



Somerset County Park Foundation



SOMERSET COUNTY PARK FOUNDATION

The Somerset County Park Foundation is a 501(c)(3) created to preserve, support, and promote Somerset County Park Commission programs, facilities, and open space through advocacy and fundraising. The Park Foundation is managed by a 14-member Board of Trustees including one member of the Board of County Commissioners. Foundation funds are used to sponsor, support, and promote park activities and recreation. Additional funds raised by the Foundation benefit Somerset County Park Commission through expansion of programs, improvement of facilities, and capital expenditures to enhance access to active and passive recreation opportunities.

For 30 years, the biggest fundraiser has been the annual Pro/Celebrity Golf Tournament, which supports a variety of Park Commission programs, including funding dedicated to the Therapeutic Recreation Department. Over the past dozen years, the Foundation has supported the Somerset County Park Commission by granting more than \$1.6million dollars in projects.



2021 – The Somerset County Park Foundation continued its ongoing support of Leonard J. Buck Garden through improvements funded by the Helen R. Buck Foundation. This year, funding for repairs to the trail that bears Mrs. Buck’s name was provided, as was funding for repairs to the boardwalk trail at Buck Garden. Plant materials were funded for a fern garden at Buck, and a small perennial garden was created in memory of

long-time garden supervisor Antoinette Tosco (retired), who passed away in 2020. With additional funding, new plantings were added to Buck, tree pruning was conducted, and lightning rod protection was installed.

Funds were approved to cover the cost of securing two equine experts from Rutgers University to work with a Park Commission committee to consider the future uses and programming at Lord Stirling Stable. Through a generous donation from Raymond and Roseann Brown to the Foundation, four free summer concerts were held on Sunday evenings in August in Duke Island Park. The Environmental Education Center at



Lord Stirling Park conducted a "Rebuild the Boardwalks" campaign, with donations submitted through the Foundation. They have exceeded their goal of \$10,000. Through two of the Park Foundation's on-going programs, six bricks were purchased to honor family members and were placed at the entranceway of TD Bank Ball Park, and families and friends also purchased 24 benches placed through the parks to pay tribute to a loved one.



2020 – Although this was a year in which many programs were not able to occur due to the pandemic, citizens flocked to use the parks to enjoy nature in record numbers. The Foundation supported Park Commission staff by contributing the cost of some of the initially needed safety equipment and supplies. The Park Foundation was also proud to be able to assist with grants to help keep the parks looking their best for all who visited.

Buck Garden planted a variety of new shrubs, plants, and flowers due to funds donated from the Helen R. Buck Foundation to the Park Foundation. Gardeners also secured services to have trees trimmed within the gardens, and pesticide treatments performed. The Upper Nursery Area at Buck Garden received a facelift with cold frames and steps installed. Funding for new bluebird boxes to



be placed at Buck Garden, to attract birds to help pollinate the plants, was also donated. The Foundation also purchased roses for the internationally award-winning van der Goot Rose Garden in Colonial Park. Matched funding to desilt the Lily Pond at the Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park was approved, as well as funding to create a forest plan for the park. Also at the EEC, funding for lumber was provided to repair bridges on the trail system. Lastly, the Foundation funded an iPad and Router to help operate the sounds system used in conjunction with the Showmobile.

2019 - Funds from the Whole Foods Market grant received in 2018 were utilized to provide health and wellness programs at the Park Commission, and also used to fund trail improvements at the Environmental Education Center. Kayaking and canoeing supplies were funded at the EEC. The Foundation continued to support the TR Program by awarding scholarships to TR program participants to enable families who can't afford program fees. The Foundation supported Photos with Santa in which a sensory-friendly environment helped calm anxieties for children with Aspergers who can't visit a large crowded mall and wait in line. This program allowed families to capture the memory of the holiday season.



The Park Foundation supported Leonard J. Buck Garden by purchasing new donation boxes, deer enclosure fencing, new signs, and funding for much needed tree work. The Foundation also sponsored the plants to be donated on Arbor Day in the spring, as well as sponsored activities at the Annual Rose Day Festival in Colonial Park. Foundation members were on site at Duke Island Park for the ribbon-cutting of the new playground.

Through two of the Park Foundation's on-going programs, four families and friends chose to honor loved ones through a purchase of five bricks that were placed at the entranceway of TD Bank Ball Park, and 10 families and friends purchased 11 benches placed through the parks to pay tribute to a loved one. The Somerset County Park Foundation served as the official sponsor of "Autograph Sundays", a Somerset Patriots program featured at all home games played on Sundays throughout the 2019 season. The reverse side of the autograph poster listed all of the Park Commission spring and summer special events, programs, lessons, and tournaments, reaching an audience of 5,000 children. Throughout the past 15 years, the valuable financial assistance provided by the Somerset County Park Foundation to enhance Park Commission programs, services, and facilities totals more than \$1.5million.

2018 – The Park Foundation was the recipient of 5% of opening day receipts from Whole Foods Markets, and the \$16,000 donation is being used to develop wellness programs. The Foundation supported the TR Program by awarding scholarships to TR program participants to enable families who can't afford the program fees. Funding from the Foundation supported Photos with Santa too.





The Park Foundation supported Leonard J. Buck Garden by purchasing several teak garden furniture pieces to enhance and upgrade the amenities for the Visitor Center and Courtyard. The Foundation also granted funds for a trail stabilization project on three Buck Garden pathways. They also funded a drainage improvement project in the Azalea Meadow, the Boardwalk-West End, and in the central portion of the Kennel Field. The Foundation also partnered with the Park Commission for the NJ Arborists' Annual Day of Work, when Colonial Park was selected as the one park in the state for the Arborists to provide \$100,000 of work in one day. The Foundation also sponsored the plants to be donated on Arbor Day in the spring, as well as sponsored activities at the Annual Rose Day Festival in Colonial Park. The Park Foundation again provided funding for "Autograph Sundays", a Somerset Patriots program in which Park Commission summer programs for youth are marketed. Foundation members were on site at the EEC for the ribbon-cutting of the Boondocks Trail completion which their matching funds helped complete.





2017 – The Park Foundation donated funds to pay for busses for a variety of trips offering by the TR department. They also paid for cabinets for storage in the TR activity center and supported the ability for children with sensory issues to have their photo taken with Santa without having to wait in line at the mall. They further supported the TR Program by awarding scholarships to TR program participants to enable families who can't afford the program fees. Reusable water bottles were purchased with Park Foundation funds, to be provided to all FT Park Commission employees to help reduce reliance

on plastic bottles. The Park Foundation provided several grants for projects at Leonard J. Buck Garden, including correcting tail erosion, repair of railings, tree works, creation of storage bins, and implementation of an irrigation system. Funding was also provided for a conceptual drawing for a new design for the Perennial Garden in Colonial Park. The Park Foundation again provided funding for "Autograph Sundays", a Somerset Patriots program in which Park Commission summer programs for youth are marketed.

2016 – The Somerset County Park Foundation donated funds in 2016 to assist with program scholarships, based on financial need for Therapeutic Recreation programs and Junior Golf. Their generous contribution enabled the production of the six performances in the free Summer Concert Series. Additional program support was provided for Arbor Day and the Rose Day Festival. Capital projects were funded for several Buck Garden improvements, through donations from the Helen Buck Foundation. Replacement of canoes and kayaks for the popular paddling programs were funded from another donor through the Park Foundation. The Foundation also purchased a new Sprinter Van to transport participants to TR programs. Through bequeaths from the Dameo Family, a horse was purchased for the Stable for the therapeutic riding program. The "Milkweed for Monarchs" program was initiated in 2016, with a bequest from Ms. Emily Fabiano to the Somerset County Park Foundation. Milkweed plants, the host plant for Monarch butterflies, were distributed free of charge, in order to bolster declining Monarch butterfly habitats. The Park Foundation also provided marketing assistance to create videos for TR and for the EEC for the new Exhibit Hall. The Somerset County Park Foundation served as the official sponsor of "Autograph Sundays", a Somerset Patriots program at all home games played on Sundays throughout the 2016 season.

2015 – The Park Foundation donated \$185,000 to assist with program scholarships, based on financial need, for TR programs, Junior Golf, and Riding lessons. A generous contribution enabled the production of the five performances in the free Summer Concert Series. Program support was also provided for Arbor Day and the Rose Day Festival. Capital projects were funded for Buck Garden and Colonial Park Gardens improvements, a beautification project at Duke Island Park, solar powered trash compactors, as well as stone wall repairs at the EEC, and replacement of kayaks for the popular paddling program. The Park Foundation also provided assistance to host the traveling Vietnam Wall, and provided funding for “Autograph Sundays”, a Somerset Patriots program in which Park Commission summer programs for youth are marketed. The Park Foundation matched a \$25,000 grant from Investors Bank to the EEC to re-build a 900’ section of trail boardwalk due to storm damage.

2014 – The Park Foundation donated funds to purchase several needed items for TR. They further supported the TR Program by awarding scholarships to TR program participants to enable families who can’t afford the program fees. The Park Foundation provided a grant for the construction of a utility vehicle bridge at Leonard J. Buck Garden, along with funds for construction of fencing for the plant nursery, and renovation of a stone wall. The Park Foundation also provided funding for a new rustic picnic arbor at Buck Garden. New sound equipment was funded for the Showmobile; the portable stage rented to community groups. Lastly, the Park Foundation matched a \$50,000 grant bestowed by 3M Corporation to the EEC to build a science biomimicry lab for elementary and high school students.

2013 – The Park Foundation donated funds to purchase a wheelchair accessible carriage and harness for the new therapeutic driving program at Lord Stirling Stable. The Park Foundation also provided the funding to purchase a Dodge Caravan to be used to transport TR participants to programs. They further supported the TR Program by awarding scholarships to TR program participants. The Park Foundation purchased a pool lift to assist people with physical disabilities. They provided a grant for the replacement of an eight-foot high deer exclusion fence surrounding the Leonard J. Buck Garden. Three scouts representing Girl Scout Troop 236 of Montgomery restored the cemetery at the former Skillman Village through funding by the Park Foundation.

2012 – The Park Foundation supported the TR department by matching a grant from the Garden Club of Somerset Hills. With these funds, TR was able to continue to collaborate with Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center to provide horticulture activities that are incorporated into the patients’ treatment goals. The Somerset County Park Foundation provided the funds to purchase pasture fencing and portable stabling units in order for Lord Stirling Stable to increase the number of boarding horses at the facility.

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The Park Foundation is registered with the State of New Jersey and is recognized by the IRS. Contributions are tax deductible. Checks may be sent to the Somerset County Park Foundation, PO Box 5147, North Branch NJ 08876.