



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

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SPRING 2018

HOPPIN' HODGES RACE – A SUCCESS!

On an unusually chilly Easter morning, some 102 runners, dressed in winter gear, took part in the Annual Hoppin' Hodges Race. The 5K race is held each year on our celebrated Rail Trail, between the Depot Park on Church Street and Valley Falls Park. Most participants came from across the State, but even included visitors from New Jersey, Georgia, Virginia and Massachusetts.

The race is organized annually by **Janit Romayko**. It is named in memory of her husband, **Jim Hodges**, 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



And they're off! Photo by Paula Passaretti

we are ever grateful. This year's proceeds of \$1500 set a new record! A big thank-you to you, Janit, and to each and every runner!

We congratulate the winners! **Brett Stoeffler** crossed the finish line first, followed by **David Eisendel**, and **John Minervino**. The first three women winners were **Alyssa Arel**, **Kathie Manizza**, and **Stephanie Jacobs**. We hope to see you next year!

Our thanks also go to **Ken Platt** for timing the race, and to our Board members **Paula Passaretti**, **Ginny Gingras** and **Bob Letendre** for representing the Friends as hosts at the finish line. 🐰



Dog-bunny is ready for the race.
Photo by Paula Passaretti



Runners enjoy after-race refreshments.
Photo by Paula Passaretti

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NEWSLETTER

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LIGHTNING STRIKE AT VALLEY FALLS FARM!

During the thunderstorm that hit Vernon on April 16th, a bolt of lightning struck at Valley Falls Farm. Sadly, it hit one of two majestic 80-ft Norway spruce trees adjacent to the ice house. We believe the trees were planted about 100 years ago to shade the ice house to help keep it cool.

The tree exploded with such a force that shards of splintered wood shot through the air, 300 feet from the tree. Debris was scattered as far as the hillside on the east side of the house and behind the red barn across the street. One shard was found actually impaled in a storm window frame of the



*Cleanup - One tree down, one remaining.
Photo by Ann Letendre*

farmhouse. Fortunately, no one was at the farm when it happened, and no injuries resulted. But we did hear from many in the area that they saw the burst of light, and heard the blast.

The lightning traveled underground about 50 feet under the ice house and the woodshed, breaking windows

and siding in both buildings. Electrical damage also occurred to the transformer on the street and to some appliances in the farmhouse.



*Wood splinters from exploded tree cover the ground.
Photo by Ann Letendre*



Ice House damage. Photo by Ann Letendre

Dangling limbs on the tree required immediate removal of the tree. Thanks to prompt work by Distinctive Tree Service, the damaged tree has been cut down, and the property has been cleaned up. We've met with the insurance adjuster, who said he'd never seen anything like this! So, we have some repair work to do, but all is well. We'll miss our tree, however. The health of its twin, the remaining tree, remains in question - it may have to be removed at some time in the future. ☹️

REST IN PEACE, MARY GLENN

We were saddened to learn of the passing of **Mary Glenn**. Mary was one of the original founders of the Friends of Valley Falls. We have many memories of working with Mary in Valley Falls Park during the 70s, and 80s, when we were



The goal of the Friends of Valley Falls is then to maintain and foster the historical, natural and recreational Valley Falls area for the townspeople now and for years to come. And keep it truly "Something for the Future."

Jessica's hand, in excerpt from Friends first membership flyer, circa 1980

discovering the natural treasures in the park. During the 90s she took on the role of Treasurer.

Mary's two daughters, **Betsy** and **Jessica**, also tell us of their childhood memories experiencing

nature in the Park. Betsy has pursued a career in biology, which she attributes to her early exposure to

the creatures in Valley Falls Park. Our first membership flyer from the 80s shows a photo of a child's hand, at the old mill foundations. The hand is Jessica's.

Mary moved to Portland Oregon in 2000, to be near Jessica and Betsy. Her main passion was teaching, especially in helping adults overcome math anxiety.

A memorial service here on the east coast is planned for Mary on September 22, 2018 at 10:30 am at Ellington Cemetery, 95 Maple St. The family asks that memorial donations be made to a charity of your choice, in lieu of flowers. If you would like to make a donation to the Friends in her name, send to PO Box 2008, Vernon CT 06066. Note Mary Glenn on the check.

Years ago, Mary and her family quietly donated a bench in the Park, in a hidden area by a small stream, just off the pond trail. The bench is in need of repair, which we will do in honor of Mary. Rest well, dear Mary. We will take care of it. 🌿

THREE-WALK WEEKEND(S): BIRDS, FLOWERS, ROCKS & RAILROADS

Due to conflicting schedules, our annual Three-Walk Weekend will be held over two weekends. On **Sunday, May 6th**, we will host two sequential walks. Each walk will be a leisurely ramble. Come for either, or walk both:

At 12:00 pm **Ginny Gingras** and **Carol Hatch** will lead a one hour walk of Ginny's favorite wildflower paths to identify and enjoy old favorites and some members of the orchid family that are hard to find anywhere else! Then, at 1:00 pm, join **Jon Roe** for a history and geology walk. He will take us on a jaunt through the historic parts of Valley Falls Park

discussing the history of the area, the cotton mill, the coming of the railroads and the rock formations of the valley.

On **Saturday, May 12th** at 7:30 am, join **Denise Animani** as she leads the "Birds of Valley Falls" walk. Denise has led our walks for more than 16 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.

For all the walks, meet at Valley Falls Park gazebo. 🌿

OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER – WELCOME!

We extend a warm welcome to **Carol Hatch**, our newest member of the Board of Directors. Carol and her husband moved to Brandy Hill Road, near the Farm, in 1981. They raised two children here. Carol practiced medicine as a pediatric neurologist, and now enjoys retirement. She is an active volunteer with the Hockanum

Valley Community Council and The Cornerstone in Rockville. She and her husband especially enjoy hiking and the outdoors. Her husband, Dr. David Hatch, is active with Connecticut Forest & Parks Association. Carol says she is looking forward to helping the Friends care for the Valley Falls area. 🌿



**The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
P.O. Box 2008
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Spring 2018

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UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Three-Walk Weekend(s)

This year due to scheduling conflicts, our Three-Walk Weekend will be held over two weekends:

Wildflower Walk – Sunday, May 6, 12:00 noon. Led by Ginny Gingras.

Rocks, Railroads and Industry – Sunday, May 6, 1:00 pm. Led by Jon Roe.

Bird Walk – Saturday, May 12, 7:30 am. Led by Denise Animani.

Open House Day at Valley Falls Farm – Sunday, June 10, 2018, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Summer Tours at the Farm – Weekends: July 14-15, July 28-29 and

August 11-12, August 25-26. All tours held from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Annual Meeting – Sunday, September 30, 1 pm. Speaker to be announced.

Check our website for updates. 