

# Friends of Colvin Run Mill

10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls, VA

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July—September 2024

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## **WE’VE CHANGED OUR NOMENCLATURE**

The new name for “Grind Day” is (drum roll):

**“*Mill in Motion*”**

Here is the full new Parktakes description:

“We’re running the mill like it’s 1811 when the mill was first operating. Come see one of the country’s remaining examples of early American mass production. Learn why Oliver Evans’ plans for an automated mill received one of the first US patents and revolutionized food production in the young country. After you explore the Mill, visit the 19th century Miller’s House exhibit and stop in the Colvin Run General Store to purchase grain ground at the mill.”

## **STAFF SUPPORT**

Buket Ozbek, who has worked on organizing site files and researching local African American history, will leave at the end of June. We will sorely miss her. She led field trips, worked in the General Store and with collections, helped with numerous administrative tasks, and simply jumped in wherever help was needed. She will be going to work for the Daughters of the American Revolution. We hope her time here at the mill will help inform her work there and we wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

## **THE YEAR THUS FAR**

**March thru May:** 1500 school children, with teachers and chaperones, visited the site, mainly for our program on simple machines.

**March:** Observance of Women’s History Month with program *Women in the 19th Century* including making biscuits, spinning wool, hand washing clothes, and making candles. See photos on page 4.

**April thru June:** 142 Scouts and family members visited for tours and badge programs. See photo on page 4.

**April 7:** We held our annual Easter egg hunt. See article on page 2.

**May:** About 35 participants attended a program *Engineering Then and Now* in conjunction with *Mill in Motion* (a 19th century engineering marvel). Participants saw blacksmithing and woodworking demonstrations; talked with a 19th century nautical engineer and a 21st century 3D printing expert; and explored aeronautical engineering (wings and propellers) and civil engineering (park planning and earthquake effects). See photos on page 4.

**THANKS TO ALL WHO HELPED MAKE THESE PROGRAMS WORK!**

## **STAFF CHANGES**

Site manager Julie Gurnee has left the Park Authority and will be working in the Fairfax County Office of Environment and Energy Coordination.

Kiersten Fiore is the Acting Site Manager.

## EASTER EGG HUNT

A sellout crowd was on hand April 7 for the annual Easter egg hunt.

The younger ones toddled with purpose down the grassy hill, targeting the pastel colored “eggs,” with parents providing a helping hand or secretly tossing out eggs already “found” once their child’s eight-egg limit was reached.

Delightful fun.



The older kids were sharp this year, leaving no egg unfound. Bravo!

Baby goats provided a diversion as children waited with barely restrained anticipation for the start of the hunt.



## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

Good news for the Fairfax County Park Authority in the county budget! The Park Authority’s revenue-based budget was raised by around \$3 million to \$36 million. Increased resources will be directed to forestry operations, bamboo removal, trash and recycling, and general maintenance. Thank you to all who advocated for more resources for the parks!

On June 6 I gave a talk about Colvin Run Mill Park to the Rotary Club of Great Falls. The club supports worthy programs locally and internationally. Members asked questions about the park’s history, production, and programs and are considering holding an event at the park to (re) acquaint residents with its charms.

Mt. Defiance Distillery reports that the grain ground at Colvin Run has been processed and the distilled results are resting in oak barrels. Unlike wine, there are no tasting notes for whiskey at this stage that would hint at its promise. Over time, the oak barrels impart notes of vanilla and caramel and up to two pounds of sugar to enrich and smooth the taste. Another reason to plant oak trees. All good things take time. The final product should be bottled in two or three years.

We bid Julie Gurnee, the park’s site manager, a fond but sad farewell and wish her all the best. Meanwhile, we welcome our friend Kiersten as acting site manager and look forward to working with her at our next board meeting, July 9.

It is truly heartwarming to see visitors who discovered the park at one of our events come back for others. Last weekend a third grader returned with his mother and sister and brother so they could learn about the mill as he did on a school outing. Colvin Run Mill Park’s combination of history, technology, food, and nature is a winner. A big thank you to all the staff, volunteers, Friends, and contributors who make the park a true gem in Fairfax County.

***Jm Wallar***

***President, Friends of Colvin Run Mill***

For more details see the [President’s Grindstone blog](#).

***Great articles on water wheels, the grits contest, the Archimedes screw, mill stones, and much, much more!***

## WHITE OAKS AND FAIRFAX RE-LEAF

One reason Colvin Run Mill was built where it is was that the surrounding land had a “good stand” of white oak trees. Today, alas, few, if any, of these stately trees grace the park’s grounds. This is a pity.

White oaks were prized for water-powered mills because they are durable and non-porous. They also are important to support wildlife – insects, birds, squirrels and the like – considered a “keystone” plant together with cherry, willows, birches, and maples. Accounting for only seven percent of all plant genera, keystone plants produce about 75 percent of the food for wildlife.

Having a good stand of white oaks is even more important now than when the mill was built. White oaks’ abundant leaves suck in carbon and release oxygen to help cool the atmosphere, and they provide wildlife food as nourishing native plants are squeezed out by non-edible invasives.

When Fairfax ReLeaf offered free white oak seedlings, we took them up on their offer. ReLeaf is a non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve, restore and promote sustainable urban forests in Northern Virginia. The local Potomac Vegetable Gardens provides space for ReLeaf to bundle and store tree seedlings.

We planted seven seedlings in the flat land to the east of the mill along the edge of the duck pond. If they take, our ancestors will marvel at their majesty and generations of caterpillars, blue jays, and chipmunks will thrive. And, with luck, the atmosphere will be cooler.

## BECOME AN OFFICIAL “FRIENDS OF COLVIN RUN MILL” MEMBER

Membership dues are as follows: Individual - \$35 a year, Family - \$55, Business - \$100.

**Join now by completing the membership form on the Friends of Colvin Run Mill site ([focrm.org/be-a-friend](http://focrm.org/be-a-friend)).**

## HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW ?

Two years ago, we set out to refresh the family garden. Last year we expanded our efforts to create an herb garden. Heading into the heat wave, they are doing well, thanks to diligent staff and the ever-attentive Oak Tree Property Care.

The family garden faces challenges of shade, competition for water from old trees, and deer. Despite careful planning, some plants succumbed. Deer didn’t heed the information about plants they were not supposed to like to eat and ate them anyway. The oakleaf hydrangea is lovely, the Christmas ferns make an elegant border, and the fragrant sumac define an edge of the upper garden.



The herb garden is thriving, blessed with plenty of sunshine. Lovage, mountain celery, and red bee balm (good for fevers) are growing tall. Sleep-inducing chamomile (Greek for “ground apple”) has spread boasting white yellow blossoms that contrast with the yellow yarrow (aka *Achillea millefolium* – Achilles of a thousand leaves). The lavender (from the Latin *lavare* – to bathe because it smells fresh) and sage (*salvare*, to cure) are tumbling onto the path.

The vegetable garden gets pretty good sun and a net fence to keep animals away. We’ve planted watermelon, green beans, cucumbers & tomatoes. The asparagus and strawberries planted last year are thriving.

So how do our gardens grow? Thanks to you, friends, very well indeed!

## THE YEAR THUS FAR

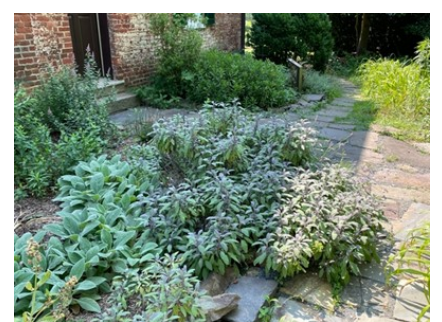


**Historical Women's Work (left to right): Spinning wool; making biscuits**

**Some Scouts at work**



**Engineering Then and Now (left to right) 3D printing, aero engineering, shake table for earthquake effects**



**How does our garden grow?**