



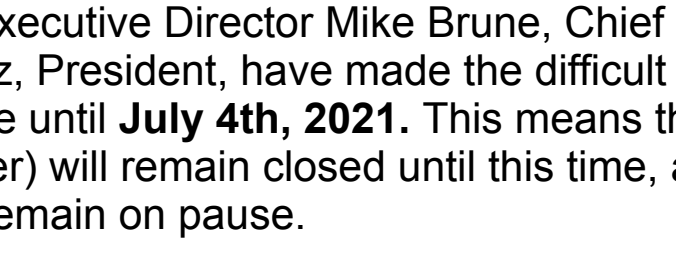
## May 2021 Newsletter

### Falls of the James Group



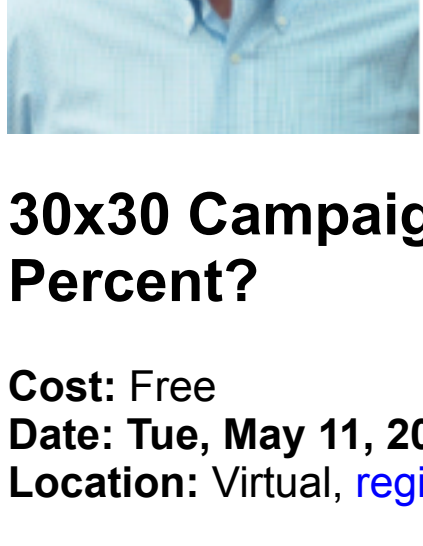
Richmond, Virginia is finally in one of its greenest seasons. Pictured above is scenery from Iron Air. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

## Updated National Sierra Club COVID-19 Response



The National Sierra Club Executive Director Mike Brune, Chief Operations Officer, Jen Tritan, and Ramón J. Cruz, President, have made the difficult decision to extend our current COVID-19 response until **July 4th, 2021**. This means that all of our physical offices (national and chapter) will remain closed until this time, and travel and in-person meetings and outings will remain on pause.

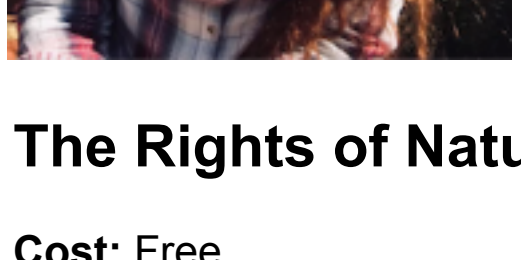
## Register for FOJG's Upcoming Programs



### 30x30 Campaign for Nature: How to Get There from Six Percent?

**Cost:** Free  
**Date:** **Tue, May 11, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM**  
**Location:** Virtual, [register here](#)

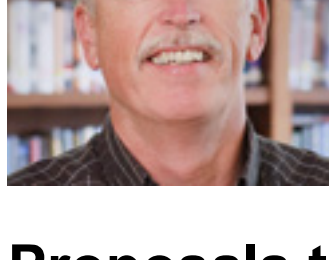
On May 11th, Parker Agelasto, Director of the Capital Region Land Conservancy, will present *30x30 Campaign for Nature: How to Get There from Six Percent?* All conservation efforts matter, from Mayor Levar Stoney's commitment to providing parks and open space to all residents of Richmond, to President Joe Biden's recent commitment to protecting 30% of the land and water of the United States. Attend this program and learn about the recent activities of the Capital Region Land Conservancy that protect our natural and historic resources, and create places for the public.



### The Rights of Nature

**Cost:** Free  
**Date:** **Tue, June 8, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM**  
**Location:** Virtual, [register here](#)

Victoria Rennau, Executive Director and Founder of VA Network for Democracy and Environmental Rights, will discuss the Rights of Nature Movement and how VNDER can assist counties, cities, and towns to create new legal, civil, and environmental rights to protect them against projects harmful to their communities.



### Proposals to Reintroduce Red Wolves to Virginia

**Cost:** Free  
**Date:** **Tue, Sept 14, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM**  
**Location:** Virtual, [register here](#)

Richmond-based journalist Stephen Nash has been looking into proposals to reintroduce red wolves, *Canis lupus rufus*, to Virginia. In the 1970s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caught the last 17 known representatives of this critically endangered species, whose range once extended from Florida to New York and the Atlantic states to Texas. The agency has worked to enlarge the captive population and reintroduce these animals to the wild, with varying success and eagle-falco poisoning. Today, only a handful of red wolves remain in the wild in coastal North Carolina, and two hundred or so are in captive breeding facilities, nine of which are at Roanoke's Mill Mountain Zoo.

Please note that there will not be any FOJG programs in July and August.

**Stay Involved!**

## The Architect of Bellemeade Park Outdoor Learning Center, "Mr. Bob" Argabright



Bob Argabright and four young helpers prepare to lay down straw in Bellemeade Community Center's strawberry beds. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

### By Shavon Peacock

Southside Richmond has a jewel of a park thanks to the bridge-building skills and personal charm of Bob Argabright. "Mr. Bob," as the kids lovingly call him, is a 76-year-old former corporate executive who started tutoring elementary children at the old Oakgrove-Bellemeade Elementary School 17 years ago after retiring. He found, however, that the best way to serve more children and the entire community was to develop the Bellemeade Park Outdoor Learning Campus. After intensive community input and planning, six acres of land adjacent to the new Oakgrove-Bellemeade Elementary School and Bellemeade Community Center have been transformed into a walkable watershed park and learning campus around Albro Creek.

The park has a rain, wildflower, and a memorial garden, a youth vegetable garden complete with a compost and worm bin, a nature play area, fruit trees and shrubs, mushroom nursery logs, purple martin birdhouses, a beehive, a wildlife hotel made of logs, a conversation circle, and trails for biking and hiking. The bike shed is a place where neighborhood kids and parents can rent bikes. The bike shed also provides opportunities for kids to learn how to repair their bikes and earn free donated and repaired bikes after volunteering in the park.

Around 150 organizations including Richmond Parks and Recreation, Tree Stewards, Boy Scouts, Blue Sky Fund, Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG), Riverrine Master Naturalists, TruTimber Arborists, Groundwork RVA, several churches, Oakgrove-Bellemeade School staff and students, and neighborhood members helped restore this once invasive plant-infested property into an outdoor paradise. Students from the Oakgrove-Bellemeade School have had the opportunity to learn about the flora and fauna of the Albro Creek watershed by seining for invertebrates and conducting water quality testing. Bob's goal is to bring children into nature, teach them about the environment, and show them the importance of community engagement.

About five years ago, Daryl Downing initiated FOJG's involvement with Bob and Bellemeade Park. Since then, many Sierrans have removed invasive plants, forked wheel-barreled, and raked mulch, and pulled weeds. Lisa and Bill Thompson recently spent a lot of time building the raised vegetable garden beds. Ten of the forty beds have been planted, and are being tended by specific families while the other beds are being planted by neighborhood kids.

Donations and grants have also helped fund materials needed for the park. On April 24, 2021, during its Earth Day Celebration, Friends of Bellemeade Park received a \$176,000 award from the Virginia Outdoor Foundation to help build a Regional Outdoor Area and workforce development site in the park. In attendance were Mayor Stoney, Mrs. Pam Northam, and Chris Frelke, Executive Director of Richmond Parks and Recreation.

There are Saturday workdays and opportunities to work directly with children in the community. On some Saturdays, Bob and volunteers conduct an outside reading academy to help tutor local elementary and middle school students. Most of these students come from the nearby Latino neighborhood. Following the environmental book readings that last an hour, the students then help plant vegetables, seeds, and wildflowers in the youth garden. Lisa Thompson, a Spanish-speaking English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, has helped lead the tutoring efforts and planting sessions in the garden this spring.

Friends of Bellemeade Park offers many volunteer opportunities. Visit the FOJG calendar if you are interested in volunteering with Bob on the second Saturday of each month for *Conserve and Create Workdays*. We are grateful that we have such an amazing environmental and humanitarian leader like Bob!



Marginals surround the garden beds of Bellemeade Community Center's youth garden. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

## Volunteer with Friends of Bellemeade Park



Many volunteers help make Bellemeade Park a great place. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

Join Bob Argabright and Friends of Bellemeade Park for the next Bellemeade Park Conserve and Create Workday on Saturday, May 8, 2021, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at 1800 Krouse Street, Richmond, VA 23224. [Register here.](#)

## FOJG Cherishes Dr. Charles Kemper Price's Legacy



Dr. Charles Kemper Price was well known for creating green spaces in the Richmond community, such as the Cannon Creek Greenway. Photo courtesy of Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Devoted Sierra Club member, Dr. Charles Kemper Price passed away on March 11th, 2021. Price served as a Chair for the Falls of the James Group and Sierra Club's Virginia State Chapter. In 2011, Price was a recipient of the National Sierra Club's Special Achievement Award. His commitment to civic engagement was extraordinary. Kemper Price's dedication to preserving green spaces flourished, and because of his efforts, the James River Park System, Bandy Field Nature Park, and the Cannon Creek Greenway are protected through conservation easements.

To plant trees in honor of Dr. Charles Kemper Price, [click here.](#)

## Solarize RVA 2021

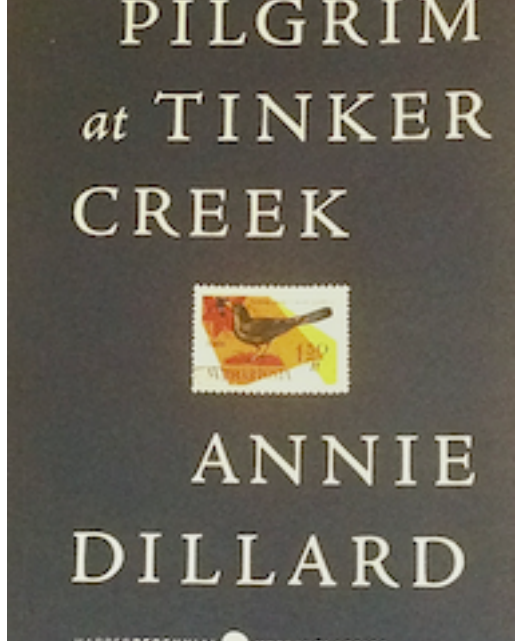


Graphic courtesy of Viridian.

On May 19th, 2021 at 7:00 pm, Viridian will host SolarizeRVA! This campaign will discuss the cost benefits of on-site solar electric systems and will cover the characteristics of a good solar site, net metering, utility bills, tax credits, and more.

To learn more about this program and register, [click here.](#)

## Joe's Book Nook



FOJG Executive Committee Chair, Joe Brancoli, recommends diving into this beautiful novel. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

### By Joe Brancoli

The book I recommend this month is Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. I don't really trust my words to convey the harsh beauty in the utterly unique language that Annie Dillard employs to describe her time in a rural area near Roanoke, Virginia.

As many a nature memoir does, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* follows the cycle of a year, finding reverent ways to bring the reader into the awe of the natural world. As we move back to warmth and summer, this is a book to travel into for a journey not soon forgotten.

## FOJG Member Spotlight

### Shavon Peacock and Lisa Thompson



Shavon Peacock and Lisa Thompson volunteer at Bellemeade Community Center's youth garden on April 17, 2021. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

After tutoring children at Bellemeade Community Center, Shavon and Lisa assisted the children in the youth garden. Shavon and Lisa volunteer at Bellemeade regularly, but on this specific day, they taught the children how to plant marigolds and strawberries. The youth garden is currently abundant in native plants, fruits, and vegetables.

## Get Featured in the Newsletter

### Photo of the Month and Member Spotlights

Have you recently volunteered for a meaningful project? Photographed something beautiful outdoors? Stumbled upon an interesting trail, park, or historic site? Contact **Veronica Hayes** at [veronicasydneyhayes@gmail.com](mailto:veronicasydneyhayes@gmail.com) with the subject "FOJG Newsletter" for a chance to be featured in the upcoming newsletter. Please email pictures, a blurb, and important information such as your name, the date, and the location by the 22nd of the month.

## 2021 FOJG Executive Committee

**Joe Brancoli**, FOJG Executive Committee Chair/Leadership Chair, & Acting Chair VA Sierra Club Chapter Executive Committee: [omethid@hotmail.com](mailto:omethid@hotmail.com)

**Glen Besa**, FOJG Political Chair and Outings Leader: [glenbesa@gmail.com](mailto:glenbesa@gmail.com)

**Steve Carter-Lovejoy**, FOJG "Skip The Plastics" Committee Chair: [scarterlovejoy53@msn.com](mailto:scarterlovejoy53@msn.com)

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

**Shavon Peacock**, FOJG Secretary, Membership Engagement Chair, & Outings Leader: [shavonandrew@verizon.net](mailto:shavonandrew@verizon.net)

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

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

**Bruce Tarr**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [bruce.tarr@comcast.net](mailto:bruce.tarr@comcast.net)

**Steve Yarus**, FOJG Executive Committee Member: [hsyarus@gmail.com](mailto:hsyarus@gmail.com)



Thanks for all you do for the environment,  
Veronica Hayes

Newsletter Editor  
Sierra Club Falls of the James Group



This email was sent by the [Sierra Club Virginia Chapter](#)  
100 W Franklin St, Mezzanine Richmond, VA 23220-5048