



MONTGOMERY PARKS  
FOUNDATION

# FOUNDATION FOCUS

SPRING • 2024



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

### Meet Trish Heffelfinger

As a lifelong resident of the DMV, Trish Heffelfinger’s passion is to work for the betterment of her community. Back in 1998, Trish led the charge as the Executive Director for the Maryland SoccerPlex. The SoccerPlex was the first of its kind. “The real mission of it was just to do something great for the kids in Montgomery County...there were so many kids playing soccer, there weren’t enough fields.”

Trish understood that as much as we want parks to be fully funded, they are typically one of the first things to get cut “so if we, as citizens, want better parks and better amenities and more recreation amenities, then we have to step up and support those. Whether it is donating to parks or to organizations that support our parks, then as interested citizens this is something we should do.” The SoccerPlex was a huge success. “This started my love of parks and my appreciation for what it takes to maintain a park, build a park, and bring it to a community that needs it.”

Today, Trish’s love of the Parks is stronger than ever. She continues to not only enjoy being an avid hiker through our extensive trails system – especially around Lake Needwood—but she also dedicates her money and time to the Foundation. Trish financially supports her beloved parks through an annual gift to the Foundation. “I think that people don’t realize that the Foundation is a great source to donate to because they are really involved in looking at parks and how best that money can be used to improve the parks for communities.” But that’s not all—Trish goes above and beyond by serving on the Board of Trustees for the Foundation. Trish sees her position on our Board as another avenue for her to give back and continue to advocate for better parks for all Montgomery County residents to enjoy!



PHOTO: JOANNE S. LAWTON



#### ASK AN EXPERT!

## Spring Birds in Your Backyard

For a couple of weeks every spring, millions of birds are passing through Montgomery County on their journey North to their breeding grounds.

**Which birds might be passing through my neighborhood?** If you're a birdwatcher, spring is the most magical time of the year because nearly any species could show up - even in the most unexpected places. As the birds are making a mad dash to be the first to their Northern breeding grounds, they look for pit stops to fuel up on food, water, and rest. Early migrants like Red-winged Blackbirds, Tree Swallows, and Eastern Phoebes begin showing up in February and March, while many of our colorful warblers, including Blackpoll and Magnolia, pass through in late May.

**Can I really see warblers and other migrating birds in my backyard?** Yes! These songbirds often migrate up to a mile above the earth at night. When the sun comes up, they're exhausted and need to rest. They may show up in parking lots, school yards, parks, and certainly in backyards. The best time to look for any new visitors to your yard is early in the morning, within the first few hours after sunrise. Listening for birds can sometimes be the best way to detect them. Try the free Merlin app, which listens to and identifies bird calls in real time using the microphone on your smart device.

**How can I attract migrating birds to my backyard?** Like a marathon runner, the first priority of any bird that's been flying non-stop all night is water. If you have a bird bath or fountain, you've already made your backyard an attractive stopover spot. One really effective trick is to purchase an inexpensive solar fountain, which turns any bird bath into a circulating water feature. Research shows that migrating birds are especially attracted to the sound of moving water.

**What about food for the birds?** Of course, bird feeders are an enjoyable way to watch the activity of wildlife in your backyard. However, feeders generally only attract birds that eat seed. Many of our migrants, including flycatchers, warblers, and swallows, are actually looking for insects. The best way to support these birds is to plant native trees and wildflowers, which host the most insect diversity (and therefore, the most bird food!). Oak, willow, and cherry trees are great for insect biodiversity, and spring-blooming Wild Columbine provides nectar for migrating hummingbirds.

**Jacqueline Raiford** | *Principal Park Naturalist, Horticulture, Forestry, Environmental Education*



# Let's Play Pickleball!

If you are like this author, you may be wondering “what is pickleball?” Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in the country. It’s a fun, fast-paced, low-impact sport that is a combination of badminton, tennis, and table tennis. It is played on a court with a tennis-like net that is thirty-four inches high. It requires a paddle and a wiffle-like ball called, you guessed it, the pickleball!

The game is easy for beginners to learn and is fun for all ages. With such a wildly popular sport, no wonder there is such an outcry for pickleball courts. Parks currently has twenty dedicated courts and ninety shared courts but is looking to make more available. Columbia Local Park will be adding four courts in the spring of 2024. East Norbeck Local Park will be converting the existing tennis courts into six dedicated pickleball courts by summer 2024.

Charles Kines, Park Planner and Project Manager for Montgomery Parks, explained there are several factors that go into selecting the best park for this sort of project. Since there is such a high demand for pickleball courts, staff wanted to be sure it could be accessible to as many park patrons as possible. Mr. Kines said “We looked for an area with good public transportation access, central to the county, and lots of parking. East Norbeck was already a regularly active park so we thought this would be a great option for these pickleball courts.” Mr. Kines also mentioned that these courts would be the first courts in the county to use portable nets. This means, rather than posts being dug into the ground, the net would be clipped to the ground and can be easily removed for any resurfacing or repairs.

With such a fast-growing sport, Parks hopes they can bring even more courts to the community and ensure that everyone in the county has access to a court to learn and play this fun game.

Want to learn more about pickleball courts in the county? Check out [montgomeryparks.org/pickleball](https://montgomeryparks.org/pickleball)

Want to learn more about the sport of pickleball? Check out [usapickleball.org](https://usapickleball.org)



## Bench Tribute Program

Looking for a way to celebrate or honor a loved one? A Tribute bench in one of our 400+ Montgomery County Parks is the perfect way to leave a legacy. Our benches come with a ten-year guarantee and are a true asset to our park system. These benches not only pay tribute to a loved one but help make our parks more beautiful and accessible for all to enjoy. For more information, please contact Anna Joyce at [anna.joyce@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:anna.joyce@montgomeryparks.org) or at 301-495-2511.



## Sustainability is more than just “going green”

Have you ever wondered what happens to all the dead trees and leaves in our parks after being hauled off?

Well, these once carbon-capturing plants find a second life at Pope Farm Nursery where Montgomery Parks operates the Green Waste Recycling Program. This “in-house” facility processes green waste, which is composted or salvaged and reused within the park system.

The Parks’ green waste program diverts a whopping 2,100 tons of organic waste annually. Instead of heading to the landfill, most of the green waste is converted into wood chips, mulch, and nutrient-dense soil. Staff even processes timber, some of which is used to build furniture for parks and buildings.

Montgomery Parks’ commitment to implementing sustainable practices has widespread ecological and economic benefits. This self-sustaining cycle utilizes natural resources that are not only grown locally but also stay local in the form of newly repurposed materials that benefit our thriving community!



**Happy customers purchase a large slab of lumber at the Parks’ Urban Wood Sale.**



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[montgomeryparksfoundation.org](http://montgomeryparksfoundation.org)

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