

IRVINE'S ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

THE WORD THAT DEFINES THE PAST YEAR AT IRVINE IS "GROWTH." IT'S BECAUSE WE BUILT A STRONG FOUNDATION, MADE POSSIBLE BY DONOR SUPPORT, THAT WE CAN CONTINUE OUR EXCITING IMPROVEMENTS.



BROOKS PATERNOTTE HIRED

In April, the Board of Trustees unanimously chose W. Brooks Paternotte as Irvine's next Executive Director, succeeding Peggy O'Neill who would retire in June 2013. Paternotte's selection followed a national search process with a highly competitive field of candidates. He commented with passion that, "Finding a place where I can combine my love of the outdoors and conservation with education is thrilling."

SELL OUTS OF ADULT PROGRAMS

For the first time in recent memory, Irvine's programs for adult learners sold out. Our eat, drink & learn series included five sessions in its 2012-2013 season. The most popular was "Migration & Margaritas" where Irvine's Director of Education Robert Mardiney lectured about the marvels of backyard birds that make the 2,000-mile trek to Central and South America.

NAMED TOP PLACE TO WORK

Baltimore Magazine's annual "best places to work" singled out Irvine as an employer doing the best for their staff. Irvine was one of only 26 companies selected for the honor, and one of the smallest on the list. By being added to this prestigious list, Irvine joins the ranks of for-profit Liberty Mutual and Baltimore's very large Kennedy Krieger Institute.

INTERPRETIVE AND GREEN FEATURES SIGNAGE

In an effort to continue to improve our visitors' experience, Irvine created and installed informative signs around the trails that help visitors gain a fuller picture of our property. The educational signage covers invasive plants, reforestation and injured wildlife. At the same time, Irvine also posted signs about the building's green features, including solar panels and porous paved parking lot.



TREEHUGGER 5K & FAMILY FUN RUN

More than 100 runners and walkers spent Earth Day 2013 racing through Irvine's meadows and forests. The fun and challenging trail run is the area's first green 5k, and it was "cup free" – minus the disposable trash seen at most marathons. Runner Stephanie Hoag came in first place, receiving a repurposed trophy full of violets. All young participants received "gold medals" made from recycled canning lids.



MASTER NATURALISTS JOIN IN

Volunteers serve an incredibly important function at Irvine, and in 2013 we gained 19 especially talented naturalists who studied here, and will each volunteer 40 hours of their time for onsite projects such as creating a self-guided wetland trail. Furthermore, many of the master naturalists who learned with us are local teachers seeking ways to increase environmentalism in their classrooms.



USED EXPANDED CLASSROOM TO MAXIMUM CAPACITY

During its first academic year, our new classroom space functioned as a second Nature Preschool classroom – resulting in 65% increase in enrollment and an at-capacity program! Birthday party bookings and membership sales followed suit with banner years as well. Currently, The Nature Preschool is a candidate for accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

EXPANDED NATIVE AMERICAN SITE

One of Irvine's most popular field trips for young learners ties with their Native American lessons. Students explore the direct relationship that pre-Colonial Native Americans had with their environment, and focus on local natural resources. To complement the program, Irvine and its many volunteers rebuilt and enlarged the wigwam – which had not survived Hurricane Sandy – and constructed a traditional lean-to and longhouse.

NATURE PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS CONVENE AT IRVINE

A hundred national educators met at Irvine last June for the second annual Nature Preschool

Conference, one of only a handful in the country. Workshops included “the role of play,” with nationally recognized natural preschool founder Erin Kenney. During the event, Assistant Director of The Nature Preschool Karen Madigan was honored with Irvine's first Early Childhood Nature Educator of the Year Award.



RECORD SETTING PUMPKINFEST

In its 29th consecutive year, Irvine welcomed more than 1,200 visitors over two days in October.

Children made use of all 116 acres of Irvine's property by pumpkin bowling on the edge of the wetlands, making their own apple cider in a volunteer-built press by the barn, and circling the edges of our protected land in a hay ride.



STAFF PRESENTED AT ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCES

Three Irvine staff members were invited to speak at the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education's conference last February. Topics included preschool environmental education and using social media to spread the environmental message. Seven staff members presented to an international audience on varying topics at the North American Association for Environmental Education conference held in Baltimore for the first time.