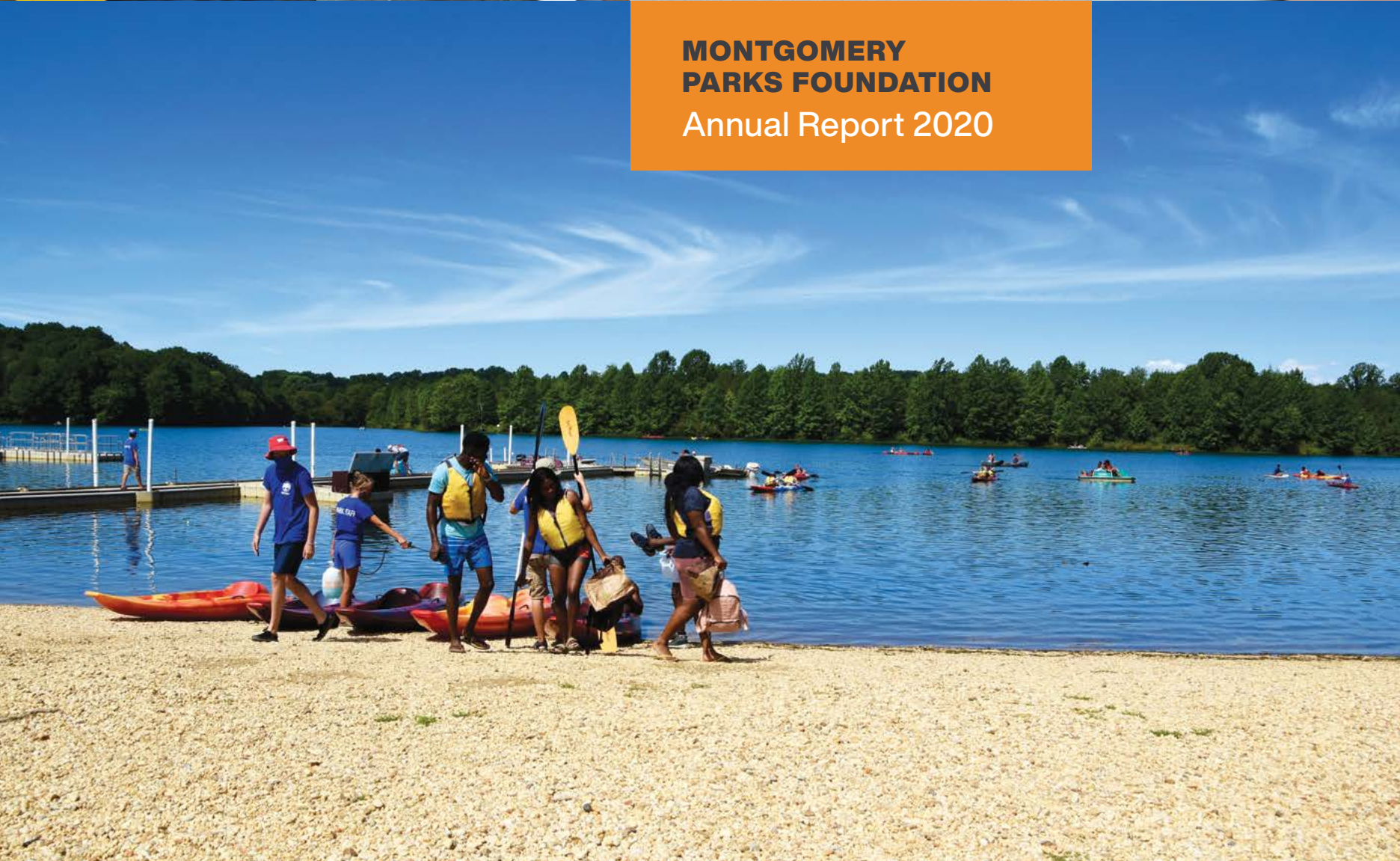




**MONTGOMERY
PARKS FOUNDATION**
Annual Report 2020





MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WAYS TO GIVE

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DEAR FRIENDS,

I'm sure you don't need to read one more article about how difficult, frustrating, and scary this year was. We all had to radically change the way we do everyday life while also cutting ourselves off from family and friends we'd normally see on a regular basis – all in the name of safety.

While a new day is dawning, this past year had a profound effect on all of us. Many of us found refuge in our local parks. In Montgomery County, we are fortunate to enjoy over 420 parks and nearly 37,000 acres of parkland. Taking a walk on your favorite trail, birdwatching with your children, or just sitting under your favorite tree became treasured routines for many of us. Not only did it allow us a chance to escape from the pressures we were experiencing in our everyday lives and seeing on our news feeds, but it became an important way for us to stay healthy both mentally and physically.

Here at the Foundation, we loved seeing so many of you enjoying the open parkways, taking a stroll through Brookside Gardens, or even finding new ways to interact with parks online! However you interacted with your favorite parks this year, we are thrilled you found respite in these remarkable greenspaces.

In the following pages of this report, we hope you will see the passion, pride, and ingenuity park patrons brought to the park system this year. The Parks Foundation was excited to collaborate with park patrons across the county in supporting the emerging needs of their local parks. Whether that was figuring out a way to support a short-staffed park system in routine maintenance or helping unveil the historically significant and impressive Josiah Henson Museum and Park, the Foundation was happy to join you every step of the way in ensuring your dollars were used to best support your park system.

The Montgomery Parks Foundation considers itself truly blessed to be a member of this caring community who stepped up to support their local parks when it was needed most.

We look forward to sunny days ahead and thank you for being a vital part of preserving these exceptional parks that we are all so lucky to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Katie Rictor
Executive Director





Left: Tony Mara and Jenny Sue Dunner, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail board members, at Neil Potter Plaza
Right: Senior Parks Manager, Richard Kharman

COLLABORATION

Coming Together in a Time of Need

IT WAS JUST TWO YEARS AGO when Jenny Sue Dunner and Tony Mara stood below a gleaming red arbor, proudly celebrating the grand opening of the Neil Potter Plaza. Their shared dream of revitalizing a once worn-down section of the Capital Crescent Trail into an inviting rest stop for walkers and cyclists had finally come to fruition.

Then the pandemic hit. Once perfectly manicured lawns had become overgrown. Weeds were sprouting throughout the garden beds. “Everyone was just shell-shocked by COVID, both professionally and personally. Parks had to cut back severely on their maintenance of the Plaza. We knew we wanted to help somehow,” said Jenny Sue, a long-time board member of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (the Coalition).

As seasoned activists, Jenny Sue and Tony Mara, current Chair of the Coalition, immediately looked for ways they could collaborate with the Montgomery Parks Foundation and the Parks Department — this time in support of park upkeep. “We offered to utilize our funds through the Foundation to have a landscape company come in and do a big one-time clean up,” said Tony.

This clean up provided much-needed relief to a severely understaffed Park’s team. Richard Kharman, Senior Parks Manager, was very grateful for the support of these proactive partners. “We were able to build upon our relationship with the Coalition by working together to help meet our Parks maintenance standards while also meeting the needs of the community,” Richard said.

Jenny Sue and Tony have more plans to grow this beautiful Plaza including adding color with additional plantings and maybe even adding a mural! You can be sure that whatever the future holds the Coalition, the Parks Department, and the Montgomery Parks Foundation will work hand-in-hand to ensure the Plaza and trail continues to be a valuable asset to all of its patrons.

“Until this year, I never really knew the number/variety/opportunities/beauty of the parks and recreation spaces available in the county.” —RICHARD S.



Alison Gillespie on Sligo Creek Parkway

COMMUNITY

Partnering on the Parkways

AS SHE RIDES her bike along Sligo Creek Parkway, Alison Gillespie — co-leader of Open Streets Montgomery (OSM) — sees for herself how the Montgomery Parks Open Parkways program has been a much-needed escape during life in lockdown. “One of the great things about the road closures is seeing neighbors, but also feeling like the community is there. It’s been a cure for loneliness,” said Alison.

Since April 2020, when portions of Sligo Creek Parkway, Little Falls Parkway and Beach Drive were closed to traffic, Alison has used the parkways every weekend since it began. After observing the diverse groups of people venturing out on the car-free streets this past year, Alison is fully aware the closed parkways changed the way people relate to parks. Joining forces with Montgomery Parks staff, and Montgomery County Department of Transportation, OSM provided valuable input and feedback as the Open Parkways program began to expand in scope. “We all rallied around a shared objective to provide space for recreation, so people could get outside,” said Kristy Daphnis, co-leader of OSM. This is just one example of how advocate-

park collaborations are solving community issues through innovative partnerships.

“The closure of parkways in response to the COVID-19 crisis created a new type of space for family exercise and recreation, and it revealed we have widespread

“I live for every Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the Parkway.” **-DARA**

support for the Open Parkways concept,” said Darren Flusche, Trails Master Planner & Trails Program Supervisor. He realizes the importance of coming together with advocates like Open Streets Montgomery to bring about change.

After witnessing pedestrians and cyclists using the closed roads in a variety of ways, Alison envisions each parkway eventually becoming a “fully-realized park for the community” where programming is offered and users can grab a bite to eat from a local food truck!



LEGACY

Josiah Henson Museum & Park

AFTER MORE THAN 15 YEARS in the making, the much-anticipated Josiah Henson Museum & Park quietly debuted in December 2020. This incredibly valuable county resource is focused on an international figure – the Reverend Josiah Henson – an African American man who rose to fame after being born into slavery here in Maryland.

The newly created Josiah Henson Museum & Park includes a newly constructed 3,000 square-foot visitor center; a 4-acre landscaped park with accessible walking paths featuring outdoor interpretive exhibits, and archaeological features; and the restored Riley/Bolton House and its attached log kitchen with additional exhibits. It is the only archaeology-based museum in the country dedicated to telling the story of African American enslavement.

“Acquiring the necessary funding to realize the vision staff intended for this historic site,” said Shirl Spicer, Countywide Museum Manager at Montgomery Parks, “was a monumental undertaking”. The property would require significant reconstruction and several new amenities to enhance the visitor experience. It was imperative that support come from a variety of different groups and supporters to ensure this site could become a reality.

Spearheading the fundraising for this project was the Henson Advisory Committee led by Mrs. Catherine Leggett, the former First Lady of Montgomery County, who was deeply affected by Henson’s story. “It is so important for our children to understand the story of Josiah Henson; how important it is for a foundation for African Americans to believe, to



Top: A young girl learns about Henson's autobiography
Bottom: Guests observe the loft area where the enslaved would have lived/slept



Mia Lewis, 4th great granddaughter of Henson, proudly stands before the rear terrace of the Visitor Center



Catherine Leggett, former first lady of Montgomery County, outside of the Visitor Center

have hope and to make a difference in our communities and the lives of so many people," said Catherine.

Various stakeholders throughout the County worked together to actively raise awareness and funds for this campaign. The Montgomery County Public Schools Retiree Association (MCPSRA) generously provided a match up to \$5,000 of individual contributions from its members. Former school administrator and politician, Lou D'Ovidio, who helped secure MCPSRA's participation said, "MCPSRA liked the concept of the park and it fit our goals of providing educational opportunities to children about the county's local history while also supporting the minority community." The Mid-Potomac Chapter of The Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc. was also instrumental in not only excavating the site but in encouraging community members to give and support the work being done to tell Reverend Henson's significant story. "For the county, this is a place that peels back more of the truth of our shared history and raises the profile of this fascinating man, Josiah Henson. On this site, archaeology amplifies Henson's own voice, as recorded in his autobiographies, by uncovering artifacts possibly related to his and other's enslavement on the property. Artifacts like — post-holes and stone foundations, an iron kettle and a ceramic chamber pot, horseshoes and pig bones—that may help to explain how enslaved people's voices can still be heard to better understand the property's landscape and cultural interactions. Our chapter was and is committed to help ensure this story is told," says Chapter President, Don Housley.

The Josiah Henson Museum & Park also received funding from state bond bills that allowed for a large part of the construction to take place. The



Clay marble excavated from the Josiah Henson site.

importance of preserving and enhancing this historical site was passionately advocated for by County and State leaders. Congressman Jamie Raskin said, “This vivid retelling of the extraordinary life and legacy of Josiah Henson will help us bring to life African-American history in Montgomery County and across Maryland.”

The dedicated individuals, foundations, and organizations who supported the vision and mission of the Josiah Henson Museum & Park played a pivotal role in ensuring this could become a place for meaningful dialogue. This is especially true for the descendants of Josiah Henson, whose family foundation’s, the Olive Tree Foundation, mission is to make impact in the areas of community development, historic preservation and education. As a board member of the foundation and 4th great grandson of Henson, Reverend Damon Green, saw the project as a perfect fit. He said, “The fact that his former place of enslavement is now recognized for its historic importance and serves as a place of education is wonderful. I hope that it will help enlighten both the young and old as we work together to form a more perfect union here in the United States of America.”

Mia Lewis, 4th great-granddaughter of Reverend Josiah Henson, is excited and pleased with the outcome of the Josiah Henson Museum & Park. Lewis said her greatest hope is “that people will come to understand who the Reverend Josiah Henson truly was—a man of tremendous strength, intelligence, loyalty, and of great faith.”

Thanks to the passionate support of advocates, stakeholders, organizations, and leaders the Josiah Henson Museum & Park can continue to tell a story of hope and remind the next generation of the importance of perseverance against all odds.



Top Left: Shirly Spicer, Countywide Museum Manager at Montgomery Parks, stands before a large wall panel recapping Henson’s story
Top Right: Covered porch where visitors exit the house to learn about Henson’s life as a free man
Bottom: Guests take a tour of the site led by Mark Thorne, History Museum Specialist



Interested in visiting Josiah Henson Museum & Park? Visit [ActiveMontgomery.org](https://www.ActiveMontgomery.org) to purchase your timed entry tickets.



“Montgomery Parks have been a blessing during this pandemic. Thanks for your work.” -SALLY

HOPE

Finding Solace on the CCT

AFTER PATIENTLY WAITING for more than a year to safely travel to Maryland, Molly O'Meara Sheehan finally had the opportunity to find some closure. On a quiet spring day, Molly and her family of four embarked on a bike ride to visit a specific park

bench situated on a quiet section of the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT). “My sons and husband and I got to see my dad’s bench for the first time on this trip,” said Molly, daughter of James O'Meara, who passed away in December of 2019.

The idea of honoring James O'Meara's life with a tribute bench, was born from his longtime friend, Brad Northrup. Brad not only wanted to celebrate the life of a humble man known for his willingness to help neighbors, but to commemorate the avid biker who commuted to-and-from work every day along his beloved CCT.

With the support of Montgomery Parks Foundation staff, Brad selected a picturesque spot nestled in the woods along the CCT to honor his friend. The placement of the bench is in a particularly meaningful area for the O'Meara family, as it is installed in close proximity to where they accessed the trail to go on bike rides.

Known as a man devoted to family and friends, the positive impact James made on the people surrounding him was reflected in their quick response to contribute toward his tribute bench. Molly acknowledges this is “a result of the extraordinarily kind effort of my dad’s friends, bicycling companions, and neighbors, led by Brad Northrup, to put a bench in his memory on a trail that he loved. My mother, sister

and I have been overwhelmed with gratitude for this wonderful support.”

The O'Meara family is forever thankful for this gift to pay honor to a cherished father, husband and friend. Here the family can have a place to seek solace and peace while fondly reminiscing about the good times they shared on this familiar stretch of trail.



Left to right in back of the bench: Megan and Clare O'Meara Left to right on the bench: Molly O'Meara Sheehan, Charles Sheehan William Sheehan, and Puppy Rocky



INNOVATION

Small Projects Making Big Impact

IN 2020, Montgomery Parks saw record numbers of visitors hitting the trails, registering for virtual classes and exploring their favorite parks. These opportunities were made possible thanks to the ingenuity of Parks staff by repurposing our public spaces and educational programming to meet the needs of the community.

Here are a few highlights from the year demonstrating the unique initiatives developed in response to the pandemic.

“My friends got married at Brookside Gardens at the gazebo. It was beautiful and we could be socially distant but still see/hear the ceremony.” **-LISA**



Hosted 71 stand-up weddings at Brookside Gardens, the Lodge at Little Seneca and Rockwood Manor. Couples eager to celebrate their marriage were able to hold intimate affairs amongst family and friends.



Presented family-friendly **“Drive-In Movie Nights in the Park”** at Wheaton Regional Park and South Germantown Recreational Park.



Partnered with Visit Montgomery and MoCo Eats to pilot the **“Picnic in the Park”** program in support of local restaurants near parks.



Donors

THE MONTGOMERY PARKS FOUNDATION is grateful to all of our donors who made a contribution in support of better parks and programming in our community. Every effort was made to properly and appropriately identify donors who made a gift of \$100 or more in 2020. If an error or omission was made in these listings, please notify the Foundation at parksfoundation@montgomeryparks.org.

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Prospanica DC



THE ROSE GARDEN at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Maryland will soon receive a beautiful new addition. In honor of Brookside patron, Tricia Crilley Wigmore, a unique sundial by noted artist David Harber will be installed.

After Tricia's passing in 2019, Tricia's husband and their close family friend approached Brookside Gardens and the Foundation about finding a way to honor Tricia's legacy in a garden she held dear. The sundial was a perfect opportunity to celebrate Tricia.

The Wigmore's friends and family quickly answered the call for the funds needed to make this sculpture a reality. In under two weeks, they met their ambitious fundraising goal and the sculpture was commissioned. The sundial will be unveiled in summer of 2021 and will serve as a reminder of the precious passing of time that is enriched when surrounded by the love of family and friends.

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Financials

Statement of Financial Position As of December 31, 2020

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Cash and cash equivalents \$1,180,890
 Investments \$172,495
 Pledges Receivable \$94,240
 Grant Receivables \$37,500
 Prepaid Expenses \$1,019
Total Assets \$1,486,144

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities \$26,692

Net Assets

Without donor restriction \$116,933
 With donor restriction \$1,342,519
Total Net Assets \$1,459,452

Total Liabilities and Net Asset \$1,486,144

Total Support and Revenue

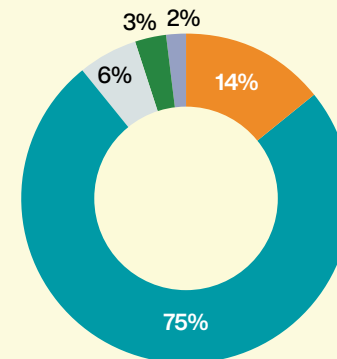
Contributions \$67,010
 In-kind donations \$434,827
 Investment income \$2,082
 Net Assets released from restrictions \$237,311
Total Support and Revenue \$741,230

Expenses

Program \$393,458
 Management and General \$198,391
 Fundraising \$148,391
Total Expenses \$740,240

Project Detail

Brookside Gardens \$79,789
 BG Feature Garden Renewal \$420,000
 Special Projects \$32,336
 Josiah Henson \$17,029
 Other Projects \$10,585
Total Project Detail: \$559,739



Increased total giving to Parks by 25%

Increased first-time donors by 23%



Support provided to Parks: \$242,727.90



OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

John Robinson, President
Marye Wells-Harley, Vice President
Kelly Groff, Secretary
Scott Ritter, Treasurer
Jodi Kline, Audit Committee

AT-LARGE

Royce Hanson
Dr. Clara M. Lovett
Rhonda Cunningham-Holmes

EX-OFFICIO

Casey Anderson
Michael Riley

Credits

Design: Jennifer Paul Design
Photography: All photos courtesy of Montgomery Parks except for page 6: family photo by Joe Sheehan

Icons throughout: courtesy of the Noun Project:
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