

## November 2023 Newsletter

### Falls of the James Group



A squirrel stocking up with hickory nuts for the winter. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

### FOJG Programs

**We continue with our in-person/virtual hybrid programs this year. Join us at Congregation Or Ami for our 11/14 Program with Parker Agelasto, Executive Director of the Capital Region Land Conservancy**



Photo of Parker Agelasto, Executive Director of the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) and the Appomattox River taken from CRLC's property in Colonial Heights looking back at Campbell's Bridge. Photos courtesy of Parker Agelasto.

**7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: What's Happening in the Richmond Region? The Land Conservation View by Parker Agelasto, Executive Director of the Capital Region Land Conservancy.** With only about 6% of the land protected in the Richmond region, the small but mighty Capital Region Land Conservancy is making its best effort to conserve land for future generations. That includes working lands like forests and farms, important natural habitats, and equitable public access to nature for all our residents. Learn how CRLC has contributed to the ambitious goals outlined in President Biden's 2021 Executive Order committing to the conservation of 30% of the land in the United States before 2030. How has the Richmond region been doing and what might a path forward look like to support these efforts? Join us in person at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom: [FOJG Program: What's Happening in the Richmond Region? The Land Conservation View](#)

### Joe's Book Nook/Read your Ballot and Vote!

Hello FOJG member and supporters,  
In the month of November 2023, the most important piece of reading material that you can put your eyes on is the ballot, to be found at your local polling precinct.  
If you have not already done so, please vote before or on November 7th, to make a difference in this incredibly important election for our state.  
And speaking of elections, please watch your email for a ballot to be sent several times in November, containing candidates for the Sierra Club State and local Executive Committees. Our four Falls of the James Group Executive Committee candidates are:

#### Glen Besa

Kevin Cianfarini  
Sheri Shannon  
Bruce Tarr

Their bios can be linked to from the ballot FOJG members will receive electronically.  
Thank you, Joe Brancoli, FOJG Chair

### Advocacy Action



Glen Besa speaks to weekly lunch group at the Weinstein Jewish Community Center. Photo Courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

On Monday October 2nd, our Executive Committee member Glen Besa gave a presentation at the Weinstein Jewish Community Center's weekly lunch program. Glen spoke and answered questions for an hour about the Sierra Club's history and mission, as well as recent efforts to have Richmond Gasworks operations be made more transparent by creation of a Public Utilities Commission. Approximately 75 people attended this learning event.

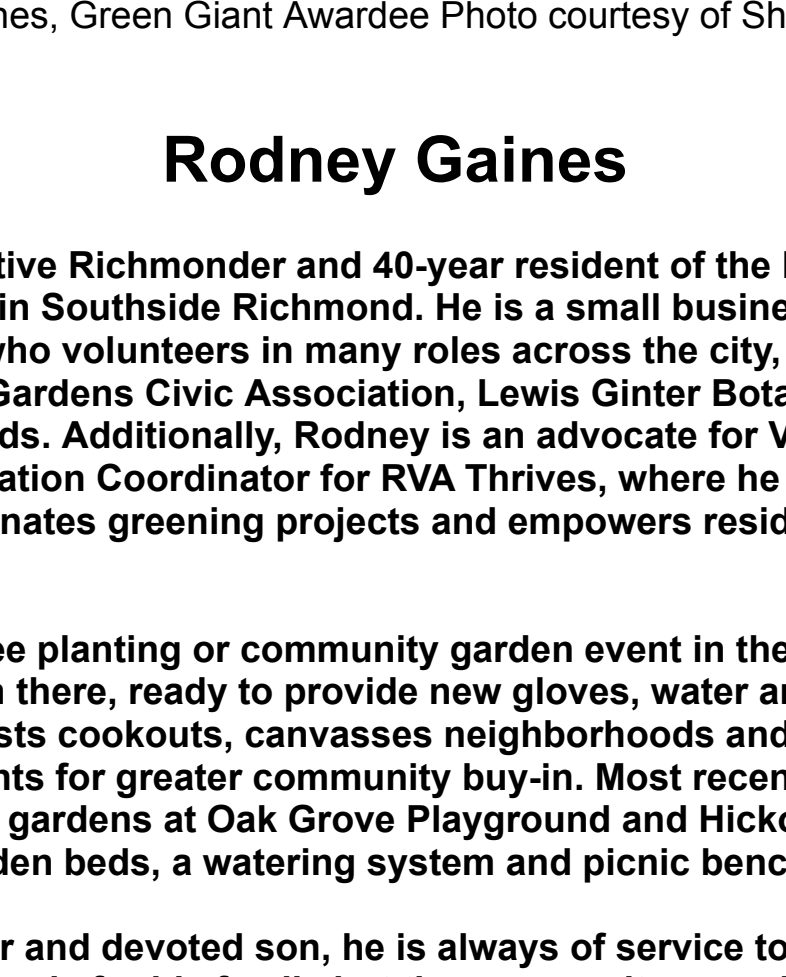
If you'd like to volunteer to join our Electrify RVA and Beyond Methane RVA Teams or get involved in active protests, contact Lee Williams at [lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com](mailto:lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com).



Top photo from left - FOJG members Carille Greenberg-Ribley, Bruce Tarr, and Aileen Rivera tabling at the Keep Henrico Beautiful Plant Native Plant! Festival at Crump Park. Photo Courtesy of Tim Hinton. Bottom photo - Lots of people out to learn about environmental groups and buy native plants at the Native Plant! Festival. Photo courtesy of Aileen Rivera.

On Saturday 10/21/23, Keep Henrico Beautiful hosted the Plant Native! Festival at Crump Park on Mountain Road in Glen Allen. Three FOJG Ex Com members interacted with participants informing them about our group, its meetings, outings, and involvement with environmental issues. Several people expressed interest in our activities and signed up to receive copies of our newsletter. Others were current Sierra Club members who had not participated in any local activities and were interested in getting more involved. The festival provided participants opportunities to learn about native species topics from the many area plant vendors, scheduled speakers, and the informational groups onsite. Bruce Tarr

### FOJG 2024 Green Giant Awards



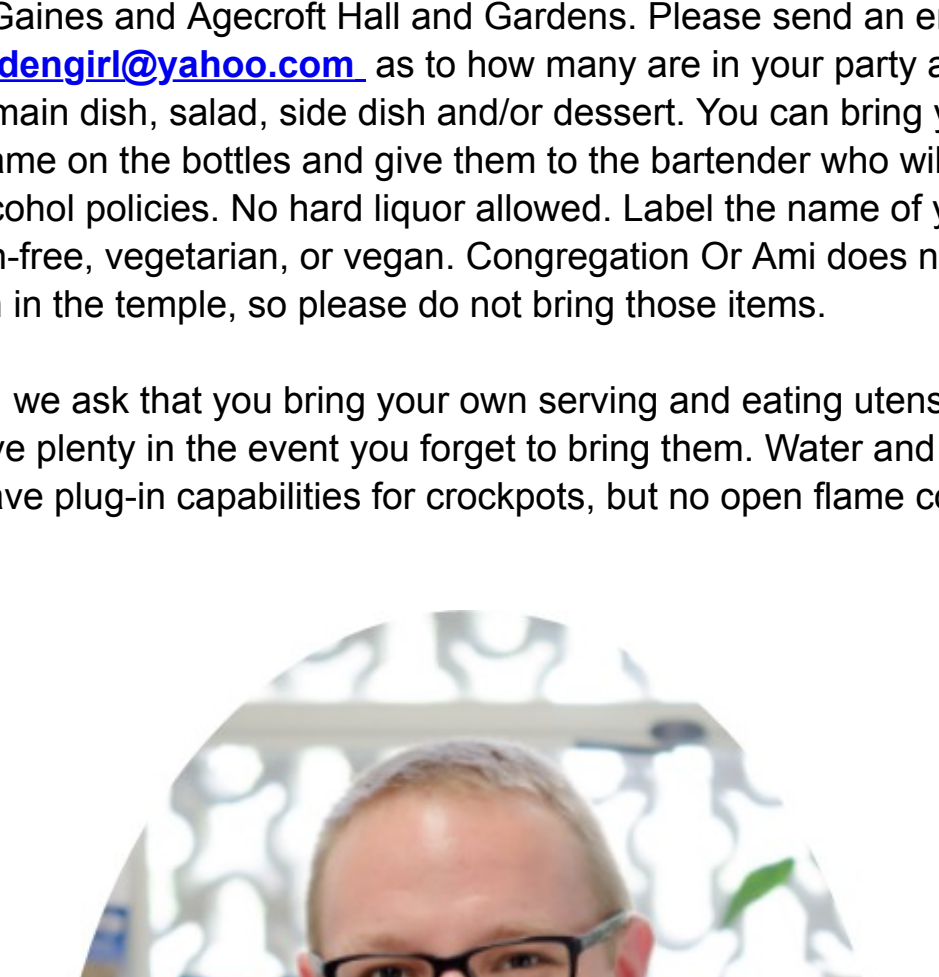
Rodney Gaines, Green Giant Awardee Photo courtesy of Sheri Shannon.

#### Rodney Gaines

Rodney Gaines is a native Richmonder and 40-year resident of the Davee Gardens neighborhood located in Southside Richmond. He is a small business owner and community advocate who volunteers in many roles across the city, including as a member of the Davee Gardens Civic Association, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens and Richmond Tree Stewards. Additionally, Rodney is an advocate for Virginia Community Voice and the Collaboration Coordinator for RVA Thrives, where he hosts community cleanup events, coordinates greening projects and empowers residents to care for the environment.

Whenever there is a tree planting or community garden event in the Southside, Rodney is usually the first person there, ready to provide new gloves, water and snacks for all the volunteers. He also hosts cookouts, canvasses neighborhoods and leads presentations to connect with residents for greater community buy-in. Most recently, he led the creation of two new community gardens at Oak Grove Playground and Hickory Hill Community Center with raised garden beds, a watering system and picnic benches.

As a father, grandfather and devoted son, he is always of service to others and believes in being a role model not only for his family but the community as well.



Agecroft Hall and Gardens. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

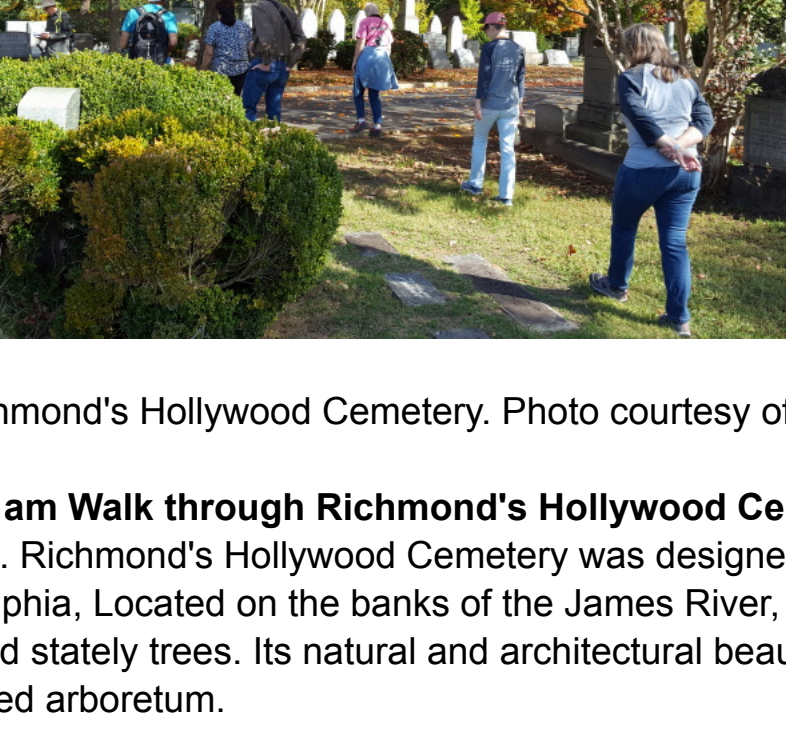
#### Agecroft Hall and Gardens

The Falls of the James Group wishes to salute a local historic non-profit's move to clean energy generation. As the linked article states, Agecroft Hall and Gardens [Agecroft Hall & Gardens, an historic manor home in Richmond, VA](#) installed enough solar panels to produce its own electric needs and to sell some back into the grid. We recognize the forward-thinking approach by this venerable institution located in the Windsor Farms neighborhood of the city will make them one of two recipients of our 2023 Green Giant Awards. Executive Director Anne Kenny-Urban talks about the solar panels in this Richmond Times Dispatch video: [Agecroft Hall goes high-tech](#)

### December and January FOJG Programs

**12/12/23 - 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG Member Potluck Dinner and Green Giant Awards.** This program will only be an in-person program at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Come join us for fellowship and celebrate FOJG's 2024 Green Giant Awardees Rodney Gaines and Agecroft Hall and Gardens. Please send an email to Nancy Patterson at [nmpatt@ingrill@yahoo.com](mailto:nmpatt@ingrill@yahoo.com), as to how many are in your party and whether you will bring an appetizer, main dish, salad, side dish and/or dessert. You can bring your own wine or beer but put your name on the bottles and give them to the bartender who will serve your drinks per Virginia ABC alcohol policies. No hard liquor allowed. Label the name of your dish and indicate if it is gluten-free, vegetarian, or vegan. Congregation Or Ami does not allow pork products or shellfish in the temple, so please do not bring those items.

As conservationists, we ask that you bring your own serving and eating utensils, plate and cup, although we will have plenty in the event you forget to bring them. Water and sodas will be provided. We will have plug-in capabilities for crockpots, but no open flame cooking is allowed.



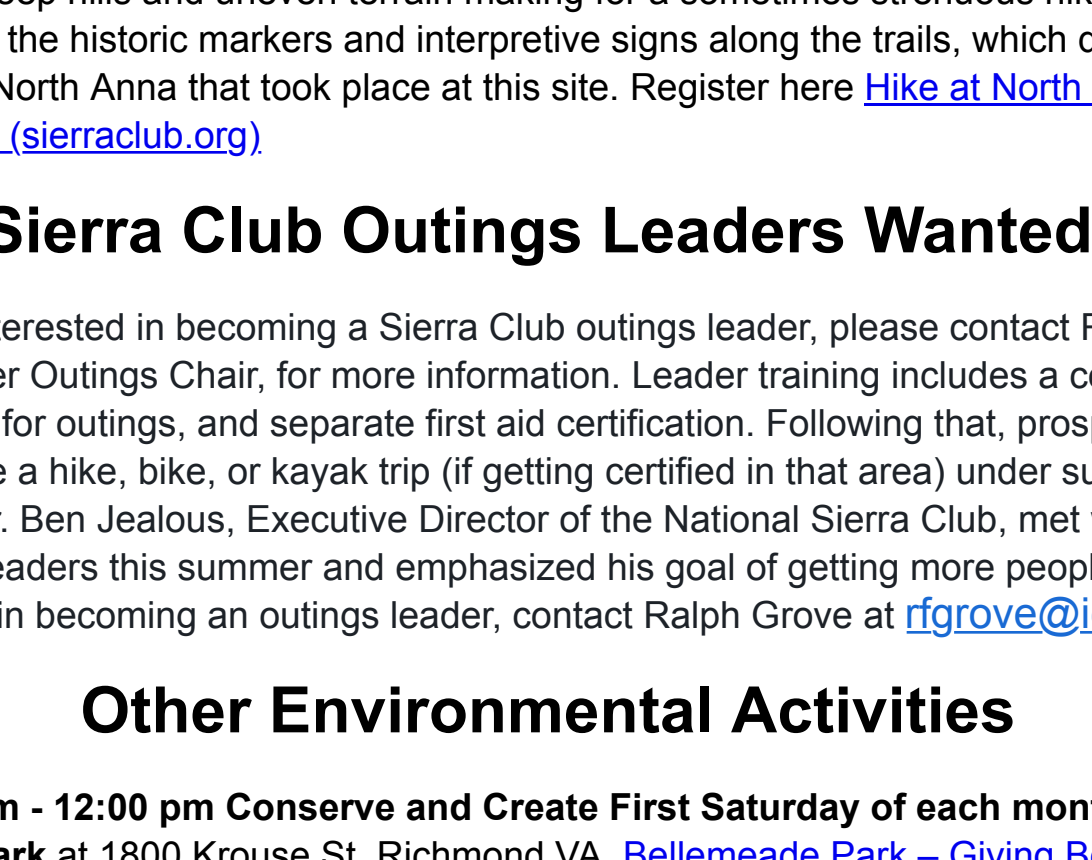
Danny Plaughter, Executive Director of both Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) and the Virginia Transit Association (VTA). Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

**11/9/2023 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG program "The Case for Transforming Rail in the Commonwealth: Why it's important, and what it means for our communities"** with Danny Plaughter, Executive Director of both Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) and the Virginia Transit Association (VTA). Join us in person at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom: [FOJG Program: The Case for Transforming Rail in Virginia \(sierraclub.org\)](#)

You can check out our local free virtual and in-person events at the FOJG calendar here: [Events/Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

To see what free virtual and in-person Sierra Club events you can attend throughout the state, check out the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club calendar here: [Events Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

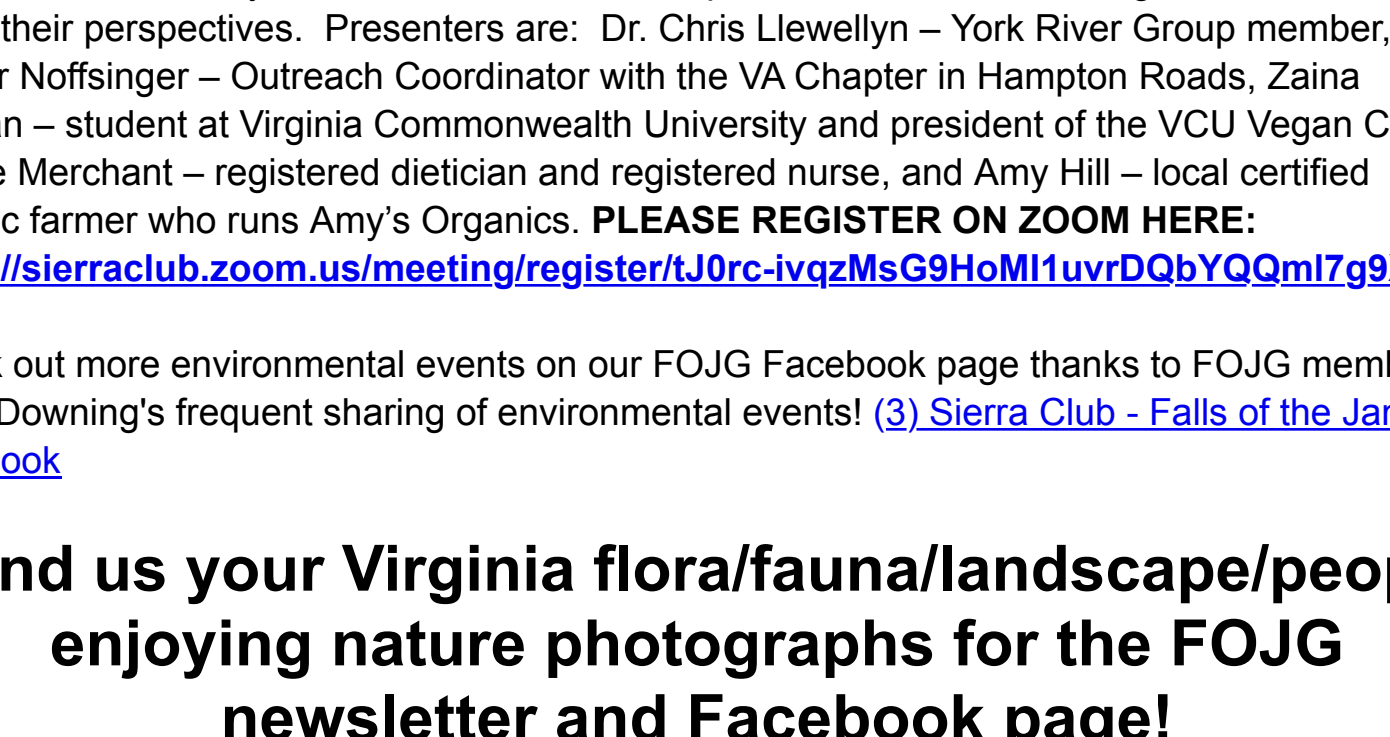
### Upcoming FOJG Outings



A hike through Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

**11/4/23 9:30 am - 11:30 am Walk through Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery.** 412 S Cherry St, Richmond, VA 23220. Hollywood Cemetery was designed in 1847 by architect John Notman of Philadelphia. Located on the banks of the James River, the cemetery spans 135 acres of valleys, hills, and stately trees. Its natural and architectural beauty has earned it recognition as a registered arboretum.

This hike will cover about three miles along roads and pathways through the cemetery. We will enjoy the beautiful landscape as well as views of the James River, and we'll see several notable graves. Total hiking time will be about two hours. Register here: [Walk through Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery \(sierraclub.org\)](#)



North Anna River in the North Anna Battlefield Park. Photo Courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

**11/18/2023 9:30 am. Hike at North Anna Battlefield Park** North Anna Battlefield Park encompasses 172 acres abutting the North Anna River, with over 6 miles of well-marked trails through oak-hickory forest. We will be hiking the Blue Trail (3.6 miles total, in-and-back). This trail includes steep hills and uneven terrain making for a sometimes strenuous hike. History buffs may also enjoy the historic markers and interpretive signs along the trails, which describe the 1864 Battle of North Anna that took place at this site. Register here [Hike at North Anna Battlefield Park \(sierraclub.org\)](#)

### Sierra Club Outings Leaders Wanted!

If you are interested in becoming a Sierra Club outings leader, please contact Ralph Grove, Virginia Chapter Outings Chair, for more information. Leader training includes a course on Sierra Club practices for outings, and separate first aid certification. Following that, prospective leaders must organize a hike, bike, or kayak trip (if getting certified in that area) under supervision of a certified leader. Ben Jealous, Executive Director of the National Sierra Club, met with FOJG and state chapter leaders this summer and emphasized his goal of getting more people out in nature. If interested in becoming an outings leader, contact Ralph Grove at [Rjgrove@sierraclub.org](mailto:Rjgrove@sierraclub.org).

### Other Environmental Activities

**11/4/23 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Conserve and Create First Saturday of each month at Bellemade Park** at 1800 Krouse St, Richmond, VA. [Bellemade Park - Giving Bellemade Its Roots and Wings \(bellemadeparkva.com\)](#) Help with garden chores in creating an outdoor campus for the children and families of this Southside Richmond community. This beautiful outdoor learning campus is dedicated to the outdoor education of the community. Register here via HandsOn Richmond: [HandsOn is now cFENGAGE | Conserve and Create - clean up](#)

**11/4/23 10:00-11:30 am Virginia Organizing** [Virginia Organizing | Real People. Real Change. \(virginia-organizing.org\)](#) will hold Governor Youngkin accountable for restoring people's rights to vote. This is the group's annual Grassroots Gathering where Virginia Organizing chapters from across the state come together for a day of action and workshops. You and your network are welcome to come to the full day event from 9:00-3:30 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, or to only the action training and action itself from 10:00 am to 11:30am. Contact Rachel Hefner [rachelhefner@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:rachelhefner@virginia-organizing.org) if interested in attending.

**11/15/23 7:00 pm Sierra Club York River Group Virtual Meeting: Healthy Foods for a Healthy Planet** The York River Group is hosting a panel which will look at the benefits of a plant-based food system for the planet. When pondering how one individual might make a difference in curbing the climate crisis, one answer could be moving to a more plant-based diet. The program will explain how our present food systems are harming our earth. Moving to vegetarian or vegan foods could also benefit your general health. You may wonder if becoming a vegan is nutritionally advisable. Several of the presenters adhere to a vegan diet and will share their perspectives. Presenters are: Dr. Chris Llewellyn – York River Group member, Hunter Nofftinger – Outreach Coordinator with the VA Chapter in Hampton Roads, Zaina Saiman – student at Virginia Commonwealth University and president of the VCU Vegan Club, Renee Merchant – registered dietician and registered nurse, and Amy Hill – local certified organic farmer who runs Amy's Organics. **PLEASE REGISTER ON ZOOM HERE:** <https://sierraclub.zoom.us/j/79c-vqzMs9H0M1uvrDQbYQOm17g9XZ2>

Check out more environmental events on our FOJG Facebook page thanks to FOJG member Daryl Downing's frequent sharing of environmental events! (3) [Sierra Club - Falls of the James | Facebook](#)

**Send us your Virginia flora/fauna/landscape/people enjoying nature photographs for the FOJG newsletter and Facebook page!**

We would love to get FOJG Sierra Club members' high quality photos to share in each newsletter. Please send your photos to Shavon Peacock at [shavonandrew@verizon.net](mailto:shavonandrew@verizon.net) and you may have the chance to have your photo in the newsletter and posted on our Facebook page (1) [Sierra Club - Falls of the James | Facebook](#) At the end of the newsletter year (4/24), we plan to have photo awards, so stay tuned! Thanks!



Caterpillar of Black Swallowtail butterfly at garden of Dogwood Middle School in Richmond during a tree planting event. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

### Join the Sierra Club

If you are not a member and are interested in joining the oldest, largest grassroots environmental organization in the country, you can join for as little as \$15 here: [Join Today, Become a Champion. \(sierraclub.org\)](#) Once you join the national Sierra Club, you are automatically a member of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club.

**Add your voice to the hundreds of thousands of Americans committed to leaving our children a living legacy – clean air, safe drinking water, and natural grandeur.** From Yosemite National Park to the Grand Canyon, since 1892 the Sierra Club has been instrumental in preserving nature's most splendid wild places. Thank You!

Shavon Peacock  
Sierra Club Falls of the James Group  
Membership Engagement Committee Chair, Outings Leader, and Newsletter Editor

### 2023 Executive Committee Contacts

**Joe Brancoli**, FOJG Executive Committee Chair/Leadership Chair:  
[joesierra@gmail.com](mailto:joesierra@gmail.com)

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**Carille Greenberg-Ribley**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [carillegr@gmail.com](mailto:carillegr@gmail.com)

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**Lee Williams**, FOJG Advocacy Chair: [lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com](mailto:lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com)

**Aileen Rivera**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [jgmouids@aol.com](mailto:jgmouids@aol.com)

**Sheri Shannon**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [sheri@southsiderleaf.org](mailto:sheri@southsiderleaf.org)

**Jessica Sims**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [jessicaleesims@gmail.com](mailto:jessicaleesims@gmail.com)

