

SPRING 2021

## Village at Willow Brook Stream Habitat Restoration



Thanks to the efforts of some dedicated residents at the Village at Willow Brook, the stream habitat on the north side of their condominiums is dramatically improving! The Village at Willow Brook is a 124-unit condo community that was built in 1996. The developer built the community along a tributary of the Oolentangy that is one of several called Turkey Run, referred to as Turkey Run “North” (not to be confused with the Turkey Run that flows through the OSU golf course!) The creek serves as a conduit for stormwater from an area of about 670 acres, bounded mostly by Bethel Rd. on the south, Case Rd. on the north, and as far west as OSU airport.

The significant rainfall events that have occurred in the past years have begun to cause serious erosion issues. This erosion has been compounded by overgrowth of invasive,

non-native bush honeysuckle, which outcompetes other native vegetation necessary for wildlife diversity leaving bare dirt underneath the shrubs that’s easily washed away.

The association Board has been planning habitat restoration for over a year and has contracted with the MAD Scientist Associates to develop a long-range bank stabilization plan. The work began in earnest when a core group of Willow Brook residents, including Gary Thornhill, PhD Ecologist and environmental consultant, reached out to FLOW for assistance. FLOW enlisted OSU “Pay it Forward” students to work with a group of residents and FLOW volunteers to begin the massive invasive honeysuckle removal on a 25° day in January 2020.

Work to remove honeysuckle from the banks and stream bed has been ongoing throughout the past summer and fall. The homeowners received a small grant in March 2020 from the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD.) Those funds allowed the Board to purchase coir logs (natural fibers wrapped in tubular netting that reduce overbank erosion,) downspout drain extensions, live willow and osier stakes, (important for stream bank stabilization,) and a number of other native plants. They also received at least 75 bare root shrubs and trees from FLOW.

Outreach to the OSU School of Environment and Natural Resources yielded a group of student volunteers, some of whom have worked with the resident volunteers throughout the spring, summer and fall planting the trees,

shrubs and cover plants on the bank-top buffer zone and in the understory along the bank. Planting the willow and osier stakes was very physically demanding, using rebar stakes to create pilot holes for the live stakes! Two OSU volunteers in particular, Zach Fisher and Samir Jain, have been



OSU Pay-it-Forward Volunteers, 1/20/20



Russell Tree Service brush pick-up

(cont. on page 3)

## FLOW Volunteers of the Season: Zach Fisher and Samir Jain

Zach Fisher is a fourth year Natural Resource Management Major with a specialization in Natural Resource Administration and Management. He said “The most satisfying part of the project was looking back at how much honeysuckle there was at the start and then walking the stream after working and seeing how much honeysuckle we were all able to cut away and replace with trees.” This summer he plans to intern with Preservation Parks of Delaware County and hopes to one day be managing restoration projects specializing in stream and wetland projects.



Left: Samir Jain; Right: Zach Fisher (unmasked for photo purposes only!)

One of the Willowbrook restoration project leads, Kim Forman, said Zach “began working with us in January and was back to help us on

May 6, 2020 and worked until October 14! Zach was always upbeat and friendly. He has a terrific work ethic, and understood what we were trying to accomplish in the ravine. We relied not only on his youth and strength, but on his advice (and his machete) in many areas!

Samir Jain is a third year Environmental Engineering major at OSU and hopes to work with water conservation in the future. His favorite aspect of the project was “working cohesively to tackle some challenging tasks which included river rerouting and honeysuckle removal and enjoyed seeing the improvements in the restoration process.” He’s hoping to find an engineering internship this summer and looks forward to senior year with the potential for humanitarian work upon graduation.

Kim also said of Samir “he began working with us at the end of May. He, too, worked many days with us and was game to do anything asked of him. He was unfailingly kind and polite and contributed greatly to our progress through the summer. Samir stepped up and helped a volunteer load hundreds of pounds of cut honeysuckle into a large enclosed truck.”

Thanks to both amazing volunteers who are vital to help FLOW improve the habitat of our watershed!

## THANK YOU!

Thanks to all of FLOW’s watershed partners!

**Alliance for Community Trees** for donating 3,000 individually wrapped redbud seedlings.

### All of our Greenspace Implementation Partners

- **The Columbus Foundation Green Fund** for providing us a generous grant to support our Greenspace Implementation project!!
  - **The AmeriCorps Maple 3 NCCC team** that is here helping us with greenspace projects this spring.
  - **The Methodist Theological School in Ohio** for hosting our AmeriCorps team. Their generous offer of housing made the AmeriCorps team dream possible.
  - **DelCo Water** for generously allowing us access to their land for greenspace improvements.
  - **AquaDoc employees** for helping us to remove invasive bush honeysuckle from the 1 acre greenspace at the western access to Woodward Park Nature Preserve. AquaDoc employees also generously volunteered their time to help us with invasive species removal for our new FLOW video (to be shown on Earthday 2021).
  - **Students from Ohio State University** helping us with Capstone studies this Semester. And a special thanks to our Rush Run Capstone team from Food, Agriculture and Biological Engineering who has been helping us in the Autumn and Winter Semesters!
  - **Franklin County Environment Court Clerk** and court volunteers for helping again this year at Sawmill Wetlands.
  - **Green Columbus** for providing us native seedling trees and shrubs and pollinator seed to restore portions of our watershed during Earth Month!
  - **Plantation Products** generously donated 12 boxes of seed to FLOW to help green up the watershed!
- Special thanks to our large-hearted volunteers who have continued to help us in COVID safe ways! We could not have accomplished what we did during this crazy year without you. Small groups accomplished a lot in picking up litter, planting trees, planting prairie plants, weeding and communicating with our partners!**

### Stream Water Quality Monitoring Volunteers Wanted!

FLOW volunteers annually monitor the stream water quality of selected Olentangy River tributaries. Volunteer teams measure physical, chemical and biological attributes, including the presence of various macroinvertebrates (insects and other small animals that indicate the level of water pollution). Training sessions are held in May, with testing starting June 15 through September. **Please contact FLOW at [info@olentangywatershed.org](mailto:info@olentangywatershed.org)** if you’re interested in joining us!

## Willow Brook Restoration *(continued from page 1)*

outstanding! Zach has provided over 60 hours of assistance, along with a pickup truck to help remove honeysuckle branches! Samir also participated in most of the work sessions throughout the summer and fall.

Critically important for habitat restoration is regular watering of the new plantings in the absence of sufficient rainfall, as experienced in Central Ohio this summer. One of the resident leaders, Janelle Bell, has been leading that function along with her many other habitat restoration activities.

During the summer, some of the rocks in the streambed were moved against areas of the bank that have been severely undercut. A longer-term solution to reduce further bank erosion will be implemented in early 2021 when Channel Maintenance Systems of Dayton reinforces the bases of the most severe slopes.

Ryan Pilewski from FSWCD visited the stream corridor in the fall of 2020 and complimented the volunteers on their progress.

But the residents weren't finished by the end of summer – they completed several large honeysuckle removal events in October, again utilizing OSU students, FLOW and other volunteers. Russell Tree Experts hauled away all the cut branches at no charge! Green Columbus also provided a number of healthy oaks and FLOW donated several dozen redbud seedlings. Those trees were planted last fall. Russell also provided 200 additional trees through the program "Tree for a Tree". Those trees were "heeled in" in the Willow Brook gardens for the winter and will be planted in the spring of 2021.

Planning for landscaping and planting continued through the winter with assistance from Amy Dutt of Scioto Gardens. This year the team will continue honeysuckle removal, native tree and shrub planting and stream bank erosion mitigation. The residents and visitors are already enjoying the dramatic improvement in the scenic beauty of their stream and look forward to further enhancements of native vegetation and improved wildlife diversity in the years ahead!

If you're interested in volunteering with this habitat restoration project please contact Kim Forman at [kimkforman@yahoo.com](mailto:kimkforman@yahoo.com).

And if you live along a waterway, you can help by:

- Knowing that all local storm water drains lead to your stream or river. They are not filtered so anything you can do to prevent pollution will help.
- Reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn.



*Coir Logs placed on upper bank*



*"Planting" live willow and osier dogwood stakes*



*Severe erosion area 3, May 2020*



*Severe erosion area 3, Sept. 2020*



*Zach and Samir attacking honeysuckle*

- Leaving an unmowed barrier along the edge of your stream to help filter rain runoff.
- Cleaning up pet waste and litter.
- Washing vehicles on your lawn.
- Planting native species and considering a prairie or pollinator garden.

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Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed  
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Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the Olentangy River clean and safe for all to enjoy through public education, volunteer activities, and coordination with local decision makers. FLOW is registered with the IRS as a tax-exempt, nonprofit charitable organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

**FLOW relies heavily on volunteer participation to create positive change in our watershed.** Please contact us for information on how you can volunteer. We have a wide variety of opportunities to fit your schedule and match your skills and interests. To be added to the FLOW email list, please send a request to info@olentangywatershed.org with a subject line of “email list”.

**Find FLOW on PointApp!** Get the PointApp on your phone to get notified of volunteer opportunities with FLOW and other local non-profits. It's a free way to find projects that fit your schedule!



## Free ways to Donate to FLOW



### Kroger Plus Card

By registering your Kroger Plus card, you can help FLOW receive a donation of 5% of qualified purchases under the Kroger Community Rewards Program at no cost to you. Use your registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count. Go to **groger.com**, select **Kroger Community Rewards**, and then follow the steps to link your card to FLOW. Our new code is AU317.

### AmazonSmile:

With AmazonSmile, you can donate to FLOW at no cost to yourself. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> and search for Friends Of The Lower Olentangy.

Thereafter, start your Amazon sessions at <https://smile.amazon.com>.



As part of FLOW's efforts to engage homeowners about what they can do for our watershed, we will be releasing a series of social media posts and articles on our website all about backyard conservation this Earth Month, beginning April 1! This series shares information about simple practices everyday people can adopt in their homes, yards, and garages to help the environment. How to manage your yard to support ecosystems and prevent water pollution, how to compost, how to mitigate stormwater runoff, and even how to attract wildlife to your backyard is included. Check out FLOW's website for detailed articles and FLOW's social media accounts for infographic-style summaries of the same information. Happy Earth Month!