

LOBLOLLY TIMES



Newsletter of Friends of the Bowie Nature Park

January-February, 2024

"We Are Fully Staffed."

Parks director Keith Paisley was excited to welcome the final member of the Fairview Parks staff, Levi Heatwole, who will be working full time at park maintenance. Heatwole finished the on-boarding process on Wednesday, January 24. Other recent hires include Tommy Peterson, who was hired as a part-time park ranger during the summer of 2023, Bre Bailey, who became the new full time program director in October, and the full time naturalist, Zena Wileman, who started January 8.

Park staffing dwindled beginning in 2019, due to budget challenges and Covid shutdowns. As people resigned or retired, they were not replaced. For two and 1/2 years, Fairview's parks had a bare bones staff of two full time employees, and one part time employee.

Early in 2023, the City began developing a Parks Master Plan. Since its passage, staffing has become a priority. The new hires have some continuity since three staff members stayed on through the lean times. However, much of the programming plans will need to be built from scratch. Bailey and Wileman have been working on a spring break day camp with a theme of art in nature. They have scheduled a few weekend events as well, and plan to have 4, one-week-long day camps this summer. The Friends Board of Directors will meet with the staff to see how we can help and supplement with volunteer hours and funds.

Park staff now includes Parks Director Keith Paisley, Program Director Bre Bailey, Naturalist Zena Wileman, Park Rangers Larry Hill and Tommy Peterson, Maintenance Supervisor Justin Tomlin and Maintenance Crew Member Levi Heatwole.



<- Park Program Director Bre Bailey and Naturalist Zena Wileman

Calendar of Events (continued next page)

City of Fairview Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting: 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at **7 pm in City Hall**. Next meeting is **February 1**. Get there early if you want to sign up for citizen comments.

Parks & Landscaping Board meeting: 1st Monday of the month. Next meeting is **February 5 at 7 pm at the Triangle School** in Fairview Historical Village.


Friends Member Meeting: 2nd Saturday of the month at 9 am. Next meeting is **February 10, 9:00 am, at Bowie Park Nature Center**.


Planning Commission meeting: Second Tuesday of the month. Next meeting is **Tuesday, February 13 at 7 pm at City Hall**.

Town Hall Meeting: Meetings where the public can ask city officials questions and have them answered. They will be on the 5th Thursday of any month that has a 5th Thursday. The next one will be on **February 29th at 7 pm at City Hall**.

Friends Board of Directors

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- ♦ Sherry Wright, Vice President
- ♦ Eileen Brogan, Secretary
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Treehouse Playground Grand Entrance Design



The new Treehouse Playground is 18 months old, and it's still a work in progress. Signage still has to be completed. The main entrance has been designed by a committee overseen by the Fairview Parks & Landscaping Board. The design has been tentatively approved by the Board of Commissioners. It still needs an estimate, and if it is more than \$25,000, it needs to be put out to bid.

The design is illustrated above. It will consist of two stacked stone pillars supporting 4x4 posts, holding up the Treehouse Playground sign from the original playground, which is still in good shape. There will be plaques mounted on the stone pillars as shown above, one on each pillar, situated so that visitors can read the plaques while standing on the sidewalk between the pillars. The plaque on the left-hand pillar (as approached from the parking lot) will have the story of the original community built playground, and donor recognition for the largest donor, the citizens of Fairview, plus the gold level donors, those who gave \$10,000 or more. The plaque on the right-hand pillar will have donor recognition for the silver level (\$5,000-\$9,999), bronze level (\$2,500-\$4,999), and friend level donors (\$500-\$2,499). The lists are in order of who gave the most within each category.

Drafts of the plaques are on the next page. The playground committee members have double-checked the list, and we are now asking our readers to help us out by triple-checking the list before we get the plaques engraved. If you see something that needs to be changed, please email connect@friendsofbowienaturepark.com to let us know.

More Community Events

Easter Egg Hunt **March 16th** at **Bowie Park** (inclement weather reschedule day March 23rd).

Arts and Crafts Fair **May 11th, 9 am—4 pm**, at **Bowie Park**.

Summer Movie Series **June 8th, 15th, July 3rd** at **Bowie Park**.

Back-to-School Bash **July 27th** at **City Hall**.

Nature Fest **September 21st** at **Bowie Park**.

Volunteer Opportunities

If you have time to donate, please let us know by emailing connect@friendsofbowienaturepark.com

Webmaster needed. If you have computer skills you are willing to share, the Friends of Bowie Park needs someone to oversee our website. Our current webmaster has taken care of our site for over a decade and is ready to retire.

Garden Crew. Spring is just around the bend. During the growing season, the Garden Crew meets on Tuesday mornings and on Tuesday evenings for those who are working in the morning. We care for the flower beds in front of the Nature Center and the restroom building.

Reminder

Membership dues for Friends of Bowie Nature Park are due at this time. Dues are still only \$10 per person per year, and can be paid through pay Pal by going to www.friendsofbowienaturepark.org/copy-of-membership-by-check

Treehouse Playground: Origin Story

Chris and Bill Grayson moved to Fairview in 1997, along with their five children. Chris took her kids to look for a playground in Fairview, and the only one she could find was a small one behind Fairview Elementary School. "We needed a playground," Grayson said. "A center for this community." One day, she saw an advertisement for a playground company called Leathers and Associates. She liked their philosophy of a community designed and built playground, and she thought it might work in Fairview.

It was a massive undertaking. The fundraising goal was \$150,000, from a town of 5,000. The volunteer goal of 2,500 people was even more daunting. Grayson recruited committee coordinators. The Children's Committee made posters and collected pennies. The fundraising committee visited businesses, held events, sold t-shirts, Christmas cards, bricks, and fence rails. The food committee prepared to feed the volunteer builders, and the childcare committee prepared to watch their children. The tools committee borrowed tools to be used during the build.

There was a "Name the Playground" contest at the elementary school. The children chose to call it Treehouse Playground. Design Day was November 7, 1997. A Leathers architect met with school children to answer the question, "What do you want in your playground?" The day ended with a spaghetti dinner and a presentation of the architect's sketch of the Treehouse Playground.

Building Days were April 14 to 18, 1998. The Leathers and Associates architects oversaw the volunteer builders. Everyone helped. Skilled workers did the measuring and cutting, while others helped put the pieces together. Older children sanded rough edges. The food committee fed everyone, and the childcare committee oversaw the younger children in jobs such as washing tires and soaping screws. "It was high energy," said Grayson. "People did not want to go home. They stayed way past their shift. It gives me goosebumps remembering what a tremendous effort, and just—pride in our community."



The original Treehouse Playground was a much beloved addition to the Fairview Community. Unfortunately it was made mostly of wood, which does not hold up well in Tennessee's moist climate. In spite of the park staff's efforts at maintenance, it gradually deteriorated. The playground company said a wooden playground's life expectancy was 20 years. The Treehouse Playground lasted 21. By July of 2019, it had become a safety hazard, and had to be removed.

It was heartbreaking to see such a beautiful playground come down. It was sad to see the empty spot it left in the park and in the community. Undaunted, the community vowed to rebuild. The City's Parks and Landscaping Committee formed a playground sub-committee to design the next playground. They conducted surveys to find out what people wanted in the next playground. They had school children vote on a name. The overwhelming favorite was Treehouse Playground. They decided to use equipment made of more durable materials, and carefully checked the warranties. And they fundraised. They visited businesses, held events, and sold T-shirts, ball caps, yard signs, and fence rails. In the end, the City of Fairview was able to fund the lion's share of the cost. The result is the New Treehouse Playground, built in 2022.

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