Thanks OLPA After Five Years of Service

By Kirk Elifson, President

Nearly six years ago I volunteered to work with OLPA on a Sunday afternoon and that quickly led to my current role as president. About five years ago, I came into the position as a relatively knowledgeable gardener who knew little about parks. As I look back, a blur of adventures, challenges and new friends followed.

Full of excitement, I enthusiastically stepped up to the plate. The progress made by OLPA since its inception in 1997 until 2008 had been monumental. Humbly I accepted the challenge of being its next leader. So much had been accomplished that I wondered what remained for my colleagues and me to do. Two days into my presidency, a car careened off Ponce de Leon and sheared the first of many lovely light posts. We were frequently confronted with one-hundred-year-old trees that went into decline and fell or had to be felled. A sinkhole that could swallow a tractor opened overnight near the Springdale playground. Paths collapsed and barricades were erected.

George Ickes, our current park director who at the time was our sole employee, needed more than a wheelbarrow, shovel, and rake. A used gator tractor along with chain saws, blowers, power trimmers, fertilizer, weed retardants, and much more were acquired to tackle the challenges we faced. These demands raised our attention and quickly brought to the forefront the importance of community fund raising support. Volunteers needed to be mobilized and guided. The repeated droughts required that we move from hand watering with a hose to a more advanced irrigation system – funds provided by supporters of OLPA made this possible. Space to store our equipment was provided by Paideia School and the Hari Krishna’s, each of which are located along a park segment.

Ongoing dialogues about our Olmsted Park and its segments resulted in a branding effort of the six segments. Easy as this may seem, our historical park designation required that we seek permission from a maze of commissions. As George and volunteers worked in the park, frequent questions arose about the name of trees and plantings. Sometimes we knew the answers, but other times we did not or disagreed. Botanical markers were added. The Fernbank Museum of Natural History helps provide us with an office space in one of their lovely homes next to their museum.

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What’s Happening in the Park?

By George Ickes, Park Director

You might think fall and winter seasons would be quiet and inexpensive times in our linear park. Not so! It’s really OLPA’s most intensive and expensive time of year, requiring over 60% of our total park maintenance budget. Here are just a few major expenditures beyond normal every day expenses.

Lawn Care: aeration; application of lime and fertilizer; over-seeding of grass = $15,000.

Tree Trimming: Thanks to the generosity of Arborguard, our trees are trimmed by them at 1/3 of the regular price, but still cost us $10,000.

Annual Planting Program: OLPA goes way beyond typical City and County care of the Park. We replace dead plants and trees and install many shrubs, plants, and other material = $12,000

Repairs: OLPA makes necessary repairs during the winter when the Park’s usage is lowest causing the least disruption to users = $8,000

Major Repairs: It is already time to reseal and repair our paths costing $50,000 or more. If you know of someone or an organization that would like to help support this effort, please contact us.

Sadly, Olmsted Linear Park lost more trees and shrubs than usual this past year. Four street trees were struck by motorists and did not survive their clash. The Deepdene segment — basically an urban forest — was hit hard with the loss of giant white oaks. For every tree lost to accident, wind, or disease, OLPA plants two replacement trees. While the Linear Park’s beds are nearly full, OLPA still must replace lost plants. This year, excess rain caused many shrubs to die, and thanks to membership contributions, these will be replaced.

Volunteer effort is increasing in the Linear Park. Some of our new volunteers are fulfilling community service obligations for their school, club, or company. A volunteer group of eight from a business helped out last month in their first community service project and can’t wait to come back. We also started a very special work program with our neighbor, the Frazer Center (see featured article).

Come out and meet your neighbors and other park members as we work together to keep our park clean and green! Saturday, November 16, 2013, 9-11 a.m. more at www.AtlantaOlmstedPark.org.

Partnering with Our Neighbor – The Frazer Center

By MacKensie Garrett, Volunteer & Communications Coordinator, Frazer Center

We are so thrilled to partner with Atlanta’s Olmsted Linear Park! Involvement in the community is such an integral aspect of the Frazer Center’s Adult Program. Each week, adult participants have the opportunity to go out into the community for a variety of volunteer and community engagement activities. Participants that are interested have the opportunity to select supported and customized employment opportunities that fit within their passions, talents and goals. During their weekly visits to Olmsted Linear Park, our adult participants gain valuable job coaching and hands-on experience working directly with the Park leadership to ensure a beautiful, safe and enjoyable space for the community.

The Frazer Center is an inclusive community where people at all levels of ability and disability gather, learn and flourish together. Over the past 64 years, we have grown from serving seven children with cerebral palsy to now annually serving over 260 children (both with and without disabilities) and over 130 adults with a variety of disabilities through our Child Development Program and Adult Program.

Our Adult Program provides opportunities to individuals with disabilities in the area of education and work training.

Far Left, George Ickes and to his left Frazer Center Volunteers with team lead Kortney Chitman at far right.

as well as providing their families with vital resources. As a Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) accredited program, we strive to create an environment where everyone can gather, learn, and flourish together. For many adults, this may meaningful, paid employment in the community; for others, a meaningful volunteer opportunity may be of interest, while still others may wish to travel into the community with to enjoy time with friends.

Should you know of any community opportunities for our adults, please contact us at info@frazercenter.org or visit our website: www.frazercenter.org.
Thanks OLPA continued

Thanks to many of you, OLPA was able to add annually 300-500 new plantings. The playground has been repaired. On a more operational level, a successful donor appreciation campaign was launched, the budget was stabilized, the board revitalized, and Alex McCray was appointed as OLPA’s first Executive Director.

At this end of this calendar year, I will be stepping down as OLPA president, but will continue working with OLPA. The experience has been powerful; the connections with people inspiring, and the future full of promise. Many thanks to all of you.

OLPA Board and Advisory Council

OLPA welcomes our new Advisory Council members Justin Critz and Mary Reilly. Also featured in this newsletter is Gale Walldorff, who after serving on the OLPA board now serves on the Advisory Council.

Justin A. Critz

A native of Atlanta, Justin A. Critz grew up in the Druid Hills neighborhood. He attended The Out of Doors School and Pace Academy. After two years at Emory University, he transferred to Brown University, where he earned his B.A. with Honors in Classics. Justin next spent five years in post-graduate studies in Classics at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago before opting for law school back at Emory. Justin graduated from Emory Law in 2008 with Honors. Immediately after the bar examination, Justin began work as interim staff attorney to a Fulton County Superior Court Judge. After his time with the Court, Justin began his own general civil practice in an office near his home.

Justin resides in Druid Hills, the neighborhood he knew he wanted to return to. He lives on Fairview Road with his wife, Robin and four daughters. Justin is currently the President of the Druid Hills Civic Association.

Mary Laney Reilly

Mary is currently president of the RFP Fund, which supports local and regional non-profits with a particular emphasis on education and social justice. Previously she worked at a refugee resettlement agency in Atlanta, in sponsorship development. Her work as a community volunteer has included ESL tutoring, recruitment and management of volunteers, planning events, and fundraising. She has served on several non-profit boards and currently sits on the board of the Dewees Island Conservancy, which promotes the conservation of the barrier island in South Carolina. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the Task Force for Global Health. She recently completed two terms on the board of directors of Georgia Organics, where she served as Secretary and chaired the Nominations Committee. She co-chaired Candler’s Committee of 100 from 2010 – 2013. Mary received a BA in English from Emory University, and then a Masters in Theological Studies from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. From 1983 to 1985, Mary served with her husband, Wendell, in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic. She is an active member of Druid Hills United Methodist Church and has three grown children.

Gale Walldorff

As a County Commissioner, homeowner, teacher and neighborhood advocate, Gale Walldorff is an experienced voice in DeKalb County community affairs. Serving as Commissioner for District 2 for 14 years, she was elected Presiding Officer and chaired zoning hearings, made committee appointments, and was responsible for the daily administration of the Board of Commissioners. She chaired the Budget, Audit, and Land Use Committees – which enabled her to partner with OLPA to allocate bond funds for restoration of the parks. She currently uses her expertise in county finance as a member of the pension board, overseeing one billion dollars in funds.

In addition to her official duties, Walldorff served as a past board member for Mexican Center of Atlanta, the Emory Board of Visitors, and the Georgia Center for Children. She was a member of the 1995 Leadership DeKalb class and listed in the International Who’s Who of Professionals for 1996. She is a founding member and a past president of CAUTION - the neighborhood group that fought successfully to maintain the integrity of Druid Hills and preserved the Olmsted parks.

Walldorff resides in the home she purchased in Druid Hills in 1976 with her husband Andy Hall. She has a Masters from SUNY of Buffalo and enjoys urban foraging, travel, and hiking in the Olmsted linear park system.
SAVE THE DATE!
Sunday, February 16, 2014

This is the evening the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance will celebrate Frederick Law Olmsted’s Atlanta masterpiece, the Olmsted Linear Park, at the 10th Annual Dream in Green Gala. The gala will be held at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History from 6:30-10:00 pm. We are pleased to announce that Sam and Nancy Williams will be our Honorary Chairs and will join us in presenting our FREDrick Law Olmsted Award. This award is the highest honor given by OLPA and this year we are proud to announce that the award will be presented to the Fernbank Museum of Natural History for their many years of support and commitment to the rehabilitation of the Park.

Mark your calendars and join us for an evening of sumptuous hors d’oeuvres, signature cocktails, elegant wines, great live music, and dancing! The festivities will include live and silent auctions and raffle featuring exotic trips, luxurious vacation homes, fine art, exquisite jewelry, and more — including many items from popular local artists. This year, we will explore Italy’s celebrated treasures by featuring Italian villas, wines and cuisine.

A Talk in the Park
By Alex McCray

OLPA has inaugurated a new program, “Talk in the Park” that will be held quarterly. Our guided tour of the first four segments of the Olmsted Linear Park took place on June 23 and was led by Jennie Richardson and George Ickes. George “talked” about the 14-year renovation of the park; names of trees and plant material; and the challenges each season brings to such a large maintenance project; Jennie “talked” about the history of the park prior to its rehabilitation; the threat of a major expressway through and near the park; and some of the history of the families that chose to build homes along the park. The enclosed photo shows some of the participants in this first tour.

The next tour will be of the last two segments of the Linear Park: Dellwood and Deepdene. Our guides will continue pointing out interesting plant material and concentrate on the unique urban forest that comprises Deepdene. Along the way, we’ll discuss erosion issues, installation of new native plants; management of the forest; and elimination of non-native invasives. These topics will assist you in developing and caring for your own home landscape. George is the Park Director for OLPA and Jennie is a former board member and a Georgia Master Gardener, DeKalb County.

The next “Talk in the Park” will take place on Saturday, November 9, 2-3:30 p.m. To reserve a place, call the OLPA office at 404.377.5361 or email at AtlantaOlmstedPark@gmail.com. The tour is free to members; non-members $10. Meet at the corner of South Ponce de Leon and Clifton Road – southeast side of Clifton. All of the paths in Dellwood are handicapped accessible and some of the trails in Deepdene are also. If you have special needs, please let us know when you register. Wear sensible shoes for walking and clothing appropriate to the weather. Drinking water is not available in this area of the park, so bring your own. In the event of rain, ice, snow, or tornadoes, the tour will be rescheduled for the next Saturday in November – the sixteenth.
The McClatchey House

By Jennifer J. Richardson

The home at 1788 Ponce de Leon that OLPA uses for its offices is owned by Fernbank, Inc. Fernbank also owns two of the six segments of Olmsted Linear Park: Dellwood and our most recently rehabilitated segment, Deepdene, a 22-acre forest within the city. Marvin M. Davies, of the Foote and Davies Printing Company, bought the lot for what is now called the McClatchey House in 1912 and the house was built in 1913. It’s the oldest one on the block. Later residents included the Samuel Brodnax family and the Grainger Hansell family. Mr. Hansell founded the Hansell and Post law firm and served on the Emory University Board of Trustees. William McWhorter was a later resident. He was vice president of the DeKalb New Era newspaper and also served as a state representative and senator. The house became the property of Fernbank, Inc. around 1979.

A women’s club meeting in front of the McClatchey House. Photo provided by Sally Hansell the granddaughter of the second owners of the house in the 3rd and 4th decade, Sally and Granger Hansell.

The architect of the home is not known, but it exhibits design elements taken from the Italian Renaissance Style — especially the front façade — as well as American “Prairie” style popularized by Frank Lloyd Wright. Both these styles carry over into the interior. The home has beams in the living room, and sun porches on either end of the structure. The wall between the western sunroom and dining room has been taken out, making one large room that OLPA uses for board meetings. An open staircase leads to the second floor that is currently not in use.

OLPA is grateful to Fernbank for leasing this home to OLPA at an attractive rate allowing OLPA to have office, storage, and meeting space. Thanks to several special donors, OLPA and Fernbank have been slowly renovating the inside of the home to restore its illustrious beginnings. The house is now known as the “McClatchey House”— named not after a prior resident, but after a generous donor to and trustee of Fernbank. OLPA is extremely grateful to Fernbank for its continued generous support and partnership.

Join us at one of OLPA’s House Gathering Events

By Julie Ralston

As an engaged neighbor and Vice President for the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance, I’m pleased to announce our new OLPA House Gatherings to introduce local residents to the significant impact Olmsted Linear Park has as the “Green Heart” of our Druid Hills community.

Our inaugural event was held on September 8 at OLPA’s office located on Ponce de Leon near Fernbank Museum of Natural History. Rob and Stephanie Benfield and Krista Brewer hosted the reception to congratulate OLPA’s new Executive Director, Alex McCray, and to introduce our current board members and advisory council members.

On September 13, Gale Walldorff, former DeKalb County Commissioner and current OLPA Advisory Council member, along with her husband Andy Hall, hosted a reception at their delightful home off of East Lake.

On September 15, OLPA board members Carolyn Hall and Gloria Seymour held a reception at Gloria’s beautiful home located on North Ponce de Leon where our most recently completed revitalized park, Deepdene, is located.

Join your neighbors at the next gathering to learn how you can become engaged with OLPA and the Park to sustain this valuable, historical Atlanta asset. To register, visit www.AtlantaOlmstedPark.org.
Why I love Olmsted Linear Park

By Sandra Stewart Kruger

When I moved into Druid Hills ten years ago, I was excited to hear about the ongoing restorations in the Olmsted Linear Park. I could always be found tromping around in the woods as a child so I was not surprised to feel a strong connection to Deepdene, an urban forest. I just wish these old oaks could talk: imagine the stories they would tell.

It is a privilege to be part of a community that treasures this beautiful greenspace. Working one Sunday morning with George Ickes, OLPA’s Park Director, cleaning signs and cutting back invasive plants, I gained a greater appreciation for all the work that goes into maintaining the Park. Now, I run and walk through the Park every chance I get. Each season brings something new and observing its transformation has been amazing, and watching others enjoy this greenspace as much as I do is inspiring. Supporting OLPA is a great opportunity for my husband and me to give back to a community that gives us so much beauty and entertainment. I look forward to spending many more days running with AnnaBelle around Olmsted Linear Park.

Legacy Leader

By Carolyn Hall

I will never forget the first time I saw the linear park along Ponce de Leon. I was a student at Georgia State in the seventies, and had to go to the Cerebral Palsy School, now the Frazer Center, for a school project. Having never traveled to this area of Atlanta before, I was amazed by the beauty of the greenspace along such a busy street. That night, I went home raving about the Park to my husband Billy. Never did I imagine that one day we would be fortunate enough to live across the street from Deepdene, a 22-acre urban forest, one of the six segments of Olmsted Linear Park. With the Fernbank Forest behind us and Deepdene across the street, we feel like we live in the best setting that Atlanta has to offer. The recent rehabilitation of the Park has solved erosion problems, made the park more accessible, and the stone bridges and tree log benches have added considerable charm.

Deepdene is often full of families playing with their children and neighbors socializing in the mead as well as hikers enjoying a brief hike through a part of Metro Atlanta’s oldest growth forest. Billy and I take regular walks in the park with our dog, Oliver, and four granddaughters. We feel a deep sense of responsibility to be a Legacy Member of Olmsted Linear Park Alliance and are honored to help preserve the Park for the present and the future.

OLPA Store

Featured in this Issue – The Original 1905
Fredrick Law Olmsted, Sr. Map of the Park

Would you like to have a copy of the original map designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted, Sr.? With a $250 membership you will receive an unframed copy of the map. With a $500 membership you will receive a framed copy of the map.

This is a masterful reproduction of the original 1905 map of the Park designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted, Sr. for Joel Hurt as part of the Druid Hills subdivision. Size is 29” x 13 ½”.

For more information or to order a map (framed $150 or unframed $50), please email AtlantaOlmstedPark@gmail.com or call 404.377.5361. Make sure we have your phone number and email address so we can make arrangements to order your map along with framing for pickup at the OLPA office located at 1788 Ponce de Leon Ave.
New Sponsors, Donors and Members

June 1 - September 30, 2013

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Yes!

I’d like to support Olmsted Linear Park, designed in 1893 by Fredrick Law Olmsted. The Olmsted Linear Park Alliance was established as a nonprofit organization to sustain this unique historical and cultural Atlanta asset for generations to come.

Name __________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________   Phone _________________________________________

Email __________________________________________________________________

Yes/No: E-newsletter also/instead? (circle one)

Membership Categories

- $35 Individual Member
- $250 Silver member Level*
- $250 sponsors a Dogwood Tree
- $250 or more you will receive a framed 1905 OLPA replica map.

- $50 Family Member
- $500 Gold Level Member*
- $500 sponsors a Hickory Tree

- $100 Bronze Level Member
- $1,000 Platinum Level Member*
- $1,000 sponsors a large caliper Oak
- Please check here if you would like us to arrange for your annual contribution with monthly installments.
- Become a Legacy Leader by pledging $1,000 a year for 5 years.

* A membership of $250 or more will allow you to be recognized in our virtual park on our website as a tree sponsor. (Currently under construction)

Thank you for your donation! Your donation is tax deductible. OLPA is a 501(C) 3 nonprofit organization.