



Newsletter of the Center City Residents' Association

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Schuylkill River Acclaimed 2014 River of the Year

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Walkers, runners, bikers, dog owners, gardeners, kids, sunbathers, artists, rowers, canoeists, kayakers – just about everyone in our neighborhood – enjoy the Schuylkill River. Apparently so do other Pennsylvanians. More than 5,500 members of the public voted online last fall, from November 25 to December 27, in the *Pennsylvania River of the Year* contest, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – and the Schuylkill won!

A \$10,000 Leadership Grant to help fund the River's activities will be awarded to the winning applicant, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, which manages the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The Association sponsors the *Annual Schuylkill River Sojourn*, a 112-mile, seven-day, guided canoe/kayak trip from Schuylkill Haven, just south of Pottsville in Schuylkill County, to Philadelphia's Boathouse Row.

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The Center City skyline, as seen from the Schuylkill River and Boathouse Row, glows at sunset.

For three seasons each year, rowers, canoeists and kayakers ply the waters of the Schuylkill River along Boathouse Row. And as long as the river is not frozen or too windy, rowers are actually on the water all four seasons of the year. The 10 rowing clubs of Boathouse Row comprise the **Schuylkill Navy**, the oldest amateur athletic governing body in the U.S. Last year, Margaret Meigs was elected Commodore, only the second woman Commodore since the Navy was founded in 1858. Meigs and her husband, Paul Laskow, are rowers and members of the University Barge Club.

Regattas are held on the Schuylkill River from February to November. (Go to www.boathouserow.org/ for schedules.) Most follow the style of more traditional athletic competitions. Some races bear their own stamp of originality, such as the *Walnut2Walnut* and the *Philadelphia International Dragon Boat Festival*.

Conducted by the Independence Seaport Museum and co-sponsored by the Schuylkill Navy, **Walnut2Walnut**, on May 31 this year, consists of a 15-mile, two-river regatta; a river-to-river scavenger hunt; and a Saturday stroll along Walnut Street (www.phillyseaport.org/walnut2walnut). Funds raised support the museum's SAILOR (Science and Arts Innovative Learning On the River) education program, which provides a hands-on approach to boat building (www.phillyseaport.org/sailorprogram).

Following in the fall is the ever-popular annual **Philadelphia International Dragon Boat Festival** on Saturday, October 4, starting at 8 a.m. (www.philadragonboatfestival.com/).

Schuylkill River Tours offers a new attraction this year – wine-education tours. Boat tours, between Schuylkill Banks and Bartram's Gardens, are run by Patriot Harbor Lines each spring and summer. (www.phillybyboat.com/)

For people who prefer to stay on land, a variety of outdoor recreational activities are available along the river's banks. The **Schuylkill River Trail** (www.schuylkillrivertrail.com/), popular with runners, walkers, and bikers, stretches for 26 miles from Center City Philadelphia to Phoenixville in Chester County. The Trail will be almost 130 miles long



An artist at work during the Art in the Open festival along the Schuylkill Banks.

when completed. The **Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk** provides runners, pedestrians, bikers and others on wheels with connections to the Schuylkill River Trail between Locust Street and the South Street Bridge.

Friends in the City's regular walking club of seniors, **Schuylkill Walkers**, meets daily for three-mile walks on the River Trail from Locust Street to the Art Museum and back. The club meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:25 a.m., and Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m. (www.friendscentercity.org/default/events-and-activities).

Each May, one weekend is set aside for the **Art in the Open Plein-Air Festival**, wherein artists set up easels outdoors along the banks of the river while the public is free to stroll by and observe them at work (www.artintheopenphila.org). To learn about other events along the **Schuylkill Banks** go to (www.schuylkillbanks.org/events).

Members of CCRA may sign up for access to one of 70 gardening plots in the **Schuylkill River Park Community Garden** (www.srpcg.org/). The Community Garden is a National Wildlife Certified Wildlife Habitat and a member of Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's City Harvest Program, which donates surplus produce to local food cupboards. Schuylkill River Park also maintains a dog park, a playground, and basketball courts. **Friends of Schuylkill River Park** holds an annual **Fall Festival** one Saturday in October (www.fsrp.org/).



The pedestrian footbridge linking Center City and University City, as seen from Schuylkill River Park.

Diners at the restaurant **Bistro St. Tropez**, on the fourth floor of the Marketplace Design Center at 23rd and Market, can enjoy a singular view of the Schuylkill River, which is especially beautiful at night. With a glass of wine and some succulent *escargots*, one could almost sense the romance of an evening in Paris overlooking the Seine. And when the City of Philadelphia sets off fireworks over the Art Museum on the night of July 4th, many people gather in Schuylkill River Park to get a prime vantage point for marking Independence Day.

Day or night, on water or land, Center City residents have dozens of reasons to celebrate the Schuylkill!