



Wilderness Louisville

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Summer has been a beautiful and eventful season at Jefferson Memorial Forest. Despite the hot weather, the team has been busy with maintaining trails and the natural areas, and offering youth summer programming and camps.

The Tom Wallace Recreation Area was officially reopened in late May, after infrastructure improvements including a new playground and an ADA-accessible trail around the lake. Board Member Vicki Welch spoke on behalf of Wilderness Louisville at the press conference & ribbon cutting.





Rendering of the to be constructed Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Summer Updates & 3 Year Anniversary

We at Wilderness Louisville have had an eventful summer so far, and are happy to share the activities with you in this newsletter. In addition to joining in the May ribbon cutting marking the official re-opening of the Tom Wallace Recreation Area, we participated in tabling events across Louisville this July. Board Member Vicki Welch represented us at the South Points Buy Local Fair at Iroquois Park and I attended the 2nd annual Wellness Vendor Fair co-hosted by the Worksite Wellness Council of Louisville & Louisville Society for Human Resource Management. Thank you for inviting us to both events, where we were happy to connect with all of you who came by to learn more about Wilderness Louisville and our work.

This August will mark my 3-year anniversary as Wilderness Louisville (WL) Executive Director. How time flies. WL has accomplished so much in that time including:

- raising over \$350,000 to support Natural Areas' Louisville ECHO program
- securing \$8 million in funding for the construction of the Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center, in a bipartisan team lift with state and local officials (The WL team included board members Randy Strobo, Sharon Bond, Kate Miller, Connor Caudill, Andy Reynolds and me)
- doubling of Wilderness Louisville's Net Assets
- adding 4 new board members
- continuing national partnership with the Children & Nature Network through the Nature Everywhere Initiative
- opening of the Chickasaw Forest Play Area

These 3 years have been a time of unprecedented growth for Wilderness Louisville, and I am thankful to everyone who helped make that possible. I look forward to seeing what the future holds!

Thank you to all of our Wilderness Louisville donors.

It is only through your ongoing generosity that we can steward natural areas & champion both nature education for youth and equitable access for the community to natural spaces



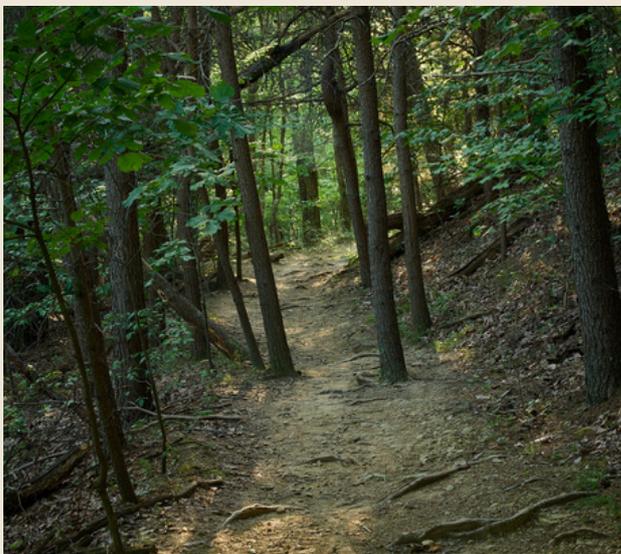
With gratitude,

Prasanthi Persad

VIEW FROM JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST



Land Management



The Land Management team has been busy this Spring & Summer – as usual!

There was a great deal of flood cleanup involved after the inclement weather. Land Management cleaned along the Ohio River at Caperton Swamp, Shawnee Park and Kulmer Beach. At Tom Wallace, they removed a bridge causing many flooding issues and cleared culverts. The team maintained trails throughout our city-owned Natural Areas- this work involved repairing washouts, erosion control, clearing culverts and tree removal.

The team repaired broken railings along the Tulip Trail in JMF. At Paul Yost, Land Management constructed and installed hitching posts for equestrian use. They built and installed two new benches on the Red Trail.

They pruned trees in recreation areas and serviced and maintained equipment.

In order to keep everyone safe, the team completed First Aid and CPR / AED training.

Thanks to the Natural Areas Land Management Team for all they do and for making JMF and our other natural areas accessible and enjoyable for everyone!



VIEW FROM JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST



Projects & Programming

Summer Camp is in full swing and campers are having LOTS of fun. Adventure Camp and Water Wonders are still underway. Camps have all been full this summer. Thank you to all participants for joining!

ECHO has also been busy with camp, including camp Odyssey in partnership with the Earth and Spirit Center, a week at the Shawnee Office week with STEAM Exchange.



This year's SummerWorks crew has 8 youth, with 2 returning from last year. SummerWorks provides two days of programming at community centers, one day of land management work, one day of nature play & storytime with the Library in Shawnee Park, and one day for career exploration field trips. Lots of partners make the SummerWorks experience top notch for the youth including a partnership with MSD, the Zoo, the Library, and this year, the Falls of the Ohio. The last day for youth is July 25th.



The Welcome Center Deck at JMF is getting an update! Demo is complete, and the project is estimated to be complete by the end of October.

Thanks for your patience during these improvements, the new and improved exterior will be worth the wait!





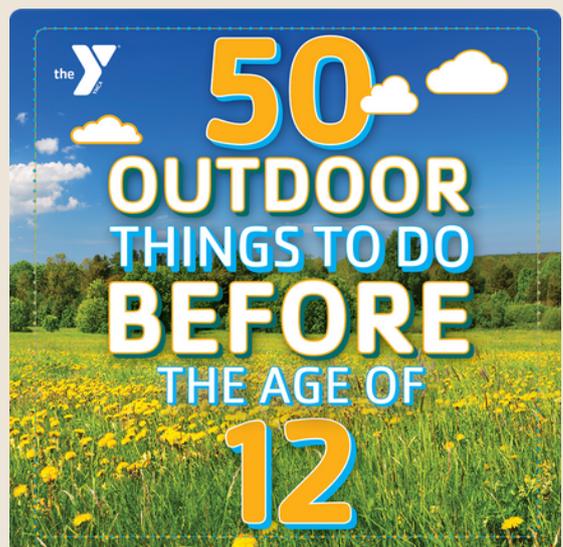
Thank you to all that came out to visit us at Forest Fest this past May. It was a beautiful day and we loved sharing a beautiful day of music, art, and activities with the community.



Wilderness Louisville was thrilled to be able to provide scholarship funding for 15 youth to attend summer camps this year, both at JMF and with the ECHO program. Your support helps make this possible.

Partnerships

We were very excited to partner with several other organizations on the “50 Things to do Outdoors before the age of 12”. All of these amazing activities are a great way to explore the forest! The full list can be found [HERE](#).



NATURAL AREAS STAFF SPOTLIGHT

*This summer, we are learning
more about Naturalist, Sylvia
Kirkwood*



Where did you grow up?

I grew up just outside of Bowling Green, Kentucky in an area called Rockfield. My neighborhood was hilly and wooded, so I spent days and days exploring the woods with my brother and our friends.

What drew you to the outdoors, both as a child and now?

As a kid I spent so much time outdoors because I had such quick access to the woods. I loved how being outside fueled my imagination. My friends and I would play pretend for hours creating stories about people and creatures who lived in the woods behind our houses. I also loved the freedom afforded me by time spent outdoors. There were no house chores or math homework to be done in the woods. Now that I'm grown my reasons for loving and seeking out the outdoors are pretty similar. I'm not as imaginative as I was at nine years old, but I enjoy writing in my free time. Much of my inspiration comes from time spent in nature, whether that's taking a walk around my neighborhood to clear my head, or journaling under the stars on a camping trip. When I feel stressed and overwhelmed by any of the aggravations of daily life, too much time spent on my cell phone, sitting in traffic on the Snyder, or my favorite basketball team losing a heartbreaker, I still turn to the natural world for peace and redirection.

What does your day to day work entail?

So much of working in the outdoors is adjusting to change—change of schedule when a storm blows in, change of venue when the river is too high to paddle. So, no two days in this job have been the same and often one day will look very different at the end than I planned it to look at the beginning. Recently, though, much of my time has been occupied by helping to plan and helping to run our summer camps at Jefferson Memorial Forest. We have just finished the first half of our summer camp programming, during which campers enjoyed hiking, archery, storytelling, environmental education, and a slip n slide operated by Fairdale Fire Department!

How did you become interested in your job?

I lived out west, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, for several years, working on federal lands. I cherished my time out there and getting to see a part of this continent so different from the little piece I call home, but about a year ago I realized that I was homesick. I missed warm summer nights and deciduous trees and lightning bugs and tree frogs and brightly colored wildflowers and lush foliage. I missed Kentucky. The Rocky Mountains are incredible, but, to me, they have nothing on the Bluegrass. I started looking for jobs in the area, found the Naturalist position at Jefferson Memorial Forest, and couldn't think of a better way to serve my community than by teaching local kids to love their home as much as I do and to promote access to local public lands. In my few months here I have greatly enjoyed showing school children more about the natural world around them, but also learning more about it myself from my knowledgeable co-workers.

What is your favorite local green space?

Asking me to pick a favorite piece of local nature puts me in a hard place. I cannot possibly pick one. I love walking, running, and riding my bike on the Louisville Loop. I had never spent much time in Jefferson Memorial Forest before working here, but through this job I have grown quite fond of JMF and of the Knobs. Lastly, I recently had to pay a visit to Metro IT downtown and was able to spend part of my morning in the Trager MicroForest. It's a lovely little park in a wonderful setting.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED



BECOME A MEMBER!

Individual Memberships - \$10 / month

Family Memberships - \$20/month

Explore Membership online

You're ongoing support helps sustain youth programming, improve trail maintenance needs, tree plantings, and much more!

DONATE

Not looking for a membership? Make a one-time donation of any amount.

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Wilderness Louisville Give for Good- QR below.



COME OUT TO THE FOREST



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Check out Natural Areas employment opportunities: [HERE](#)