

A stream is reborn in Millburn

(Continued from Page 1)

Sprucing a park's image begins with restoring nature as it was intended. This is the goal of an innovative and collaborative partnership involving the Conservation Resources, Inc., the Township of Millburn, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Rahway River Association.

On June 29, a series of earth-moving bulldozers began the process of dredging one wetland and installing new concrete outfalls in anticipation of bringing the stream to the surface. The restored waterway will meander through the length of Old Short Hills Park with natural elbows and riffles connecting a vernal pond replete with wood frogs and salamanders under the cool shade of a forested grove to sun a loving wetland, filled with bulrushes and tussock sedges. A transition area will be planted with native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers the length of the stream to buffer it from storm water runoff. More importantly, the plantings of native vegetation will become a wildlife habitat for a whole range of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds and beneficial insects.



trail with bluebird houses filled with nesting songbirds, an interpretive sign with educational brochures for both young and old and additional plantings for the vernal ponds.

As the newest project of the Rahway River Association's Neighborhood Biodiversity Program, Old Short Hills Park will hopefully attract new visitors who prefer to take a nature walk, go bird watching or simply commune with nature. Daylighting a buried stream after nearly a hundred years provides a well spring of hope and optimism that as humans we can restore nature even on a scale. As Margaret Mead once said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

The RRA plans to fundraise in order to add a bluebird

RIVER RIPPLES

A Publication of the Rahway River Association

Resurfacing a stream: lessons for an urban watershed

Wood Frogs provide a chorus of song amid the reeds with Red winged Blackbird males singing their familiar "screeee". A garter snake slithers in the streamside thickets while a Red Eyed Vireo lets loose its monotonous soliloquy, "Here I am... there you are...". The future of Old Short Hills Park may be a biologically nature preserve in the not too distant future.

Presently, Old Short Hills Park looks more like the great lawn in Central Park than a nature preserve. With 41 acres of manicured lawns, the park provides a haven for soccer, golf or running dogs but, in reality, is an ecological desert. Intended as a passive park, the verdant oasis surrounded by majestic Norway Spruces that conceal the majestic Greenwood Garden. In 2009, Old

Short Hills Park is an underutilized nature preserve in search of an image.

Early spring is a slogging, muddy event for Old Short Hills Park; the lawns appear to have a difficult time absorbing the water. Every spring the water that puddles and pools

amid the greenery seemingly knows that a stream that once flowed is missing. Left stranded above ground, the water cannot reconnect to an old pipe buried under several feet of soil. The hidden vestige of a

(Continued on Page 4)



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All donations to the Rahway River Association are tax-deductible.

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Local companies pitch in to help

The Rahway River watershed is fortunate to have numerous partners from our local business community that have committed their resources to making our watershed an essential part of the corporate culture. In 2009, they have played a major role in furthering the improvement of the quality of life for both nature and humans.

To celebrate Earth Day, the Comcast Corporation mustered nearly fifty volunteers to tidy up Bezega Park in the City of Rahway. Together with support of the Land Conservancy of New Jersey's Parks for People Program personnel and volunteers of the Rahway River Association garbage was collected, weeds and invasive plants were removed and mulch was placed on trails of the 10-acre nature preserve, a part of the Union County Park system. The project volunteers received encouraging words of support and gratitude by Mayor Jim Kennedy of the City of Rahway and Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders Chairman Alexander Mirabella. Comcast's volunteers toiled hard to make Bezega Park a better place for the surrounding community and for the wildlife that call this park home.

Covanta Energy, the operator of the Union County Resource Recovery Facility along Route 1 in the City of Rahway is an enthusiastic partner with the Rahway River Association and the Union County Utilities

(Continued on Page 3)

Corporate partners aid watershed

(Continued from Page 1)

Authority in maintaining Rahway Riverfront Park, a 10-acre park along the shores of the Rahway River. On May 27, dozens of Covanta employees, representatives from the Union County Utilities Authority and other volunteers expanded a butterfly garden that was built last year with funding by Merck and Company. The garden composed of native flowers, shrubs and trees will provide a food source for beneficial insects, butterflies, hummingbirds and migratory birds.

This park has also become the home of a joint educational program between the Rahway River Association and the Rahway-based John F. Kennedy Community Center. RRA Executive Director Dennis O. Miranda has led children from the JFK Center on birdwatching walks in the park. Signage, an educational brochure and a blue bird trail are all planned for the future thanks to a pledge of future support by Covanta Energy.

In 2007, Merck provided the funds to build the first stage of the butterfly garden at Rahway Riverfront Park and furnish the Rahway River Association with a grant to buy binoculars and field guides for the children of the JFK Community Center. Funds were also provided to have the RRA provide weekly nature walks for the children of the JFK Community Center.

This year, Merck is providing financial support to assess the natural resource values of the Red Hill section of the Ashbrook Swamp Reservation, a unit of the Union County Park system. The Red Hill area appears to be a relict Pine Barrens habitat disconnected from the southern New Jersey habitat thousands of years ago.

The Rahway River lives on the Internet!

Please visit us online at www.rahwayriver.org

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A Publication of the
Rahway River Association

The Rahway River Association is a volunteer-driven organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Rahway River and its watershed.

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The monies will help determine the health of globally rare plants that were discovered here during a RRA-sponsored Bioblitz in 2007 and make recommendations for ensuring their survival into the future.

Covanta Energy, Comcast Corporation and Merck and Company are the first members of the Rahway River Association's Watershed Business Partners who recognize the need to contribute to the improvement of the parks, nature preserves and natural areas of the Rahway River watershed as part of their corporate philosophy. The Rahway River Association is deeply grateful for their financial support and commitment to the environment.

DiVincenzo honored for watershed work

Spearheading a large scale culling of the White tailed Deer in a public parks is never an easy political decision. However, Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo is right in calling for the annual hunt to help reduce the oversized deer herd at the South Mountain Reservation, the headwater for the western branch of the Rahway River.

Following the 2007 Bioblitz of the South Mountain Reservation, we learned how the ecosystem has broken down due to deer herbivory and the extent to which invasive plants have flourished in altering wildlife habitats. Partnering with the South Mountain Conservancy,



the County of Essex is developing a series of exclosures designed to prevent deer from entering the protected spaces where volunteers will have planted thousands of

native trees, shrubs and flowers. Over time, it is hoped that the plants will multiply and re-establish outside of the fenced areas to restore the native flora to the South Mountain Reservation. Mr. DiVincenzo has demonstrated strong leadership, moral courage and a commitment to public policy based on science not on emotional rhetoric.

At its annual conference earlier this year, DiVincenzo was presented with the 2009 Martine Donofrio Memorial Champion of the Rahway River Watershed Award as recognition of his efforts to protect the Rahway River watershed.

Community teams up to build garden

Adjacent to the Union County Resource Recovery facility on Route 1 in Rahway is Rahway Riverfront Park. Located on one of the busiest intersections in the City and facing Lawrence Avenue, Rahway Riverfront Park is easily overlooked. The manicured lawns, neat hedgerows and scattered trees line a series of little used trails that lead, to an abrupt end yearning for visitants and recognition. So it goes in this stretch of the Rahway River Greenway and perfect location for the latest Rahway River Association's Neighborhood Biodiversity Project!

On June 25, volunteers from Merck & Company joined children from the John F. Kennedy Community Center to build a community butterfly garden at Rahway Riverfront Park. This project was made possible to a generous grant from Merck and Company and assistance from the Union County Utilities Authority, the City of Rahway, Covanta Energy and the JFK Community Center.

Over 75 adult plants native to our region were planted at the entrance to the park. They should adapt easily, require little watering after they are established and will not need fertilizer and other man-made materials to thrive.

Most of the flowers in the garden naturally time their blooming periods of July to August anticipating the arrival of migratory songbirds, butterflies and beneficial insects. Even the regal Monarch Butterfly will visit the garden in numbers on their way south to the wintering grounds in northern Mexico. Their numbers will increase all through the month of September and decline in October.

For the rest of this summer, volunteers from the RRA and JFK Community Center will monitor the plants and see what butterflies, birds and other wildlife visit the garden. Join us as we explore the latest discoveries to be made at the Butterfly Garden at Rahway Riverfront Park!

For more information on the programs, projects and events run by the RRA please visit www.rahwayriver.org.