With Appreciation...for You!
Message from Andrea Timpone, Elachee President/CEO

As we wrap up another great year at Elachee and reflect on many successes, all of us here recognize these could not be accomplished without the generous support of the many individuals and businesses contributing their work, wealth and wisdom to this organization. Every contribution is vitally important, furthering Elachee's mission to promote environmental understanding through education and conservation. This holiday season, please consider a financial gift to Elachee – a gift that will benefit thousands of children, nature lovers and the Chicopee Woods in 2020.

I hope you enjoy seeing examples of these successes in the enclosed report, Elachee 2019 Annual Highlights: By the Numbers. We have compiled a summary revealing the results of our efforts to support and grow Elachee's work-in-progress.

Elachee’s team of dedicated school teachers, environmental educators, trustees, volunteers and administrators strive every day to educate and inspire young people, as well as visitors to the Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve, to explore, respect and protect our natural world. Together with you, we look forward to continuing this most important work in 2020. MAKE A GIFT: elachee.org/donate

New Digs for Our ‘Teaching Residents’
ADOPT AN ELACHEE ANIMAL FRIEND

Have you visited Elachee's newly renovated live animal exhibit? There are 25 different animal species living here. They reside in curated habitats as part of the interpretive exhibits for all visitors to enjoy. Elachee animal friends are also teaching assistants, helping our environmental educators give students and nature lovers a better appreciation for these and other creatures.

If you are looking for a seasonal gift, birthday present or a ‘just because’ reason to honor someone close to you, make an ‘adoption’ donation of $25, $50, $75 or $100 to become an Elachee Animal Friend Sponsor. Your gift will help defray the cost for food, habitat supplies and residents’ veterinary care at the Nature Center. We will acknowledge this gift for one year with a nameplate located near the animal’s home in the exhibit. Plus, you’ll get some Elachee goodies to give, including an adoption certificate! LEARN MORE: elachee.org/animal-adoption
New Walnut Creek Bridge

If you hiked in Chicopee Woods this summer and early fall, you likely saw piles of wood along the trails. Among recent updates to the hiking trail system is a newly constructed pedestrian bridge across Walnut Creek. This 35-foot bridge, along the Bridge Loop, replaced a 15-year-old structure that was showing visible signs of stress due to age, wear and pressure from forceful stream flow. Volunteers carried lumber to the construction site, staging it along the way, then reversed the process to remove the old bridge debris from the Nature Preserve.

Some 65,000 hikers and joggers travel across this Walnut Creek Bridge each year. Elachee’s Volunteer Trail Crew actively maintained the previous bridge as this pedestrian access point is vital to the hiking trail system. However, earlier this year Elachee’s Natural Resources Manager, Lee Irminger, elevated priority to replace it. Thanks to a grant from REI Co-op along with a generous ‘gap’ donation from an avid Chicopee Woods hiker, bridge replacement and construction began in June.

From a pick-up truck, to an ATV, the trail crew then teamed up to hand-carry each 16-foot board another tenth of a mile along the trails to the construction site. A contractor worked to demolish the old bridge and construct the new bridge. Volunteers from ZF-Gainesville LLC worked alongside the trail crew to haul the old bridge debris out of the Preserve.

“The bridge helps people view a wilderness area in the middle of an urban sprawl,” says Trail Crew Volunteer Dave McCarril.

This bridge marks the first of many to be replaced as part of Elachee’s ongoing upkeep of the Preserve trails.

READ FULL STORY: elachee.org/new-walnut-creek-bridge

Volunteer Profile

Mandi Whiting

Introduced to Elachee in 2015 through her job with digital marketing firm Full Media, when the Nature Center launched a new website, Mandi today has two additional ties here. She chairs Elachee’s 2020 Flights of Fancy Benefit & Auction volunteer host committee. Plus, Mandi’s oldest son attends Elachee Nature Academy (ENA).

Mandi and husband, Adam, along with their three children, 5-year-old Brady and 16-month-old twins, Davis and Owen, are now regulars at Elachee. Brady went to Camp Elachee this past summer and was thrilled to play in a creek. In August, he joined ENA’s Kindergarten class. Her son’s love of Elachee spurred Mandi to serve on the Flights’ organizing committee last spring, which has evolved into her chairing the 20th annual event, taking place Saturday evening, April 25, 2020.

“Full Media’s owner, Kris Nordholz, is very big on giving back to the community, allowing his employees time to volunteer for an organization that they’re passionate about. For me, that’s Elachee,” Mandi explains. “I believe in the importance of Elachee’s mission, to educate people about nature and to provide a beautiful place for families to enjoy nature, by preserving the Chicopee Woods.”

One of Mandi’s goals as the 2020 Flights of Fancy volunteer chair is to introduce as many new people as possible to Elachee “so that they can also benefit from this incredible resource.”

This fun social event brings together some 250 friends and supporters on Elachee’s outdoor patio for a farm-to-table dinner, auction and lively activities. Area businesses and individuals get involved with this annual fundraiser through sponsorships and by donating nature- and outdoor-themed items and experiences.

Brady is a constant reminder to Mandi of Elachee’s value. “Every day he’s so excited to talk about what he saw and what he did,” she shares. “The children are learning what they would in a traditional classroom. What’s different is the way the teachers get the students excited by incorporating nature into the lessons. It’s genius!”

Brady is also spreading the word. “He tells everyone he meets that he goes to ‘nature school,’ and how much fun it is,” confides this resident of Braselton, Ga. “So many of my friends are amazed when I post pictures on social media of him at Elachee. They’ll say, ‘Where is that beautiful school? What a cool place!’”

READ MORE: elachee.org/mandi-whiting-volunteer-profile

Elachee Nature Academy is an accredited and fully licensed school, offering Preschool and Kindergarten-1st Grade programs. The school is managed and operated by Elachee Nature Science Center and follows the Hall County Schools’ academic calendar. Visit www.ElacheeNatureAcademy.org to learn more.