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ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC



The Harvard Alumni Jazz band thrills the crowd with a toe-tapping performance.

Photo by Tony Vogel

Robbins Farm Almanac . . . the newsletter of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park

Spring clean up, summer news and events

Robbins Farm annual Spring Clean-up is being billed as a TLC day for the park.

Come on out on Sunday, May 2 and help start the season. A variety of interesting projects from raking to painting to spreading wood chips and renewing the sand await the volunteers. In the afternoon there will be kite flying—free kites will be offered to volunteers.

The Arlington Park and Recreation Commission has opted to continue the **portable restroom program** at a number of parks in Arlington. This season our park will have a new, larger unit sized to meet handicapped accessibility codes. Incidentally, the larger size makes it easier for a parent to assist a toddler. Plans are underway to enclose the unit with lattice, similar to last year. FORFP has contributed \$1000 to the seasonal rental.

Marlene Rockmore, with board input, has developed a **Robbins Farm Park Priority List**. This spread sheet tracks all the projects that FORFP hope to accomplish. Some items, such as “spread bark chips,” are practical and short term. Others, such as “repair the big slide,” or “develop a sundial,” require town input, planning, and fund raising. The list gives us a good overview for budgeting our time and resources.

Good-bye to the **dead elm tree** at the bottom of the park – the town removed this tree in early April. We don't know if it fell victim to the ubiquitous “Dutch elm disease” (spread by a fungus which is carried by the elm bark beetle) or just the ravages of time.

The town has also replaced some **swing chains** at the playground.



Planting seeds of peas and learning...

Cooperative Gardening Comes to Robbins Farm

By Oakes Plimpton

Community gardening has returned to Robbins Farm Park. Nathan Robbins farmed the land from 1910 to 1941, and individual Victory Gardens were cultivated from 1943 through 1946, but this garden will be a cooperative garden, hence just one garden, and also educational—the public will be invited in, kids welcome! You will see the garden enclosed by recycled snow fence below the playground. The garden offers *two* web sites: the first, <http://www.robbsfarmgarden.org>, is an organic gardening blog to help folks who are inter-

ested in growing their own organic vegetables, and the second, dubbed *Veggie School*, <http://veggieschool.robbsfarmgarden.org/>, is a *kid-friendly*, educational web site that describes the vegetables being grown in the garden, their nutrition and histories, some common garden bugs, basic garden tools, compost how-to's, as well as some Town farming history. Many of the gardeners have contributed to the web sites, and additional topics and content will be added

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FIELD OF DREAMS

An appreciation by Tony Vogel, FORFP President



"View from Robbins Farm," collage by Arlington artist Janice Hayes-Cha, 2009

Photo opposite page, lower left: The newly turned earth at the Robbins Farm Cooperative Learning Garden.

When I saw it I knew I had to have it. There were a lot of wonderful items for sale at the benefit that night last middle of May, but for me, one stood out. But let me set the stage. The Town Hall had been transformed into a magical space. Hundreds of blue moon paper globes hung from the balcony, music was playing, and the place was jammed with friends. I already knew it was going to be a special night because long-time FORFP Director Jen Rothenberg and FORFP volunteer Kim Smith had been planning it for months. This was a fundraiser to improve the landscaping and playing field at Robbins Farm Park's neighboring Brackett Elementary School. The community had donated myriad of enticing items, and each told a story. Teachers donated special experiences for students; there were amazing tickets to sporting events; there were personalized lessons, tours and wonderful objects. I knew I wanted to support the cause, but nothing I had seen so far was something I really wanted or needed. And then I found the art. An aisle off the main auditorium had been transformed into a gallery full of paintings, photography, ceramics, and drawings. And then I found something that I knew I could not live without, an iridescent collage of the view to Boston from our very own Robbins Farm Park. I was not the only one who fell under its spell, because I had to bid at least five more times after my first attempt at the silent auction. I felt a little guilty and extravagant as the bidding rose. All the time I worried that the bidding would stop on someone else's offer, as I continually raised the stakes. But I felt this artwork really was special, a dreamy array of colored papers strewn to create this landscape so familiar and yet always so inspiring. Then the clock struck and I captured the piece which had captured me.

I learned that there was a story behind the piece from the artist, Janice Hayes-Cha, who, you will not be surprised to learn, is a FORFP member. She had been ill for a time and received many beautiful "Get Well" cards. She recycled the cards to create this colorful fantasy. I love the way she has compressed this familiar scene, mixing the literal and the whimsical into the design. Scraps of the good wishes from her cards, "Thinking of You," and "love and healing," peek through the landscape and the clouds. I like to think that perhaps this place has been therapeutic to her as well, as I think it is to many of us. So I hope you enjoy this lovely dream from a field as I do. I had to have it.

. . . Continued from page 1

as the growing season unfolds. Be sure to check them out!"

The idea for the garden was a brainstorm of Oakes Plimpton, FORFP Co-Secretary, after watching Bill Moyers interview Michael Pollan about urban gardens back in December 2008. Many discussions later, the key to its happening was the entry of Alan and Elisabeth Carr-Jones and others, veterans of the Arlington Food Co-op Cooperative Garden in Patricia Watson's back yard near Spy Pond from the 1980s to 2006, for they were serious gardeners, ready to go back to work. Then Alan Jones recruited other gardeners through his gardening e-mail list—Menotomy Gardeners.

In October, the Garden Cooperative of 10 members came before the Friends, and the Board endorsed the garden project as consistent with its mission. Then the Cooperative applied to Parks and Rec. Commission for

permission to establish a garden at the park. In November by general principle, and then in December subject to details on irrigation and fencing, the garden project was accepted by the Parks and Rec. In January those details were worked out. It was agreed that the Garden be administered by the Commission, with a fee of \$75 for expenses, \$10 of that to go to Parks and Rec. Six more gardeners have been recruited, and there is still room for a few more gardeners, 20 the maximum, May 1st the deadline. The application form is on the Parks and Rec web site.

http://www.town.arlington.ma.us/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_RecNotices/01521D9E-000F8513

Come visit the Garden! Usually the cooperative will be working there Saturday mornings, but people will be there other times, with garden tours to be scheduled, samples offered, and inspiration spread about!

Welcome to Robbins Farm Park

The Kiosk is in for some sprucing up. Each side of the kiosk will have a banner similar to the one above. The headings will read "FORFP Notices," "Community Notices," and "The History of Robbins Farm Park." The community notice banner spells out the rules—notice must be dated and will be removed after one month. This keeps the boards current and tidy, and gives everybody a chance at display space.

The kiosk literature rack, which was damaged, has been removed—a new one should take its place any day now. In addition, a new history poster will be installed under the history banner.

Community Outreach News:

Community Outreach Chair, Christian Klein has organized the summer schedule (see right) with the help of event leaders for each special event. Come out and volunteer, and you will get to work with and meet a new crew for each event. Hard working volunteers last season received a handsome Robbins Farm Park mug for their participation – a tradition we hope we can continue! High school volunteers can earn Community Service credits for FORFP events, too! Email volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org.







- Spring Clean up and Park TLC – Roly Chaput & Kite Day – see Christian for free kites for volunteers!
- July 4 – Christian Klein
- Movie Night – Mona Zeffel
- Town Day – Sandy Carmichael
- Baseball Night – Elaine Backman and Jim Thompson
- Field Day – to be determined
- Bulb Planting – Mike Smith



SUMMER SCHEDULE of EVENTS:



Cut out and post on your refrigerator!

- | DATE: | EVENT: |
|--|--|
| May 2 (Sun)
 | Spring Clean-Up & Kite Day
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Kite flying in the afternoon
Bring rakes, shovels, gloves! |
| July 4 (Sun)
 | Independence Day Celebration
with the spectacular Boston
fireworks on the big screen and
live performance by the John
Penny Band—starts 6:00 pm |
| July 15 (Thur)
 | 6:30 p.m. Harvard Alumni Jazz
Band (with rain date July 22) |
| Aug 1 (Sun)
 | 5:00 p.m. Note: This year's
production of "Othello" will be at
Menotomy Rocks Park,
presented by the Rebel
Shakespeare Co. |
| Aug 21 (Fri)
 | Friday Night Flicks — 8:00 p.m.
A family movie night out,
title to be announced |
| Sept. 25 (Sat) | Arlington Town Day
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Visit the FORFP Booth for info,
hats, books, and t-shirts |
| Oct 1 (Fri) | Baseball Night!!
6:30 p.m. Picnic
BOSTON
BASEBALL
NIGHT
7:05 p.m. Game Time
An annual event
featuring your favorite
teams on the big screen |
| Oct 23 (Sat) | Field Day—an Annual Tradition!
1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Activities for the whole family |
| Nov 7 (Sun)
 | Fall Clean Up Day and Bulb
Planting 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm |

Confirm times and dates at
www.robbinsfarmpark.org



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Friends of Robbins Farm Park, Inc.*

email: friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

website: www.robbinsfarmpark.org

Harvard Alumni Jazz Band to Play on July 15

This issue's banner photo features the Harvard Alumni Jazz Band. After the success of their first concert at the park last year, they've agreed to play again this summer on Thursday, **July 15 at 6:30 p.m.** with a rain date of July 22. We are pleased to have the connection with band member Allen Feinstein, composer, music professor at Northeastern, Arlington resident, and FORFP member.

The Harvard Alumni Jazz Band is a 16-piece big band made up of avid amateur and professional musicians who are also local doctors, graduate students, business people, scientists, educators, etc. They play a wide variety of big band repertoire. Their upcoming concert will feature works by Charles Mingus, the Count Basie Orchestra, Bob Mintzer, Ray Brown, Horace Silver, Cedar Walton, and many others. Check the website for any changes due to rain.

Robbins Farm Almanac is a biannual newsletter published by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. It is also posted on our website in color. We welcome and encourage your suggestions for articles. Please write or email to the attention of the editor. If you would like to become a member, write or email the membership secretary at friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

Officers 2009-2010

*Anthony Vogel, President
Judy Leich, Vice-President,
Newsletter editor
Roly Chaput, Treasurer
Oakes Plimpton & Sandy Carmichael,
Co-Clerks/Recording Secretaries
Jim Thompson, Membership Sec'y.
Oakes Plimpton, Founder/Historian*

The Friends of Robbins Farm Park, Inc. is a community organization formed to promote the beautification, restoration, improvement and maintenance of Robbins Farm Park in Arlington Heights, Massachusetts.

FORFP is a charitable, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

We sponsor and promote cultural, educational, recreational and other community activities throughout the year. We invite active membership in the organization and seek to represent the Robbins Farm Park community.

Monthly meetings of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park are typically held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Jefferson-Cutter House in Arlington Center. Anyone may attend. Check the web site as occasionally the meeting place changes.

Don't forget to renew your membership to keep receiving the Almanac. Our spring issue contains the Summer Events Calendar.