



Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park

# Knobs and Knolls

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**January 2019**

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## **WHAT'S NEW ON THE NATURE CENTER FRONT**

Big news! Thanks to the generosity of our Beaver-enthused members (Nelson and Debbie Gwaltney in particular) we've reached our fundraising goal for the Crawl-in Beaver Lodge Exhibit. Modern Designs has installed the impressive mural across the back wall, construction signs are up, and work has begun on the exhibit framework. Within the next few weeks, Ponds and Plants will be here creating the life-like lodge. We (and our Nature Center beavers) are excited to see its completion. Thanks to everyone who has helped with this project.



Back Wall Mural for Beaver Lodge Exhibit



Second Floor Gallery Space Under Construction

Terry Napier's crews have also been very busy. In addition to building the core structure of the Beaver Lodge Exhibit, they have been renovating the upper floor of the original Nature Center building. Once complete, this space will have three distinct areas of use. The main area will be a large open gallery space for seasonal and traveling exhibits for the public. Jeremy Stout will have his office in part of the space, and the remainder will be for private staff use and storage. The gallery has retained its rustic décor with big wooden beams, hardwood floors, and high ceilings - ideal for special displays that will change seasonally. There is still a sponsorship available for the Gallery's name.

## ***WHAT'S NEW ON THE NATURE CENTER FRONT (Continued)***

There are two remaining exhibits to be completed on the upper level once funding becomes available for them: the “Kids Zone” (a room designated for the youngest explorers), and the Native Plants Exhibit (focused on wildflowers, shrubs and trees native to Steele Creek Park). Both of these exhibits need sponsors.

Two of our major downstairs exhibits are completed - the Crawl-through Cave

(sponsored by Rush and Lea Powers), and the Geology Wall (sponsored by the Blue Stocking Club of Bristol). Two additional major exhibits on the lower level, along with a smaller downstairs public gallery also remain in need of sponsors. The “Park After Dark” Exhibit will feature sights, sounds, and creatures of the night in Steele Creek Park; the Giant Sloth Exhibit will feature a life-sized skeleton replica of the giant sloths that used to live in our area.

We are excited by the increased number of visitors that have come to see our new expanded Nature Center. Most have been wowed with the design and educational detail of the six major exhibits already completed. All of the work on the interior of the expanded Nature Center has been funded locally by individuals, businesses, and corporations, in conjunction with the City of Bristol Tennessee. Thanks to all who have made this progress possible!



**City Staff, Ed Hackley, and Friends Members Review Beaver Lodge Plans**

## ***LOVETT PROPERTY/STEELE FAMILY CABIN***



**Steele Family Cabin**



**MTSU Team at the Steele Family Cabin**

At the end of November a team from Middle Tennessee State University’s Center for Historic Preservation visited our newly acquired Lovett property with its log cabin dating back more than 150 years. Led by Tennessee State Historian, Dr. Carroll Vann West, the team spent the better part of an afternoon assessing the cabin and its surroundings. Their immediate impressions supported our assumptions that the cabin is of historic importance and well worth preserving and protecting. They confirmed that the core log structure dates back to at least the mid 1800’s, and probably earlier than that.

We anticipate a full report with recommendations from the MTSU team after they have completed their in-depth assessment later this year. Stay tuned!



## KUDOS TO JEREMY STOUT AND THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

### TRPA Four Star Award for Public Relations

This past fall at the Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association's Annual Conference in Knoxville, the City of Bristol Tennessee Parks and Recreation Department and Community Relations Department received that organization's Four Star Award for Public Relations. The TRPA Public Relations Award is presented annually to the agency significantly impacting the public's awareness and recognition of public parks, recreation, and leisure services programs through marketing and public relations.

The Department submitted the "Steele Creek Explorer" for consideration of this award. "Steele Creek Explorer" is a joint project between the Parks & Recreation Department and the Department of Community Relations. This nature themed BTN-TV educational program stars the Nature Center's very own Jeremy Stout. "Jeremy has a unique talent that comes to life in front of the camera," said Parks and Recreation Director Terry Napier.

Napier continued, "Behind the camera, Brennan Dye, Senior Media Production Specialist in the Department of Community Relations has consistently gone above and beyond to video, edit, and produce this very popular program. The first episode aired in October of 2011 and now with more than 20 episodes completed, we are just getting warmed up. We plan to continue with more great episodes for the future." The extensive collection of the programs may be watched by logging on to the [WatchBTNTV YouTube site](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL67C8D0EE7F5A39F4) (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL67C8D0EE7F5A39F4>).



Brennan Dye, Jeremy Stout, and Terry Napier Proudly Display TRPA Four Star Award (with Mayor Margaret Feierabend)

### Jeremy Stout – Bristol First, Employee of the Month Award

In December, Jeremy Stout received the City of Bristol Tennessee's Bristol First Award. Each month the City recognizes a City employee (or employees) for their achievements and dedication to public service and special contributions. Jeremy was nominated for this by our President, Michele Sparks. In the nomination form, Michele had this to say about Jeremy:

*"Providing year-round educational programs to the entire community, Nature Center Manager Jeremy Stout is the City of Bristol's jewel in the crown. No task is too big or too small for him to handle. Mentor to many young budding naturalists, Jeremy's easy going attitude brings folks of all ages together for his many stimulating talks, challenging hikes, and entertaining public speaking engagements. His vast knowledge of the natural history of the Park shines through his many informative episodes of "Steele Creek Explorer," routinely featured on BTN-TV."*



Jeremy Stout Receives Bristol First Award from Mayor Margaret Feierabend

## ***RECENT LOSSES***

Just before and during the holidays we were saddened by the loss of two very dear friends and ardent supporters.

Powell Foster passed away in mid December. Powell and his wife Sharon have been long time Friends members and tremendous supporters. Sharon served for many years on our Board of Directors and contributed countless hours coordinating our gardens working group and volunteering in many other capacities. About two decades ago, she and Powell made a very generous donation establishing a land acquisition fund that subsequently allowed us to purchase a valuable parcel of land in the Trinkle Hollow area of the Park. Powell was an avid outdoorsman/conservationist who had a passion for the southern Appalachian Mountains.

Just after Christmas, Clarence "Wilkie" Wilkerson passed away at home. Wilkie and Becky have been active, dedicated Friends members for more than a decade. Becky served on our Board of Directors for quite a few years and continues to be a critical member of our Nature Center Expansion Planning Committee. Wilkie always enjoyed attending our various events, including our recent Beaver Lodge Campaign event just last month. We will certainly miss his steadfast support, his cheerful demeanor, and his friendly smile!

Our sincere condolences go to Sharon and Becky.

## ***WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GREAT PARTNERS!***

To help us continue the important work that we do, and to raise additional funds for new exhibits and educational resources at the Nature Center, we have begun a campaign to partner with local and regional businesses, organizations, and individuals. The purpose of this campaign is to assure ongoing funding for new exhibits and educational programs, as well as the other support we provide for the Nature Center and the Park. We hope that you might be interested in becoming a Friend of the Park Partner by making a multi-year commitment of support.

The only requirements for becoming a Partner are 1) a signed agreement pledging to contribute a minimum of \$500 per year for at least two years, and 2) timely payment of pledged amounts according to the agreement. Total contribution amounts for the five partnership levels are: Oak - \$20,000 or more; Maple - \$10,000 to \$19,999; Chestnut - \$5,000 to \$9,999; Hemlock - \$2,500 to \$4,999; and Poplar - \$1,000 to \$2,499.

Sponsoring Partner's name(s) (with the designated level) will be prominently displayed in and around the Nature Center and in *Friends* advertising and promotional materials. Sponsoring Partners and their guests will be invited to attend all after-hours donor programs. For Chestnut level (\$5,000 total) and above, Sponsoring Partners will have the opportunity to be recognized as an exhibit sponsor with a stylized plaque placed on an exhibit of the donor's choosing (limited to those exhibits not already sponsored).

If you think you or your organization might want to become a Friend of the Park Partner, contact us at [mail@friendsofstelecreek.org](mailto:mail@friendsofstelecreek.org) or by calling (423) 764-8828.

## ***COMING SOON -- STEELE CREEK PARK'S EDUCATIONAL APIARY***

By this summer we expect to have a working apiary at Steele Creek Park. Terry Napier and Jeremy Stout are working closely with long-time beekeeper, Ben Cowan, to establish a functional beekeeping exhibit in the fields on the hill across the road from the Lodge. We plan to make this an educational installation, hopefully with help from the Whole Foods Foundation's Bee Cause Project. Look for progress on this "honey of an exhibit" later this spring.

## **Upcoming Nature Center Programs**

**Friday, February 1, 4:00 pm. Groundhog Walk & Talk.** Get ready for Groundhog Day by meeting Don at the Nature Center for a fun walk about these fascinating animals, including the cosmic importance of this seemingly silly holiday!

**Friday, February 15, 3:30 pm. Great Backyard Bird Count Feeder Watch.** Meet Don at the Nature Center to engage in citizen-science while learning about bird-watching and taking part in this nation-wide count!

**Friday, March 22, 10:00 am. Spring Migration Bird Walk.** Hearing is believing; and oh yeah, so is seeing! Meet Don at the Nature Center for a moderate walk looking for migrating songbirds, waterfowl, hawks and more!

**Friday, March 29, 4:00 pm. Spring Wildflower Walk:** Meet Jeremy at the Nature Center for an easy walk looking for some of the first living gems of the warmer months. This walk will focus on the quick-blooming ephemerals and could be an excellent photo opportunity!

**Friday, April 5, 4:00 pm. Reptiles as Pets.** Have you ever thought about keeping a turtle, lizard, or snake as a pet, or found a reptile in your yard that you want to keep? Meet Lance at the Nature Center for a discussion on the dos and don'ts of keeping reptiles as pets, and get an up close look at some in the Nature Center.

**Sunday, May 12, 2:00 pm. Intro to iNaturalist.** If you've ever seen an interesting plant or animal on a hike and wondered what it could be, or if you just like observing nature, iNaturalist is the app for you. Meet Lance at the Nature Center for an introduction to one of the most popular citizen science nature apps. Then head outside to observe, record, share, and create research quality data to help better understand and protect our natural resources!

**Friday, May 24, 4:00 pm. Spring Butterfly Foray.** Meet Don at the Nature Center for an easy hike looking for these warm-weather gems of the skies. Bring a camera if you have one!

## **Tree Keepers Seminar**

**Saturday, March 2, 8:30 am – 2:00 pm.** Join us for a day filled with practical workshops and interesting topics, all about plants! There will be door prizes and a light breakfast and lunch will be served. There is a \$10 fee for this event. You can call 423.764.4023 or visit <https://bristoltn.recdesk.com> to sign up!

## **Mark Your Calendar – Earth Day Cleanup Day**

Saturday, April 20th 9:00 am - Noon Earth Day Lake Cleanup! Join park staff and the Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park at the Nature Center for a clean-up of our park! Bags, gloves, and refreshments will be provided.

You can keep up with what's going on at the Park and with *Friends* by liking us on Facebook or Instagram (Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park) or by following our webpage at <https://www.friendsofsteelecreek.org>.

**For those of you who receive Knobs and Knolls by e-mail, this will be the last issue you receive in this pdf format. Starting with the April issue, we will be distributing our newsletters and other items of interest via MailChimp. This platform should provide a more dynamic and informative format to keep you abreast of what we're up to at the NC.**

If you prefer to not receive these newsletters, simply let us know at [mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org](mailto:mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org).

# Thanks to Our Many Members and Donors 2017—2018

## Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park and

## The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park

### OAK

#### Massengill-DeFriece Foundation The Blue Stocking Club

#### Maple

Joe and Sandy Armstrong  
Ben and Anne Cowan  
Friendship Enterprises  
Strongwell  
Rush and Lea Powers

#### Chestnut

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Don and Ginia Shawl  
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#### HEMLOCK

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