

Friends

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MCCONNELL SPRINGS

McConnell
Springs
LEXINGTON 1775

Volume 32 Issue 1
March 2026



A Day of Fun While Supporting the Springs

Join us as we celebrate our 19th annual Wine Barrel Tasting Event! Wineries that produce their wine on-site will offer exclusive tastings straight from the barrel, giving you a first look at their

newest creations, while wineries that produce off-site will feature special bottled selections. Each winery participates in its own unique way, so plan your route and enjoy as many stops as you can between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 28.

Tickets are \$28.52 and available on Eventbrite. Scan the QR code above or visit <https://mcconnellsprings.org/>

and click the purchase tickets link from our homepage. See the map insert to choose your starting point and plan your route from there. At your first

winery, show your Eventbrite proof of purchase, receive a McConnell Springs wine glass, and be

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Since our annual luncheon had to be postponed due to weather, please join us on April 7 at 11:30 a.m. at the Bates Creek Ballroom for our Annual Friends of McConnell Springs Business Meeting and Luncheon.

It will be catered by Lexington local Dupree Catering featuring delicious appetizers and entrees such as Harvest Panzanella Torn Buttermilk Cornbread, Winter Spice Fried Chicken w/Spicy Maple Syrup, Smoked Gouda and Roasted Red Pepper Mac and Cheese.

We'd love to celebrate with you! The cost is \$35. Cash, check or PayPal is accepted.



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Parks Representative and Park Naturalist
 Jason Thomas



Dear Friends...

by **Charlie Boland, Chair**

Happy 250th Anniversary to America! We spent last year celebrating the 250th anniversary of our beloved city, and this year marks that same milestone for our entire nation. July 4, 1776 stands as the official birthday, with the publishing of the Declaration of Independence. The Revolutionary War already underway, begun over a year earlier in Lexington and Concord, MA, this document served as the ironclad bond of our founders' resolve, who closed the document with this statement: "And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." Notice how they capitalized the words 'Divine Providence', 'Lives', 'Fortunes', and 'Honor'. This added emphasis on the core principle and treasure that guided their action reveals that they understood that the quest for independence might cost them everything. They boldly named the source of their trust and resources, and capitalized them to remove any doubt. Eyes wide open and fully committed. The events that followed came at great cost – freedom isn't free – and secured the liberty we enjoy and the great nation we call home. I hope you will join us in celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary with that same resolve for our future!

There is a lot coming up at the park as detailed elsewhere in the newsletter. We hope you will be able to experience them all! Thanks to the Wine Barrel Tasting Committee for their great work in producing the

upcoming Barrel Tasting event on March 28. Information, a map, and a registration link can be found elsewhere in the newsletter. This is a key annual fundraiser for the Friends group and so important to our board's mission to support the park. Here's hoping for a great weather day and turnout!

In addition, we are planning many other activities throughout the year that you won't want to miss. Please check out the full slate of events going on at McConnell Springs on the Friends website at mcconnellsprings.org and also the LFUCG Parks website at <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/playing/parks-natural-areas/natural-areas/mcconnell-springs-park>. The awesome parks staff produces so many great programs and events and we hope you will be among the over 100,000 people who come to the park each year to enjoy all that this beautiful place has to offer.

Speaking of our parks staff, I want to give a special welcome to our new park manager, Jason Thomas! We look forward to working with you in the years to come!

Finally, Friends, thanks so much to all of you who have volunteered your time or dollars to sustain our efforts. We could not do it without you!

Sincerely and on behalf of the Friends board,

A Time of Honor and Remembrance at The Springs

Support McConnell Springs' educational programs and enhance the park's tree diversity! By purchasing a tree for \$100 donation, one will be planted in a Roots for Remembrance plot during the planting season.

A 7-foot metal tree sculpture has been purchased and assembled in the nature center and will feature the names of each honored individual engraved on a leaf as a tribute. Applications can be found on our website, at the nature center, or by calling the park at 859-225-4073.



19th Annual

Barrel Tasting

for the Springs

March 28

11 am - 5 pm

begin at one of

14 KY Wineries

see website for wineries.

Friends of



Purchase your 2026 ticket at our
EventBrite QR code or by visiting
McConnellSprings.org



WINERIES



A. 1922 House Vineyards & Winery
3155 Keene Rd., Nicholasville, KY
859.321.3533
www.1922housewinery.com



B. Chenault Winery
2284 Barnes Mill Rd., Richmond, KY
859.328.7773
www.chenaultvineyards.com



C. Equus Run Vineyards
1280 Moores Mill Rd., Midway, KY
859.846.9463
www.equusrunvineyards.com



D. First Vineyard Winery
5800 Sugar Creek Pk, Nicholasville, KY
859.885.9359 | www.firstvineyard.net



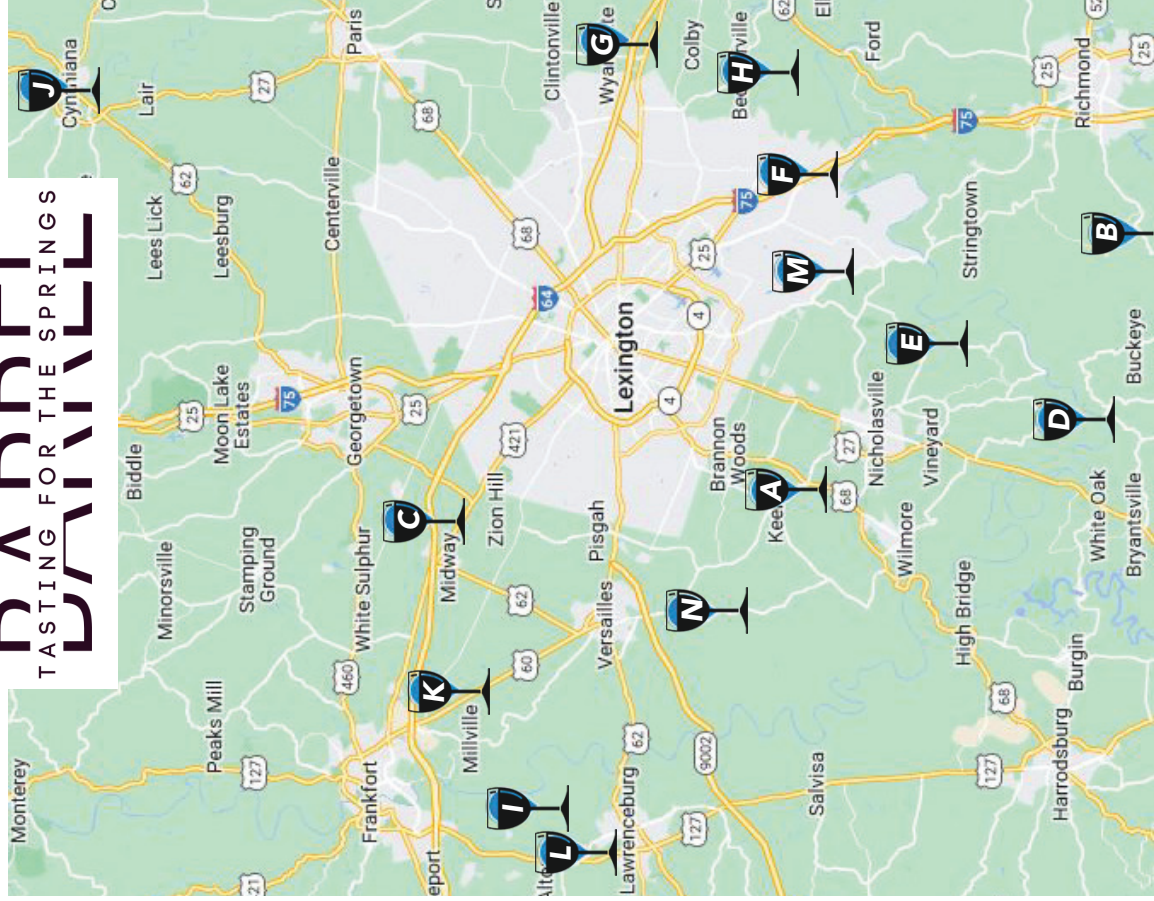
E. Ghost Fox Winery
2385 Chrisman Mill Rd.,
Nicholasville, KY
502.553.8378 | <https://ghostfoxwinery.com/>



F. Grimes Mill Winery
6707 Grimes Mill Rd.,
Lexington, KY
859.368.7148
www.grimesmillwinery.com



G. Hamon Haven Winery
7041 Rockwell Rd., Winchester, KY
859.745.4161
www.hamonhavenwinery.com/
facebookhamonhavenwinery



H. Harkness Edwards Vineyards
5199 Combs Ferry Rd.,
Winchester, KY
859.644.5140
www.harknessedwardsvineyards.com

I. Lovers Leap Vineyards & Winery
1180 Lanes Mill Rd.,
Lawrenceburg, KY
502.839.1299
www.loversleapwine.com

J. Runners Ridge Vineyard at Pike Street Wine House
132 E. Pike Street,
Cynthiana, KY
859.569.3204
<https://www.pikestreetwinehouse.com/>

K. Prodigy Vineyard and Winery
4686 Versailles Rd.,
Frankfort, KY
502.352.9400
www.prodigyvineyards.com

L. Rising Sons
975 Frankfort Rd.,
Lawrenceburg, KY
502.600.0224
www.risingsonswinery.com

M. Talon Winery & Vineyards
7086 Lates Creek Rd.,
Lexington, KY
859.971.3214
www.talonwine.com

N. Wildside Winery & Vineyard
5500 Troy Pk.,
Versailles, KY
859.879.3982
www.wildsidewinery.com

Use your smart phone mapping app for directions from your current location.

Purchase your pass through our EventBrite QR code on the left. On March 28 a McConnell Springs volunteer will be at each of the wineries to confirm your receipt. You will receive a McConnell Springs commemorative glass and be directed to the winery tasting area.





Notes from the Naturalist...

by Jason Thomas

McConnell Springs has come through winter in good shape, and the recent thaw is already revealing the first signs of the season ahead. As the ground softens and the earliest shoots return, visitors are finding their way back to the trails to enjoy the quiet shifts that signal spring. The Bur Oak still stands like a gentle giant along the path, a steady landmark as the park wakes from the months of cold.

This season also brings the anticipation of another successful rendition of the annual Bluegrass Birding Festival, when birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts gather to welcome the movement of migrating species through Central Kentucky. We remain grateful for our

partnership with Wild Birds Unlimited—Lexington and the community support that makes this event such a highlight.

Through winter and early spring, our staff and Friends board members have been preparing for another year of natural and cultural interpretation at the Springs, with our mid-May Founders Day event as a key milestone. As the weather warms, we look forward to sharing these efforts through both passive and active programming.

As always, we welcome you into the Education Center to say hello and explore our exhibits. We look forward to seeing you on the trails as spring unfolds and the park fully emerges from winter.



Events Worth Saving the Date For...

McConnell Springs is in full swing with our annual events being held once again at the park, so don't forget to add these dates to your calendars!

Barrel Tasting for the Springs

March 28, 2026 - See front page and right for details.

Founders' Day -

May 16, 2026

Founders' Day will be held Saturday, May 16, 2026 at the park from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Founders' Day will feature a variety of educational exhibits, live music, wildlife, indigenous history, participation by special dignitaries and valued community partners, food trucks, and many more exciting aspects of the life and history of our community. Founders' Day is a great event for the whole family and there is no charge to attend. Please join us!

History to Chew On Series

This year's free History To Chew On is being finalized, but will be June to October on the second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. The programs booked to date include: The History of Gratz Park, Women's Contribution to the Equine Industry in Kentucky and The Underground Railroad. Looking forward to seeing you this summer.

Barrel Tasting

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directed to the winery tasting. Keep the glass to use at your next wineries!

With 14 wineries to choose from, it's the perfect day to explore, taste, and enjoy. Be sure to find a designated driver so you can relax and fully experience the wine and the touring. Your participation helps support the upkeep of the park, including the many free events offered throughout the year. We truly appreciate our supporters! We would like to thank our wineries because without them this annual fundraiser wouldn't be possible.

- 1922 House Vineyards & Winery •
- Chenault Vineyards • Equus Run Vineyards •
- First Vineyard Winery • Ghost Fox Winery • Grimes Mill Winery • Hamon Haven Winery • Harkness Edwards Vineyards • Lovers Leap Vineyards & Winery •
- Prodigy Vineyards and Winery • Rising Sons Winery •
- Runner's Ridge Vineyard at Pike Street Wine House • Talon Winery & Vineyards •
- Wildside Winery and Vineyard



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

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/McConnellSpringsPark/> or @McConnellSpringsPark

Website: <https://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

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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.