended December 31, 2021

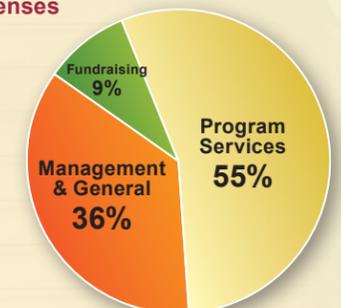
Statement of Financial Position

Property & Equipment.....\$1,714,180
Current Assets\$935,062
TOTAL Assets\$2,649,242

2021 Total Revenue



2021 Expenses



Donors 2021

\$10,000+

ASTM International 🌳
 Carol Baker and Mark Stein
 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
 Constellation
 The Germeshausen Foundation Inc.
 Janssen Pharmaceuticals 🌳
 Pamela M. Luchsinger
 PECO
 Phillies Charities, Inc.
 The Powell Family Foundation
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 Anonymous
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 The Wright-Cook Foundation 🌳

\$5,000 to \$9,999

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 TreeVitalize Watershed Grant Program 🌳
 UHS

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Ellen and Eben Jordan 🌳
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 Patrick Ryan
 Shreiner Tree Care Specialists Inc. 🌳

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 Chantee Angus
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 Michael Barcus
 Paul and Cathy Chicos 🌳
 Mary Coe
 Mr. and Mrs. David Comroe 🌳
 Aulikki Copas 🌳
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 Lisa Schreiber
 Philip Sullivan
 Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Weiner
 Sherrie Willner 🌳
 Thomas V. Zug 🌳

Riverbend deeply appreciates all donations. Gifts under \$50 are acknowledged on our website.

Thank you to our many Friends of the Bend for their long-term support of our mission.

- 🌳 = White Oak - Friends who have given annually for 20 years or more.
- 🌳 = American Holly - Friends who have given annually for 10 to 19 years.
- 🌳 = Eastern Redbud - Friends who have given annually for 5 to 9 years.

Volunteers 2021



Thank you to all of our Volunteers for 2021!

Individual Volunteers

Connie Atkinson
 Estelle Atkinson
 Gerry Atkinson
 Andrew Babb
 Jason Krain
 Kara Kulak
 Isberr Xiloj-Madrid

Ian Lee
 Izzy Lo
 Navya Ramesh
 Gabrielle Sarraino
 James Tornetta

High School Seniors

Sebastian Bell
 Kayla Bleier
 Christian Demopoulos
 Keyan Dumon
 Ben Gillin
 Keyanna Grier
 Garret Kelly
 Spencer McCallum
 Finn Stains

Teen Summer Volunteers

Milan "Mico" Carpiello
 Zachary Dietch
 Lucas Fraser
 Lauren Halak
 Tessa Klimowicz
 Elena Kovach
 Stephen (Jack) Kovach

Volunteer Work Day Groups

Bryn Mawr Trust
 Episcopal Academy 6th grade
 Episcopal Academy 7th grade
 Episcopal Academy 9th grade
 Episcopal Academy Seniors
 Junior League of Philadelphia
 Family Tree Planting Day
 The Baldwin School
 The Impact Center
 Villanova Day of Service
 Virtual Learning Center

Summer Camp Teen Volunteers (EIT)

Gerry Atkinson
 Caden Cleffi
 Sienna Curley
 Olivia Heldring
 Mahum Mahmood
 Katie Neary
 Sofia Tarnopolsky
 Vivienne Welsh
 Anna Wetzel
 Allison Wightman

Special Thanks to the Summer Camp Stiltgrass Pullers!



In Kind Donations

Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Baumstein
 Shreiner Tree Care Specialists Inc.
 Kevin Silverang



Gifts in Honor

In Honor of Laurie Bachman Keith Pension
In Honor of Eleanor Hughson Maria Palermo
In Honor of Ellen Jordan Annabelle Irely
In Honor of Wendy Lewis Benny, Max, Nathan and Wyatt

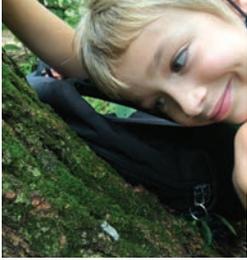
Gifts in Memory

In Memory of Clemens Lazenka Elizabeth Lazenka
In Memory of John A. Luchsinger, Esq. Pamela M. Luchsinger and Family
In Memory of Harvey L. Nisenbaum Sylvia T. Nisenbaum, Esq.
In Memory of Adam Sawoski Joan Sawoski
In Memory of Sheffield Kate Jiggins
In Memory of the mother of Pragati Shukla Michael Haines
In Memory of Alec Williamson Lisa and Lars Williamson
In Memory of Elizabeth Winters Maria Palermo



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Gladwyne, PA 19035

Nature **connect**



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“...we need more environmental educators that are looking to find more equitable solutions for STEM in urban environments. I see Riverbend as a long-term partner. I want educators to know you gotta form those partnerships for your students.

If I didn't come to Riverbend, I wouldn't be as passionate. I'm just excited about it!”

- Dr. Tracy Sainvil-Joslyn,

Teacher at Edmonds Elementary School in Philadelphia and participant in Riverbend's Nature-Based STEM Community of Practice