In 2016, Friends of Westchester County Parks took a momentous step forward: consistent with our strategic plan, our board of trustees voted to rebrand the organization to the Westchester Parks Foundation. This strategic decision was the result of many hours of brainstorming, careful consideration of new names, logos and taglines in order to accurately reflect the mission of our organization.

The creative forces behind Thompson & Bender reimagined the visual concept of our mission and vision. Ultimately, the result is a fresh, modern interpretation of our organization that clearly speaks to our mission and long standing devotion to the Westchester County Park system and the role of parks in our community.
Westchester Parks Foundation engages the public to advocate for and invest in the preservation, conservation, use, and enjoyment of the 18,000 acres of parks, trails, and open spaces within the Westchester County Parks system.
Thank you to our outstanding corporate and local partners for your grant support this year, including:

- Continued support from Entergy for Cabin Rehabilitation at Croton Point, for $15,000 and a Nature's Ambassador's group through our volunteer program for $10,000.

- Con Edison's Trail Promotion and Environmental Awareness for $25,000 to support trails at South County Trailway, in addition to their generous $20,000 support of Bicycle Sundays on the Bronx River Parkway.

- A multi-year commitment from Thalle Industries, beginning with $25,000, to sponsor our first-ever Bronx River Reservation “Graffiti Squad”.

- A grant of $9,333 from Impact100 Westchester to support our operations.

- Support from Fujifilm for $7,500 and a team of employees beautifying Kensico Dam Plaza prior to the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony.

- Over $14,000 from Whole Foods Market Westchester, as the recipient of their April “5% for the Community Day”, where 5% of net profits from the three Whole Foods locations in Westchester are given to a local not-for-profit. Whole Foods also sponsored 2016’s Pitch In for Parks efforts, joining us at Saxon Woods and giving out refreshments and water bottles to participants.
Our Volunteer Program continues to grow in leaps and bounds, demonstrating the passion of Westchester’s individuals, community groups, and businesses to get involved and dig into our parks. This year, we surpassed 2015’s inaugural turnout, with 1,709 volunteers contributing 5,173 hours of service to our parks. This is equivalent to an astounding $142,723.07 worth of investment of sweat equity into Westchester’s parks, according to the Independent Sector’s estimate of the value of Volunteer Time in New York State. In two years, over $283,000 equivalent worth of sweat equity has been done through our volunteer program in our park system. This year, our volunteers built stairs, removed trash, restored trails, mulched, raked, planted, painted, and cleared graffiti, among lots of other great projects to help our park system! In 2017, we plan to relaunch our corporate volunteer program to build upon the first two years of great success, and improve our program even further.

2015-2016 numbers:
3,164 Volunteers
10,264.5 Hours of Service
$283,197.55 Worth of Sweat Equity
WPF threw the switch on a third successful season of Winter Wonderland on Friday, November 25 with the lighting of Westchester’s newest favorite Christmas Tree – 34’ tall on the main plaza. County Executive Rob Astorino joined WPF Chairperson Joanne Fernandez, Executive Director Joe Stout, Westchester County Parks Commissioner Kathy O’Connor, a family from presenting sponsor WMC Health’s Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital, and all of our event sponsors to light the big tree and officially start the program for the hundreds of holiday revelers on hand. WPF is exceedingly proud to sponsor Winter Wonderland each year, with the event produced by our partners, the dedicated staff and administration of the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation.


WPF brought back many of 2015’s favorites, including the spectacular skating against the backdrop of the Dam, the Santa Experience with visits from Santa’s friends, the Wonderland Express, Holly Jolly Caterpillar, and Winter Hay ride, stunning light show and awesome local food trucks. This year also saw the addition of the Hanneford Holiday Circus, with a red-and-white striped doublepoled circus tent pitched on the main lawn, and up to four dazzling circus performances per night.

Feedback from the public was again overwhelmingly positive. Visitors loved the entertainment, characters, rides and skating all for the $15 all-inclusive price. This season’s event sold over 24,000 tickets and had another year of increased revenue. In all, over 30,000 people experienced and loved Winter Wonderland. PR coverage of the event was excellent, with significant interest from local media outside of Westchester, including great in-depth coverage by Fox 5 NY in primetime and on their morning show “Good Day NY”. Coverage of the event helped to drive non-Westchester ticket sales to again double the previous year, showing the strength of the program in attracting interest in Westchester and beyond.

The use and enjoyment of our parks is core to our mission, and Winter Wonderland invites people of all ages to enjoy the spectacular beauty of Kensico Dam Plaza for the holidays. Proceeds from this event directly benefit Westchester Parks Foundation, and allow us to serve the park system year round through programming, advocacy, and direct support.
**WESTCHESTER CONCESSIONS**

Westchester Concessions had another strong year to finish up their contract with Westchester County before winding up management and assets to be absorbed by Westchester Parks Foundation in 2017. Thanks again to the efforts of our Board of Trustees, the rent paid to Westchester County was far more reasonable than in prior years. Westchester Concessions paid off its loan to WPF completely, and the driving range and vending operations will be absorbed by WPF in 2017.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

In 2016, WPF focused on solidifying our operations and strengthening our staff, adding positions in the Development Office, Graphic Design, and Camp Recruitment. We look forward to building on this base in 2017 with converting part time staff to full time in our Data Entry and Business Operations departments.
We added new fundraising and “friend-raising” events to our calendar, both with excellent growth potential:

- **Sunset Yoga in the Parks** drew over 500 people over 5 dates from May-September. In partnership with Whole Foods Market Westchester and Tovami Yoga of Mamaroneck, WPF offered a free yoga series at Kensico Dam Plaza and Rye Playland beach. We received an overwhelming response from the public, great media coverage, and an overall zen-like feeling for everyone involved.

- **Summer Party on the Pier** introduced a fun, casual summer event to the calendar and raised $5,000 in unrestricted contributions. This event featured a prime firework viewing location from the Playland Boardwalk, on a beautiful July evening. In addition to supporting WPF, attendees received a Playland wristband, and could head out to enjoy all that Playland has to offer, before joining us on the pier at the Tiki Bar, for great food, drinks, and music. Thank you to sponsors David Lerner Associates and AKRF!

- The inaugural **Mutts on the Mountain** event took place in October. Billed as the only trail race that allows runners with canine companions, the event featured both a 5K course and 1M “Lazy Dog” Fun Run. Held at scenic Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill, the event also showcased a great park that people in central and southern Westchester may not often visit. In our first year, we had 133 participants, and over 300 people in attendance, with great support from sponsors Captain Lawrence Brewing Co, LL Bean, Backcountry Ltd, Masterwork Plaques, and media sponsors WHUD/The Peak and Westchester Magazine.

- WPF continues to participate in initiatives at Kensico Dam Plaza, adding more beautiful hanging baskets and contributing to sponsorship of July 3rd MusicFest and Screening Under the Stars.
Camp Morty saw unprecedented success with WPF staff running the camper recruitment process. Our goal for 2016 was to increase enrollment at camp, and increase the number of unique campers attending camp, and we are proud to have achieved both of those successes. Our staff worked hard to find the campers, convert the application to an online process, and ensure that all applications were complete before campers boarded their bus for camp. The result was a 40% increase in enrollment at camp. Additionally, WPF benefited from an increased administration fee to support our behind-the-scenes work, and the addition of the full time staff person that supports the camp and our office. For the first time this year, we sent a bus to Peekskill, in addition to regular stops in White Plains and Yonkers, to give kids from the Northwest part of the county an easier opportunity to attend camp. We expect that enrollment from this area will grow in coming years with the addition of this transportation option. In another first for our camp, this year we applied for and were awarded funds from the USDA’s Summer Food Service Program, which helped greatly to support the running our kitchen at camp.

From a program perspective, we were proud to have introduced a “farm-to-camp” aspect of our nutrition program, sourcing produce locally from Hilltop Hanover Farm and Muscoot Farm, giving our campers the opportunity to “eat locally” from their very own fresh salad bar. Camp Morty campers also participate in a range of activities, including ropes course, waterfront, outdoor adventure, drama and dance, and family campfires.

Thank you to our dedicated partners, the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Community Mental Health. WPF is proud of the experience that our campers receive – in addition to great programs, they work with an outstanding staff of leadership and counselors. Hailing from 11 states and 6 countries, our campers learn about different cultures without having to leave Westchester. Our staff are also excellent role models, with this year’s group comprised of 10 “Counselors-in-Training”, 6 former campers as Counselors, and a former camper on the leadership team. Our staff show the campers what they can achieve through hard work and teamwork.
Annual Gala under the circus tent, Winter Wonderland
WPF decided this year to showcase one of our signature events, Winter Wonderland, by holding our annual fundraising gala onsite in the Hanneford Holiday Circus tent. After many fantastic years at the beautiful Glen Island Harbour Club, we went in a new direction to showcase all that Winter Wonderland has to offer. Guests were invited to celebrate with us, and then stroll the grounds, see the light show, visit with Santa, and participate in all the fun of the event! A clear winter evening and glittering tent made a great backdrop at Kensico Dam Plaza. This year, the honorees were:

- **Thompson & Bender**, recognized for its dedication to Westchester parks, in particular its unwavering promotion of the programs and initiatives of the Foundation, and their vision in crafting our revitalized brand this year.

- **Westchester Knicks** and **Eastern Land Management**, recognized for their commitment to the community, as well as their support of the Foundation and the county’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation through their generous partnership on programs and projects that bring people together to enhance parks and recreation spaces. In March, the two groups joined forces to mulch and plant flowers at Miracle Field at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale.

Each year, Westchester Parks Foundation is proud to recognize those that contribute positively to parks and open space in Westchester, and 2016’s honorees exemplify that commitment. Our organization is immensely grateful to our honorees and supporters, who help us to fulfill our mission each year. We thank them for their unwavering dedication to WPF and to Westchester County Parks.
In 2016 we provided nearly one million dollars in goods, services or direct monetary benefits to the Westchester County Park system or Department ranging from equipment, improvements, volunteers or programs (excluding Camp Morty).

Additionally, the Westchester Parks Foundation and our subsidiary Westchester Concessions, Inc. provided almost 90 seasonal or hourly jobs to mostly Westchester residents.
Westchester Parks Foundation continues to support the professional development of the management and staff of the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation. Professional Development contributes to the high quality of service that PRC staff provide, enabling our park system to be clean, safe, and well-managed. Staff provide park visitors with a level of excellence that they have come to expect. WPF is proud to sponsor PRC Staff “Boot Camp”, Staff Conference, and development seminars and conferences throughout the year.

Westchester Parks Foundation ended 2016 with revenues of $1,539,744 and expenses of $1,504,716 (unaudited). An increase in fundraising efforts and Winter Wonderland revenues contributed to our net revenue, realized despite an increase in payroll expenses.

**REVENUES:**
- Grants, special programs and projects: 79.16%
- Fundraising: 5.22%
- Administrative: 15.63%

**EXPENDITURES:**
- Program and facility support: 74.88%
- Administration: 21.63%
- Fundraising: 3.49%
Westchester Parks Foundation wishes to thank the following members of our 2016 Board of Trustees, who are not continuing on with us. We cannot support parks and open spaces in Westchester County without the support of our talented and dedicated Trustees, and while we are sad to see Girish Menon of FUJIFILM and Sally Veltidi of the Town of Eastchester depart our board, we thank them for their service to WPF and wish them all the best!
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Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation & Conservation