

November 1, 2024

Dear Friends,

**Thank you for your support** of Friends of the National Arboretum and happy holidays! With your help, FONA has strengthened our relationship with the U.S. National Arboretum. We have much to be thankful for and a great deal to update you on!

It has been an important year of collaboration and expansion as we prepare to take on a larger role as the Arboretum's private partner leading up to its 100th anniversary in 2027, and beyond.

We have continued to enhance FONA's youth and family education programs. Our communications efforts to tell the Arboretum's story are expanding in scope, and we are increasing our fundraising efforts to fund specific Arboretum projects.

**Often, we hear “What exactly is the difference between FONA and the Arboretum?”** It's important to understand the differences so that you know how your support contributes to the success of the Arboretum.

**The National Arboretum** is a federal scientific research facility and public garden that is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and funded by Congress. Its horticultural research benefits each of us and our nation's nursery industry. For example, you can thank the Arboretum for many of the varieties of hydrangeas, camellias, and other trees and shrubs in your garden or neighborhood! Dr. Richard Olsen, Director of the Arboretum, and his staff are focused on scientific research and maintaining the 451-acre D.C. campus with its gardens and collections. The campus itself is a critical component of the NE Washington community, and it plays an important role in the network of greenspace in D.C. that benefits all who rely on it for health and well-being.



**Friends of the National Arboretum**, as its 501(c)3 private partner, handles all that the Arboretum cannot, given staffing and budget constraints. This includes marketing and communications, youth and family programming, enhancing the visitor experience for 710,000+ annual visitors, educating local and federal officials about the importance of the Arboretum, convening stakeholders and partners, and fundraising to support FONA and specific Arboretum projects.



The stronger FONA is, the more we can handle on behalf of the Arboretum.

This benefits the local community and allows Dr. Olsen and his staff to focus on their scientific mission. As you review our highlights below, keep in mind that your support is vital to helping FONA grow in securing the success of and a strong future for the Arboretum.

### **FONA's highlights from this year include:**

- **Strong leadership** – FONA recently welcomed Martha Van Dale as our Board Chair. We're grateful for Michael Stevens' leadership during his recent term as Chair and delighted he will remain on the board.
- **Washington Youth Garden fence renovation** – With your help, we finished the renovation, further enabling us to fulfill the Arboretum's mission of public outreach and education. This one-acre garden is where we host youth education for underserved students and their teachers and grow produce for local families. It's a space for *all* to connect with nature, science, and “nature play.”

- **FONA's tree canopy walk project** – This “boardwalk among the trees” near the Washington Youth Garden has received regulatory approvals for construction in 2025. This canopy tree walk will provide an exciting addition to FONA's programming and educational offerings.
- **FONA's communications** – This program grew, allowing us to further serve the Arboretum by telling its story. Our recent *Digging In* presentation featured the history of Civilian Conservation Corps Company 1360 and the role this African American unit played in building the infrastructure of the Arboretum from 1934 to 1941. (The story is on [FONA.org](https://www.fona.org); we encourage you to watch it!)
- **FONA's membership program** – New and improved! We now offer monthly giving options and digital membership cards. Look out for new member benefits and gatherings!
- **The 28th annual Dinner Under the Stars** – FONA's flagship event convened important local and federal political leaders, partners, stakeholders, and corporate leaders from the agricultural sector. We were honored to have USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Representative Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-PA) as our speakers.

### Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond

As its private partner, FONA will continue to rise to the challenge of supporting the Arboretum's mission, especially as we prepare to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2027. A strong and vibrant National Arboretum – both with its scientific endeavors and the 451-acre greenspace in Washington – benefits each of us, our community, the nation, and the broader scientific community.

We'll continue to expand visitor services and youth and family programming for those who love the Arboretum and rely on it for health and well-being. Communications and marketing will continue to grow as will our fundraising efforts as we seek to expand our direct support of the Arboretum.

Blueprints for building the tree canopy walk are complete and all government regulatory agencies have approved the project. Once constructed – fingers crossed in 2025! – this “boardwalk in the treetops” near Washington Youth Garden, will offer an exciting opportunity for visitors and students to walk across the canopy and learn about and be inspired by nature and science. Stay tuned!

The Arboretum's future is bright and it benefits each of us. It is a beautiful time of year. Please find time to visit, take a deep breath, relax and connect with nature, and take pride in knowing you've made a difference in helping support this important scientific institution and green oasis in our nation's capital.

Thank you for your steadfast support. We hope to see you soon and we welcome hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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