



# Spring 2020 ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

## Note From FORFP Board President



Duke Practicing Social Distancing

For over two decades—with the support of neighbors like you—the Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) has worked as an advocate, events sponsor, and steward of our local park. Now, in the shadow of the coronavirus, our world has changed but our mission remains the same: to use the park to strengthen our community.

Usually at this time of year we announce our summer schedule. This year, sadly, in light of state and Town guidelines we have cancelled our summer events. We will continue to work with local officials to see if it will be safe to conduct some smaller events in late summer or fall. We also typically conduct our annual membership drive at this time of year.

**Given the financial stress some members face, we decided to simply extend all current memberships an additional year for free.** While we are not charging membership fees, we encourage members who are able to consider making tax-deductible donations to support our work.

*Donations may be made online at [robbinsfarmpark.org](http://robbinsfarmpark.org) or mailed to FORFP, PO Box 70013, Arlington, MA 02475.*

Although our events are on hold, other work continues. With your support, we continue to work with the Town to maintain and improve landscaping, playground equipment, park benches, and overall park conditions. We are also in the early stages of reevaluating the park's playground design and conditions, with an eye to creating a safer, more inclusive experience for all of our children. And, of course, we hope this newsletter will provide some light reading to update you on what's happening at the park. Please stay safe and enjoy the park in these trying times.

Sincerely,  
Elaine Backman



Safe and Stylish

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## Ways to Enjoy the Park While Social Distancing

by Jen Firreno and Megan Burns

Our green spaces play a vital role during the Covid-19 lockdown. My 14 year old, Isabel, says “The Park’s a stress reliever. We’re all having to merge our homes with our workplaces, which makes it essential to have a place where you can get away from everything and relax—whether that’s taking a run, sitting on the benches and looking at the skyline, listening to some music—it all helps to distract us from the anxieties we’re feeling 24/7.” Though events at the park are cancelled until further notice, there are many safe ways to enjoy the park for all ages while observing social distancing.

*(Continued, Page 2)*

## Ways to enjoy the park while social distancing:



Puddle Play

- Walk/run the perimeter (1 circuit=.5 mile)
- Fly a kite
- Roll down the hill
- Play games with your family on the basketball court:
  - Line tag (play tag, but staying on the lines painted on the court)
  - Count the lines and have children call which line to run to
  - BYO Chalk and make nice drawings for passersby
- Play in the puddles after (or during) the rain
- Bike/scoot on basketball court or pathways
- Play with your dog (and clean up after)
- Enjoy sunrise/moon rise from top of the hill
- Use Robbins house base structure to exercise (box jumps, step ups, tricep dips, etc.)
- Read a book on a blanket in the grass
- Check on progress of the vegetable garden

## Ways to think about the park when you cannot go outside:

- Build a Lego model of the playground
- Read about history of our park: *Robbins Farm Park, A Local History* [robbinsfarmpark.org/history/](http://robbinsfarmpark.org/history/)

## What other ways have you and your family been enjoying the park?

Share your thoughts/ideas/photos on the Friends of Robbins Farm Park Facebook page [@robbinsfarmpark](https://www.facebook.com/robbinsfarmpark)



The Playground in Lego

## Sandy's Sightings

*Board member Sandy Carmichael lives at the top of the park and can view activities from her house*

One thing that has struck me during this pandemic and the use of the park is the different gatherings that occur behind my house, especially on sunny days. Lots of people sit on the benches, one on either side, social distancing, just looking at the view or talking with friends. Quite often there are circles formed with people 6 feet apart, cross-legged, facing each other, sitting on the grass at the top of the park talking and laughing, enjoying one another. At the end of the day when temperatures drop, people wrap themselves individually in blankets to fend off the cold.



Sidewalk Art

It has been quite pleasant for me as I watch the activities going on. There is kite flying, skateboarding, ball tossing, bike riding, remote control cars, and remote control airplanes (one of which landed on my deck). The owner rang the doorbell, stood at the end of my front walk, and asked if I could drop it down to him from my deck (which I did). He was very grateful.

There are people walking their dogs, couples walking their toddlers, husbands and wives walking or running together, parents kicking soccer balls to their kids, a mom tossing a football to her son, people stopping to take pictures of their loved ones wearing masks with the Boston skyline in the background.

One Saturday, there was a drive-by celebration with honking horns and friends leaning out car windows, maybe celebrating the birthday of a high school age girl

who was standing at the upper end of the park here. The friend who was with her obviously staged it so she would be at that part of the park at the right time. At least 20 cars noisily drove by with hands waving and lots of “Whaaa - hoos!” being screamed out the windows. The honoree was quite excited and animated. I think her friends made her day, and it’s certainly livened up the neighborhood!

And the best “Sandy’s Sighting” yet?  
When after two long years, I watched the fence around the ballfield come down on May 21st!



The Fence Coming Down!

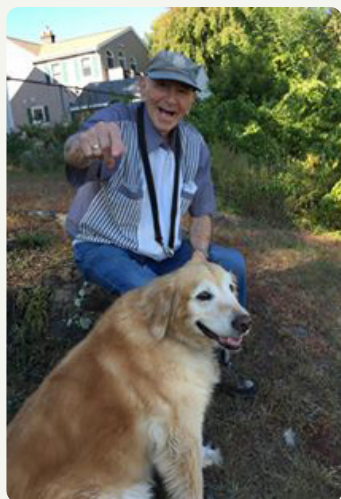
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## Robbins Farm Dog Community by Mona Zeftel

Many different communities gather at Robbins Farm Park. Dog walkers—or as someone quipped, dog standers—are just one active group. Dogs can be off leash in many Arlington parks before 9:00 am each day. At Robbins, it’s a bit more complicated: when school is in session, there’s a break for students to walk comfortably across the field from 7:30 to 8:30.

“Dog standers” gather to exercise their dogs and visit with each other before heading to work or home, making human and dog friends that can last for years. It’s a great way to connect with the neighborhood, form social connections that stretch across different ages and occupations, and discuss daily concerns: politics, life issues ... or just dogs.

WWII navy veteran and retired Cambridge police officer Mike Janokos was a longtime dog owner and congregant at Robbins: first with his golden retriever Zoe, then with his mixed breed Chase. As Mike got older and frail, people watched out for him to make sure he didn’t fall when active dogs (including his dog Chase) frolicked. Mike came to the park every morning without fail to exercise Chase and chat with many friends—the highlight of his day.



Mike and Zoe

People enjoyed Mike’s tales of the Navy, including his fighter plane flight with his *not* favorite ball player Ted Williams. Flying with Ted did not improve Mike’s opinion of him, as Mike thought football the only game worth watching. When Mike fell and couldn’t make it to the park for some weeks, dog owners started a Google group to bring Chase to the park each day. Many visited Mike at home to keep him company and bring a treat for Chase. Mike passed away this March at the age of 92 because of heart problems. His son John couldn’t keep Chase due to allergies, so sought a home for him near Robbins. Leslie and Chris Ouellette, whose dog passed away in December, were overjoyed to adopt him. John said Chase picked Leslie and wouldn’t leave her side.

Chase still visits Robbins every morning to greet his friends. For many during quarantine, it’s a safe place to gather, socially-distanced, with masks and dogs. There are always new puppies. Some play kickball soccer with a few dogs as the defenders, or watch dogs play and tumble through the chatting owners. Come join us—with or without a dog.

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## Robbins Farm Park Off-Leash Dog Hours

6-9:00am Mon-Fri (7/1-8/31)

6-7:30am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)

8:30-9:00am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)

6-8:30am Sat & Sun (4/1-6/30 & 9/1-11/15)

6-9:00am Sat & Sun (11/16-3/31 & 7/1-8/31)

Notes: If field is in use for school department activity, off-leash activity is allowed behind backstop only. Fields are generally closed to all users in wet weather. For e-mail alerts re: park and field closures, subscribe to the Field Conditions Notification e-mail list at [www.arlingtonma.gov/subscriber](http://www.arlingtonma.gov/subscriber) .

## Join Us!

Support RFP and honor the legacy of Nathan Robbins, Farmer-Philanthropist. RFP seeks to continue his tradition of bringing this community together and providing recreational space.

*Funds go towards projects, events & upkeep of our wonderful park.*

Join or renew your household membership:

1-year \$10, 3-year \$25 or special gift \$\_\_

*To Join or Donate:*

[robbinsfarmpark.org/join-donate/](http://robbinsfarmpark.org/join-donate/)

## Friends of Robbins Farm Park Mission

- Promote the beautification, restoration, & improvement of Robbins Farm Park.
- Sponsor & promote cultural, educational, recreational and other community activities.
- Invite active membership in the organization & represent the Robbins Farm Park community.

*FORFP is a 501 (c)(3) all-volunteer organization*

 **Friends of  
Robbins Farm Park**

*Membership Secretary*

*P. O. Box 750013*

*Arlington, MA 02475*



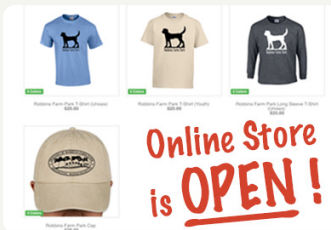
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## FORFP ONLINE MERCHANDISE STORE - JUST LAUNCHED!



- *Our online store is the place to shop for items to show your Park Spirit.*
- Purchases help support the work of our nonprofit community organization.

Ordering T-shirts and Caps is now a click away!

- Go to [friendsofrobbins.itemorder.com](http://friendsofrobbins.itemorder.com)

OR [robbinsfarmpark.org](http://robbinsfarmpark.org) and click on "STORE"

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