



## September Greetings

Since taking up the mantle of the Friends of High School Park Board President in early July, I have had the delightful pleasure of walking in the Park several times a week to assess its seasonal progress and vitality. Often, I walk with Cynthia Blackwood, who has transitioned nicely from the former Board President to her current role as Park Manager. Cynthia lets me know what she is focusing on at any given time and what park issues need addressing.

It is impossible to ignore the beauty that surrounds us as we walk. The meadow, ever evolving, is home to a myriad of butterflies including Monarch and Swallowtail. With the help of Larry Weaner Associates, we are cultivating swamp milkweed, false sunflowers, bee balm, and meadow grasses that are native to our area – all pollinator friendly species. You might see some irregular mowing patterns in the meadow on a given day, created by Cynthia with the “Goat”, our industrial brush mower that enables her to clear dense areas of weedy reed grasses. The irregularity is due to Cynthia’s reluctance to mow down young rabbits, milk snakes and the more desirable native species which have made homes in the thick of the meadow.

The back observation walkway is a great place to stop and watch the movement in the meadow. You might get a glimpse of an oriole or two making their way through the tall grasses. Goldfinch, prairie warblers, woodpeckers, osprey and a kestrel have also been spotted in the Park. Elkins Park is lucky to have several backyard beekeepers, and High School Park benefits from being within flight range for most of them. This time of year especially you can see honey bees among the tall flax and milkweed. We are host to many other bee and wasp species thanks to our native pollinating plants.

Now that the new sewer and drainage work is completed along the High School Park leg of Tookany Creek, workday weekend volunteers have raked layers of bark chips over the pathways, making for a smoother walk through the woodlands part of the park. On a sizzling summer day, this area is a lovely refuge from the sun and humidity.

It is an honor to take part in the future of High School Park as we move into our 25<sup>th</sup> year of existence. I look forward to a very energized and exciting year ahead.

When is the last time you took a stroll through High School Park?

Cathy Callan

President, Friends of High School Park

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