

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is Inviting You to Celebrate Earth Month in Your Parks

Spring is upon us, and we're gearing up for a month-long celebration that honors our planet! We're excited to announce a full schedule of safe in-person Earth Day events throughout April. The free programs will encourage park supporters like you to get outdoors, explore your parks, and do your part to leave the environment better than we found it.

This year's festivities will offer all Pittsburghers an opportunity to celebrate and honor local nature in their neighborhoods. In-person environmental stewardship events will be held throughout the city, including tree plantings, group cleanups, and 'pick-your-park'

solo cleanups through our Parks Champions volunteer program. In addition, the Parks Conservancy will offer guided hikes, programs designed for children, and other inclusive activities all month long.

In years past, the Parks Conservancy's Earth Day programming culminated in a large festival in Frick Park. This year, thanks to the support of donors like you, we can connect with park lovers from across the city as we collectively celebrate Earth Month together.



Visit pittsburghparks.org/earthmonth to learn more and register for programs in advance!



From Story Hikes to stewardship events there's something for everyone to enjoy as we celebrate Earth Month!



Various nature hikes and exploratory walks will soon be offered for people of all ages to enjoy as we honor our planet!



The Parks Conservancy will offer an array of health and wellness activities at various parks located in the City of Pittsburgh throughout April.

SEND A FAREWELL NOTE TO PHIL AS HE BEGINS HIS RETIREMENT!



Handwritten-style note area for sending a farewell note to Phil.

Give a gift to the Park Tree Fund in honor of Phil and help protect Pittsburgh's urban forest.

Yes, I want to support the Park Tree Fund to help restore our urban canopy, clean our air, and keep Pittsburgh beautiful.

\$50

\$75

\$150

Other \$

See enclosed envelope or call **412.682.7275** for more information.

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy does not solicit contributions from persons or entities in states other than Pennsylvania, New York, or Florida.

ENGAGE Contact Zak Koval at zkoval@pittsburghparks.org or 412.682.7275 ext. 240

DONOR NEWSLETTER

March & April 2022



Restoring a Piece of History: The Hartzell Memorial

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is pleased to announce that restoration work will soon begin on the historic Hartzell Memorial located in Allegheny Commons Park.

The Hartzell Memorial, also known as "Man, Beast and Bird" is one of the City's few monuments to honor a woman. It was erected in 1909 in memory of Annie Hartzell, a founder of the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society. Once a working fountain, it featured a large trough for horses on one side, a drinking fountain for humans on the other, a birdbath on top, and a pair of small basins at the base for dogs and squirrels. In 1973, the Memorial was relocated to a corner of Market Square and incorporated

into a large circular pool. In 1990, due to the renovation of Market Square, the Memorial was moved to the corner of Federal Street. Unfortunately, it was not plumbed as a fountain, and its condition has since deteriorated.

In 2020, the Parks Conservancy was awarded \$50,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission towards the restoration, which is a recommendation of the Allegheny Commons Park Master Plan.

Thanks to generous park supporters like you, the funding gap to restore this historical monument is closed, and the Parks Conservancy will officially begin restoration work in the coming months.

"The Hartzell Memorial is an enduring symbol of the Northside's illustrious history," says Brandon Riley, Capital Projects Manager, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. "This generous funding will help safeguard its place in the Pittsburgh landscape for years to come."

The restoration of the Hartzell Memorial is the next project taking place along the historic Promenade in Allegheny Commons Park.

To learn more about this park improvement project, visit pittsburghparks.org/hartzell-monument.



Lichens and moss currently cover the Monument and cracks have begun to form under the central urn.



Farewell, Phil! Director of Horticulture and Forestry to Retire

Next month, we will say farewell to Phil Gruszka, Director of Horticulture and Forestry at the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy as he begins the next chapter of his life: retirement. An industry leader with more than four decades of experience in the industry, the loss to Pittsburgh's park system is immense. Still, the positive impact Phil's made throughout his time with the Parks Conservancy will live on for years to come.

For the past 20 years, Phil's led the Horticulture and Forestry team at the Parks Conservancy. He's served as an advisor to the City of Pittsburgh regarding ecological, horticultural, and other maintenance issues facing Pittsburgh's public park system. In addition, Phil's worked closely with park supporters throughout the years on various specialized projects to improve the ecological health of Pittsburgh's greenspaces.

"I met Phil several years ago over a concern for the area above lower Braddock Trail near the intersection of the Nine Mile Run (NMR) Trail," Kitty Brunkhorst, Parks Conservancy supporter, explained.

"His history with Frick Park and close working relationship with Dick Wilford was apparent as they patiently explained why planting trees in that area would actually be unhelpful. As I continued working with them on NMR issues, I became aware of their nurture of the next generation of horticulturalists. I shall be eternally grateful that he was seriously concerned with not only caring for the current canopy but also with seeking trees able to adapt to the changing climate."

Furthermore, Phil is a leader in testing historically significant trees and their contemporary replacements for genetic diversity and developing protocols for managing those historical collections to maximize biodiversity.

Most recently, Phil's collaborated with a park supporter who's passionate about creating a resilient urban forest. Together, they've created the Schenley Park Tree Research Grove, a one-acre site in Schenley Park dedicated to planting native and non-native trees

for evaluating their potential to become the future urban forest for the Pittsburgh region.

"Ever since I came to Pittsburgh I've admired its trees," Dr. Tor Richter, a supporter of the Parks Conservancy explained. "I read about Phil's work regarding genetic tree diversity more than a decade ago. In 2019, Phil and I worked out the idea of an experimental tree grove in Schenley Park that could do double duty as a runoff interceptor and nursery. Today, Fezziwig Grove stands in a corner of Schenley Park and is one of many legacies Phil leaves to all of us."

In 2004, Phil and Dr. Cynthia Morton co-authored an article on genetic research into the London Plane Tree population in Schenley Park in the Journal of Horticultural Science and Biotechnology.

"The most rewarding project that Phil and I worked on together through the years was the urban tree genetic diversity study," Cynthia explained. "This research began when I was asked in 2004 by Phil to examine London Plane Trees in Schenley Park. The Garden Club of Allegheny County funded us to examine the genetic diversity of the existing trees, understand the tree populations that have resiliency to diseases, examine the genetic diversity of nursery London Plane Trees, and select trees that would increase the genetic diversity of the existing trees in Schenley Park."

Cynthia explained that this was not just a little project about Schenley Park. Phil and Cynthia's research outcomes reached an international level when they presented at the International Tree Conference in Australia. Scientists and people from Canada, Australia, and Japan approached them afterward, concerned that they were experiencing the same thing in their countries.

"I am so proud that I had the opportunity to work with Phil on this -- I am not sure the result would have been the same," Cynthia explained.

Join us as we thank Phil for his dedication to Pittsburgh's parks and wish him well as he begins his new journey into retirement.

A Note From Phil - A Final "Phil-osophy" Update

"Dear Friends,

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is well known for its capital projects and restoring wonderful assets across the park system. What is less well-known is the incredible work that a handful of gardeners and environmentalists do to maintain the gardens within the capital sites while ridding our woodlands of invasive species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants — this group is the Parks Conservancy's Horticulture and Forestry team (H&F).

Because of the unwavering support from many people like yourself,



Park supporters Karen Esch and Dr. Tor Ritcher enjoying a visit to the Schenley Park Tree Research "Fezziwig" Grove with Phil Gruszka.

the H&F team has enhanced tree populations in the parks by replacing old trees that have succumbed to environmental challenges, age, disease, and destructive insects. In addition, our memorial tree program and tree fund have provided sufficient revenue to restore the historic tree canopy. Thanks to the support from corporate groups, large landscape segments have new trees thriving in them.

Within the last few years, the H&F team has focused on global warming and what that means to park trees. We know, thanks to the US Forest Service modeling, that all of the native species of trees we have in Pittsburgh are in their mid-range, meaning they are going to be with us for a very long time. However, that does not relinquish the responsibility of addressing the issue.

Thanks to Dr. Tor Richter, the generous supporter of the Schenley Park Tree Research Grove, we have a study of Yellowwood trees ongoing in Schenley Park. Yellowwood is native to Tennessee and Kentucky, and they are incredibly handsome trees in the landscape and woodlands. We have found great trees growing in and around Pittsburgh and have collected seed from them, germinated that



Throughout Phil's career with the Parks Conservancy, he's helped protect Pittsburgh's urban forest, thanks to the generous support from donors like you!

seed, and developed seedlings that are now on a hillside, which we're carefully watching for bud break, growth form, and rate.

Thanks for supporting this team for the past 20 years. It's been a pleasure working with you to restore Pittsburgh's parks to excellence.

Sincerely,

Phil Gruszka

Director of Horticulture and Forestry
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

P.S.

Supercalafragilisticexpeladocious seems more appropriate to express my gratitude than thanks does."

Dust Off your Hats - It's Back!

We are thrilled to announce the return of the PNC Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Spring Hat Luncheon. After a two-year hiatus, this beloved event will blossom once again on Saturday, May 7 with a few refreshed and exciting surprises. While the event will look new to some, what is not novel is the continued need in Pittsburgh's public parks.

This year, the Spring Hat Luncheon is set to take place in historic Highland Park — known for its Victorian-style gardens, walking trails, and many historical amenities.

As the Parks Conservancy's most critical fundraising event, the Luncheon's success sets the stage for projects that can be completed in Pittsburgh's regional, community, and neighborhood parks on behalf of the Conservancy.

Visit pittsburghparks.org/hatlunch to learn more and to support this year's event!

