Every day this week, as I walk up to the building, I am thrilled by the accomplishments made by the army of volunteers who worked during the January “Clean-the-Grounds” Saturday morning. This transformational day was organized by John Quinby and Jeanette Watson, with Susan Sander serving as the on-site go-to person. Many energetic people worked together to beautify RNC. If you missed this day, please mark your calendar for the next one: Saturday, Feb. 15 from 9 a.m. to about noon. We’ll provide the doughnuts and coffee, you provide the gloves and your favorite gardening tools.

On January 20th we had about fifteen guests attend a presentation on the RNC Beauty of Britain trip that is slated for Sept. 25 – Oct. 3, 2014. If you missed the presentation, stop by and ask for a full color brochure that details the itinerary, and we’ll be happy to answer your questions.

We will have a few get-togethers between now and then to give the travelers a chance to visit with one another and get acquainted. Each traveler will receive a one-year membership to Great Britain’s Royal Horticultural Society.

What fun to travel with a group of folks from your hometown, all with a love of nature, as members of the Royal Horticultural Society to see some of the most beautiful gardens of Great Britain!

On January 29th we hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation Reception. As always, Martha Hix—in partnership with Jeanette Watson, Lydia Jetson, Janice Penton, Joy Bradford, and Maggie Tatum—put together an amazing array of food and beverages that delighted everyone! And we inducted 14 volunteers into our 100 Hours Club (volunteers with 100 hours or more in a calendar year). We also gave special thanks and recognition to a new volunteer, Karen Rockoff, and one of RNC’s founders, Bob Dewers. Later in the newsletter you will find a more detailed re-cap of the event, but I am still smiling over the delight we all shared with one another at the event.

In closing, I want to share with you our progress on the next exhibit, “Wildflowers and Other Natives: Keep Texas looking Like Texas.” It opens on Saturday, March 1.

We’ve all been to committee meetings wherein no one speaks, and when it is time to sign up for responsibilities, everyone’s eyes are on the floor. Well – that is NOT this group! This exhibit is produced through a partnership among RNC, the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas and Native American Seed, the latter based in Junction. When we meet, there is so much excitement, enthusiasm and great ideas, the challenge is getting folks to talk one at a time and slow enough to capture all the good stuff flying around! We all came into this process knowing the bar is high to make an exhibit that is as fine as “17,000 Years of Hill Country Life” produced by the Hill Country Archeology Association and the Kerrville Elks Lodge #2081. However, I think this group is meeting the challenge and it will be on everyone’s “must see” list during the months of March, April & May.

So, please “save the date,” March 1, to attend the WILDFLOWERS opening. We will have refreshments and committee members on hand to provide more in-depth information on all the elements of the exhibit.

Meanwhile, if you haven’t seen the 17,000 Years exhibit yet, you only have from now until Feb. 22 to do so! Hope to see you soon.

Mary Muse

Enjoy the privileges of touring Royal Horticultural Society gardens as a member of the Society, while enjoying the company of Kerrville friends...

Read Mary’s info above about the “Beauty of Britain.”
Events are open to the public, and new faces are always welcome. It is a good idea to confirm time and place, and/or to RSVP, as events are subject to change.

‘17,000 Years of Hill Country Life’ LAST DAY TO SEE IT: Friday, Feb. 21
9 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays, 1-4 p.m. Sundays
Developed by the Hill Country Archeological Association with sponsorship by Kerrville Elks Lodge #2083, the exhibit celebrates the first Texas Hill Country peoples, and how they used available natural resources and primitive technology to build earthen ovens and to make tools and weapons. Donations appreciated.

2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
Tuesday, Feb. 11
11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
Steve Stoutamire, Hill Country Archeological Assn., speaks on "The latest discoveries and technology in North American archeology" and Kerr-area sites. Cost is $5 RNC members, $8 nonmembers, free if joining RNC at the meeting.

Winter Grounds Cleanup, Part 2
Saturday, Feb. 15
9 a.m. to noon
Bring your favorite rake or clippers, wear gloves, and come on down to spiff up the nature center's outdoors. If forecasted weather is miserable, please call 257-4837 to confirm the event. Payment is doughnuts, coffee and appreciation.

Native Healing Garden
Thursday, Feb. 20
11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Join certified traditional herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S., for the monthly gathering. The gardeners tend/plant medicinal herbs, while learning their healing properties. Next is a potluck meal and a presentation on spotlighted herbs. Bring gloves, a trowel and a healthy herbal dish to share. Donations fund the garden. Call 257-4837. Visit www.riversidenaturecenter.org for general information.

Town Creek Cleanup Team
Saturday, Feb. 22
1 p.m.
Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Town Creek Cleanup Team will remove trash and debris from Town Creek near Riverside Nature Center. Note that the team will meet in the afternoon, to avoid cold weather. Necessary to register at 257-4837, a week in advance to secure adequate equipment and supplies. Please wear gloves, appropriate clothing and headgear. Meet in the RNC parking lot.

Bernice Lewis in Concert
Monday, Feb. 24
7-9 p.m.
Riverside Nature Center, in partnership with Kerrville Folk Festival, brings poet and recording artist Bernice Lewis to perform at RNC. Snacks and drinks will be available for donations. Cost is $15.

Herbs at Twilight
‘Herbal Aphrodisiacs’
Thursday, Feb. 27
6-7:30 p.m.
Certified herbalists Amy Coward, RN, and Sally Garrett, M.S., are definitely ON for herbal aphrodisiacs. Learn about delightful and decadent elixirs, cordials and treats made from damiana, ashwagandha, shatavari, muira puama, horny goat weed ++. Sample teas and tinctures. RSVP to ensure sufficient supplies and samples are on-hand. Cost is $20 RNC members, $25 nonmembers.
A chance to recognize the leaders among Riverside Nature Center’s volunteers

Volunteer of the Year - Karen Rockoff - by Martha Hix

It must have been the summer of 2012 when I first noticed a tall and attractive young woman, covered with the honesty of sweat and dirt. I kept seeing her. And kept seeing her. Always working, digging, lifting, mulching. When Susan Sander let her loose with a chain saw, I knew this volunteer had to be special. Yep. She is.

It turned out Karen Rockoff was on a busman’s holiday. Certified as an arborist and a master horticulturist, she owns her own landscaping firm here in Kerrville. As I got to know Karen, the more and more I grew to enjoy her company…and to appreciate her many contributions to RNC's mission. She even came to our rescue last autumn, when our #1 turtle friends, Leo/Leona and Sunshine/Sonny, needed more attention than the staff could provide. Not only has Karen adopted the turtles, those little scamps are being fed gourmet meals (turtle version), off the equivalent of a silver platter!

We have many, many volunteers who give it all, year after year, and deserve the title “Volunteer of the Year.” This is Karen Rockoff's year. Thank you, Karen.

The 100 Hours Club

Last year, RNC initiated a “100 Hours Club” to recognize the volunteers who go way beyond the call. Many of those same volunteers qualified again this year. RNC salutes each and every volunteer who gave anywhere from one hour to 520 this year. Thank you. And hats off to the newest members of The 100 Hours Club. Barbara Lowenthal,* Fane Downs, John Quinby,* Judy Ferguson,* Julie Clay,* Karen Burkett, Maggie Tatum, Martha Hix,* Nancy Alford, Pat Nelson, Susan Longacre,* Susan Sander,* Thomas Collins,* Virginia “Ginny” deWolf.* Note that an asterisk after a name indicates two years in the club.

Committee Leaders

Also mentioned at the awards ceremony were: Judy Ferguson, Atrium and Board President. Tracy Gournay, Education. Ann Laughlin, Barbara Staggs, and Laurie Peese, Gift Shop. Thomas Collins, Fauna Census and Big Sit. John Quinby and Andy Peese, Grounds and Buildings. Martha Hix, Hospitality. Barbara Lowenthal, Julie Clay, and Susan Longacre, Meadow. Amy Coward and Sally Garrett, Native Healing Garden. Planned Giving, Wes Dorman, with support from Rick Ertel, Jack Millikan, and James Penland. Tim Lewis, Town Creek Cleanup Team.

Pioneer of the Year - Dr. Robert S. Dewers- by Susan Sander

Among the small group who remember Riverside Nature Center’s first days is Dr. Robert S. Dewers, retired dendrologist. Back in 1993, he suggested that RNC apply for a Texas Forest Service grant to plant an arboretum. Bob gave 100s of hours, once the grant was awarded, to select every tree—all 100 of them—and then to guide their planting.

Thanks to Bob, Riverside's unique collection of native plants now includes 75 species of native trees and shrubs, including two endangered species and many rare Hill Country endemics, plus over 200 species of forbs, grasses, and cacti.

More Volunteer Appreciation Celebration photos on next page………..
Volunteer Appreciation Celebration Photos

Barbara Lowenthal, twice a 100 Hours Club member and last year’s co-winner for Volunteer of the Year, joins Barbara Quinby in eyeing John Quinby’s “Most Interesting Man in the World” beer. (Wait. Isn't that Corona?) John is also twice a 100 Hours Clubber, as well as co-winner last year for Volunteer of the Year.

Checking out the treats...Barbara Lowenthal, Susan Sander (taking a shot at the other paparazzi), Janice Penton, Gwynn Groggel (Secretary of the Board), and Ginny de Wolfe. Barbara L., Susan and Ginny have twice earned the 100 Hours Club distinction.

Maggie Tatum, Riverside Guide and 100 Hours Club honoree

Maggie Tatum, far left, with Judy Gausnell — both are Riverside Guides! — wearing red and sitting across from Maggie, watch the PowerPoint presentation on RNC volunteers that Mary Muse, with the assistance of our new intern from Texas State University, Christopher Scott, put together.

Staffers Jeanette Watson and Janice Penton sample the cheese balls, with Barbara Lowenthal and John Quinby partaking of the accompaniments.
Muse added, “You’d be amazed at the number of ranchers and property owners who have quietly pored over this multimedia exhibit, to try to understand what they’ve found on their own land.”

Stoutamire, a retired geologist, is a past president of HCAA. He led the team to create the archeological displays and is featured in the video that plays at the center. “Whenever Steve Stoutamire speaks at Riverside, his expertise and professionalism always packs the room,” said Mary Muse the executive director. “If you want to hear Steve, arrive early to claim a seat.”

The brown-bag event is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 11. Drinks are available for purchase. The nature center is located at 150 Francisco Lemos St., at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Town Creek. Note that the cost to attend this luncheon series is now $5 for members, $8 nonmembers, and it’s free if an attendee joins RNC during the meeting.

Mary Irish

Steve Stoutamire, of Hill Country Archeological Association, will speak at Riverside Nature Center’s upcoming 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn series. Stoutamire plans to talk on recent discoveries and technologies in how the first humans got to America, as well as the high points of Kerr-area archeological sites.

“His presentation is especially timely,” said the center’s executive director, Mary Muse. “HCAA and the Kerrville Elks Lodge #2081 partnered with Riverside on our exhibit that will close in the latter part of February, ‘17,000 years of Hill Country life.’”

On Tuesday, Feb. 11, the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas will hear a presentation by Mary Irish, who will educate us on botanical plant names. The event will take place at 3:00 p.m. in the Riverside Nature Center visitor center located at 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville.

Mary is a garden writer, horticultural consultant, lecturer and educator who was born and raised in Austin, Texas. She has written seven additional books on gardening and plants appropriate for Southwest gardens, in addition to Gardening in the Desert and Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants, a Gardener’s Guide.

She worked as a horticulture consultant for municipal gardens in California and Arizona. For 11 years she was the Director of Public Horticulture at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. Currently she works part-time managing the plant sales program at the San Antonio Botanical Garden.

More information is available on the Kerrville NPSOT web site npsot.org/Kerrville.

Visitors are welcome.

For more information contact Melinda Wasson at 830-895-2521.
VOLUNTEER LIAISON

Lydia Jetson, weekend manager and assistant to Mary Muse, has accepted the assignment of VOLUNTEER LIAISON. Lydia can be reached at RNC’s main number, 257-4837, or via email, info@riversidenaturecenter.org.

Prospective volunteers should be referred to Lydia. She will meet them, process their paperwork, and will see that the appropriate committee chair or staffer is contacted/introduced.

PIG HEAVEN

Contact Lydia for first dibs on these first come, first serve assignments.

Do you enjoy looking at pictures of beautiful things, like flowers and butterflies and excellent creatures, may they have two or four legs? Are you the sort of person who enjoys organizing, making things tidy? If that’s your idea of pig heaven, you have just found your niche at RNC.

Assignment: DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS EDITOR
Perk: Get acquainted with RNC’s history—flora, fauna, folks.

Parties, parties, and more parties. If you think pig heaven is meeting everyone in the room, and you have a digital camera or are willing to learn to use the office’s camera, here’s your task.

Assignment: SPECIAL EVENTS PHOTOGRAPHER
Perk: Enjoy the food and beverage, as well as the entertainment, at no charge, and you get to meet lots of interesting RNCers.

If your idea of Pig Heaven is greeting folks as they walk in the door and signing them in for a presentation, and you especially like the idea of hearing the presentation at no charge, this is the place for you.

Assignment: BROWN BAG LUNCH & LEARN HOST/HOSTESS
CAVEAT: Don’t expect pig troughs. The atmosphere is pure RNC heaven.

TOWN CREEK CLEANUP TEAM

The morning was so cold that Tim Lewis told his team not to bother showing up to clean the banks and bridges of Town Creek. Not to be daunted by freezing water and disgusting trash, or the 18° temperature, Tim loaded equipment and slapped the team’s sign on the door of his pickup. He arrived at the RNC parking lot by 8:30 a.m. To his delight, there were other brave souls waiting for him. Dan and Sandra Meineke, and Tom Warner pulled on their gloves and greased their elbows. Thank you, all!

Enjoy the privileges of touring Royal Horticultural Society gardens as a MEMBER of the Society, while enjoying the company of Kerrville friends…
Read Mary’s Pg. 1 letter, re the “Beauty of Britain.”
By Barbara Lowenthal

As I write this article, I am thinking of what caught my eye as I strolled along the paths through the meadow during the second week of January. There was such a mix of browns and tans of spent vegetation and vibrant greens of rosettes and new growth. A layer of mulch, which had formed near the bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), caught my eye because the leaves are very large and heavy. I carefully pulled them back to find some young plants healthy and green and others, more fragile, struggling to stay alive. The soil seemed rather dry in spite of the fact that the top of the leaves were quite wet. It seemed to me that a heavy mulching in our area might actually prevent the precious moisture reaching the soil.

After having many nights of temperatures in the teens and 20s, I was interested in examining the green vegetation. The rosettes for spiderwort (*Tradescantia pedicellata*), standing winecup (*Callirhoe leiocarpa*) and cedar sage (*Salvia roemeriana*), as well as quite a few other species, looked quite healthy and showed no signs of freeze burn. The shrubby cutleaf germander (*Teucrium laciniatum*) was already showing signs of budding. The beautiful globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea angustifolia*) had new growth that was already nearly two feet tall. The clumps of nerve ray daisy (*Tetraneuris scaposa*) was already blooming.

This time of the year is an interesting time to take a stroll through the meadow. In spite of the dryness and extremes of temperatures during the winter months, it is fun to step into the world of our native plants and see what they are doing and how they are developing. Of course, though many plants are showing their early life and rosette cycles, there are many more that are truly dormant and are remaining invisible. This provides for many surprises throughout the growing season.

*If you are interested in helping, there is a general maintenance morning scheduled for Saturday morning, Feb. 15. If you have time to help out more often, please contact the office. We would love to have you as part of our team of volunteers that keeps Riverside Nature Center blooming and prospering.*
What is a “Riverside Nature Center”

Located at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Town Creek in the Hill Country town of Kerrville — 2010 population, 22,347 — Riverside Nature Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, owned by its members and primarily operated by volunteers.

We provide highly valued experiences for the community’s adults, families, and children in order that they not only come to appreciate the region’s natural resources, plants, habitats, and wildlife, but also to become stewards of these resources now and in the future.

VISITORS CENTER & GIFT SHOP
9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Weekdays
10 to 3 p.m., Saturdays & 1 to 4 p.m., Sundays

NEW MEMBERS JOINING IN JANUARY
Frieda Simmons * Evelyn Vittone * Mary Thomas
James & Kadi Wills * Greg Walton * Junior & Sarah Hilburn