WE'RE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE!

Friends of Vernon Park involves children and families so that they will grow up to love and be good stewards of our park. They will learn how to plant flowers, trees, and shrubs and watch them grow. They will observe birds and insects and learn about invasive plants and insects, sustainability, and stormwater management. Most important they will learn how to protect and share what they have come to experience and enjoy.

Each year is very busy in its own distinctive way. Please enjoy this reflection on 2018 as we look forward to 2019, together!

www.FriendsofVernonPark.org
@FriendsofVernonPark on Facebook
ARTS, CULTURE, COMMUNITY

Friend of Vernon Park, along with partner Alyson Bauer, a Children’s Librarian at the Joseph E. Coleman Northwest Regional Library, hosted “Under the Shady Old Tree”, a summer literacy program for all ages. Held on four Friday afternoons in July and August, attendees enjoyed storytime, made arts and crafts, enjoyed acoustic guitar sing-alongs, african dance and drumming, yoga breathing workshops and even received free books to add to their own home libraries.

Friends of the Wissahickon joined us in July and donated the wonderful book ‘Good Night Wissahickon’ to each child who attended. Children were asked open-ended questions about how we can keep our natural spaces clean and beautiful. We talked about planting seeds with hope and taking care of nature, and each child received a copy of the book.

Two local authors read their books as well. Niema Golphin’s book, ‘Grey’s Treasure Box’, showed us about what makes us each unique and special. Sara Greene’s book, ‘Love for a Lion’, teaches us all about love and respecting others differences.

This series was the brainchild of FoVP member Rose Slater and supported by a grant from the Fairmount Park Conservancy.

We look forward to expanding the program and building on its success in 2019, with programs for children and a book club for adults. Stay tuned for more details.

Returning for a second year, Kate Ibarra Podlogar led yoga classes on Sunday mornings with donations benefiting Friends of Vernon Park.

The Community Office of Councilwoman Cindy Bass funded the ever popular Oldies in the Park nights on Wednesdays in July and August in front of the Vernon House featuring McDerek Lee and DJ Gary O bringing back memories.

The Black Writers Museum in Vernon Park hosted The People’s Poetry and Jazz Festival on Saturday, August 18 headlining Lenny White and Friends. The festival hosted a wide variety of vendors with delicious food and cultural crafts and artwork.

The City of Philadelphia’s Performances in Public Spaces initiative, managed by the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy supported a concert by the Brazilian Dance & Drumming Group, Opera in the Park and the Philly Pops Big Band Concert featuring Tiffany Jones.
Vernon Park has its very own We Walk PHL group which meets twice a week in the summertime and occasionally, when it is not too cold, in the winter.

The Germantown Special Services District hosted a movie series in the park on Saturdays in June, July and August: The Lion King, Wonder, A Wrinkle in Time, Star Wars, The Last Jedi, Coco, Jumanji, Moana, and Black Panther.

On September 8, The One Less Foundation and The Johnson House Historic Site organized the 5th Annual Run Germantown 5K which began and ended in Vernon Park. In spite of the rainy weather, many folks still came out to run (and cheer on the runners) and had a great time.

We Stafford a Friends of Vernon Park table at Community Day held in the Park in June. The event was hosted by state and city elected officials. Staff from their offices and non-profit agencies were on hand to meet with community visitors.

Bob Seeley led several Walk Germantown events including one which began with a tour of Vernon Park.

We held a very successful Fall Community Bazaar and Flea Market with over 50 vendors and more visitors than ever before.

During a wet fall we were lucky to have beautiful sunny weather (for the rain date) to enjoy the mix of crafts, original artwork and bargain second-hand items, as well as community resources and information. The Camara Arts drummers and dancers did a wonderful job of entertaining our visitors this year. At Friends of Vernon Park’s table we sold items to support our on-going expenses, particularly winter maintenance which is not covered by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department.

We welcomed our community to Trim a Tree for Peace, as we had in 2015—but this time, the tree that will be growing and shining in Vernon Park year round! Children decorated peace signs, hearts, stars and doves and wrote their messages of love and peace on the back and then hung them on a live blue spruce tree. Hot chocolate kept everyone warm and cozy. We talked about how the tree will grow bigger and stronger.

The tree was planted near the Park’s peace pole by Friends of Vernon Park Volunteer Coordinator David Bower with a crew from Power Corps Philadelphia. It is planted in loving memory and tribute to Carrie E. Lewis, our dear friend who who passed away in late 2018.

We look forward to watching it grow and decorating it with love and care each year.
VOLUNTEER CLEAN UPS AND ACTIVITY DAYS

We held two Love Your Park events in the spring and fall and participated in the city-wide annual Philly Spring Cleanup in April.

Crefeld School students built corrals around our newly planted trees and helped with many other gardening needs.

William Penn Charter School students held an Earth Day Event, April 23 with 100 students and teachers from 1st and 4th grades. They picked up litter, weeded, mulched, pushed heavy wheel barrows full of compost and produced creative chalk artwork.

Waldorf School of Philadelphia students came on their ‘First Day of Summer Break” in June. They weeded and worked in the gardens and made bright colored posters about Germantown to hang on the fence.

Villanova University’s hard working students came on their annual St. Thomas Day of Service September 15. The students cleared all out all the enormous vines, weeds and trash under the rose bushes. They gave the rose bushes a long-overdue pruning.

We are very grateful that we can count on Villanova students to roll up their sleeves and get major landscaping projects completed in one day.

David Bower, FOVP’s Volunteer Coordinator (who has since moved on to other endeavors) logged many many volunteer hours providing the leadership and expertise for the service days. This fall, he led hardworking PowerCorpsPHL and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation trainees to Vernon Park for a number of fall days to help prune trees, clear all the late leaves from our pathways and remove broken branches. Thank you for your years of dedicated service, friendship and hard work, Dave!

We are extremely grateful for the generous service of the many volunteers who brought their energy, enthusiasm and efforts to Vernon Park this year. Hundreds of volunteer hours go into stewardship of Vernon Park each year. These volunteers make the park a better place for people, a better habitat for wildlife and lift up the spirits of everyone they meet in the Park.

We welcome volunteers at future events in 2019!
THE RAIN GARDEN

Robin Irizarry and Nagiary Porcena-Meneus of the Tookany/Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership have provided major support of the rain garden. Through TTF we worked with the Philadelphia Water Department’s Soak It Up Program. The program funded an internship to keep the rain garden functioning well. It also provided funds for tools and some replacement shrubs and plants in places which needed more greening. The intern has been keeping the channels and pipes clear so that they can carry rainwater from the roof of Center in the Park into the rain garden which now has sizable native trees and naturalized perennials which draw birds, snakes, butterflies, insects and small mammals.

If you or your group would like to have a tour of the Vernon Park rain garden and learn more about storm water management, please contact us.

TREES

We enjoy our tree canopy in Vernon Park. We continued this year with our plan to plant 3 new native trees each fall. Most are doing well and the ones put in 9 years ago are well-established. We also inventory our other trees and arrange for the removal of dead or dying trees.

This year, we planted a Redbud, Silver Maple, Shagbark Hickory and Blue Spruce, in addition to 200 daffodil and crocus bulbs, several hostas and black-eyed susans. We look forward to adding to the butterfly garden among the roses adjacent to the playground area this coming spring.

NOTE FROM A FRIEND

“In a world beset by climate change, wars, terrorism, economic recession, and poisonous politics, giving a small park new life seems like a small victory—but it is not. Urban parks lift a community’s spirits, improve its health, and spark changes that benefit all the park’s neighbors and the earth itself.”

—BOB SEELEY, Friends of Vernon Park
MONUMENTS

This year saw the final restoration work on the Francis Daniel Pastorius Monument which was begun in 2015. We encourage you to visit and re-acquaint yourself with the history of Germantown carved into the four sides of the base.

PARK SAFETY

We continue to be active and bring positive events to the park. The more we use the park for special events and regular walks, the safer the park will be for everyone. We met with the community officers from the 14th Police District and are very grateful for the attention of the community relations officer to the occasional illegal activity. The bicycle officers come through frequently. We remind park users that if they observe illegal activity they should leave the park and report it immediately. If it is reported third-hand later there is not much that can be done to correct the problem.

We updated our Keep Our Park Safe leaflet and promptly cleaned up graffiti.

We would also like to remind everyone that Vernon Park is a smoke-free park (as are all public parks in Philadelphia). We all appreciate the cleaner air, particularly at the children’s playground.

CHELTEN & GREENE STREET BUS STOP RE-DESIGN

Friends of Vernon Park were included in planning for a re-design of the Chelten and Greene Street bus stop. Funds will come from the State of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia City Commerce Department. Unfortunately we write about the redevelopment of the Chelten and Greene Street bus stop every year and there is always a further delay in the start time. The latest word is that work will begin in the spring of 2019. This will create better overall use of the space and a new entry into Vernon Park.

THE YWCA BUILDING

In 2016 we heard the good news that the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority had selected KBK Enterprises, a minority-owned business, to develop the YWCA building. In 2017 Friends of Vernon Park attended a community meeting with state officials, city officials and KBK. We heard details of KBK history and their plans for the building. Unfortunately, this project also seems to be stalled.

We are deeply concerned that the empty Germantown High School building and Germantown Town Hall continue to deteriorate and hold back future revitalization plans. We remain hopeful that they can be creatively repurposed.

REBUILD PHL

Rebuild is now moving forward with income generated by the sugary drinks tax after a delay caused by a losing lawsuit brought by the beverage industry. There are plans for Germantown projects which including the renovation of Happy Hollow Recreation Center.
Friends of Vernon Park is indebted to Fairmount Park Conservancy and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department staff. These two groups bring Friends groups together to share good ideas and better connect us as a network in support of the city’s public parks. Together they attend to capital projects, advocate for us and support community programs by providing park groups us with resources for programs and events.

Allen Baker, Vernon Park’s Seasonal Maintenance Attendant, has worked his third successful year in the life of our park. He worked from April to October for Philadelphia Parks & Recreation picking up litter, clearing up leaves, doing landscape work and acting as an ambassador to the park visitors.

NOTE FROM A FRIEND
“A Butterfly garden is an easy way to see more butterflies and contribute towards their conservation. It is with excitement and pleasure that Friends of Vernon Park will be planting milkweed, zinnias, black-eyed susans and more butterfly-friendly blooms among the roses by the playground area in 2019.

It is very special to bring a butterfly garden back to Vernon Park in an area where children of our community will play and learn through observation about these beautiful and gentle creatures that are fun to watch with many interesting behaviors. Like the residents of Germantown, butterflies are beautiful creatures that are very colorful and diverse.

—ROSE SLATER, Friends of Vernon Park
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Several of our members attended the first city-wide Public Space Summit. This wonderful event connected volunteer friends of libraries, parks and recreation centers for networking, workshops and coalition-building. Current FOVP President Angela Miles co-facilitated a session on Communications and Marketing for friends groups. We met volunteers from all across the city and learned a LOT!

President Emeritus Ruth Seeley gave a guided tour of Germantown’s rain gardens to a visiting engineer from the Central Scotland Green Network referred by the Philadelphia Water Department.

Friends of Vernon Park participates in a network of large and small organizations in Germantown who are also working toward positive inclusive change for all who live and work here. We will continue to build on these relationships in 2019 for we know that together we have far greater impact than we can ever do separately.

If your organization is interested in working with Friends of Vernon Park, please let us know. Email info@friendsofvernonpark.org or join us at one of our open monthly meetings.

Friends of Vernon Park is very grateful to the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown for generously providing us with space for our monthly meetings.

We would also like to acknowledge the tireless advocacy efforts of our local elected officials, Councilwoman Cindy Bass and State Representative Stephen Kinsey and their entire teams as well as the two great organizations that make their home in Vernon Park, Center in the Park and the Black Writers Museum—thank you for all you do for Germantown and Vernon Park!

NOTE FROM A FRIEND

“It is such a rewarding experience to protect a refreshing green space of interesting trees, flowering plants, shrubs and play areas in central Germantown. We are so lucky that this land was saved by earlier Germantown residents and not built on.”

—RUTH SEELEY, Friends of Vernon Park
**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

*Friends of Vernon Park is entirely supported by voluntary contributions, program grants and fundraising events.*

We are very grateful for the ongoing interest of the **First Presbyterian Church in Germantown** for their generous annual donation and for providing us with a room to hold our monthly meetings. Our Bazaar vendor fees and sales raised the balance of our funds.

The largest and most important item of our expenses is the investment in crucial winter maintenance. Friends of Vernon Park contracts with a professional worker for part-time, ‘off-season’ support. Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation does not hire anyone to work in the parks from early October until late April due to budget constraints. Other funds go toward programs, communications and equipment for the special events and gardening.

With grateful thanks, we wish to acknowledge the individuals and organizations that have provided Friends of Vernon Park with financial resources in 2018. These funds are devoted to stewardship and community-building in Vernon Park. We could not accomplish all that we do without this support. Thank you!

*Cyane Gresham and S. Alan Bayersdorfer*

*First Presbyterian Church in Germantown*

*Ruth Cato*

*Suzanne Ponsen*

*Ruth and Bob Seeley*

*Mary Wood*

*Suzanne Ponsen*

2018 grant(s) received from:

*Fairmount Park Conservancy Event Grant*

*Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting Fund for Peace & Social Concern*

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We welcome all donations of *any* amount. Consider supporting our work by making a donation online at [www.friendsofvernonpark.org](http://www.friendsofvernonpark.org) or by mail to:

**Friends of Vernon Park**

P.O. Box 48374 | Philadelphia, PA 19144

*Thank you for your support!*
JOIN US IN 2019

We welcome all who wish to become a Friend of Vernon Park. There are no dues to pay—community spirit and a love for Vernon Park is all that is necessary. Our group is a diverse mix of people of all ages and background with different talents and gifts that support the mission of Friends of Vernon Park:

*Keeping Vernon Park, ‘The Emerald of Germantown’, healthy, green and engaged in the community.*

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FRIENDS OF VERNON PARK OFFICERS

ANGELA MILES, President
BOB SEELEY, Vice President, Interim Secretary
CARL CHEESEMAN, Treasurer
RUTH SEELEY, President Emeritus

Friends of Vernon Park is deeply grateful for our friend DAVID BOWER, for his many years of service and expertise as the FOVP Volunteer Coordinator and wish him well as he moves on to other things and green spaces.

We also wish to express our thanks to KIMBRELL FRANCIS for her years of dedicated notetaking as Secretary of Friends of Vernon Park, helping us to document our (and the park's/community's) story.

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*In memoriam, Carrie E. Lewis, a longstanding and devoted member of the Friends of Vernon Park and the larger Germantown Community. We miss her quiet and supportive presence.*

STAY IN TOUCH. Check out the information about future events and meetings in 2019 on our Facebook page, our website and our two bulletin boards on the Greene Street and the Germantown Avenue entrances. Sign up to receive our newsletters and announcements. We encourage you to bring your ideas to our meetings and join our group.

*Friends of Vernon Park meets on the second Wednesday of every month in the Finney Room at the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown from 6:00 - 7:30 pm.*

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