

## making nature relevant

### FINDING COMMON GROUND

By Gail Farmer, Director of Education

**THIS APRIL MARKED THE 45<sup>TH</sup>** anniversary of Earth Day, and we have come a long way since that huge 1970 event. But clearly, we have a long way to go: a recent study by the National Environmental Education Foundation found that two-thirds of the public fails even a basic environmental quiz and a whopping 88% cannot pass a basic energy quiz. This same study found that 45 million Americans think the ocean is a source of fresh water and 130 million believe that hydropower is America's top energy source.

Alarming, this environmental literacy gap is widening: people between the ages of 18 and 34 know less about the envi-

ronment than the previous generation, ages 35 to 54. After five decades of environmental education in our schools and in our communities, we must recognize that this growing environmental literacy gap is not simply a matter of education. It's also a crisis of relevance.

While immersive experiences in nature are a great way to build personal relevance, children today have significantly less direct experience and contact with the outdoor environment than they did even a generation ago. American kids have retreated indoors, spending 1/3 of their time watching screens (7.5 hours/day), but only 1% of their time outside. How can environmental issues be relevant to a generation of youth who have very little direct and meaningful experience in the natural environment?

For the last decade, the Schuylkill Center has been offering programs that provide Philadelphia youth with immersive experiences in nature, experiences which

aim to create emotional connections and build relevance – the essential foundation for environmental literacy. Our summer and day-off camps, our after school program, and our Nature Preschool all offer opportunities to connect with nature in a personally meaningful way and on a regular basis. The challenge is that the people who register for our programs are families for whom nature is already relevant. So, how

THIS GROWING ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY GAP IS NOT SIMPLY A MATTER OF EDUCATION. IT'S A CRISIS OF RELEVANCE.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



#### in this issue:

ALL ABOUT THE PICNIC, PAGE 3

ART IN THE OPEN, PAGE 4

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK, PAGE 5

ENCHANTED FOREST RECAP, PAGE 6



50 YEARS  OF PEOPLE + NATURE

50 The Schuylkill Center



8480 HAGY'S MILL ROAD  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19128  
www.schuylkillcenter.org  
215-482-7300



# director's cut

## ARCELORMITTAL BRINGS LIFE BACK TO CATTAIL POND

**PARTNERSHIPS ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK** – over our 50 years, we've partnered with hundreds of nonprofits and businesses. And we always look forward to finding new partners.

One of our strongest partners is ArcelorMittal, the global steel and mining firm that operates a steel mill in Conshohocken. Over the years, ArcelorMittal's environmental grants have allowed us to restore a highly degraded meadow (the monarch butterflies thank them!), plant young trees in Penn's Native Acres, and, next year, begin restoring the forest around our pavilion and amphitheater.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Kathleen F. Wagner, President  
Timothy J. Szuhaj, Vice President  
Jan Albaum, Vice President  
Curtis Welsh, Treasurer  
Stephen J. Kaufman, Secretary

Christopher Ball  
Glenn Bergman  
Linda Carpenter  
Gary Clarke  
Michael Harris  
Jeffery Hayes  
Keith Kowalski  
Tom Landsmann  
Charles T. (Chip) Lee III  
Deenah Loeb  
Cheryl Mason-Dorman  
Christopher McGill  
Lindy Snider



**ADVISORY BOARD**  
John A. Affleck  
Charles Dilks  
John Howard  
Binney Meigs  
David P. Montgomery  
David K. O'Neil  
Julie D. Spahr  
Linda S. Unland  
William Y. Webb  
Harry Weiss

This year, they've been helping us improve Cattail Pond, one of the oldest and most used ponds in our programming. After 25 volunteers and dedicated staff invested 150 hours of love and labor in the pond, a liner has been installed, and new plantings have been installed around its perimeter—with help from the company's employees on work sessions.

By May, thousands of tadpoles were wriggling in the water (left). "On the day we planted at the pond," notes Melissa Nase, our Land Stewardship Manager, "forty parents and children were lined up along the deck, watching us while also looking at the toads and toad eggs. It was pretty amazing to see just how this area gets used and how important it is to the Center."

"Companies like ArcelorMittal," adds Steve Goin, our Director of Land and Facilities, "extend our capacity by providing volunteers that help us accomplish our work. True partnerships like this really allow us to further our mission."

Over just the last year, PECO volunteers have restored deer fencing at our community gardens, the large Vanguard Group and the smaller Supermighty, a new Center City app developer, sent teams to clear invasive weeds and vines, as did the engineering firm InPosse and Leadership Philadelphia. And Yard's Brewery powers our special events with craft beers.

On a recent pondside lunch, those tadpoles were joined by a host of other creatures. Water striders skated across the surface. Backswimmers, a small insect, swam underwater propelled by oar-like legs. A diving beetle surfaced to grab an air bubble, its version of a scuba tank. A green frog set up shop on the edge, and a green darner dragonfly patrolled the perimeter, claiming this pond as its territory. Cattail Pond has new life. With thanks from the help of friends like ArcelorMittal.

Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director, [mike@schuylkillcenter.org](mailto:mike@schuylkillcenter.org) | 215-482-7300, x125

**STAFF**

Sylvia Bastani, Acting Director of Development  
Barbara Baumgartner, Environmental Educator  
Patty Boyle, Development Assistant  
Denise Bratina, Site Rental & Community Garden Coordinator  
Nicole Brin, Lead Preschool Teacher  
Christina Catanese, Director of Environmental Art  
Daphne Churchill, Nature Rx Coordinator  
Ben Coleman, Seasonal Caretaker  
Beth Crawford, Summer Public Relations Intern  
Seery Devinney, Preschool Teacher  
Rebecca Dhondt, Preschool Teacher

Shannon Dryden, Preschool Manager & Lead Teacher  
Sean Duffy, Land & Facilities Manager  
Kristina Eaddy, Preschool Teacher  
Gail Farmer, Director of Education  
Stephen Goin, Director of Land & Facilities  
Beatrice Kelly, Education Assistant & Registrar  
Anna Lehr Mueser, Public Relations Manager  
Susan Marcossan, Environmental Educator  
Claire Morgan, Gift Shop Manager & Volunteer Coordinator  
Melissa Nase, Land Stewardship Manager  
Mary Phalan, Clinic Office Assistant

Camila Rivera-Tinsley, School Programs Manager  
Damien Ruffner, Youth Programs Coordinator  
Rick Schubert, Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation  
Kiley Sotomayor, Summer Environmental Art Intern  
Donna Struck, Director of Finance & Administration  
Liz Vaden, Preschool Teacher  
Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director  
Michele Wellard, Assistant Wildlife Rehabilitator  
Elisabeth Zafiris, Public Programs Manager

# 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY PICNIC

Join us for the party of the year!  
Saturday, June 27, 5 – 8:30 pm

## ABOUT THE PICNIC

Come out for a summer picnic celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a barbecue presented by **Weaver's Way Co-op**. Enjoy a free-form evening of crafts, interactive art, live music, an animal show, nature hikes, s'mores, and more. Play games, make a seed bomb – a clay ball filled with seeds – and add your thoughts to our time capsule, to be opened in 2040. We'll also have a special cake from **Night Kitchen**.

Consider staying over for the **Great American Backyard Campout**.

Throughout the evening we'll have special activities to celebrate each of our core program areas: education, environmental art, land stewardship, and our wildlife clinic.

## ACTIVITIES

Live music  
Crafts  
Woodblock printing with Nancy Agati  
Seed bomb making  
Time capsule  
Family nature walks  
Ecology and wildflower walk with Executive Director Mike Weilbacher  
Outdoor art walk with Director of Environmental Art Christina Catanese  
Picnic dinner  
S'mores & cake  
Live animal show

## CONNECTING PEOPLE + NATURE

Our mission is to *inspire meaningful connections between people and nature*. Whether it's through environmental art, a workshop, planting trees, or caring for animals in our clinic, the experiences that forge these connections are immersive, engaging, and transformative. For children it might be our afterschool program or summer camp; for adults it could be learning about bird behavior or meadow ecology. Whatever it is, these are the experiences that will stay with a person her whole life, laying the groundwork for connections with the natural world.

Tickets are limited, so don't wait to register  
Special members-only tickets are \$12



# open spaces

## ART IN THE OPEN AT THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER

By Christina Catanese, Director of Environmental Art

**FROM THE SCHUYLKILL BANKS TO** the Schuylkill Center, nine artists bring their creative process to our gallery and trails this summer for *Open Spaces*. These artists are part of Art in the Open, a bi-annual program which brings the action and intrigue of artists making their art directly to Philadelphia's Schuylkill riverbanks for three days. There, free to all audiences, artists respond to this historic and environmentally unique local setting. The public is invited to walk among the artists and observe their process of creation and craft up close, or even participate in its creation.

Now, a year later, these artists have brought their Art in the Open work to the Schuylkill Center. Each uniquely suited

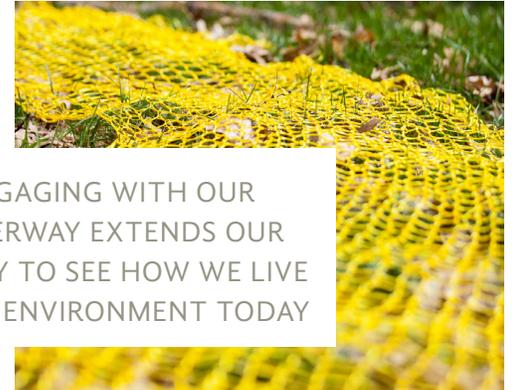
to the Schuylkill Center context, five artists are on view in the gallery and four on other sites around the property.

Deenah Loeb, Schuylkill Center trustee and part of the founding creative team for Art in the Open, elaborates: "engaging with our waterway and the urban fabric and landscape through different mediums is yet another opportunity to expand how we live in the environment today... Learning from the visions that artists bring to us and honoring the role of creative process in exploring the world around us seems very much consistent with the Schuylkill Center's environmental art program."

*Open Spaces* is on view June 1 – July 25,

with a reception on June 16. Don't miss Nancy Agati's community wood carve as part of the Schuylkill Center's 50th anniversary picnic. ➤

READ AN INTERVIEW WITH DEENAH LOEB ABOUT ART IN THE OPEN ON OUR BLOG



ENGAGING WITH OUR WATERWAY EXTENDS OUR ABILITY TO SEE HOW WE LIVE IN THE ENVIRONMENT TODAY

## MAKING NATURE RELEVANT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

do we get on the radar of everyone else?

Outside of our work with schools, environmental education often fails miserably at reaching beyond "the choir." How do we reach and engage people for whom nature is not relevant or meaningful? This is a tough one. At the Schuylkill Center, we have outlined a strategy to help us address this challenge. We must expand our messaging beyond what matters to us (healthy ecosystems, environmental literacy), aligning it with broader issues that already matter to the parents, teachers, and community members we are trying to reach. In education, we refer to this as "meeting people where they are." It's not about getting them to hear what we have to say; rather, it's about beginning with what matters to them and finding where our values intersect.



Personal health and well-being, safety, and family are nearly universal values. In addition to public programs that offer immersive nature experiences, our education department has been cultivating partnerships with non-environmental organizations that provide essential services addressing these broad needs.

For example, we are partnering with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, an organization that helps families transition out of homelessness. As they need high-quality childcare services for the children of families they serve, the Schuylkill Center provides these children with spaces in our summer and day-off camps. I have recently been giving talks

about the health and wellness benefits of nature, and have been contacted by people working in mental health, social services, and health care who are interested in providing nature experiences for their patient populations because of the positive cognitive, physical and emotional health impacts. So the Roxborough pediatric clinic of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia brings groups of patients to the Center for "Walk with a Doc" trail hikes. Such collaborations are the key to reaching beyond our base and an important pathway towards a larger and more diverse "choir."

So as we move into the next 50 years of programming, we are looking to offer more nature-health connections like wellness walks, and outdoor yoga. We're continuing to offer immersive nature programs. We're also looking to build more partnerships with non-environmental, groups. But above all, we're looking for common ground. ➤

# the wild side

## BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS

**SPRING IS THE SEASON OF BABY BIRDS** at our wildlife clinic and this spring was no exception. They came pouring in, as many of 40 patients a day, as the weather warmed up. Starlings, robins, mourning doves, grackles, sparrows, geese, even owls. And, of course, the regular dose of baby squirrels and opossums came too. This busy spring actually meant that the clinic had to close to new patients for three days in May so staff could catch up on care. With baby birds being fed four times a day, the 8 am feeding wraps up when the next round begins. Right: rehabilitator Michele Wellard examines a sparrow; her diagnosis: good, this one will soon be released. ➤



# naturalist's notebook

## AN ENDANGERED PHENOMENON

*Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director*

**ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 27**, volunteer coordinator Claire Morgan watched two monarch butterflies sail by the nature center's picnic grove.

"I was amazed," she said, "my jaw dropped. We saw so few last year. So to see two in one day—and in May—was great. We usually don't see them until June."

Monarch butterflies are one of the most intriguing—and embattled—local insects. Monarchs famously overwinter in small secluded mountain valleys in central Mexico. No other insect on the planet

makes a migration like this. It is a unique phenomenon.

In the decades between 1994 and 2015, scientists measured their overwintering site, which varies annually, as an average of 15 acres of butterfly-covered trees. But that number has been steadily declining, and in the winter of 2013-14 was only 1.5 acres, 90% below the average. Scientists began openly worrying the insect might disappear.

But last winter was encouraging, a gentle turnaround to almost 3 acres of butterflies.

Monarchs have been challenged by the disappearance of milkweed, their sole host plant. And milkweed in turn is challenged by loss of habitat as land becomes developed, exacerbated by genetically modified crops like soybeans and corn that are sprayed with herbicides that kill milkweed. So when monarchs return from Mexico each spring, they face a milkweed desert.

Activists across the country are vigorously discussing—and protesting—the soybean-corn issue. Meanwhile, nature centers, parks, and even home gardeners across the country are planting milkweed as fast as they can—hoping to build milkweed bridges across that desert.

As new bumper stickers and T-shirts ask, "Got Milkweed?" ➤

READ MORE ON MONARCHS ON OUR BLOG



**ANNUAL BUTTERFLY COUNT**  
THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1 – 3 PM  
Be a citizen-scientist and learn all about local butterflies

# enchanted forest 2015

## FUN-FILLED EVENING A MAJOR SUCCESS

**MORE THAN 150 FRIENDS AND** supporters enjoyed a fabulous evening at our fourth annual Enchanted Forest on Friday, May 15. This year's event was the most successful to date, raising over \$35,000. Trees and

walkways glimmered and the near-perfect spring air was filled with the smooth sounds of the David Banner Trio. Guests nibbled on delicious hors d'oeuvres, a Pecorino cheese wheel filled with home-

made pasta, and delectable desserts prepared by Di Bruno Bros. Highlights of the silent auction included a Cape May getaway, autographed Phillies baseballs, season subscriptions to the Stagecrafters, an insider tour of WHYY studios, and many handmade artworks. Our honorees, **Binney Meigs** and **Julie Spahr**, spoke movingly of their deep connections to the Center over many years. Also among our guests were many members of the Center's founding Smith and Meigs families, our PECO sponsors, and state representative **Pamela A. DeLissio**. Kudos to **Jan Albaum** and **Sachiyo Searles**, exceptional volunteers who were instrumental in helping us organize this enchanting evening. ✈



MEMBERS OF THE SMITH AND MEIGS FAMILIES, THE TWO FAMILIES WHO FOUNDED THE CENTER IN 1965, SURROUND HONOREE BINNEY MEIGS (CENTER LEFT, WITH HAT).



TRUSTEES STEVE KAUFMAN (FAR LEFT) AND KATHY WAGNER (FAR RIGHT) CONGRATULATE HONOREES BINNEY AND JULIE SPAHR.

### WHITE OAK SPONSOR PECO

### PATRONS

Glenn S. Bergman  
David Boring  
Charles and Gene Dilks  
Elizabeth H. Gemmill  
Jay and Ellen Haas  
Sarita Smith Hanley  
Mike Harris  
Sally and Bob Herd  
Sallie Smith Kise  
Keith Kowalski and Deborah Heuckeroth  
Tom Landsmann and Anastasia Somers  
Charles (Chip) T. Lee III  
Deenah Loeb  
Richard and Linda Lyttle  
Mr. and Mrs. William McDowell  
Binney and Katie Meigs  
Mark and Divina Meigs  
David and Lyn Montgomery  
David O'Neil  
The Philadelphia Phillies

Julie and Bob Spahr  
Edward Tang  
Joseph Tarsavage  
Jane Taylor  
Kathy Wagner and Jeff Menzel

### SPONSORS

Abass and Jane Alavi  
Jan Albaum and Harry Cerino  
Christopher and Stephanie Ball  
Mrs. John Brock  
Curtis R. Conner  
Ann and Brian Duvall  
Becky and Graeme Frazier  
Joseph Garzio  
Nancy Giles  
Harry and Edda Hare  
Pete Hoskins and Sharon Barr  
Karin James  
Steve Kaufman and Sydelle Zove  
Thomas L. Kehoe and Linda Carpenter  
Dr. Evamarie Malsch  
Christopher McGill  
Jenny Meigs  
Robert Meigs

Bruce Middleman  
Alice and Rod Moorhead  
David and Sachiyo Searles  
Gail Seygal  
Stan and Melissa Smith  
William F. McElroy  
Nancy Louise Miller  
Kris and Mark Soffa  
Timothy and Patricia Szuhaj  
Chris and Lee van de Velde  
Joan Walkup  
David Walsh  
Lisa Wentz  
Harry and Cynthia Weiss  
Jamie Wyper and Isabelle Kellogg  
Emily Young

### SILENT AUCTION DONORS

Nancy Agati  
Jan Albaum  
Ambler Theater  
Azima Therapeutic Massage  
Lyn Buchheit  
Di Bruno Bros.  
Andrew F. Gillespie Tree Service

Marguerita Hagen  
Anita Halpern  
Hawk Mountain  
Tracey Hewitt  
Tom Landsmann and Anastasia Somers  
Laurel Hill Cemetery  
Love'n Fresh Flowers  
Nancy Louise Miller  
Morris Arboretum  
Tamara Paulits  
The Philadelphia Phillies  
The Philadelphia Flyers  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Rembrandt's Restaurant  
Sachiyo Searles  
Gail Seygal  
Norman Silver  
Lindy Snider and Dr. Larry Kaiser  
The Stagecrafters Theater  
Sweet Mabel Folk Art  
TRAX Restaurant  
WHYY

### BEER DONOR

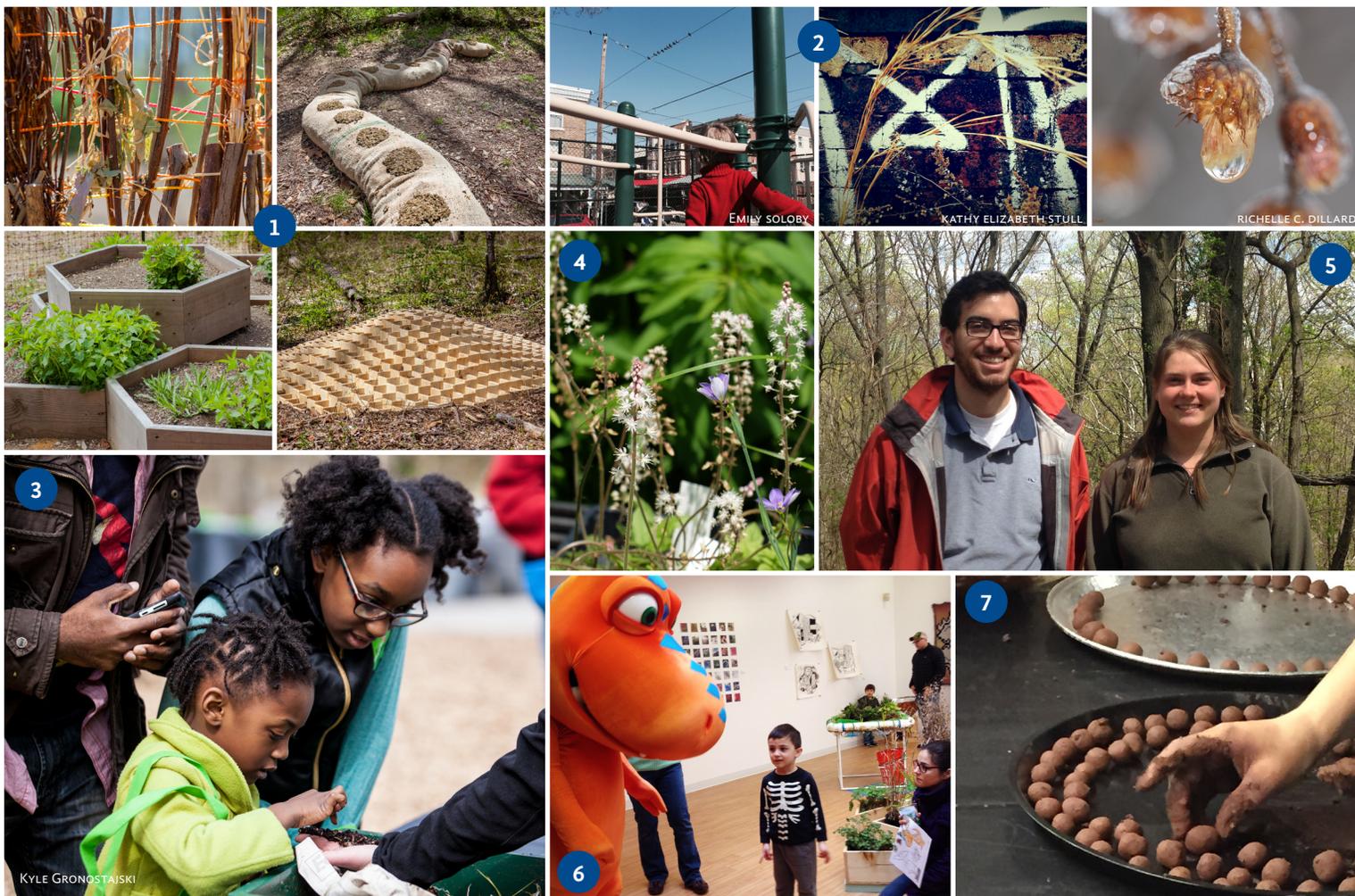
Yard's Brewing Company



# the season in brief

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM SPRING 2015

- 1 On April 26 our LandLab artists celebrated the completion of their residencies and their installations. Clockwise from top left: *Interwoven* by WE THE WEEDS, *#StormSnakes* by Leslie Birch, *Future Non-Object #1* by Jake Beckman, *Native Pollinator Garden* by B. H. Mills, Maggie Mills, and Marguerita Hagan. The installations will be in place for the next year, so check them out the next time you're here.
- 2 In March we chose three winners of this year's photo contest, *Nature in the City* (left to right): **Emily Soloby**, **Kathy Elizabeth Stull**, and **Richele C. Dillard**.
- 3 We had a great time at **Naturepalooza!** our annual Earth Day festival in partnership with the Philadelphia Science Festival. We welcomed over 500 people for music, citizen science, and a fort building competition.
- 4 At our **Native Plant Sale Members Preview** on May 1, we gathered with over 200 members to celebrate our land stewardship work with a special toast, and to start adding to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary **time capsule**.
- 5 This spring we said goodbye to **Ezra Tischler**, our 2014 - 2015 environmental art and PR intern, and to **Stephanie Jones**, our winter-spring arts intern. Thank you to both of them for their time, energy, and hard work.
- 6 In March we had a blast with our friends from **WHYY**, who brought **Buddy the Dinosaur** out to a **Saturdays@SCEE**.
- 7 This spring we made over 500 **seed bombs** – balls of clay, compost and native plant seeds harvested at the Center. Grab a few to take home at our anniversary picnic. These seed bombs can be tossed into any sunny area. When it rains, the clay will dissolve and the seeds will grow.



50 YEARS  OF PEOPLE + NATURE

# 50 The Schuylkill Center



NONPROFIT ORG.  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HAVERTOWN, PA  
PERMIT No. 45

8480 Hagy's Mill Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19128  
[www.schuylkillcenter.org](http://www.schuylkillcenter.org) | 215-482-7300

quill  
SUMMER 2015

## in this issue:

MAKING NATURE RELEVANT,  
PAGE 1

ANNIVERSARY PICNIC, PAGE 3

ART IN THE OPEN, PAGE 4

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK:  
AN ENDANGERED  
PHENOMENON, PAGE 5



# jubilee grove

**BUILD A LASTING LEGACY.**

Join us this year to plant **JUBILEE GROVE**, a special grove of native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers just behind our Visitor Center.

## ENDOW JUBILEE GROVE

Please use the enclosed envelope to make a gift for Jubilee Grove.

