

ROLAND PARK NEWS

Finishing Olmsted's Masterpiece: An Update on the Plan to Purchase BCC's Open Land

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by **Mary Page Michel, President, Roland Park Community Foundation**

This past summer, did you or someone you know visit a destination with a beautiful mountain, lake or ocean? A scenic vista or trail? Parks and open spaces continue to be an enormous draw for all ages. Our community has been working diligently to preserve, improve and even create new green space right here in Baltimore City. The Open Space Campaign for Greater Roland Park selected three projects. The first two — improvements to Stony Run and the restoration of the Roland Water Tower have been showcased in the *Roland Park News*. The final project, and the largest in scope, is the purchase of the surplus land from the Baltimore Country Club. It is important for residents to understand the history of this land, and why it is so important to so many.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a permanent community recreational space in one of America's oldest Olmsted planned developments is now at hand.

For almost a half century, the threat of large-scale development on the 17.5 acres of open land at the Baltimore Country Club (BCC) has been a source of community concern. While this threat is serious, our community's alternative vision for this majestic space is truly exciting. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a permanent community recreational space in one of America's oldest Olmsted planned developments is now at hand.

The Baltimore Country Club land is the remains of a 150-acre golf course, one of the first courses in the country and the first to be incorporated within a planned community. The original site included what are now Poly and Western High Schools and the Cross Keys development. The remaining 17.5 acres are bounded by Hillside Road on the South, Falls

Road on the West, Plover Lane and Edgevale Road on the North, and about halfway up the hill in front of the Baltimore Country Club building that faces Falls

Road. Two streams run through the property and join at the bottom of the hill before going underground and flowing into the Jones Falls. This land is zoned R-1, which allows for single family homes, churches, schools and recreational space.

The community would like to transform this site into a public community recreational park. The park would be planned using the informal, natural style of Frederick Law

Olmsted and his sons, who designed the surrounding landscape. The healthiest parks are those that welcome three generations. Initial plans for the new park include a dog park, playing fields, a playground, paths connecting to the existing footpaths and a central expanse for community gatherings, with no lights or additional parking other than what exist on Falls Road.



The woods and the fairway today, the proposed site of the new community recreational park. Photo: Anne Stuzin.



The view from the BCC clubhouse veranda, looking northwest down on the 1st tee and, beyond, the Jones Falls valley. Circa 1910s. Photographer unknown. Source: www.tillinghast.net.

All Aboard to Acorn Hill at Robert E. Lee Park!

By Nancy Worden Horst

Acorn Hill, a children's creative play area in Robert E. Lee Park, opened on June 18 to great shrieks of delight. The ribbon-cutting ceremony featured County Executive Kevin Kamenetz doing the honors, while other elected officials, construction workers, parents, grandparents and Nature Council volunteers joined in the celebration.

"I've never seen a public works project turn out so aesthetically pleasing," said Kamenetz, referring to the refurbishment of Robert E. Lee Park. "[The view] is just breathtaking." He said what began as a "kind of a dream . . . has become a fantastic amenity" for Baltimore.

Following Kamentz' remarks, Helga Morrow was presented with a Baltimore County Council resolution congratulating the Nature

Council's Acorn Hill Committee for their work in planning the new children's play area. Helga and Gail Stetten, together with the late Peter Maloney, first president of the Nature Council, envisioned a place where children could learn through imaginative play.

Various play stations with names such as 'Hollins Station', 'Jones Cabin', 'Mine Company' and 'B & S RR' reflect the rich history of the Park, with its railroad, mines, reservoir and mills. The stations contain structures for climbing, swinging, exploring and balancing, and are designed for children to learn while having fun.

Acorn Hill features picnic and quiet areas, a butterfly hatchery, bird sanctuary and spaces for art projects and theater productions. A 'critter



Opening Day at Acorn Hill in Robert E. Lee Park — fun in the sun for everyone! Photo: Hord | Coplan | Macht.

path' has been created nearby where children can discover the rich diversity of animal life in and under dead logs, and learn about protecting animal and plant habitats.

The Robert E. Lee Park Nature Council is offering many programs this fall that emphasize environmental conservation and exploration of animal and plant habitats — child friendly doses of learning in the guise of great fun! See p. 14 for more information.

Robert E. Lee Park is easily accessed by public transportation; a scenic walk along the boardwalk leads directly into the Park from



Zachary Cheng and Amelia Auvil sell tickets to the train at Acorn Hill's 'Hollins Station' in Robert E. Lee Park.

Photo: Susan King-Byrne, Master Naturalist.

Fun! Great Outdoors! Prizes!

Have an adventure in your own backyard with Baltimore County Nature Quest.

Pick up your Nature Quest Passport booklet at participating parks, online at relpnc.org/nature-quest or at your local Wegmans grocery store. Passports will direct participants to hiking, biking, and canoeing opportunities at the County's nature sites, where questers can record their visit in the Passport. Complete just five trails to earn prizes and free admission to Quest Fest at Robert E. Lee Park, October 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12 p.m.

For more information, please visit relpnc.org/nature-quest or call 410-887-4156.



the Falls Road light rail stop. Drivers can use the aforementioned light rail parking lot or park in the designated lot just past the Lake Roland dam.

Come explore Acorn Hill with your children, grandchildren or young friends and take a magical trip through this scenic Park. ❖



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Fall Highlights at Robert E. Lee Park

September 6, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., **Camp Fire Cooking 101**. Enjoy time around the campfire while learning techniques and recipes for campfire cooking. Create and sample several recipes and conclude the evening by creating your own campfire dessert. Ages 8 and up, \$5 per person.

September 13, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., **The Battle of Baltimore: The Homefront**. Enlist to help the home front during the Battle of Baltimore! Learn about the battle, see a historic weapon demonstration and participate in a race against time to make black powder for the front line defenses. Ages 7 and up, \$3 per person (\$2 members).

September 20, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., **Nature Quest Canoe Trip**. Enjoy canoeing on the lake while searching for the Nature Quest marker. Call or email to reserve a canoe. Ages 8 and up, \$10 per person (\$8 members).

Tuesdays beginning September 23, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. or Thursdays beginning September 18, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. **Nature Scouts**. Rangers will teach children important outdoor skills, including whistle with grass, build a miniature boat, go fishing, construct a shelter, build a fire, and much more! Ages 6 – 12, \$25 for all six sessions (\$20 members).

September 26, 7:00 p.m. to September 27, 9:00 a.m. (Rain date: September 27 to September 28), **Fall Campout**. Experience the forest night life with this family campout. Rangers will lead the group on a night hike and end the evening with a campfire. Bring dinner on Friday or food to cook over the fire; Saturday breakfast

will be provided. Bring your own tent, or call 410-887-4156 to rent one. All ages, \$5 per person (\$3 members).

September 27, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Introduction to Geocaching**. Looking for a fun, family-friendly way to exercise both mind and body? Try geocaching, the fast-growing sport that's akin to a modern-day treasure hunt. We'll explain geocaching basics and find caches located right here in the park. When registering, please note if you will need to reserve one of the GPS units. All ages, free.

September 28, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., **Serpentine Nature Quest Hike**. Hike on the back trails to the globally rare serpentine barrens and collect your serpentine Nature Quest rubbing along the way. See the last page or the park website for more information. Ages 8 and up, free. Trail surface: packed dirt, with rocky incline. Difficulty: moderate.

October 4, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., **Canoe and Kayak Tour**. Bring your own canoe or kayak for a ranger-led paddle around Lake Roland. Explore the length of the lake looking for wildlife and learning about the history of Baltimore's first public reservoir. All participants must wear a life jacket and those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Ages 8 and up, free.

October 17, November 4 or December 29, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., **School's Out Days**. Looking for something fun to do? Unplug the kids and let them spend the day at the park! Bring lunch, snack and water. Ages 6-12, \$25 per child, per day.

October 18, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., **Quest Fest**. All Ages, FREE with Quest completion. Be sure to complete at least five trails in your Nature Quest booklet for free admission to this exciting event. Quest Fest features live animals, canoeing, archery, face painting and tours of the dam at Lake Roland.

October 24, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., **Haunted Hall Zombie Scavenger Hunt**. Try to escape the zombies as you collect items at stations along our trail. Candy for all participants, and prizes for the quickest "survivor." Not for the faint of heart! Bring a flashlight and fast shoes. Ages 12 & up, \$10 per person (\$7 members).

October 25, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Rain date: October 26), **Haunted Halloween Hike**. Encounter witches, owls, snakes and others as you try to solve a Halloween mystery. Bring your flashlight and treat bag to this scary event. Costumes welcome! Ages 5-12, \$7 per person (\$5 members).

November 1, 2:00 to 4:30 p.m., **History Walk**. Learn about the history of the park, which includes railroads, mining, wars and more. This two hour walk begins at the dam. Ages 8 and up, free.

November 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., (Rain date: November 15), **Stories Around the Campfire**. Gather around the campfire to hear stories and learn about the art of storytelling. Feel free to bring a short story or instrument. Ages 5 and up, \$3 per person (\$2 members)

November 22 or November 23, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., **Pioneer Days**. Come build miniature log cabins, create corn husk dolls, play colonial games and dip your own candles to learn how early American pioneers lived. Ages 6 and up, \$5 per person (\$3 members).

November 29 or November 30, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Wreath Making**. Make a decorative wreath from natural materials such as pine, spruce, and holly. We'll have everything you need to make a masterpiece and brave the cold inside the ranger station, including hot chocolate, cookies, and holiday tunes! Ages 14 and up, \$10 per person.

More fall programs may be found at relpnc.org. Registration is limited and required for all programs. Please call 410-887-4156 or email releepark-rp@baltimorecountymd.gov to register. ❖



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