



LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE

EDUCATION - ACTION - STEWARDSHIP



2022 Annual Report

From the President . . .

I've admired LFWA's work from the start, but joining the Board has made me really appreciate how fragile and complex our ecosystem is and how many stakeholders are involved in sustaining its health! I'm so honored to be entering my second year as president of the Board and I'm excited to work with the extraordinary Board team to continue our great work.

As we enter our fifteenth year and celebrate the stewardship efforts of our over 7,000 volunteers, I am continually amazed by the positive impact that can result when individuals gather in community to care for our creeks, parks, and green spaces.

In 2022 on a small budget and with one part time staff:

- ❑ Our water quality program engaged over 50 volunteers and expanded to 8 sites on the Willett Branch, Little Falls Branch, and Minnehaha creek to monitor for bacteria, benthic macro-invertebrates, salt, and water levels. The results are posted on our website and shared with 50,000 individuals through local neighborhood list serves.
- ❑ Our citizen scientists discovered exceptionally high levels of fecal bacteria in the Willett Branch and confirmed through testing that the source is humans. The Montgomery Department of Environmental Protection has agreed to our demand for an investigation into the problem and its source.
- ❑ Work continues under a Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund grant to develop autonomous water quality testing using robots.
- ❑ Over 200 participants enjoyed the first Norwood Park Natural History Day festival and learned from a fascinating slate of exhibitors and speakers. The day-long event included a bird walk, tree tour, invasive species removal, and introduced our new Norwood Park Arboriculture Project.
- ❑ At 18 trash pickup events, 250 volunteers helped us remove 2,820 pounds of trash from the watershed.
- ❑ Our spring and fall Creek Critter Day family workshops drew 100 kids and adults eager to hunt for macro-invertebrates and learn about stream health.
- ❑ Along Massachusetts Avenue at Falmouth Road, we transformed a 10,000 square foot jungle of non-native invasives into a restored habitat with over 2,000 native perennials, shrubs, and trees.

Looking ahead to 2023, we are planning a new habitat restoration and stormwater management project at Little Falls Swim Club, and we won't let up on our community workdays to clear non-native invasives and pick up trash. The data collection and analysis through our water quality monitoring programs will also continue at full strength. Most importantly, we will continue to be a resource for those who seek to learn and be part of a community of volunteers improving our natural habitat, one project at a time.

Karen Thornton
LFWA Board President



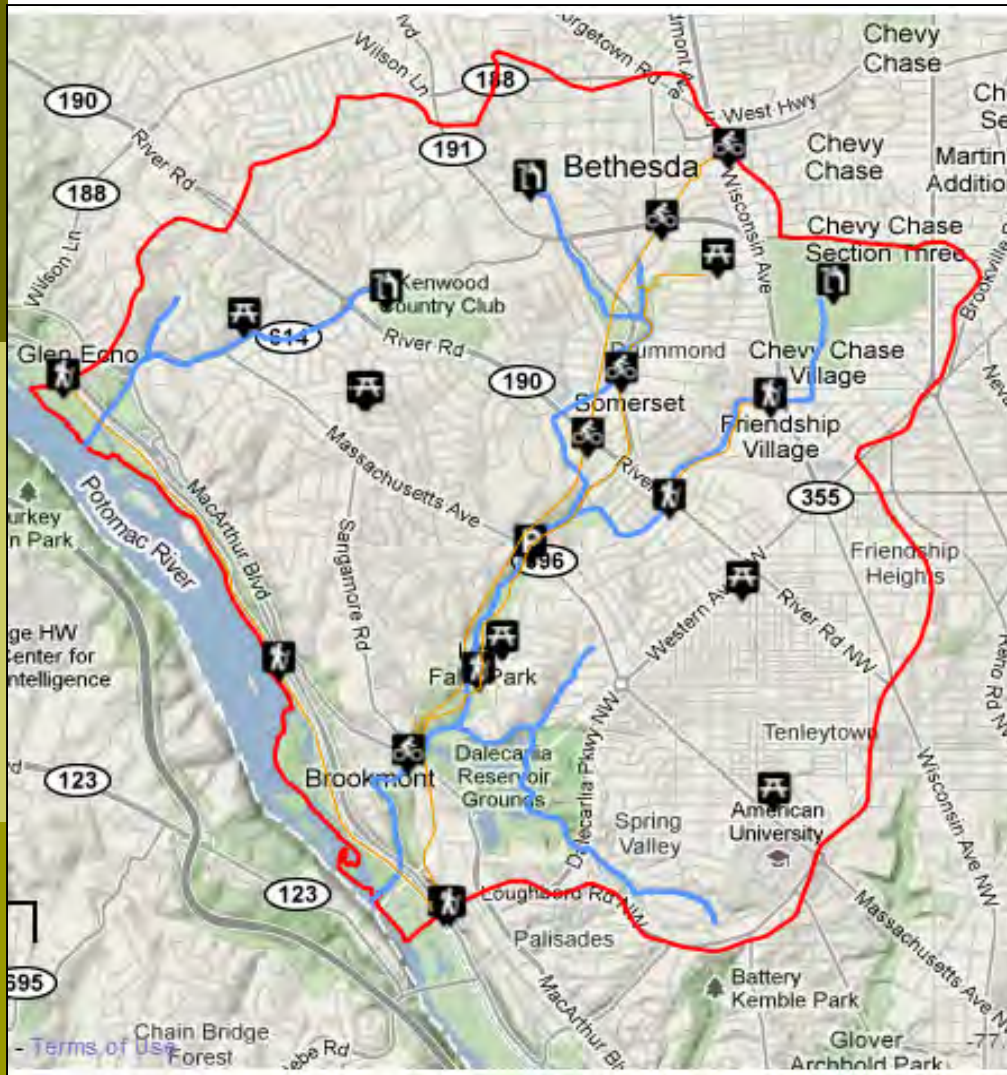
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Little Falls Watershed Alliance

- ❑ Little Falls Watershed Alliance is an environmental stewardship group, founded in 2008 by a group of neighbors committed to protecting the fragile natural environment of the Little Falls and Willett Branches and surrounding Little Falls watershed. Our mission is to ensure that the natural spaces in our area persist for generations to come. We strive to bring neighbors together in order to build awareness, improve the natural habitat, protect our community's natural heritage, and enhance the community's enjoyment of our creeks and wooded areas.
- ❑ From our first meeting, we have grown to over 5,000 members and engaged more than 7,000 volunteers in over 700 work days and other activities. Our volunteers have logged over 20,000 hours of service to the watershed.
- ❑ As stewards, we are committed to restoring the water quality, natural habitat and ecological well-being of the Little Falls Watershed. We focus on trash abatement, habitat restoration, and stormwater management.
- ❑ As advocates, we speak up for the needs of our parks and natural areas, and we advocate for clean water laws that are fair and enforced consistently.
- ❑ As educators, we work with neighbors, school groups, local businesses, and other community members to educate through classroom activities, festivals, community work days, and outreach events.



Where Are We?



- 9.5 square miles in Lower Montgomery County and Upper NW DC
- Three Creeks –
 - Little Falls Branch
 - Willett Branch
 - Minnehaha Branch
- Three Main Parks:
 - Little Falls Stream Valley Park
 - Capital Crescent Trail
 - C&O Canal

Stewardship

Trash Removal

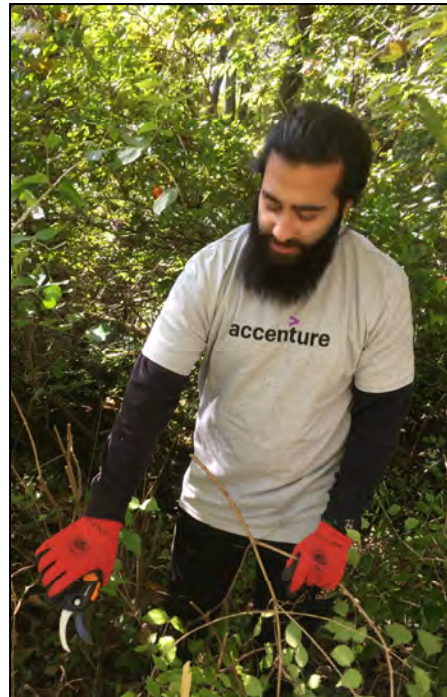


- ❑ 250 volunteers; 625 man hours
- ❑ 2,820 pounds of trash; 42 bags of recyclables
- ❑ 18 events including:
 - ❑ Monthly pick-ups on Little Falls Parkway and Little Falls Branch
 - ❑ Fall and spring whole watershed events to include more locations and sites on the Willett and Minnehaha creeks.
- ❑ Partner with Montgomery Parks, DOT. and local groups including Westmoreland Garden Club, Town of Glen Echo, and Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail.

Stewardship

Invasive Weed Removal

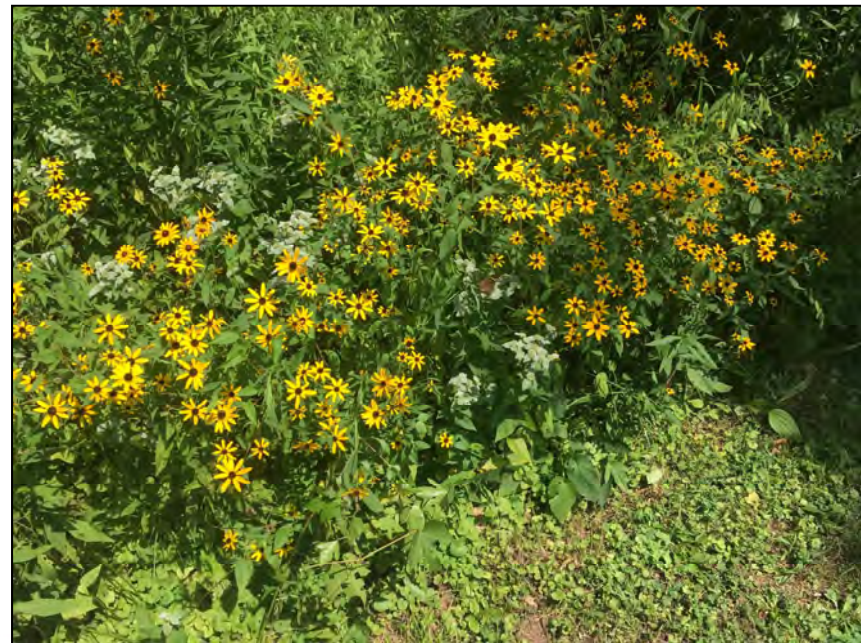
- ❑ Hosted 57 work days for the community or for private groups - 659 participants, 1,647 man hours.
- ❑ Led 13 special work days for office, sports, and scout groups.
- ❑ Partnered with Montgomery County Public Schools to work in Forest Conservation areas, State Highway Administration, and with Montgomery Parks.
- ❑ Partner with the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail to restore habitat along the Capital Crescent Trail.



Stewardship

Westbrook ES Meadow

- ❑ Partnership with Montgomery Parks and Westbrook Elementary School (MCPS).
- ❑ Students from the elementary school grew trees and plants from seeds.
- ❑ Local neighbors maintain meadow.
- ❑ In its twelfth year.



Stewardship – Habitat Restoration

Norwood Meadow

- ❑ Installed in 2011 in partnership with Montgomery Parks, funded in part by a grant from Whole Foods.
- ❑ First meadow installed in a County park outside of Brookside Gardens.
- ❑ Ten community planting days have installed over 3,000 native grasses and wildflowers.
- ❑ Reseeded with wildflower seeds gathered from Montgomery County plants.



Stewardship - Habitat Restoration

Green Acres Meadow

- ❑ Neighborhood led; Partnership with Department of Transportation and MCPS Forest Conservation.
- ❑ Land cleared and native wild flowers and grasses planted with help of community members and Westbrook Elementary School Environmental club.
- ❑ 15 trees and shrubs planted along the creek bank in partnership with DOT.
- ❑ Budgeted \$10,000 for the next five years for new plantings and maintenance.
- ❑ Spring and Fall plantings added 150 new plants in 2022.



Stewardship - Habitat Restoration

Falmouth Road

- ❑ In Spring 2022, 10,000 square feet along Mass. Ave at the Falmouth Road intersection was transformed by replacing weedy non-native invasives with native plants.
- ❑ Over 2,000 native perennials, shrubs and trees planted
- ❑ \$26,000 project funded by local donations.
- ❑ Community initiative. Neighborhood volunteers watered and weeded throughout the summer.
- ❑ Partnership with MD State Highway Administration and Westmoreland Hills Civic Association



Stewardship

Water Quality Monitoring

Three Water Quality Monitoring Programs

- Bacterial, Benthic Macro-invertebrate, and Salt.
 - Engages over 50 trained Citizen Scientists. All volunteers undergo required training.
 - Monitor eight sites on the Willett Branch, Little Falls Branch and Minnehaha creek.
 - Results of all monitoring are posted on our website and shared with over 50,000 community members via neighborhood list servs.
- **Bacterial Monitoring**
- Tested for E.coli bacteria at 8 sites every week from June 1 to September 15. This doubled our 2021 efforts and added three new sites to our program.
 - Discovered a huge fecal bacteria problem in the Willett Branch and conducted testing to determine that it is coming from human sources.
 - After months of meetings, the Montgomery Department of Environmental Protection will investigate the problem and locate the source.
 - Doing testing on the Little Falls Branch in location of proposed Dog Park to give us “before” data.



Stewardship

Water Quality Monitoring

- ❑ **Benthic Macro-Invertebrate Monitoring:**
 - Monitor Little Falls Branch four times a year.
 - 15 person team trained to capture and identify macro-invertebrates living on the bottom of the creek.
 - Report data to partner Nature Forward (nee ANS).
- ❑ **Salt Level Monitoring:**
 - 14 person team tests salt level monthly and before and after storms in eight locations as part of national study on impact of road salt on waterways.
 - Data is reported to partner Isaac Walton League.



Stewardship

Water Quality Monitoring Robots



- Work on developing autonomous robots to test water quality continues.
- Robots will be housed at three locations on the banks of the Little Falls Branch and periodically through the day move into the water for testing.
- Robots sample for:
 - pH
 - Dissolved Oxygen
 - Turbidity
 - Temperature
 - Total Dissolved Solids
- Data will be live streamed to a dashboard on the LFWA website and available for use by citizen scientists.
- Research is funded by a grant from the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund.

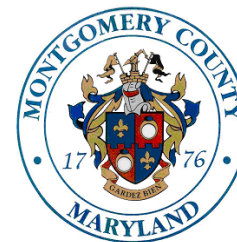
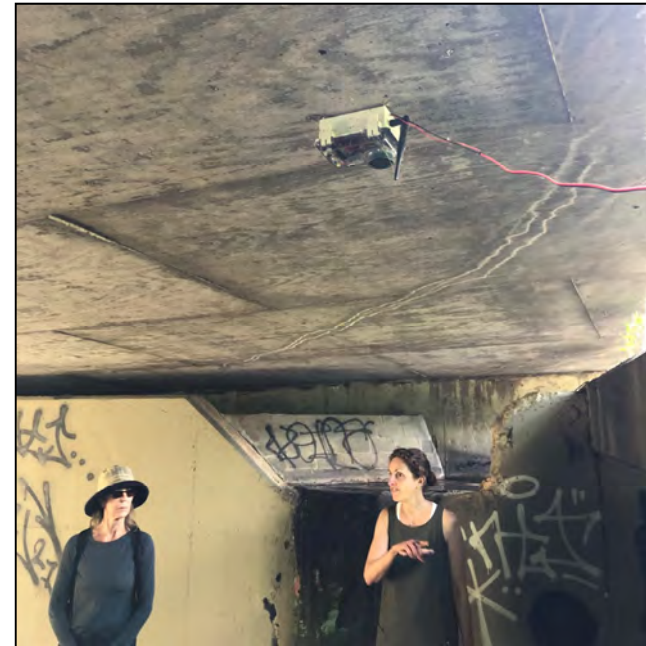
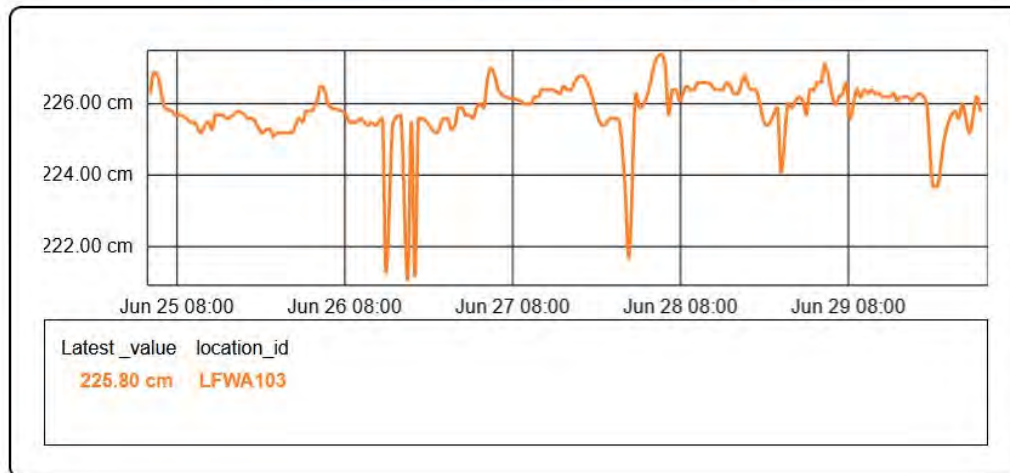


Stewardship

Water Level Monitoring Stations

- ❑ Maintain three water level monitoring stations. Sensors are located under bridges and solar powered.
- ❑ Stations live stream data to our website giving us valuable information about how rain events impact the water level. <https://www.lfwa.org/water-level-monitoring>
- ❑ Effort is funded by the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund as part of a grant received in 2021.

Water Level Distance from the Pool Bridge (cm)

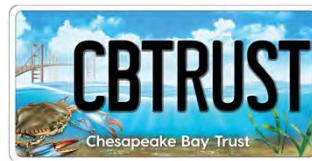


Stewardship - Stormwater Management

Overlook Permeable Pavers Grant



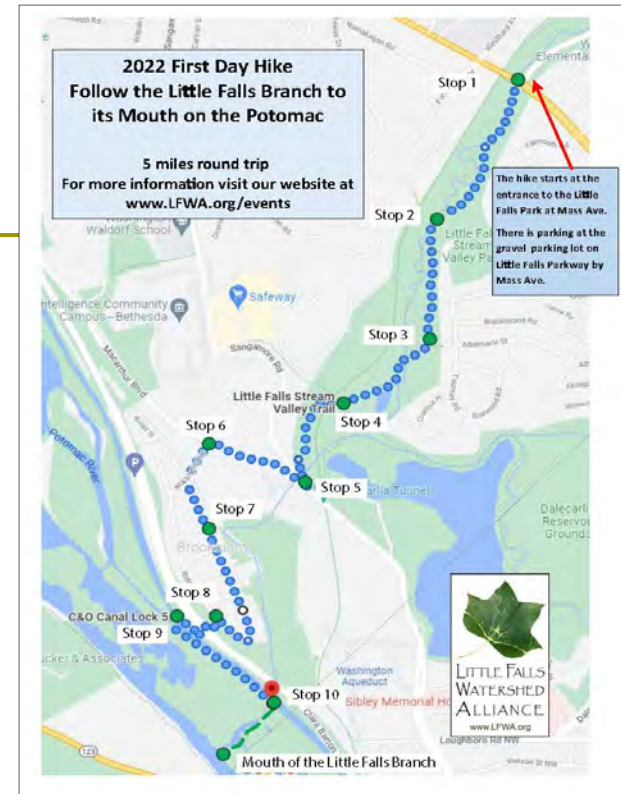
- ❑ Worked with Overlook Homeowners Association to install permeable pavers in two locations in their community pool parking lot.
- ❑ Pavers manage run-off from the parking lot.
- ❑ Project was funded in 2021 by a \$33,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and finished in 2022 with a show and tell party.
- ❑ Funding for the grant is from the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund.



Education and Outreach

First Day Hike

- 70 people joined us on a 5-mile round trip hike to discover the mouth of the Little Falls Branch along the Potomac.
- Also developed a self-guided hike using QR codes at stops along the way that included information about the watershed and how residents can help the environment. 83 people downloaded the QR code map!



Education and Outreach

Norwood Park Natural History Day

- ❑ Norwood Park Natural History Day Festival, Sunday, October 30.
- ❑ Over 200 participants.
- ❑ Exhibitors and speakers included:
 - Bethesda Historical Society
 - MD Native Plant Society
 - Dr. Doug Levin, Geology
 - Mycological Association of Washington DC
 - Montgomery County RainScapes.
- ❑ Mapped trees in Norwood Park.
- ❑ Developed a Tree Tour of the Park.
- ❑ Started the day with a bird walk.
- ❑ Food donated by local businesses.
- ❑ Introduced our new Norwood Park Arboriculture Project.



Education and Outreach

Creek Critter Days

Spring and Fall Family workshops led by our stream monitoring team.

- ❑ Free family event to hunt for Macro-invertebrates.
- ❑ Attended by over 100 children and adults.
- ❑ Educates on stream health and engages public in stream ecology and understanding the need for clean water.
- ❑ Partnership with Nature Forward.



Education and Outreach

Social Media & Community Events

- ❑ Publish monthly e-newsletter with information on environmental issues, native plants and events of interest. Newsletter is sent to 2,800 people on our mailing list.
- ❑ Speak to local garden clubs on issues facing the watershed.
- ❑ Active Facebook page with pictures of events and exchange of information on native plants, stormwater issues, and events of interest.
- ❑ Hosted Exhibit for local photographer's wildlife photos.

June in the Watershed

CRITTER COUNT
Discover Who Lives in the Creek!
Saturday, June 4
1:00 to 3:00



Join us for a fun family activity identifying critters in the creek. We will have all the tools you need to capture and ID the macro-invertebrates that live in the water. Bring your smart phone as we will be using an app created by the Audubon Naturalist Society for this activity. We have smart phone covers so don't worry about it getting wet. And if you don't have a smart phone, we can pair you someone who does. We also have a few boots to lend!

FREE!
Little Falls Stream Valley Park
Little Falls Parkway and Massachusetts Ave, Bethesda

Pre-registration is required as space is limited.
Visit our website [HERE](#) to register.

Clean the Creek, Clean the Parkway
Saturday, June 11, 10:00 to 12:00

Join us to clean the parkway and the Little Falls Branch between River Road and Mass Avenue. Meet at the gravel parking lot at intersection of Mass Avenue and Little Falls Parkway.

Alice Ferguson Watershed Clean-up Above and Below. It was raining in April for the Alice Ferguson 20th Annual Potomac Watershed Clean-up, but that didn't stop our volunteers! Thank you to the dedicated crew that came out to clean the Willett and Little Falls Branches. And thank you to the crew that came out the next week (when the weather was much better) to finish the job. We removed 31 bags of trash, 12 of recycling with a total of 79 volunteers.



LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE
www.LFWA.org



PHOTO EXHIBITION

Sunday October 16, 2022 3pm-6pm

A Look Through A Local's Lens
@ Little Falls Stream Valley Park



SPONSORED BY
Jeff Zeisel (Photographer)
The Summer Citizen's Association
Little Falls Watershed Alliance
St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church

LOCATION
St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
"The Church on the Trail"
5450 Massachusetts Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland 20816

Advocacy

Willett Branch; Stormwater Management

Willett Branch Greenway

Since 2015, LFWA has been advocating for the formation of the Willett Branch Greenway, a new park and naturalized stream to replace the graffiti covered concrete culvert that is the current Willett Branch. The focus of much of our advocacy has been to ensure that development in the area of the new park conforms to the strictest stormwater management regulations.

Stormwater Partners

LFWA is a member of Stormwater Partners, an advocacy group for stormwater management regulations in Montgomery County. As a member of the group, LFWA has been involved in writing comments on the new stormwater (MS4) permit for both Maryland and for Montgomery County, advocating for implementation of a “no waiver” policy for stormwater management permits for new construction.

LFWA is also a member of the **Choose Clean Water Coalition**, **Montgomery Conservancy**, and **Trash-Free Maryland** and participates in their advocacy campaigns.

Partners in Stewardship

Over 50 community partners support our efforts including:

Abt Consulting, Accenture, August Jackson, AUID, BCC High School Service Club, Bethesda Bagel, Booz Allen, Breads Unlimited, Brivo, Buddhist Temple, Bullis School, Cassell, Chevy Chase Garden Club, CohnReznik, Cub Scout Packs 100, 256, Girl Scout Troops 33177, 239, Democratic National Committee, Discovery, DSG, Enviva, George Washington Freshman Experience, Home Snap, Kind Works, Ledo's Pizza, Marriott, MOMs Organic Market, Montgomery Parks, Monumental Me Kickball, Nature Forward, Oppenhiemer Group, Outdoor Illumination, Riverbed Technologies, Scout Troop 61, Sidwell Friends Lower School, Spark Post, St. Dunstan's Church, Strosnider's Hardware, The Potomac School, UCG, Washington Waldorf School, Wedding Wire, Westbrook ES Aqua Eagles, Westland Middle School, Westmoreland Church, and Young Ambassadors for Community Service Programme



2022 Funders

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- Mikel Moore, Vice President*
- George Wyeth, Treasurer*
- Sara Robinson, Secretary*
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- Jack Sobel

* Returning officers