



# NATURE OF THINGS

CHESTER COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

WINTER/ SPRING 2009

## County Parks Celebrate 50th Birthday

*By John Mikowychok, Director*

There may not have been a cake with candles, but it was evident from the evergreen trees, animal mounts, park maps, kayak and mountain bike present in the room that this was a special birthday evening for people who enjoy the outdoors.

On October 23, 2008, the Chester County Department of Parks and Recreation held a 50th Anniversary Banquet at Wagontown Fire Hall. The event was attended by some one hundred guests, including many notable persons associated with the conservation movement locally and within Pennsylvania. County Commissioners, municipal supervisors, State and U.S. legislators were also present.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Dr. Geoffrey Godbey, Professor Emeritus at The Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Godbey addressed the changes of society, and the value of parks and recreation facilities in providing stress relief as well as preventing many of society's ills, including obesity and juvenile delinquency.

County Commissioners Carol Aichele and Terence Farrell noted the department's growth, with over 4,500 acres of parkland, over 31 miles of trails, and natural and historical resources preserved as a result of the County's and department's efforts. Commissioner-Chair Aichele presented the Department with a Proclamation, noting the growth since its inception, by order of the County Commissioners effective January 1, 1958, to "accept and retain title in the name of the Commissioners of Chester County, to such Chester County properties as may be conveyed by gift or otherwise, for purposes of the establishment of parks and playgrounds . . ."

The Commissioners also recognized eight individuals and organizations for their roles in helping in volunteer efforts, park development, professionalism, and many educational programs and special events. A Conservator Award, the top award of the evening, was presented to Richard G. Sprenkle, Director of the Department from 1979 to 1991, and later Deputy Secretary of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, for his leadership in championing regional parks and trails.



Parks and Conservation Leaders Honored: Individuals and groups honored by Chester County Parks and Recreation Department with awards presented by County Commissioner-Chair Carol Aichele at the Department's October 23, 50th Anniversary Banquet included the following, pictured with their awards: Richard G. Sprenkle; Ed Herr; Shelley Francies; Commissioner Aichele; Thomas Struble, accepting an award on behalf of his late father, Robert G. Struble, Senior; Jeffrey Moses; John Ross; and Gaye Lynn Criswell on behalf of Margaret Van Gilder. Also pictured are John Ross family members Jeffrey Deacon and Mr. and Mrs. John Ross, Senior.

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## 50th Anniversary Sponsors

### Thank You!

It was our goal to have a broad-based, community-sponsored banquet to commemorate our accomplishments. Our sponsors' generosity allowed us to host a special celebration and share our achievements.

#### KEYNOTE:

McCormick Taylor  
Natural Lands Trust

#### PARK FRIEND:

The Party Center  
Herr Foods, Inc.  
Recreation Resource, Inc.  
Chaddsford Winery, Ltd.  
Chester County Trail Club  
John P. Mikowychok  
Anonymous, "Keeper of Terramore"  
Anonymous, West Chester  
RE/MAX Action Associates  
LandStudies, Inc.

#### TRAIL BLAZER:

Auble Financial  
Sandra Franovich  
Rachel Mullin

#### IN-KIND:

Happywood Floors  
Shamrock Tree Farm



50th Birthday - continued from front page

Other award recipients included: Ed Herr, of Herr Foods, for corporate funding of the department's annual Freedom Fest program; Shelley Francies, of the Downingtown West High School Ecology Club, for her and her students' work in designing and constructing the Butterfly House



at Springton Manor Farm; Jeffrey Moses, Coventryville Trout Club, for the Club's trout stocking program and youth fishing rodeos held at French Creek in Warwick County Park; the Hibernia Friends Group for their work in restoring and preserving Hibernia Mansion; Margaret Van Gilder, for her leadership in the annual Youth Conservation Camp and Outdoor School; John

Ross, President of the Hibernia Friends Group, for continued work in conserving the Hibernia Mansion's museum collection, and the late County Commissioner Robert G.

Struble, Sr., for his efforts to acquire and develop the Struble Trail. The Commissioner's son, Thomas Struble, accepted the posthumous award on his father's behalf.

*".....this was truly top notch. From the decor to the dinner to the speaker and awards, all was most enjoyable - great job!"*

*Teddi Wright  
Retired teacher; Envirothon coach*

The reception, held at the start of the banquet, included an information table (upper right) and a debut of a new vertical 5-panel display (pictured left), showing a timeline of the department's history, facilities and program services. Also debuted were 20 centerpiece luminaries (upper left foreground), each of which housed natural history, historical and program photos. These pieces will be used for wedding receptions at Springton Manor Farm's Manor House. The Anniversary Banquet was supported by numerous private sponsors. Attending the banquet were, above



from left, Robert Morrison, Chairman of the County Parks and Recreation Board; Molly Morrison, President of the Natural Lands Trust; John Mikowychok, Director of the Department; Rob Pingar and Sandra Martin. Engineers from McCormick Taylor. The Natural Lands Trust and McCormick Taylor were primary sponsors.

*Looking towards another half century of conservation and recreation!*