

Friends

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MCCONNELL SPRINGS

McConnell
Springs
LEXINGTON 1775

Volume 29 Issue 3
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*From the
Friends of McConnell Springs
Happy Holidays*

Fall Friendsgiving

Fall Friendsgiving 2023 was held on October 24 and all of the nearly 40 attendees enjoyed a great barbecue meal as we heard an annual report on the park and presented our Volunteer of the Year award. Afterward, everyone had a chance to have a preview walk of the Jack-O-Lantern trail. This was the second year for the event, and we are already discussing ways to make the



event even better for 2024. Thanks to all who helped with planning and with event set up. Special thanks to Parks staffers Autumn Barnett for creating some beautiful native grass table centerpieces, and Keith Harding for help with event set-up!

Volunteer of the Year

Congratulations to Becci Ray (holding cup) for being awarded the 2023 Volunteer of the Year! Becci was nominated for her commitment to take the leadership of our major fundraiser, the highly popular annual Wine Barrel Tasting. Stepping up to chair the event, she led the committee to a rousing success and continued a valuable tradition for The Friends of McConnell Springs. Thanks, Becci!



Inside: Jim Rebmann Spotlight



Dear Friends...

by *Charlie Boland, Chair*

What are you grateful for this holiday season?

We should not let the headlines dominate our perspectives during these times of uncertainty. Not to downplay the serious nature of some of these, but we can also spend time focusing on the things in our lives to be thankful for. Those things have a unique power to shift our perspective and bring us joy, at a time of year where Joy is a major theme. It's my hope that you will take some time to reflect on and appreciate the things you can be thankful for this season and find a way to tangibly express that gratitude to others. McConnell Springs Park has great walking trails if you need a place to get away and do that type of reflection – put on your walking shoes and come on out!

I am thankful always to our faithful and engaged board members, and to the gifted and enthusiastic staff of McConnell Springs Park. Working together with these partners over the course of the year has been an honor, and our community is better for their energy and effort. When you visit the park, please let the staff know what you love about the park and give them a word of thanks if you have a chance to do so.

The next year holds much promise. The city has formed an event planning committee to develop the 250LEX Celebration - Lexington's 250th anniversary - and as the founding site of our city, McConnell Springs plans to be actively involved in those festivities. In conjunction with LFUCG Parks, we also want to help develop and refine potential plans to expand the park facilities with regard to access, facility space, and parking. We also will offer updated versions of our favorite annual events such as Wine Barrel Tasting and Founders' Day. It is an exciting time to be involved with our favorite park!

In light of that promising future, I ask that you please remember The Friends of McConnell Springs in your end-of-year giving. We are thankful for your generosity toward helping us preserve, promote, and grow the park as one of the most special and unique places in Lexington. We all have a lot to be grateful for and your support means so much!

On behalf of the board, best wishes to you and your friends and families for a joyful holiday season!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Executive Committee

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Don Powell, Secretary
Jim Rebmann,
Vice Chair Emeritus
Joan Whitman, Chair Elect
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Parks Representative and Park Naturalist

Steven Rogers



PayPal Giving...

The Friends of McConnell Springs has been authorized to receive donations made by PayPal account holders through its PayPal Giving Fund at: www.paypal.com/fundraiser/hub. Once at PayPal Giving Fund, you search for Friends of McConnell Springs and follow the prompts. By using this method, you are donating to the PayPal Giving Fund who then distributes your money to the Friends. The donor can remain anonymous or have their contact information accompany their donation to The Friends. Donations made this way do not include a transaction fee for The Friends. If a donor does not have a PayPal account, they can still use the credit card method found on our web site at: www.mcconnellsprings.org.



Notes from the Naturalist...

by Steven Rogers

Turkey time! With fall in full swing and the holiday season upon us, many folks will gather around a table with the classic center piece of the season, the turkey. Central Kentucky is home to a very strong wild turkey population, and you don't have to travel too far out of the urban core of Lexington to find them on farms and in forest remnants. Turkey aren't spotted often at McConnell Springs but it does happen from time to time. Park staff and some lucky students from Stonewall Elementary were able to spot a turkey hen near the Final

Sink in November 2023. Prior to this encounter, only two other confirmed sightings by staff had occurred at McConnell Springs and some of us have worked here for over a decade. Despite being a great potential habitat for the birds they can't access this location easily and are probably scared off by the regular park visitors. If you're quiet and extremely lucky, then perhaps you'll get to have this rare experience on your next walk at the Springs. Even if you don't spot a turkey, the squirrels are always happy to see you!

Jack-O-Lantern Trail a Success!

The Jack-O-Lantern Trail, JOLT, event at McConnell Springs this past October was a huge success! Once again, over 700 pumpkins were carved and donated by the public then placed around our trail for all to enjoy. The weather was cooperative this year and the event was able to operate all four nights. Nearly 11,000 people attended and many more enjoyed the pumpkins walking along the trails during the day.

A question that the staff gets often during the event is "What happens to the pumpkins after the event?". The answer is that several things happen. After JOLT ends, the staff removes all the battery powered lights. All those lights (over 1,500) are collected into buckets and put away until we have volunteers that can assist in removing the batteries. Unfortunately, because of rainfall and pumpkin guts the lights can't be reused so, all the lights and batteries are then taken to LFUCG electronics recycling for responsible disposal. That still leaves over 700 pumpkins sitting around starting to get moldy and mushy. Each year, a local pig farmer comes out and loads up as many pumpkins as their truck and trailer can hold, over 100 this year. After the piggies get their fill, staff and volunteers begin moving the pumpkins into a few different locations. If the pumpkins have been painted or have accessories that aren't biodegradable then they get taken to our dumpster, this is usually a very small number. We focus on filling up our compost bins with as many pumpkins as possible. Lastly, the remaining pumpkins are moved off the trail into the woods where they can degrade naturally.

The plan for 2024 is to have an event immediately following JOLT called Smashin' Pumpkins, where visitors can use different items to smash pumpkins in the woods. We would like to thank park volunteers like Steve Beckelhimer and students from Providence Montessori that helped place pumpkins, lights, and with the removal process.

The Friends of McConnell Springs also donated funds for pumpkins that were carved for the event. Without the efforts of volunteers, the event would not take place.



Board Member Spotlight – Jim Rebmann

McConnell Springs Park is located at 416 Rebmann Lane. If that name sounds familiar, it is because Jim Rebmann is a thread that runs through the tapestry of this park from beginning to end, and it was very fitting to name the street the park is located on in his honor. Jim is our vice chair emeritus, official photographer, site expert, historian, environmental conscience, and says the part he played in making McConnell Springs Park a reality is one of his proudest personal accomplishments.

Jim was born in Brooklyn, NY and raised in Hempstead, on Long Island. Growing up in the northeast, family vacations often revolved around visiting historical sites, particularly those associated with the Revolutionary and French & Indian Wars. At a young age, his interest in early American history and military artifacts surfaced and began a lifelong passion for preserving and protecting things from our nation's early days. Stamps, coins, firearms, bayonets – Jim is an ardent collector and an expert on many things from this period of American history.

A curiosity about different earth strata he saw in the mountains led him toward an interest in geology. Jim came to Eastern Kentucky University in 1965 to study the field and earned his MS in Physical Geography with an emphasis on geology. During his first semester there, one of his professors got him interested in exploring underground caverns. "Spelunking" became a lifelong hobby for Jim, who says he has probably spent more than 5,000 hours underground, much of that in Rockcastle County, KY. He and a companion wrote *The Caves of Rockcastle County* out of those experiences, still a favorite book in the UK Geology Department library. From there he went to work for KY Geological Survey and then served as an officer in the US Navy.

Fresh out of the Navy, Jim accepted a job in 1974 at the newly formed Lexington Fayette Urban County Government as a Sr. Environmental Planner, a post he held for 41 years. With the karst topography of our region and the associated sinkholes, well-planned development that would account for and avoid these natural structures was very important, and Jim played a major role in developing the needed regulations and protocols to guide new development in the community. He also led the community in protecting the urban forest and gaining the Tree City USA distinction. Many other important environmental initiatives done in this region during the past 30-40 years also bear his fingerprints.

Jim says that first caving adventure in his first semester of school shaped his academic studies to have a life of work-



Jim Rebmann

ing with caves and karst topography, and that he never found a hole in the ground he didn't like! Which brings us to McConnell Springs.

His first trip to the site was in 1974 and by 1976 the site had been designated on the National Register of Historic Places. An open house was organized for New Years Day 1976 where 100 people showed up, despite the 16 degree temperature. Slowly community awareness and interest grew. The site was 26 acres, 23 of which were unusable for development, and had been used as an illegal dumping ground. The bank took possession of the property in 1994 and offered the three acres for sale for \$130,000 and would give the additional 23 acres at no cost. Community leaders Isabel Yates, Weezie Douglas, and Jessica Bell began a public appeal and Jim provided his expertise in understanding how the springs could be returned to their natural state, and the site reclaimed as a park to mark the founding site of Lexington. Early donors began to provide funding toward purchasing the land. Mayor Pam Miller saw the value of the park and agreed to move forward.

With Vice Mayor Isabel Yates' help a non-profit group was formed – The Friends of McConnell Springs – to front the fundraising and park planning efforts. Jim was there every step of the way, and the rest is history.

When asked about who had a particularly important influence on him, Jim pointed to Mayor Foster Petit, who was mayor when Jim began working for the city. Mayor Petit took Jim to breakfast one day early in his career, and advised him to do his work with these two things in mind: Be kind to other people, and think of your work in terms of how many people you can help. Jim also provided this advice gained from his own experience: Trying to do something by yourself doesn't work as well as partnering with other people.



Jim Rebmann at Founders' Day.

The board is so fortunate to have Jim in our ranks, a modern-day pioneer who helped reclaim the springs for future generations of Lexingtonians. And thanks also to his wife, Lynn, for supporting his involvement over the decades. Without Jim's efforts and passion, a part of our history could well have been lost, but will now stand the test of time. Every person who walks these trails owes you a debt of gratitude, and you have ours as well.

Embrace the Future!

The Friends of McConnell Springs board has honored Isabel Yates, James Rebmann, and John Keifer, our emeritus board members, for their continued support of the park. A legacy donation was made in their honor at the Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF) to The Friends of McConnell Springs endowed fund.

The BGCF manages the endowed fund and provides the board with the ability to write grants each year to support the park. The board can elect to write grants annually or retain the granted amount in the fund for a future need.

The board has embraced the future to support the park in this lasting way, much like our emeritus board members have continued their support of McConnell Springs Park their lifetimes.

Rita's Ride Transportation Grant Helps Students

The Rita's Ride Transportation Grant program was established in 2012 to defray the school district expenses of busing a class to the park for an educational program geared to the student's current studies. Your donations have made it possible for The Friends to award grants of \$7,880. This grant is initiated by the classroom teacher. The application for the grant can be found on our web site at www.mcconnellsprings.org.



The grant was created in honor of past chair, Rita Keys.



Mark Your Calendars for Barrel Tasting 2024

Make plans to attend the annual Wine Barrel Tasting at various wineries across the bluegrass on March 23, 2024. Volunteers are always needed for this fundraiser that helps support McConnell Springs in various ways.

If you would like to volunteer, contact us at Friends@McConnellSprings.org!

Roots for Remembrance

The Roots for Remembrance program at McConnell Springs is a great way to remember a loved one or to honor someone special to you. When you register for the program and submit payment, trees are planted in the spring or fall season in the Roots for Remembrance Forest plot. The trees are not labeled but you will be notified of the species planted in the plot.

The Friends of McConnell Springs and Park staff have plans to install a plaque that will be housed in the Kentucky American Water Education Center with the names of the honorees of the program. Creation of the plaque is in the planning phase now with hope of having it installed in spring 2024, all past honorees will be the first names included on the plaque.



This fall, sycamore and flowering dogwood trees were planted in the park as part of the program with some of the trees honoring Sherrell Brown, past Board Member of The Friends of McConnell Springs.

Help us reforest McConnell Springs while also honoring someone special in your life. All proceeds from the donation directly support the expenses for the program and remaining funds are a donation to The Friends of McConnell Springs.

To remember those, you honor and love . . .

Grow Roots of Remembrance with a newly planted tree. Help support educational programming at McConnell Springs with the purchase of a tree to help improve the diversity of trees in the park. After your donation has been received, a tree will be planted within one of the Roots for Remembrance plots at McConnell Springs. The Honoree or donor will be notified of the species of the tree and the plot where it was planted.

Check the Occasion: In Honor of _____, In Memory of _____, Gift _____, or Other _____.

Name of the person being honored with this planting: _____

Name of the person purchasing the tree: _____

Purchaser's email address and/or cell number: _____

How many trees would you like planted: _____ times \$100, total cost \$ _____, check # _____

Name and address of the person that will receive the letter of confirmation:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip: _____

Mail this form with your payment to: Friends, PO Box 12196, Lexington, KY 40581-2196

Buy a Commemorative tree

Roots for Remembrance



Thank YOU for Giving!

Many thanks are extended to the organizations and individuals who contributed to The Friends of McConnell Springs since Nov. 15, 2022. We are especially grateful to those Friends who continue to support us on a regular basis. All of your contributions directly benefit McConnell Springs Park. Though we made every effort to include all of this year's donations received prior to November 15, 2023, we apologize if there are any errors or omissions in this list, and would appreciate hearing about them. Please contact Dick Mathy at treasurer@mcconnellsprings.org.

New and Renewing Members 11-15-2022 to 12-31-2022

American Online
Giving Foundation
Ms. Carita Arnold
Mr. Steve Beckelhimer
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Blanton
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Bullard
Ms. Claire Carpenter
Mrs. Robin Combs
Ms. Mary Cotton
Mr. James Currens
Mr. Thomas Duke
Dr. Rolf Embertson
Ms. Cece Fister
Gardinside Green Thumb
Ms. Jean Givens
Ms. Rebecca Goodman
Mr. Jeffrey Godecker
Ms. Phyllis Hasbrouck
Ms. Helen Hamilton
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hewett
Mr. Hal Headley
Mr. Stuart Horodner
Ms. Margaret Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher King
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Karnes*
Mrs. Becky Kemper
Mr. & Mrs. David Kessler
Dr. & Mrs. John Kiefer*
Mr. Timothy Kuryla
Mrs. Dena Lawing
Ms. Eva Larue
Ms. Elizabeth Lewis*
Ms. Elizabeth Lutin
Mr. Fred Mills
Mr. & Mrs. Martin McMahon
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Miller
Mr. & Mrs. John Phillips

Mr. & Mrs. James
Rebmann*
Dr. & Mrs. Nat Sandler
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Seiler
Mr. Bernie Skeeters
Diikanehi Stump
Ms. Ann Stanchina
Mr. Dan Terrell
Dr. Ouida Tisdall
Mr. Larry Trivette
Ms. Vicki Vance
Vulcan Materials Co.

New and Renewing Members YTD 2023

Ms. Patricia Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Leslie Baynham
Mr. Steve Beckelhimer
Mr. and Mrs. Al Cinson
Ms. Anne Combs
Ms. Katherine Crook
Mr. Jeff Darnell
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Farmer
Dr. & Mrs. C. Gill
Ms. Helen Hamilton
Mr. & Mrs. Caylin Hickey
Ms. Samantha Hillard
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Jacobs
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Janes
Mr. Earl James
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Jacobs
Kentucky American Water
Ms. Tracy Koller
Lexington Chapter DAR -
S. Martin
Ms. Janet Marshall
Merrick Printing
Mr. Michael McDonald
Ms. Meg Menke

Mr. Robert Milward
Aubrey Niehaus
Erin O'Donnell
PayPal Giving Fund
Usha and Rayudu Polisetty
Charitable Fund
Ms. Kelly Quick
Ms. Becci Ray*
Mr. & Mrs. James Rebmann*
Mr. Philipp Rosemann
Mr. Gordon Roberts
Ms. Hanna Smith
Society of Colonial Wars in the
Commonwealth of Kentucky
Ms. Barbara Sterrett
Mr. & Mrs. A. W. Turner
Ms. Tammy VanCleve
Mr. Daniel Vichitbandha
Mr. George Voorhees III
Vulcan Materials Co.
Mr. Jim Zechinati

2023 Legacy Donors at the Blue Grass Community Foundation

Ms. Mary Malone
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Mathy*
Dr. Vivien Smith
Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Tucker
Ms. Darreldean Winkler

*Friends of McConnell Springs
Board Member



The Friends of McConnell Springs
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Friends Information

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/McConnellSprgs>

Facebook: Be our FRIEND: -

<https://www.facebook.com/McConnell-Springs-293733489824/>

Website: www.McConnellSprings.org

Friends – Memberships

The Friends of McConnell Springs is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Your tax-deductible donation supports the preservation of McConnell Springs and educational programs at the site. Can we count on your support in being a Friend? If so, please mail this form to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation amount:

\$1000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25
other: _____

Check this box to make my donation to The Friends of McConnell Springs Endowed Fund #0527 at the BGCF.

Please email my newsletter to: _____

Complete the form above and mail it with your membership donation to:

The Friends of McConnell Springs
P.O. Box 12196
Lexington, KY 40581-2196

Trailblazer (\$1,000)
Founder (\$500+)
Preservationist (\$250+)

Builder (\$100+)
Homesteader (\$50+)
Friend (\$49 - under)

No matter what membership level you give, your generosity is greatly appreciated! Thank you for your support!

Our mission

The Friends of McConnell Springs, an independent not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, works in a partnership with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Parks and Recreation, dedicated to the restoration and preservation of McConnell Springs as:



- a national historic site, recognized as the pioneer encampment in the naming of Lexington, Kentucky;
- an environmental and educational resource; and
- a passive recreational park.

FRIENDS is published by the Friends of McConnell Springs

Editor: Reneé Williams

Contributors: Charlie Boland, Dick Mathy, Steven Rogers, and Laurie Thomas

McConnell Springs is a natural and historic site at 416 Rebmann Lane in Lexington, Ky. The park has two miles of trails that lets you explore the sinking springs, vegetation, stone fences and vestiges of historic buildings. McConnell Springs boasts more than 130 species of plants and numerous species of urban wildlife that reside at or visit the park. The unique geologic, natural and historic features are protected, providing environmental, cultural and historical education opportunities for the residents of Fayette County and elsewhere.

To learn more about McConnell Springs, call 859.225.4073 or visit www.McConnellSprings.org.