



ABOVE: MINDY MASLIN

mindy maslin

THE 2021 HENRY MEIGS ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARDEE

By Amy Krauss, Director of Communications

FOR THE 16TH ANNUAL HENRY MEIGS ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARD, we're honoring Mindy Maslin, the founder and director of Tree Tenders, a key program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS). Since joining PHS in 1991, Mindy has been responsible for planting at least 20,000 trees across the region while training 5,500 tree care volunteers.

Through her deep knowledge of trees, Mindy has inspired thousands of citizens to make a difference in their community; she believes planting trees is "a powerful way to enhance the health, resilience, and quality of our neighborhoods."

We're honoring Mindy at a ceremony at the Schuylkill Center on Thursday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m. Joining Mindy for a conversation on "The Urban Forest" are Tree Tenders Sharrieff Ali and Gabriella Paez, and TreePhilly's Jack Braunstein. Please join us for this event.

The award celebrates area leaders who symbolize the spirit of integrity and vision of Henry Meigs, one of our

founders, who served on our board for 40 years until passing away in 2005. His family established the award shortly thereafter, and past honorees include former governor Ed Rendell, artist Stacy Levy, and environmental center founder Jerome Shabazz.

As one of the oldest volunteer urban tree programs in the country, Tree Tenders has inspired similar programs across the state and country. Locally, Tree Tenders graduates come from at least 100 active volunteer groups in the city and surrounding counties. Since this work is done by volunteers, the city has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by not having to hire professional arborists to do the planting or the initial care. Mindy sees the social benefits of trees and

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director's cut

THE CLIMATE-COVID CONNECTION

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AS IF THE EARTH DIDN'T WEIGH IN LOUDLY ENOUGH ON THE ONGOING CLIMATE DEBATE THIS SUMMER, with record-shattering heat waves, droughts, wildfires, monsoons, mudslides, and floods sweeping the planet, a new tragedy seemingly every day, Ida hit the Philadelphia region with a special vengeance in August. The “remnants” of this storm caused record flooding of the Schuylkill River, burying Manayunk’s Main Street under a deluge of water and mud while flooding our neighbors along River Road in Upper Roxborough. And it spawned 6-7 tornados that, among other things, devastated a Mullica Hill neighborhood.

When President Biden toured Ida’s damage in Queens, he said the “code red” event signaled that “we have to take bold action now to tackle the accelerating effects of climate. Folks,” he offered, “the evidence is clear: climate change poses an existential threat to our lives, to our economy, and the threat is here.” He thought that “even the climate skeptics are seeing that this really does matter.” I wish I agreed. I wish the skeptics were swayed by Ida and the events of this past summer.

At the same time, deep into the fourth (!) wave of the pandemic, we’ve been conducting a worldwide science experiment on the efficacy of masks and vaccinations, and the evidence is consistently and remarkably clear: communities with higher vaccination rates and more mask usage experience less COVID. And yet naysayers persist.

The science on both climate change and COVID is real and incontrovertible: we can see the impacts of both with our own eyes. And the denial of both has an underappreciated side effect. More people are unnecessarily dying from the lack of masking and vaccination mandates, and more people are unnecessarily dying from the impacts of climate change.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Perhaps the decades-long denial of mounting climate evidence—factual data that scientists have been carefully assembling since the 1980s—has given everyone from presidents to folks on the street practice in denying what is right in front of us.

You sense my frustration here. As a science educator, for decades I have been sharing data on walks and talks, keeping up with the science so you know the latest in what’s happening. Yet after decades of teaching about climate, we still stand on the precipice, and have a very narrow window of opportunity before we fall in, a window that closes a little more every day.

COVID is real; fighting it is surprisingly easy. Climate change is real; fighting it is incredibly hard. If we can’t fix the easy problems, how will we ever tackle the hard ones?

All the best,



Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director
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@SCEEMike on Twitter



ABOVE: SHURS LANE AND MAIN STREET IN MANAYUNK THE DAY AFTER IDA

clinic spotlight

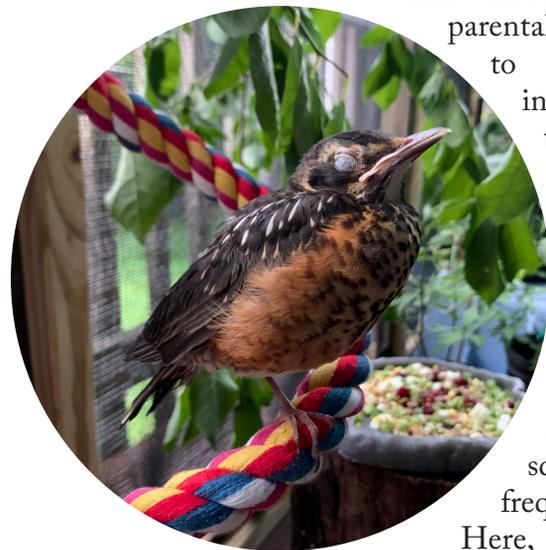
AVIARY AND SQUIRREL ENCLOSURES COMPLETED

By Chris Strub, Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation

OUR PATIENTS NOW HAVE TWO NEW OUTDOOR REHABILITATION SPACES. As part of a critical step in preparing animals to return to the wild, we completed our back deck aviary and outdoor squirrel enclosure. These new structures will give our patients the ability to exercise in a more natural setting and get into shape for their eventual release.

Just outside our back door, on a previously underused deck, the aviary will provide young birds a safe space to practice flying and foraging. The close proximity to the building allows the rehabilitation team to keep a close eye on them and continue hand-feeding them on a regular schedule. In between the nestling (infants) and juvenile (immature adult) life stages, young birds go through the fledgling (teenager) stage, where they naturally leave the nest and explore on their own while still being fed and cared for by their parents.

We have introduced real world enhancements such as native plants, live branches, a variety of perches, and a bird bath. During the 1-2 weeks they typically spend in this protected, secure space, the youngsters will learn to acclimate, explore, and adapt to their natural environment.



ABOVE: A FLEDGLING ROBIN TAKES A POST-FEEDING NAP IN THE AVIARY SURROUNDED BY LIVE PLANTS AND OTHER NATURAL ITEMS TO MIMIC A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

While still receiving ongoing parental care prior to gaining their independence in the wild.

With our brand-new squirrel enclosures, we now have space for hundreds of orphaned squirrels, our most frequent patients. Here, our pre-release

patients will have more room to practice their climbing, hiding, and foraging skills. This is especially important for fall baby squirrels who face their first winter when they are just six months old. The enclosure also provides more space for overwintering patients, including our recent squirrel babies, who will spend the winter with us, and be released in the spring. While this spacious, sturdy outdoor enclosure provides vital space for many litters of orphaned squirrels, it will also do double-duty for opossums and other small mammals. ✂



ABOVE: FRAMING FOR SQUIRREL ENCLOSURE

These major improvements wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of Wildlife Clinic supporters Gail Seygal, Bob and Nancy Elfant, and a board member and spouse. We are extremely grateful that they chose to make the clinic facilities a charitable priority.

al mudhif - a confluence

By Tina Plokarz, Director of Environmental Education

THIS SUMMER WE BUILT A TRADITIONAL IRAQI GUEST HOUSE, a *mudhif* (in Arabic), on our property. Constructed entirely of the invasive reed phragmites, the outdoor art installation, *Al Mudhif — A Confluence*, is the first such structure built in North America. For more than 5,000 years, Iraqi inhabitants of the lower Mesopotamian valley, the cradle of civilization, have been building these guest houses out of reed grasses.

Environmental artist Sarah Kavage and social designer and Iraqi immigrant Yaroub Al-Obaidi spearheaded this project. It is part of a greater arts initiative, Lenapehoking~Watershed, organized through the Alliance for Watershed Education for the Delaware River. The intent was for the *mudhif* to become a welcoming space for intercultural encounters and hospitality.

These images are of the initial build, grand opening, and variety of ways in which visitors have experienced the mudhif. The outdoor structure is accessible when the Visitor Center is open. The indoor exhibition is on display until October 31.



YAROUB AL-OBAIDI, FAR RIGHT, AND SARAH KAVAGE, 2ND FROM RIGHT, ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION WITH PARABOLIC ARCHES OF BOUND REEDS.



TOGETHER WITH IRAQI IMMIGRANTS AND U.S. VETERANS, CHAPLAIN CHRISTOPHER ANTAL FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, 2ND FROM RIGHT, DEDICATED THE CENTER'S LAND AT OUR KICK-OFF CEREMONY HELD ON MEMORIAL DAY.



OVER THE COURSE OF TWO WEEKS, 200 VOLUNTEERS CAME TOGETHER FOR THE BUILDING PROCESS. HERE, AIM ACADEMY 9TH AND 10TH GRADERS LEARNED HOW TO WEAVE, DIG, AND WRAP REEDS TO CONSTRUCT THE ROOF AND WALLS OF THIS IRAQI STRUCTURE.



BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



AFTER TWO WEEKS, CONSTRUCTION WAS COMPLETE AND WE OPENED AL MUDHIF. THROUGH AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT BY TRINITY NORWOOD (RIGHT) FROM THE NANTICOKE LENNI-LENAPE TRIBAL NATION, REMARKS BY YAROUB AL-OBAIDI AND SARAH KAVAGE, AN INDIGENOUS TALE BY PERFORMER TCHIN (LEFT), AND A BLESSING BY CHAPLAIN CHRISTOPHER ANTAL, WE CELEBRATED THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES BROUGHT TOGETHER THROUGH THIS INCREDIBLE ART INSTALLATION.



THE COMPANION INDOOR EXHIBITION FEATURES ARTWORKS BY VETERAN ARTIST DREW CAMERON OF COMBAT PAPER, PHOTOGRAPHER AND ACTIVIST MERIDEL RUBENSTEIN, ART COLLECTIVE JUSTSEEDS, AND INDIGENOUS ARTISTS TAILINH AGOYO AND TCHIN. AUDIO RECORDINGS BY U.S. VETERANS, IRAQIS AND NATIVE AMERICANS REFLECT ON WAR AND SANCTUARY.



VETERANS AND REFUGEES TIED MEMORIAL RIBBONS IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES LOST TO WAR.



SUMMER CAMPERS GOT INTO THE SPIRIT OF BUILDING AND THE TRADITIONS AND CULTURE OF THE IRAQI MUDHIF. THEY LEARNED ABOUT ITS DESIGN AND USE OF INVASIVE WETLAND REED MATERIAL WHILE UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL CONNECTION BETWEEN PLANTS AND PEOPLE.



IN JULY, ARTISTS SARAH KAVAGE AND YAROUB AL OBAIDI ALONG WITH DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL ART TINA PLOKARZ HOSTED A GUIDED TOUR IN OUR GALLERY AND A TEA CEREMONY IN THE MUDHIF.

PHOTOS BY: ROBER ZVERINA AND RICKY YANAS

mindy maslin

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is committed to addressing the inequities in tree canopies. As set out by the City of Philadelphia's strategic plan that every neighborhood has at least a 30% tree cover, the PHS tree team has identified an uneven distribution of tree canopy that corresponds with high-density, low-income, and high-crime neighborhoods. Mindy agrees that "all neighborhoods deserve to benefit from trees, for heat island abatement, air quality improvement, stormwater sequestering, and the softer gifts of mood enhancement and community building." In response, Tree Tenders has a tool for prioritizing planting in low-canopy neighborhoods. In fact, studies show that people view urban residential spaces with trees as more attractive, safer and more appealing. "If you plant trees," Mindy says, "it encourages people to go outside, meet their neighbors and build relationships; in turn, it fosters community pride which ultimately makes neighborhoods safer."

In her efforts to diversify the program, she has connected with local institutions to bring the training directly to underserved neighborhoods. "Working within the community with local institutions and local tree champions is a critical part of the Tree Tenders model. They provide education and tools. But the onus is on the neighborhood Tree Tenders group to activate their neighbors to plant trees—it's neighborhood-based citizen stewardship."

"You need to convince people who might be reluctant to plant a tree on their property why taking this action will improve their lives," she says. And that happens at the neighborhood level where locals become advocates in their own community. Once you plant a tree, it still needs care to grow—a critical part to a tree's survival. That's where the stewardship piece comes in. The Tree Tenders program provides a framework to check on the trees and neighbors to make sure that the proper care is given.

PHS's Chief of Healthy Neighborhoods Julianne Schrader-Ortega notes, "Mindy is an integral part of the vitality of PHS's mission to use horticulture in advancing the health and well-being of citizens in our local region and

we're pleased that Mindy is receiving the Meigs award as public recognition of the large impact she has had on the environment and on people's lives."

Mindy is honored to be receiving this from "an institution of the Schuylkill Center's caliber. It is a huge professional accomplishment. For decades, Tree Tenders and the Center have created joint programs that have served thousands of people in the region; our collaborations continue to be a highlight in my career. This award from such a valued partner is truly extraordinary."

In turn, Executive Director Mike Weilbacher was pleased that "we received more nominations for the Meigs award this year than ever before, and multiple ones for Mindy. I'm so happy to honor her, as few people have planted more trees in the region than she has, and tree planting is such a powerful act."

We look forward to learning more from Mindy and our panelists on November 18 at 7pm. 🦋

The Urban Forest: Meigs Award Evening

Thursday, November 18, 7-9 pm

In the Schuylkill Center auditorium

Free, with advance registration

Featuring panelists Mindy Maslin,
Sharrieff Ali, Jack Braunstein, and
Gabriella Paez



season in brief

HIGHLIGHTS OF SUMMER 2021

1 Christopher McGill (far right), the president of the Board of Trustees, welcomed four newly elected trustees at our June Annual Meeting: (from left) Jonathan Essoka, Ellen Fernberger, Marilyn Tinari and John Carpenter.



2 Tina Plokarz (left), director of the environmental art program, thanks trustee Deenah Loeb, as Deenah cycles off the board after nine years of service. For much of that time, she chaired the Environmental Art Advisory Committee.



3 We welcomed two new tractors to our family this summer. These stalwarts are used for stewardship activities like meadow mowing, trail maintenance, preparing tree planting areas, moving storm-damaged tree debris, and more.



4 Our paths were brightly colored this summer from a performance by the artist collective Propelled Animals. The troupe shared dance, interactive installations, live music, and guided experiences ending with pine needle tea in our Pine Grove.



5 At Camp Schuylkill, we completed our second successful summer season despite COVID-19. 515 campers ages 3-12 were led by 19 camp counselors and 13 counselors-in-training. Our programs included building bug hotels, tracking animals, canoeing on Wind Dance Pond, learning the life cycle of plants, and so much more. Here are our wonderful counselors.



6 Volunteers from the Roxborough Manayunk Conservancy helped with needed weeding at the River Trail Gateway, our new entrance on the Schuylkill River Trail.



7 Campers examine a caterpillar with Teacher Rose.





The Schuylkill Center

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helps build a future where all people
respect and protect our natural world.

SCAN TO MAKE A GIFT



OCTOBER 22 & 23, 4-10PM

