



2016 was a milestone year for the Conservancy with the groundbreaking for our expanded environmental education center! The new nature center will allow us to better serve the community for years to come.

This exciting project would not be possible without the support of our donors and volunteers.

*Thank you!*

## Expansion Begins



PHOTO CREDIT: VIC GLADSTONE

Major donors and elected officials help break ground on our education center expansion.

Construction on our expanded education center is expected to be complete in May 2017, just in time for our 11th annual Wine in the Garden and Beer in the Barn! **The new nature center will feature exhibits on trees, birds, beneficial bugs, pollinators and more.** A new children's play area will offer opportunities for the very young, while the nature center, meeting rooms and outdoor classroom will serve students and adults alike.

## Educational Programs

Another milestone this year is the growth of award winning Conservancy programs across the state! The student generated **Watershed Report Card**, an authentic environmental experience where students evaluate the biological, chemical and physical factors of their watershed, is now in twelve jurisdictions across the state. A statewide summit will be held at the Statehouse in Annapolis in the spring, and students will advocate for improvements to their watershed with elected officials. **Thirty-two schools across the state** are taking part in this program, with **1,500 students** in Howard County alone!

Not only has this program grown outside of Howard County, but the work of our students had an impact on citizen science statewide. Howard County students contributed to the development of a **new biological assessment tool**, which enables greater precision in organism identification and classification. In partnership with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, this improved stream survey tool is now used as part of the Stream Waders program, which **evaluates more than 100 streams across the state.**

**More than 3,200 elementary school children** experienced outdoor education at the Conservancy this year. Our second grade soil program with **hands-on exploration at the soil pit** is still our most popular elementary field experience. All programs align with school system curriculum, from first grade *Owl's Observations* where students learn about adaptations and survival to *Nature Tales* where preschoolers listen to read-aloud stories during their nature hikes.

Bioblitz at Belmont saw fifth and seventh grade students working to identify all the living species in the park. **252 total species were identified this year**, and 45 were research-grade observations that were shared through the citizen science iNaturalist program.

It was another great summer with **335 summer campers at our two sites.** With the theme of *Explore your World*, campers investigated habitats, hiked to ponds, streams and champion trees, and learned from experts about paleontology, beekeeping, archery and more.



PHOTO CREDIT: EMILY CALKINS

High school students participate in a stream corridor assessment.



PHOTO CREDIT: KEITH JANSON

*The historic farmstead at Mt. Pleasant.*

### Community Outreach

Conservancy programs “on the road” reached nearly 2,500 this year. Our owls, snakes and turtles were just some of the Conservancy family to **visit schools, libraries and senior centers** across the county. Businesses even joined in this year, providing educational opportunities for their customers.



*The Conservancy hosts an annual hike to the Patapsco River.*

### Special Events

**Public programs** drew more than **4,000 visitors** to the Conservancy. Some highlights included Scott Weidensaul, *Peterson Reference Guide* author, who drew more than 100 to his talk about owls. Our **storytelling program** featuring local citizens sharing personal stories of life in Howard County was sold out. We are excited that this successful program will return in 2017 and will incorporate the 50th birthday of Columbia.

### Belmont

Program attendance at Belmont **has grown by 75% this year!** In addition to our school and camp programs, we offer monthly preschool programs and free guided hikes on the third Saturday of every month—come visit!

### Our Grounds

Our **Community Garden** continues to thrive and support those in need. This year **1,459 pounds** of fresh, organic vegetables were donated to the **Howard County Food Bank**. Our honeybees were busy too – we now have **eleven hives**, and 120 pounds of honey were harvested this year in partnership with the **Howard County Beekeepers Association**.

Our bluebird boxes had a good year as well, producing 30 total nest sites, 93 eggs and 51 young.

In partnership with **The Howard County Bird Club**, a new **sky watch** site was installed along the grassland loop trail. In addition to hawks, this is a great place to watch the migration of kestrels, osprey, eagles and even non-raptor migrants like swallows, warblers, hummingbirds and monarchs.

And, despite a cold rain, 120 dedicated volunteers planted 145 trees along our trail network on Earth Day!

### Awards

Everyone at the Conservancy was thrilled with the induction of **Ruth and Frances Brown into the Howard County Women’s Hall of Fame this year**. Many former students and neighbors were able to attend the ceremony to celebrate the sisters and the incredible gift of Mt. Pleasant Farm that was left to our community. We were also pleased to be recertified this year as a **Maryland Green Center** by the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education.



PHOTO CREDIT: LORNA SCRIBNER

*A great day at summer camp!*