



# Spring 2021 ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC

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## Note From FORFP Board President



Duke awaiting the storm

What a blessing parks have been during the past year. As the threat of COVID-19 forced the closing of offices, schools, restaurants, bars, gyms, theaters, and museums, Americans flocked to public parks as never before. A recent survey reported that 59% of all adults and 68% of parents in the US claimed that access to local parks, trails, and open spaces was essential to their well-being during the pandemic.

Robbins Farm was no exception to this trend, as more people than ever visited the park this spring. Whether walking, jogging, picnicking, star gazing, playing in the playground, or using the courts and playing fields, people of all ages have attenuated COVID-19-caused frustration and boredom by taking advantage of our beloved park.

But keeping the park safe and welcoming during the pandemic required a lot of work. On behalf of the FORFP Board of Directors, I'd like to thank the following people for their extraordinary efforts this year:

- The Recreation Department, under the direction of Joe Connelly, which made necessary and significant improvements to the current playground while also beginning the planning process for a major renovation of the playground in the next few years
- The Town Public Works Department, particularly Charlotte Milan, Recycling Coordinator, who supported us during our Fall and Spring cleanups and assisted us in removing invasive weeds at the park, and Tim Lecuivre, Town Tree Warden, who arranged for the planting of new trees that will eventually create a shade canopy on the Eastern Avenue side of the Park
- The Park and Recreation Commissioners who have worked so hard to keep the Town's parks open and safe during these trying times
- Most of all, to the many, many volunteers who have swept, raked, pruned, watered trees, rebuilt the community garden fence, picked up debris, and removed bags and bags of invasive weeds at the Park this year.

To paraphrase a common saying, it takes a village to maintain a park, and we are fortunate to have had so many people contributing this year. As the pandemic wanes, we look forward to continuing to collaborate with neighbors and town officials to re-launch our events this summer. Please consider joining the fun up at the Farm!

Sincerely,  
Elaine Backman

### RFP 2021 EVENTS

- **Jul 4:** Independence Day Concert/Picnic
- **Jul 15:** Harvard Alumni Jazz Band Concert
  - **Aug 14:** Rockin' Robbins Concert
- **Aug 28:** Arlington Philharmonic Classical Concert
  - **Sep 11:** Movie Night
  - **Oct 16:** Field Day
  - **Nov 6:** Fall Cleanup Day

See FORFP website for most up-to-date schedule

## Pickleball in the Park by Tony Vogel



Tuesday night pickleball players

Go up to the basketball courts at our park and you might be surprised to see people playing a game that is definitely not basketball, and looks like a mini version of tennis or maybe a giant version of ping pong: it's actually a court game called pickleball. That's the funny name for a very social game that's become one of the fastest growing sports in the last decade.

Due to popular demand during public meetings while planning reconstruction of the park in 2017, the park's basketball court was repaved, also enabling pickleball at RFP. Three fathers in Washington State improvised the game in 1965 with materials they had on hand as a family activity, and developed it into the game it is

today. The courts are the same size as a badminton court (about half the basketball court), it's played with paddles instead of rackets, with balls that look like bright yellow wiffle balls, and mostly played in doubles. For temporary courts like at RFP a portable net can be set up in a few minutes. Arlington Recreation started a pickleball program at Hardy School last year and added the Robbins Farm Park this year. The program is run by our very own FORFP Board Member Marianne Comeau. Marianne brings her four decades of experience with Arlington Recreation to offer pickleball to players of all levels. The program—currently run on Tuesday and Thursday evenings—is so popular it has a long waiting list. You can also reserve court time on the Recreation website, but you'll have to bring your own net, paddles and balls. Come check out the game at the park and you may just get hooked!

## Quarantine Relief at the Park by Jim Hampe

Two groups bring me to Robbins Farm nearly every day: Kids and Dogs. The park is the most consistent place where our family gets out to release quarantine energy. We've built some amazing friendships—old and new, human and canine—over the past year.

In a scientific poll of some kindergarteners through second graders, the following are the top responses for “the best activities in Robbins Farm Park from spring 2020 – spring 2021, “even with masks and distancing”:

- Sledding
- Learning to swing on the big swings
- Slides
- Sports
- Rolling down hills
- Meteor Shower!
- Picnics
- Playing Stomp Rockets
- Flying kites
- Playing “Last Kids on Earth,” inspired by a current cartoon show of the same name. Some of the rules are unclear, and at best fluid, but it involves defeating zombies and monsters that roam the park, and a lot of air jumps and falling down.

I would add to that:

- While walking the dog, I get to see a lot of sunrises over Boston, in all sorts of weather.
- Walking to and from school with friends. Prying out information about the school day's goings-on seems easier in a group setting.



Jim's dog, Lemon, enjoying the

Our dog, Lemon, lights up as soon as we hit the park's edge (well, honestly sometimes a little before that if you ever see her pulling me up the end of Coolidge Road). As of this writing, she can't yet converse in human, so here is my best guess at her experience:

Within three feet of the rocks at the entrance, "yes. Yes. YES! Park. There's a ball in his pocket. I know there is a ball in his pocket! Take it out, TAKE IT OUT... yes! FETCH, TREAT. Fetch, Treat. fetch, treat. Where are my friends?! THERE THEY ARE! AAAHH!!"



Gatherers watch the full moon rise

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## News in the Park by Jen Firneno

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### *Trees, Please*



Town Public Works Department planting new trees at the park

For many years, a shade canopy stretched along the full length of Eastern Avenue at Robbins Farm Park that has thinned out over time. This winter, FORFP suggested recreating this effect and town officials were enthusiastic. Hence, in early April the town planted seven new trees there, including Lindens, Tulip trees, Hackberry and Hop Hornbeam. FORFP board members each adopted trees to water throughout this first season to ensure their healthy establishment.



Megan Burns and sons water adopted tree

### *Spring and Fall Cleanup Events*



AHS students Sparrow Sheldon & Izzy Firneno bag invasive weeds

After having to forgo our other events last year due to the pandemic, clean up days were a welcome excuse to get outside with neighbors. Each April and November, FORFP hosts a spring and fall community cleanup event, respectively. Over the years, volunteers have cleared underbrush, planted bulbs, spread wood chips, raked leaves, pruned trees, de-littered, addressed erosion, and swept the playground's walkways during our cleanups—this past year we particularly focused on removal of invasive plants. Between the spring and the fall events, we removed 59 bags of invasive plants plus 96 bags of leaves. Volunteers helped to make this possible, including many AHS students who receive community service credit towards graduation. Many thanks to all those who pitched in!

***If you are interested in volunteering for future FORFP events, email [volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org](mailto:volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org)***

### *Senior Sunrise*

On Friday, May 21st, 157 AHS Seniors gathered at Robbins Farm to enjoy the spectacular sunrise. Approved by the Arlington Parks and Recreation Committee and supported by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park, the event aimed to help the senior class reconnect with each other and reflect on their past four years at AHS, as well as think about the next chapter of their lives. We wish them all the best as they move on to the next stage.



Candles light the path to Senior Sunrise

# 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).

## SPONTANEOUS MUSIC IN THE PARK

Stanley Pollack and his wife moved to the top edge of Robbins Farm Park in 1988. In recent years, Stanley formed a classic rock music band called the Undercovers with 3 friends. On March 14, 2020, they were scheduled to play at a First Parish fundraiser for over 400 people. The Monday before, Stanley got a call from a friend stating he had a moral responsibility to cancel the event due to COVID (most of you will recognize this friend as none other than Robin-Schoenthaler-the-Boston-cancer-doctor-who-writes-about-Covid). They did cancel it, likely preventing a superspreader event, and thus began quarantine life.

Stanley and a bandmate started to practice on his back porch, (which overlooks the park), where they could social distance outside and still play together. Soon the whole group joined in. They let some friends know when they were playing and folks started coming to listen and dance on the park side of the fence while socially distanced. Thus it happened half a dozen times during the summer that the Undercovers gave the gift of music to park-goers when people most needed a way to safely get out and find joy. As Stanley says, "music is a non-contact sport."

### Join Us!

Support RFP and honor the legacy of Nathan Robbins, Farmer-Philanthropist. FORFP 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 a gift of your choice \$\_\_

[Join or Donate Now](#)

Go to [robbinsfarmpark.org](http://robbinsfarmpark.org)

& click on "JOIN/DONATE" at the top of any page

### 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 ONLINE MERCHANDISE STORE

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 [robbinsfarmpark.com](http://robbinsfarmpark.com) & click on "STORE" at the top of any page



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