



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Volume XXVI Number I

SPRING 2017

HOPPIN' HODGES RACE - EASTER FUN!

On a warm, sunny Easter morning, some 71 runners, 4 walkers, 3 doggies and one horse came to Vernon to take part in the Hoppin'

Hodges Race. Topped off with boxes of free donuts and refreshments, the event was a morning filled with high energy, high spirits, and just plain fun. The 5K race is held on our celebrated Rail Trail, between the Depot on Church Street and Valley Falls Park.

The horse was THE hit of the race. In keeping with the day, he was given the race #100, encircled with Easter colors of yellow and pink garlands. As of this writing, we don't know his race time! But we do know this beautiful black horse is a Fresian from Holland, and

is owned by **Kathy Daigle**. He joined the race on his walk from Lydall Street in Manchester.



*Kathy Daigle with her Fresian horse.
Photo by Paula Passaretti.*

The race is organized annually by **Janit Romayko**. It is named in memory of her husband, **Jim Hodges**. Jim was an avid runner who especially enjoyed the trails in the Valley Falls area. Thanks to Janit's lively personality and energy, the race is a big success. Proceeds from the race are donated to the Friends, for which we are ever grateful. A big thank-you, Janit! Thanks also to our Board of Directors members **Paula Passaretti, Ginny Gingras** and **Bob Letendre** for representing the Friends as hosts at the finish line. (And we note that Bob, a former runner now in his 80th year, couldn't resist the challenge of participating in the race). 🐾

CONNECTICUT OPEN HOUSE DAY AT VALLEY FALLS SATURDAY, JUNE 10TH

HISTORICAL TOURS AND FAMILY BIRD WALK

Free tours of Valley Falls Farm and a free nature program for families in Valley Falls Park will be offered as part of the local celebration of Connecticut Open House Day. The Friends will host free historical tours of the Farm between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm.

A Family Bird Walk will be given in Valley Falls Park by wildlife biologist, Jane Seymour of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The program will begin at 9:00 am and will end at 10:00 am. Meet in the gazebo. Come learn about birds and go for a walk!

This 13th annual Connecticut Open House Day is sponsored by the CT Department of Culture and Tourism. The one-day statewide event is designed to showcase Connecticut's diverse world of history, art, and tourism. For other state events, go to www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2128&Q=500314&PM=1. 🐾

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**“THREE-WALK WEEKEND”
MAY 20 & MAY 21ST**

Join our spring walks! “The Birds of Valley Falls”, a birdwalk by Denise Anamani, is scheduled for Saturday morning, May 20th, at 7:30 am. A wildflower walk, “Wildflowers of Valley Falls”, will be lead by **Ginny Gingras** and will be held Saturday afternoon, May 20th at 1:00 pm. “Rocks, Rails and Industry at Valley Falls”, a history and geology walk, will be held Sunday, May 21st at 1:00 pm. It will be lead by **Don Sierakowski**. Meet at the gazebo in the Valley Falls Park parking area. Participants should dress accordingly for each event, being sure to be covered for possible rambles off the trail and into the brush. Rain date for the Bird Walk and Wildflower Walk will be Sunday, May 21st. ☂

**MEET THE “BIRD LADY,”
DENISE ANAMANI**

Denise Anamani has been leading our May birdwalks for over 15 years. The hallmark of her walks is to create a quiet

experience in nature, one that tunes in the sound and feel of what’s around you. She has been interested in birding nearly her entire life, starting with being active in the Audubon Society since Middle School. Currently, she is a lecturer and mentor at the University of Connecticut in genetics. She considers herself a naturalist, and has a background in biology. She participates in the Audubon’s yearly Christmas Bird Count and in the Breeding Census Bird Count in June. Denise lives in Ellington with her husband. Their two children are of an age at which they have “left the nest”, so to speak! ☂



ADIEU, BRUCE DINNIE!

After 30 years as Director of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Vernon, Bruce decided to retire last year. And for these 30 years the Friends have appreciated his willingness to listen to our concerns and our thoughts on the management of Valley Falls Park. Of all his accomplishments, Bruce considers Vernon’s popular trail system and town-wide garden beautification to be his favorites. The gardens have certainly been a source of pleasure to many and have contributed greatly to the “sprucing up of Vernon” over recent years. We surely hope the focus continues! He says that the best part of his job was working with his staff and volunteers. Bruce’s friendly manner and the respect he showed people enabled him to develop a veritable army of volunteers that supported both parks and recreation. He will be truly missed by the Friends. ☂

2017 ARTISTS DAY - AUGUST 20TH



Photo by Tom Griswold.

We like to think of Valley Falls Farm as the most scenic corner in Vernon. The pasture, the red barn, and the iconic stable on the hillside paint a picture unique to our community – and – dare we say, unique in our State. This thinking gave birth to the idea of “Artists Day at Valley Falls Farm”. It was the perfect place for artists to create, musicians to play, and visitors to enjoy a balmy summer afternoon. The first event in 2008 drew over 200 people, and it has become a biennial event since that time.

This year’s Artists Day at Valley Falls Farm will be held on Sunday, August 20th. The public is invited to stroll through the fields between 1:00 and 3:30 pm, and enjoy the art of the *plein*

air artists painting on the grounds. Other paintings by the artists will be on display in the red barn and will be available for sale. Tours of the historic buildings will be given on the hour, sparked with tales of the intriguing history of the “gentleman farmers” that once owned Valley Falls Farm. Live musicians will play on the porch of the farmhouse during the afternoon, funded by the Vernon Arts Commission. The herb and flower gardens in the old cold frames, planted and tended by the Vernon Garden Club, add to the experience. Mark your calendar - August 20th - for a quintessential summer afternoon experience at Valley Falls Farm! 🌿

HERITAGE CENTER UPDATE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF THE HISTORIC STABLE

Work continues on the grant to create a heritage center in the stable at Valley Falls Farm. We have hired local architect Bob Hurd to help with adaptation of the building for this use. Bob will also work with local building officials and the Town Planning department to determine permitting requirements. As of this writing, an on-site meeting is planned with the local officials this coming week.

The historical integrity of the interior will be retained,



Horse stall in the stable interior. Photo by Ann Letendre.

no major changes are planned. Since the heritage center will be open only seasonally, June to October, the installation of a heating system will not be required. Upgrading of the existing electrical, water and bathroom facilities will likely be needed. The horse stalls make excellent areas for displays. We expect completion of the project in the fall of 2018. 🌿



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
P.O. Box 2008
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Spring 2017

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NATURE NOTES _____

BLOODROOT (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) is one of the earliest wildflowers to greet us in the spring. Its white flowers emerge from unfolding leaves. The foliage is lovely and will last all summer and fall. Bloodroot is one of many woodland flowers dispersed by ants who carry the seeds to their nest where they eat the outer covering, then discard the seed in their "compost pile." The rhizomes contain a red sap which the Native Americans used as a dye. Bloodroot occurs throughout the park and can be seen along the Braille trail. ☺



CALENDAR

★ **"Three Walk Weekend"**

May 20th and 21st

★ **CT Open House Day**

June 10th

Valley Falls Farm historical tours

10 am to 2 pm

Family Bird Walk in Valley Falls Park

9 - 10 am

★ **Summer Tours at the Farm**

Wednesday afternoons, 1 to 3 pm
(July 5, 12, 19, 26; August 2, 9, 16)

Saturday afternoons -

July 15 and August 12

★ **Annual Meeting**

Sunday, September 24th at 1:00 pm in the
Red Barn at Valley Falls.