

## Follow up from Chapter Retreats!

Thank you to all who attended the eastern and western friends group retreats! We had lively discussion and great sharing.

What follows are some of the thoughts, concerns and challenges that were shared, as well as some potential solutions.

### Greatest Challenges:

- Increasing membership was the most popular challenge, whether this be members-at-large, volunteers, or board members
- Communication among board members and/or with park/forest staff challenged some folks.
- Fundraising
- An over-loved park
- Busy members/fatigue
- Engaging young folks
- No meeting space
- Memorials to deceased members

### Proudest Accomplishments:

- Increase visitors
- Protecting the dark skies
- Building amphitheaters (Shawnee and Prince Gallitzin)
- Playgrounds
- Hay rides/haunted house/Ghoulish Gallop (Prince Gallitzin, Parker Dam, Kings Gap)
- Festivals
- ADA Dock (Beltzville, Laurel Hill)
- Firewood Sales
- Events (Lyman Run)
- Bridges (Pine Grove)
- Graffiti Removal (PPFF, Pine Grove)
- Convert Mansion Garden back to historic garden (Nolde)
- Move strategic plan ahead
- Removing last debris from Hurricane Sandy (Nockamixon)
- Building partnerships
- Senior fairs (PPFF)
- Photo Contest (Ridley,
- Engaging community (Ridley)
- Art Event (Beltzville, Nolde)
- Pollinator Tour (Beltzville)
- Keep PA Beautiful Cleanup
- Beltzville on the Move

## Potential Solutions

Idea: Speaking engagements with local service organizations

Why: Potential volunteers and/or donors.

Who: Rotary Clubs <https://www.rotary.org/en/search/club-finder>

Lions Clubs <https://directory.lionsclubs.org/>

Kiwanis <http://locator.kiwanis.org/>

Women's Clubs <http://www.gfwc.org/> or check your directory for a local women's club near you

Garden Clubs <http://www.pagardenclubs.org/>

Generation On (youth service club) <http://www.generationon.org/service-clubs/join/about>

AARP Chapter <https://secure.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchChapterLocations.action>

Young Professional Organizations: Google 'young professionals' to find a club near you.

Leadership X: These are community leadership programs that are often looking for projects to sharpen the participants' skills. Google 'leadership X' to find a program near you (Leadership Harrisburg, Leadership York, etc.)

Sister organizations who may lend expertise or contacts

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Idea: Reaching out to high schools and colleges

Why: Potential expertise and volunteers.

Who: Choose colleges and high schools within a radius of your park or forest. Research their majors and identify potential partners based on areas of expertise. Also consider honor societies, student councils, fraternities, sororities, student clubs.

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Idea: Preparing a business card to handout to users of the park or forest

Why: Recruit volunteers and build awareness

Who: see sample provided by Ridley Creek and PPF. (Avery makes a perforated business card that works quite nicely for these. Contact Pam at [pmetzger@paparksandforests.org](mailto:pmetzger@paparksandforests.org) for help.

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Idea: Creating posters/displays to show how funds are used by the friends.

Why: Facilitate understanding that funds are reinvested into the park/forest to increase visitor experience. Also to assist in raising funds and celebrating successes.

Who: Prince Gallitzin does this well.

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Idea: Join and/or visit your local chambers of commerce

Why: The chamber is a network of business leaders who benefit from state parks and forests and from the work that you are doing. They are potential partners, in-kind and financial donors, and board members.

Who: Search your local communities for their chamber contacts. Many chambers have mixers where you can attend for low to no fee. You may also want to invite the chamber to host a meeting at your park or forest or to have a mixer at your parks or forests.

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Idea: Host a documentary showing over the winter!

Why: People are looking for things to do, and hosting a documentary showing invites people into your park for a low-key event where you have an opportunity to talk to them and share with them what you are doing. PPF has a variety of documentaries that you can borrow or stream that do not require a permit to use.

Who: Visit the [PAConservationHeritage.org](http://PAConservationHeritage.org) website for materials and information on how to host a showing, building a panel discussion, sample press releases and more. If you schedule a showing, contact Beth at [bartz@paparksandforests.org](mailto:bartz@paparksandforests.org) so that she can supply you with materials you may find helpful as well as make sure it gets on both the PPF and the conservation heritage website.

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Idea: Community open house

Why: To showcase your park or forest as well as your work. To recruit potential new members and volunteers.

Who: Meet with your park manager or district forester to plan an open house.

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Idea: Social Media

Why: People use it.

Who: If you have a social media account, make sure that it is current by posting a few times a week. Amanda Trimmer ([atrimmer@paparksandforests.org](mailto:atrimmer@paparksandforests.org)) sends a monthly suggestion list of things to post. You can also repost information from relevant organizations, such as our FB page, your park/forest FB page, DCNR, etc. To learn more about Facebook, visit the PPF website at [paparksandforests.org](http://paparksandforests.org) and look under Friends Resources for a video on FB.

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Idea: Newsletter

Why: People like to know how their donations are being spent and they like to be associated with dynamic organizations.

Who: There are templates available for all friends groups if you are not already doing a newsletter. Contact Pam at [pmetzger@paparksandforests.org](mailto:pmetzger@paparksandforests.org).

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Idea: Have regularly scheduled work days so that folks get 'into the habit.'

Why: People like predictability.

Who: You! Set regular meeting dates or work days so that folks get in the habit of participating.

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Idea: Be specific about what you want a volunteer to do.

Why: When folks say "Do you want to volunteer?" that might mean an hour commitment or 20 hours! Being specific—and starting small—is a great way to engage people.

Example: Hey Dan, I know that you like photography. We need a volunteer to judge our photo contest. It would take about two hours on a Saturday in January. Will that work for you?