



View from new conservation easement



2017 Annual Newsletter *Saving Special Places You Love*

Dear wonderful supporters and friends,

This year has been a great one. And in fourteen months, River Fields, founded in 1959 when I was in the first grade, celebrates its 60th anniversary! WOW! **We are local, long-standing and unique. Your support is unique and essential.** As we approach this important 60th anniversary, the River Fields Board has been working on a very important strategic plan. Our focus is future strength and success in the next sixty years.

This upcoming anniversary reminds us that River Fields is creative and uses diverse, multi-dimensional tools in its tool box to *preserve the special places in the region. Not every tool can preserve every special place.* One tool is conservation easements, which so far has protected over 2,100 acres forever in this region for the public. Unlike any other land trusts in the region we also hold over 60 acres of land, most of which is open to the public. To save the special places it is necessary to use many tools in our toolbox. We use advocacy, historic preservation and education, just to name a few. Thank you for supporting this unique and critical work. **We need your support now more than ever.**

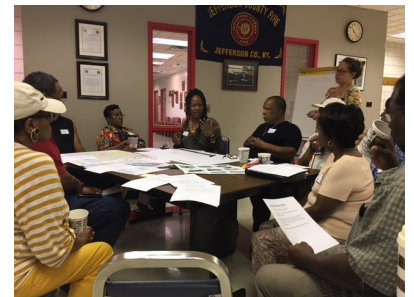
Executive Director



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship

Neighborhood Plan

Since the late nineties, River Fields has been persuading government officials about the unique significance of the historic African-American neighborhood on Upper River Road. We first took the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), David Morgan, to tour the neighborhood. No local historian or citizen had ever brought this area to the attention of a historic official before. Early on in this advocacy process, the SHPO officially recognized the area as having two eligible National Register Districts, designations which protect them from federal undertakings. In later years we also invited major state leaders including two Governors, Brereton Jones and Paul Patton, and a Kentucky Secretary of Transportation, James Codell to see this important historic area. Again, no one had ever advocated for these neighborhoods with state officials. Additionally, River Fields led tours for national preservation officials including Richard Moe, then the President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), Elizabeth Merritt, the NTHP top attorney and innumerable federal officials from the Federal Highway Administration and from the U.S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.



Residents of these neighborhoods at a recent planning session

In 2017, an active neighborhood planning process was initiated for the neighborhood which includes both eligible historic districts, **The Jacob School Neighborhood** and **The James Taylor Neighborhood**. A draft Neighborhood Plan has been completed. This planning process is funded by a \$40,000 grant from River Fields with a contract with the Center for Neighborhoods to implement the planning process and produce a plan which will be presented to the Louisville Metro Council for approval. Special thanks to trustees Arnita Gadson and Hunter Louis who serve on the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee. Look for further details soon.

Land Conservation Updates

Stoll Hill Conservation Easement

Recently, River Fields completed the donation of a conservation easement on an open space property along Lime Kiln Lane given by Breck and Rhonda Jones (see banner photo on page 1). Protection of this property will ensure that its open spaces provide scenic views, wildlife habitat, and natural watershed benefits to the community for generations to come. The verdant expanse of this property will continue to contribute to the sense of natural land and uncrowded views for the many people passing it every day on this busy and historic road which runs through the Country Estates of River Road National Register District.

Current Projects

Local landowners continue to come to River Fields to help achieve their conservation goals. After a comprehensive review and selection process, we pursue those projects that will yield important benefits to our communities. One current project will see generous landowners donate a conservation easement on another historic cultural landscape and home in the nationally significant Country Estates of River Road. Yet another long-term project could conserve a rare large tract of forestland in southwest Louisville, benefiting air quality, native flora and fauna, heat-island effects, and natural watershed functions in this highly urbanized area.



View of easement in process

Stewardship Habitat Improvements

Did you know River Fields owns over 65 acres of land in the River Corridor, including the Garvin Brown Preserve and open space and restoration properties along the River Road Scenic Byway? River Fields manages our properties to benefit the public, to protect scenic views and to provide wildlife habitat. This includes installing habitat enhancements like wood duck boxes and bat boxes, but it also involves removing non-native invasive species that threaten to crowd out the native flora and fauna. In the past couple of years, River Fields has battled bush honeysuckle, wintercreeper, and callery pear trees, among many others on several of our properties. Our efforts attempt to remove the invasive species where it is practical, and plant native species to improve the habitat value of the property. The goal is to reduce non-native invasive species and install more habitat enhancements which will add to the ecological value of the local natural habitat provided by the land you help River Fields protect. If you would like to help with our next clean up, please email vanessacastle@riverfields.org.



Photos by Ralph Homan



Successful Annual Fundraising Event

At our 2017 "A Celebration in the Country," we honored Lee Troutman Cory for her superior, steadfast and successful leadership as President of the River Fields Board of Trustees from 2010 to 2017. This event produced our second highest net profit amount in the 26 years of its existence! It was a wonderful evening, full of great fun and delicious food by Lilly's. Many thanks to those who attended and especially those who responded to the special appeal.

African-American Historic House Update

Last year was a very productive year for River Fields in our work on the historic Merriwether House. Project manager, Honorary Trustee Robert W. Griffith, and a committee made good progress in the restoration of this important African-American resource to the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties." Because studies showed extensive termite and water damage, as well as the need for a new foundation, the house was raised and given a new foundation. Also, inappropriate, modern siding, the deteriorated porch, non-historic 1959 additions, windows and doors were removed. All salvageable architectural features were stored for timely restoration. The next phase of the project includes restoring the porch, replacing the historic windows, replacing the roof and gutters, exterior painting and landscape work. We have recently been awarded \$20,000 from two Kentucky foundation's new to River Fields' work to continue to the restoration process. For more info, including how you can provide financial support, visit our website, <http://riverfields.org/properties/merriwether-house>.



photo by James Archambeault

New Partnerships

This October, River Fields partnered with the Conservation Committee of the Glenview Garden Club, led by long-time River Fields' member Louise Gardner, for an incredible interactive canoe experience up the Ohio River to the confluence of Beargrass Creek, a watershed that drains 61 square miles of Louisville. In two 15' Voyageur canoes, we were led by well-known environmental educator, David Wicks. We obtained a better understanding of our waterways, our storm water management techniques and their direct impact on our waterways, the unique wildlife and plant life along the Creek, and the expanded recreational uses that a cleaned-up creek system could provide for our community.



One of the Voyageur canoes



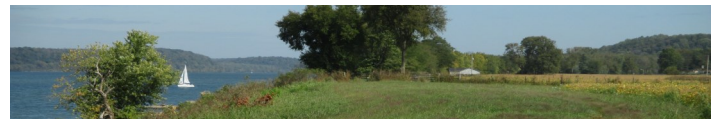
Proposal of Prospect Cove project

Along with the City of Prospect, River Fields and our members played an integral part in the defeat of the highly inappropriate planned Prospect Cove development, which called for a four-story, 198-unit building on a nearly 10-acre tract at River Road and Forest Cove Lane. This development would have set a dangerous precedent in the area and was defeated by the Metro Council in October.

For information on all of our national, state and regional partners, visit our website, <http://riverfields.org/about-us>.

Garvin Brown Preserve Celebrates 20 Years!

This year marks 20 years that River Fields has owned and managed the Garvin Brown Preserve so that it is open to the public every day. Thanks to the vision and generosity of Laura Lee Brown, Dace Brown Stubbs and the late George Garvin Brown III, this 46 acre tract of riverfront land is open green space preserved forever. One thing remains constant through the changes of time – **you are invited to take a walk there any day of the week, any time of the year.** This kind of public resource builds community and allows people to connect with nature by enjoying its open spaces. For directions on how to access GBP, see our website: <http://riverfields.org/properties/garvin-brown>.



Garvin Brown Preserve

The following quotes about the Preserve were heard in the last two years:

"Every day at the Garvin Brown Preserve is a good day."

"It's amazing the community of people that use this place."

"Thank you to River Fields for making this daily walk possible for me."

"When my dad was declining, we would walk at Garvin Brown and he would find peace and his face would show it, every time."

River Fields Welcomes New Trustees



Betsy Bennett

Although not a native, Betsy Bennett grew up in Louisville and moved back about eighteen years ago. With a law degree from the University of Kentucky, Betsy has practiced environmental law for the last twenty-five years. She has served on a number of boards including Kentucky's Environmental Quality Commission, Sierra Club, Jewish Hospital, Kentucky Resources Council, Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence and the UK College of Public Health. Her son is a lawyer in Lexington and her daughter practices medicine in New York City. She has two grandsons and three granddaughters.



David Fannin

David Fannin has served in many professional and civic capacities in a career spanning over 40 years. Most recently he served as Interim CEO and General Counsel for New Directions Housing Corporation. Other roles include Executive Vice President & General Counsel for Office Depot and the Sunbeam Corporation. Prior to that, David had a successful legal career as a partner with Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs in Louisville. David has been active in civic affairs both in Kentucky and in Florida, having served as a Board member of the Office Depot Foundation, Inc., member of the Board of Florida Earth Foundation, and as a trustee of Spalding University where he was co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee. He currently serves on the Board of the Center for Nonprofit Excellence and is a member of the Visiting Committee of the University of Kentucky College of Law, where he received his JD degree in 1973.

Family Gives New Bench at Garvin Brown Preserve As Memorial

For over 20 years, the Garvin Brown Preserve has been a public community resource that has touched many lives. Some families have used its quiet shore for gatherings in memorial of those they have lost. This summer we were honored that a family chose to install a bench at the Preserve as a memorial to a beloved family member. The donating family worked closely with River Fields to ensure a quality installation that can withstand flooding, and installed a plaque in remembrance. The bench is a beautiful place to take in the view of the Ohio River. The family is grateful for the opportunity to create such a meaningful memorial. "I should be thanking you for giving me the opportunity to put a memorial to my son in such a wonderful place," said the donor.



Bench overlooking Ohio River

Give For Good Louisville

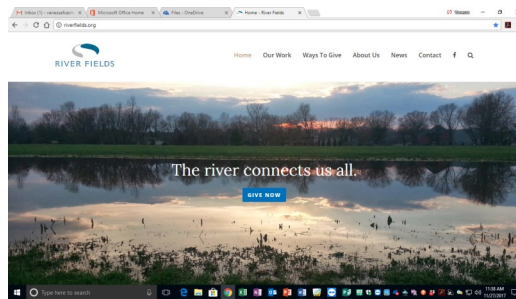
On September 14, River Fields participated in the Community Foundation of Louisville's Give For Good Campaign, the biggest day of local giving in our city. River Fields received a bonus for having over 25 unique donors. We received donations double our original goal! Along with many other non-profits, we showcased our work at the midday rally which was held at 4th Street Live. We are grateful to those who supported us on this day and look forward to participating again in 2018.

River Fields Development Consultant
Vanessa Castle at the rally



Website and Social Media Updates

This past year our staff worked hard to update our website, www.riverfields.org, to better represent the work we do and to make it easier for visitors to navigate. Check it out!



We also joined Facebook (www.facebook.com/riverfieldsky/) and

Instagram ([riverfieldsinc](https://www.instagram.com/riverfieldsinc/)) and invite you to follow us on social media for updates!



We've Moved!

After five years in the historic Starks Building on Fourth Street, River Fields has recently relocated our offices to Butchertown. We are thrilled to move back to an historic district close to the Ohio River, the driving force behind our work. Our new space is inside the Butchertown Market building. Our new address is 1201 Story Avenue, Suite 215, Louisville, KY 40206.

You Make a Difference!

Please consider a monthly recurring gift that is automatically deducted -- this process is painless and really makes a difference for our project planning purposes!! You can do this by visiting <http://riverfields.org/donate> and choosing "Show my support by making this a recurring donation."

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