

Friends of Rye Nature Center

Annual Update

2020



Secure the Legacy of Your Bigger Backyard

Dear Friend,

Whether you're taking a weekend hike with your family, listening to the babbling water of the Blind Brook, enjoying a walk on your lunch break, or feeling a cool breeze on your face as it weaves through a rich pallet of fall foliage, the Rye Nature Center provides something new and wonderful each time you visit.

During this season of thanks and giving, FRNC is grateful for so much. We have a wonderful team of staff, board members, and volunteers; outdoor education is more popular than ever; and walking the Nature Center grounds has become a daily routine for many.

While some nature centers across the nation had to shut their doors, ours was able to emerge from quarantine ready to implement Covid-19 summer camp policies, enroll over 170 students in weekly nature immersion classes for the school year, and steward a 47-acre park through the ongoing impact of climate change events. FRNC is resilient today because Rye's residents and surrounding neighbors have invested in our mission since 1959.

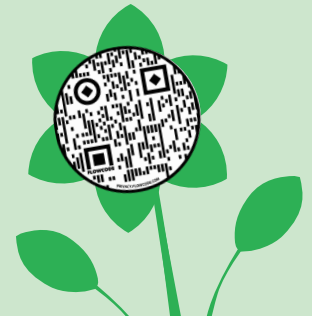
Today we ask you to support this enduring legacy of conservation, education, and access to nature that these gifts created. Please help ensure that the Rye Nature Center will be a place for our community to meet, play, and enjoy the beauty of nature for years to come.

With Gratitude,

Lisa Sandler, Board President

Christine Siller, Executive Director

Donate online at ryenaturecenter.org/annualappeal, by mailing the enclosed reply envelope, or scan the QR code to the right with your phone's camera. We accept and appreciate employer matching donations. Donations of securities can be made by contacting Nicole Pennucci, Development Director, at nicolepennucci@ryenaturecenter.org.



Conservation Corner: Fall 2020

New Conservation Director Hits the Grounds

On March 17, 2020, Danny Molinaro joined FRNC's team as Director of Conservation. Though his first day on the job was very unconventional (we met him on Zoom), once here, he hit the grounds running. His expertise and management of Rye's precious 47 acres has brought several forest restoration and planting projects to fruition. On your next walk through the forest see if you can spot the new tulip trees, American sycamore, river birch, and staghorn sumac.

In addition, Danny has reestablished a regular crew of hard-working volunteers. These volunteers range from high schoolers and college students to recent graduates and other interested community members. We are grateful for the help from long-time volunteer partner, Mahattanville College. Every Wednesday, up to 10 students volunteer to help implement FRNC's Habitat Management Plan. This plan was recently reviewed and updated by Laura Green, a forester working out of Yale's School of Forestry. This fall, our conservation projects focused on planting native trees and shrubs in sections of the forest deemed high priority for restoration.

Board of Directors

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| President | Treasurer |
| Lisa Sandler | Megan Schatz |
| Vice President | Secretary |
| Rob O'Connor | Andrew Padovano |
| Directors | |
| Daniel Allen | Susan Moreland |
| Melissa Belleville | Greg Smith |
| Rebecca Bruno | Todd Smith |
| Lauren Gallagher | Chip Stevens |
| Kelvin Gentles | Davin Thigpen |
| Caitlin Layng | |

Staff

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Executive Director | Associate Director of Forest Education | Environmental Educators |
| Christine Siller | Henry Myers | Emily Embick |
| Education Director | Outreach Educator | Katie Jamer |
| Allison Rogers | Siobhan Prout | Kris Karpinia |
| Program Director | Conservation Educators | Amanda Montalbano |
| Mary Gillick | Gennaro Ferraro | Program Coordinator |
| Conservation Director | Jack Meyers | Lisa LaBarbera |
| Danny Molinaro | | Horticulturist |
| Development Director | | Annette Hein |
| Nicole Pennucci | | |

Bringing Nature to You



Virtual and Socially Distant Field Trips

In the absence of in-person learning, a grant from Con Edison launched FRNC into a virtual space. In addition to public programs like Backyard Bushcraft and June Bugs At Home, the grant helped FRNC support local teachers. To date, we've virtually supplemented science lessons and hosted socially distant field trips for 672 students. A Zoom room of third graders was riveted by FRNC's class on ornithology and bird songs. And our mask-on/hands-on policy provided a new twist to our favorite beach program! Throughout September, 50 second graders masked up on the shores of Oakland Beach in small groups to see what critters are living in the Sound.

Through our Nature Access Fund and local partnerships, FRNC provides enriching experiences with nature to those who need them most. We have extended access to our virtual programs to our partners so that they too may benefit from our unique way of connecting concepts in the classroom to the natural world. Siobhan Prout, our Outreach Educator, has been teaching pre-recorded and live-streamed lessons for 200 students at Our Lady of Victory school in Mount Vernon since the pandemic began. These programs ensure nature education remains in children's lives no matter where they are during this challenging time.

Learn Outside



Outdoor Education on the Rise

In 2015, FRNC pivoted its afterschool programs to a 100% outdoor model. The change was most welcomed by the elementary students who had spent the first nine hours of their day, trapped as some of them put it, inside. Seeing the dramatic difference in engagement and concept acquisition when students were taught outside, FRNC took the model one step further and launched our own Forest Preschool program in 2017. If there can be a silver lining to this pandemic, it would be the unprecedented demand for these programs. This fall we expanded our Forest Preschool program to three classes and have filled every section of our afterschool programs for grades K through 8. Program participants get to spend some much-needed time freely enjoying the outdoors while socially distancing throughout our 47-acre classroom.

If you need further convincing to opt outside when it comes to education, just ask one of our forest preschoolers who can identify a white pine by simply counting its five needles to match its five letters. The ever-changing forest provides endless opportunities for discovery and science experimentation while fostering social, physical, and cognitive development.

A Letter From Paddle Adventure Camp

FRNC opened its camp programs on June 29, 2020, just three short weeks after Governor Cuomo gave the green light for summer camp operators. Education Director, Allison Rogers, and the rest of our staff went to great lengths to adopt, adapt, and add policies hot off the Department of Health's Covid-19 presses. FRNC knew that many families were anxiously counting on us to make camp happen safely and happily.

Jana Seitz, who along with Executive Director Christine Siller and former Conservation Director Taro Ietaka, designed and implemented Paddle Adventure Camp in 2015, writes below about this summer's unique experience on the water.



"Paddle Adventure Camp (PAC) was different yet the same for its sixth year. In summers past, we sardined ourselves into a 15-passenger van, driving throughout the Hudson Valley to the great heights of Breakneck Ridge and the vistas of Mount Beacon. This summer we were deliberate in our distancing. Parents had to drop off and pick up their children, so we kept the trips within a short radius of Rye. Our daily routine was different, too. Each day started with temperature checks, hand sanitizing, and a review of social distancing etiquette. Masks, even while hiking and paddling, were kept close at hand if not on one's face. This is not an easy task when it's 90-degrees and sweat and sunscreen are dripping down your face. We also quickly learned that our tried-and-true spots had new rules to accommodate the throngs of people with nowhere else to go. Our 'secret' spots were discovered, and we were sometimes even turned away! There's always something new to find even if the places are repeats. Nature always keeps giving, and that won't change." - Jana Seitz

2020

By the Numbers

47

acres of trails, open space, flora, and fauna to discover.

61

years of conservation and environmental education in our community.



381

native trees, shrubs, and grasses planted.



147

Forest Preschool and Preschool Ecology students spending their early childhood years immersed in nature.



330

campers exploring the Nature Center forest and local waterways in our day camp and Paddle Adventure Camp.



30,000

smiles on the faces of children, adults, and families in our community.



722

students connecting science concepts in the classroom to the natural world through our virtual and socially distant field trips.



1,137

pounds of garbage cleaned up by our conservation staff and volunteers.



10,255

temperatures taken.

4,878

pounds of invasive plants removed.

Nature's Guide to 2021

| January | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

| February | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | | | | | | |

| March | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

| April | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |

| May | | | | | | |
|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

| June | | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

January

Registration Dates:

- 15 Preschool Ecology
- 22 Summer Camp
- 22 Paddle Adventure Camp

Save the Date!

Our June Bugs Registration has moved to April 9.

February

- 2 Groundhog's Day
- 12 Backyard Bird Count
- 17 Food Scraps sign up
- 25 Rye Healthy Yards pledge

March

- 8 Order your RNC birdseed
- 17 Start your seeds indoors
- 20 Plant-a-Flower Day
- 21 Spring Equinox

April

- 9 June Bugs Registration
- 12 Go a week without plastic
- 22 Earth Day
- 30 Arbor Day

May

- 8 Pick up litter
- 13 Walk to work or school
- 22 Find a sit spot
- 26 Penumbral Lunar Eclipse

June

- 8 World Oceans Day
- 10 Annular Solar Eclipse
- 20 Summer Solstice
- 26 Pull an invasive species

July

- 3 Hop a Park Day
- 7 Plant a tree
- 13 Walk along the beach
- 23 Go stargazing

August

- 7 Recycle electronics/batteries
- 12 Perseid Meteor Shower peaks
- 18 Honey Bee Day
- 28 Upcycle a craft

September

- 4 Shop your closet
- 18 Coastal Cleanup Day
- 22 Fall Equinox
- 26 Shop at a thrift store

October

- 6 Pack a waste-free lunch
- 10 Great Leaf Hunt begins
- 16 Build a terrarium
- 30 Go on a mindfulness walk

November

- 5 Fall Birdseed Sale
- 13 Clean your storm drains
- 18 Partial Lunar Eclipse
- 27 Mulch your leaves

December

- 4 Use eco-friendly gift wrap
- 13 Search for animal tracks
- 21 Winter Solstice
- 29 Donate to a local organization

| July | | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

| August | | | | | | |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

| September | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | |

| October | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

| November | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

| December | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

Financial Report

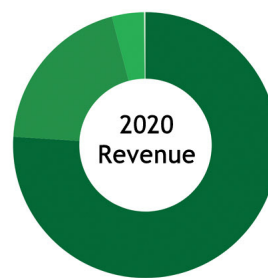
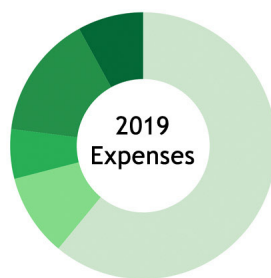
Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020

Revenue and Expenses

Fiscal Year 2019, which ended on December 31, 2019, marked the eleventh consecutive year in which Friends of Rye Nature Center operated with a balanced budget. This report provides a summary of revenue and expenses on a cash basis and balance sheet results.

In aggregate, revenue totaled \$1,583,766, increasing 3.9% from FY 2018. This slight growth was due to increased enrollment in our preschool programs and strong donor support of our Nature Access Fund and annual Oktoberfest. Support of our 60th Anniversary campaign, The 1959 Club, also increased our overall fundraising for the year. Between casual visitors, program and camp participants, outreach partnerships, public events, and school groups, FRNC educated over 27,000 people in 2019. The value of FRNC's investments grew 7.5% to \$810,339 because of market return. There was no draw-down from the portfolio.

FY 2019 expenses totaled \$1,413,514, increasing by 7.2% over FY 2018, as FRNC invested more in education and conservation staffing to meet its program and land stewardship obligations. Other expenses remained flat at \$312,115. The mix of expenses remained constant with 73% going towards programming and 27% going to towards operations management and fundraising. Net assets equaled \$1,743,575 at year-end 2019.



At the time of this report, expected aggregate revenue for FY 2020 is \$1,350,000, a decrease of 15% due to the continued disruption of Covid-19 which has led to program revenue and event fundraising losses. Expenses for FY 2020 are estimated to be \$1,252,126, a decrease of 11.4% from 2019. Expenses were prudently adjusted where feasible to balance revenue losses. The organization's liabilities increased from \$0 to \$396,952, a result of securing federal loans to ensure the organization's fiscal position during this ongoing precarious time. By year-end 2020, the organization will have completed \$105,000 in capital improvements; net assets should remain flat relative to FY 2019.

The board and management staff of FRNC, as fiduciary stewards of the organization's net assets, understand that responsible fiscal management is a critical obligation to the Nature Center, its donors, and the community. FRNC's President, Treasurer, and Executive Director are responsible for maintaining internal control over the financial reporting of FRNC and have designed and instituted such internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that financial reporting is accurate and reliable. Finally, this report was completed after the 2019 annual audit process. The financials estimated for FY 2020 are incomplete and subject to change.

Nature's Playground 4.0

When FRNC decided to create some natural playground areas for the community in 2009, the intention was to build in phases. A few elements - the Beaver Hut and Spider Web - were built that year, and then in 2013, the Chutes and Scramble area was added. Con Edison saw the connection between time outside and learning outcomes, and in 2016, sponsored the design and installation of the Rye Nature Center S.T.E.M. Challenge Course. Last year, an assessment of the original playground elements showed that they were "well-loved." Our board set funds aside to repair and replace some of the original elements. Covid-19 obviously ran interference in terms of timing, but we are so excited to announce that Nature's Playground 4.0 will be completed by the end of November. The new elements include a Bench Swing, a Fishermen's Net Hangout, an Eagle Nest, and a Rope Crossing.





Friends of Rye Nature Center
873 Boston Post Road
Rye, NY 10580
p. 914.967.5150
f. 914.921.5968
info@ryenaturecenter.org
www.ryenaturecenter.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
PERMIT NO. 2213

Our grounds are
open daily from
dawn until dusk.

Come visit!



FRIENDS OF RYE NATURE CENTER *Annual Update*

