

Annual Update



Be a Force for Nature

December 2018

Our Mission

Our mission is to protect and conserve the natural areas that contribute to the vitality and unique character of Fort Thomas through land preservation, responsible stewardship, and the promotion of community awareness, understanding and enjoyment for present and future generations.

A Note from the Chair, Chuck Keller

FTFC has had a busy 2018! Throughout the course of the year our FTFC Board, members and numerous volunteers found a number of ways to support our mission. I'm especially pleased to share with you on our new website <https://www.ftfc.org>. The website creation project was led by FTFC board member, Jason Weier. The talented local photographer, Lenny Beck, donated his photos. We encourage you to bookmark the site now so you can keep up with 2019's activities and news.

The Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy has great volunteers and we would love to add you to that list. Please consider getting involved. We love people who make things happen. It's going to be an exciting year. Our annual report reflects just how busy we have been, but also hints at the vitality of 2019. Our mission is to preserve and protect our green space as well as educate the public in what they can do. We can't do it all, but if each of us does a little then we can accomplish great things. We encourage everyone to be a force for nature.

Officers and Board of Directors

Chuck Keller, Chair
Stephanie Graves, Vice-Chair
Emily Zoller, Secretary
Ginny Gesenhues, Treasurer

Linda Rankin, Director
Larry Holladay, Director
Mark Leopold, Director
Trisha Schroeder, Director
Jason Weier, Director

Properties and Easements

Two properties have been particularly active this year. First, we have partnered with the city on our River Road property to compost the city's leaves. Our goal is to turn those leaves into compost for use in the parks, our properties, and to sell back to residents. It takes time to make quality compost so don't expect it soon.

We surveyed Rossford Park to re-establish the conservation easement boundaries. Conservation easement signs are in and will be installed in early 2019. A new trail has been outlined and invasive plants (bamboo and honeysuckle) are being removed as part of our management plan to make way for some proposed stream restoration work.

In the spring we walked the Hill property and Crawford preserve and discussed ways for the Environmental Science students at Highlands High School to use that as a natural laboratory and classroom.

The Hubbard easement continues to develop into a focal point for many of our outreach programs. We are excited with its transformation into our environmental experience center.

Events

After reviewing the calendar, it's clear that our motivated members were busy. We can't thank everyone enough for making this a memorable year. Here's a summary of our major events.



April 22 Earth Day 2018: We partnered with the city to host this event. We had an estimated 3,000 visitors to our first annual Earth Day in Tower Park. We showcased area nature opportunities, held demonstrations and activities, showcased nature oriented vendors and environmentally conscious farmer's market vendors, and conducted hikes through the woods. The turtle sculpture, carved by Chris Rust, was unveiled in the Model Native Garden. Earth Day 2019 is scheduled for Sunday, May 5 at the Mess Hall in Tower Park.



May 23 Native Garden: The Fort Thomas branch of BB&T awarded FTFC a \$1,500 grant to improve the Model Native Garden in Tower Park. In addition, they provided over a dozen volunteers for an amazing work session resulting in a new path, weeding, a bench for visitors, tools, and bird houses painted by the Natural Start Preschool. They donated almost 100 work hours. Thank you BB&T for being wonderful corporate citizens.



July 4 Independence Day parade: FTFC entered a float and won First Place for the Most Original Float award. It was a group effort led by members Jan Jolley, Erika Peter, and Andrea Burkhardt. It was a hot day but we had lots of fun! We gave away a 1,000 FTFC fans too.

July 18 Mud Pies for Butterflies, Farmers Market activity: Jan Jolley, Trisha Schroder, and Katie Cook conducted a workshop at the Fort Thomas Farmers' Market where children made mud pies for the garden to attract butterflies. We gave away dozens of mud pies to gardeners/children. We partnered with the Natural Start Preschool on this event.

This activity was a prelude to our certified Backyard Habitat program that we will unveil in 2019. It's an exciting way for residents to make their gardens friendly to beneficial animals and insects and plants.



October 13: Ken Swinson Hubbard Studio fundraiser: Artist Ken Swinson, who admits that Harlan Hubbard was a major influence on his work, held a printmaking workshop at the studio. After making a donation, participants pressed their own prints of an original Swinson wood block print. We have a few prints left. We raised well over \$2,500 that will go toward restoration of the exterior on the building.



November 17 Rossford Park: Board member Mark Leopold led a chainsaw safety course after which the group put those skills to use removing invasive honeysuckle and bamboo.



December 20 Armory: We held our first family Holiday Tree for Wildlife event in cooperation with the Fort Thomas Recreation Board. Board members Trisha Schroder and Emily Zoller, and members Jan Jolley and Michele Wright organized the event. They read the children's book *Night Tree* and then guided children in making natural food ornaments to adorn a tree for the animals in the park.



COME JOIN US TO DECORATE A
**HOLIDAY TREE
FOR WILDLIFE**

When: Thursday, December 20th
Time: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Place: Armory (downstairs room on the left)

Enjoy some cookies and drink, hear a children's story called *Night Tree*, create edible ornaments for wildlife and head outside to decorate a tree for wildlife. Dress for the weather.



Recreation Department



Fort Thomas
Forest
Conservancy

RSVP: Trisha Schroder at tschroder@fortthomas.org - Walk-ins welcome
Allergy Note: We will be using peanut butter.

Harlan Hubbard Studio and Nature Preserve

We continue to host our meetings in the building where the Conservancy was founded. The pollinator garden had a successful second year. Plants are multiplying and attracting more pollinators. The honeybees that we found in the building last year will return in a hive. It will become an educational focal point as well as a honey producer.





September 20: Xavier University theology classes visited the studio to discuss the role of nature in theology.

October 9: SPANKY (Society of Plein Air Painters of Northern Kentucky) returned to the studio for a day of painting.

Thanks to a grant from the **Ohio Valley Foundation**, the restoration of the studio's window and door are now complete and the electric has been upgraded. The building is safe and secured.

Studio Hours: We will open the studio on the third Saturday of the month from 10:00 - 1:00 for those who want to get in touch with nature, or to meditate, paint, create music, or pursue other creative endeavors. The community is invited to use the space in a creative and environmentally sound way.

Visitors: We have also hosted numerous private tours as well for visitors from around the country as well as those interested in our mission. We are moving toward becoming the environmental experience center that we envision. Check the calendar at ftfc.org for updates.

Outreach:

Education: Mark Leopold, Dave Wormald, Chuck Keller, and Colleen Epperson walked the Crawford and Hill properties behind Highlands High School discussed creating an outdoor education center and how FTFC can partner. This project will create an outdoor learning area for students to learn about the environmental sciences.

Passport: In November we entered a partnership with the Recreation Department and the city to create an activity passport for city. In addition to encouraging residents to visit local businesses and events, it encourages people hike our wooded trails. And we created a series of urban trails. The passport will be unveiled at Earth Day 2019.

Museum: Board members, Trisha Schroder and Linda Rankin, refreshed the display room in the city museum next to the Model Native Garden. Stop by to visit. It's a gem for the city and for FTFC.

New Leaders: We added members to the board — Jason Weier, Emily Zoller, and Ginny Gesenhues — who bring new energy and valued perspectives to our leadership. We also added new active members for committees and they are the ones who make things happen. Rick Stegeman, an experienced beekeeper, is the latest to join us as the new beekeeper.

Website

Thanks to the outstanding leadership of Jason Weier, our new website is up and running. We are excited about the new features like the calendar and news updates. And it's easy now for people to become members or to renew. We can't do everything we do without your help so please become a member. It's easy and we try to make it fun. Visit us at www.ftfc.org.

Contact Us



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