The Visitors Center at Riverside Nature Center is in a state of happy chaos! The renovation construction, funded by the Charity Ball grant and augmented by some timely and generous donations, is complete. Sporadically, we are moving back into our workspace in the Visitors Center. Meanwhile we are developing our first set of exhibits and preparing for our official ribbon-cutting on Friday, April 5.

So please save the date, and plan to bring a bottle of wine and stay for a while, because immediately following the ribbon-cutting we will host the popular community event, the First Friday Wine-Share!

While you are saving dates on your calendar, here is a very important one. On **Tuesday, March 5, at 6 p.m.**, please come to Schreiner University’s Cailloux Activity Center and support Riverside Nature Center’s pitch at the Community Foundation’s Grand Slam Event.

There were close to 60 nonprofit organizations who applied to participate in the event, and Riverside Nature Center is one of the ten finalists who has been invited to make a 90-second pitch.

Three winners collectively will be awarded $20,000 that evening. And while the judges are deciding, five other finalists have been invited to make a 90-second pitch. Then the audience will vote on a $2,500 “People’s Choice” award from the 15 pitches they have heard. So in addition to planning the pitch, Riverside Nature Center needs to unabashedly stack the house with supporters who will be there to vote.

If Riverside Nature Center earns First Place and the People’s Choice, it will be a $12,500 evening!

With that money we will construct the Wildscape demonstration area that will attract not only birds but also visitors who are walking the River Trail; we will install a “please touch” exhibit cabinet in the visitor center with pelts, plaster tracks, skulls, and more; and we will install new signage throughout our gardens and on the River Trail with QR codes (Quick Response—those square bar code-looking images) that Smartphones can read and link to photos and more extensive information instantaneously. All of these projects are important and timely. And your support can make a huge difference, so please help us win that night!

I have two more bullets on my outline and several other upcoming happenings I would like to highlight, however I am trying to be kind to Martha Hix (our newsletter editor) by watching my word count. I see that I need to wind down and bring this message to closure.

So, please drop by sometime and I will gladly tell you about the Planned Giving Program we are developing, and about the elite team of Riverside Guides we are recruiting—perhaps a team you may be interested in joining. While here, I will give you a narrative on the atrium planners’ work that you will see by April 5. And please join us for some of our upcoming events on the next page. As always, thanks for your support, your time, and for caring about the beautiful Texas Hill Country. As W. Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel wrote in his song, “Beautiful Texas,” it’s the most beautiful state that I know!
Coming Events

THURSDAY, FEB. 14
River Trail Valentine Walk
5:30 p.m., Town Creek overlook, Riverside Nature Center. Love nature on this Valentine’s Day interpretive walk along the new Kerrville River Trail, led by RNC Naturalist Susan Sander. Cost is $3, or $5 a family. No RSVP needed.

THURSDAY, FEB. 21
Native Healing Garden
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Meeting, potluck meal and tending the native medicinal plants. Focus is Globe mallow and Rock rose. Donations fund the garden. No reservations needed.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 20
RNC Re-Purpose Pre-Sale
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. RNC members and volunteers are invited to take first dibs on RNC’s surplus items.

SATURDAY, FEB. 23
RNC Re-Purpose Sale
9 a.m. to noon. Surplus items from RNC’s recent renovations. Volunteers appreciated. Call RNC if you’d like to help.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5
Grand Slam Grants Finals
6 p.m., Schreiner University, Cailloux Student Activity Center. Join Team RNC audience for 90-second pitch to land up to $12,500 in grants to enrich our programs. Be there to vote for Reader’s Choice. Signup sheet in Visitors Center for audience, carpools.

FRIDAY, APRIL 5
RNC Visitors Center Celebration & First Friday WineShare
Time TBA. Ribbon-cutting for Visitors Center revitalization, with inaugural of exhibits, the first being Guadalupe River display. Followed by FirstFriday WineShare.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9
Red Ants Pants Party
3-6 p.m. Red Ants Pants, work pants for women, will be at Riverside Nature Center giving women the opportunity to try on and buy work pants designed especially for women. Finger foods, beverages, music, pants, and a lot of fun!

TUESDAY, MARCH 12
2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. “Introduction to Falconry,” by Cynthia Burgin, who will bring a live raptor to the presentation. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting. No RSVP needed.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17
St. Paddy’s Day on the River Trail
5:30 p.m., meet at Town Creek overlook, RNC. To celebrate the day of the Irish, join RNC naturalist Susan Sander to find out what’s turning green along the trail. Cost is $3 or $5 a family. No RSVP needed.

TUESDAY, MARCH 21
Native Healing Garden
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Meeting, potluck meal and tending the native medicinal plants. Focus TBA. No reservations needed.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9
2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn ‘Fire-wise Landscaping’
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Certified Master Gardeners and fire-wise landscaping specialists Carol Hagemeier and Leigh Thomas will speak. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting. Reservations not required.

THURSDAY, APRIL 18
Native Healing Garden
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Meeting, potluck meal and tending the native medicinal plants. Donations fund garden.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19
Earth Day members only plant sale
5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. RNC members and/or Texas Master Naturalists Hill Country Chapter are invited to shop while selection is best, before the Saturday sale. Not a member? Join and shop the same day. Free admission.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20
Earth Day festival and native-plant sale
8 a.m.-3 p.m., Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Annual plant sale also offers seminars on environmental topics, family-oriented activities and fun, educational displays and more. Free admission.

Times, dates, and place are always subject to change. If you are interested in attending an event, please check with the RNC office, 830-257-4837, to reserve your spot and/or to confirm the date, time, location, etc.
Thank you to THE MAIN

This locally owned, locally operated package store, located next door to Hasting’s offers a large selection of liquors, wine, beer, and most excellent gourmet food items. RNC thanks The Main for their abundant contributions to the Harvest Moon fundraiser.

RNC reaches GRAND SLAM GRANTS finals

Grand Slam Grants: A Community Foundation Fast Pitch Event!

Community Foundation of the Hill Country has selected Riverside Nature Center as one of the 10 Finalists to compete for part of $20,000 in prize money

AND
We have a second go with our 90-second pitch THIS TIME the audience decides the winner in the PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD

This is our chance to take $12,500 back to RNC, to fund our projects!

Let’s show our great TEAM SPIRIT-- LET’S HIT A HOMER OUT OF THE STADIUM!

Show up and vote!
TUESDAY, MARCH 5 6 p.m.
Cailloux Student Activity Center Schreiner University

MEET OUR BATTIN’ A 1000 SLUGGERS
Judy Mantle Ferguson & Mary A-Rod Muse

See Mary’s first-page letter for more details
CARPOOLS, TAILGATE REVELRY SIGNUP SHEET AT RNC
GREAT NEWS

We all know our founder, Susan Sander, has given RNC her time, her passion, and her endless energy for many years. One generous RNC friend has made an anonymous donation, designated as compensation for a one year, part-time position for Susan. We are delighted to have her “official” help and support.

She provides staff support to the Education Committee and participates in the plans for developing atrium educational exhibits. Susan also works with Melinda Wasson and Executive Director Mary Muse to develop the training curriculum for the Riverside Guides.

In addition to those responsibilities, Susan has agreed to be the instructor for the Junior Naturalist class which will begin later this month.

COURSE IN BASIC HERBALISM

From Amy Coward and Sally Garrett: “Jan. 17, we had a lively meeting studying Agarita. Feb. 21, we will profile Globe mallow and Rock rose. Our Native Healing Garden gatherings will continue to be the 3rd Thursday of the month, 11:30-1:30.

“We also want you to know about an upcoming class that we’re teaching together, ‘Studies in Basic Herbalism—Hill Country Style.’ We will study native plants supplemented by other herbs. The course is one year, so we can study the growing patterns in all the seasons. It will be similar but much deeper into herbalism than the Thursday meetings.

“Classes meet the 3rd Friday of most months, 10-4, at RNC.” Members receive a discount. Class starts in March. Brochures at RNC. To receive the discount, contact sally@earthlightenergies.com NOW.

Smith to Head NPSOT–KC

Horticulturist Shannon Smith, Ph.D., has just been nominated to serve as the next President of the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville, following Bill Stone.

On March 5, Shannon and Susan Sander begin a lecture series: “RNC Reaches Out to Comanche Trace.”

Curriculum is driven by questions submitted beforehand by attendees, pertaining to plant characteristics, ID, care, maintenance, or life cycle.

RNC—STEWARD OF THE ENVIRONMENT

RNC board member Martha Miesch brought to our attention… “Peter Lewis pointed out at the November board meeting that all the paint products used at the atrium renovation site were cleaned offsite and all construction materials are sustainable.

“Only environmentally good practices were used in the renovation. This should be a good example to the public for practicing what we preach at the nature center by being good stewards of the land.”

RNC board member Peter Lewis not only designed the Visitors Center in 1998, he also designed the 2012-2013 updates. Thank you, Peter, for all you do!

GET WELL SOON

Cynthia Burgin, who volunteers with her husband, Jim, as greeters for the Second Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learns, is suffering with a leg injury. We wish her a speedy recovery. Cynthia plans to present “An Introduction to Falconry” at the Brown Bag Lunch & Learn in March.

ABOUT THOSE EMAILS WE SEND YOU

Experts say it takes three exposures to information for a marketing effort to be effective. When RNC has events, volunteer opportunities, or important news, we try to reach you three different ways—through our newsletter, through postings onsite, and through e-announcements. Often, newsletter space is limited. Our posting space at RNC is also limited. Our very best way of communicating with our membership is through e-announcements.

We pledge to make our communications brief, limiting our messages to one topic with a clear subject line. Please give us your feedback and suggestions. And, thank you for taking the time to read and care about RNC happenings!
The trauma of Meadow Restoration continues, but we can see much evidence of hard volunteer labor digging their way to making it happen. The Meadow has been an effective teacher for all of us who have taken part in this project under competent leadership with Barbara Lowenthal acting as our coach and cheerleader. It is showing signs of progress and we are looking forward to a spring season that will show us much of the beauty and wonder of natives in the days ahead. There are some signs of spring already as plants, shrubs, and trees are showing us new growth, taking baby steps to become mature natives. You can see these signs of growth in its infancy if you are willing to look closely.

For instance, look at the Snapdragon vine from the Scrophulariaceae family on the two short trellises in the Butterfly Garden. Only a few weeks ago it looked like masses of dead vine. Now you can see a steady climb of green growth coming up from the ground. It’s triangular, arrow-shaped leaves are slowly coming back and from early spring in March through September we will see some creamy white tube shape flowers that erupt into four or five purple petals. Although it’s a relatively small vine it becomes a nice mass of delicate beauty that is an excellent habitat for insects and lizards that are part of the food chain of life in the wild. This vine thrives in sun and partial shade and likes well drained soil. It certainly likes the Butterfly Garden. These vines originated in another location at RNC on the slope going down to the river. It was a perfect candidate for transplant so we decided to move a small amount of the plant roots to its present location. Sometimes transplants work and sometimes they don’t. This plant loves its new home.

There are other scrubs and native trees on the perimeter of the Meadow that will flower in the spring and are showing signs of what will be beautiful blooms. Remember the beautiful yellow blooms that are showered through Agarita that will become the red berries with which humans love to make jelly and birds will eat if they get to them first? Look closely at the Agarita stems on the berm adjacent to the road. Evidence of the spring blooms is there to see if you look closely.

Surely you have seen the Madrone with its red trunk close to the gate on the west side of the Visitors Center. Its spring white blossoms are in their infancy now and you can spot them forming in their branches now.

The first signs of spring are there now. Come to the Meadow and see what you can discover.

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**RNC RE-PURPOSE SALE**

10 to 4, Wednesday, Feb. 20
for RNC members & volunteers
10 to noon, Saturday, Feb. 23, general public
Contact Jeanette Watson, 257-4837
DATABASE FOR ONE-SHOT PROJECTS

We recently sent out an “APB” for meadow workers. Then the weather turned cold, too cold to work. (Barbara Lowenthal says if the thermometer dips below 40 degrees, we’re not working.) Trouble was, we didn’t know who to contact, to tell about the cancellation. And it was too late to send another APB.

While we are on the subject of volunteers, many thanks for the great response to the APB for help in the meadow. We want to build a list of volunteers who are interested in “one-shot projects,” be they in the meadow, for special events, or other needs.

If you might be interested in joining the One-Shot Project team, we’d love to have you. Please send an email to Martha Hix at nmcmembership@gmail.com or call the office at 257-4837, and we’ll add your name to the list. If there are specific times you are NOT available for projects, please let us know so we can filter our call-out to you.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION

Did you know…? We had at least 150 people volunteer in our various programs last year. Seventeen earned a spot in the newly created 100 Hours Club, for volunteering at least 100 hours last year. At the annual celebration, Barbara Lowenthal and John Quinby were honored as 2012 Volunteers of the Year. Having the most hours were Barbara Lowenthal, Priscilla Stanley, Judy Ferguson, and Julie Clay. Thank you, all 150 of you. Thank you very much!

RNC Re-PURPOSE SALE

Due to Visitors Center revitalization, RNC has items that are no longer of use. Thus, we’ll offer the public these good items for a chance at a second life. The proceeds are earmarked to purchase the things we now need.

Before we hold a public sale, we’d like to invite our members and volunteers to a pre-sale.

Pre-sale is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Weds., Feb. 20, at the center.

Some items are 24” TV on rolling stand with DVD/VCR player; 33” x 53” glass display case; revolving magazine/brochure racks; cash drawer with mounts; large, heavy metal frame table; mahogany-colored bookcases; mahogany executive desk; office chairs; more, more, more!

Sale is from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 23, at the center.

Have some items, with the exception of clothing, that you’d like to donate to the sale? Let’s talk. If you’d like to help prepare for the sale, or to work either or both the sales, please contact Jeanette Watson, 257-4837. Thanks!
Memories from our Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MARY MUSE
WELCOMES
THE VOLUNTEERS
TO THEIR
APRECIATION
CELEBRATION

Stalwart volunteers Barbara Lowenthal and John Quinby took top honors at the Volunteer Appreciation Celebration, held Jan. 22 in the newly re-opened Visitors Center.

Board member and "Maid of the Meadow" Martha Miesch chats with Volunteer of the Year, Meadow Supervisor Barbara Lowenthal, and to another top volunteer in the meadow, Julie Clay. Susan Longacre, also a meadow regular, chats with Barbara Quinby. Passion supervisor John Farnes is seated at the table, talking with his longtime pal, the second Volunteer of the Year honoree, the not-pictured John Quinby.

Again this year, Queen B's Tea Room catered the event.
Board of Directors

Officers:
Judy Ferguson, MA—President
Rick Ertel, Attorney—Vice President
Jack Millikan, MBA — Past President
Martha Miesch, BA—Secretary
Taylor Scogin, CPA—Treasurer

Board Members:
Peter Beeman
Kathleen Boyce, RN
Tracy Crawford-Gournay
David Johnson
Peter Lewis
Kristin Webster
Lisa A. Williams

Welcome

New Members of RNC, Joining in January

Danny Criswell, John Sloan, Nancy Walker, Randy & Joan Spear
Rhonda Hall, Richard Sweet, & Robert Calcote