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## Healthy People, Healthy Park: Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens Receives Funding to kick off year two of wellness sessions for Ward 7 residents, neighborhood national park visitors

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – (April 19, 2022)** Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens received an inaugural [ParkVentures](#) grant from the National Park Foundation (NPF). This grant along with support from other local foundations and individuals will enable the Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens to continue its second year of WELLderness, a wellness program offering free art and fitness classes to all, with a particular focus on Ward 7 and 8 park neighbors.

"So many of our Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens neighbors were positively impacted by our wellness sessions and outdoor concerts, especially during quarantine, that we really wanted to bring our WELLderness program back for a second year. The National Park Foundation, other local foundations, government grants and individuals were able to help us make that happen!" said **Tina O'Connell, executive director of Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens**. "Now, we are able to host WELLderness, engaging with our community in ways that resonate with their needs, strengthening ownership and value, while raising the awareness about what they can do to protect, maintain, and restore our shared rivers, streams, and parks. We look forward to growing our relationship with neighbors and helping them reclaim this area as their backyard oasis."

WELLderness – wellness in the "wilderness" of the nation's only national park devoted to aquatic plant life – will now offer several sessions on first and third weekends including but not limited to tai chi, forest bathing, yoga, birding. Neighbors and visitors can also enjoy outdoor concerts by Bele Bele Rhythm Collective and the youth-led East of the River Steel Drum Band. Canoeing and pontoon boating will be provided in partnership with Anacostia Watershed Society. New to the WELLderness schedule this year will be nature trail biking and biking fundamentals, in partnership with the Washington Area Bicycle Association (WABA). Sessions will run from March through October with a few highlighted events during the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens' annual Lotus and Lily Festival, including after-hours WELLderness sessions on Saturdays in July when the park will be open until 8 p.m.

Part of NPF's [Outdoor Exploration initiative](#), ParkVentures is a new NPF program that supports activities that help people create and strengthen life-long relationships with



national parks, with a focus on communities that have been historically excluded from parks and may not feel a sense of belonging in the outdoors.

This new program supports the National Park Service's mission by expanding access to the outdoors and connecting people to the benefits of nature. National Capital Parks-East (NACE) is a program partner..

"The National Park Service appreciates opportunities to partner with Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and National Park Foundation," said **Tara Morrison, National Capital Parks –East superintendent**. "It's exciting that NPF's support will allow the park to continue efforts that began in 2007. Our park rangers enjoy working with Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and we're excited to learn that the WELLderness program will once again be able to enhance and increase the livelihood of our park neighbors and visitors!"

"The National Park Foundation recognizes that many factors can hinder people from connecting with and being inspired by national parks," said **Will Shafroth, president and CEO of the National Park Foundation**. "Through our new ParkVentures program, the National Park Foundation is investing in leaders and organizations who are removing barriers and bringing people together for joy-filled and meaningful experiences outdoors."

While ParkVentures is a new National Park Foundation program, the push to advance equity in parks is an enduring cause. ParkVentures now joins numerous efforts across the country to make national parks and public lands more accessible and welcoming to everyone.

The NPF ParkVentures program is made possible by private philanthropy, including support from ParkVentures founding partner Nature Valley and Outdoor Exploration initiative premier partner Subaru of America and supporting partner Sun Outdoors. Additional support is provided by Apple, American Airlines, EVOLVE Plant-Based Protein, and method.

[Learn more](#) about NPF's efforts to help ensure all people see themselves in parks, feel a sense of belonging in them, and experience the wonder and benefits of being outside.

### **ABOUT FRIENDS OF KENILWORTH AQUATIC GARDENS**

FoKAG is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that connects people to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens through stewardship, engagement and educational programs. Founded in 2007, we envision an Aquatic Gardens that inspires. Learn more at [kenaqgardens.org](https://kenaqgardens.org).

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION**

The National Park Foundation works to protect wildlife and park lands, preserve history and culture, educate and engage youth, and connect people everywhere to the wonder of parks. We do it in collaboration with the National Park Service, the park partner community, and with the generous support of donors, without whom our work would not be possible. Learn more at [www.nationalparks.org](https://www.nationalparks.org).

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