



our pandemic stories

By Amy Krauss, Director of Communications

OVER THE PAST FOUR MONTHS, most of the Schuylkill Center staff has been working at home. For us, being indoors is anathema to the spirit of our mission of connecting people with nature. But, we have pressed on with our Zoom meetings and online teaching while continuing to learn how to share our passion for the environment with our students, members and the public via a virtual platform. Here are three vignettes of how our staff is facing the Coronavirus head-on.

Ann Ward, Kindergarten Lead Teacher

When the virus hit, Ann, together with her co-teachers, embraced the new digital format and delivered Nature Preschool to her virtual classroom, the Mighty Oaks.

While she missed the in-person morning meetings, she noted, “the fun thing about the virtual meetings was that our students were bringing guests with them like pets, siblings, and the occasional parent.” She smiles, “the children could share their environment with us through their computer or iPad and there became this sense of normalcy in the midst of all this uncertainty.”

Towards the end of the school year, Ann decided that having each student raise their own silkworm at home would lend itself to emergent learning, an approach that relies on the children's interests and the circumstances of the day to dictate the learning content. ‘Project Silkworm’ became a chance for

children to have hands-on observations of the lifecycle of their silkworms; they could then share their observations with each other online. While the school year is over, the silkworms continue their metamorphosis of spinning their cocoons which will molt into moths.

Aaliyah Green Ross, Director of Education

Aaliyah was managing her work/family balance until her spouse suspected he had contracted the Coronavirus in April. Despite his test coming back negative, “he had all the symptoms and was sick for five weeks,” she says. “That meant that he couldn’t help take care of our two kids.” This was especially time-consuming with her daughter, Naomi, who was attending 2nd grade virtually.

While Aaliyah appreciated the work and dedication of Naomi’s teachers, she still had an incredible amount of responsibility as a parent.

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director's cut

CALLING FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD



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THE HORRIFIC DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD IN MINNEAPOLIS REACTIVATED AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF RACIAL EQUITY, with hundreds of thousands braving the pandemic to march and protest. On that same May weekend, Black birder Christian Cooper found himself in a tense standoff in New York's Central Park over an unleashed dog, with the white dog owner's racially-charged 911 call reminding us that Black and brown people are not always welcome in green spaces.

As a nonprofit with deep roots in Philadelphia, the Schuylkill Center could not sit on the sidelines. Like hundreds of environmental organizations across the world, we issued a statement saying we "join with all people of conscience in Philadelphia and across America in calling for a just and sustainable world free from institutionalized racism." Our complete statement can be found on our website.

The Schuylkill Center aims to provide meaningful connections between people—all people—and nature. We acknowledge the historical legacy of racial exclusion in natural spaces and in the environmental field, and we are committed to intentionally welcoming all members of the community to our 340 acres of forests, and to our programs. Black lives matter here.

We are also committed to examining our own institutional culture—from our hiring practices to our program offerings to our partnerships—to ensure that these important values are reflected in all that we do.

We are speaking out because no one can remain silent in the face of the traumatic, systemic violence, including environmental injustice, directed at communities of color. We must come together to have the difficult conversations, acknowledge our own biases, and do the hard work of healing these deep wounds. At the same time, we must continue to demand accountability, transparency, and justice from the public officials we rely on to protect us.

The green movement has been disappointingly white for decades. But as Bob Dylan sang oh so many years ago, the times, they are a-changin'. Finally.

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naturalist's notebook

HELP US RESTORE OUR DAMAGED PINE GROVE

By Mike Weilbacher

PINE GROVE IS EASILY ONE OF OUR MOST BELOVED FEATURES, kids climbing in its many branches, parents inhaling the calming scent, everyone grateful for its cooling shade. But the grove was devastated in early June from a derecho—a supercell thunderstorm—that slammed into the region, knocking down trees and branches everywhere, causing massive power outages, and killing several people.



The storm sliced through Pine Grove like a knife cutting butter, a straight-line of trunks tumbling to the ground, more than 20 trunks snapping off and piled unceremoniously on the ground—and each other.

We closed our trails for a week to wrestle with downed trees and dangerous branches overhanging our trails. While our trails are now reopened, Pine Grove remains closed even now—our staff needs to pull down lots of hanging branches before we allow you back in.

Which is where you come in. We are starting a fund to restore the grove, as we need to both remove branches and trunks while planting new trees in the canopy gaps now present there. Please use the envelope tucked into this Quill or go [online](#) to donate to the grove's restoration: please help us bring back this unique feature of our campus.



About that storm: a derecho is a line of intense, widespread, and fast-moving windstorms, often thunderstorms, that moves a great distance. This one rolled 250 miles to the Jersey shore, where a gust was clocked at 92 mph, hurricane force. From the Spanish for “straight ahead,” derechos are associated with warm weather—they need heat energy for fuel. While no one storm event can be pinned on climate change, a warming climate increases the chances for large storm events. What we saw that day was weird, excessive, and points to large amounts of heat in the atmosphere in only early June. For me, that derecho was spawned by climate change, a stark reminder that, with power outages, people killed, and houses, cars, and trees damaged, the price tag for ignoring the climate crisis is steep, and rising. We will continue this conversation in our programming, of course.

And I hope you will join me in donating to the [Pine Grove Fund](#). 🦋



ABOVE: PINE GROVE



member spotlight

THREE MUSKETEERS WALKING OUR TRAILS

By Amy Krauss, Director of Communications

IF YOU'RE OUT ON OUR TRAILS EARLY ON A WEEKDAY MORNING, most likely you'll happen upon an energetic trio enjoying the sights and sounds of our 340 acre forest. Dr. Evamarie Malsch, Dr. Louise Lisi and Gail Harp are our neighbors from Cathedral Village, the continuing care community around the corner. As frequent visitors, they have come to know our trails intimately. "We're really lucky to have the Schuylkill Center so closeby," Evamarie comments, "and we've been going there at least twice a week to hike since the start of the pandemic."

Evamarie took up hiking soon after she retired and was fortunate to meet Gail and Louise, avid hikers who also reside at Cathedral Village; together they are affectionately referred to as the Three Musketeers in their community. Evamarie is delighted to explore the far reaches of the Schuylkill Center because every time she goes out, she finds something new in bloom. "We have been having such fun learning about animals and ephemerals."



ABOVE: THE THREE "MASKED" MUSKETEERS, SHARE AN EARLY MORNING WALK ON OUR TRAILS.

One creature that recently caught their attention was a red eft, a stage in the left cycle of the Eastern newt salamander. The hikers disagreed about whether the bright red coloring was poisonous, but they eventually confirmed that, indeed, this was the most toxic stage of the eastern newt and a clear warning to predators.



ABOVE: EASTERN NEWT SALAMANDER

Louise muses, "because the Schuylkill Center landscape changes so rapidly, our hikes never feel the same." Her favorite spot on the property is Smith Run. "I feel like I'm in some far away country when I'm listening to the stream while enjoying the trees and foliage." Now that restrictions have somewhat eased, she has extended her love of the Schuylkill Center to her grandchildren and even made up a scavenger hunt for their introductory trip. Gail remembers the pear trees in bloom. "You see these beautiful flowering trees and yet they're only flowering for a short time."

Evamarie has been a loyal member of the Schuylkill Center for five years and shares why she supports it. "I get so much pleasure from going there so I choose to give to a place that aligns with my values of educating people about nature." She also appreciates the fact even though it's "in the city limits, it feels like I'm in the wild. Here, everything is natural which is calming and peaceful."

We invite you to explore our trails this summer. We're open dawn to dusk every day and studies show that being in nature helps relieve anxiety and stress. Who knows? Perhaps you may run into our Cathedral Village friends. Ask them a question, they may very well know the answer given their time spent at the Schuylkill Center.

If you're enjoying our trails, please consider helping us to maintain them by becoming a member for as little as \$50/year. ✂



earth day at 50

ARTISTS RESPOND

By Christina Catanese, Director of Environmental Art

MARKING EARTH DAY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY THIS PAST APRIL was much more subdued in the wake of the worldwide pandemic that put so much on indefinite hold, including the opening of our latest art exhibition, *Ecotactical: Earth Day at 50*.

Artists have played an essential role in Earth Day from its inception in 1970. Recognizing this rich legacy, our exhibition responds to the question of what the holiday means (or should mean) fifty years after it was first celebrated. The turmoil of our own moment and the increasing urgency of the climate crisis gives the historical roots of the first Earth Day new relevance, and artists can help us reflect on and perhaps reimagine the role of Earth Day today.

Through a variety of media, artists in our exhibition explore connections between the activist origins of Earth Day in the 1960s and more contemporary expression of artists in activism today; present stories of nature, community, and justice in the Philadelphia area; and suggest that grief, memory, reverence, and celebration need to be added to Earth Day at this milestone.

In our gallery, six artists show works in various media. **Kristen Neville Taylor** will create an arrangement that incorporates elements of the history and imagery of Earth Day and environmental activism in Powelton Village.

Sophy Tuttle will display *Solastalgia*, a memorial to the estimated 150-200 species that go extinct every day. **Pili X** will resent photographs documenting community activity at the North Philly Peace Park, a local effort that integrates alternative urban farming methods, environmental and racial justice, and holistic health. Documentation of **Tools For Action's** inflatable sculptures from the People's Climate March in 2014 will be displayed. Music duo **Ants on a Log** will show documentation and artifacts from their family-friendly eco-musical, *Curious: Think Outside the Pipeline!*, which follows a young girl's journey into community organizing. **Meg Lemieur** and **Bri Barton** will present *Water Ways*, a series of illustrations depicting water, health, and justice in relationship to fracking in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Outdoors, **Nicole Donnelly** will create sculptures of invasive vines and handmade plant-based paper. **Julia Way Rix** will install cyanotype flags along sections of our trails which draw from signs and slogans from recent climate strikes and environmental demonstrations.

We look forward to celebrating a belated Earth Day and sharing these artists' work with you when the Schuylkill Center's visitor center reopens. 🦋



SOLASTALGIA BY SOPHY TUTTLE



PILI X



NICOLE DONNELLY



staff spotlight

SEASONED EDUCATOR JOINS OUR FAMILY

WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME MARILYN TINARI to the Schuylkill Center as the Interim Director of Early Childhood Education. Marilyn is an accomplished educator and leader with more than 40 years of experience in education, 20 of those as Head of the Middle School of the Springside Chestnut Hill Academy. She holds a Master's in Education from Arcadia, and a Doctorate in Educational and Organizational Leadership from UPenn. An educational consultant, she is on the faculty of Penn's Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational and Organizational Leadership.



ABOVE: MARILYN TINARI

Marilyn reflects on her one-year appointment and says, "although we are living in challenging times, environmentally and socially, we have a great opportunity to work with our children, nurturing them through a formative and precious time." She goes on to say, "I look forward to collaborating on creating a shared mission and vision over the next year." Executive Director Mike Weilbacher said, "I'm thrilled to have an experienced education leader join our staff at a pivotal moment for Nature Preschool."

After the school year ended, former Nature Preschool director Sandi Vincenti moved on to other opportunities. The Schuylkill Center thanks her for her service. 🦋



a film conversation

THURSDAY, JULY 30 AT 7:00PM

This new film takes a sweeping look at the crisis of plastic pollution and its effect on both people and planet. Spanning three continents, this film illustrates the catastrophic effects of plastic production and processing to our land, rivers, seas and skies.

Go to our website to register and receive a link to watch the movie in advance. Then on July 30, join our panelists online for a lively conversation about this pressing issue.



summer camp

CORONAVIRUS-STYLE



our pandemic stories

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“I had to copy down all Naomi’s assignments, print them, photograph them then upload them to submit. I felt like I had two full-time jobs.” Fortunately, her husband has recovered from the virus and Naomi is enjoying the warm weather and sharing in the joy of the outdoors with her mom.

Chris Strub, Assistant Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation

In mid-March, the Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic staff quickly assessed their situation and realized protocols were going to have to drastically change in order for them to safely care for the patients and each other.

Even with a reduction in the intake of patients and an absence of volunteers, they faced an additional challenge when Chris’ spouse, Sarah, contracted the Coronavirus in mid-May. This forced Chris to quarantine for 14 days and the Clinic temporarily closed due to limited staffing. “While I never tested positive for the virus,” Chris says, “I didn’t come into the Clinic because I didn’t want to infect my co-workers.” Happily, Sarah recovered from the virus and the clinic reopened in mid-June.

Like us, Ann, Aaliyah and Chris, are still navigating the challenges/opportunities the virus continues to have in our home and at our workplace.



ABOVE: CHRIS STRUB AND WIFE, SARAH. TAKING A HIKE.

Check out our [blog](#) for updates on the staff mentioned here and additional staff stories brought on by the Coronavirus. 🦋





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