A Message from Mark Fallon, newly promoted Director of Briar Bush

In congratulating me on my new role as Director of Briar Bush, several people have offered the old adage: “Congratulations and condolences!” These days, however, it does not always play as a joke. In 18 years as the Senior Naturalist and part of the education team, I have seen many challenges to Briar Bush, but nothing approaches the existential crisis created by the global pandemic. As we all know, just living day-to-day right now can be a struggle. Guiding any organization at this time is a bit daunting.

But I am not alone. I am profoundly indebted to our longtime Business Manager, Patti Platt, who led Briar Bush through most of 2020 as Interim Director. Her caring attitude, detailed focus and extraordinary work ethic has been rightfully recognized by Abington Township (read more on page 3).

I also stand on a foundation laid by the many members, donors and Board Members of the Friends of Briar Bush. “The Friends” formed in the ’70s to support programming at BBNC, then a fledgling Township Park. This partnership with the Township has led to an organization of great strength and resiliency. The incredible generosity, forethought, and leadership of the Friends has meant we will have the capacity to at least limp through this pandemic and come out the other side, leaner but still strong. In particular, the most recent Treasurer, Steve Cardullo, spent countless hours helping Patti navigate the finances to keep Briar Bush from catastrophe.

I also have a team that has run this gauntlet by pulling together, having each other’s backs and focusing on adapting our mission to new parameters. As you can read in our COVID Update, they are finding ways to get kids outside when they are glued to screens most of the time, or if they can’t be in-person, they are making screen time into productive learning and play time. They are keeping children happy, healthy and having fun learning about nature.

So, I thank everyone for the many congratulations. And though regrets may be in order for desk work taking over a good deal of my time, I know condolences will not be needed for Briar Bush itself: we have too much going for us, in the past and the future. I look forward to seeing what it brings and seeing all of you take part!
“How are you doing?” - COVID-19 Update on Briar Bush

We say it without thinking. It is simply a greeting, because there’s normally only so much that could be “going” poorly. But in the past 10 months, nothing has been normal. So many have lost income, jobs, adequate schooling, even loved ones, due to COVID-19. Many of us almost hesitate before asking now. But at Briar Bush, we still ask, because we care about our volunteers, members, supporters and coworkers.

So many people have been asking how Briar Bush is doing and honestly, just being asked makes us feel so grateful. The effects of the pandemic on Briar Bush have been intense and cascading, including:

- Cancellation of spring programs
- Closure of the Museum and Bird Observatory to the public
- Lay off of part-time administrative and facilities staff
- Cancellation of regular summer programming
- School/preschool programs at a minimum, almost all virtual
- Cancelled all in-person Senior Citizen programs
- Severe limitations to volunteer work
- Restrictions on live animal use and “no touch” policy for programs

All of this has meant drastic cuts to revenue and disruption of our mission.

However, there is some good news. Briar Bush is a magical place, and supporters like you have stood by us, many increasing already generous donations in what feels like miraculous ways. Our team has pulled together, working harder than ever to keep programs happening. They have kept that Briar Bush magic spreading far and wide, especially with virtual programs. Some programs since March (and ongoing) include:

- Modified in-person programs: Fewer participants, masks, and intensive sanitation
  - Summer and School’s Out ½ day programs for K-6
  - NEW After School programming for K-6
  - Continued early childhood programs (Magic Mornings) for 2-6 with caregivers
  - Outdoor preschool visits
  - “Pod” programs, scouts and birthdays in backyards and at BBNC

- NEW Virtual programs: We now have the tools to be in schools and homes anywhere!
  - Streaming Nature - Adult learner series
  - Virtual live animal and science lessons in preK and elementary
  - Virtual birthday visits from our animals
  - Virtual intergenerational program - a bring your Grandparents to Briar Bush night (even if they live in California!) sponsored by BLBB Advisors

Thank you to everyone who has shown concern, and especially to those who have been able to sustain us through your participation and donations. We will continue to need your help, especially to fill our limited programs until we can get back to our normal point of not being able to fill our demand. We understand that so many of you have difficult struggles right now, but even if you can just tell everyone:

BRIAR BUSH IS STILL HERE! Thanks!
Patti Platt, Longtime Briar Bush Business Manager, Promoted by Abington Township

The entire staff at Briar Bush would like to give our heartfelt congratulations to Patti Platt on her promotion to Manager of Business & Recreation Services for all of Abington Township!

Briar Bush Nature Center Director, Mark Fallon, has known and worked with Patti for 18 years. Although some of us have not known Patti for as long, Mark’s reaction to Patti’s recent promotion resonates with the entire staff here at Briar Bush:

*Patti has been the glue holding Briar Bush together since I arrived when Dede Long was still Director. She has kept me where I need to be and kept my attention on what’s important. Thankfully, her role at Parks & Rec still dips into our operations and she still works from Briar Bush part of her time. We know she will continue to support us as much as she can.*

Thank you, Patti, for everything that you do for Briar Bush! We wouldn’t have made it without you!

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New Board Members

**Kimberly Hamm** - Kimberly Hamm is an independent nonprofit consultant, focusing on fundraising and strategic planning, to keep organizations healthy, vibrant, and mission-driven. Before branching out into consulting, Kim handled fundraising, engagement, and relations for teams at Manor College, Fox School of Business at Temple University, and the National Kidney Foundation. Kim lives in North Hills with her family and enjoys spending time hiking, camping, and skiing.

**Tara Moore** - Since moving to Glenside in 2010, Tara and her family have enjoyed Briar Bush’s activities, including Magic Mornings, campfires, lectures, and summer camps. She got a closer look at the workings of Briar Bush in 2019 when her daughter and two friends designed and installed the children’s area mural in the Bird Observatory while earning their Girl Scout Silver Award. Tara has volunteered with Girl Scouts for many years, including serving as the committee chair for Girl Scouts Overseas in Singapore. A registered professional engineer with a Ph.D. in Medical Engineering, she is self-employed as a consultant investigating accidents.

**Pamela Olshefski** - Pam lives in Ambler with her husband and 3 teenage daughters. She is a graduate of Albright College with a degree in Environmental Science/Biology. Pamela is the Natural Lands Manager at the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania. She has worked at the Arboretum since 2001 starting as the Natural Lands Manager working at both the Arboretum and in Fairmount Park. Pamela is also on the Executive board of Girls Friendly Society (GFS), and the Branch advisor and co-leader of the Ambler Branch. Pamela coaches field hockey and lacrosse for the Upper Dublin School District as well as recreational teams. Pamela loves youth education and is especially passionate to help the next generation learn, love and protect our environment.
Programs for Children

Registration is required.
Members receive a 20% discount. Abington residents receive a 10% discount.
To register, visit www.briarbush.org or call (215) 887-6603.

Magic Mornings
Modified In-Person Program for ages 2-5 with adult

Toddlers bring your favorite adult to Briar Bush for walks, crafts, games, stories, and more. Each week features a new theme, which repeats throughout the week (register for one day per week).

- Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays
  - January - March: 10:30 AM-11:00 AM
  - April - May: 10:30 AM-11:30 AM

$8/class; $5 each additional child in the same household

(Additional discounts may apply.)

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School’s Out? Get Outside!
Modified In-Person Program for grades K-6

Briar Bush Nature Center understands the importance of nature play and scientific discovery in a child’s development. Our half-day School’s Out! program allows us to offer an opportunity for children to safely experience the wonders of nature.

AM Session: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
PM Session: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

$50/session per participant (Discounts may apply.)

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STREAMING NATURE FOR KIDS
Virtual Program for ages 2-5

Streaming Nature is a pre-recorded virtual program. It includes an intro lesson, story-time, craft demo video, themed activity modeled by an educator, an Animal Encounter Experience, and supplemental activities.

Activities are geared toward spring and summer.
$5/program per household

www.briarbush.org
Programs for Children

Covid Policies and Updates: Masks are required for individuals ages 3+. Visit our website to review the Mitigation Plan for Modified In-Person Programming. The Mitigation Plan and program information are subject to change. Check our website for the most up-to-date policies and program information.

Escape to Nature: After School

Modified In-Person Program for grades K-6

Join our educators in nature play and scientific discovery during our After-School Programs! Register for one weekday or all five - any combination of days that works with your schedule.

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, &/or Fridays
Winter: 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Spring: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Wild Wednesdays (extended hours)
Winter: 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Spring: 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Cost varies depending on option(s) chosen.

Homeschool Program

Modified In-Person Program for grades K-6

Enrich your homeschool science curriculum at Briar Bush Nature Center! Join our educators for a six-week study of the natural world. 90-minute sessions include nature journaling, live animal encounters, and read-alouds/discussions - all relating to the daily topic.

Submit each session as one of your 180 days of school!

AM Session: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
PM Session: 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

$125/student for the entire 6-week series (Discounts may apply.)

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Escape to Nature: Summer Camp

Modified In-Person Program for grades K-6

Our modified half-day Escape to Nature: Summer Camp program allows us to offer an opportunity for children to safely experience the wonders of nature at their favorite backyard nature center.

Weekly from June 21 - September 3
Summer Camp themes change each week.
AM Session: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
PM Session: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
$275/child/week (Discounts may apply.)
Programs for All Ages

Covid Policies and Updates: Masks are required for individuals ages 3+. Visit our website to review the Mitigation Plan for Modified In-Person Programming. The Mitigation Plan and program information are subject to change. Check our website for the most up-to-date policies and program information.

Virtual Programs
Schedule our Animal Ambassadors to visit your party, class, or work meeting! Book your virtual event today!
Visit www.briarbush.org/virtual-animal-encounters or call (215) 887-6603 for more information.

Winterfest 2021: Cabin Fever!
Friday - Sunday, February 5th - 7th, 2021

* Live Animal Zoom Program
  Sunday, February 7, 2021 @ 1:00pm
  (Registration information coming soon!)
* Self-Guided Interpretive Hike at BBNC
  All Weekend, February 5-7, 2021
* Family-Friendly Internet Scavenger Hunt
* Make-at-Home Craft Instructional Video

A Walk in the Woods
Modified In-Person Program tailored for adults
Join Director Mark Fallon on interpretive guided hikes around Briar Bush and Alverthorpe Park.
Select Thursdays & Saturdays
2:00 PM - 2:45 PM
FREE/BBNC Members
$5/others
(Registration required.)

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The Sequel!
Join the Briar Bush staff for a special social-distance walk through the preserve featuring some of your favorite Briar Bush resident animals!

Coming June 4th to a Nature Center near you!
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
$20/groups up to four; $5/each additional participant

Virtual Programs
Schedule our Animal Ambassadors to visit your party, class, or work meeting! Book your virtual event today!
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4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
$20/groups up to four; $5/each additional participant
Programs for Adults

Streaming Nature for Adults

Join a **LIVE webinar** with Briar Bush Educators to learn more on topics of interest relating to the environment.

Select Fridays from 1pm-2pm

$25/program (*Discounts may apply.*)

Registration is required; call (215) 887-6603 to register.

**Medical Marvels** with Katie Fisk  
*January 15, 2021*

Health is the global focus right now, but far before COVID-19, scientists have turned to nature for solutions to some of our most pressing medical needs. Not only have there been medical breakthroughs thanks to the natural world, but countless plants and animals keep us healthy in an everyday way as well. Tune in to this program to find out more. Doctor’s orders!

**The Winter Wolf Moon** with Ehren Gross  
*January 29, 2021*

The winter nights are long and cold, but clear skies and shining stars bring a bit of wonder to the night. Learn about January’s full Winter Wolf Moon and enjoy a tour of the night sky constellations along with fables and stories. It’s sure to be a HOWLING experience!

**Amorous Animals** with Katie Fisk  
*February 5, 2021*

It’s Valentine’s Day and love is in the air—for animals, too. Log on with your sweetie, a virtual group of friends, or go stag for this unique and very explicit program (*may be inappropriate for some viewers*)! You’ll alternate between blushes and bouts of laughter as you are regaled with the bizarre behaviors and natural histories of amorous animals. We’ll talk faking it, bizarre endowments, just how DO porcupines mate, courtship methods, and yes, who really is the biggest in the animal kingdom (hint: it’s not you).

**Maple Sugaring** with Ehren Gross  
*February 19, 2021*

The days may be getting a bit warmer, but the nights are still cold and trees are still dormant. Even in the cold, late winter can be the sweetest time of the year, so let’s tap into the source of something sweeter. Educator Ehren Gross will take you through the process of harvesting and processing maple syrup and share delicious recipes that come after!

**Reading the Signs of Nature** with Melissa Eldridge  
*March 12, 2021*

It’s a thrill to spot wildlife while exploring in nature, but there’s no guarantee you’ll spot something every time. However, you can always find traces and signs of wildlife, even when the animals themselves are not visible. Sharpen your observation and investigation skills as you learn to read and interpret tracks, scat, holes, nests, and more!

**Predators Aloft: Raptors** with Mark Fallon  
*March 26, 2021*

Can Director and Senior Naturalist Mark Fallon answer your questions about raptors? If they are Canadian basketball players, no. Eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls? Probably! Come along for a virtual visit from one of our live raptor ambassadors and a raptor rap session.

**Backyard Habitats** with Katie Fisk  
*April 9, 2021*

We’ve all been spending more time at home lately, so there is no better time for a backyard project to welcome more wildlife into your space! A pond that requires no maintenance and costs under $50? Flowers that attract hummingbirds and do not need extra watering? A hawk feeder?! Whether you live in a house with a huge backyard or rent an apartment with a cement patio, there are simple and inexpensive ways to attract wildlife to your home.

**What’s Blooming at The Bush?** with Ehren Gross  
*April 23, 2021*

Remember the saying, “April showers bring May flowers?” Discover the meaning of this saying by exploring the change in weather and the instruments that record it. Observe what’s “springing-up” around Briar Bush as Educator Ehren Gross leads you on a virtual walk along the trails.

**Herpetology 101** with Katie Fisk  
*May 7, 2021*

Hooray for herps! Herpetology is the study of reptiles and amphibians and in this week’s program, we’ll learn more about what sets these fascinating animals apart, as well as get to know some of our local herp friends. We’ll have some cameos from some of Briar Bush’s many reptiles as well. Hop to it!

**The Nature of Families** with Katie Fisk  
*May 21, 2021*

Just like human families, families in the animal world all look very different. Some young stay with their parents for a long time, some are on their own from birth. Some parents work together to raise their young, while others are single parents, and for some it’s a whole family affair! Learn about all the fascinating diversity in animal families along with some very special animal guests.

www.briarbush.org  
215-887-6603
Pod Programs

Are you part of a “pod” that is looking for new ways to entertain?

Briar Bush can bring our Group Outreach Programs to you, host your group for an On-Site Program, or present a Virtual Program!

For more information or to book a program call Briar Bush at (215) 887-6603.

The 30th Annual Friends of Briar Bush

Feather Our Nest - The Briar Bunch

This year’s Feather Our Nest event, The Briar Bunch, was a tremendous success! Our on-line auction focused on supporting local businesses, our Dinner2Go ran smoother than we ever could have imagined thanks to our volunteers, and the food from Karen Spires and DNH Catering was phenomenal! The Zoom program was a new way to engage with our guest. We hope that everyone laughed at the blunders, bloopers, and “episode” as much as we have.

The Briar Bunch would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our event participants and supporters. We would like to especially thank the Friends of Briar Bush Board and FON Sponsors including: Grand Sponsor, BLBB Charitable; Anonymous Platinum Sponsor; Gold Sponsors: Lindy Communities and Marge & Steve Ulrich; Silver Sponsors: Bonnie Bell & Family, David Judge & Family, and Michele Kaczalek; Bronze Sponsors: Bleczinski, Kleiman & Klein LLC, Mark Fallon & Maani Waldor, Henry & Nancy Geyer, The Giant Company, Kiki Vodka, The Lexow Family, Norman Marcus, and TD Bank; Copper Sponsors: Brenda Lacy Branson, D.M.D., The Fireside Bar & Grille, and Pillar to Post: The DuPey Team; Supporters: Bee Bergvall & Co., Sustainable Choices, LLC, and Quinn & Wilson. This event would not have been possible without your contributions and participation.