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Nature Mixed In

Quarterly News from Elachee Nature Science Center • May 2021

Message from Sarah Bell

Elachee's New President and CEO

Dear Friends,

I am incredibly excited, honored and humbled to greet you as Elachee's President and CEO.

During my career in the Gainesville City School System, I always appreciated the many opportunities Elachee provided. Now as an 'insider,' I have to say that I am even more impressed by this organization's diverse and outstanding offerings.

Throughout the interview process and during these last few months, it has been an absolute pleasure to learn more about our community gem: Elachee Nature Science Center in the Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve. Most importantly, it has been an honor to get to know the amazing people – from the wonderful Board of Trustees to the outstanding staff to the numerous, invaluable community partners and friends who 'are' Elachee.

My goal is to preserve and build upon the tremendous legacy that has been established here at Elachee. Andrea Timpone, Peter Gordon, scores of community leaders and so many others have built a culture of care and nurturing that is truly a treasure. One Elachee Advisory Board member pointed out that I would not be trying to fill Andrea's shoes – that they are more like hip-waders – and I certainly know this is accurate! It is not a task that I take lightly, and the opportunity to learn and grow in this amazing environment is certainly a joy.

Now that we are hopefully beginning to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, all of us at Elachee look forward to welcoming smiling school children and teachers back to the woods and achieving some sense of normalcy. While doing so, we will use lessons learned over the past year and adjust to meet new challenges, when needed. We also hope that *you* will continue to visit Elachee and the Nature Preserve to hike or to participate in upcoming programs and events. Please see the calendar on our website for details, www.elachee.org/calendar.

I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones in the coming days. Thank you for your continued support of Elachee – only by working together can we educate today to preserve for tomorrow.

With gratitude,

Sarah

Sarah C. Bell, sarah@elachee.org



Sarah Bell, Elachee's President and CEO



CAMP ELACHEE

PRESENTED BY

NORTHSHORE
HOSPITAL

During Elachee's recent spring break camp, young campers previewed what to expect at Camp Elachee 2021 summer day camps taking place nine consecutive weeks, from **June 1 through July 30.**

"This is the best camp I have enrolled my child in. My younger child is so excited to be able to go this summer!"

"My son LOVED his experience. After not having many opportunities to get out and meet other kids outside of school due to the pandemic, he really needed this. He was able to safely connect with others, while learning about nature in a fun, engaging way. Thank you so much, we can't wait for summer!"

2021 Summer Day Camp ONLINE REGISTRATION

elachee.org/camp-elachee

ELEMENTARY DAY CAMPS
for Rising Kindergarten-6th Grade

MIDDLE SCHOOL DAY CAMPS
for Rising 7-8th Grade

Plus...OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS
Counselors-in-Training Leadership Program

Trillium Trek 2021

TRAIL RUN & WALK

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elachee.org/trillium-trek

Training Year Round

One day each year, Elachee hosts Trillium Trek. This race, which is over half-marathon and 5K courses along the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trail System, is a chance to 'run wild' in an urban woodland that is also part of the National Old Growth Forest Network. The 11th annual run/walk event was held May 1, 2021.

In 2020, Elachee staff and a dedicated volunteer trail crew completed the wayfaring signage project that updated all mileage markers along the 8-mile hiking trail system. This new signage also defines the set Trillium Trek 'race' courses.

Typically each race day the Elachee team laid out Trillium Trek courses and marked them. Directional signs for the courses have now been applied to the trail signs. Plus, a portion of the half-marathon course has a 10K option. Mileage posts are permanently in place, defining these courses and creating a great tool for year round training. As well, these courses aid hikers keeping track for physical fitness purposes or to log progress toward their annual Chicopee Challenge goals!

With the exception of race day, each 'race' course starts halfway between the Bridge Loop's beginning (0.0) and its 0.25 mile marker. The finish for both the 5K and half-marathon is on the Geiger Trail, with the 10K finish on Bridge Loop.

DETAILS: elachee.org/trillium-trek



Introducing Discovery Saturdays at Elachee

Elachee to extend Discovery Saturdays' programming through the summer.

Elachee Nature Science Center's exhibits and visitor center will be open to the public for general admission each Saturday through July 2021. Discovery Saturdays at Elachee offer to families and nature lovers self-guided activities and independent exploration among numerous interpretive exhibits, as well as participation in naturalist-led programming and special activities. Elachee will release an updated public admission schedule in August.

Discovery Saturdays at Elachee is a public-friendly programming solution put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Giving public visitation and family-friendly nature programming priority focus each Saturday enables Elachee educators to concentrate their efforts on scheduled weekday PreK-12 environmental education programming, which is a year-round endeavor. **FIND EACH SATURDAY'S ACTIVITIES:** elachee.org/calendar

Saturday programming features multiple Live Animal Showcases in which a teaching naturalist and resident animal ambassadors interact with guests, followed by a guided tour of Elachee's live animal exhibits. Guests may witness demonstration beehives with pollinators hard at work, then meet a Great Horned Owl, along with dozens of other Georgia native creatures who call their curated habitats home. Elachee also offers in-person programs for adult learners requiring pre-registration. Elachee may discount fees for members.

DETAILS: <https://bit.ly/3tAjHB8>

Hiking Trails Open Daily

The Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails are open daily to the public, 7 a.m. to sunset. Public restrooms are open weekdays at the visitor center (as posted) and all day Saturday. Portable restrooms are also in conservation area parking lots. When hiking, *Pack It In, Pack It Out* and *Leave No Trace*. All vehicles are subject to the Chicopee Woods Conservation Area parking fee. Be advised: dogs, pets, bicycles and motorized vehicles are **prohibited** on these pedestrian hiking trails.

DETAILS: elachee.org/hike



Grant Benefits Students in Forsyth Co. Schools

Thanks to an extraordinary grant award from **The Chantal and Tommy Bagwell Foundation**, every 3rd grade student in the Forsyth County Schools' school district will have the opportunity this year to participate in Elachee's *Habitat is Home* environmental education program – at no charge to the student or school. This grant award also made possible the purchase and branding of two dedicated vans Elachee will for outreach programs.



Elachee's 3-Legged Education Stool PreK-12 Student Access Across the Region

In a typical school year, Elachee serves on average some 33,000 PreK-12 students. Yet, the 2020-2021 school year has been anything but typical for teachers and their students. Elachee educators offer three teaching methods to both help teachers navigate



Elachee Naturalist Norma Rainwater conducts an Interactive Distance Learning program with the help from Elachee's resident Gopher Tortoise.

this pandemic and to give students access to nature through STEAM-based ecology classes that complement their classroom instruction. The programming options are student field trips to Elachee, traveling to schools for *Elachee in Your Classroom* outreach and Interactive Distance Learning to engage students who are at home along with those in the classroom.

"It's so important to encourage students to stay connected to nature and help boost their innate curiosity," says Alison Thompson, Education Programs Manager. "We utilize nature as our classroom and subject matter. Recent studies reinforce a direct link between being outdoors and benefits to a child's mental, social and physical wellbeing."

DETAILS: elachee.org/school-programs

NEW! 2nd/3rd Grade Class Enrolling for 2021-2022

The accredited Elachee Nature Academy is offering a 2nd/3rd Grade class for the upcoming school year, that starts August 6, 2021. The Nature Academy's inquiry-based **curriculum meets and exceeds** Georgia learning standards. Students benefit from meaningful, guided outdoor instruction representing 85-percent of each school day!

"My daughter cares deeply for the earth and how we treat it. She loves bugs and trees because Elachee Nature Academy helped bring that wonder into her world."

DETAILS: www.ElacheeNatureAcademy.org



Fall 2021 Georgia Master Naturalist Program

Fridays, August 6 to October 8, 2021

Course Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Limited spots remain, so register now! You will explore local habitats and ecosystems in this interactive 11-program course that combines indoor lectures with outdoor field experiences.

REGISTER: elachee.org/lifelong-learning



We have missed seeing our Elachee friends at local markets and events! Visit the Nature Shop on Saturdays for nature-inspired gifts.

ELACHEE NATURE SHOP HOURS

Saturdays, 9 to 5

- **MAY SALE:** 20% off Jewelry and Spa/Personal Care Products
- **JUNE SALE:** 20% off Birdhouses and Bird Feeders
- **JULY SALE:** T-Shirts... Adult sizes 2 for \$24, Child sizes 2 for \$18
- **AUGUST SALE:** 10% off Books and Field Guides

Sale

Avian Nest Predation Research on Hiking Trails

University of North Georgia Biology Department 3-Month Study in Progress

The Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve is the site of a UNG research study to assess the impacts of walking trails on avian nest predation. As one of Georgia's largest protected green spaces and recognized as a National Audubon Important Bird Area, the Nature Preserve is an ideal location for the study.

"Increased predation along habitat edges is a well-established ecological phenomenon, but there is little information about the effects of recreational walking trails," states Michael Bender, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biology at UNG. He, along with researchers Jenna Myers and Maggie Woodall, hope to gain data that will, in turn, assist professionals seeking to manage natural areas in ways that minimize impacts on bird populations.

March through mid-April, pink ribbons and flags marked the locations of artificial nests placed along and adjacent to the hiking trails. The team's monitoring and data collection methods have now shifted to other means for the duration of the study.



UNG researcher Jenna Myers checks nest and its contents the team placed along the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails.



Artwork by Sofia Labrador, Age 12, Gainesville Middle School

Announcing a Flights' Delay

In-Person Event Planned for Saturday Evening, October 23, 2021

Elachee's Board of Trustees has rescheduled the **21st Annual Flights of Fancy Benefit & Auction** to increase the chance of holding this event in person. Named **Best of Hall 2021 Non-Profit Event**, Flights of Fancy will take place October 23, 2021 on Elachee's outdoor patio and balcony. In keeping with tradition, an eclectic, nature-inspired silent auction will be on display during the event AND accessible through a mobile bidding app for virtual participation.

Admission to this limited seating fall party is exclusively through sponsorships. The Flights 2021 Volunteer Host Committee is accepting auction donations until August 31. Find more event details at elachee.org/flights-of-fancy or call 770-535-1976.

Flights of Fancy is Elachee's sole fundraising event each year. Proceeds enable the Elachee organization to provide access to nature and engaging outdoor educational experiences for school children and nature lovers throughout north Georgia.

Flights of Fancy



BENEFIT & AUCTION

S P O N S O R S

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NUF
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FLIGHTS 2021
MAPLE EVENT SPONSORS

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Pete & Martha Nesbitt



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Mincey Marble Company
Brandi Paul
Sylvester Ratowt and Ryan Fogg
The Reynolds Team/Keller Williams Realty Atlanta Partners
Al and Mary Beth Trembley
Adam and Mandi Whiting