

THE CONSERVATORY NEWS

Fall/Winter 2010

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT



There's a brisk autumn wind blowing through the magnificent shifting verdure of Volunteer Park. The foliage on the tall trees, expertly planned by the Olmsted Brothers, erupts into a blaze of color before falling to the park floor, another season passing. But the Conservatory, nestled comfortably at the northern extreme of the park, doesn't waver. The sturdy white framework stands strong and proud as it has for almost a century. Even in the coldest grip of winter, the Conservatory remains a balmy and tropical escape for restless travelers, citizens, families and friends.

This year Seattle's Mayor Mike McGinn was faced with an unprecedented budget shortfall and was tasked with submitting a budget for the 2011-2012 year which necessitated many painful cuts in programs and services. The threat of closure for the Volunteer Park Conservatory was very real. The Friends of the Conservatory mobilized and got the public involved. We wanted to make sure your voices were heard, and heard they *were!*

It is my great pleasure to announce that after months of speculation and nail biting, the Mayor's proposed budget for 2011 –

2012 continues funding for Volunteer Park Conservatory at the current level!

I am confident that this decision was in no small part due to the massive demonstration of support from concerned citizens in the community, local organizations and media coverage. The plight of the Conservatory was featured in several local publications, blogs, and television news broadcasts. This helped our "Save the Conservatory" petition generate well over three-thousand signatures of support. We hand delivered the heavy stacks directly to the offices of the Mayor and City Council. While the Seattle City Council has yet to vote on the budget proposal, we are optimistic that the Conservatory's doors will remain open through 2011 and hopefully far beyond. We will be keeping a close eye on the City's future budgets as the Conservatory will continue to be an operating expense. If need be we will mobilize again to rally community support. For the time being we are looking toward a bright future, feeling renewed confidence about the Conservatory's 100-year anniversary celebration in 2012.

We could not have done this without such a caring and concerned community. I commend Mayor McGinn for demonstrating his commitment to preserving Seattle's cultural heritage and for honoring the Conservatory as a public asset, open to all, free of charge.

I invite everyone to take the opportunity to come and visit the Conservatory, an exquisite treasure which we now know cannot be taken for granted. Each fall the Seasonal House showcases a variety of exotic chrysanthemums, and as the weather

gets chillier, it's the perfect place to escape and reflect. In December, the same house will be transformed into a kaleidoscope of poinsettia and evergreen displays. We will also be hosting our annual Holiday Open House on Friday December 3rd from 5 P.M. to 8 P.M. It's always magical and an excellent time to do some holiday shopping in the Conservatory Gift Shop after-hours; current (and new) FOC members receive a 25% discount on their purchases.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to honor and thank our long-time friend and board member Leonard Johnson who passed away in September. Leonard was a great personality and talent - he attended nearly every FOC event and was never without his camera. At our Plant Sales Leonard hustled the Tillandsia table, offering his whimsical creations for sale. He always appeared with a wonderful giant smile and sparkle in his eye. His photographs both in and around the Conservatory are nothing short of breathtaking. Leonard was one of the first board members with whom I had the opportunity to work during the last Conservatory website redesign. I am honored that I was able to experience his wisdom and energy. A full tribute can be found inside this newsletter.

Thank you to all our friends and supporters!

President, Anthonio Pettit

IN AND AROUND THE CONSERVATORY

A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND: LEONARD JOHNSON:

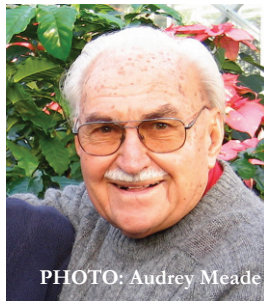


PHOTO: Audrey Meade

As I sit here awaiting the first round of trick-or-treaters, it occurs to me that I don't know what my friend Leonard followed as part of his Halloween ritual. Knowing him, I can only guess that it was something that was full of humor, kindness and a little bit of mischief.

Because, you see, those were the qualities that Leonard embodied in everything he did - he not only saw the good in any situation - he'd often take it and turn it into something that was more fun than anyone in the room had experienced in ages.

Leonard left us on September 16th at the age of 90 years old. To say that he was "young for his age" is to reflect on how fortunate anyone in his path was to be the recipient of his buoyant energy. His generous soul transcended generational and other boundaries.

As a dauntless advocate of the Conservatory over the years, his enthusiasm was expressed by his presence on several committees - most prominently the Education Committee. As a member, he rallied the FOC board to support the opening of the Resource Center as well as renovating the meeting space in the

Cottage.

Leonard touched many people in the Conservatory community in a variety of ways: whether you knew him as the photographer, blissfully snapping his way through tropical paradise on a grey day; as the creator of the wonderful driftwood tillandsia arrangements which he then donated to the Plant Sale; or through his many years of service as a board member: his outlook was forever bright, his glass always more than half-full.

Born and raised in Michigan, one of Leonard's favorite subjects for painting or photography was the beauty of the Upper Peninsula. In his early career, he was a consummate teacher, as witnessed by the artwork of his former students displayed in his home, many of whom went on to be successful artists. He left teaching when offered the position of Art Director at Ford Motor Company, where he enjoyed a long career. After retiring from Ford, he moved to Florida, where he studied landscape design and semi-tropical gardening.

The Friends of the Conservatory are considering a few ideas to recognize the generous contributions that this special man shared with us. Please stay-tuned to upcoming announcements in this regard or feel free to forward any & all suggestions to our e-mail: [foc @ volunteerparkconservatory.org](mailto:foc@volunteerparkconservatory.org).

With love, Ellen Hecht



PHOTO: Leonard P. Johnson

Before he even moved here, Leonard was already becoming attached to the Conservatory. This recollection is written by the former senior gardener about their first meeting in early 2000 (or thereabouts):

Johnson & Johnson

"I was alone in the Conservatory, making my rounds and closing up. I entered the Bromeliad House and encountered the last visitor of day. I gave him my standard, "Sorry sir but the Conservatory has closed for the day, please finish your visit." He began to engage me in a conversation about bromeliads. The last thing I wanted at the end of a long day was to be quizzed on my knowledge of bromeliads.

Instead, he was very complimentary on the diversity of the collection and how well they had been exhibited. And, he had me at the words "beautifully displayed".

During a slow walk to the front door, we talked non-stop about bromeliads, his upcoming plans to relocate to Seattle and his desire to connect with me again on a future visit. He briefly mentioned his connection to various bromeliad growers in Florida and "name-dropped" Bert Foster. Anyone who knows their bromeliads knows of, or about, Bert Foster and his contributions to bromeliad growing and breeding. Leonard -before we reached the door I learned his name-was beginning to sound more and more like "my kinda guy"...the sparkle in his eye and his gorgeous tan accentuated by his pink shirt sealed our fate.

Years later when we would reminisce about our meeting, we would hold hands and decide it was kismet. Leonard did contact me from Florida, several times before relocating. He was solely responsible for the acquisition of many lovely specimen bromeliads donated to the Conservatory from Bert Foster's greenhouses. It was a coast-to-coast connection that developed into a wonderful friendship."

Stephanie Johnson-Toliver,
Senior Gardener Emeritus

JOIN FOC BOARD MEMBERS LARS HUSBY, HENRY KUHARIC AND GARDENER GISELLE BLYTHE AS WE TRAVEL TO PANAMA!

13 days, March 23-April 4, 2011

Let's go explore tropical plants in habitat, world-class birding, UNESCO World Heritage sites, native arts and crafts and much more. For detailed itinerary please visit the FOC website at <http://volunteerparkconservatory.org>, or contact Catrina at EEI_Travel@catrina.forcier@europeexpress.com, 800-565-7236.

AFTER HOURS

JOIN US FOR AN
EVENING VISIT

AT THE CONSERVATORY!

This is the only chance all year for you to enjoy an “after dark” visit to the Volunteer Park Conservatory!

December 3rd from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Live music and refreshments

As a special benefit, new and current members of The Friends of the Conservatory will get a **25% discount** on any purchase made in the Gift Shop that night.

Please bring your family and friends to this special viewing of the Conservatory and plan to do your Holiday shopping too!

HOLIDAY HARP

LIVE HARP MUSIC SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

Need a retreat and refuge from the busy holiday time? Join us three Sundays in December to let the restful and contemplative sounds of harp music sweep you away.

Harpist Bill McJohn will be performing in the Seasonal House:

December 5th, 12th and 19th, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

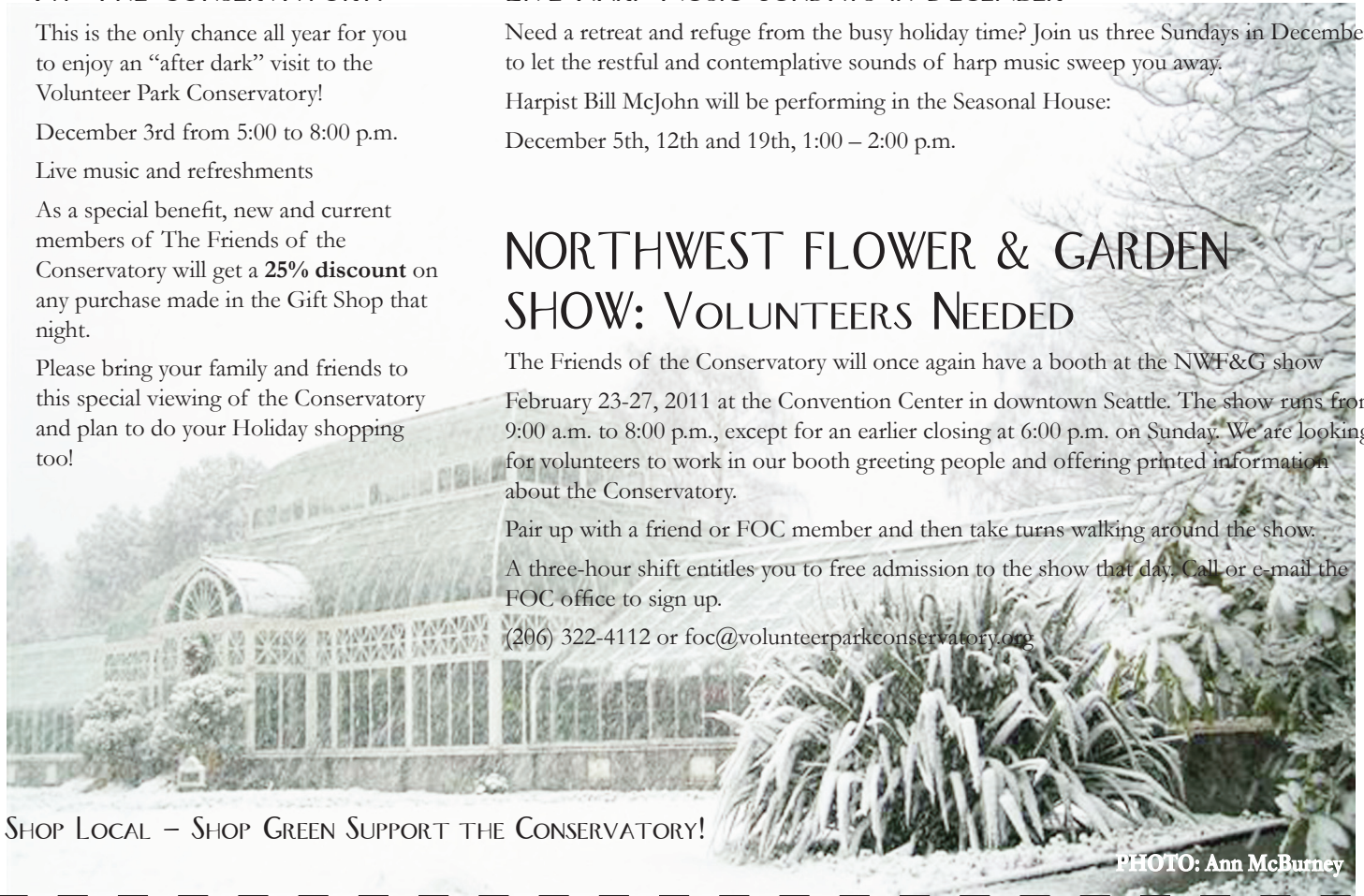
NORTHWEST FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Friends of the Conservatory will once again have a booth at the NWF&G show February 23-27, 2011 at the Convention Center in downtown Seattle. The show runs from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., except for an earlier closing at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. We are looking for volunteers to work in our booth greeting people and offering printed information about the Conservatory.

Pair up with a friend or FOC member and then take turns walking around the show.

A three-hour shift entitles you to free admission to the show that day. Call or e-mail the FOC office to sign up.

(206) 322-4112 or foc@volunteerparkconservatory.org



SHOP LOCAL – SHOP GREEN SUPPORT THE CONSERVATORY!

PHOTO: Ann McBurney

Join the Friends of the Conservatory!

Your membership in the Friends helps to support the Conservatory and its programs. Join us!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Method of payment:

Check enclosed (payable to FOC) Visa MasterCard

Card # _____

Exp. date _____

New Member

Renewal

\$40 Individual

\$25 Senior/Student

\$50 Supporting

\$100 Sustaining

\$500 Patron

\$1000 Conservator

Other \$ _____

Mail to: FOC, 1402 E. Galer St., Seattle, WA 98112



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www.volunteerparkconservatory.org

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CALENDAR

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov 20, 27 | Plant Talk: Ant Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |
| Dec 2 | First Thursday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Dec 3 | FOC Evening Event: Conservatory After Hours 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. (page 3) |
| Dec 4 | First Saturday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Dec 4, 11, 18 | Plant Talk: Ant Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |
| Dec 5, 12, 19 | Holiday Harp: Seasonal Harp Music in the Seasonal House 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. (page 3) |
| Jan 1 | First Saturday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Jan 6 | First Thursday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Jan 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 | Plant Talk: Carnivorous Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |
| Feb 23 - 27 | Northwest Flower & Garden Show: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. <i>Volunteers Needed!</i> (page 3) |

