

The Watering Hole

The Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Quarterly Newsletter



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Blooming where we're planted

Even with the warmer weather, the Willow Waterhole is still a popular destination for many. This season, we invite you to visit our native prairie garden located on South Willow Drive near Triangle Lake to see what's in bloom. Our resident garden experts maintain the area for all to enjoy.

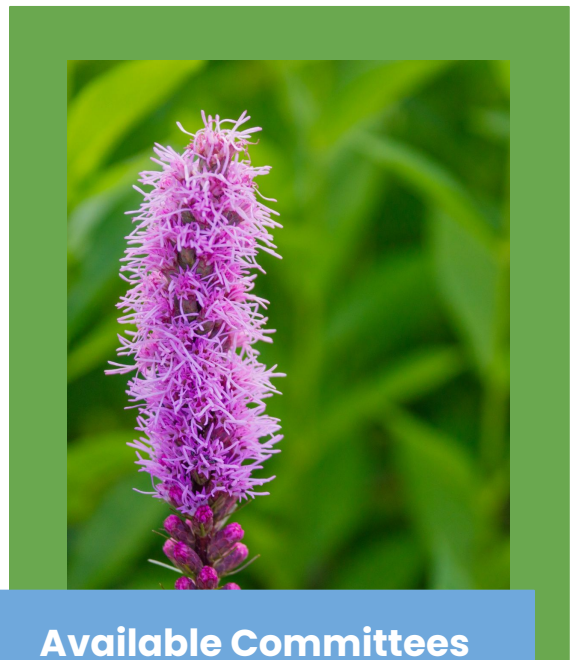
If you're planted in Houston this summer, we encourage you to join us at the Waterhole to walk, bike, picnic, fish, volunteer, or whatever gets you outside in nature.

Meet the 2021-2022 Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Board

We want to give a warm welcome to the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy (WWGC) board members who assume office on July, 1, 2021 for an annual term. This year, the Conservancy has a new president, Bill Burhans, so the vice president position is still open, along with other committee areas, for those interested in serving. Grateful for their work!

President/ Conservation Chair	Bill Burhans
Vice President	Open
Recording Secretary	Barbara Richards
Corresponding Secretary Membership Chair	Tony and Donna Robert
Treasurer/Finance Chair	Valerie Runge
Education Chair	Trudy Holmes
Water Resources Chair	Bill King
Website Chair	Gayle Nesom
Operations Manager	Brett Byers
Community Representative	Cindy Chapman
Community Representative	Becky Edmondson
Community Representative	Bruce Krewinghaus

Permanent Members	
Past President	Ralph Rieger
Past President/ Events Chair	Howard Sacks
Emeritus	Russell Schexnayder



Available Committees

- Events (MusicFest, Halloween, Winter Holiday)
- Conservation (community workdays, Scout projects, maintenance and security)
- Water Resources (fishing, canoeing, sampling)
- Trails (hiking, biking, running)
- Education (newsletters, Facebook, press releases, kiosks, presentations)
- Website (managing content, technology updates)
- Membership (promotion, thank you's, recordkeeping)
- Finance (budgeting and grants)
- Elections and Bylaws

Volunteer opportunities

We are always looking for volunteers to help lead our organization focused on creating park amenities, conservation activities and community events.

If you would like to learn more, Conservancy Zoom meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m. To receive more information and the Zoom link, contact us at volunteer@willowaterhole.org.

Board member profile: Valerie Runge

Valerie Runge has been treasurer of Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy since 2013 and volunteered one year as recording secretary in 2012.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, she moved to Houston in 1979 from Waco, Texas, after attending Texas State Technical College where she received a degree in printing technology. After graduating, she worked in the printing field until 2006.

In 2011, she passed the Enrolled Agent exam to become a federally authorized tax practitioner and has worked at Rieger & Associates since 2012.

She moved to the Willowbend neighborhood in 1992 as a single mother with four wonderful children.

She has been actively involved in local education—serving on the Red Elementary Board as parliamentarian and volunteering at school events.

Valerie also served as treasurer for Cub Scout Packs 688 and 740 where she was engaged with multiple projects, including rebuilding the scout house, scout fair, campouts, scout night, etc.

She bought her home in Post Oak Manor in 1994 and married her husband, Ray, in 1998.

They became extremely interested in the property behind their house, which is now Prairie Lake of the Willow Waterhole Greenway (technically known as Compartment 3).



This led to them becoming involved with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

In addition to her work on the WWGC Board, she participates and supports workdays, Music in the Park, MusicFest and so many wonderful events at the Willow Waterhole.

You may see Valerie and Ray riding their e-bikes at WWGC!



Val's biking views

Recap: Willow Waterhole 20th Anniversary celebration

On April 1, 2021, the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy celebrated its 20th anniversary and held the grand opening of its newest project, the Naturescape Garden.

The Conservancy's mission is to lead nature conservation, provide programming, and facilitate development of amenities at the Greenway through partnerships with the community, schools, and environmental organizations.

Representatives from the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD), Harris County Precinct One, the Houston City Parks and Recreation Department, and the Brays Oaks Management District (BOMD) attended the event.

Howard Sacks, a founding member, first president, and current events committee chairman, served as master of ceremonies. He provided a history of the Conservancy and led the ribbon cutting for the Naturescape Garden.

The eight sculptures in the Garden represent what is commonly seen at the Greenway: birds, fish, turtles, wildflowers, dogs, and people.

First Ribbon Cutting

Willow Waterhole partners:

- City Councilmembers Martha Castex-Tatum and Sallie Alcorn
- Houston Parks and Recreation Department's Luci Correa
- HCFCD's Project Brays Manager Gary Zika
- Precinct One Community Engagement Coordinator Shannon Martin
- BOMD Executive Director Ben Brewer
- Westbury High School Principal Jerri Nixon

Second Ribbon Cutting

Conservancy founding members:

- Dabney Kennedy
- Howard Sacks
- Russell Schexnayder
- Edith Smith



Martha Castex-Tatum +
Sallie Alcorn

History of Willow Waterhole Greenway: Part Two — Designing the basins

As promised, we are sharing the second installment of the history of the Willow Waterhole Greenway.

To pick up from the last newsletter, the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy (WWGC) received funds to proceed with a plan to detain water from the bayou.

Unfortunately, basins at that time called for dry bottoms with narrow concrete drainage channels. The slopes would be steep and excavated in a way that maximized the amount of storage capacity.

Basically, it would be a hole in the ground with a fence around it and no trees! Not the vision the group had in mind.

The Braes Bayou Association (BBA) hired the world-famous landscape architect, Kevin Shanley, to develop the first conceptual landscape design to present to the public. His task was to produce the Willow Waterhole Greenway (WWG) we see today, with six lakes, gazebos, bridges, wetlands, and trails on the initial acreage.

Kevin convinced Ed O'Rourke, president of the BBA at the time, that developing the WWG detention basin as a park would help alleviate many environmental concerns.

In 2000, the Houston City Council voted to make the Greenway a park and the funds received from the Texas Parks and Wildlife aided this progress.

At a meeting in fall 2000 sponsored by the Houston Parks Department, 45 local organizations endorsed the design.



**Architect
Kevin Shanley**

The land would be used for “passive recreational activities” and Howard Sacks was chosen to be the first WWGC president.

Offers were sent to the landowners in the Greenway area from 2001 to 2002 to determine who would voluntarily sell. After receiving the initial land offers, the remainder of land parcels required to connect the lakes were acquired by eminent domain. An additional 30 acres was donated to the district to construct a more scenic landscape design.

In 2017, the Houston Chronicle profiled the Waterhole as a model for flood control. To read the article, click [here](#). We are grateful for all who have helped create and design the Greenway that so many love today.



Getting to know the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province

Many of you have heard the chimes at the convent, but were you aware that there is a different tone dependent upon time of day?

We were fortunate to meet with Sister Maria Theresa and Sister Angela of the [Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province](#) for a property tour. The chimes start at 5:00 a.m. on weekdays and 6:00 a.m. on weekends and continue throughout the day, announcing prayer time each hour and then lights out at 11:00 p.m.

Our neighbors at the convent are part of a group that came to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975. According to their website, when war broke out in 1975, the Sisters missioned along the coast of Vietnam were “left with no choice but to join the wave of exodus” and “brave the tumultuous boat journey on the high seas.”

The Sisters shared that their trust in God enabled them to leave with confidence, and eventually they were rescued by U.S. naval ships. The Sisters arrived in the U.S. and were spread across the country, with many living in Connecticut.

Seeking to find a climate more comparable to their homeland, the Sisters in Connecticut moved to the Houston area in 1977 where the then-bishop and chancellor of the archdiocese of Galveston-Houston warmly welcomed them.

With loving donations, the Sisters were able to purchase the property on Gasmer in 1986 and one year later the structures on the land were dedicated and they were able to move into their new home.



**Sisters Angela +
Maria Theresa**

Currently 45 Dominican Sisters, with four generations including postulants and elderly, live in the provincial diocese house with 10 acres of land. Their primary focus is education and their nursing ministry, as well as maintaining the beautiful gardens surrounding the buildings.

Due to the pandemic, the convent’s Mary Queen of Preachers Chapel is closed to the public, but will hopefully reopen soon. This beautiful chapel completed in 2014 accommodates 250 people.

Say hello if you see some of the sisters out enjoying their time at the Willow Waterhole, biking, walking, or picnicking.



Aerial view of convent

Honoring founding member Dabney Kennedy's 65 years of service with pavilion naming

Dabney Kennedy, a founding member of the Willow Water Greenway, recently received the "Silver Buffalo Award," the highest award the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) bestows upon its volunteers.

The BSA recognized Dabney for his 65 years of service to Scouting through the Sam Houston Area Council and his 50 years as a Westbury community leader. In 2021, only thirteen "Silver Buffalos" were awarded throughout the U.S.

Vision, creativity, and mentorship mark Dabney's 65 years as an adult volunteer in Scouting. Dabney has mentored hundreds of young adults, including many who have become national Scout leaders.

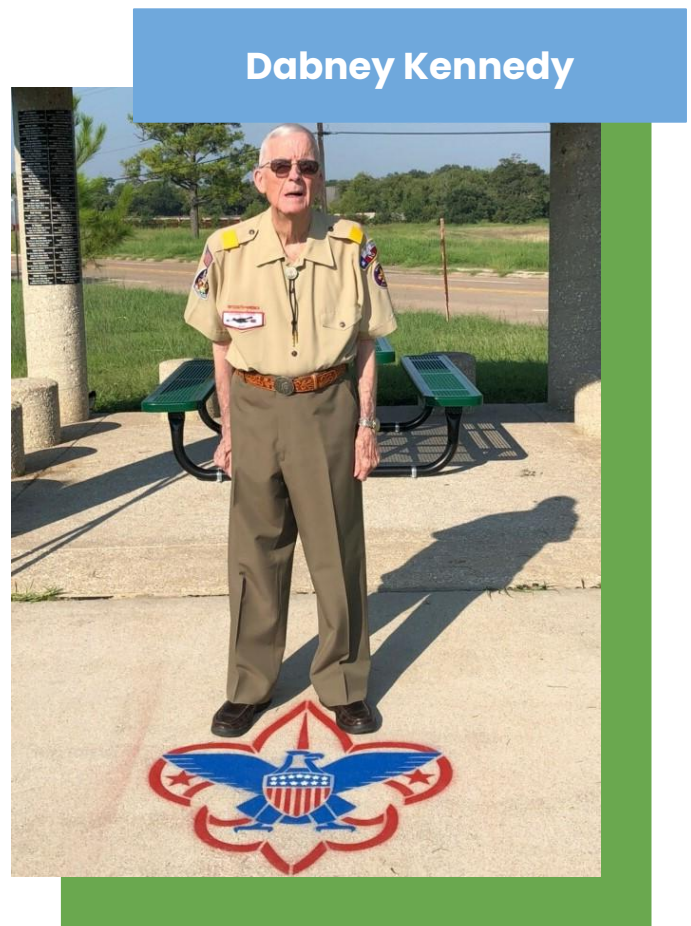
Dabney has held many roles over six decades, including den chief, patrol leader, Scoutmaster, camp director, vice chairman of the national Order of the Arrow program, and architect of the current National Order of the Arrow conference.

He also led and/or participated in 38 national meetings and events, founded the national leadership seminar, and led national fundraising efforts for a museum.

He has received multiple awards for his distinguished service, including the National Order of the Arrow Lifetime Achievement Award, James E. West Fellow and Vigil Honor, Arrow of Light, and the Silver Beaver and Antelope, among others.

In 2001, Dabney served as the first vice president of the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

The Dabney Kennedy Scout Pavilion, 5311 South Willow, is named in his honor and recognizes Scouts who have completed their Eagle and Gold Award projects at the Willow Waterhole Greenway (currently totaling 60).



Conservation updates: March–May 2021

Highlights from conservation days and other local activity March through May 2021:

- New plaques added at Scout Pavilion (10 total—Dabney’s Silver Buffalo, six new Eagle and Gold, three repaired)
 - **March 21:** 18 volunteers from the Interfaith Environmental Coalition, seven Conservancy members and two community members worked on the native prairie garden and moved pruned limbs at Willow Lake into centralized piles
 - **March 21:** Two Court of Honor ceremonies for Eagle Scouts at the Schwartz Gazebo/ Rafferty Memorial
 - **April 15:** Volunteers with Trees for Houston (TFH) planted 55 trees for the organization’s tribute grove near the west side of Ranchwood Apts
 - **April 18:** Trafton Academy volunteers planted five trees near TFH grove
 - **April 22:** HEB conservation workday on Earth Day focused on tree pruning
 - Rented chipper and mulched piles of tree limbs on north side of Willow Lake, Triangle Lake, and oleanders at AT&T property
 - Altar’d State (local retail store) volunteers oiled the Naturescape sculptures and painted picnic tables
 - Scouts planted tree near Triangle Lake for community service
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AMERICAN BASKET FLOWER

A Texas native plant, the American basket flower is in bloom at the Waterhole. It is one of the tallest flowers at the moment with hues of purple, pink, blue, and white.



We've got good news

There is always good going on at the Waterhole, but we are pleased to announce a new website, donation, and more wildlife coming soon.



Newly Redesigned Willow Waterhole Website

The Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy launched its new website in celebration of the Greenway's 20th anniversary.

The website now includes points of interest, things to do, a new trail map, more photos, updated Conservancy and donation information, membership page, new flood control section, and special features such as the Houston Audubon bird surveys at the Greenway and updates on MusicFest events.



The new design offers better visibility on phones and tablets. Visit www.willowwaterhole.org and please let us know what you think. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.



Altar'd State (Retail Store) Donation

Altar'd State, a women's clothing store in City Center at 796 Town & Country Boulevard, agreed to share 10 percent of its Monday net sales with the Conservancy until July 18. The company has a mission to support local communities by volunteering. Read [more](#).



Texas Wildlife Rescue Center Release

The Conservancy received approval from the Harris County Flood Control District to release turtles and birds by the Texas Wildlife Rescue Center. We look forward to seeing more wildlife out at the Waterhole soon!

Thanks to our newest Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy members and continuing donors

Thank you to our local community members whose yearly contributions keep Willow Waterhole a beautiful urban green space. The list below reflects new members and donors from March 2021 through mid June 2021. We also reached our 100th member—David Naff!

Individual Members	Supporting Members	Sustaining Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dawlett Dawlett* • Dalton DeHart* • Rebecca Fueger • Nancy Hunter • Anna Julia • Sarah Morris (Estrella Photography) • Jo Ann Trial • Anne Vance • Jessica Wilbanks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Anderson • Carol Claverie • Sarah Costello • Jamers Eager • Helena Finley • Deborah Hendryx • Scott Garfinkle • Trudy Holmes • Kathy Metcalf (Clearwater Backflow Testing) • David & Mary Montague • David Naff • Mary Tysor • Marie Woodward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret A. Greene • Colleen O'Donnell • Ray & Valerie Runge



VETERAN MEMBERS:*
 We have two new individual members who are veterans. We are very grateful for their service.

Coming this October: MusicFest 2021

Your generous donations support our ongoing programming and events for the community, including MusicFest 2021 now scheduled for October 30th.

Want to volunteer?

Fill out the [form](#) on the MusicFest page on the Willow Waterhole website to sign up to volunteer.



we're back!

OCTOBER 30 | **SATURDAY**
11AM - 7PM | **FREE**

willowwaterhole.org/musicfest

Snapshots: Posing for the camera

Local photographer Shauna Stewart of [Shauna Kiely Photography](#) regularly captures the happy smiles of adoptable dogs from [Houston Cares Animal Rescue](#) (formerly known as Westbury CARE). Below is Heaven, seated in a field of bluebonnets, who was recently adopted and had been with Houston Cares since 2018. What a joy for her to find a new home and family!



A final word: Send us your photos!



We'd love to feature your photos in The Watering Hole newsletter. Clear, simple snapshots of landscapes, wildlife, and the lakes are ideal. Email photos to volunteer@willowwaterhole.org or tag us on Facebook.

Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy

Park Address:
5300 Dryad Drive, Houston, TX 77035
Email: info@willowwaterhole.org
www.willowwaterhole.org



FOR PET LOVERS

A loving reminder to please keep dogs on leash per City of Houston codes. Thank you!