



Melody Farrin

This page: Flowers in the Highland Park entrance garden.

Opposite page: Plantings on Oakmont's Arboretum Trail, a one-mile walkway that runs through the center of the business district, are maintained by Garden Club of Oakmont, which established the trail as a gift to the community.



Christopher Longo

FOR *Love* OF *Gardening*

Area garden clubs have deep roots in our neighborhoods. BY **MARY S. GILBERT**

FOR *Love* OF *Gardening*

Mary, Mary, quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockleshells
And pretty maids all in a row.

Last year, the Window Box Garden club sold decorative baskets of plants at the annual May Market at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. This year, the club will be offering hanging baskets and planters to raise funds for its organization.



Green-thumbed Mary of nursery rhyme fame set an aspirational standard for many gardeners during their formative years.

Yet even her iconic—albeit imaginary—assemblage of plantings pales in comparison to the collective impact the members of local garden clubs have on our landscape and lifestyle.

These hardworking, dedicated volunteers from across the East End, Fox Chapel area, and Oakmont are driven by a singular passion for beauty and nature. For them, gardening is both a personal expression of creativity, as well as a means to enhance society. They nurture flowers, grasses, herbs, produce, and trees on their own properties and share their accumulated wisdom. And they have transformed public spaces in our community into verdant, floral oases for enjoyment by their neighbors.

Amy Mehta of Point Breeze, president of Window Box Garden Club, whose members are predominantly from the East End and Fox Chapel, says the popularity of garden clubs is a direct result of plants being such an important element of the human experience. “Everyone in our club is drawn in a different way and for different reasons, but we all have plant life in common,” Mehta says. “It creates a curiosity about how to do it and a yearning to learn more.”

Garden clubs, as formal community-based organizations, have been fixtures in the Pittsburgh area since at least as early as 1914. That’s when a group of idealistic women from the East End and several outlying neighborhoods formed the Garden Club of Allegheny County, one of the area’s oldest clubs and still one of the largest with 160 active and sustaining members.

CRESCENT
Baths & Kitchens



Crescent Baths & Kitchens

6301 Butler Street, Pittsburgh
.8 mi. west of the Pittsburgh Zoo
412.782.3300
crescentbathsandkitchens.com



Abrazo™ freestanding bath

The Abrazo™ freestanding bath’s unique organic shape makes it a natural focal point. Made from exclusive KOHLER Lithocast™ solid-surface material, Abrazo has a matte finish that resembles real stone, but feels warm to the touch.

THE BOLD LOOK
OF **KOHLER**®



Similarly, Linden Garden Club traces its beginnings to 1924 in Point Breeze, the result of several friends dedicating themselves to the upkeep of the grounds of Linden School. Fox Chapel Garden Club dates back to 1931, and Seeders and Weeders was founded in 1934.

Men's Garden Club of Pittsburgh (which now includes women in its membership despite its name) was founded in the mid-1940s as an outgrowth of the victory gardens cultivated during the world wars. In the 1950s, several Jewish women in the East End started up Gardens Ltd when they were overtly excluded from other garden clubs. A more recent entry on the scene was Garden Club of Oakmont in 1987.



Suzanne Curry and Christy Redican, both of Fox Chapel, are members of Seeders and Weeders garden club. Curry is its president.

By sheer virtue of their longevity, garden clubs have an attraction that transcends time. Some clubs have legacy members who carry on the tradition of involvement begun by their mothers and grandmothers. Suzanne Curry, president of Seeders and Weeders, notes: "One of our founders was Kaka Lockhart, who lived in ShadySide. Her granddaughter, Rachel Stevens of Fox Chapel, is a member, and Rachel's aunt, Katie Griswold, was a member, too."

Left: The Squirrel Hill garden of Marian Finegold, who has been a member of Gardens Ltd for more than 25 years, will be featured on this summer's Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Town & Country garden tour.



Sharon Dowler and Sandy Howard, both of Aspinwall, are members of the Squaw Run Garden Club, which holds an annual May Sale in Squaw Valley Park.

Depending on when they were established, certain clubs still count cherished founders among their membership. Noted philanthropist Elsie Hillman is a founding member of Window Box Garden Club, established in 1946.

For Eve Ferraro, president of the Squaw Run Garden Club, the pleasure of gardening—and sharing that joy with fellow club members—is simple. "I get a cheap thrill when something pops up that I've planted," she says. "In addition, it's important to give back to your community and beautifying the community is my way to do it. That's how a lot of our members feel."

It's a common narrative that you will find at the origins of most local garden clubs, although the specifics are often buried in history. Women and men with a general interest in horticulture, gardening, civic planning, conservation, and service seized upon the idea of holding regular gatherings with like-minded friends. The members shared and expanded their knowledge within a social framework that fostered camaraderie and fellowship. They brought their skills and experience to bear for the benefit of the community through a variety of beautification and outreach projects.

FARMHOUSE DESIGN STUDIO

landscape design • historical preservation • estate planning
specialty gardens • ecological restoration

www.farmhousedesignstudio.net
412.953.1955



the farm & garden

your local grower for perennials
& natives

300 cedar run road allison park, pennsylvania
www.thefarmandgarden.net



THE
Songbird
SANCTUARY
Sharing the Joy of Backyard Birdfeeding

Visit us for beautiful bird feeders, nest boxes,
nature books, bird baths, hooks & poles, bird foods,
nature-inspired home décor, gifts & free classes!

A BIRD LOVER'S PARADISE!

Tuesday - Saturday • 10:30 - 4:30
311 Freeport Road • Blawnox • 412.828.5393
www.thesongbirdsanctuary.com



Members of the Orchid Society of Western Pennsylvania hold an annual orchid show at the Phipps Garden Center in Squirrel Hill.



Ed Sisenwain, president of the Men's Garden Club of Pittsburgh, manning the grill at last year's May Market.

Ed Sisenwain of Highland Park likes that gardening is a far cry from his profession as a social worker in hospital critical care.

"It feels good to get dirty under your nails," says Sisenwain, president of the Men's Garden Club of Pittsburgh. "Not to be corny, but there's a basic earthiness to it that has a great appeal to our members. Gardening is my year-long pursuit, from poring over catalogs, to starting plants from seed, to taking them outdoors to be planted, to putting them on my table as a vegetable or a flower."

Garden Club of Allegheny County president Laurie Johnson says, "Gardening, like music, is life-reaffirming, watching what changes and what grows."

Some garden clubs have been designed with a singular focus, like the Orchid Society of Western Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh Bonsai Society, which both meet at Phipps Garden Center in Point Breeze. As its name indicates, the bonsai society is dedicated solely to disseminating knowledge about the ancient Chinese and Japanese art of cultivating dwarfed trees. Originally limited to royalty, bonsai eventually spread to the masses, and the Pittsburgh society was one of the first of its kind in the U.S. when it was established in 1957.

President Dave Metzgar, who nurtures nearly 70 bonsai trees himself, thinks that club members with stressful occupations are especially drawn to bonsai because of its meditative quality. "I kid one of our doctors that he has a



Bonsai trees, like this ficus planted on a slab and displayed at last year's Orchid and Tropical Bonsai Show at Phipps, are the sole focus of the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society.

God complex and wants to create his own universe of trees," he laughs.

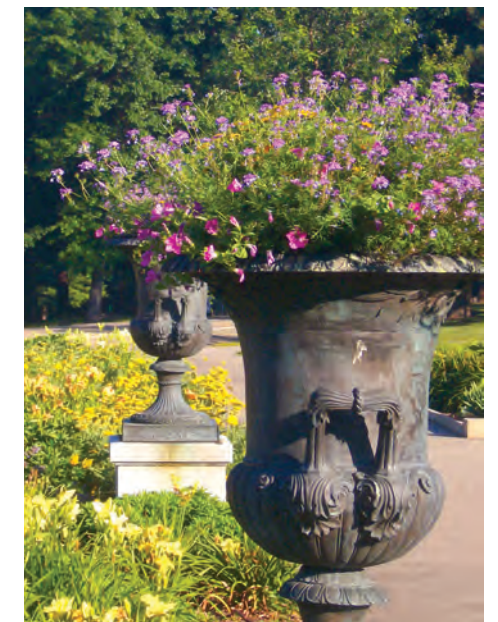
The basic format of garden clubs is to hold monthly meetings at members' homes, restaurants, or garden-related venues like Phipps Garden Center or Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve in Fox Chapel. Men's Garden Club of Pittsburgh has its winter base at West Penn Hospital in Bloomfield. Lunch, tea or other

refreshments are served. Guest speakers present any manner of plant-related topics or members participate in hands-on demos, such as floral arranging or fashioning plant-based holiday decorations. Excursions to llama farms, apiaries, vineyards, nature reserves, and vegetable farms for heirloom tomato tastings have been on various agendas. Members pay nominal annual dues to help fund operations.

Ellen Primis, co-president of Gardens Ltd, values the social aspect of the garden club and "meeting women I'd never know otherwise."

"It's just really fun," says fellow member Marian Finegold, who has been involved for more than 25 years. "We do all kinds of things. And, of course, the girls are all friends."

Today's garden clubs also place a premium on community service, outreach, and fundraising, both as a means to foster civic improvement and education about gardening and to generate awareness about their own organizations. Along with a myriad of smaller initiatives, most clubs undertake at least one signature public project each year.



Members of the Men's Garden Club of Pittsburgh help maintain the garden at the entrance to Highland Park.



Classic Persian Carpets

"We're more than a rug store."

Try it, before you buy it. Lighten up your rooms with our new summer collections of rugs.

**HAND WASH - RESTORATION - APPRAISAL
BUY - SELL - TRADE**

2127 MURRAY AVE. • SQUIRREL HILL

412.421.7330

www.classicpersiancarpets.com

PITTSBURGH BOTANIC GARDEN
850 Poplar Street • Pittsburgh, PA 15220

Town & Country Tour




JOIN US! as we showcase fifteen beautiful gardens in Shadyside & Squirrel Hill ~ **Sunday, June 24th.**

Owners will be on site to discuss their gardens with you.
Bus tour includes lunch.

Register for this spectacular tour online at www.pittsburghbotanicgarden.org or call (412) 444-4464.

Ainsley



dina ellen

817 S. Aiken Avenue
Shadyside
412.621.6133

FOR Love OF Gardening



Two of the Fox Chapel Garden Club's biggest projects are the Trillium Trail (above), along Squaw Run Road in Fox Chapel, and Gardenfest (below), which is now in its second year at Boyd Community Center in O'Hara.



For instance, beautifying and preserving its neighborhood is embedded in the annals of Fox Chapel Garden Club. In the 1940s, the club was instrumental in obtaining the property that is now the 36-acre Trillium Trail. Member Ruth Boyles and her husband, Dick, procured the pristine land, which was slated for a housing development. The club memorializes a member who created a summer park program for children with an annual scholarship for a student to study ecology and conservation. At Glitter and Glow, a major fundraiser held each December at the Fox Chapel Golf Club, the garden club auctions and sells donated items, such as needlepoint, antiques, and seasonal greens.

"We try to keep our money as close to home as we can," says Carol Papas of Fox Chapel, who is president of Fox Chapel Garden Club. "Our next big thing is a \$10,000 commitment to Boyd Community Center. We created Gardenfest with them, a grassroots garden and environmental education festival. Also on our horizon is helping to develop the new Aspinwall Riverfront Park."

Through its own initiative and with Oakmont's full blessing, Oakmont Garden Club assumed the daunting task of transforming a weedy, overgrown eyesore in the borough's business district into an urban Eden. It features a mile-long paved walking trail along Allegheny River Boulevard with beautiful plantings, which the club still maintains.

Fox Chapel Images LLC

The Orthopaedic Program is now the Bone and Joint Center.

Exceptional care, from an exceptional hip and knee joint replacement team.



Brian Hamlin, MD

Tony DiGioia, MD

Anton Plakseychuk, MD

Peter Siska, MD



The Bone and Joint Center at
**Magee-Womens Hospital
of UPMC**

Visit UPMC.com/MageeBoneandJointCenter



May Market, which has been held on the grounds of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in recent years, has been an annual mainstay on the local gardening scene calendar for 76 years.

“Other people had talked about doing something about it, but it didn’t happen until we decided to take on the job,” board member Connie Fitzgerald explains. “It took us 10 years, but our club raised over \$3 million from projects like plant sales and a golf tournament, and we even went after grants.”

Phipps Conservatory’s May Market is a popular venue for garden clubs to showcase their talents, market their wares, and spread the gospel of gardening. Among the clubs in regular attendance are the Daffodil and Hosta Society, Pittsburgh Iris and Daylily Society, and Window Box Garden Club. Seeders and Weeders, also a longtime exhibitor at May Market, has been a catalyst for the greening of the city, according to president Curry of Fox Chapel.

“Through projects big and small, including maintaining the courtyard garden at Canterbury Place in Lawrenceville and the sidewalk garden at the Squirrel Hill Post Office, we volunteer our time to help make Pittsburgh more livable and lovable,” Curry says. “Further, we provide financial support to places like Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Nine Mile Run Watershed Association.”

The long duration and good works of garden clubs notwithstanding, misperceptions still linger, according to Johnson of Garden Club of Allegheny County.

“Some people think we just sit around and have lunch or tea,” she says. “But we are really a hands-on, working organization that gives out substantial amounts of money—



The Fox Chapel Golf Club is the site of the Garden Club of Allegheny County’s annual fund-raising shopping event PIZZAZZ.

over \$800,000 to date from PIZZAZZ, our premier shopping extravaganza held in October at Fox Chapel Golf Club.”

Other recent projects have included planting the 27 stone planters at Schenley Plaza in Oakland, helping develop a landscape master plan for the new Frick Environmental Center, creating a therapy garden for POWER, a nonprofit serving women in recovery, and documenting gardens of historical value for the Archives of American Gardens at the Smithsonian Institute.

As any organization must do, garden clubs have evolved to stay current with the times and remain relevant to new generations. Many clubs have developed robust, user-friendly Web sites and now use electronic voting systems. Some have tweaked their customs and offer evening meetings to accommodate working members. It’s a balancing act, says Curry, between “keeping the mission and traditions of our founders while moving into what fits into the lives of women today.”

For Linden Garden Club, long gone are the strictly prescribed social mores of its inaugural members who, says president Joni Good of Fox Chapel, “were required to wear suits, hats, and gloves and properly address themselves as ‘Mrs. So and So’ instead of by their first names.” “We still look nice,” Good says. “But nothing like that, and we’re much more informal.”

Attracting younger members can be a challenge for garden clubs in that club membership and volunteerism often go by the wayside as lives become ever more busy.



Susan Mihm of Fox Chapel and Jackie Lloyd of Shadyside, both long-time members of the Linden Garden Club, working at their club’s tent at last year’s May Market.



The lush planters at Schenley Plaza in Oakland are a project of the Garden Club of Allegheny County.

“Like most garden groups, we’re always looking for younger members because we suffer the perils of age,” Sisenwain says. “No pun intended, we’re a very down-to-earth group of people who enjoy the hobby of gardening, and we welcome people who want to get their hands dirty.”

That said, garden clubs remain an essential part of our culture, participants agree.

“I think that garden clubs have made our city all the better and brighter and a beautiful spot,” Mehta shares. “With our club’s focus on the East End and Fox Chapel, we help to bring the conversation to the table about making sure that areas are taken care of and that people care about the environment, ecology, and plant life. We play an important role in that huge discussion.”

SA



Land of The Free



Home of The Brave

Homewood Cemetery

Invites Your Family

to Attend Our

Pre-Memorial Day

Services

Sunday

May 27, 2012

2:00 p.m.

- ◆ Bag Pipe Procession
- ◆ 2011 Roll Call
- ◆ Placing of Wreath
- ◆ Dove Release
- ◆ Refreshments
- ◆ Children's Activities

The Homewood Cemetery

1599 S. Dallas Avenue

Pittsburgh PA 15217

412-421-1822



FOR *Love* OF *Gardening*

LOCAL *Garden Tours & Events*

Phipps Garden Center Great Plant Auction

Friday, May 4, 6 pm
1059 Shady Avenue, Shadyside
Reservations required. 412-441-4442, ext. 3925
www.phippsconservatory.org

Squaw Run Garden Club May Sale

Saturday, May 5, 9 am - 2 pm
Squaw Valley Park, Fox Chapel
This annual event features perennials from members' gardens and beautiful pots of annuals.

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Summer Flower Show

May 5 - September 30

One Schenley Park, Oakland
See beautiful flowers and healing plants from around the world.
www.phippsconservatory.org

May Market

May 11 & 12
Friday, 9:30 am - 7 pm, and Saturday, 9:30 am - 5 pm
Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Oakland
The annual festival for everything garden-related.
www.phippsconservatory.org

Garden Club of Oakmont Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, May 12, 9 am - 3 pm

Hoffstott's Café Monaco parking lot,
533 Allegheny Avenue, Oakmont
Featuring perennials from member gardens, annuals, and gifts for Mother's Day.
www.gardencluboakmont.org

Community Gardenfest

Saturday, May 12, 9 am - 2 pm
Boyd Community Center, 1220 Power's Run Road,
O'Hara Township
Plants, family fun, and educational workshops.
Check out heirloom perennials and mushroom sandwiches!
412-828-8566
www.boydcommunitycenter.org

Lots of Pots

Sponsored by Squaw Run Garden Club
Wednesday, May 16, 10:30 am
Fox Chapel Golf Club, 426 Fox Chapel Road
Master flower pot designer Ray Rogers demonstrates how spectacular a well-grown and carefully-chosen container garden can be.
For more information call Sharon at 412-782-4225.

Pittsburgh Bonsai Society Spring Show

June 2 & 3
Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm, and Sunday 10 am - 4pm
Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue, Squirrel Hill
See members' trees on display, attend styling demos each day at 11, purchase starter kits, or bring in your own tree for expert styling and care advice. Specialized workshops require reservations and a \$25 fee.
412-795-0800
www.pittsburghbonsai.org

Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Town & Country Garden Tour

Saturday, June 24, 9 am - 5 pm
Tour fifteen glorious gardens in Squirrel Hill and Shadyside. Tickets are \$50 for a self-guided tour and \$130 for a bus tour that includes lunch at the Pittsburgh Golf Club.
www.pittsburghbotanicgarden.org

Greater Pittsburgh Chapter of ORT America Annual Garden Tour

Early July (date TBD)
Visit lovely gardens in Regent Square and Edgewood.
For information, contact Barbara Tisherman at tishermanb@gmail.com or 412-683-0207.

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania Native Plant Container Gardening Workshop

July 29, 2 - 4 pm
Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, Fox Chapel
Discover the best native species to use in a container garden and create one to take home. Reservation and fee required.
412-963-6100
www.aswp.org



Before Pruning

PRUNING TOPIARY

The mistake most people make with topiary is that they're afraid they'll do the wrong thing, so they don't prune at all. Then it loses its shape and is difficult, if not impossible, to restore.

June is the right time to prune topiary, with a follow up trim in the fall.



After Pruning

CALL US TODAY!

724-575-2106



*The pruning experts at
One Garden at a Time
can help protect
your investment
in your garden.*

SUMMER GARDENER'S SPECIAL

*6 hours of pruning
for the price of 5!*

With this ad.
Exp: 7-31-12

www.onegardenatatime.biz

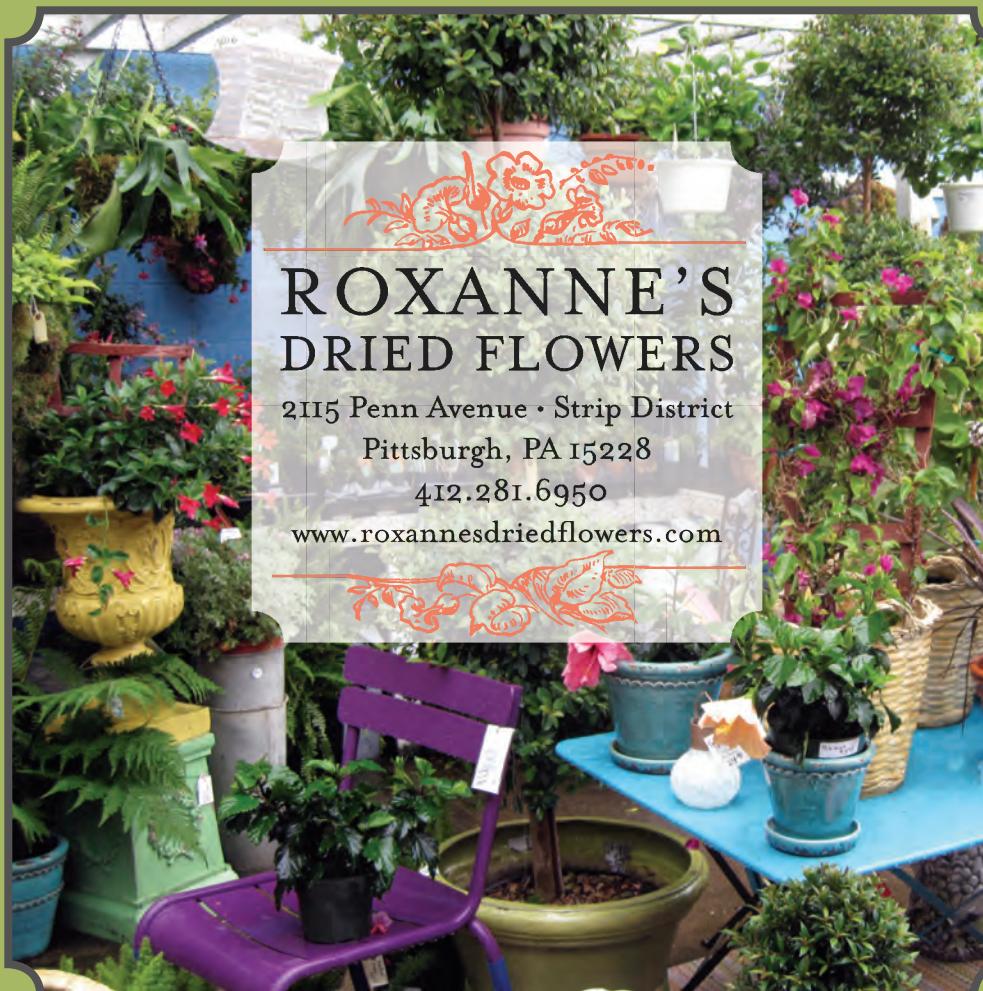
THE PORCH AT SCHENLEY OAKLAND'S MOST UNIQUE DINING DESTINATION



THEPORCHATSCHENLEY.COM

LOCATED IN SCHENLEY PLAZA ACROSS FROM THE CATHEDRAL OF LEARNING

All photography by Laura Petrilla. www.misslphotography.com



ROXANNE'S DRIED FLOWERS

2115 Penn Avenue • Strip District
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
412.281.6950
www.roxannedriedflowers.com

Handcrafted arrangements, live plants, furniture and accents for your home & garden.

Spring has arrived at Isabela on Grandview!

There is no better place to watch the beauty of Spring unfold than at **Isabela on Grandview!**



Experience for yourself why **Isabela on Grandview** was voted the

Best Overall & Most Romantic

2 consecutive years by the **Pittsburgh Magazine's Readers' Poll.**

Visit www.isabelaongrandview.com for sample menus, photos, and information.



Isabela on Grandview
1318 Grandview Avenue
Mount Washington

Call **412.431.5882** or visit www.isabelaongrandview.com to book a reservation.

FOR *Love* OF Gardening



PITTSBURGH BOTANIC *Garden*

After more than two decades of dreaming and drawing, the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden is finally starting to take shape. Located on 452 acres 20 minutes west of the city in North Fayette and Collier townships, it will be the region's first major outdoor public garden. It aims to be a "living museum" with documented collections of plants, beautiful and artistic garden displays, and education programs related to horticulture, nature, and botany.

A 30-year master plan projects that the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden will attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to its 18 gardens, five woodland areas, outdoor amphitheater, botanic research facility, and trails. The first garden area—Woodlands of the World—is expected to open this fall, featuring trees, shrubs, and perennials found in the United States, Asia, and Europe.

In 1998, Allegheny County awarded the nonprofit a 99-year lease of \$1 a year for its land. Earlier this year, the county agreed to lease six more acres to serve as the public entrance to the garden. The land houses a log cabin and farmhouse built in the late 1700s, which will be converted into a welcome center and administrative offices with surrounding gardens. An ancient apple orchard near the buildings will also be restored.

Other sections of the property are undergoing reclamation from acid mine drainage; the work is being funded by the sale of remaining coal from the site.

For more information visit www.pittsburghbotanicgarden.org.

**RIVER
PEDIATRIC THERAPIES**

**SUPERHERO
SUMMER
CAMP 2012**

Sign-up your
Child Today for all
3 Sessions in 1 Camp:

PT Boot Camp

Socialization

Handwriting

SCAN FOR
MORE INFO

www.RiverPediatric.com/events.html