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Thank You To our Generous Foundation Supporters

Dear Member: Please Join us for our Annual Meeting & Celebration

SUNDAY NOV. 12th 2pm - 4pm

Dear Friends and Supporters:

2017 has been an exciting year at Awbury. We completed several capital projects which have been in the works over the past few years and were pleased to welcome visitors to enjoy these new spaces. Just a few weeks ago, we opened “AdventureWoods,” our new natural materials playground to the public for the first time. Hundreds of children of all ages and their accompanying adults delighted in the new playspace, taking advantage of opportunities to climb, jump, build, weave, and create together. It was great to see the Arboretum being enjoyed by so many new faces, and I am looking forward to the potential for continued community engagement with this new space. Alongside improvements to our landscape, we have continued to offer successful programs for all ages, developed many new partnerships, and hosted several special events. A highlight of the past year was the unveiling of the natural materials playground to the public for the first time. Hundreds of children of all ages and their accompanying adults delighted in the new playspace, taking advantage of opportunities to climb, jump, build, weave, and create together. It was great to see the Arboretum being enjoyed by so many new faces, and I am looking forward to the potential for continued community engagement with this new space. Alongside improvements to our landscape, we have continued to offer successful programs for all ages, developed many new partnerships, and hosted several special events. A highlight of the past year was the unveiling of the Gay Gilpin Johnson Archives and Education Fund. Awbury friends and neighbors came together to honor one of Awbury’s most beloved heroes, celebrate her enduring legacy, and launch a new fund in her name.

As we have developed our capacity to provide programs and created new spaces to serve an ever-growing number of visitors, we have also taken strides toward long-term financial sustainability. Alongside growing support from individuals and foundations, several years ago we realized that social event rentals – weddings, birthday parties, family and corporate gatherings – could provide a revenue stream for the Arboretum. We are starting a phase of investment, and consequently, we did operate at a loss this year. You can read more about the specific financial decisions the Arboretum has made, along with information on our programs, projects, and events, within this report.

Awbury’s success has always relied on a strong network of supporters, and we are grateful for the many who share our commitment to preserving and stewarding these 55-acres, and to providing programs, events, and services to connect our community to nature and history. I hope you will take time to read more about our growth over the past year in the pages of this report, and I encourage you to share your enthusiasm about Awbury with others.

Sincerely,

Mark Sellers, Chairman
Wow! What a year. I could not feel more fortunate working in such a beautiful place, with thoughtful people and the ability to create events sharing all the arboretum has to offer. We have had many new additions to programming this year - here are some of the highlights:

Our first Murder Mystery dinner was a huge success, and our ongoing dinner series at the Cope House has been gaining in popularity. The Hearth and Horticulture adult classes and lecture program has tripled its attendance in 2017. Some of the most popular events have included a Zero Waste Lunch, a grafting class with the Philadelphia Orchard Project, and an Herbal Remedies class. If you haven’t made it to a class yet you might enjoy our historic tree tour and lunch in partnership with PHS. Annual events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Astronomy Night and the Awbury White Elephant and Flea Market also recorded a record number of attendees. If that is not enough - did you know that we now have gallery space? That’s right, the Francis Cope House has been outfitted with a gallery hanging system and is booked for the next year showing local artists’ work. To celebrate this new addition we are hosting a post-POST (Philadelphia Open Studio Tours) reception on October 19th, featuring eight artists from Northwest Philadelphia. The event is curated by The Center for Emerging Visual Arts. And last, but certainly not least, the New AdventureWoods natural materials playground is officially open! Campers started enjoying the new structures and play area this summer and beginning last month we now have open play days for the public on Wednesdays from 9 to 3. Future programming for this area will include nature walks for families, scavenger hunts, fairy house contests, and more. AdventureWoods will be a stop for the hayride at the upcoming Harvest Festival on October 28th, so if you haven’t seen it yet, come on out. The Festival will include live music, 4H animal ambassadors, a costume parade, local beer, cider and kombucha and farm fresh lunch from the Awbury teen program - TLC, as well as activities from many community partners. Our Greens Sale will be December 2nd this year. Please join us to celebrate the holiday season and support Awbury by purchasing your tree and greens from us.

Hope to see you here soon - ideas, suggestions and thoughts for the future are always welcome - I’d love to hear from you.

hzimmerman@awbury.org.

Heather Zimmerman - Program Director

Landscape Highlights

2017 has seen major changes in two specific areas of the Arboretum’s landscape - the Cope House and the Secret Garden. At the Cope House, a new blue stone patio was installed in March. The Awbury landscape crew worked diligently to complete the project in time for guests at the first wedding of the season. The patio and surrounding gardens provide a new space for special celebrations and enhance the Cope House with native plantings chosen to provide year round interest. The transformation of the spaces surrounding the Cope House has only just begun, and planting will continue to enhance this area of our landscape.

The second key project undertaken in 2017 occurred in the Secret Garden with the construction of our new AdventureWoods Natural Materials Playground. Major tree work was completed in the spring and early summer. The WPA wall paralleling the full length of the Ardleigh Street was cleared of unruly trees, vines, and shrubs. Extensive invasive plant removal was needed to recover areas that had been overgrown for years. Many of the dangerous or invasive trees removed at this stage have now been transformed into structures to entice imagination and challenge physical abilities through play.

Now completed, Awbury Arboretum’s AdventureWoods offers three key play spaces based on an original concept design by Studio Bryan Hanes. Visitors are encouraged to walk down the main path, past the persimmon trees, to a new path leading to the first play area, “The Willows.” The Willows hosts tree trunk tables, chairs, and willow huts surrounded by a walled garden of child-friendly plants. Piles of bark, stones, branches, acorns, and other materials are gathered to provide materials for the construction of fairy houses or other child-led creations. Following the path, visitors encounter the second play area, “The Weft and the Weave”. Designed to replicate the rolling hills of Germantown’s piedmont geographical zone, the Weft and the Weave offers several soil mounds for children to climb. One of these mounds was present before the construction of AdventureWoods and is theorized to be the pile of rubble from the Cope family’s original thatched playhouse. Bookending the Weft and Weave area are two giant sized weaving boards for children to create patterns and interact with natural materials. As visitors continue down the log-lined path, the trail opens up into the largest of the play spaces, “The Woodlot”. The structures of the woodlot are designed as backbones for children to build upon themselves. Several teepees, upside down tree trunks and stump paths are set amongst loose limbs, tree cookies of every size, grasses and leaf piles. All three areas are full of the variety of textures, colors, and smells nature provides. The transformation of the Secret Garden space provides those who visit Awbury a new way to engage with an area previously dormant. Awbury staff and volunteers continue to work toward several space changing projects including the restoration of the wetland area bordering Washington Lane and the expansion of the Community Garden.
Volunteer Highlights

Volunteers have donated countless hours in 2017, and we have benefited from the time, talents, and energy of many individuals and groups. Volunteer highlights include a new focus on woodworking, a partnership with Weavers Way Co-op, a budding volunteer events welcoming committee, and the continued work of our dedicated Pollinator Habitat volunteers. Woodworkers have constructed two arbor benches at the Agricultural Village, sandwich boards for events, and a golf cart trailer. Earlier this year, we were thrilled to announce a new partnership with Weavers Way Co-op — Weavers’ members can now serve their membership discount hours at Awbury, and this added volunteer stream has already added 8–10 hours of service per week. Thank you Weavers’ Way! Our newly-launched Awbury Events Welcome Committee is offering those with a love of Awbury and a knack for making people feel at ease an additional way to serve. Welcome Committee volunteers attend Awbury’s public events regularly; giving directions, sharing flyers for upcoming programs and events, and supporting staff. Awbury’s Pollinator Habitat continues to shine as a beautiful educational space at the Agricultural Village due to the hard work of a dedicated crew of Pollinator Habitat volunteers. Pollinator Habitat gardeners have added new flower beds to go along with the arbor benches, a water resource for a redesigned rain garden, a garden map with a numbered plant list, and pollinator plant education file cards to use for tours and educational purposes. Thank you to the many more volunteers who have contributed to the stewardship of Awbury in 2017 — our seed starting workshop group, the Chew and Belfield Neighbors Club, Parkway Northwest High School, DePaul Youth and Episcopal Mission Center youth service groups, SpArc, summer landscape interns, and so many more.

Awbury al Fresco
Unveiling the Gay Gilpin Johnson Archives & Education Fund

On Saturday, May 20th, Awbury hosted a combination farm tour, dinner, fundraiser, and memorial honoring the late Gay Gilpin Johnson, a longtime resident and supporter of Awbury Arboretum, and celebrating the newly instituted Gay Gilpin Johnson Archives and Education Fund. The event took place at the Arboretum’s Agricultural Village, was attended by 117 guests, and raised over $10,000 for the Fund.

The evening began with a self-guided tour of the Agricultural Village, showcasing the Arboretum’s many partners and programs. After the tour, guests gathered under a tent set up in front of the Education Center for remarks. Daughter Becky Johnson spoke on behalf of the Johnson family, recalling her mother’s dedication to Awbury throughout her life and many memories of growing up at the Arboretum. Neighbor Evelyn Spann shared a moving tribute to Gay and her pivotal role as an active and engaged member of the community. Board member Mark Sellers spoke of Gay’s countless contributions to the Arboretum and of her commitment to Awbury’s educational mission. Finally, Archivist Alex Bartlett spoke about Gay’s interest in preserving the legacy of the Arboretum through its photos and documents.

As the sun set and the evening came to a close, guests continued to share fond memories of Gay and talked enthusiastically of the Arboretum’s future.
Camp is Magic!

Last summer, after many campers arrived at the Arboretum dressed in Hogwarts robes, the idea for a Harry Potter camp at Awbury was born. The camp was piloted in 2017 and was fully enrolled, with 24 children and 20 adults in attendance. Classes were offered in Potions, Divination, Care of Magical Creatures, Charms, Herbology, and Defense Against the Dark Arts. On any given day during Harry Potter Camp, you might see campers puzzling out the portkeys in tea leaves, making slimy goo, magically unlocking doors, or making soothing salve from plants. In the afternoon, the campers played Quidditch. The week ended with final exams, naturally, as well as a practical test of their skills as they battled a Gorgon, rescued their kidnapped Housemates, and deciphered messages written in ancient runes. The new camp was a major success and will be offered again in 2018.

In 2017, the Teen Leadership Corp. expanded growing beds to just over an acre of land in cultivation. Fencing was added to protect from deer, and teens and adult leaders cultivated high value, nutritious food together with botanical and medicinal herbs and flowers. Youths worked alongside researchers on two citizen science projects, and they participated in a pilot urban farm data collection and mapping project to evaluate productivity and potential to grow food. A new work-exchange was piloted with a group of neighbors, engaging 6 new adult volunteers who worked weekly with our youth in exchange for vegetables and cut flowers. TLC youth had many opportunities on and off-site to sell produce grown at Awbury and products made in the teaching kitchens. For the fourth year, TLC served as a summer job-site for the Philadelphia Youth Network’s Work-Ready program, offering youth from across the city an opportunity to “earn and earn.”

TLC Highlights

TLC youth prepare a meal together

By the Numbers...

- 25,000+ visits
- 12 dinners hosted
- 50 couples married in marriage
- 1 bald eagle spotted
- 100% of campers made friends with someone who lives in a different neighborhood
- $10,000 Raised for the Gay Gilpin Johnson Archives & Education Fund
- 200 shrubs, 40 trees, and 20 different species of native herbaceous plants planted

Financial Report

As you will notice in the Financial Report included in this Annual Report, we operated at a loss during the Fiscal Year that ended June 30, 2017. Since financial reports are “snap shots” of financial conditions at one moment in time, our actual situation is not as startling as the Report suggests. Some of the capital improvements we made during the past year were made with grant funds previously received and being held in our Cash Reserves. Some of the work completed was done under the terms of grants that allowed us to use the terms “reimbursement” grants.

Accordingly, some of the expenditures made before June 30 are being reimbursed after July 1. That being said – we did operate at an actual loss and had to draw from our Cash Reserves to cover operating losses. In addition, the Board has approved a budget for FY 2018 that also shows a loss, albeit a smaller one.

I am well aware that financial sustainability is essential, and while we have been steadily improving the grounds and expanding programs I want to assure you we have also been working to operate with a balanced budget. Social event rentals have become an important revenue stream for Awbury. Many of the capital improvements made to the Cope House and its surrounding gardens have been made to improve our capacity to serve as a rental venue. We are now poised to take the next steps necessary to maximize our financial return from these events.

After careful review of the potential, we have decided to invest in a seasonal tent and the tables and chairs needed for social events. When Awbury owns these items, we can continue to provide an economically attractive venue, while expanding our rental package and securing more revenue. We have also entered into an exclusive caterer agreement with Birchtree Caterers that will reduce our operating costs and yield a return on the food and beverage revenue of the events held at Awbury. So – while I unfortunately have to report some negative financial news, I pleased to report that we think we have a realistic and viable “game plan” going forward.

Chris van de Velde, General Manager

Rental Program Growth

Awbury’s rental program continues to grow and improve. This year’s renters enjoyed capital changes such as our new patio and gardens, better paving, and refurbished porches. Over the past few years, we’ve loved celebrating major life events with hundreds of clients and thousands of guests, and we’re learning to do it while better serving our community and mission. Along with improvements to the grounds, we’re happy to announce the selection of Birchtree Catering as our Exclusive Caterer for 2018 and beyond! They are a team of exceptionally kind people that make great food, care for the environment, and have a style and mission that fit Awbury well. Check out the Event Rental section of awbury.org for more on why we know Birchtree is a great choice for our clients and our venue and for pictures of recent events!

Looking to next year, we are expanding ways for families to enjoy Awbury with our new AdventureWoods! We anticipate rental events where families play in our favorite new playscape. We are also anticipating the 2018 installation of a seasonal tent, additional paving and storage improvements, and new plantings in the Cope House area, all of which delight and serve the Arboretum long-term.

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