

Well-Informed

Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation | Community Benefit Report | Winter 2015



Promoting Healthy Living through Outdoor Connections

A conversation with Andrew Gilchrist, Regional Advisor at the [Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#), Diane Kripas, Division Chief at the [Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#), and Kurt Zwiak, Executive Director for the [Schuylkill River Greenway Association](#) on the need for continued commitment to parks and recreation.



In 2014, twelve area parks celebrated what makes the outdoors special as part of the Foundation's inaugural On Your Park, Get Set, Go!™ contest. These parks offered opportunities for physical activity and other experiences that enhanced quality of life. They empowered us to improve the community by connecting with nature, socializing with neighbors and enjoying a more physically active lifestyle. They reminded us of the importance of community pride for people of all ages and abilities—and the need for investment in their future.

Why do people visit parks? Percentages of area residents who agree or strongly agree with the following reasons for visiting parks:

77% Physical Activity*
93% Connect with Nature
46% Be With or Around Others
59% Connect with History, Culture, or Sense of Place

*The most well-rounded parks include physical activities for all age groups.

[Survey taken as part of Penn State study commissioned by the Foundation](#)

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a message from our president



Happy new year! And with winter upon us, it might be tempting to stay indoors, especially as we remember the particularly harsh temperatures just last year.

But instead, what about embracing all that the Pottstown area has to offer?

A great resource for immediate news is the Pottstown Mercury's [Fit for Life initiative](#). This collaboration between the Foundation and the Mercury offers a wide range of articles, ideas, events and more.

Of course our website can also serve as a place to start your research on healthy living. With a new design and more content, [our site](#) is meant to be easy for you to navigate.

Kick off 2015 with a goal to find more reasons to get outdoors. And on behalf of the Foundation, we wish you a happy and healthy new year!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David W. Kraybill".

David W. Kraybill, President

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"Survey after survey has told us that parks are very important to the people of the Commonwealth," said Andrew Gilchrist, Regional Advisor at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "And our state is the cradle of the conservation movement. It's part of our legacy."

Importance of a continued commitment

Parks are places to see friends and neighbors. They are a focal point for special events and a place to walk, play and recreate. For local municipalities, they are the primary sites for physical activities.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 report presented research emphasizing how the design of communities—and presence of parks, trails and other recreational facilities—affects people's ability to meet recommended levels of physical exercise. Across the state and in our own region people agree.

"We recently surveyed the state and found that the number one reason that people use parks/recreation services is the physical and health benefits," said Diane Kripas, Division Chief at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "The general public is also making the connection between parks and the health care system. The ultimate goal,

then, is to enable every resident to have access to safe, ready-to-use public parks."

Gilchrist offered his personal perspective: "When I go into the woods, it's therapy. I feel better after going to a local park, both physically and emotionally."

Kurt Zwinkl, Executive Director for the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, concurs. "We're seeing more and more people returning to 'the great outdoors'—and they understand it's important from both a mental and physical standpoint. From our perspective, the more trails (and connector trails) that are built, the more people become engaged."

Best practices

When it comes to uncovering the common threads in managing successful parks and recreation programs, the following areas of importance bubble up:

- 1. Power of collaboration.** Good collaboration and solid partnerships utilize proper cooperation, consistency, communication, commitment and credit. As Kripas puts it, "I care about their success, and they care about mine. We both row the boat."
- 2. A health and wellness connection.** Along with the power of collaboration comes a connection to health care organizations, foundations and/or hospital networks.
- 3. Importance of volunteers.** "Train the trainer" programs can make the best use of tight budgets while allowing individuals to take part in their personal passions.
- 4. Purposeful program design.** Programs that center on giving back give people opportunities to serve others ("Love Your Park Days" in Philadelphia). Or, programs that are motivating or goal-oriented encourage participation ("Get Your Tail on the Trail" 5k activities).

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Schuylkill River Greenway Association

Taking a closer look at what the Schuylkill River Greenway Association has done with the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area.

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by the U.S. Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a distinctive landscape. The Association works to revitalize and restore the region through preservation, education, recreation, community revitalization and tourism.

In 2014, the Schuylkill River was named Pennsylvania River of the Year, with the Association named as lead agency in developing a year-long celebration of the river. As the year draws to a close, they have celebrated a number of events, including the 16th Annual Schuylkill River Sojourn, as part of the program to draw even more awareness.

The organization's continued success can be seen in its expanding Pedal and Paddle biking/kayaking trips, as just one example. In 2013, they held one event each month from May through September. Over the course of the summer, they introduced 75 people to a 4.5 mile ride along the Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown, a tour of the historic Morlatton Village and a return trip via kayak. 2014 showcased even more interest and additional tours to keep up with participant demand.

When it comes to telling their story, Kurt Zwinkl, Executive Director for the Schuylkill River Greenway Association reports, "We have found that community members come and watch our events, like the Sojourn. Also, we have a professional writer on staff who is constantly communicating. We've found that the more success we have in getting out the word, the more people want to participate and get involved. Our media relations have helped put us on the map."



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What the future holds

Encouraging people to return to the great outdoors continues to be at the heart of parks and recreation programs. With that in mind, we asked our experts to weigh in on what the future holds. Here are their optimistic thoughts:

An urban renaissance.

"Pennsylvania is a complex state," said Kripas. "I think there is a renaissance going on, with areas like Philadelphia, Allentown and Easton experiencing positive growth. The younger generation is happy to live in cities, which are fast becoming vibrant places with many things to do. They desire their

neighborhoods to be walkable and bikeable. They are embracing parks. And as a result, we are encouraging park and recreation departments to reposition themselves, making them more valuable to residents."

A maintenance mentality.

"If you build it, people will come," said Zwinkl. "But you have to maintain it for them to come back. For example, make sure signs are current, damages are repaired/replaced, and wear/tear is fixed. This requires constant attention to secure funding and investment, starting at the local level. We strive to develop partnerships for the long-term—those that last way past the ribbon cutting."

A return to the past.

"I grew up in the city," said Gilchrist. "As a kid, you could find me by a creek looking for crayfish and minnows. I was comfortable there, and that's what we need to instill in kids today—being comfortable in nature. It's what spurred me to be a Boy Scout and ultimately become a natural resource management major in college. I can trace it all back to being a little kid and having a safe place to play at the bottom of the street. That concept of the wilderness in the city was a strong influence on me."



Celebrate the past year of grantees featured in our Community Benefit Reports:



Hickory Park in New Hanover finished first in our On Your Park, Get Set, Go!™ contest.



Exeter Park in Exeter township placed a close second in our On Your Park, Get Set, Go!™ contest.



Sunset Park in Upper Pottsgrove celebrated a third place finish in our On Your Park, Get Set, Go!™ contest.



TriCounty Community Network, an organization striving to improve the health, social and environmental conditions of the Pottstown region.



Pottstown Area Industrial Development, an organization dedicated to business recruitment, retention and the attraction of new investment in Pottstown.



Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities works to provide basic needs and resources to the Pottstown population.

Board profile



Douglas Trainer, Board Member

Douglas Trainer joined the Foundation's Board in October 2013. As a Vice President and Senior Financial Consultant at National Penn Investment Services, Trainer provides objective financial advice and tailored solutions to his customers. That includes individuals, businesses, foundations, endowments and estates.

His career in financial services spans nearly 30 years, so joining the Foundation's Financial Committee was a natural fit. Also, he is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee.

"Having just marked my first year on the Board, I can say that one thing that has impressed me is seeing what the Foundation has accomplished, while at the same time being good stewards of their resources."

In the community, Trainer is a member of New Hanover UMC, Pennies for Bears, Pottstown Soup Kitchen and Reading Masonic Lodge #549.

In his spare time, Trainer enjoys cooking, golfing (to excess, in his words) and swimming. In fact, his background includes experience as a chef. He advises embracing healthy living—whether that means getting outdoors for a little physical activity or using natural foods instead of boxed or pre-cooked meals. Sometimes it's easier to adapt when you make only a few adjustments.



Board profile



Linda Flederbach, Board Member

While Linda Flederbach splits her time between Pennsylvania and Texas, her passion for our community drives her to remain an active voice on the Foundation's Board, as well as the Grants/Program committee and Marketing/Communications committee.

Her entrepreneurial spirit and love of animals drove her to launch her own business called Joe Paws Dog Bakery. Though, her education and background suggest Flederbach's well-rounded and unique perspective serves the area in multiple ways. She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Psychology from Kutztown University, and her master's degree in Social Work from Syracuse University. She has worked in schools and daycares. As a licensed Social Worker, she has served as an addictions counselor and provided counseling to individuals and families. She also developed and presented wellness programs for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

This blend of experience made her the right choice for the Main Street Manager position for Boyertown. "There were many parallels between my areas of expertise and the requirements needed to be the Main Street Manager," she said.

Her area volunteer activities have included serving as a member of the Boyertown Rotary Club, as well as District 7430 Inbound Youth Exchange Coordinator. She was in charge of incoming exchange students in the Rotary Clubs in her district. She also served on the Board of the United Way of Boyertown, as a committee member of the Berks County Community Foundation's Boyertown Area Charitable Giving Program and part of the Boyertown Holiday Open House Tour Committee.

How does she encourage others to embrace a healthy lifestyle? "Communities should promote the healthy assets they have. Sometimes we don't realize what's in our own backyard," said Flederbach. In addition, she noted, "I think we can all set achievable goals when it comes to being healthier. Also, do more of what you like, and it'll snowball!"

Changes to the Foundation's Board

As of July 1, 2014, six of the Foundation's Board members have retired. "They have all played an integral part in forming the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation," according to Dave Kraybill, Foundation President. "They each brought their own unique personalities, expertise and passion for health and wellness to the Board. Their dedication and leadership has helped guide the Foundation in fulfilling its mission of motivating people to adopt healthy lifestyles."



(left to right) David Kraybill, President; Robert Boyce, retired Board member.



(left to right) Retired board members Charles Palladino, Kenn Picardi, Sharon Weaver, Scott Detar, Milt Martyny.



"Foundations of Life" Blog with Dr. Laurie Betts

Find inspiration and advice by following Dr. Betts as she discusses family life, exercise, nutrition and more. She will cover topics everyone can relate to, so join in the conversation and share your challenges and your successes.

[Click here](#) to follow Dr. Betts today!

www.pottstownfoundation.org



PottstownFoundation.org

Here at the Foundation, we are all about helping people improve their health and well-being. That includes having a website that is easy for visitors to navigate—whether they are interested in applying for a grant, learning more about the initiatives we support or finding helpful resources.

We invite you to take a moment and visit www.PottstownFoundation.org. A few highlights include:

- Detailed and easy-to-follow guidelines meant to make the [grantmaking](#) process easier. Whether it's promoting healthy living through healthy eating or active living, or providing accessible and quality health care, we look forward to hearing from you.
- Whether you are interested in the latest news from the Foundation, downloads of insightful studies and reports, links to a variety of Healthy Living resources, and more, [our Resource section](#) can help.
- Learn more about the Foundation—including its [mission](#), its [staff](#) and its [history](#).
- Find out how the Foundation connects to the community through a number of [initiatives](#) and [collaboratives](#).

Tell us what you think!



Need another reason to get outdoors in 2015?

The Foundation will give you two exciting ones! We'll be in the garden this spring and back in the parks this summer.

Intrigued?

Stay tuned for more details next year!



Fall 2014 Grant Round

The Foundation seeks grant proposals that are consistent with our identified mission of improving health outcomes in the Pottstown region. Within our mission, we have established priorities that our grants are required to serve.

The fall 2014 grant round includes 32 grants, totaling \$905,528 awarded to non-profit organizations, schools and municipalities. These grants are funded according to the following priorities:

PRIORITY #1: Healthy Behaviors

PRIORITY #1A: Promoting healthy living through nutrition, activities and programs in public and private schools to reduce obesity and encourage healthy living

There were no requests in Priority #1 during this grant round.

PRIORITY #1B: Improving parks, programming and the built environment to increase access to physical activity. (Three grants were awarded totaling \$25,214.)

Holy Cross Regional Catholic School: Rock Wall Relocation

Green Lane Park - County of Montgomery: Green Lane Park Fitness Stations

Expressive Therapy Concepts Inc.: Smashville Badminton & Fitness Center

PRIORITY #1C: Creating and promoting social networks involving healthy living (Nine grants were awarded totaling \$302,930.)

Spring-Ford Counseling Services: Signs of Suicide Prevention Program

Chester County Community Foundation Inc.: 4-H After School Program at Park Spring Apartments

Goals Over Obstacles: Goals Over Obstacles Skills Academy

Pottstown Family Center (Family Services of Mont. Co): Resilient C's Project

Triskeles Foundation: Food For Thought

Maternity Care Coalition: Pottstown Early Head Start

Pottstown Area Seniors' Center: Prime Time Health

Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities: Strengthening the Health of our Community and Organization

Pottstown Athletic Club: FitnessTown USA programs for Barth Elementary and Pottstown Middle Schools

PRIORITY #2: Physical and Emotional Health (Eleven grants were awarded totaling \$368,923.)

Montgomery County Community College Foundation: Dental Sealant Day

Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust: Life Safety Equipment Program, Colebrookdale Railroad

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills: Aging in Community

Child, Home & Community: Pottstown Adolescent Prenatal, Parenting and Support Continuum

Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania: Jump with Jill

Phoenixville Healthcare Access Foundation: Health Care Access Vision, Dental, Prescription, Mammogram and Emergency Orthopedic Programs

Child Advocacy Center of Montgomery County, d/b/a Mission Kids: Fostering Resilience by Expanding Mission Kids' Victim Advocate Program

Carson Valley Children's Aid: "Women's Voices/Healthy Choices"

Visiting Nurse Association Community Services, Inc. (VNA): Personal Navigator Program with Expanded Legal Support

Community Health and Dental Care, Inc.: Affordable Care Act Health Insurance Enrollment Assistance in the Pottstown Service Area

Creative Health Services, Inc.: Healthy Weight, Healthy Families Program

PRIORITY #3: Funding learning opportunities and strategic planning to strengthen non-profits (\$316,310)

TriCounty Chamber of Commerce: Membership for Daniel Boone School District

Pottstown Public Library: A Viable, Attractive, Useful, and Nimble Library Facility

Visiting Nurse Association of Pottstown: Increasing Opportunities for Staff and Volunteer Development

Greater Berks Food Bank: "Bringing More to the Table" Capital Campaign

Pottstown Area Industrial Development Inc.: PAID Annual Operations - 2015

Royersford Outreach, Inc.: General operating for building and program

Community Wellness of Boyertown: "Complete the Circle of Well-Being"

Pottstown Area Police Athletic League: Operating Capital

Preservation Pottstown Inc.: Expansion of Community Garden Outreach, Awareness and Advocacy Footprint



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