OLPA Announces New Executive Director

By Kirk Elifson, President

After an extensive search process that resulted in attracting 80 candidates, we are excited to announce our new Executive Director, Alex McCray. Alex comes to OLPA with many years of experience in the environmental arena. He was most recently active in helping cities and businesses throughout the Southeast to implement global clean technology solutions to advance the U.S. economy and green jobs. Previously he served Mayor Shirley Franklin as the City of Atlanta’s Director of Environmental Affairs. His most recent achievements include being recognized as an Official OSEC Expert member of “The Pool of Experts” and Atlanta Business Chronicle’s Environmental Innovation Finalist for 2012. He has served on many boards and committees in the Atlanta community and currently serves on the Keep Atlanta Beautiful Advisory Board and the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Steering Committee.

OLPA Highlighted on Sidewalk Radio

By Alex McCray

Just days into my new job at OLPA, I had the opportunity to watch our longtime board member and OLPA News editor Jennie Richardson as she was interviewed by Gene Kansas for his Sidewalk radio show, held April 22 in honor of Earth Day. The live vocal taping of “City in a Forest” featured Atlanta’s magnificent tree coverage.

Microphones didn’t intimidate Jennie as she is often interviewed as a local Olmsted historian. She smiled as she discussed Olmsted’s “paintings” that use landscape materials, and the significance for Atlantans to have their very own Olmsted Park.

Fascinated, I listened intently as she spoke of the long history of Druid Hills, built by Joel Hurt, and later Asa Candler. Joel Hurt commissioned Fredrick Law Olmsted to design Druid Hills, which would be the last of Olmsted’s suburban designs: the only one in the Deep South.

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PBS Film
Frederick Law Olmsted

By Jennifer J. Richardson

In a previous OLPA News, it was announced that the Olmsted Linear Park is one of several Olmsted projects in the United States to be featured in a Florentine Films production. Produced by WNED-TV, Buffalo/Toronto, Florentine Films, and Hott Productions, “Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America” is in the final stages of editing.

In a press release issued by WNED, it was written that “To Frederick Law Olmsted, a park was both a work of art and a necessity for urban life. Olmsted’s work to preserve nature created an ‘environmental ethic’ decades before the environmental movement became a force in American life.”

In the meantime, OLPA remains honored to be a small part of the PBS documentary. Supporters of the Olmsted Linear Park remind everyone how extraordinary it is for the City of Atlanta to have this work of art in our midst.

OLPA Highlighted on Sidewalk Radio

OLMPA Voted Creative Loafing 2012 Best Leisurely Stroll
Thanks Atlanta!
What’s Happening in the Park?

By George Ickes, Park Director

This is a wonderful time of year to view things blooming in the park. Each week we upload stunning photos on our Facebook page. Like us and see what’s blooming. Last year we added 2,500 yellow daffodils in the park and the teachers and students at Paideia were particularly appreciative of all the color in front of the school.

Taking care of the park is a year round job. Imagine if you had to care for a forty-four acre garden that had to be weeded, trimmed, fertilized and mulched. We continually add bushes and trees. Some of our trees are reaching the end of their lifespan and we are in the process of planting new trees. In addition, OLPA spends money to have trees trimmed and lawns aerated by professionals. To maintain and improve the park, OLPA needs to raise $200,000 each year. All this is made possible by donations. Please continue your membership or become a member today and help us plant a new tree for as little as $250 for a Dogwood tree.

Several years ago we started putting out horticultural markers in the park. We are planning on adding many more markers in all the park segments, with special emphasis on Deepdene this year.

We Need You!

Deepdene, our 22 acre woodland park segment, is a wonderful place to enjoy getting away from all the intrusions of a city setting. It’s also a place where volunteers can help create a special space. We’re having groups from Oglethorpe Power and Lake Claire Neighborhood help us remove invasive plants and trim along the paths. If you or a group that you know would like to spend some time working in Deepdene, please call George at 404.723.3118.

Legacy Leader

By Doug Grimm

This bench will be visited often by members of my family whose names are on the bench. I grew up in Druid Hills and played in Fernbank Forest as a kid and in my later years (22+) walked a number of dogs along the tight paths of Deepdene — memories I never forgot. And, when business moved me to Dallas, Panama City, Myrtle Beach, and Macon, my heart never left the Druid Hills neighborhood. I learned from living and traveling elsewhere that contrary to Thomas Wolfe’s book, “Look Homeward Angel,” I could go home again. When I retired in 2003 and came home to Druid Hills, I found it was better than ever. A big factor had been OLPA’s creation and the completion/restoration/maintenance of the Olmsted Park. This beautiful park has enhanced the neighborhood tremendously. I am proud to have served on OLPA’s Board and financially support its efforts!
Board Briefs

Goodbye… and Hello…

The Board of OLPA says goodbye and thank you to retiring board members Quigg Fletcher, Cloé Larsen, Sally Sears, Billy Hall, Doug Grimm, and Jennifer Richardson. Billy Hall has joined OLPA’s Advisory Board.

OLPA welcomes new board members Shed Harrison, Toby Brooks, Stephanie Stuckey Benfield, Steven Cappel and Carolyn Hall. In this and future issues of the OLPA News we’ll highlight three of the new board members.

Stephanie Stuckey Benfield

Stephanie is Executive Director of GreenLaw, an organization dedicated to preventing air and water pollution that endangers human health and degrades Georgia’s natural resources. An outdoor enthusiast and nature lover, Benfield has been a vocal environmental advocate during her 14 years as a member of the Georgia House’s Natural Resource Committee.

She formerly served as State Representative of House District 85. She is the third generation of her family to enter public service. Stephanie’s father, Billy Stuckey, represented the 8th District of Georgia for 10 years in the US Congress, and her grandfather, Williamson Sylvester Stuckey, served in the Georgia Legislature and founded the Stuckey’s candy store chain which is still a family owned and operated business.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Georgia in 1989 and graduated cum laude from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1992.

Stephanie is married to Robert H. Benfield, Jr., a local attorney. They attend Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, where they were married. She and her husband are the proud parents of a ten year old son, Robert, and a seven year old daughter, Beverly.

Steven Cappel

Steven is a former partner at Ernst & Young. He left there in 2003 to pursue his passion for restoring old houses.

Steven has an MBA from Columbia Business School and an MA and M.Phil from Yale University and a BA from the University of Pennsylvania. His interests include art history and 19th century American domestic architecture.

Steven and his wife, Katherine Fritts, moved to Atlanta from New York City six years ago. They were attracted to Druid Hills because of its designation as an historic district and because of the Olmsted Park. Both Steven and Katherine had been regular users of Olmsted’s Central Park when they resided in New York. The couple is hard at work restoring their 1923 Colonial Revival home.

Carolyn Hall

Carolyn is a retired educator. She worked in Special Education in DeKalb County Schools and then taught English to speakers of other languages for 18 years at DeKalb Institute of Technology. She has both a Bachelors and a Masters degree from Georgia State University.

Carolyn is currently doing weekly volunteer work teaching English to refugees from Myanmar. Drawn to the area mainly because of the Olmsted Park and the historic houses, she and her husband Billy have been a resident in Druid Hills for 17 years. She has had leadership roles at Oakhurst Baptist Church and has served on the board of the Theatrical Outfit.

Carolyn has two daughters and four grandchildren that live close-by, so she is actively involved in their lives, especially helping out with the grandchildren.
OLPA Dream in Green 2013

By Jennifer J. Richardson

Olmsted Linear Park Alliance 9th Annual Gala benefit for the linear park was held on February 17 at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History.

As guests entered the Atrium of Fernbank Museum of Natural History, they were greeted by the sounds of live music provided by Atlanta Acoustic Jazz and gorgeous decorations designed by Phillip Thompson of the Lily and the Lion Floral Decorations. Party goers enjoyed an open bar featuring the year’s signature drink, the Azalea Martini, and hors d’oeuvres provided by An Affair to Remember Caterers.

Beth Grashof was this year’s gala chair supported by Kirk Elifson, Quigg Fletcher, Ryan Guthrie, Shed Harrison, George Ickes, Cloé Larsen, Jennifer Richardson, Julie Ralston, Gloria Seymour, Kevin Steward, and Connie Weimar.

Splendid original art, prints, photographs, getaways, restaurant gifts cards, jewelry, vacation homes, concert tickets and an array of services ranging from dog grooming to landscaping were offered in a silent auction. Jeb Howell was the live auctioneer helping bidders win a fabulous vacation villa in Tuscany, fine wines, vacations in Highlands, NC and Saint Simon’s Island, and a photograph by Ted Maloof. Raffle items included a pendant from Atlanta artist Lainey Pappageorge and a painting by Rod Pittam.

Former OLPA Board Member Judi Shur, who has re-located to Colorado, was on hand for the gala and honored by the presentation of a plaque from OLPA. Judi was the founder and first chairperson of the OLPA “Dream in Green” gala. Now, nine years later, Judi recalled: “I just envisioned a small neighborhood cocktail party that first year to help raise money for the Parks on Ponce.”

Judi continued to say, “Now, the Gala has turned into this wonderful event enjoyed by so many in the community, continuing to help raise needed money to maintain the linear park after years of unprecedented restoration.”

The event raised over $45,000 for OLPA which will be utilized as we shift our focus from restoration to continued beautification and preservation of the Olmsted Linear Park as a historical and cultural asset for many generations to come.

The City of Atlanta and DeKalb County manage our parks by moving and removing fallen trees and limbs, but OLPA completely funded the park design and plantings of trees, bushes and shrubs, and flowers along with buying and installing park benches, bridges, and street lamps. This is all accomplished by your generous donations so we thank you for being an OLPA member and participating in our annual gala.

The 2014 OLPA Gala will be held on February 17, 2014 at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History. 2014 will be the tenth anniversary of the gala, so anticipate a few surprises and special celebration marking the occasion.

A gala planning committee is already organizing and seeking extra-special donations for the raffle, and live and silent auctions. If you’d like to join the gala committee, be a sponsor or if you have something you’d like to donate for our auctions and raffle, please email us at AtlantaOlmstedPark@gmail.com.

Local artist Rod Pittam stands beside a painting of an English Village that he donated to the raffle.

The 2013 Presenting Sponsor was Fernbank Museum of Natural History. Gold Sponsors included Affairs to Remember, Canterbury Press, CSX Corporation, NewFields, and Smith & Howard Financial Services.

Silver Sponsor was AGL Resources and Sutherland, and Bronze sponsors were Atlanta Intown, Cortland Partners, Georgia Power, Natalie Gregory, Inc., Paris and Associates Realty, Personal Care, and Tunnell & Tunnell Landscape Architecture, Equifax, and Farmhouse Design Studio.
Thank you to our many Gala Sponsors, Gift-in-kind Donors, Gala Hosts and Gala Participants. Your contributions helped raise $45,000 out of the $200,000 we need annually for the continued beautification and preservation of the Olmsted Linear Park as a historical and cultural asset for generations to come.

Sidewalk Radio continued

Jennie spoke passionately of the care it took to design and build this historical landmark and then spoke of the long battle between the Georgia Department of Transportation and several groups that organized and won one of the only freeway battles in U.S. history to stop a proposed expressway that would have destroyed the Olmsted Linear Park and several in town neighborhoods.

I’m proud to be working for this dynamic dedicated group that has struggled to preserve this unique legacy of American history. OLPA’s truly grateful that Jennie Richardson is one of them, preserving some of Atlanta’s unique history; safeguarding 100 year old trees that would take decades to replace and creating pathways for all to share. For more visit “City in a Forest” at Sidewalk Radio WordPress.

Join Jennie on Sunday, June 23, 2013 for a guided, historical Olmsted Park tour. See page 6 for more information and to register or visit www.AllantaOlmstedPark.org.
Kids Korner

Why We Love the Olmsted Parks

By Robert & Beverly Benfield

Beverly, Age 7
I like picking flowers (but only the ones Mom says are okay to pick, like dandelions). I like picnics and playing in the park. My favorite time to visit the park is when they’re having the Festival on the Ponce. I went there last year with my friend, Justin, and we had a really fun time.

Robert, age 10
The Olmsted Park add a lot of value to our neighborhood. Think about what Druid Hills would look like without them: there would be buildings instead of all the nice green space. We would not be able to enjoy walks in the parks or soccer practice on Deepdene field. And there are animals, like squirrels and birds, which make their homes in the parks. The Olmsted Parks make our community a better place to live.

Did You Know?

Olmsted Facts…

In 1890 Atlanta businessman Joel Hurt engaged Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., to prepare a plan for developing the area now known as Druid Hills. Years before who did Joel Hurt marry?

Olmsted Guided Tour

Interested in taking a guided historical and horticultural tour of Atlanta’s Olmsted Linear Park?

Jennie Richardson, former OLPA board member and OLPA Archivist will share stories about the fascinating history of the people who chose to live along the park including Coca-Cola’s Asa Candler and the King family of the King Plow Company. Joining her is George Ickes, OLPA Parks Director, who will speak about the 14 year rehabilitation of the park all provide information about the current flora and fauna.

Tours will cover three of the six segments. Springdale, Virgilee and Oak Grove.

To register ($10 requested donation – members free) for the tour on Sunday June 23, 2-3:30 please email AtlantaOlmstedPark@gmail.com

ANSWER: In 1875, Joel Hurt married Annie Woodruff. Her brother Ernest was the father of Robert Woodruff, the Coca Cola visionary. Hurt became Robert’s favorite uncle.

OLPA Store

Featured in this Issue – Rod Pittam

Would you like to have this drawing of a bridge in Deepdene, one of six segments of Atlanta’s Olmsted Linear Park? Order a set of six, 4x6 note cards either black and white as shown or four hand tinted in water colors, one per season, $10. Comes with matching envelopes. These beautiful ink drawings are by local artist, Rod Pittam who creates impressionistic landscapes and architectural works in oils, watercolor and pen and ink. Rod has donated artwork for many organizations including Atlanta’s Historic Druid Hills Tour of Homes and the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance. For more about the artist www.pittamassociates.com.

To order, email AtlantaOlmstedPark@gmail.com or call 404.377.5361.
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All donations are appreciated and we also thank all of our Family and Individual Members which are listed on our website.
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*

- $50 Family Member
- $500 Gold Level Member*

- $100 Bronze Level Member
- $250 sponsors a Dogwood Tree

- $500 sponsors a Hickory Tree
- $1,000 sponsors a large caliper Oak

- $250 sponsors a Dogwood Tree
- $1,000 Platinum Level Member*

All donors giving $100 or more will receive a complimentary set of the featured note cards by Rod Pittam.

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

- Please check here if you would like us to arrange for your annual contribution with monthly installments.
- Please check here if you are not interested in receiving your complimentary gift note cards.

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