

"Federation Corner" column
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Community celebrates threatened park meadow

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As part of our community's environmental stewardship efforts, the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association (NFCCA) sponsored a clean-up of the North Four Corners Park on Sunday, April 15. The park is located at 211 Southwood Avenue, near the intersection of University Boulevard and Colesville Road. Volunteers gathered to remove invasive plants and prepare the area for a community festival planned for May.

Neighbors in the Silver Spring area banded together with the Blair Sports Academy to pull invasive vines, shore up eroding areas, and lay down mulch at the meadow in the local park, even though the County Council voted recently to obliterate the park's meadow and mature trees. The six-acre area, affectionately named "Rachel Carson Meadow" by local residents, adjoins the south side of North Four Corners Park and abuts University Boulevard West (Route 193). The Oaks at Four Corners, an apartment residence for seniors, is located next door to the meadow.

The intensive work session ran from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. and was overseen by Amilton Da Silveira and Kaleen O'Connor, owners of ADS Landscaping, whose house in the North Four Corners neighborhood overlooks the meadow. ADS Landscaping also donated mulch and lent tools to the project.

In recognition of recent concerns expressed by local teens about their need for employment opportunities during meetings sponsored by the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board's Neighborhoods Committee, the NFCCA arranged for ten students from the County Recreation Department's Sports Academy Program at Blair High School to participate in the clean-up. The Sports Academy provides academic and career enrichment services in conjunction with athletic activities for students experiencing performance problems in school. The teens earned both Student Service Learning (SSL) hours and \$10 per hour for participating, with funding contributed by the NFCCA.

The Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association represents the roughly 1,480 households in the neighborhood and has met since the 1970s. The North Four Corners area is a walkable and very livable community with a population that is racially and ethnically diverse, has a wide range of incomes and ages, and includes many long-term residents.

The clean-up was scheduled in order to spruce up the meadow and park in time for the NFCCA's fourth annual Rachel Carson Meadow Festival, to be held Saturday, May 19, from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. The Washington Revels will again create an interactive Spring Festival Program and the "Pitting of the Pooches," the NFCCA's annual fun dog show, will also be held. Crafts using invasive vines will be taught, a soccer clinic will be held for children, and the event will culminate with the Revels' May Pole dance. Several local environmental groups will once again man information booths and educate/sign up local residents.

This may well be the last Rachel Carson Meadow Festival, as bulldozers are slated to arrive next year. The irony is that this location and event constitute a wonderful example of the concept of civic greens put forth in the County Parks Department's draft 2012 Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan discussed by the Planning Board on April 12.

As stated on page 61 of the draft Plan, "Perhaps the most significant trend recognized by this PROS Plan is the urbanization of the County and the trend for people to live in transit served areas, with less reliance on the automobile. The Plan recognizes that people in these urban areas need trail and sidewalk systems for recreational walking or biking or for commuting, as well as places for gathering, meditation, recreation, connecting to nature, etc. To respond to this need, this PROS Plan proposes a new urban park classification which includes civic greens for gathering and urban wooded areas for connection to nature."

North Four Corners Park and the gentle slope of Rachel Carson Meadow are used daily by local residents, who bring their children to play and explore, read, walk their dogs, exercise, toss Frisbees, enjoy being outdoors, and even practice their golf swings! The centerpiece of the space is a living walnut tree that is estimated to be more than 180 years old.

Plans for Rachel Carson Meadow by the Montgomery County Parks Department—approved by the County Council on March 20 of this year—will spend \$5.6 million to pave a 50-car parking lot, dump enough fill dirt to leave a 26' high berm wall facing the neighborhood homes, level the trees, and install an adult soccer field. Residents, via the NFCCA, have requested repeatedly that the Council use the funds elsewhere.

Rachel Carson is the famous local scientist and author whose last book, *The Sense of Wonder*, encouraged adults to instill in children an appreciation for the beauty and magic of natural areas. Carson lived just a few blocks north of the NFCCA territory.

Volunteers from the Northwood-Four Corners community will participate in another environmental stewardship activity on Sunday, April 29th. The NFCCA will sponsor a cleanup of the Lockridge Creek, which flows into the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. For the past twenty plus years, the community has conducted these stream trash and invasive plant removals on a semi-annual basis.

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net