



Penns Valley Conservation Association

www.pennsvalley.net

Fall 2013



Introducing PVCA's New Environmental Educator

--By Jim Flanagan--

Three weeks after I was born, I was already boating with my family on the Allegheny River in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, wearing a handmade life vest and smiling. I guess you can say I was raised on the water and in nature and have been hooked ever since. Growing up in Pittsburgh I remember playing in the woods behind our house, fishing with my Dad, and spending nearly every weekend on the Allegheny River exploring the water and its environs. I remember looking for tiny toads, playing in the surf of boats and barges as they traveled the river and sitting around the campfires on the beach.

These images have stayed with me as I grew up and moved from place to place. I was fortunate enough to spend my teen years on the west side of Cleveland near Lake Erie, attended college in southern Ohio at Miami University to study business marketing (BS 1990), and stumbled into Environmental Education after graduation.

My first job after graduation was at an overnight camp that ran programs for school

PVCA's Fall Meeting to Focus on Riparian Buffer Design

PVCA's Fall Meeting will be held on *Thursday, November 14th, 7PM at Old Gregg School in Spring Mills*. Our featured speaker will be Emily Carlson, a graduate student of Landscape Architecture at Penn State and a research assistant in the Greening the Lower Susquehanna Project (GLS).

Her talk is entitled, "Collaborative Community Design of Riparian Buffers."

The GLS project works with residents in Dauphin, Lancaster and Lebanon Counties, where nutrient runoff is particularly problematic. The project guides community members and municipal authorities through a visioning and designing process in order to accelerate forest riparian buffer restoration efforts. Emily writes that, "We work on striking an ecologically viable compromise that provides the environmental services of riparian buffers, but also is acceptable to suburban aesthetic sensibilities." Her presentation will describe the collaborative process and demonstrate how a method of riparian design that incorporates the ideas and concerns of the community can expedite the process and enhance the protection of our waterways.

The Fall Meeting will also feature an update on PVCA business from President Jim Zubler, and reports from Andrea Ferich, Executive Director and Jim Flanagan, PVCA's newly hired environmental educator. Members will have the opportunity to participate in this year's Board elections as well. Join us afterward for a potluck dessert, coffee, tea and cider and socializing.

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--by Jim Zubler--

Crickfest 2013--what a time sharing the beauty and bounty of the Valley! I hope you all took the opportunity to enjoy the day at the "Forks" among family, friends and neighbors. All of you who volunteered in preparing food, conducting workshops, introducing children to the wonder of nature, or worked at netting rubber ducks ;) , we thank you. Once again the work and planning of the Community Outreach Committee (COC) marshaled the volunteer energies and made the day a huge success. This Committee works tirelessly through the year planning our workshops, meetings and events and deserves our many thanks and gratitude.

We welcome Jim Flanagan, our new Environmental Educator, to the PVCA family. Jim has an impressive resume and brings a strong set of skills and experience to the position. Learn more about Jim in this edition of the newsletter and come to the Annual Meeting Thursday, November 14, to hear his story and plans for PVCA in person.

After nearly a year working in tandem with our Executive Director, Andrea Ferich, several conclusions can be drawn. While our impact in the watershed has been great and continues with our many initiatives addressing water quality, sustainable economic principles, and delivery of environmental education, it has become apparent that the only way we are going to sustain this effort is by broadening attempts to generate revenue to fund these ventures. In a universe of ever-shrinking governmental grants, our success will be measured by our ability to attract partners to leverage private investments for sustainable efforts. We have several projects in the works to bring value to the organization while providing a quality product for the Valley. I am happy to report that we hit our goal of maintaining 225 member households and our emphasis in the coming year will be to increase this substantially. I implore you to join us in reaching this next level.

Hope to see you at the Annual Meeting on Thursday, November 14th. Thank you for being a good steward of the Valley.

--Jim

PVCA's Mission and Vision

PVCA serves as a steward for the natural and cultural communities in the Upper Penns Creek Watershed. We seek to preserve and honor the agricultural roots of Penns Valley by protecting and conserving its waters, farmlands, forests, and rural heritage.

PVCA envisions an engaged community, where growth is balanced with support for healthy natural systems that foster the local economy. Our Valley has dark night skies, clear streams, healthy forests, prosperous farms, and local jobs.

Value-Added Products

--By Andrea Ferich, Executive Director--

Every day that I work for PVCA I ask myself the same questions. What can we do to reach our goals? How do these goals help us to achieve our mission? Read them with new eyes Andrea. How do they fit together? Read them as though you have never read them before. Read them as though they are possible, and imagine without limits. Think Big. Dream it into reality.

I find a lot of pleasure visualizing the places where our five various goals intersect, and how they can be synthesized through analysis and action. As Frank Lloyd Wright says, "Get the habit of analysis- analysis will in time enable **synthesis** to become your habit of mind." Read these goals slowly, with new eyes, like a love poem, or a new language you are just learning to translate:

1. *Environmentally educated, inspired, and engaged watershed community*
2. *All watershed municipalities consistently practice sound environmental stewardship*
3. *Achieve and maintain drinkable*, fishable, and swimmable* quality water in all surface and ground water sources.*
**legal terms*
4. *Encourage entrepreneurial spirit, locally owned businesses, and farms that create environmentally sound jobs.*
5. *Continue to strengthen PVCA's organizational infrastructure and community image.*

In addition to thinking critically about reaching these goals, the other big question that I ask myself every single day is: how can we sustainably fund PVCA? What are the ways that we can generate revenue that help us to achieve our mission? Our finances must be like the healthy ecosystems we seek to protect; a diverse, stable, and replicable system strengthened through cooperation.

As a non-profit we can produce and sell goods and services that are within the spectrum of our mission, as long as the money goes back into



the organization. This means that we would not need to be dependent upon grants, fundraisers, and donations alone. Perhaps there is a good or service that will help us to achieve our mission. Part of my vision for PVCA is that we will have a diverse and stable funding stream that includes value added products that do just that.

PVCA's Mission is to serve as a steward for the natural and cultural communities in the Upper Penns Creek watershed. We seek to preserve and honor the agricultural roots of Penns Valley by protecting and conserving its waters, farmlands, forests and rural heritage.

One of the places that I have been exploring as a lynchpin for opportunities for PVCA to meet the mission of the organization through the development of value-added products has been at Martin's Feedmill in Coburn. Martin's Feed Mill orders, receives, mills, processes, and ships hundreds of tons of animal grade grains each year, including corn, oats, wheat, barley, and rye. Many of these grains as well as sunflower seeds are sourced locally. They fill tractor trailer loads with these mixes, bag their own line of grains, and also sell bagged outside products- Purina feeds, Fertrell organics, Ivesco, and Cooperative Feed Dealer products. Additionally, they produce their own line of custom mixes, which can be made for orders of 500 pounds or more. My initial two conversations with the mill owners were informal, a way of getting a feel for the business and its market opportunities, gathering information and researching the

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Environmental Education Philosophy

--By Jim Flanagan--

SPARK. That is what I am here to create as the PVCA Environmental Education Coordinator. There is more in the world of Environmental Education than any individual or any one organization can teach. It is my role to find the SPARK that will open the world to students of all ages. It is my belief that all areas of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) can be accessed through Environmental Education. For example, there is technology and engineering in rock arches formed by wind and water; patterns in sedimentary rock that can be better understood through computer modeling and math; and rhythm and movement in brooks and creeks captured in dance and music. Environmental Education intersects all aspects of our lives. It is only when an individual engages meaningfully in their environment that they truly learn. As Galileo once said "you cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself." It is my hope that this connection can be made through the hands-on experiences that are at the heart of Environmental Education. SPARK.

Penns Valley is blessed with a wonderful landscape for students of all ages to explore. The more we explore, the more we understand, the more we understand, the more likely we are to make informed decisions on how we interact with our surroundings. My goal is to introduce a variety of habitats to school children and the community at large so that we may better appreciate our environment and become knowledgeable stewards of Penns Valley. In this process it is important that we respect the history of the valley and community as well as embrace the changes that come in order to create a more sustainable future. School aged students are an important part of this goal. As the Environmental Education Coordinator I will strive to create an atmosphere that draws on the strengths of the schools, students and the community leading to a sustainable stewardship for the future of Penns Valley.

Environmental Educator, continued from p. 1

children K-7 in the spring and fall and I loved it. Realizing I could not spend my post graduate life working only two seasons, I decided on obtaining a graduate degree in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Montana (MA 1997). During these studies I was drawn to people's interactions with their environment and have worked in education exploring these interconnections ever since.

Oddly enough, my interest in anthropology led me to New York City to further pursue my education in Anthropology, but soon found myself working at the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx managing the Everett Children's Adventure Garden and training high school students and other volunteers to teach hands-on plant science to visitors of all ages. Even though I eventually left this position to become a stay-at-home dad, the opportunity to work with the staff and visitors taught me valuable lessons about how people interact and experience the environment around them. This opportunity will play a key role in helping me determine what PVCA needs to do in order to get Penns Valley students and the community at large to continue to explore their wonderful and diverse surroundings.

For the past 10 years I have continued to work in education and with the environment at the South Mountain YMCA, Montclair State University (adjunct professor) and locally at Shaver's Creek, Stone Valley, Millbrook Marsh and even a couple of volunteer days at Muddy Paws. I am eager to continue exploring my passion for inspiring people to engage meaningfully with their environment as the Environmental Education Coordinator and steward for the PVCA. I look forward to working with the Penns Valley students and community and I am excited to share the beautiful Upper Penns Creek Watershed with my family living in Boalsburg, which along with my loving and supportive wife Stephanie includes two nature-loving children (11 and 8), a lazy cat and a dog who loves to hike.

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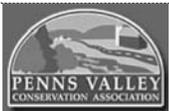
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Penns Valley Conservation Association

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- Computer/website Membership
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PVCA may share its mailing list with like-minded organizations. Please check here if you do not want your name shared.

CRICKFEST CRICKFEST

Many many Thank Yous to all those who supported Crickfest with Donations, Volunteer Hours, Musical Performances, and Attendance!


A Special Thanks to our Friends, Supporters, and In-Kind Contributors!

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**COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION and
3 CREEKS = CRICKFEST!**

Beautiful weather, record attendance, excellent food, rockin' live music, and hard work by many volunteers all came together to make Crickfest 2013 the best one yet! Thanks to all those who contributed—it is awe inspiring to see what we can create when we all work together.

If you would like to get on board early and help plan for next year's Crickfest email Judith Fordham, jfordam@verizon.net. The COC is always looking for new members and you can join to help plan all of PVCA's events or sign up for the Crickfest subcommittee.



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- Haney Family Jennifer Tucker
- Green Drake Art Gallery

A PVCA Outdoor Library?

--By Brian Burger--

Hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities can be fundamental roots to a holistic knowledge and skill-set for active conservationists of all ages. It is a particular problem for youth who lack mentorship or hosted opportunities to get afield and gather the know-how for these activities or maybe even a greater conservation interest. It is a similar problem to the one we had in mind in starting the Penns Valley Community Learning Garden—offering a resource to the community who would like to gain these sorts of skills.

To address this issue, I had a notion to start an outdoor-skills library shelf somewhere in the Valley. Recently, some classic books primarily related to fly-fishing have been passed along to PVCA to steward as the seed for such a library. Perhaps the Old Gregg School is the place to host it.

Others are invited to add to the collection. Maybe your dad or grand-dad (or mother or sister??) have some how-to books for an aspiring outdoors-person. Maybe you'll see something at a used book sale. As a community, we can do this. Perhaps there is even a commercial sponsor or two to help support it. Let the seed germinate and enjoy.



Value-Added Products, continued from p. 3

potential for mutually beneficial arrangements for PVCA and the mill. If PVCA members are interested, perhaps we can propose the development of a buying club to increase demand of local and watershed friendly grain options, and/or the development of a Martin's Mill/PVCA product depending on demand. I have conducted interviews with a handful of local residents to determine interest and current purchasing at Martin's. I have heard a number of requests for no-spray or non-GMO (Genetically Modified) corn, non-GMO soybeans, layer mixes, and a locally milled birdseed mix, which they currently do not offer. I believe this sort of collaboration could help us to gain momentum in achieving our goals and our mission. I have great confidence in the ingenuity of Penns Valley's farmers and the creative capacity and care for the waterways and economy by its residents. Over the last 15 years PVCA has implemented Ag BMP's (best management practices) on 24 farms, and certainly there are at least as many other farms engaged in watershed friendly practices. I am greatly interested in gauging the possible demand here in Penns Valley and the region for these locally produced grains and seed, and developing with Martin's "PVCA Watershed Friendly Products."

Community Radio Update from the Slow Money Committee

After several months spent soliciting community input, PVCA's radio committee will be filing our "application to construct." on or about October 15th, assuming there's a functioning government to file it with! That's phase one. In phase two, we'll fund-raise and help community members put shows "in the can," while we're lining up the technology to be able to broadcast from St. Luke's Cultural Center. Once we think we're ready for that, we can file the application to broadcast. It's a long road, but we're on our way!

PVCA's Environmental Education Program Needs You!

*To volunteer to help with
programming, field trips, and more
contact Jim Flanagan:
pvcaeducator@pennsvalley.org*

CONGRATULATIONS PVCA PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS!

Thank you everybody for entering our photo contest! We received over 80 entries! The winners of the 2013 contest will be on display at the Green Drake soon. Additionally, limited edition cards of these prints are available. Visit our website to view the color versions and categories won!



By Greta Haney



By Sabine Carey



By Cyndy Engle



By Lexie Orr



By David Whiteman



By Cyndy Engle



By Cyndy Engle



By Marica S. Tacconi

An Update from the Education Committee

An educated population is societies' greatest asset.

--By Jim Pierce, Ed Committee Chair--

On the heels of the “Best Crickfest Ever” the Education Committee is setting sights and goals to make the upcoming school year the best ever for environmental education. Hours of brainstorming boil down to two top priorities:

1) Perpetuate the momentum that previous Education Educator Jenny Campbell created in the schools with our new EE Jim Flanagan.

Jenny did a fine job in a short time of re-establishing PVCA as a welcome addition to school routine by building relationships with the teachers and staff, updating curriculum and connecting with the kids. Jim Flanagan brings his energy and hands-on-lets-get-dirty style along with a ton of ideas to build on this foundation. Classroom sustainability audits, competitive recycling, guest speakers and a multi-front assault on Outdoor Deficit Disorder are high-level topics for chunking out and putting to pavement.

Our last committee meeting included a fine discussion on how we can help the new EC (at the time we didn't have a name or face) to succeed. Our next meeting should be fun as we fuse ideas and energy and begin what will hopefully be a long, fruitful, child influencing, valley improving relationship.

2) Revive, rebuild and recreate the 65-acre Environmental Education Center with the goal of including it in our spring 2014 Environmental Days.

If the first goal is academic then this one will provide balance through physical activity. The Center, although dormant and somewhat neglected, is a beautiful place, a through the looking glass world instantly transforming from highway 45 and the institutions of school, to *school*, Nature 101, or 401. Our current committee includes several people with a



Members of the Education Committee tour the Environmental Center.

passion to polish this gem and reopen the living classroom. We hope to organize work projects and sponsors as well as encouraging high schoolers to take on education center related graduation projects. Many hands will make the many, many ideas we have become reality.

The PVCA Education Committee has come a long way in a year and continues to mix fun with function. We meet monthly, alternating between after school and evening times in order to accommodate different schedules. We have an email distribution list for anyone who wants to get involved or just stay informed. If you or someone you know would like to get on the list contact Jim Pierce at jim@tilth.org.

Serve on PVCA's New Governance Committee!

Adding to the already successful slate of committees that help make our group strong, PVCA's board is looking to create a Governance Committee to ensure future success. What does a Governance committee do, you might ask? Well, the basic function is to make sure the board and organization can bring qualified people into leadership roles and help figure out what PVCA needs to have a solid plan for the future. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Frank Maguire at Francis.maguire@gmail.com.

Muddy Creek Butterflies

--By Andrea Ferich, Executive Director--

One of the Young Forest Sites where PVCA has done some work is located at Lisa Williams' and Walt Whitmer's home in George's Valley. These Young Forest sites, as many of you know, are the specialty locations for Woodcock Habitats, a quilted mosaic of intersecting ecosystems, including a young forest of newly planted trees and a clearing for the woodcock breeding male to perform the mating dance in the spring. On one evening last year Lisa, who is also the state woodcock biologist, counted 13 singing males. Every year in order to maintain this habitat, the field must be mowed at a unique time of the year to ensure the control of invasive species and to stimulate new growth in the clearing where the woodcocks dance. This field is also home to milkweed, the host plant for monarch butterflies. Lisa's daughter Lucy asked her mother if they could walk around the property and collect the monarch chrysalises before the mowing, so that none of them would be injured. Sure enough, Lucy carefully harvested their field of monarch chrysalises along Muddy Creek, brought them to their screened-in porch, and awaited the emerging new life.

Where does a child's love for the smallest creatures come from? For some it is a learned love, hiking with family or neighbors. For some it is a strong innate connection. And for many of you it came from a biology teacher at Penns Valley, Mr. (Jack) McDonald. Not too far down Muddy Creek from Lisa and Lucy's home, Mr. McDonald lived with his family. Early in September Mr. McDonald's house burnt to the ground, leaving a pile of his collections and decades of memories in ashes, a sudden and terrible tragedy. As chance would have it, I met Mr. McDonald only a week or two after the fire, and listened to him in Burkholder's aisle 8. He was a trapper and a hunter, a collector of tools and instruments that came before my time and even his. He spoke of his violins, sacred artifacts, and the picture of his daughter riding bareback as an eight year



Monarch chrysalis.

old with red hair blazing back free and without worry. Mr. McDonald's eyes seemed as though he were reading something, seeing something timeless, an abundant life source. Despite his tragic loss, nobody was hurt, and somehow deep inside his lament, he had found freedom. Talk with this man, he has stories to tell and his peace is deep beyond ways of knowing. They are rebuilding again, and as I sit here writing these words my belly is full from the homegrown potatoes that he gave to my neighbor, one of his students from decades ago, when she reached out to him following the fire. The ways that he has impacted me in our ever so brief meeting have left me humbled and desiring that which outlasts our stuff and possessions.

Back upstream, Lisa William's daughter Lucy brought all of the collected monarch chrysalises into their screened in-porch. A few days later the porch was covered with adult butterflies who seemingly had to die to receive their new wings. They are ready now to journey together following fields of goldenrod thousands of miles to Mexico. As a Biology teacher and neighbor here in Penns Valley, Mr. McDonald has surely given many of you new eyes to see the world. Now he has hatched and is emerging like a monarch butterfly on his lovely and life-giving journey. Remember him and all those who have inspired a deep connection within you that goes beyond understanding.



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Please Join Us For

PVCA's Fall Meeting



**Thursday, Nov. 14th ~ 7:00 PM at the
Old Gregg School in Spring Mills**

Featuring a presentation entitled,
Collaborative Community Design of Riparian Buffers

Speaker Emily Carlson is a graduate student in Landscape Architecture at Penn State and a research assistant with the Greening the Lower Susquehanna Project.

Join us for an update on PVCA activities, reports from our Executive Director and Environmental Educator, Board of Director elections and refreshments.