

Committee Reports

For the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Community Outreach

Co-Chairmen Karin James and Ginny Gingras

Our newsletter is published twice a year and is mailed to about 700 people. All previous issues are available on our website under "Archives". We also send an e-news letter to those members that wish to get one. This year we again welcomed visitors to the Farm Open House tours, but fewer had fewer attendees. Seventy visitors attended the CT Open House Day in June, attracted by beekeeping demonstrations and free honey samples given by our beekeepers Marcie Lavoie and Tom Kaminski. We also welcomed the Vernon Garden Club and their event "Dessert in the Garden", enjoyed by all.

We are members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, a group of 12 local volunteer organizations that meet quarterly to exchange information and share resources. Raising awareness of the jewel that is Valley Falls Farm and Park, and recruiting new membership continues to be our greatest challenge.

Business Development

Co-chairman Ann Letendre and Joe King

Membership: As of June 30, 2019, we have 172 members (individuals or families). Another 11 individuals or families contributed to the Friends. In addition over 9 contributions were made by runners in the Hoppin' Hodges Race. The total number of members and contributors was 192, the same number as the previous year. These generous supporters are listed on pages 6 and 7 in this Report.

Fundraising: This year we received a total of \$8,685 in dues and contributions, and \$1,210 in contributions to the endowment fund, for a total of \$9,895, an increase of \$767 from the previous fiscal year. In addition, we received \$1,736 from the runners in the annual "Hoppin' Hodges" Easter 5K road race, held in memory of Jim Hodges. This was a slight decrease of \$143 from the previous year. We are especially grateful to Janit Romayko Hodges, who organized the many details needed to make the race happen. We also thank Ken Platt of Platt Systems for the donation of his timing services.

Grant Applications: No new grant applications have been submitted this fiscal year, but we plan to submit a grant to the 1712 foundation for security system and lightning rod on the stable.

Report of the Audit Committee

On September 14, 2019 the Audit Committee met with the Treasurer and reviewed the financial statements for the fiscal period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. The Committee has found them in accord and in reconciliation with all bank records and income and expense reports.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryann Levesque, Tom Kaminski, and Ginny Gingras

Buildings and Grounds

Co-chairmen Bob Letendre and Joe King

Maintenance of the grounds continues to be a major effort and expense. Adams Lawn Care takes care of mowing. The cold frame gardens are cared for by the Vernon Garden Club, and Betty & Bill Wardrop. Ron Levesque provided much appreciated help with yard trimming and removal of invasives and dead trees. Beekeepers, Allen Valli, Tom Kaminski and Marcie Lavoie have a total of 5 hives. Allen reports that he had a good honey production year and no hive losses. Tom and Marcie report a loss of one of their three hives in the spring, but they had a good production summer of about 50 lbs so far.

We continue work on the restoration of the buildings. We did have a setback when lightning struck one of the two Norway spruce trees in April, causing extensive damage to the icehouse and woodshed. Both buildings have been successfully repaired. Repair work was also done to the door framing for the Manure Shed and Cold Storage area. A new floor was installed in the woodshed, enabling the area to become a solid storage area for the old doors, windows and lumber on the property.

Special Projects – Heritage Center

Co-Chairmen Ann Letendre and Maryann Levesque

We continued work on the \$150,000 grant we received in 2011 from the State of Connecticut to develop the Valley Falls Heritage Center. Much of our time this year was spent on researching the history of the Beach family, thanks to Jon Roe and Maryann Levesque. As of June 30, 2019 we have expended \$84,285 of the grant funds. The major expenditures this fiscal year were to consultants Musevue 360 for research and drafting of the storyboard text for the displays, and to architect Bob Hurd for preparation of bid drawings for upgrades to the electrical and plumbing work. The upgrades are taking longer than anticipated, and the opening has been moved to 2020.

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee of the Friends of Valley Falls presents the following slate of officers and directors for a two-year term, July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021.

Officers

President, Joe King
Vice President, Karin James
Secretary, Jean Merz
Treasurer, Bob Letendre

Directors

Ginny Gingras
Ann Letendre
Maryann Levesque
(2 vacancies)

Respectfully submitted,
Maryann Levesque, Chairman
Ann Letendre
Tom Kaminski

Our Strategic Plan – Some Progress

In 2011 the Friends hired organizational consultants “Musevue 360” to provide direction and guidance for our future. Here’s a summary of their key recommendations, actions we’ve taken to date, and the work we have ahead.

- **Create a strong visual brand that the community readily identifies. Review the FVF’s logo, graphics, etc. and investigate options for improvement.**
We rolled out a new logo in 2014 using the iconic stable as an identifiable visual brand. A large banner with the new logo was made to display at local events.
- **Communicate better with target audiences and inspire support. Investigate options for improving the FVF’s web site and internet presence.**
This fiscal year we set up a Facebook page, and we continued to improve the website, and to publish e-news. Much more needs to be done with improving internet presence, however, as well as setting up the ability to join and pay for memberships online through a paypal account.
- **Deepen connections with the local community and build the pool of volunteers and potential board members. Establish a committee structure around key areas of activity and set a list of tasks to be completed in the next year.**
We set up a committee structure in 2014 with appointed chairmen from the Board. The role and responsibility of each Committee was defined. Defining specific tasks and projects, and populating the committees with volunteers still need to be done.
- **Build local support among key stakeholders for FVF’s mission. Establish open, regular communication. Keep an ear to the ground for “hot button” issues in the local community.**
As members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, we continue to meet quarterly with twelve other local volunteer organizations to share information and resources.
- **Establish a community advisory committee composed of representatives of key partners organizations.**
No action has been taken to establish the advisory committee, other than to create a tentative list of people who might serve.
- **Deepen the volunteer pool and build awareness of the value of FVF to the local community. Focus public communication on volunteer recruitment.**
We continued summer tours of the Farm. We have not yet put a pro-active focus on volunteer recruitment.