

# Neighborhood NEWS

RUXTON-RIDERWOOD-LAKE ROLAND AREA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

WINTER • 2013-2014

## Trail Blazers

by Nancy Worden Horst

Many of us walk, jog or bike in local parks but don't realize there are more obscure opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. In Robert E. Lee Park, for example, many groups of volunteers get out onto the Park's trails and byways to clean, fix, restore, chat and get dirty all in the name of fun and Park stewardship. The Habitat and Trail team, comprised of a group of dedicated volunteers, keeps the trails and pathways of the Park clear and free of debris so hikers, walkers and runners can enjoy the Park more easily. On the second Saturday morning of every month these hardy volunteers clear fallen trees and brush, cut back invasive plants such as multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) vine and groom the trails. It is a never-ending process that provides some good, dirty fun and helps not only to make trail passage safer but also enables the sun to reach the underbrush and dry out areas that would otherwise be perpetually muddy. Another method of stabilizing muddy portions of a trail is to build a 'corduroy' road. This is an age-old road building technique in which logs are placed perpendicular to the direction of the road over a low or swampy area and then covered with sand. In the last couple of years, the trail team has helped to install several corduroy road patches.



John Goodrich working on his adopted L'Hirondelle Trail  
Photo courtesy Jeffrey Budnitz

John Goodrich, a twenty-something who grew up riding his bike on the trails through the Park, recently adopted clearing responsibility for the L'Hirondelle Trail. Jeffrey Budnitz, a Nature Council (as

well as an RRLRAIA) Board member, and John have groomed about ¾ mile of the trail from Club Road to



Photo top, Lake Roland clean-up crew – Park volunteers and Ocean Conservancy members. Photo below, Habitat and Trails volunteer Gero Verheyen cuts 'cookies' from 108" diameter poplar tree on the L'Hirondelle Trail Photos courtesy Jeffrey Budnitz

the Park 'gator' (the rangers' all-wheel drive vehicle, not a reptile!) and the fire department should an emergency arise.

Other volunteers and groups have been busy in different areas of the Park. For example, Mary and Frank Emerson have been grooming trails in the fragile serpentine area near the Home and Hospital School. There have also been several Eagle Scout projects where volunteers cleared and stabilized various trails. Still other volunteers have been busy cutting fallen tree trunks into 'trail cookies' – rounds of wood cut from tree trunks – that can be placed on muddy portions of a trail. One poplar tree that

the trestle bridge, ridding it of encroaching greenbrier and multiflora rose that had made it almost impossible to hike without scratched legs or torn clothes. John plans to bring members of the Young Defenders group from the Maryland Historical Society to work on the trail. An added benefit of clearing this particular path is that the L'Hirondelle Trail and the nearby Lake Roland meadow are now accessible to both

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# Trail Blazers

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had crashed to the ground and was cut up into cookies (see photo on page 1) had a circumference of 108 inches! Don't worry; volunteers who cut trees, cookies and logs for the corduroy treatment have been trained and certified to handle chain saws and other equipment!

On the water and along the banks of Lake Roland, some 13 volunteers in kayaks and canoes recently collected dozens of bags of trash. This effort was sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy as part of their International Coastal Cleanup program. The Conservancy's educational philosophy stresses that "trash travels; no matter where you live, trash can travel from your hands out to sea" so everyone must be part of the solution to trash pollution. What goes in the Lake travels down the Jones Falls to the Chesapeake Bay which empties into the Atlantic Ocean – not hard to imagine.

In addition to cleaning and clearing, volunteers are also 'blazing trails' by marking them with 'blazes' (paint spots) at measured

distances to mark the direction of the trail. The Trail team is using high tech GPS (Global Positioning System) technology and physical maps to blaze the trails. Volunteers are marking blazes with red, green or yellow paint that will correspond to a paper trail map being developed by Baltimore County and the Nature Council. Not only will these blazes help hikers find their way along the trails but they will also make emergency location much easier to identify for the Park rangers.

The Park has some of the best trails in Baltimore County, but they require constant upkeep. So, if you like to work outside, get your hands dirty and do a good deed, join a ranger and the Habitat and Trail team on the second Saturday of every month from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. to help maintain the

beauty of Robert E. Lee Park. Be sure to wear closed-toe shoes and bring water.



*Christine and Steve Christianson in the 'mother ship', collecting trash before it can flow further downstream to the harbor*

Photo courtesy Howdy Knipp





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