



## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

### *Long Time President Mac Wilson is Stepping Down . . .*

The Conservancy welcomes a new President this fall, as Mac Wilson has decided to step down from that role after serving for nearly twenty-five years. Since initially joining the board of directors in the mid-1990s, Mac created a legacy of accomplishments far too lengthy to describe in detail - the highlights alone are remarkable in themselves.

Mac's most notable achievement is the expansion of the Conservancy's network of nature preserves, beginning with the establishment of the Cedar Hollow Preserve in 1999. Mac joined Governor Tom Ridge and other dignitaries in Malvern as Ridge signed Pennsylvania's initial Growing Greener act into law. The Conservancy received the first-ever Growing Greener grant, enabling the acquisition of the new preserve, now one of our most popular.

Following that momentous occasion, Mac oversaw significant additions to Cedar Hollow and to the Diamond Rock Preserve, with smaller additions to the Airdrie Forest Preserve as well. Most recently, Mac was instrumental in acquiring ownership of the Conservancy's newest property in East Whiteland Township, to be opened as the 11 acre Valley Hill Preserve in 2023.

Less visible, but still very important, The Conservancy achieved accreditation By the Land Trust Alliance in early 2022. This substantial accomplishment means that We meet the same levels of operational and financial proficiency as the largest land trusts in the country. Mac and the other Conservancy officers played a key role in this multi-year initiative, which should pay dividends for years to come.

The Conservancy's volunteer opportunities expanded greatly under Mac's leadership, particularly with the introduction of the popular Vine Days program to manage invasive species throughout the Preserve system. Mac is especially pleased to have volunteer assistance at the Diamond Rock Preserve, where he has served as Preserve Manager for many years.

Lastly, Mac has ushered in a rebranding of the Conservancy's public image, with bolder new signs and online presence to increase our visibility in the community and reinforce the role we play in preserving native habitats and protecting water quality. In addition to his administrative role in chairing meetings, recruiting new board members, managing fundraising and insurance, and serving as the public face of the organization, Mac has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the long-term success of the Conservancy.

Now retired as a partner in a local insurance agency, Mac plans to remain on the board, enjoy time with family at his lake house in New York, and continue to share his love of the outdoors with his wife Kathy and their grandchildren. *Tim Lander*



*Former President Mac Wilson, and new President Tim Lander*

## **... Tim Lander Becomes New Conservancy President**

Following Mac's decision to step away from his leadership role, the board elected Tim Lander as his successor in October. Tim has served on the Conservancy board since 2004, having volunteered in the preserves for several years prior to that. He spent ten years as board secretary and has been the preserve manager for the Airdrie Forest Preserve since 2006. He recently chaired the Accreditation Committee, which provided him with excellent insight into all operational aspects of the Conservancy, particularly in the areas of governance and finance. A Main Line native, now retired from a career as a software industry executive, Tim also serves as treasurer of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society and president of the Friends of the Chester Valley Trail. He and his wife Karen live in Paoli, in a home adjacent to the Airdrie Forest Preserve. He looks forward to building on Mac's legacy and sustaining the Conservancy's track record of protecting native habitat in the Valley Creek watershed. *Tim Lander*

## **Scouts to the Rescue . . . Again!**

***We salute and thank Paoli 1, for their considerable efforts in service to our community by improving our open space and access to it - these projects exhibit the Conservancy's long partnership with the local Scouting community.***



Scout Troop, Paoli 1, led by Will Cochran of Strafford, completed an Eagle Scout project in Cool Valley Preserve. They built boardwalks to cross the gullies and wetlands created by storm water drainage on the trail in the South Meadow. They also cleared brush and debris from the less trafficked trailhead off Windswept Drive and cleared a wide swath of invasive Japanese barberry on the Loop Trail sloping to Valley Creek. Barberry was commonly used in residential landscaping poses a major threat to existing native flora - its commercial sale in Pennsylvania has now been banned permanently. *Bob Schuster*

Eagle Scout candidate Nathanael "Na" Chen completed a project in the western section of the Airdrie Forest Preserve. Increased stormwater runoff over the past few years created an erosion channel across the trail near the creek that runs through West Airdrie. The storms of fall 2022 resulted in enough additional erosion that trail safety was compromised. Na and his fellow Scouts from Troop Paoli 1 erected a small footbridge to carry the trail over the gully, with a handrail to provide increased security for trail users. The team also added a waterbar to divert runoff away from the trail, as well as a check dam within the gully itself. The latter structure is intended to impede stormwater and lessen the scouring that occurs with heavy rainfalls. Na did a great job in designing the project and managing it to completion. *Tim Lander*



## **OLC Welcomes A New Office Manager: Amy Saylor**

Amy Saylor was raised in Audubon, PA. She is a graduate of Methacton High School and Temple University. She moved to Chester County in 2016 with her husband and 2 small children to a property that borders Valley Creek Preserve. She is active with the PTO at Valley Forge Middle School and a committee member at BSA Troop Devon 50. Amy has been a member of the OLC since 2016 and began working for the OLC at the beginning of 2022 as the Office Manager. Amy enjoys kayaking and hiking with her family and is a frequent visitor to many of the OLC Preserves.



## Bluebird Paradise!

*You have probably seen many birdhouses in our Preserves. These have been built, placed and maintained by Mary Trometer. Here is her story . . .*



My inspiration in working in bluebird conservation came from my sister who worked tirelessly for many years in New York state to build and place nesting boxes throughout her county where the population was at risk due to habitat loss. Habitat loss is the single biggest factor in the decline of bluebirds due to the clearing of land and the cutting down of old trees for housing, commercial developments, highways and agriculture. Wooden fence posts that historically had provided nesting cavity opportunities have been replaced with metal posts. With these changes, the supply of natural nesting cavities for bluebirds and other native cavity nesters has been greatly reduced. Habitat loss was also compounded by the introduction into North America of two imported species—the European Starling and the House Sparrow (not to be confused with sparrows that are native to North America, such as the Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, etc.). Both starlings and House Sparrows are cavity nesters and will aggressively chase away or kill bluebirds.

I first encountered our local population at the Lorimer preserve one winter several years ago. Our preserves are ideal environments for the bluebird as they provide wide open prairie like fields for food sources and nesting. As bluebirds they feed on

remain in our area year round insects in the summer and depend on wild berries in the winter. They will also come to feeders for mealworms and seeds yearlong but especially in winter. Our open fields with scattered trees and low or sparse ground cover are ideal habitats along with the fence line, wires, tree branches, or other sites where bluebirds can perch to search for food.

Bluebirds are cavity nesters and the boxes we have put out fit their specific needs for location, size and access for the birds. The boxes must be located in an open field area and the opening must be no more than 100ft from a tree, fence or bush in order for the newly born fledglings to reach a safe location when they emerge from the nesting boxes.

The bluebird makes a nest entirely of grass shaped like a sock so that the eggs sit at the bottom of the nesting box. They typically build their nest in late March to early April and lay their eggs (4-5) in the middle of April. The bluebirds generally hatch within 17 days of the first egg being laid and leave the nest 16-21 days after hatching.

They often compete with the tree swallows for the boxes so I generally place at least 2 boxes close to one another to allow for both bluebirds and tree swallows to nest (this is particularly true near the Lorimer pond). The boxes need to be monitored during breeding season for any issues and then cleaned out in late fall/early winter of all nesting material. The birds will often use the boxes for roosting in the winter during storms or very cold weather.

There are now 58 boxes spread out between Lorimer, Valley Creek and Cool Valley preserves. Many of the boxes were donated by Uhler's Seed and Feed at 160 Lancaster Ave in Malvern. We continue to review the best placement of the boxes and add additional ones every year based on the results of the nests. Please look for our beautiful bluebirds as you walk through the preserves – especially in the sunny mornings. Their color is outstanding.

If you have any interest in learning more about these beautiful birds and the conservation efforts and studies underway please go to the following websites:

*The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania* <http://www.thebsp.org/>

*North American Bluebird Society* <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>





P.O. Box 1031, Paoli, PA 19301



### Vine Days Begin January 14!

Check your email and  
the website.

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Amy Saylor

#### Emeritus Board Members

- Katharine A. E. Campbell
- Robert W. Haver



### *Holiday Greetings to All!*

*Please consider a year-end  
donation that will help keep  
our Treasures Secure!*

*And thanks to those who have  
already donated!*

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