



Friends of Kenilworth

AQUATIC GARDENS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

WHO WE ARE

Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens (FoKAG) was founded in 2001 by a small group of volunteers enthralled by the park's unique beauty and place in D.C. history. Keenly aware of the enormous task of maintaining the park, FoKAG works in cooperation with the National Park Service to ensure the park is well-maintained, well-enjoyed and welcoming for neighbors and visitors.

FoKAG is a 501c3 nonprofit organization connecting people to the park through stewardship, engagement and educational programs. We envision an aquatic gardens that inspires.

The Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens celebrates and protects this special place by:

- Engaging volunteers
- Enhancing park infrastructure
- Supporting educational and interpretive programs
- Building community partnerships
- Fundraising for special park initiatives

THANK YOU

From the Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens staff and board, we thank you for giving your time, energy, and love to this oasis in the city this year.

The challenges we all faced in 2020 made us more aware of the importance of nature and safe spaces to recreate, provide comfort, and gather. The power of parks, indeed, this park's power particularly, was felt in 2020. In 2021, we plan to build on that resilience by continuing our volunteer stewardship efforts and leaning into programs and partnerships to meet our neighbors' and visitors' needs.

Dear Friends,

In a year that brought so many unexpected changes and challenges, we took comfort in nature's timeless elements – fresh air, migrating birds, and ponds filled with lotus and water lilies. A healthy and thriving Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens has never been more vital.

We have welcomed an increased number of visitors seeking to recreate and enjoy nature this year. Despite planning a full suite of programs early in the year, we changed gears when the park closed from mid-March to June and delivered high-quality virtual programs and experiences to youth and families. The pandemic and a reaffirmed commitment to anti-racism are now foundational to our approach and programs. We believe now more than ever, Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens must listen and support its Black neighbors, and with that, increasingly serve as a community hub.

Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens is committed to delivering on its core programs of stewardship, public engagement and education, while also making an intentional shift to become more partnership-forward and community-centered.

Recently, we received a note from a frequent visitor and neighbor; it said:

"I love this park. It feeds my soul."

We couldn't say it any better. Thank you for helping us celebrate and steward Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens.

Be well,



Tina O'Connell

Tina O'Connell
Executive Director
Friends of Kenilworth
Aquatic Gardens



Martha Holley-Miers

Martha Holley-Miers
Board Chair
Friends of Kenilworth
Aquatic Gardens

Back in Bloom

Reopening and Staying Safe

The National Park Service worked hard this past spring and summer to keep this oasis beautiful when the world went into lockdown and they worked even harder to ensure our safety through the summer months. The **creation of a pedestrian circulation pattern** throughout the park was one of the many ways the National Park Service ensured a safe place for us to **#RecreateResponsibly**. FoKAG embraced this swell of visitation and spent the summer **safely engaging with visitors at an outdoor welcome table**, alongside the National Park Service, to **help visitors navigate this new route and provide materials for self-guided strolls through the ponds and surrounding trails**.

Parks across the country recorded **high visitation numbers in 2020**, and Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens was no exception. With safety protocols in place, visitors could get outside and reap the benefits of spending time in nature by all of us now more than ever. We repeatedly heard from visitors and community members that the **park has provided much-needed comfort and solace, as well as space for the young (or young at heart!)** to run, explore and play. With the outdoors being a “safer” gathering place, we’ve also seen friends meet up for walks and even small gatherings, including the introduction of newborns to extended family members. **We look forward to continuing to be a place where people come to gather and heal as we come out of the pandemic.**



Rhina Cabezas © 2020

The Outdoor Classroom

Bringing the Park to the Families, and Families to the Park

This year greatly impacted our youth, both academically and socially. The transition from in-person to remote learning was not easy and remains a challenge for most. However, the outdoors and Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens have always been our platforms for education. This year, **our camp programs helped anchor families during a time of uncertainty to safe outdoor exploration and fun.**

In place of our traditional Spring Break and Summer Camp activities, this summer we developed a **modified camp experience that allowed for maximum safety and fun for the neighboring children**. We hosted a four-week summer camp and fall family days that were a **hybrid of online and in-park activities for children ages 6-10 and their families**. Each Monday, we provided a contactless pick-up of materials and instructions for that week's activities, as well as a family meal for four and a bag of fresh produce, to help meet families' growing nutritional needs. Weekly themes included learning about nature, art, water, and plants and animals. Feedback from the camp programming had overwhelming gratitude and high marks for the camp, as it engaged entire families and centered them safely in the outdoors.

One mother wrote, "This was the best camp my kids attended all summer...**We felt so supported and cared for.** I've rarely had a camp make me feel that way."

We can't wait to provide another round of enjoyment in the coming year to our camp families!



Statistics & Accomplishments:

- 38 summer campers (and their families!)
- Four weeks packed with programming (both safe in-person and virtual activities!)
- 300+ participated in our family-led activities in the park, made possible by FoKAG efforts
- 100 % more connected to nature. On the last day of camp, participants answered a survey based on the American Camp Association's Affinity for Nature Scale and Camp Connectedness Scale. We found that 100 percent of campers enjoyed learning about nature, and they enjoyed the activities they did at home.

Stewarding the Gardens

Cultivating A Healthy & Thriving Aquatic Gardens in a Pandemic

A New Normal

Public Engagement Amidst a Pandemic

Jean Althoff © 2020

The **large and committed FoKAG volunteer force** was **critical to a healthy and thriving park in 2020**, primarily as **NPS was unable to host volunteer events** and use of the park and surrounding trails was higher than usual. As soon as events were allowed in September, we immediately activated our volunteer corps to **clean the park and surrounding paths and riverbanks of months of accumulated trash**.

FoKAG also **hosted a crew of five local young adults over eight-weeks through the SCA** (Student Conservation Association), who **restored 3.3 miles of trails**, including **restoring over 1500 feet of pond banks** for safer and wider trails throughout the park. During these two months, the crew **took on the park's task backlog and made significant progress on the long-term effort to remediate ponds and trails**.



FoKAG focused on **developing materials** to help visitors safely enjoy and explore the park, including a **new brochure with an improved park map, scavenger hunts for families, a monthly photo contest, and plant and animal identification guides**. These materials allow visitors to explore and understand the park more fully and independently, which has been essential given the visitor center's closure and suspension of ranger-led tours.

The summer concert series and Lotus and Lily Festival were canceled. Still, we used this time to reconsider our role in best activating this space, especially now, when so many seek safe, outdoor places lacking in nearby, predominantly Black neighborhoods. Our first **new partnership to come out of this effort is the creation of a new artist-in-residence program alongside Capital Fringe called Down To Earth**. This partnership will offer paid artist residencies highlighting the climate emergency and systemic racism, using the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens landscape as inspiration. In 2020, in collaboration with the D.C. Oral History project, we continued to **gather long-time Kenilworth residents' oral histories** to build relationships and connections with our park neighbors.



Chris Rief © 2020

Statistics & Accomplishments:

- Three Covid-safe volunteer events, including National Public Lands Day and a postponed Earth Day
- 102 volunteers
- 306 hours of service
- 3.3 miles of trails stewarded by our SCA crew

Statistics & Accomplishments:

- Five oral history interviews were collected for the D.C. Oral History Collaborative.
- 126% increase in photo contest entrants and over 300 photos submitted!
- Seven new park materials developed for an improved park experience.
- 156 new donors and 71% increase in individual giving this year with over \$23,000 raised in 2020!

BY THE NUMBERS

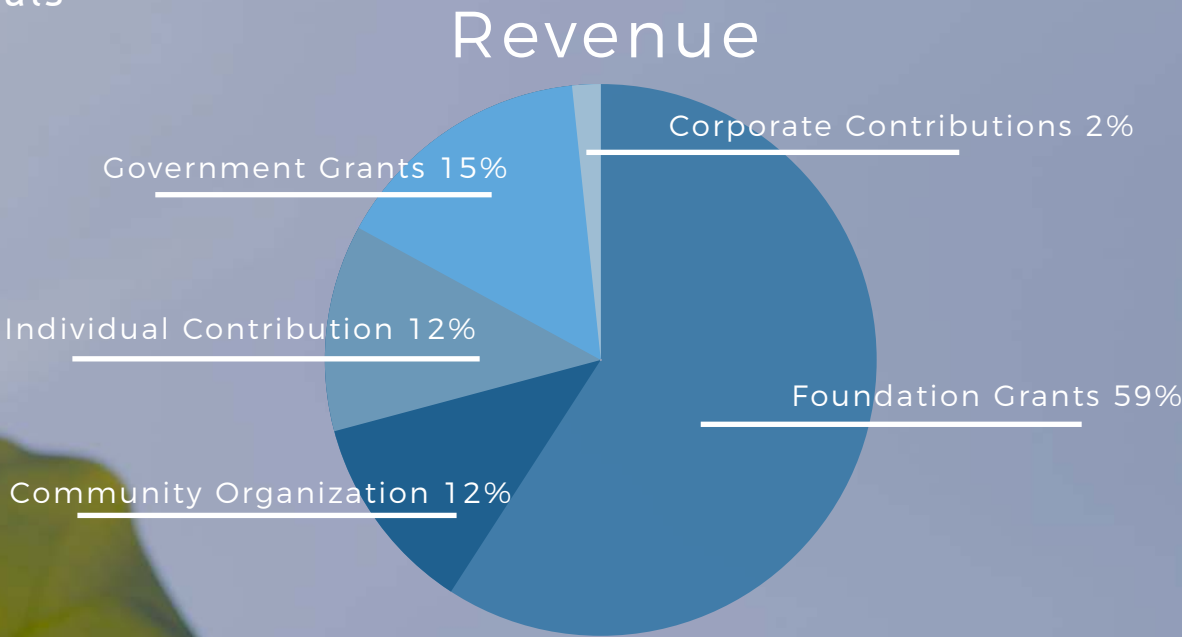
2020 Financials



Friends of Kenilworth
AQUATIC GARDENS



2020 Year in Review

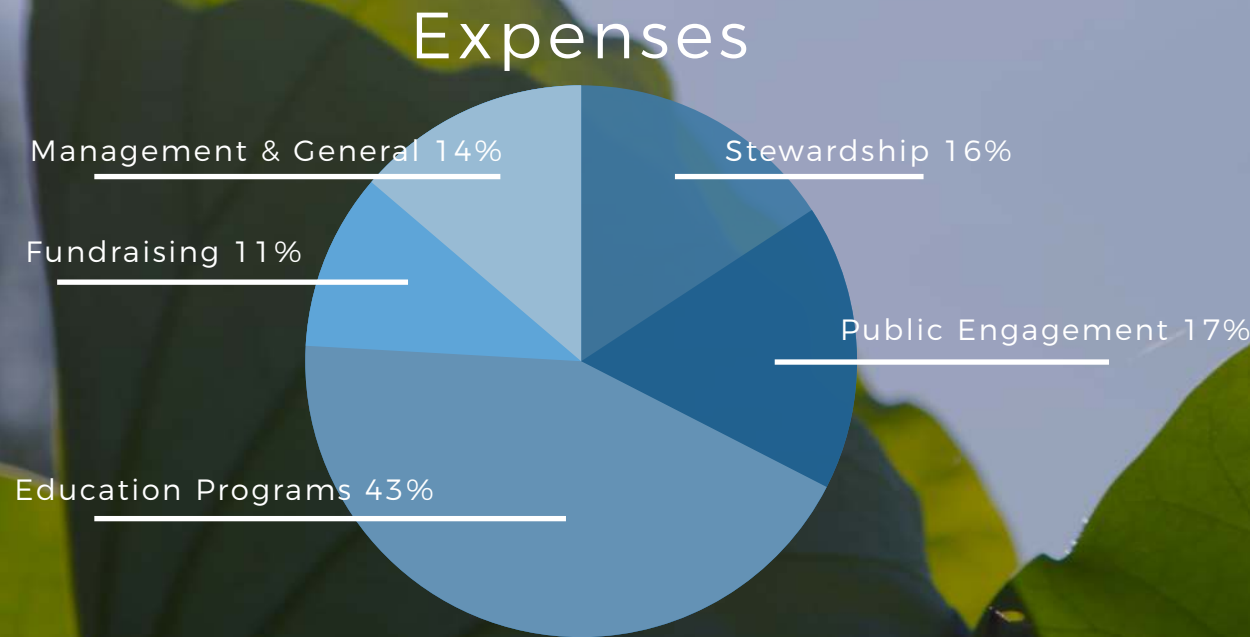
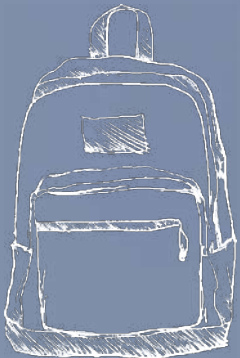


102

volunteers engaged

38

kids engaged in
our free summer camp



306

volunteer hours



5

stories captured in
partnership with DCOHC

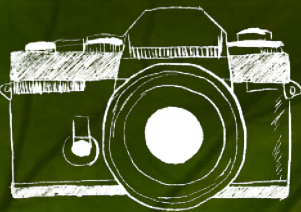


7

materials developed for
improved park experience

325

photos submitted in
our photo contest



3.3

miles of trail stewarded
by our SCA crew
(In park and on ART)

Revenue

Foundation Grants	110,100	59%
Community Org	21,563	12%
Individual Contributions	22,570	12%
Government Grants	28,583	15%
Corporate Contributions	3,000	2%
Total Income	185,816	

Expenses

Stewardship	37,005	16%
Public Engagement	38,403	17%
Education	100,342	43%
Fundraising	24,684	11%
Management & General	31,604	14%
Total Expenses	232,038	

**These are the unaudited financials for 2020 and excludes our \$17,600 PPP loan. Audited financials are forthcoming. Stay tuned!*



Friends of Kenilworth
AQUATIC GARDENS

A proud partner of the National Park Service



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kenaqgardens.org

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