

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

Communications and Outreach Report for the June 6, 2018 Board Meeting *Prepared by Susan Abell May 28, 2018*

Communications

Marketing/promotion

E-news, e-blasts, and advocacy

Throughout late winter and spring, we advocated for no electronic illuminated signage at subway stops adjacent to the parks. A decision is pending. Winthrop Square has cropped up several times in the media, and the Friends has been steadfast in their wish not to re-litigate this issue and only commented on the positive: a comprehensive plan for Downtown and a new Master Plan for the Common.

The e-news continues to be a consistent means of communicating and engaging with our members. We have worked to make the e-news articles succinct and diverse, showing our members all the different activities of the Friends. In each issue we try to focus on the work of the Friends, care of the trees and lawns in the three parks, an interesting history of specific pieces of sculpture, and introducing noteworthy members in "Meet a Friend". Our open rate is around 33%, which is still close to double the average open rate for non-profits. We continue to have an almost even split in how people read the e-news between mobile devices and a desktop computer.

We continue to stress the importance of advocacy, the history of the Friends in fighting for protection of the Boston Common, Public Garden, and Commonwealth Avenue Mall, and the current activism by the Friends to safeguard these landmark historic parks for the millions of people who use them every year.

Media

The Friends has had coverage in the local papers for the Annual Meeting, Green and White Ball, and the beginning of the tour season. Our staff worked hard to get outstanding media coverage for Duckling Day, including CBS Boston, WCVB, Channel 7, and Fox Boston, and a huge photo array in the Boston Globe Metro and a full page in the Herald. Liz was interviewed for a Boston Magazine article about the future plans for Boston Common that was just recently published.

<https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2018/05/22/boston-common-transformation/>

Publications

This year we added a spring print newsletter that was included with the spring renewal campaign in addition to being mailed to all members. It was shorter, focusing on upcoming events and projects, and thanking donors with a brief letter from Liz and Leslie. Our new rack card has proven to be very successful, and we were able to have them at the Leventhal exhibit at the Boston Public Library, as well as other events. The Annual Review has been converted to electronic as a test for this year and will be sent to all Members. This combination of print and electronic media will increase our ability to reach out to our Members through both formats.

Social Media

We are finding new ways to integrate our website into our social media posts, and to keep directing people back to our website whenever appropriate.

Facebook

As of May 28, we have 2537 likes, up over 125 from February 2018. Post engagement is up 49% and overall reach up 32% partly due to the changed Facebook algorithm that requires us to pay to boost posts. We continue to get good responses on Facebook promoting the Annual Meeting, Duckling Day, and Young Friends events. Our largest audience continues to be women and men ages 35-44 with 74% women and 24% men, with the last 2% un-identified.

Twitter

We are now at 3,835. We have a net gain of 156 followers on Twitter in the past three months. We continue to grow steadily, with regular attention and comments.

Instagram

We are up 215 followers since November and are now at 4,347! The Friends co-hosted an “Instameet” with two Instagram users (they were both leaders and hosts!). Held on a warm Saturday in April, the theme was time-lapse photography, and in the next few weeks photos from the meet will be shared on the Friends Instagram account. We were very excited about interacting directly with photographers, and hope to schedule another event soon.

Outreach

Duckling Day

This year was a huge success, with over 1,200 children and adults attending. Luckily, the weather was good, and there were over 600 people who registered at the event. We had a record number of sponsors this year, including Stride Rite as the major sponsor. All the sponsors had fun, kid-friendly activities and along with our regular entertainment, there were plenty of creative activities for the large crowd of ducklings! After a rousing introduction from Liz and then Chris Cook, standing in for the Mayor, everyone lined up behind the Friends banner and the cutest Officer Michael ever. The parade started right at noon, and the crowd happily wound their way to the Public Garden, over the bridge ending at the *Make Way for Ducklings* statue serenaded by the Harvard Marching Band.

Making History on the Common

On Monday June 4, the Friends are welcoming over 1,100 3rd through 5th grade students in Boston who are eagerly awaiting an innovative field trip: the 9th Annual Making History on the Common. This event, which brings centuries of history alive through an engaging learning environment, will include a new station where the students will learn about the architecture on Beacon Street along the sides of the Common – educators from the Boston Landmarks Commission will teach the students about the different structures that make up a historic home. Other learning stations from previous years include colonial games and trades led by educators from Historic New England; a performance by the Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers; a demonstration by the Freedom Trail Foundation of the use of wooden pillories for punishments in the 17th and 18th centuries; a re-enactment of the valor of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the first regiment of African American soldiers from the North to fight in the Civil War and many others.

Untold Stories of the Public Garden

As a result of our information sessions, we had twelve people sign up and complete the training to become guides. Tours began on May 22, and we have a total of 31 people, including veterans, trained and approved to give tours. Our regular tour schedule is almost completely booked, and we have had many requests for special tours from various groups. We hope to add several evening tours and gauge the interest of guides who might want to help develop and give a tour of Boston Common.

Video

A wonderful and affecting video about the Friends developed by the Communications and Development staff, at the request of the Green and White co-chairs, was shown at the ball. The response was extremely positive, and the video is currently on our website. It will be used at cultivation events and other occasions throughout the year.

Young Friends Fundraising Social

Our winter social on February 1 at Parker's Bar at the Omni Parker House Hotel was very successful. We expanded our committee to include three more people and with their help had a record number of attendees. The Friends introduced the idea of Dessert and Dancing for the Young Friends at the Green and White Ball, where it was received with great enthusiasm. We are planning a fall event at the Liberty Hotel in mid-September.

New Events

The Friends is planning a celebration of the Brewer Fountain 150th anniversary on June 14 complete with the reading of a proclamation from the Mayor, school kids reading poems, free food truck food and cookies, entertainment and music. We are also partnering with Lend a Hand Society, founded by Edward Everett Hale, to celebrate their 125th anniversary and the fortuitous timing of the repair of the statue base by the Friends. The event is planned for September 26, 2018. We are preparing for the extensive Shaw/54th Memorial restoration in 2019. This event involves a partnership with the National Park Service, the City of Boston and the Museum of African American History, and will include programming and events to educate and engage the public about the importance of the monument, its history and the restoration.