

Reunion on The Mountain

by Brad van Appel, Executive Director

When Howard Buford Recreation Area opened to the public in 1973, Mount Pisgah Arboretum was here to help Lane County restore and care for the land, and

serve and educate the community. By 1989 the full scope of work had come into focus, and different priorities had emerged. While the Arboretum continued to concentrate on caring for trails and habitats, and teaching about nature on its 209-acre lease area, the Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah (Friends) formed to protect and enhance native ecosystems and compatible recreation in the greater Mount Pisgah area. The Arboretum and the Friends have worked side by side for 33 years. Sometimes there has been competition, sometimes collaboration, and frequently there's been public confusion about why there are two different non-profits working at Mount Pisgah.



Photo by August Jackson

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In the past several years, both organizations have updated their missions, grown closer together, and aligned their visions. The leaders of both groups have come to realize that it's time to reunite. By combining strengths and sharing resources a reunited group can have a stronger voice for the land and better serve the community that has come to love this special place.

Last fall, the Directors of the Arboretum and the Friends approved the following joint resolution: Resolved, Mount Pisgah Arboretum (Arboretum) and Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah (Friends) share common history and a desire to nurture and restore our connection to nature. Realizing this vision will depend on broader community engagement, greater resources and evolving collaborations. Therefore, the Boards of the Arboretum and the Friends ("Boards") have resolved to work toward uniting the two entities into one organization over the next two years. The Boards encourage sustained community support for both groups as we combine our strengths, talents and commitment in service to a growing community and an extraordinary natural landscape.

Conversations about "reuniting" the two groups have occurred in the past, but in 2021 all the stars aligned to formally begin the process. As the Arboretum's Board President, Karen Anderson put it, "over the years, the missions of both organizations have evolved in similar directions. From several important perspectives, our progress has converged to the point where the Arboretum and the Friends serve the public good in parallel ways and share many of the same goals. Also, the current stability of both organizations makes 2022 an ideal year to unite the two into one legal entity. And what better way to celebrate the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Buford Park!"

Friends Board President Steve Moore feels there are two key reasons for the two organizations to unite into a single nonprofit. "This smart decision will help us expand and enhance the public's appreciation and knowledge of the greater Mount Pisgah ecosystem. It also allows us to maximize the potential of our financial resources and the varied talents and experiences of our combined staff and volunteer networks." The official name of the new organization has not been determined.

Steve adds that "ultimately, everyone involved is working to nurture and restore our connection to nature. We all share the goal of protecting and sustaining the flora and fauna of this precious landscape. Karen Anderson and I, and the members of both boards agree that we can better serve the broader community of the Eugene-Springfield-Pleasant Hill region by serving as a unified voice for the greater Mount Pisgah area." Over the next year or so, both of the current Boards will merge into a single Board of Directors.

Friends Executive Director Janelle McCoy is confident that the reunion process will proceed smoothly. "We anticipate the most technical steps in the reunion process, for example gathering under a single tax ID number, will be completed in a little over a year. Other aspects of the process, such as completing a new strategic plan, branding and combining back-office systems, will likely take another year or so."

On a day-to-day basis, we foresee no sudden or significant changes to the current workload or programming of either entity. We do anticipate the new nonprofit will eventually be able to offer even more nature education, and community events, and provide greater care for trails and natural areas. While the Arboretum and the Friends have a shared history with similar missions, they have had independent roles. Reuniting will shift some responsibilities and clarify others. Looking ahead, the combined staff will adapt to a new organizational culture while they coordinate work plans and identify shared priorities.

Karen Anderson says, "we're confident that reuniting the organizations will result in extra resources. Such resources will help fund any new staff positions that may become necessary. For instance, additional staffing for areas in development, volunteer coordination, education, and park stewardship will likely be more feasible in the future. We sincerely encourage all donors, large and small, to continue supporting both organizations in any way they can. We look forward to announcing to all our donor networks when they can begin supporting the new combined nonprofit 501(c)3."

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Mount Pisgah Arboretum is a nonprofit organization with a mission to engage people with nature through interactive learning and stewardship.

Mount Pisgah Arboretum is located on the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya people. The Kalapuya people were forcibly dispossessed of their homeland and moved to reservations in western Oregon by the United States government following treaties in the 1850's. Today the Kalapuya people are largely citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. We acknowledge that the Arboretum is on occupied lands, and express our respect for the Kalapuya. We humbly honor their past, present, and future, and are committed to finding meaningful ways to recognize their enduring legacy in the region.

Fundraising Update!

Because of you, Mount Pisgah Arboretum exceeded its year-end giving goal of \$40,000! 2021 was a record year for both donations and memberships. We continue to be impressed with how our members and the community support this beautiful place. Your donations will support the care of our site and the stewardship of native habitat as well as provide environmental education opportunities for people of all ages. Thank you!



Photo by August Jackson

While the structure and enhanced staff responsibilities of the larger, reunited organization are still to be determined, there are no plans to eliminate any of the current staff positions. The organization will be led by a combined Board of Directors and co-managed by Janelle and I throughout the transition. All members of the reunited organization will be able to combine the benefits currently offered by both groups.

Remembering Rob O'Connor

By August Jackson, with Mackenzie O'Connor

Longtime volunteer Rob O'Connor passed away at the age of 80 on December 25th, 2021. Rob was one of a kind. I had the pleasure of working alongside Rob for a little over four years (merely 1/5th of his tenure volunteering at the Arboretum). His work ethic, tenacity, and good humor were inspirational to me as I began my career.



Photo from Archive

Rob started volunteering with the Arboretum in the mid-1990's at weekend work parties, where he developed a lasting friendship with former Site Manager Tom LoCascio. Upon retirement, Rob expanded his volunteering and assisted in several major projects including the construction of our office, restoration of our barn's silo, and construction of the updated Adkison Bridge. It seemed that Rob was at his happiest when he could focus on a task that would yield visible results by the time the day was done. Those tasks shifted a little as he aged but were no less consequential.

A quote from Rob in a 1996 Tree Time article on volunteering captures his spirit well: "When I started, I told Tom [LoCascio] 'I don't want to be on a committee, and I don't want to be a boss. I just want to get sweaty and do some work.' Now I'm on a committee and occasionally I'm called upon to be a boss," he says dryly. But he adds, "I really like it."

Rob's love of the Arboretum had a lasting impact on his family. His grandaughter, Mackenzie, joined the organization as our Office Assistant last summer, and has this to say about her grandfather: "My grandpa was the best grandparent I could ever ask for. He encouraged us kids to spend as much time as possible outside - taking us out to the Arboretum every weekend we spent with him and going on family hikes and bike rides frequently. Anything we showed interest in he was there supporting us however he could. He taught us to be confident and responsible and always treated us with respect. I feel so thankful for all of the wonderful memories I have with him - cheering us on at our sporting events, taking us out for rides on the gator, beating us at checkers over and over again. Words cannot describe the amount of love my grandpa gave me throughout my life. He will be dearly missed."

Site Report

By Connor Reinecke, Facilities Manager

Happy winter from your friendly site staff! Richly colored fall leaves and clogged drainages have kept us busy while the weather has turned cooler and wetter. Ten inches of fluffy white snow brought kids out to make snow forts and we even saw a few intrepid skiers. Heavy winds and rain brought down a few trees, but overall the site is looking better than ever.

Volunteers have been active clearing blackberries, improving trails, and planting native plants at our bi-weekly Saturday work parties. Whole Earth Nature School installed a new woody-debris check dam to provide habitat and recharge groundwater. Additionally, we thank the Looking Glass School and Lane Metro Youth Corp for their contributions in helping with Mushroom Festival setup, drainage work, and even removing an old stump from behind the Visitor Center.

The Wildflower Garden is ready for spring. Volunteers have been hard at work replacing borders, planting native plants, and removing invasive species. Site staff have been moving boulders to provide habitat and structure. Keep an eye out for beautiful spring flowers in the coming months.

The heavy rains brought potholes to our parking areas. Site staff have been filling and repairing the damage. Additional drainage work has been completed on trail 35, the main summit trail, and areas of the Water Garden. Further, Bonnie's bench on trail 35 received a facelift. This site has full sun exposure and is putting our wood finishes to the test.

Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you soon!



by Jenny Laxton, Education Manager

This fall was not quite the return to normal we had all hoped for, but we were able to both continue some of our educational offerings started during the COVID lockdowns as well as restart fall field trips. Many of the larger local school districts chose to delay a return to field trips, so we started back with groups from smaller rural districts. It was nice to have classes back out at the Arboretum after such a long break! Many of our volunteer Nature Guides have been patiently waiting for our field trips to resume and were ready to get back to leading nature walks with students. We couldn't have offered any field trips this fall without these dedicated volunteers.



Photo by Connor Reinecke

A check dam placed by Whole Earth Nature School holds against a swelling creek. These woody-debris dams slow water, preventing erosion and providing habitat for fish, amphibians, and invertebrates.



Photo by Jenny Laxton

Arboretum Exploration

Tuesday afternoons 3:30-5:30PM for youth 5-11



Photo by Patrick Wegner

Two Sessions! March 1st-April 19th April 26th-June 7th



Photo by Patrick Wegner

Registration is now open for spring after-school programs!
For more information visit: bit.ly/3rvjyAx



Photo by Jenny Laxton

Since so many kids were back to school in-person during the day, we switched our popular kids dropoff programs to an after-school time. While walking around the Arboretum this fall, you may have noticed the plethora of acorns on the ground. It was a mast year for Oregon white oaks so we took advantage of the bounty and our after-school kids harvested, processed, and then got to taste

acorns in pancake form. The acorn pancakes got a thumbs up from all the kids.

Our adult and family walks continued this fall, frequently filling up. We look forward to being able to go back to slightly larger groups for these programs in the future but have also enjoyed the smaller groups. Before COVID required us to switch to a pre-registration system, some of our popular walks were so full it was hard for everyone to see and hear the walk leader. Pre-registrations are a COVID adaptation we plan to keep in place. Another change this fall was switching our family walks to coincide with no-school days, which is working really well for many families.

This spring, we're looking forward to more field trips, after-school programs, adult and family walks, and planning for summer kid programs.

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Correction: In the article "Eye of Newt, Ear of Bat" from the Fall 2021 issue of Tree Time, the range of Townsend's big-eared bats was described as extending into Central America. In fact, their range extends only into the far south of Mexico.

Thank You, Business Members!









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