

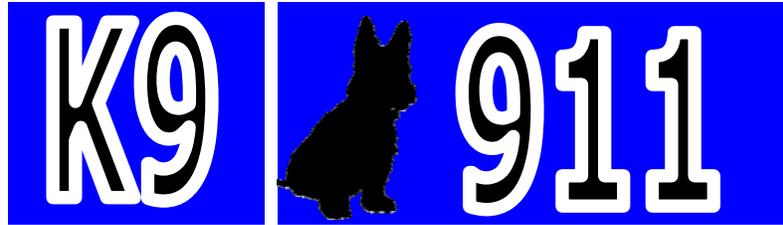


FRIENDS OF WEST MILL CREEK DOG PARK

# Paw Prints



## Our Third Annual Meeting



On Sunday, February 21, we held our Third Annual Meeting in a lovely meeting room generously provided by Beth David. We had 28 people in attendance. Ellen Briggs went over our accomplishments in 2015 and our plans for 2016, and Ellen Reese presented a 2015 Treasurer's Report. The substance of the Ellens' reports are included in this newsletter. Once the business part of the meeting was complete, **Dr. Michelle Harris** of PetsFirst Veterinary Center in Bryn Mawr gave us a wonderfully informative presentation entitled "**K9 911—When to Call the Vet, When to Treat at Home.**" Dr. Harris was a lively and knowledgeable speaker and we thank her for donating her time to helping us become better informed dog owners.



## Accomplishments in 2015

**Trail Improvements.** A top priority for our group since its founding in Fall of 2013 has been trail improvements for what used to be the muddiest section of the trail. A year of persistent advocacy with the township paid off. The Township installed two French drains underneath the trail and raised the height of the trail in the former bog. We have had non muddy level footing ever since. Many thanks to Lower Merion Township Parks & Recreation for the fabulous job they did!

**Wildlife and Respite Garden.** We owe many thanks to our wonderful volunteers. Spring through Fall, **21** different people donated a total of **93** hours of labor to planting 650 perennials, weeding, and watering our garden. Special thanks go to the watering team which cared for the plants in a very droughty summer. As most of you know, the garden serves two purposes. One is to give people with elderly or small dogs a quiet spot away from the frenzy in the main park. The other is to provide habitat for endangered pollinators and song birds. We've seen it in use for both of these



purposes, and are thrilled that the garden is becoming the community asset that we hoped it would be.

**Parking Issues.** In December, the police began issuing parking tickets to some of our members for being in the lot after sunset—at around 5 pm. We contacted the Police Department and had a productive talk which resulted in voiding of those tickets. The bottom line is, though the township ordinance sets park hours at sunrise to sunset, the police are willing to use discretion to give legitimate park users a bit of time to finish up conversations and get out of the park, rather than issuing tickets the instant the sun goes down. Nevertheless be aware that beyond that, you're still at risk of a ticket if you park on the grass, on Mill Creek Road or after the sunset "leeway period."

**Events.** Thanks to our Events Committee we had a number of great events, including Meet the Trees, a Bridlewild Trail tour, an Active Members Thank-you Party, our Dog Days of Summer fundraising event and our Santa Paws event which raised over \$500 for the SPCA.

## Early Accomplishments and Future Plans for 2016

As the park has become more popular, safety issues involving cars are becoming vitally important. The park cannot be fully fenced, so the decision to bring your dog at all depends on your risk tolerance and above all, your knowledge of your dog. That said, we have devoted our energies to finding ways to make the park safer.

**Gate and Parking Lot Barrier.** Our recent member survey overwhelmingly endorsed installation of a gate between the parking lot and park.



We communicated this request to the Township and the response was very quick—the gate has already been installed! At the same time, at our request, the township crew extended the parking barrier between the parking lot and Mill Creek. (Last year, a car slipped on the ice and began the long slide into the creek, so this is an important safety improvement!)

**Further Trail Improvements.** The comments sections of our recent survey showed strong and widespread interest in continued trail improvements. We will pursue options with the Township. (We'll also consider the other suggestions made in survey comments).

**Fence at Old Gulph Road.** Our recent survey also solicited opinions on constructing a fence on the far side of the creek near Old Gulph Road to keep dogs from swimming the creek and running straight onto the road. This project received majority support from our respondents. A fencing

contractor has said that the project is feasible. The project is problematic, however, because the land is owned The Courts, Inc., a tennis club. We will try and approach the tennis club to see if they would allow us to build the fence.

**Events.** We are planning a spring event involving a demonstration by the police K9 unit and a Halloween event for those dogs who enjoy cute costumes. We are also hoping to persuade Santa Paws to return once again in December. Keep your fingers crossed!

**Wildlife Garden.** Needless to say, we will continue to work on maintaining and improving the wildlife and respite garden. The major expenses of this project (purchase of trees, shrubs and plants) are now behind us, so most of the effort will be on maintenance. We hope that many of you will participate in our 2016 workdays. You can bring your dog and bond with your fellow WMCers while you work!



### Thank You to Our 2015 Organizational Supporters!

**PracticePromoter.com** donated our website domain, hosting, and support for our website.

**Montgomery Signs in Conshohocken** donated our beautiful weatherproof Wildlife and Respite Garden sign.

**Tired Hands Brewing Company** in Ardmore donated some very fine craft beer to our Active Members Thank-You Party.

**Telegraphics, Inc.** donated design services for park signage.

**Lower Merion Township Department of Parks & Recreation**, including **Director Donna Heller**, **Parks Supervisor Dave DeAngeles**, and Dave's crew for all the park improvements!

### Treasurer's Report FWMC 2015

<b>Balance Forward/2014</b>	<b>1,475.39</b>
<b>Total Revenue 2015</b>	<b>4,404.60</b>
<b>Total Expenses 2015</b>	<b>(3,215.13)</b>
<b>Balance Forward</b>	<b>2,664.86</b>

### Itemization

Donations	3,924.60
Gross revenue Dog Days	480.00
<b>Total Revenue 2015</b>	<b>4,404.60</b>
Programs	(837.88)
Garden	(2,162.29)
Printing	(55.25)
Kiosk upgrade	(12.71)
Merchandise for Dog Days	(147.00)
<b>Total Expenses 2015</b>	<b>(3,215.13)</b>

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen Reese, Treasurer

## Volunteer Spotlight

In 2015, we held **8 official work days**, plus ongoing **watering duty** during weeks of insufficient rainfall. Altogether **21 people** donated a total of **93 hours of labor** in our Wildlife and Respite Garden. Special kudos to our **watering team** for many hours of watering during a drought-ridden summer!

Garden Workday Volunteers: **Paula Burns, Chris Bushnell, Celeste DeBeese, Michelle Detwiler, Mary Field, Joseph Garrity, Gary Stein, Meredith Greenbaum, Karen Hinckley, Martha Lombardo, Hazel Murphy, Melissa O'Connor, Linda Pitt, Ellen Reese, Toba Spector, Wendy White, Ellen Briggs, Peter Briggs, Steve Briggs.**

Watering Team: **Mark Wassmansdorf, Chris Bushnell, Michelle Detwiler, Bobby Harmelin, Karen Hinckley, Toba Spector, Ellen Briggs.**

In addition, **Chris Bushnell** once again donated his woodworking talents to frame and install our beautiful Wildlife and Respite Garden sign, which was designed by **Ellen Reese** and **Gary Stein**. **Gary** also fixed the gate hardware for us so it is now a pleasure to open and shut those gates.



L to R, Michelle Detwiler, Ellen Briggs, Ellen Reese and Melissa O'Connor pause for photo op in May 2015 marathon planting of 450 Blue Wood Sedge.

## Friends of West Mill Creek Park gratefully acknowledges the following supporters:

### FOUR PAWS (\$150 or more)

Anonymous  
Ellen Briggs  
Fran Bryan  
Ellen Reese and Gary Stein  
Rebecca Wells

### THREE PAWS (100-\$149)

Elisa Abeloff and George Landau  
Judy and Yair Argon  
Mary and Iain Black  
Erik Bronstein  
Chris and Claire Bunting  
John and Jessica Cassimatis  
Karen Hinckley  
Jay and Marya Margolis  
Karl and Dori Middleman  
Hazel Murphy  
Craig Oliner  
David Preefer & Karen Zimmerman  
Eileen Rosenau  
Elaine Stern

### TWO PAWS (\$50-\$99)

Janice Asher  
Jill Cooper  
Kristin and Scott Edwards  
Bobby and Randi Harmelin  
Michael and Selina Hoessly  
Beverly Keefer  
Karyn Lush  
Narberth Area Garden Club  
Cary Sellers  
Mark Singer and Barbara Podell  
Jood Thompson

### ONE PAW (up to \$49)

Matthew and Heather Cosgrave  
Karen Garbeil  
Maddy and Steve Kessler  
Martha Lombardo  
Jeff Rudnick  
Mandy Steier  
Helene Feinberg Walker  
Karen and Rick Wilson  
Flaura Winston



## Members Involvement

We welcome suggestions, comments, and questions from all our members. And, if you'd like to be more actively involved in our group, remember we have a Gardening Committee, and Events Committee, and a Membership Committee. Just let us know if you'd like to help out!

# Heading to the Dog Park?

LEARN HOW TO PRACTICE GOOD DOG PARK ETIQUETTE.



are sitting around watching the dogs and talking.

**4. Give your dog a time out if your dog's behavior is making another dog owner uncomfortable.** This is a matter of courtesy, even if you believe that your dog's behavior is normal and appropriate.

**5. Be very careful about bringing food** (either person food or dog treats) to the park. Competition for food can create unwanted incidents. If you must bring dog treats to the park for emergency recalls etc. keep them hidden and airtight so as to minimize its attractiveness to the other dogs. And **never** feed another person's dog without express permission.

**6. Don't correct or restrain another person's dog**—instead, ask the owner to take action. Don't take this upon yourself unless there are emergency circumstances.

**7. Clean up.** Clean up after your own dog, draw other owners' attention to their clean up duties if needed, and be a good park citizen by cleaning up poop of unknown origin.

**8. Keep your dog leashed in the parking lot.** Please, please be careful about this because it is all too easy to back up without seeing a loose dog behind the car.

**9. Remember to keep both your Montgomery County dog license and your Lower Merion Township Off-Leash Permit up to date**—you need to renew both every calendar year.

**10. West Mill Creek works so well because we are all willing to work out issues courteously through civil dialogue.** Keep up the good work folks!

**1. Monitor your dog.** Know where your dog is and what he is doing, and be ready to intervene if a situation amongst the dogs is getting out of hand. Usually, putting your dog on leash for a time out and walking him around the trail on his own until he has calmed down is sufficient. In cases of extreme overexcitement, remove your dog from the park and return another day.

**2. Help others by reminding them to monitor** if you see that someone is not paying attention when they should be (moments of inattention happen to all of us sometimes).

**3. Keep moving, or go to the creek.** Long experience at the dog park has taught us that most incidents amongst the dogs occur when a large number of owners have gathered in a stationary group to talk. The dogs mill around close to the owners and find reasons to quarrel. The best behavior occurs when the owners are walking around in smaller groups. Also, when the dogs are playing in the water there is virtually never any quarreling, even if there are a lot of dogs and the owners

## Friends of West Mill Creek Park Poop Sheet - FAQs

**Q: Why must I clean up after my dog?**

A: No one wants to step in dog poop—so cleaning up is a necessary courtesy to other park users. But in addition, failure to bag the poop and put it into the provided trash cans harms the environment.

**Q: Why does cleaning up after my dog help the environment? Isn't dog poop natural and biodegradable?**

A: In the natural world, there would be a few carnivores and their waste products would be harmlessly absorbed in the ecosystem. But the population density of dogs in our area is very high and the amount of waste they produce is a serious source of water pollution. In heavy rains, dog waste is washed into streams. This is especially likely at our park, because we are situated in a flood plain, but it also happens throughout the township because feces left in yards and on the street wash directly into streams through our storm drains. There are two reasons why dog poop in our waterways is harmful:

1. Dog waste contains disease-causing bacteria and viruses which can infect people, making it dangerous to come into contact with the water in our streams and lakes.

2. When dog waste decomposes in streams, it releases nutrients that cause excessive algae growth. Oxygen is depleted and the water cannot sustain aquatic life.

**Q: I notice that Friends of WMC is advocating use of unneeded plastic grocery bags instead of the green bags labeled "biodegradable" provided by the township. Aren't the township bags better for the environment?**

A: Township trash is shipped to a trash-to-steam plant and it is all burned. Therefore, the biodegradability of the bags is not relevant. (Two interesting side notes: (a) Even if our trash were shipped to a landfill, the value of a biodegradable bag is questionable. Landfill does not turn into compost over time. By and large it just sits in sealed underground containers. What

biodegradation does take place is anaerobic so it produces polluting methane gas. (b) Dog waste can be composted, but special methods are needed – the pathogens are not destroyed in ordinary home composters.)

**Q: Isn't it better to recycle plastic grocery bags rather than use them for pick-up duty?**

A: We've all heard the slogan, "Reduce, Re-use, Recycle." Those options are listed in order of environmental benefit. The greatest benefit is not to create the trash in the first place; the second is re-using an already manufactured item, and last is recycling. Recycling is good for the environment, but comes last on the list because it involves a second manufacturing process, which takes energy and may create polluting by-products.

For more information: *Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management*, Philadelphia Water Department. <http://phillywatersheds.org/doc/Homeownersguidetostormwatermanagement.pdf> and Seemans, Rose. *The Pet Poop Pocket Guide: How to Safely Compost and Recycle Pet Waste*