South Windsor MOMS donate $2500 to the Northwest Park Sugarhouse Expansion Program

The South Windsor MOMs Club presented a generous $2500 donation to the Northwest Park Sugarhouse Expansion Project recently. On behalf of the Friends of Northwest Park, Chuck Drake, Sugarhouse coordinator and vice president of the Friends of Northwest Park, said, “The project was undertaken to bring all parts of the maple-syrup-making operation under one roof, ensure efficient processing and keep it a simple and enjoyable experience not only for the visitor but especially for our volunteers. The MOMs donation will allow us to purchase a filter press that will allow our volunteers to efficiently filter our maple syrup. This will simplify some of the most tedious tasks and hopefully entice our future volunteers into continuing the program we have worked so hard to establish.”

Roger Nolte steps down as long-time chairperson of the Country Fair; Fair committee postpones next Country Fair

Roger Nolte, a trustee of Friends of Northwest Park, and five-year chief organizer of the Northwest Country Fair, is stepping down as chairperson of the Fair Committee. Roger has served in that capacity for more than five years. His task as chairperson didn’t begin a month or two before the fair, nor did it end at its closing. Once one fair ended, Roger headed his committee toward developing the next year’s Country Fair.
President’s Corner

We hope you took the time to enjoy Northwest Park this winter. The Park is currently humming with the sounds of maple sugaring, concerts, and early spring clean-up.

It is time to reflect on all the support the Park was given in 2019 and encourage everyone to continue the efforts to help make the Park even better this year.

In 2019, besides all the individual efforts and a significant grant from the South Windsor Women’s Club, support has come from our Corporate Sponsors and matching gift companies as well. We wish to thank the following for their financial support and volunteer work:

- Athletic Brewing Company
- The Hartford
- TLD USA
- Voya Financial

Without all of you, Northwest Park would not be what it is today.

One last note, our 2020 Capital Project of Preserving the Park’s diverse landscapes as healthy natural habitats has brought in almost $1000 towards our goal of $5,000 by year end. The environmental education mission of the Park appears to be in good hands and we hope to reach our goal with your assistance. Help secure the land management for future generations.

As always, you can contact me at Terry@northwestpark.org.

Terry Langevin, President

Mark your calendars for the Friends of Northwest Park’s annual Pancake Breakfast March, 28 from 9-11 a.m. in the Warming Shed. Get ready for hot pancakes, sausages covered in 100% pure maple sugar processed right in Northwest Park’s Maple Sugar House.
Gary Dogewicz, sound and sight man for Northwest Park’s Concert Series

You’ve probably seen Gary Dogewicz around town in some capacity or another. Whether he’s manning the soundboard or lighting at a concert series, or making announcements at an event. Gary is there. He’s in town for much of the community’s needs. His resume for what he’s done proves it.

In 1994, Gary began working as Assistant Building Manager for the town. He’s been in the position for 26 years. From there, his experience did not go unnoticed when Northwest Park’s then-manager, Mickey Mattei, was in search of somebody to work sound for various events, including the Northwest Park Country Fair. A year later, Chuck Drake wanted to organize a series of musical events to serve the town. That endeavor became the Coffeehouse Concert Series. As Gary notes, “I’ve been there since Day One!”

Gary was born and bred in Windsor, along with two other brothers. His education took him from Poquonock to Sage Park, and eventually Windsor High. Upon graduation in ’84, Gary studied and received his degree in computer programming. But, that’s not where his heart was most content. Although, computer programming is an essential way of life today, it was a course on electronic music and running sound at high school events that became Gary’s passion. He was soon taking on the soundboard for the Summer Concerts on the green and has continued to do so for 35 years with Bill Carlin.

That extended out to his responsibility of running WGTV (Windsor Government Channel 96) in 1991, as a part of the Win-TV family, providing meetings filmed at the Town Hall.

Over time, Chuck and Gary have coordinated and shaped the event to what it is today. During its infancy, the concert series was under a tent with a small stage. Clip-on floodlights attached to a tree stump provided light. The series is now held in the back of the Nature Center on Saturdays during the winter months. The lighting rig and sound gear have become sophisticated through time. Gary continues to tweak and add things to hold his interest.

Besides all of his work with the Friends of Northwest Park, Gary has found himself working many other events around town throughout the years.

The most complex of all setups every year is the Windsor Family Feud, where he transforms the Town Hall’s Council Chambers room into the high-glitzy of bright lights, buzzers, and large screens. Everything that looks like your typical game show sets up in about three weeks. Take-down is a mere 24-hour window of opportunity the next day, before a Monday town council meeting. Gary has worked 17 years of his magic for the Feud.

Gary has been running announcements for the annual Shad Derby Festival over the past 12-13 years, where he reads off a book-size of notes and brief biographies from the many participants in the parade.

These are only some of the many accomplishments of Gary Dogewicz’s lengthy resume.

When asked about whether he prefers to work with lighting or sound, Gary says, light is “less pressure,” while audio is “critical.”

How long does he plan on keeping with his technical passion?

“When it stops being fun, I won’t do it anymore.”

Let’s hope that’s a long way to come.

Article and photo by Tracy Rotkiewicz
Preserving Healthy Habitats at Northwest Park

By Marilyn Smith, Northwest Park Manager

One of my most important roles as the manager of Northwest Park (NWP) is to protect the park’s natural resources so native species and habitats will continue to thrive here. NWP is blessed with a wonderful variety of ecosystems, including different types of wetlands, forests, fields, and thickets. Some people might wonder why we need to do anything to “maintain” natural areas. Doesn’t nature take care of itself? In reality, doing nothing would soon result in the degradation of some habitats, while others would be almost entirely lost within a couple decades.

Nearly every visitor is familiar with NWP’s spectacular open fields, a legacy of agricultural land use for many decades before the park was formed. The tobacco drying sheds that dot the landscape bear witness to the most recent crops raised here. These grassy fields are mowed every year to prevent them reverting to a forest due to natural succession. NWP’s fields attract many of Connecticut’s ‘high conservation priority’ species, including Eastern Box Turtle, Eastern Kingbird, and the state endangered Grasshopper Sparrow.

Shrubby thickets are another type of habitat within NWP which require active management. They develop when young shrubs and trees are allowed to grow into a field for several years without intervention. Cutting the young woody plants every 4-5 years prevents succession into a forest, and starts the growth from field to thicket all over again. To be honest, thickets are not the most aesthetically pleasing landscapes to view, and it’s harder to cut through thick scrub than field grasses, so maintenance is quite a chore. But this habitat is invaluable for hosting many wonderful species that have become all too rare in our state. Orchard Oriole, Prairie Warbler, Indigo Bunting, and Brown Thrasher are a few of the birds that thrive in thickets at NWP.

Whether you’re a dedicated birder or simply enjoy taking an outdoor stroll, I encourage you to take note of the various habitats you experience at NWP, and to look more closely at the wildlife and plants you see in each one. Should you encounter heavy equipment cutting a field or thicket during the dormant season, rest assured it’s the work required to preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

Windsor resident registration is open for the Camp Foxfire summer program at Northwest Park.

On a 473-acre campus of forest, field, farm and pond, children learn about nature, and environmental education in a healthy and stimulating outdoor setting. Go to townofwindsorct.com/recreation for camp dates, themes and to register.
Upcoming programs for Northwest Park

Rent a plot in the Community Garden at Northwest Park. Raise your own produce in a 36 square-foot plot that’s been harrowed and staked out at the start of the growing season. There’s a nearby water source but gardeners need to bring their own hose and tools. $50 (Windsor residents), $60.00 (non-residents). Registration begins April 1, 2020. Call 860-285-1886 to register for the season.

Celebrate Earth Day
Saturday, April 25, from 1 to 3:30 pm for a screening of the film The Beaver Believers followed by a discussion and hike to the beaver pond onsite. As a keystone species, beaver enrich their ecosystems, creating the biodiversity, complexity, and resiliency our watersheds need to absorb the impacts of climate change. Beavers can show us the way and do much of the work for us, if only we can find the humility to trust the restorative power of nature and our own ability to play a positive role within it. This free program is Sponsored by the Friends of Northwest Park.

Bring your binoculars to the Evening Bird Walk at Northwest Park on Wednesday evenings, April 29 through May 20 from 6 pm – 7:30 pm. Join us in an after work stroll as we search for spring migrants and enjoy the lengthening daylight. All levels of experience welcome but not recommended for young children. Cancelled in case of inclement weather. Free. 860-285-1886.

Woodland Wildflower Walk
May 9
Come out to Northwest Park from 10 am to noon on Saturday, May 9 for a guided Woodland Wildflower Walk with Aimee Gelinas Founder/Director of Tamarack Hollow Nature and Cultural Center. Learn about the natural history and importance of wildflowers as you stroll along the trails in search of spring blooms. This program is sponsored by the Friends of Northwest Park. The program is free for Friends of Northwest Park members who are asked to call the nature center to register. 860-285-1886.

Lives of reptiles and amphibians
June 20:
Join us at Northwest Park from 1 to 2 pm as we learn about the lives of reptiles and amphibians through a special presentation by Rainforest Reptiles. You will have the chance to come into direct contact with live reptiles and artifacts. Hear their incredible stories as you learn the differences between exotic and native species and how these fascinating animals have adapted to live in their environment. This Free program is sponsored by the Friends of Northwest Park.

You can help fund Northwest Park’s 2020 Preservation Projects for Environmental Education

Preserving the park’s diverse landscapes as healthy natural habitats is vitally important to the environmental education mission of Northwest Park and Nature Center. Northwest Park is blessed with a rich variety of forests and wetlands in addition to its spectacular fields and thickets, but these areas can degrade over time if they are not properly tended.

The Friends of Northwest Park recently supported development of a multi-year plan to maintain healthy habitats where native plants and wildlife will continue to thrive. This initiative will require additional expenses for which donations are being accepted. Any amount will help us reach our goal of $5000.

Send your donation through Northwestpark.org, PayPal, our Facebook site @NorthwestParkCT, or to The Friends of Northwest Park, P.O. Box 773, Windsor, CT 06095.

Save the date…

June 7

The Friends of Northwest Park’s annual meeting is Sunday, June 7. Come and share your thoughts and ideas, and see what is happening at the park.
Roger Nolte, Continued from page 1

Roger’s dedication to presenting a top-notch fair each year included guiding the Fair Committee to coordinate the many entertainment and food venues, as well as the many volunteers it takes to bring an enjoyable day to the thousands who attended Windsor’s Northwest Park Country fair each September.

Roger’s community involvement doesn’t stop at the fair. He also volunteers at Mary’s Place, in Windsor, a center for children and families in who are grieving the death of a loved one.

Roger will still remain a member of the Country Fair Committee, who this year will postpone the 2020 fair to plan for a 2021 fair, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Friends of Northwest Park, and the 38th Country Fair.
The maple tree sap is flowing and the Friends of Northwest Park are preparing for this year’s Pancake Breakfast March 28

The Friends of Northwest Park’s annual Pancake Breakfast will be held March 28 from 9-11 a.m. in the Warming Shed. The maple syrup comes from the park’s own maple trees, and it takes more than 40 gallons of tree sap (demonstrated above) to produce one gallon of maple syrup. No reservations are needed, just show up to enjoy hot pancakes and sausages, as well as coffee, tea, hot chocolate and orange juice; $6 for adults and $4 for children under 12; children under 3 eat free!

The 2020 Friends of Northwest Park memberships are due now and can be submitted on the web site www.northwestpark.org
Don’t miss these upcoming performances at the Northwest Park Concert Series

April 4 – Lucy Kaplansky ($20/$18 for Friends Members). 7:30 pm – doors open at 7 pm. Lucy started out singing in Chicago folk music clubs as a teenager. Then, barely out of high school, Lucy took off for New York City. There she found a fertile community of songwriters and performers—Suzanne Vega, Steve Forbert, The Roches, and others. With a beautiful flair for harmony, Lucy was everyone’s favorite singing partner, but most often she found herself singing as a duo with Shawn Colvin. The New York Times said it was “easy to predict stardom for her.” She harmonized on Nanci Griffith’s albums and landed soundtrack credits, singing with Suzanne Vega on “Pretty in Pink” and with Griffith on “The Firm,” and several commercial credits as well—including “The Heartbeat of America” for Chevrolet. In 1998 Lucy teamed with Dar Williams and Richard Shindell to form supergroup Cry Cry Cry. Many years and many albums later, Lucy is still making audiences smile with her songwriting, her beautiful voice, and her stories.

April 18 – Porch Party Mamas ($20/$18 for Friends Members). 7:30 pm – doors open at 7 pm. These established Boston area musicians and singer/songwriters have combined their individual talents and create their own brand of Urban Folk, Country and Blues.

May 2 – Gil Gutierrez Trio ($20/$18 for Friends Members). 7:30 pm – doors open at 7 pm. The very talented guitarist and composer Gil Gutiérrez has established an avid following throughout Latin America and Spain with his classically–trained mastery of jazz, flamenco, and son cubano. Mr. Gutiérrez has been performing to sell out crowds in the New York metro area in his Spring visits to the East Coast and enjoys our venue as much as we enjoy having him. Gil Gutiérrez will join forces with two equally gifted colleagues, violinist Robert Stern and bassist David Rodriguez, for two sets of high–level improvising.