

Winter/Spring 2023

NatureConnect

For Special Friends & Donors of Riverbend Environmental Education Center





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Letter From Riverbend’s Leadership

Dear Riverbend Supporters,

As the pandemic recedes, Riverbend is reflecting on two years of abundant, communal resilience, with supporters like you showing up for local schools in need. The COVID-19 pandemic placed unprecedented strain on our friends and partners in the American education system, and low-income children suffered the worst educational losses. Riverbend's pandemic story is a case study in how things grow back, and what happens when dedicated, passionate people commit to care for the earth and our children – *ALL children* – no matter their zip code.

As Riverbend's leaders, we are deeply grateful to YOU: the donors, volunteers, Board Directors, staff, and teachers named within this newsletter. Your generosity directly powered the rebuild of our award-winning, in-person environmental education programs at lightning speed when schools finally reopened their doors in March 2021, to educational partners like Riverbend.

Riverbend is once again Montgomery County's #1 provider of environmental education for children, and a model STEM teaching partner for schools in the greater Philadelphia region.

In the last 12 months, thanks to your involvement, Riverbend grew from teaching 700 children in-person in 2021 to teaching 6,709 children in-person in 2022, delivering nature lessons and outdoor experiences led by our trained Environmental Educators.

It was glorious to see the first yellow school buses roll down Spring Mill Road full of elementary school students on their first field trips to Riverbend in nearly two years. For many of our students, a trip to Riverbend marks their first time walking in a stream, catching a toad, or stepping into a greenhouse.

Our conviction is that children need to know about the natural systems that sustain all life on earth, and about how to protect those systems. For their mental and emotional health, they also deserve guidance on how to form their own intimate relationship with Mother Earth, and a joyful beginning to a lifelong habit of spending time in nature.

This report overflows with stories of things growing back, from our reopened Aquaponics Greenhouse to our festive lineup of weekend events for families, adult educational offerings, and relaxing evening gatherings for adults and families at our 30-acre Gladwyne preserve.

Thanks to YOU - Riverbend is flourishing once again.

But the work is unfinished. In 2023, we will invite you to help us carry out Earth Action projects in Philly schools, restore trail signage on our serene walking paths, and expand nature access by introducing summer camp scholarships. And, approaching our 50th anniversary in 2024, we invite you to help us spend this year envisioning Riverbend's next five decades of environmental education.

With the world moving so fast, how do we stay grounded to the things that matter most? Riverbend keeps us connected to our first teacher: Mother Earth. We strive to ensure every visitor falls in love with the natural environment, and leaves Riverbend inspired to take action to protect its delicate and interconnected systems – *the very systems that sustain us all.*

With gratitude,

Bryan Franey
Chair, Board of Directors



Erin Reilly
Executive Director



Support for Science Teachers

Classroom teachers know that hands-on projects conducted outdoors increase student's interest in science. To prepare students to address timely environmental issues and succeed in STEM-based careers, strong partnerships between informal (nonprofits) and formal (schools) education institutions are key.

This school year, Riverbend is working with 10 classrooms enrolled in our free, year-long Community of Practice. This

grant-funded program coaches teachers on how to teach science curriculum outdoors. After only three days training with Riverbend at the program's 2022 kickoff event – our Summer Inquiry Institute – public school teachers were already reporting an increase of up to 70% in their confidence and knowledge of outdoor STEM instruction.

Riverbend has been investing in classroom teachers as valued and respected partners in nature education for nearly a decade.

Right: Riverbend's EE Fellow, Chris Sosnowski, works with students at Stonehurst Hills Elementary School in Upper Darby.

Below: Education Specialist, Jill Shashaty, leads a group of educators in an introductory outdoor session at the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove.



BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

After doing an Earth Action project: "I hear kids being very outspoken about litter. They point the drain and say 'It's gonna go down there! It's gonna go into our watershed'. I think about how I didn't have this information as a kid. And it makes me think how much better could the earth be? This whole experience was amazing. I learned so much."

-Community of Practice Teacher Kristin Kelly, 1st - 5th grade at Rhoads Elementary



Community of Practice Teacher, Kelly Koreck's 1st grade students from Keystone Charter Academy sharing their signs to help to curb litter in their schoolyard.

Nature-Based STEM in the Schoolyard

Riverbend Making a Difference for Local Students in Their Communities



Riverbend Environmental Education Center made a positive impact in Upper Darby and Norristown School Districts in 2022, reaching all 4th graders in both districts, making multiple visits to each class, and taking students outdoors to investigate the natural habitats on their schoolyards.

In an effort to further connect children and teachers to nature in their own neighborhoods, Riverbend environmental educators led guided field trips for all classes to their nearest nature preserve – Heinz Wildlife Refuge and Norristown Farm Park. Students lifted up rocks to find salamanders, traversed streams, and fed native fish. Teachers praised the hands-on, immersive nature of the program.

As we look ahead to the 2023-24 school year, Riverbend will continue teaching Upper Darby's 4th grade and will double the number of Norristown students by serving two grades, reaching an estimated 2,000 students next school year to enhance their understanding of the natural world. As federally designated Title I districts, the districts enroll a majority low-income student body, and this program was provided for free to all Upper Darby and Norristown 4th grade students thanks to Riverbend's generous donors. Riverbend dedicates 50% of its school year education programming to low-income students.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

"I received great feedback with lots of academic details about them from the students. The visit [from a Riverbend educator] was an eye opener for many of the students. Seeing their school yard as an ecosystem made them really think!"

- Upper Darby 4th grade teacher

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We're back! 2022 in Review

The Past Year Was a Time of Renewal and Growth at the Preserve and Beyond



Young learners from Cupola Academy help cut the ribbon at the grand re-opening of Riverbend's aquaponics greenhouse in April 2022.



Events are back at Riverbend including beloved community favorite Shiverfest.

Summer Camp Expands to a Second Location

Riverbend is proud to report we added a second location for summer camp, partnering with McKaig Nature Center to provide a fun and educational experience for children at McKaig's pristine 91-acre woods in King of Prussia. The goal of the camp is to give children a deeper understanding of the environment and the importance of conservation.

In 2023, Summer Camp at both Riverbend's Gladwyne preserve and McKaig's King of Prussia preserve will be led by Riverbend's skilled educators who guide campers in nature exploration through hikes, stream-stomping, bug-catching, and adventure.



Riverbend's Camp Director, Matilda Kitabwalla at the Thursday night summer camp cook-out.

Welcome New Board Directors

Five New Directors Join Riverbend's Board in 2022



Dr. Sean Gardiner

Dr. Sean Gardiner has been a leader in the field of STEM Education in the greater Philadelphia area for over 13 years. Working with teachers, administrators, School Districts, and local community partners, Dr. Gardiner has led a variety of initiatives aimed at transforming the STEM landscape in K - 12 educational spaces. A primary focus of his work has been addressing systems that have perpetuated the systemic underrepresentation of students from the BIPOC community in STEM careers. Dr. Gardiner earned his Master's degree in Communication Sciences from the University of Connecticut and his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Widener University. He is currently the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for STEM Education in the Upper Merion Area School District.

To Dr. Gardiner, Riverbend's mission captures the essence of STEM education and the importance of children learning through meaningful outdoor experiences. At the heart of the mission is the central tenet of equity, which encompasses everything Dr. Gardiner and his school district do to ensure all students have an opportunity to learn, engage, and excel.

Dr. Gardiner connected with Riverbend over eight years ago by engaging in a partnership leveraging outdoor education and Aquaponics. Over the past eight years, his district has had over 2,800 students visit Riverbend. In the Upper Merion Area Middle School, students engage in hands-on learning throughout the school year by using 27 classroom Aquaponics systems installed by Riverbend experts. This partnership has brought shared local, state, and national recognition with Riverbend.



Sarah Greenstein

Sarah is a Senior Customer Strategy Manager at Johnson & Johnson Consumer Healthcare focused on Skin Health. She has been part of J&J for the past 18 years, starting in Supply Chain and moving into various Sales roles throughout her career.

Sarah values Riverbend's mission to bring environmental awareness and principles to children across the region. She believes that the hands-on opportunity Riverbend provides through programs, field trips, and summer camps, encourages children and provides the opportunity to become aware of their impact on the environment around them.

Sarah first connected with Riverbend in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when her two boys attended the on-site virtual learning program. During the virtual learning center days, Sarah's sons grew to love the preserve. As a result, the family came to Riverbend for hikes and enjoyed family activities such as the virtual scavenger hunt, ShiverQuest.



Clay Hall

Clay Hall is a Portfolio Manager at Conservest Capital Advisors, a boutique wealth management firm based in Wynnewood. He is a CFA charterholder and member of the firm's investment committee.

Clay believes that through its mission, Riverbend is helping to develop and improve environmental conservation practices for children and families in the region.

First introduced to Riverbend through Leadership Philadelphia, Clay appreciates Riverbend's beautiful nature preserve and believes that it should be maintained and enhanced for current and future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

In 2022, Clay and his fellow Leadership Philadelphia Junto Number 5 group members helped Riverbend build new propagation beds on the preserve. They donated all of the necessary materials and supplied the needed volunteer person power to install them in place. *Learn more in the sidebar on the next page.* →

"The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope." - Wendell Berry



Dr. Tracy Sainvil-Joslyn

Dr. Tracy Sainvil-Joslyn has 20 years of educational experience and has centered her focus and research on Educator Effectiveness and Evaluation and Nature-Based Science via Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE). In her spare time, Dr. Sainvil-Joslyn indulges in writing, cooking, meditating, laughing, and remembering how valuable it is to have time with her family.

Dr. Sainvil-Joslyn feels that Riverbend's mission speaks to the core of her educational philosophy. She believes we must empower children and adults to take action, specifically to conserve Earth's resources. This is how we can preserve what came before us. Her first experience with Riverbend was in the summer of 2018 when she participated in Philadelphia Children Access Nature (PCAN) and the Summer Science Inquiry Institute. Through the years, Tracy has been honored to see and support the growth and development of this program through active participation in Riverbend's Nature-Based STEM Community of Practice.

Participating in the Summer Science Inquiry Institute and the Nature-Based STEM Community of Practice has empowered Dr. Sainvil-Joslyn to continue learning about and advocating for environmental learning in our K-8 public schools. Nature has been such a source of healing for her, both professionally and personally. She feels that her work with Riverbend has helped broaden her leadership capacity in Science education and has helped her make authentic relationships with other advocates and educators of nature-based science.



Mike Werner

Mike has over 20 years of work experience in a variety of industries. Most recently, he has worked locally at Tandigm Health as the Vice President of Business Transformation. In that role, Mike works on developing and implementing their business strategy. Educationally, Mike has a BS in Finance from Villanova University and an MBA from the University of Notre Dame.

Mike has a fond memory of chaperoning a field trip with his children several years ago and remembers being impressed by the day's program and the area's beauty. When it comes to Riverbend's mission, he feels that Riverbend's commitment to educating children in the local and surrounding communities resonates with him the most.

Board Directors Blaze the Trail

In 2022, Riverbend's Board of Directors set a bold course for the near future, completing both a 3-year Strategic Plan and Riverbend's first-ever DEI plan. As environmental educators, we know that natural environments with greater biodiversity are stronger and more resilient. In turn, we aspire to be an ever more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization. We commit to building a community where both our staff members and the students, educators, and families we serve, feel valued, respected, and engaged. *The full DEI Plan and Strategic Plan can be found on Riverbend's website.*

Riverbend also expresses its immense gratitude to outgoing Board Directors Angela Allevi, Dave Copas, Ellen Jordan, and Keith Pryor, whose terms ended in the last year. These dedicated leaders, and their fellow Board Directors, took an active role in crafting programming and strategy, and brought new resources and people to the team effort of sustaining Riverbend's critical mission.



Clay Hall and other members of Leadership Philadelphia's Junto Number 5 help Riverbend build propagation beds this past spring. The beds are used to start native plants and trees at Riverbend and transplanted to various areas around the preserve.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2021 & 2022

2021

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

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

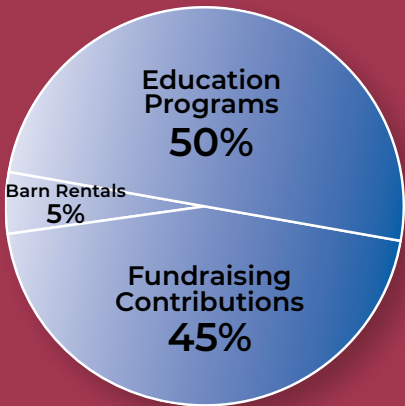
2022

Total Ordinary Income.....\$1,105,579
Total Expenses.....\$953,261

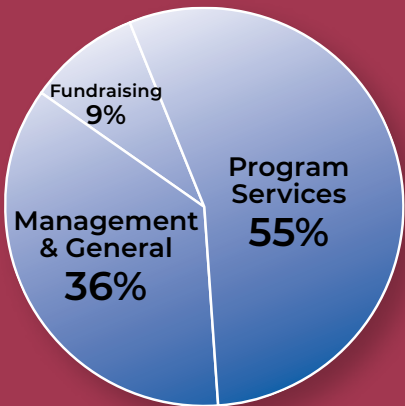
Year Ended December 31, 2022

Statement of Financial Position
Property & Equipment.....\$1,631,060
Current Assets.....\$1,127,251
TOTAL Assets.....\$2,758,311

2022 Revenue



2022 Expenses



In Kind Donations

Carlino's Market	Kiki Vodka
Conshohocken Brewing Co.	McCaffrey's Food Market
DiBruno Bros.	Mom's Organic Market
Dock Street Brewery	Nothing Bundt Cakes
Eagles Care	Rosalie
Evil Genius Brewery	Solebury Orchards
Founding Farmers	Trader Joe's
The Gladwyne Market	Turning Point
Helium Comedy Club	Wawa
Jim Herbert	Yard's Brewery
William Marx, Esq.	

Gifts in Honor

In Honor of Laurie Bachman	Peter Grove
In Honor of Brucie and Ed Baumstein	Lisa Hancock
In Honor of Tasha Childs	Julie Schwartz
In Honor of Danielle Curley	Kellie Braconier
In Honor of Ellen Jordan and Gretchen Cooney	Eleanor Miller
In Honor of Ellen Jordan	Annabelle Irely
In Honor of Caroline Siegfried	Jane Siegfried
In Honor of Peihong Tang	Guochun Xie
In Honor of Barley VanClief	Diane Reilly

Gifts in Memory

In Memory of Clemens Lazenka	Elizabeth Lazenka
In Memory of the mother of Jeff Martin	Michael Haines
In Memory of the mother of Rory McNeil	Michael Haines
In Memory of Erika Miller	Jennie Roach Royce Marcus Jane Kellar Paul Kellar Seymour Thickman E. Peinemann & H.F. Terhart
In Memory of Harvey L. Nisenbaum	Sylvia Nisenbaum, Esq.
In Memory of Peggy Rhoades	Michael Haines
In Memory of Adam Sawoski	Joan Sawoski
In Memory of James Viscusi Sr.	Anonymous
In Memory of Alec Williamson	Gerald Dworkin Lisa and Lars Williamson
In Memory of Jim Winsor	Donna Winsor
In Memory of Calvin Wolcott	Kristin Edwards

DONORS 2022

\$10,000+

ASTM International
Arcadia Foundation
Brucie and Edward Baumstein
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Doris and James Brogan
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Enterprise Holdings Foundation
The Germeshausen Foundation
The Hess Foundation
Independence Blue Cross
PECO
The Powell Family Foundation
The Stratton Foundation
The Wright-Cook Foundation
WSFS Bank
Anonymous

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Dee and Nick Adams
Sarah and Cole Collier
Gretchen and Gordon Cooney
Barbara and Harry DeVerter
IFF
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Philadelphia Insurance Companies
Keith Pryor
Riggs Distler and Co. Inc.
Ruth and Sid Rosenblatt
Rosenlund Family Foundation
Shreiner Tree Care Specialists Inc.
Simon and Jill Herriott
Tandigm Health
TE Connectivity
Township of Lower Merion

\$2,500 to \$4,999

E. Murdoch Family Foundation
Janine and Bryan Franey
Franklin Mint FCU
Hassel Foundation
Sarah Greenstein
Ellen and Eben Jordan
Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation
Manko Gold Katcher and Fox LLP
Lainey and Trip McMahon
Neubauer Family Foundation
Angela Allevi and Jason Newman
Kristie and Peter Ressler
Patrick Ryan

Jody Seibert
Viola and Christian Terwiesch

\$1,000 to \$2,499

Aqua America
The Alex J. Ettl Foundation
Gwen Goodwill Bianchi
Amanda Bruno
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
Clean Harbors
Comcast
David Copas
Cotiviti, Inc
Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
Kristin and Scott Edwards
John Fistner
Nancy Greene and Peter Grove
AJ Healy
Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial
Kylie Holland
Jessica Keller
Sean Kennedy
Nancy and Dick Klavans
Kimberly Kupka and Jeffrey Spann
Merck & Co.
Miller Bros.
Laurel and Edward O'Connor
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald B. Rorer
Bethany and Garrett Shiner
Socius Partners
Shanin Specter
Sprague Foundation
Michelle and Samuel Stanford
Pam Stites
Jonathan Stump
Seymour Thickman
Lisa and Jeffrey Thomas
Mr. and Mrs. James J. Tornetta
The Wetherill School
Drs. Tamara Davis and Bruce Wightman
Lisa and Lars Williamson
Guochun Xie and Peggy Tang
Anonymous

\$250 to \$999

Monica and Les Alston
Drs. Melissa and Paul Anderson
Laurie Bachman
Krista and Greg Beach
Christine and Leif S. Beck
Biamp Systems
Frederick Bissinger
Mr. and Mrs. James M. Buck III
C&V Landscaping
The Catherwood Family Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation
Diane Conner
Sara and Matthew Doelger

Edmond Doran
Erin Reilly and Patrick Doran
Pearl and Steven Elias
Nancy and Phillip Franey
Cristina and David Fryman
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gadsden
Megan Quigley and Eric Gill
Mr. and Mrs. Matthews V. Hamilton, Jr.
Hardy Plant Society
Anne Stokes Hochberg
Annabelle Irely
Christine and Brian Lobley
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Melissa and Steven Nielson
Dyana and Jimmy Owens
Arlene and Albert Perlstein
Diane and Steve Reilly
Cynthia and William G. Roberts
Meriam Zandi and Thomas J. Rush
Bernadette and James Sharp
Waverly Custom Homes
Anonymous

Up to \$249

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Abramowitz
Christa and Christopher Albek
Benjamin Alden
Mai Vy Alexander
Bluestone Environmental Group
MaryKate Boland
Mary Kate and Eric Bolinder
Allison Boyle
Dennis Brogan
Cathy and Paul Chicos
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Kevin Coles
Mr. and Mrs. David Comroe
Aulikki Copas
Graham Copeland
Mary Jo Daley
Nancy Davis
Larissa DiStefano
Katherine and John Douglas
Elizabeth Rittenhouse and Steven DuPont
Laith Elias
Katharine Fisher
Anne and Gren Foote
Norah and Howard Goldfine
Jeff Grace
Allison and Andy Hamilton
Luke Hamilton
Lisa V. Hancock
J. Barton Harrison
Laura Haynes
Michael Heilser

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.

Dana Hibbard

Kate Jiggins

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Keating Jr. 🍷

Mr. and Mrs. R. Mark Keating

Teresa and Josh Keesan

Jane Kellar

Paul Kellar

Anthony Kerlavage

Diane Koch

Goldie Kurtz

Brian and Adela Lang

Elizabeth Lazenka 🍷

Elaine Marquardt

Mary-Helen McCulloch

Martin Miller

Eleanor Miller

Percival Moser

James Nasuti 🌐

James Newman

Sylvia T. Nisenbaum, Esq. 🌐

E. Peinemann and H.F. Terhart

Lauren and Nicholas Pennington 🍷

Ben Prusky

Molly Reynolds

Vesta and Surena Salehi

Sara Samimi

Joan Sawoski

Julie Schwartz

Kyra and Joshua Shapiro

Wenjing Shen

Jane Siegfried

Philip Sullivan

Lee Tabas 🍷

Kristin Topolewski

Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Weiner

Michael Werner

Sherrie Willner 🌐

Barbara Spillane Wilson

Donna Winsor 🌐

Sonya and Christopher Yohn 🍷

Thomas V. Zug 🌐

Anonymous (4)

VOLUNTEERS

2022

Shiverfest Volunteers:

Mary Ann Ahearn

Liz Amber

Charles Atkinson

Connie Atkinson

Gerrard Atkinson

Andrew Babb

Lauren Ballaster

Falina Baron-Hionis

Charlotte Bellec

Juanita Belt

Constance Busin

Matthew Chalissey

Sarah Collier

Paloma Cordova

Simon Dombar

Nathan Doran

Tom Dougherty

Guinevere Dunn

Dash Durning

Bryan Franey

Nancy Franey

Phil Franey

Ava Gayl

Marsha Gayl

Meredith Gelles

Christy Giugliano

Miriam Goldberg

Taylor Graham

Paige Grau

Hannah Greenstein

Sarah Greenstein

Christopher Guadagnino

Clay Hall

Quin Hammersley

Barb Herbert

Jim Herbert

Robert Herbert

Naomi Hines

Priya Johnson

John Kandemir

Dave Katan

Dayton Kephart

Hannah Kim

Brian Kingan

Boaz Livney

Melissa Livney

Aileen Lutz

Heather McCarthy

Marie Mullen

Ella Murray

Jimmy Owens

Rachael Parker

Lauren Pennington

Nick Pennington

Shane Pryor

Diane Reilly

Stephen Reilly

Linda Reinhardt

Emily Richmond

Pat Ryan

Tracy Sainvil-Joslyn

Valeria Schuster

Anna Shashaty

Dalia Shashaty

Gavin Slate

Katherine Slotnick

Nathan Smith

Jonathan Stump

Evan Udelsman

Michele Vessal

Jenna Xue

Summer Teen Volunteers:

Milan “Mico” Carpiniello

Charlotte Vivi Daly

Jack Daly

Peter Daly

Lucas Fraser

Lauren Halak

Hanina Hecker

Max Keefe

Charles (Charlie) Krieg

Meara Lim-Goyette

Shane Pryor

Max Schmieder

David Shen

Nicholas Silvers

Sol Zhou

Individual Volunteers:

Vicente Pena

Sara Robinson

Amy Hertzog

Jim Herbert

Lauren Halak

Kristine Olley

Jackson Stuart

Katherine Russell

Volunteer Work Days:

Leadership Philadelphia

ShIPLEY 11th Grade

ShIPLEY Middle School

Earth Day Tree Planting

ASTM

Episcopal Academy 7th grade

Episcopal Academy 12th grade

GSK

The Baldwin School

Episcopal Academy 6th grade

Fall Family Tree Planting Day

Merion Mercy Academy



The past year saw a return to an active public event schedule at Riverbend including our largest community gathering, *Shiverfest*.

In 2023, we have a full schedule of educational and family-friendly events including, *Tadpole Transformation* and a *Family Bird Walk* in April, our *Spring Adopt-a-Tree Treeplanting* day and *Farm to Table* gala in May, and *Summer Solstice* celebration in June.

Head to our website, riverbendec.org, to see Riverbend's full event schedule for 2023.



1950 Spring Mill Road
Gladwyne, PA 19035

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
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CONSHOHOCKEN, PA
19428



2022 IMPACTS BY THE NUMBERS

38

teachers received professional development in nature-based STEM learning from Riverbend.

389

lessons taught in classrooms by our environmental educators.

256

volunteers helped us maintain the native species on the preserve.

6,709

students engaged through our school programs and nature camps.

1,400

people welcomed to the preserve at 9 public events.

214

trees planted.

Made possible by a TreeVitalize Watershed Grant managed by PHS with funds from PA DEP and Aqua.

585

Shiverfest tickets sold for our first year back since 2019.

68%

of our program visits benefited at low-income students.

365

days a year that our preserve remained open to the public.