



Connecting With Our Community ... In Nature

Annual Accomplishment Report 2023



Report Contents

Letter From Our Director.....	1
At a Glance: Our Year By the Numbers.....	2
Our Program Journey.....	3
Schools and Scout Programs.....	4
Summer and Day Camps.....	5
Adult Programs.....	6
Raptor Programs.....	7
Family Programs.....	8
Volunteers.....	9



Letter From Our Director

I'm so pleased to help present Meadowside's 2023 Accomplishments report. Looking at the entirety of the year, it's easy to get lost in data and numbers with regards to what Meadowside has accomplished. And certainly, that is *one* way to measure success. This year, we measured our impact on how well we connected with our community in nature, and it goes beyond the numbers.

We made enhancements to the park with the creation of a new Raptor Trail, expanded our reach within our community to offer a variety of new volunteer offerings, and brought back our popular Habitats school program. Additionally, Meadowside continued to support Montgomery County's THRIVE 2050 Plan (Plan) by creating a new Climate Change Committee with a focus on climate programming, and worked across Montgomery Parks, specifically with our Water Resources and Natural Resources Division, to provide community outreach training which directly supports the Plan and how the county will grow over the next 30+ years.



I'd like to express my deep gratitude for all that Meadowside staff have completed over this last year. Together, with our participants, volunteers, and local community, we have a lot to celebrate about 2023.

Carolina Giraldo

Director of Meadowside Nature Center



At a Glance: Our Year by the Numbers



1,324 CHILDREN experienced the benefit of nature in Meadowside Nature Center's educational programs, field trips, and scout groups.

2,683 PARTICIPANTS of all ages engaged in one of Meadowside's programs or events. By multiplying our programs by total program enrollment, our contact hours added up to **5,090 hours spent connected** with our community.



77 VOLUNTEERS contributed towards Meadowside's success in environmental learning and conservation efforts. A total of **1,504.5 HOURS** in all.

152 PROGRAMS OFFERED for the year which includes summer camps, school groups, and general programming.



Our Program Journey

Meadowside offers a robust suite of programs which continued to support Montgomery Parks' mission of:

Protect and interpret our valuable natural and cultural resources.

Balance demand for recreation with the need for conservation.

Offer various enjoyable recreational activities that encourage healthy lifestyles.

Provide clean, safe, and accessible places.

Our talented team of Naturalists worked to plan, prepare, and deliver educational programming for the community. They supported local schools and scouts, immersed campers in week-long activities, and increased adult programming. Participants learned to develop their appreciation of nature and discovered practical steps they can take at home to help protect our wildlife and natural spaces.

Photo: Ed Wondoloski



School and Scout Programs

Over the past year, we offered one Daisy Scout program and eight school programs across Montgomery County and Washington D.C. Our school field trips focused on animal habitats, what animals need to survive, and exploring park trails. We also traveled to D.C. to study the urban heat island effect and its negative impacts on city residents with Capitol Hill Day School.

For many students, our field trips are often an introduction to the animals and habitats of Meadowside. What a beautiful place to “dip your toe” into nature!

White Flint Children’s House, Montgomery County Public Schools Youth Climate Summit, Creative Learning Center, and Montgomery Village Middle School were among the many who visited us this past year.

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“Thank you so much for welcoming our students with smiles, patience and an opportunity to interact with community members in various settings. They had a really great time learning about animals and their habitats. We hope to see you again once the weather warms.” – Special Education Teacher Montgomery Village Middle School



Summer and Day Camps

Our summers are filled with sunshine, crafts, creek play, wildlife, and messy fun! This year, we had 72 campers participate in five summer camps and one day-camp. Our camps are loaded with nature-based adventures and activities, and one camp even had a wizard! Campers learned about the “magic” of nature, the importance of watersheds, wiggled like worms during pre-school, and cared for our Animal Ambassadors.

Let’s not forget our on-going collaboration with Montgomery Parks Program Access where we offered a summer camp for neurodivergent children. Campers learned about nature through sensorial activities such as mud painting, “animal” yoga, flower pressing, and bubble play.

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Adult Programs

In Montgomery County, we are lucky to say that you are no more than 3 miles from your closest Montgomery Park. Green spaces are not only aesthetically pleasing--they are also good for your health. We welcomed the busy adults to take a moment for themselves and relax in the dreamy forests of Meadowside.

We are incredibly proud to announce that we offered 30 adults only programs that served 667 participants!

Program highlights include American Sign Language Paint and Sip Night, Raptor Breeding Monitors, Etch and Sip, Maryland Day, Spooky Trivia, Spooky Night Hike, Wreath Making, and teacher workshops.



Raptor Programs

Can I get a “hoot hoot” for this success?! We offered 65 raptor related programs. Throughout these programs, 711 individuals learned about the raptors under human care at the nature center and conservation efforts that help protect their counterparts in the wild.



Our regular Saturday Raptor Caretaker Chats were attended consistently throughout the year, rain or shine! New for this year was our Visit a Vulture chat where participants met Gillis the black vulture. Some even got up close and personal and learned how to help staff during target training. This is a type of animal enrichment, an activity or tool that provides opportunities for animals to display their natural behaviors.

Family Programs

Historically, Meadowside has offered the most programs in the “family” category and this year we kept up that trend and offered 93 programs and enrolled 1097 individuals. Easily our most diverse programs in terms of topics, highlights for the year included: Sensory Days Make and Take Crafts, St. Patrick's Day, Mud Pie Bake off, Mothers' Day Eco Printing, Seed Bombs, Kindness Rocks, Fairy Day, Care of Magical creatures, Happy Noon Year.



Volunteers

Our volunteers are the secret to our success. Without their dedicated training, willingness to support programs, and variety of interests, we would not thrive without them. In just 2023 alone, we had 77 volunteers who collectively donated about 1,504 hours of their time which adds up to a total value of contributions around \$47,843!

Teen Volunteering

A whopping 30% of our volunteer contributions come from our youngest comrades in championing nature: teenagers! Parks facilities like Meadowside work with youth volunteers across a number of programs, and see these teens come back to continue investing their time, talents, and energies into education programs, restoration efforts, and even construction projects! This past year, our teen volunteers assisted in camps, classes, and workdays.

A special shout out to our Eagle Scouts, who flew in with a set of wooden silhouettes of different birds of prey commonly found in the park. These hand-crafted wingspans can be found on the X Trail. Join the flock in sharing gratitude for our youth volunteers by comparing your arm span with the wingspan of a raptor!

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

1 volunteer, 20 hrs

ANIMAL CARE VOLUNTEERS

13 volunteers, 366.5 hrs

SUMMER CAMP COUNSELORS

9 volunteers, 333 hrs

RAPTOR BREEDING MONITORS

42 volunteers, 529.50 hrs

NATURALIST AIDES

6 volunteers, 56.75 hrs

GROUNDSKEEPERS

2 volunteers, 23.5 hrs

WORKDAYS

5 volunteers, 10 hrs



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



MEADOWSIDE NATURE CENTER

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