



FRIENDS  
OF THE  
OAK PARK  
CONSERVATORY

Spring 2017

# CONSERVATORY Conversations

*The Newsletter from the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory*

## FOPCON'S 28TH ANNUAL PLANT SALE MAY 5-7

*By Muriel Stephenson, Plant Sale Chair*



### PLANT SALE HOURS:

F, May 5 – Members Only 2-6pm  
Sa, May 6 – Public 8am-4pm  
Su, May 7 – Public Noon-3pm

### New This Year!

Our preorder for members only is online! Order and pay online with pickup during member sale hours. Visit [fopcon.org](http://fopcon.org), go to Join FOPCON to become a member.

Spring has arrived at last and hat finds us hard at work at FOPCON's annual plant sale. This event is our largest fundraising activity every year and we welcome back our loyal members and all of our new customers. We have sown thousands of seeds and nurtured as many transplants so that you will find a wonderful variety of annuals, vegetables and perennials for your garden. What a joy! Plants range from ageratum to zinnias and lots in between. Want tomatoes? We offer seven varieties. How about Swiss chard, hot & sweet peppers, petunias, begonias, cucumbers, hibiscus, kale, collards, basil, or coleus, and much more...

**Our catalog is up on our website, [www.fopcon.org](http://www.fopcon.org) and has information you'll need to start planning this year's garden.**

Please join us on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> for FOPCON members shopping hours 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm. The sale is open to the public on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm and Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup> from noon – 3:00 pm. And a big plus this year for you, the FOPCON members, we have a pre-order available online. You can order and pay online. Pick up is May 5<sup>th</sup> between 2 pm - 6 pm. So easy!

## By The Numbers: FOPCON Event and Program Attendance



	2014	2015	2016
Docent led tours	70 tours / 1553 people	51 tours / 1206 people	47 tours / 967 people
Exploration Station	1627	1660	1601
Exploration Kits	7 schools / 22 kits	8 schools -/24 kits	10 schools / 26 kits
Garden Walk	450*	575*	550*
KidsFest**		550	689
Plant Sale	1380	1129	1116
Toddler Exploration Time (TET)	135	225***	245
Uncorked****	547	480	514

\*Does not include "comped" volunteers

\*\*\*Program grew from 1 session to 2 sessions offered in 2015

**\*\*949 attended in 2017!**

\*\*\*\*Does not include volunteers - 25 for each event

"I became a member because I come to the Conservatory often and bring my daughter to the monthly programs, Fall Fest, KidsFest, etc. It's a place my whole family enjoys and I want to support the organization."

*- Meghan Eagan, Family member*

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AND MUCH MORE!

## Annual President's Report

*By Ellen Kuner, President  
Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory*

What a productive year!

We celebrated FOPCON's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday with a grand celebration, "Seeding the Future." We were honored to receive the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association **Community Service Award** from the Park District of Oak Park for our long-time support of the Conservatory. A sentence in the program praises all of you: "The distinction that makes this group outstanding, is the collaboration and dedication that so many of their members over the years have given to the Conservatory, through selfless use of their time." Thank you so much for making this recognition possible.



Continuing with our mission to provide educational and recreations opportunities, we launched the **Discovery Garden Exploration Time** or **DGET** which is pronounced "Dig It." Quite appropriate for the Garden! Every Saturday from 10:30 am - 12:30 pm, weather permitting, FOPCON volunteer Garden Docents are in the Discovery Garden to identify plants and to lead programs. The topic for March/April is **Garden Games – Come to the Garden to Play**. Do stop by to see how the Jacobsen Garden has grown over the past three years. Bring your children or grandchildren Saturday mornings for more formal activities or anytime just to explore.

Another task in our three-part mission is to support projects that benefit the Conservatory. Last fall we agreed to help repair the hydronic system in the showrooms. It is the 88 year-old set of fins and pipes that circulate hot water to keep the plants growing during the winter months. Clearly the system needs to be replaced before it fails. The entire project is expected to cost \$200,000. **We agreed to provide \$100,000 by donating \$20,000 each year for the next five years.** When the project is completed we look forward to having warm winter showrooms for at least the next 88 years.

The final segment of our mission is to promote community interest in the Conservatory. We are succeeding. Just a few examples: **KidsFest attendance 949 – a 38% increase over 2016, Uncorked brings a wide audience, and TET is sold out.**

Thank you for all you do to help support Oak Park's treasure -- the Conservatory!



*"I love to just come and sit -- it's so peaceful and relaxing – and my three year old loves to come and run around, especially in the Discovery Garden with the water."*

*– Laura Anderson, Individual member*



FRIENDS  
OF THE  
OAK PARK  
CONSERVATORY

### FOPCON Mission Statement:

To offer educational and recreational opportunities, to promote community interest in the Oak Park Conservatory, to support projects that benefit the conservatory.

P.O. Box 1096,  
Oak Park, IL 60304  
(708)725-2460  
info@fopcon.org

### Board of Directors

#### OFFICERS

Ellen Kuner, President  
Carol Dudzik, Vice-President  
Barbara Stratton, Secretary  
Mark Finger, Treasurer

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Hilda Birney  
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B. Ann Hageman  
Mary Ann Jurgus  
Denise Kozel  
Mary O'Kiersey  
Linda Smith, Education Committee Chair  
Inga Simitz, Communications Chair  
Muriel Stephenson, Plant Sale Chair  
Jeff Stewart  
Kim Wilson, Exploration Station  
& Kits Leader

#### STAFF

Beth Cheng, Executive Director  
Kathy McNamara, Volunteer and  
Program Coordinator  
Tammy Verticchio, Operations Coordinator

"I was researching how to plant a biblical garden and learned about the herb sale. I became a member so I could keep going to the herb sale. Then I started going to Uncorked and got to meet other people in the area."

- Carleen Villasenor, Family Member



## Executive Director's Report

*By Beth Cheng, Executive Director  
Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory*

After celebrating our 30th anniversary with a bang last year, we are looking forward to ensuring that the Conservatory and the Friends are here for the next 30 years and beyond. To move forward, we decided we needed to first retreat!

At the **February Board retreat**, we stepped back from the daily running of programs and events to talk about our values, vision, mission, and strategic intent for the next five to ten years. We are also reaching out to hear your stories and voices.

The striking commonality in the conversations is the deep emotional attachment we have to the Conservatory. **Treasure. Hidden gem. Community asset.** These are the words we use to describe the Conservatory. And why do we describe it this way? Because it's a place that creates health, happiness and peace – an assertion that would sound grandiose except that it rings true for so many of us.

And what is the role of the Friends? To be a vehicle for the community to be a vital part of making the Conservatory come alive with visitors of all ages connecting with diverse plants, nature and each other. To continue increasing the impact of our free and low cost events and educational programs, and to continue partnering with the Park District of Oak Park to support capital improvements, we need to continue growing the base of support for the Conservatory.

Our 450 members and 200+ volunteers (about half are also members) have an outsized impact but we need to engage more of the visitors who accounted for **over 30,000 visits last year** but may not know how the Friends helps make the Conservatory what it is. We are working on new ways of articulating the case for support to a wider audience. We will be asking for your help in telling that story, and your ideas on how to grow our circle of Friends and how you might like to be involved.

In the meantime, please reach out anytime to share your thoughts. Thank you for your support! Thank you for all you do for the Conservatory!

### JUNE 12 AT 7PM

**Annual Meeting Of Members,  
Friends Of The Oak Park Conservatory**

Come hear Nina Kozoil, contributor to the Chicago Tribune and lecturer at the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Morton Arboretum speak about the Joys of Timing Color in the Garden.

Visit with fellow members and nibble a few cookies. Vote and welcome the new members to the Board of Directors.



*The Oak Park Conservatory is a historic  
property of the Park District of Oak Park.*



**FOPCON Members: Visit our partners and save 10%!**

**Clover's Garden Center**

7401 West 25th Street  
North Riverside, Illinois 60546  
708-788-0243  
[www.cloversgardencenter.com](http://www.cloversgardencenter.com)  
Garden center. *Note: seasonal.*

**Good Earth Greenhouse & Café**

7900 West Madison Street  
River Forest, Illinois 60305  
708-366-9500  
[www.goodearthgreenhouse.com](http://www.goodearthgreenhouse.com)  
Plants, garden accessories, flowers & a café.

**McAdam Landscaping, Inc.**

2001 Des Plaines Avenue  
Forest Park, Illinois 60130  
708-771-2299  
[www.mcadamlandscape.com](http://www.mcadamlandscape.com)  
Landscaping design, construction and maintenance for residential and commercial lawns & gardens plus retail plants & trees.  
*Note: Discount only in the retail store.*

**Westgate Flowers & Plant Shop**

841 South Oak Park Avenue  
Oak Park, Illinois 60304  
708-386-0072  
[www.westgateflowers.com](http://www.westgateflowers.com)  
Full service florist.

## Education Committee Report

*By Linda Smith, Chair*

The Education Committee continues to create and implement new programs and activities for children and families visiting the Conservatory.

The **Exploration Station Program** on Saturdays and Sundays continues to educate and amaze children with new topics each month. The **Toddler Exploration Program (TET)** has two sessions on the third Friday of the month. Children participating in the TET Program now register on line using the Park District's site, and is FREE.

The **Exploration Kits** continue to be very popular with the District 97 kindergartens. We have expanded the program by offering the usage of the kits to a few private kindergartens in Oak Park. The usage of the kits is a great way to introduce the children to the Conservatory.

The **Exploration Backpacks** continue to be a BIG hit with the children. The children enjoy using the backpacks as they explore the Conservatory and the Discovery Garden. They love using the binoculars!

**Tours** for children as well as adults continue to be very much in demand. Our new **"Diverse Learners Tour"** has become very popular. We continue to update our tours as the showrooms and the Discovery Garden change.

In the Discovery Garden, we have a new program called **Discovery Garden Exploration Time (DGET)**. This program runs every Saturday, March thru October, from 10:30 am -12:30 pm, weather permitting. This program has a different topic every two months. A Garden Docent is in the Discovery Garden to lead the activities and answer questions.

The **Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden** continues to enchant children! The children love the water feature. They use their imagination as they pump the water and sail various things down the runnel. They also love building with the blocks and the "tree cookies".

The Education Committee continues to create and design programs and activities for children and families to learn about nature and the Conservatory. The Conservatory is such an awesome place to visit and explore. **Come EXPLORE with us!**

**We are waiting for you!**

**In 2016 we received contributions in honor of Hilda Birney, Mark Finger, Don Foree, Kathleen Garness, Elizabeth & Maxwell McCalla, the Plant Sale volunteers, Dr. Manish Sadarangani, Donna Schuler and Alice Tully**

**In 2016 we received contribution in memory of Joshua Bowen, Lee Brooke, Jillian Dounias, Gene Kearley, Matilda Mickler, Gerry Nekrosius, Martha Poziombka and Rose Wasserstrom**



## Volunteering at the Conservatory

By Kathy McNamara, Volunteer and  
Program Coordinator

On any given day, you will find volunteers in the Gift Shop, assisting customers, keeping up with the Exploration Backpacks or stuffing envelopes to help with the office work flow.



Looking out the window of my office, into the Conservatory, I see a myriad of exciting activities happening! Most would not take place if not for the enthusiasm of our dedicated volunteer force. A typical week at the Conservatory touches on many of the volunteer opportunities available.

### Take a look:

**Monday** – FOPCON staff and volunteers may be found working diligently on administrative tasks or in meetings necessary to keep the organization running smoothly.

**Tuesday** – A typical Tuesday finds volunteers entering data, caring for plants in the Operations Room, or even crafting the next Toddler Exploration Time (TET) activity.

**Wednesday** – Volunteers can be found in the showrooms, sprucing up the walkways to make sure everything is in tip-top shape, before the Conservatory opens its doors to visitors.

**Thursday** – Tour Docents, trained to give one-hour tours, including our NEW Diverse Learner Tour offering, take visitors through the showrooms, sharing information about the Conservatory collections and ecosystems.

**Friday** – On the 3rd Friday of the month you may find TET Docents sharing their time and energy with some of our young learners. These Docents read stories, assist with hands-on activities, and encourage children and caregivers to explore the showrooms. On 4th Fridays during the summer months, FOPCON hosts Uncorked.

**Saturday** – On any weekend during the school year, you can find an Exploration Station Interpreter conversing and sharing information with a Conservatory visitor, or, in warmer weather, you may meet one of our new Garden Docents in the Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden, leading an educational activity.

**Sunday** – Sunday afternoon is a great day to participate in one of our special events, like KidsFest, or FOPON's annual Plant Sale!

JOIN over 200 active volunteers who support the Conservatory and the Friends' mission - donating over **6500** hours in 2016. **Multiply those hours by \$23.56 (estimated hourly value of volunteers), and volunteers have contributed over \$153,000.00 for this year alone!**

If you'd like to learn more about volunteering with the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory, please contact me at [coordinator@fopcon.org](mailto:coordinator@fopcon.org) or 708-725-2460, option 2.



"We are members because we enjoy having the Oak Park Conservatory as a resource in the community and want to support it. We have been coming to **KidsFest** every year for 12 years, have been to the plant sale and love the addition of the outdoor gardens.

- Mark and Lori Boyer, Family member

"The Conservatory is a great place to **find some solitude and commune with nature.** It's such a wonderful treasure for the community."

- John Owens, Individual member





# CONSERVATORY Conversations

## FRIENDS OF THE OAK PARK CONSERVATORY DONOR LIST 2016

*A huge thank you to all our donors for your enormous generosity. Donors with a cumulative total of \$500 or greater are recognized on the Donor Board hanging in the Conservatory lobby.*

### \$800 AND ABOVE

Bess and Candelario Celio  
Carol and John Dudzik  
Ebinger Family Charitable Fund  
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Andrea and Dan Green  
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Kim and John Wilson

### \$100 - \$499

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Loretta Wolak  
Nancy and John Wood  
Leslie and Robert Zimmerman

“One of the reasons I became a member is because of the annual Plant Sale which encourages our community to learn where its food comes from. The Conservatory is also a great resource for our community and children to learn about the diversity of plants.”

– Jill Niewoehner, Family member

## Membership Committee

By Denise Kozel, Chair

Big thanks to B Ann Hageman and Mary Ann Jurgus, new to the committee. We are creating new ways to delight and entertain our membership. Our lecture theme this year is Joy and we started with stunning floral design from Terese Maguire Hester of Garland Flowers. Check [www.fopcon.org](http://www.fopcon.org) for dates, times and topics for the next three.

“Chocolate, Cheese, and a Tour If You Please”, is the theme of our new membership appreciation event. Join us for an informal get together to find out what new plants are being displayed, get acquainted with the Discovery Garden, make new friends catch up with those you know, share gardening stories, bring your new ideas and suggestions for topics and speakers.

Membership makes this all possible. Please shop the plant sale, exchange plants and tools, and attend a lecture, and ask your friends and neighbors to join! Better yet, buy them a gift membership so they can come with you. Every member counts. Don't forget we now offer a three-year option saving you some money and time renewing every year.

## Join Our Legacy Society

Think ahead and join our Legacy Society. Planned gifts, such as bequests and IRA/qualified retirement plan designations will make you eligible to join our Legacy Society. For more information, please contact Beth Cheng, Executive Director, at 708-725-2460, ext. 1 or email [director@fopcon.org](mailto:director@fopcon.org).

“I became a life member because I wanted to support this wonderful treasure for the community. Very few communities have a Conservatory that provides exposure to all these unique and lovely plants. I'm very enthusiastic about the programming that has become more robust and that provides educational experiences for children.”

– Judy Das Gupta, Life Member

## Perennial & Garden Tool Exchange

Saturday May 20, 2017

Drop off perennials and tools between 9:30 am – 11:30 am. Then return at noon to take your pick from the bounty. What a great way to expand your garden or add to your tool collection.

Note: we cannot accept plain hosta or orange daylilies. Everyone seems to have too many of these!

## 24th Annual Garden Walk

Sunday, June 25, 2017

The 24th Annual Garden Walk jointly sponsored by the Garden Club of Oak Park and River Forest and the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory is Sunday, June 25th from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Nine beautiful and diverse gardens located in both villages will be featured this year. Artists will be painting in several of the gardens.

Buy your tickets at the Conservatory or online at the Garden Club's website: [www.gcopr.org](http://www.gcopr.org). Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 on the day of the walk. You may purchase tickets the day of the event at the Conservatory or at Cheney Mansion. If you purchase tickets in advance at the Conservatory, individual members can buy one at \$13; family members can buy two at \$13 each and premier members can buy four at \$13 each.

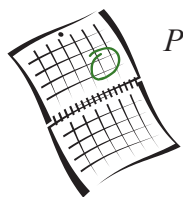
Hope to see you there. It is a lovely annual event.



# CONSERVATORY *Conversations*

The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory  
PO Box 1096  
Oak Park, IL 60304

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



- May 5, 2017

*Plant Sale Members' Day*

- May 20, 2017

*Perennial Exchange*

- June 12, 2017

*Annual Meeting of Members*

- June 25, 2017

*Garden Walk*

the OAK PARK CONSERVATORY

# UNCORKED

FOURTH FRIDAYS, JUNE - SEPTEMBER, 6-8PM



## Our Summer Social

Plan to attend Uncorked this year. What a great way to relax early on a Friday evening – music, appetizers, wine or beer and much more. This year's dates are June 23<sup>rd</sup>, July 28<sup>th</sup>, August 25<sup>th</sup> and September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The time is as always 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

This year for the first time, advance tickets are available online for a reduced price. Go to [www.pdop.org](http://www.pdop.org) to purchase tickets. Advance tickets are \$14 for Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory members and \$16 for non-members.

Visit [fopcon.org](http://fopcon.org) to become a member! At the door tickets are \$18. For more information email [uncorked@fopcon.org](mailto:uncorked@fopcon.org) or phone 708-725-2400.



“The Conservatory is a wonderful Oak Park resource which I feel is  
**something important for me to support.”**

*- Barbara Hunt, Individual member*

**SEE MORE “WHY I’M A  
MEMBER OF FOPCON”  
STORIES INSIDE!**