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# THE CURRENT

Newsletter of River Fields, Inc.

July 2024

**RIVERFIELDS.ORG**



## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 65TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Our annual event will take place 6:30 PM October 25, 2024 at Locust Grove. For tickets, go to: [http://riverfields.org/annual\\_fundraising\\_event/](http://riverfields.org/annual_fundraising_event/)



**LOCUST GROVE**

## THE RIVERS THAT CONNECT US CONTINUED

thousand miles. Protecting this precious resource is essential to ensuring the endurance of our cultural identity, historical significance, biodiversity, safe drinking water, and recreation. We should strive always for rivers to connect rather than divide us, and protect them as if all our lives depended on it. Because whatever false boundaries we draw, the rivers' fate will be our fate, too. I am so honored and excited to serve an organization that has always and will always speak up for the river. Thank you for supporting River Fields, the river, its lands, and the people who call it home.

*Kristin Faurest, Ph.D., CEO and President, River Fields*

## DEAR FRIENDS OF RIVER FIELDS:

What an exciting time to be part of our organization! Whether you are a new member or a longtime supporter, we wanted to reach out and say thank you. Our compact yet mighty non-profit is undergoing large-scale changes, and we can't wait for what's next!

I'm proud to introduce you to our newest President & CEO, Dr. Kristin Faurest. After an exhaustive search that extended well over a year, the Board of Trustees is thrilled with our new leader. Kristin comes to us from River Heritage Conservancy and has an impressive resume, which includes past leadership roles at Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest and Portland Japanese Garden. She also has served as a consultant to the Environmental Protection Agency and Planetizen, the

country's biggest education and media platform for urban planners, and she's an adjunct lecturer in



**KRISTIN FAUREST**

landscape architecture at two German universities.

Kristin has hit the ground running and we certainly hope that you

have the chance to meet the new face of River Fields soon. We feel confidently that Kristin will be able to champion our past and continue making great strides in the fields of land conservation, advocacy, and education, yet will bring on new ideas and fresh perspectives to our long-lasting legacy.

Speaking of legacy, we would like to thank Meme Sweets Runyon yet again. Meme tirelessly led our organization for the last 37 years, taking it from a room above her garage to where it is today. Cheers to Meme! We hope she is enjoying her much-deserved retirement.

Again, thank you for your fantastic support.

*Logan Ormerod, Chairman, River Fields Board of Trustees*

**YOU CAN MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION HERE:**  
<https://riverfields.org/ways-to-give/>



## ADVOCACY UPDATE: SIX MILE ISLAND BARGE REPAIR FACILITY

Everyone knows the quote from Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. We at River Fields saw proof of that with the tremendous public outpouring of protest against the barge repair facility proposed for the Indiana side of the Ohio River at the foot of Six Mile Island.

River Fields's 65-year history of advocacy for the public benefit on both sides of the river reaps many rewards for the public. The US Army Corps of Engineers Permit Notice for the facility at the foot of Six Mile Island could have gone without any public outcry and no news coverage, had it not been for our email alert sent out to thousands. For decades, River Fields has built a coalition of members, donors and concerned citizens who receive alerts like this

one. We called the public's attention to the dangerous application filed with the USACE to permit the construction of a facility that would critically endanger natural and cultural assets. Following our broad campaign, you, the public, responded with a flood of letters to the USACE protesting a bad idea that could bring permanent and significant damage. The *Courier Journal* ran front page coverage and the Mayor of Louisville, among other elected officials, sent strongly-worded letters.

We wrote an extensive letter of opposition citing the multiple negative risks to historic and natural treasures in the area, the recreational boating industry, and potentially the safety of Louisville's drinking water supply. We called for the permit to be denied, and a public meeting scheduled.

The Permit Notice stated, incorrectly,

that no historic resources would be impacted. River Fields's letter listed eleven properties on the National Register of Historic Places that would be negatively impacted. We reminded the USACE that under the 1966 Historic Preservation Act, federal law requires a review by the Kentucky State Historic Preservation Officer and that a Section 106 consultation be initiated to determine impacts. The State Historic Preservation Officer confirmed that this lengthy federal process must take place before any construction can begin.

The fight is far from over. But information is power. River Fields will work with the Heritage Council as a consulting party and keep you up to date on developments and how you can stay involved as an active citizen. Thank you for standing up for the river.

—*The River Fields team*

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH RIVER FIELDS?

### WILDFLOWER WALK RECAP AND EDYALMOOR TOUR

On Sunday, April 21st, we hosted our largest Wildflower Walk yet. Gary Libby, Principal Scientist and Owner of Skybox Ecological Services, LLC, who specializes in botany, ecological restoration, and wildlife biology led the walk and showcased the varied wildflowers that can be found at Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm.

Approximately 412 acres, Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm has been owned by Sallie Bingham since 1988. She donated the easement to

River Fields and the Kentucky Heritage Council in 1999. The property includes a nineteenth century mill and other historic structures, farm fields, ponds, two ecologically-significant creeks, mature hardwood forests, an eighteenth-century cemetery, wildlife habitat, open space, and scenic views. It can only be accessed during River Fields public programs, so please stay



EDYALMOOR ESTATE

tuned for a possible fall color walk on the property this fall!

Our June 2 planned tour of the lovely Edyalmoor estate was

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH RIVER FIELDS? CONTINUED

postponed due to inclement weather and is taking place June 30 instead. The program is currently sold out, but if you'd like to try to get a ticket from any last-minute cancellations, contact Vanessa Castle at [vanessacastle@riverfields.org](mailto:vanessacastle@riverfields.org)

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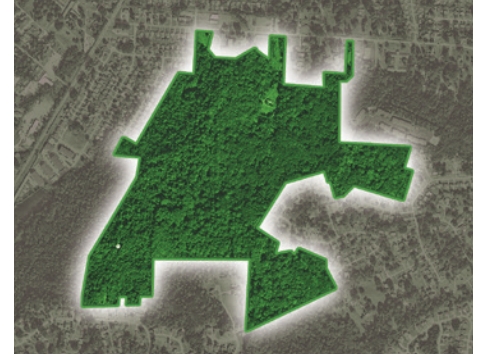
As always, you can expect great music, delicious food, and lots of conversation about the critical

work River Fields is doing to protect cultural and ecological resources. Just go on the link below to purchase tickets and watch your inbox for updates! [http://riverfields.org/annual\\_fundraising\\_event/](http://riverfields.org/annual_fundraising_event/)

### NEW EASEMENT IN PROGRESS

We are working to finalize an easement on Daisy Hill, 140 acres of dreamy woodland in Southwest Jefferson County. This gorgeous piece of property is in the midst of dense development but not far from Iroquois Park. It's a mature upland habitat and watershed that supports

a great deal of wildlife and helps reduce the urban heat island effect in the area.



DAISY HILL

## THE RIVERS THAT CONNECT US

I've held a lifelong sacred bond with rivers. Growing up lucky in Jeffersonville's Arctic Springs neighborhood – back then a sylvan and eccentric river rat enclave -- I spent every available moment on our riverfront beach. That's where I developed an enduring love of sycamore trees, longnose gar, great blue herons, the feel of driftwood and shells under my rough bare feet, and sting of the water hitting my nostrils as I dove off the dock hoping whatever lay beneath

wasn't going to maim me. Even finding a dead alligator gar on our beach couldn't keep me away. I'm missing upper tones in my hearing from so many ear infections from swimming in that river. That's ok, I wouldn't make the swap. The house, dock, and sycamore are long gone, but that wondrous landscape is and always will be home. In later years, fortunate enough to get to

live in Europe, I made the Danube my soulmate, visible from my living room window and accompanying me on my daily runs. There, too, was a similar landscape of great blue herons and sycamores. Imagine! Five thousand miles from my



THE AUTHOR, ARCTIC SPRINGS DOCK, C. 1980

beautiful Ohio and yet so familiar – it seemed uncanny and magical! And since childhood, everywhere I have traveled in the world, if a river runs through it, I feel embraced, oriented, at home, and...connected.

With that as the formative setting of my childhood, it seems like a perfect circle to be named the new CEO and President of River Fields,

using my passion to take this great organization that Meme has shepherded for the last 37 years into its next phase of life. I see our rivers as connecting pathways – from nearly every corner of the earth, they are the lines that connect us to the ocean and the sources that give us our precious water. Yet, we so often make rivers into boundaries and barriers: uncrossable lines that divide neighborhoods, cities, regions, states, even countries. And in our misguided and unchecked city planning, we have often willfully divided ourselves from the rivers themselves with freeways, industrial sites, warehouses, gated communities: all manner of barriers that limit our access and prevent us from having an engaged relationship with these extraordinary waterways that are the very reason many cities exist in the first place.

Our Ohio River unifies about 30 million people along nearly a

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