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Urban Forest Project Coordinator and Data Manager

MARGARET MILLER  
Urban Forest Project Director and Grant Coordinator

RACHEL SKYLIS  
Parks Alive Program Manager
our mission

A Breath of Fresh Air for Grand Rapids Parks & Trees

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks is an independent, citizen led, nonprofit organization founded in 2008, working closely with but separate from the City, with the mission to identify specific projects, mobilize people, and generate resources to protect, enhance, and expand the city’s parks, public spaces, and urban forest.
2016 in review

Budget spending

- 65% on programs
- 10% on fundraising
- 25% on management & administration
2016 STATS

- hosted 2,300 volunteers for over 5,000 volunteer hours
- planted 684 trees
- celebrated 16 new citizen foresters
- hosted 45 volunteer park and tree events
- 14 citizen forester classes
- 12 community presentations & 10 special events
- 8 parks alive leaders classes
- 8 new parks alive leader graduates

collaborated with Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation to help reach 5,200 for community input into the Parks & Recreation strategic master plan
The Grand Rapids Urban Forest Project seeks to engage the entire community in growing a larger, healthier urban forest.

2016 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: *Inaugural Mayor's Greening Initiative Tree Planting*

On October 28, 2016, 500 volunteers planted 300 trees throughout Grand Rapids in under 3 hours in the kick-off event for the Mayor’s Greening Initiative. This inaugural event was a partnership between Friends of Grand Rapids Parks’ Urban Forest Project and the City of Grand Rapids, and set a new record for FGRP for both total trees planted and volunteers engaged in one event.

One of the primary goals of the Mayor’s Greening Initiative is to plant trees in areas of the City suffering from low canopy cover. This years’ planting focused on increasing the number of trees along freeway entrance and exit ramps for I-196 and US131.

The event honored Richard and Helen DeVos for their contributions to Grand Rapids, paying tribute to their inspiring years of city building by installing a tribute grove in their honor.

The planting was made possible thanks to generous support from the Employee’s Community Improvement Fund at Amway Corporation.

In 2017, The Mayor’s Greening Initiative will support FGRP’s annual celebration of Arbor Day with a neighborhood tree planting event on April 28, 2017.
Parks Alive seeks to reclaim and sustain parks through volunteerism, sponsorship, and community leadership.

2016 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: **BBQ & Beautify Series**

The concept for the first-annual BBQ & Beautify series was simple: we’d bring our tools, grilling gear, hot dogs, and yard games to a neighborhood park on a summer evening and invite community members to join us.

From May through September of 2016, the series visited six different parks throughout Grand Rapids, including Garfield, Ken-O-Sha, Sigsbee, Richmond, Joe Taylor, and Martin Luther King.

Each event engaged neighbors, Citizen Foresters, and Parks Alive Leaders alike in a park spruce-up or tree maintenance project, allowing both seasoned and novice FGRP volunteers to gain hands-on experience with our parks and forestry tools. Following the work project, everyone celebrated together over veggie burgers and hot dogs.

FGRP Board members manned the grills, staff members played Frisbee with neighborhood kids, and everyone engaged in meaningful conversations about the parks system. Topics included safety issues, favorite memories, neighborhood goals, and big-scale park dreams. The series engaged dozens of community members per event and over 130 volunteers total.

BBQ & Beautify 2016 was made possible with support from Kent County Health Connect, Doorganics, Open Systems Technologies, and West Michigan Credit Union. BBQ & Beautify will return for a second season in the late spring of 2017.
"I love volunteering with FGRP & the Urban Forest Project because of the opportunity to be involved with the community, both by protecting and revitalizing our parks and by planting trees in our urban spaces."

heather bell — volunteer
Volunteers are the rockstars of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks.

They’re the ones who do the heavy lifting—sometimes quite literally—around here. They dig the holes for new trees, pick up the trash in our parks, and help our staff haul tools and tables and bins full of event materials to and from our cars. Their service and dedication is humbling, and we’re deeply grateful for every single volunteer who’s ever worked with us to improve our City’s parks and green spaces.

For her service in 2016, we’re shining a spotlight on Heather Bell. Heather is a certified Citizen Forester and a Parks Alive Leader. In 2016, she put in a whopping 115 volunteer hours. Thank you, Heather!
get involved

VOLUNTEER
Email us at info@friendsofgrparks.org to sign up

BECOME A CITIZEN FORESTER OR PARKS Alive LEADER
Email Daria at dariafriendsofgrparks.org for Citizen Forester info
Email Rachel at rachelfriendsofgrparks.org for PAL info

STAY CONNECTED
Follow us on Facebook @friendsofgrparks or Twitter @friendsGRparks
Subscribe to our monthly newsletter at friendsofgrparks.org

BECOME A FRIEND
Make a donation of any amount at friendsofgrparks.org/donate

ATTEND AN EVENT
Visit our events calendar at friendsofgrparks.org/events
thank you partners & sponsors
loyal friends
ITC
West Michigan Tree Services*
Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge*

best friends
616 Lofts*
Advance Packaging Corporation
BISSELL Inc.*
Envirotech Outdoor*
Grand Rapids Brewing Company
Sid Jansma Jr.*
Stacey and Nate Koetje
Emily Loeks*
Meijer*
Elizabeth and Mark Murray
Open Systems Technologies*
Grant Pecor

Pfeiffer Lincoln Mercury*
Southland Auto Wash*

great friends
Caroline Beall
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan*
Brewery Vivant*
Brent Carey
Cascade Engineering*
Chemical Bank*
CHOP*
Clark Hill PLC*
Doreen Cleveland
Consumers Energy*
Custer Office Environments*
The Davey Tree Expert Company
Erhardt Construction*
Experience Grand Rapids*
Farmhaus Cider Co.*
Laurie and Don Gardner*
Suzy Gill
Grand Rapids Public Schools*
Grand Valley State University*
Gravel Bottom Craft Brewery
The Green Well
Diane Griffin
Mark Holzbach and Dana
Friis-Hansen
Rebecca Smith-Hoffman and
Jack Hoffman
John D. Hunting
Hyde Creative*
Jane and Bob Lang
Karen and Bill Lawrence
Jaimie and Mike Lomonaco*
Elizabeth Welch and Jerry
Lykins
Traci Montgomery*
Lee Mueller*
Ric Mueller

Valerie B. Nelson
Timothy O'Rourke
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