

The James and Anne
Robinson Foundation
2010 Annual Report





Message from the Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2010 was an exciting year for the James and Anne Robinson Foundation. We initiated our Community Green Footprint Awards, formed partnerships with three local schools, treated the construction workers at the Robinson Nature Center to some ice cream, and began the crucial process of recruiting volunteers for the Robinson Nature Center. The year ended with a new beginning for the Foundation. Our offices are now located in the Simpsonville Mill office complex, overlooking Anne Robinson's property from across the Middle Patuxent River. From our back windows, you can see past the river and through the trees to Anne Robinson's backyard, now part of the Robinson Nature Center grounds. Watching over Anne Robinson's beloved land gives us a still greater sense of responsibility as we move into the next chapter for the land, long a part of Howard County's history.

The Robinson Nature Center is tantalizingly close to completion. When its doors open, children and adults in Howard County and throughout our area will have a new world to explore. It truly won't be long until the Center begins to serve as a place for families to learn and play and for the community to gather. Supporting and expanding access and offerings at the Center will be a major focus for the Foundation in the coming years.



"I have become part of the Property, and the Property has become part of me. The memories of my late husband, James Howard Robinson; the beauty of the woods; the sounds of the creatures; and the wonders of nature; all are part of me and my Property. It is my wish and desire to maintain my Property in its natural state for all to enjoy as I have. I want the Property to serve as a source of inspiration, education and beauty for the general public."

– Excerpt from Anne Robinson's
Letter of Instruction, 2005





For the Foundation to help the Center reach its full potential, we will need community support. Thank you to those who already stepped forward in 2010, by volunteering your time and expertise, donating equipment or supplies, or generously giving financial support. Our wonderful volunteers donated over 500 hours of service. But that is just the beginning. Howard County is building one of the finest nature centers in the country, and now it is up to us to build the support network our Center deserves. I hope you'll join us! Let's work together to fulfill Anne Robinson's dream for our community.

Sincerely yours,

Marianne Pettis, Executive Director



Research continued in 2010 into James and Anne Robinson's ancestry and personal histories. The story of their long family connections with Maryland, its land and rivers, will be told in a special exhibit in the Robinson Legacy Room at the Nature Center.

Our investigations took us to the Smithsonian to explore the Robinson-Via Family Papers, an extensive collection documenting family life, tobacco farming, and rural culture in Prince Georges County since James Robinson's great-grandfather bought land there in 1843. Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., the archive's donor and a relative of James Robinson, generously assisted us in identifying photos, deeds, and other documents of great interest to the Robinson Family.

Photo of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Prince Georges County by Lucille Walker



New Home in Simpsonville!

On December 15, 2010, Marianne Pettis and volunteer Outreach Coordinator Barbara Matheson welcomed trustees, advisory board members, volunteers, and friends of the Robinson Foundation to an open house in our new office. In the Simpsonville Mill complex on Grace Drive, the light-filled space is just across the river from James and Anne Robinson's woods and home site. While enjoying homemade scones and warm conversation, Foundation supporters could look out the back windows to glimpse the Nature Center through winter-bare trees.

The need for more room for volunteers prompted the move, though we miss our friends and supporters at our former office in the innovative Enviro-Center in Jessup. Annie's wonderful friends at the Howard County Christian Services Thrift Shop generously donated furnishings such as an antique oak dining table where we think Annie would feel at home sipping tea. We anticipate many gatherings around it to talk about ways the Foundation can lead efforts to support the Center and environmental education around our area.

Advisory Board Chair Jeff Agnor noticed that a fallen tree nearly bridged the river to the Robinson property. "Having our office overlooking the Nature Center presents a great opportunity," says Jeff. "This location makes clear our connection to the very place that inspired the creation of our organization and to the Robinson Center."



"I think that Annie would be overwhelmed that this could really happen. She just wanted children to understand nature and for people in the county, as it was building so fast, to have a place to enjoy the peace and the beauty of nature. She and James bought the land together and loved it together. That is the legacy she left us."

– Eileen Shields, Member, Robinson Foundation Board of Trustees, and friend of Anne Robinson

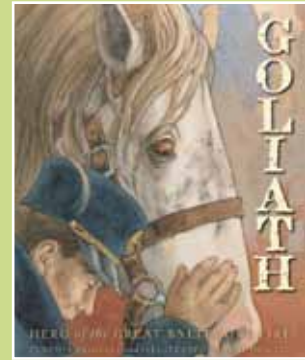


A Hero's Story

On February 7, 1904, fire bells rang throughout Baltimore. Probably a dropped cigarette had ignited a blaze that would destroy 140 acres and 2,500 businesses throughout the center of the city. Two of the first responders to the blaze were a grey Percheron named Goliath and his driver, Eugene Frank Short. The skill and bold action of the brave horse and Pipeman Short made them heroes of the Great Baltimore Fire.

A framed photo of Goliath and Frank Short proudly stood on Anne Robinson's shelves for decades, a testament to Anne's love for horses and her Grandfather Short. To celebrate their important roles in Annie's life, the Foundation sponsored a visit on October 22 to Swansfield Elementary School by Claudia Friddell, author of a new children's book, *Goliath: Hero of the Great Baltimore Fire*.

The author, a first grade teacher in Baltimore, spent a day at the school, talking about Goliath's courage and about a key event in local history. In every classroom, the talented teacher also told her audience about Anne Robinson and her dream of a nature center on her land nearby. Over 500 Swansfield students, plus faculty and staff, learned the exciting news that the Robinson Nature Center will soon open just down Cedar Lane.



“While it is always a joy to talk about my book, Goliath: Hero of the Great Baltimore Fire, with audiences of all ages, it is a particular delight for me - a first grade teacher - to visit elementary schools. Last fall I spent an amazing day with students and teachers at Swansfield Elementary School. Their enthusiasm for history, horses, and heroes was impressive! It was a special treat to get a sneak peak at the Robinson Center grounds as Anne Robinson's grandfather was the heroic driver of Goliath's water tower.”

– Claudia Friddell, Author of *Goliath*





Countdown to Opening Day

On a hot September afternoon, construction workers at the Robinson Nature Center paused at an unexpected sound. Music blared from an ice cream truck pulling into the drive. Representatives of the Robinson Foundation, sponsor of the event, were also arriving to shake the hands of the dedicated designers, supervisors, and construction workers on site that day. As everyone enjoyed Creamsicles and ice cream sandwiches, Foundation trustees and volunteers had a chance to talk with the people who are turning the dream of the Center into a steel-and-glass reality.

Among the many exciting sights visitors noticed that day were sustainable building features such as the green roof, porous pavement, and local stone construction materials. Two college interns with the Foundation studied the building's green features through the summer, interviewing experts on the Center at the Department of Recreation and Parks and at Forrester Construction Company. Eric Pettis and Adam Schwemin, undergraduates studying engineering and environmental science, learned about all of the features that will earn the Center points toward LEED certification. LEED is the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program to recognize sustainable building design and construction. Eric and Adam identified all the points the Center needs to reach its ultimate goal, LEED Platinum Certification, the program's highest level of achievement.



“The internship itself was a great first step for me into the environmental work field because I had never had something to work on outside of school that dealt with my major. While I have not actually been to the nature center yet, having this project confirmed for me that I want a job in this field in the future.”

– Adam Schwemin,
Robinson Foundation Summer
Intern, 2010



By the fall, interior work at the Center was well under way. And by December 2010, visitors in hard hats could catch glimpses of the Simpsonville history room and wildlife exhibits as well as peek into classrooms and the auditorium and digital planetarium spaces. The progress is thrilling to everyone who is waiting for the doors to open next summer.



“Gary J. Arthur, Sr., Director of Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks, was with the department for 31 years and served as the Director throughout the design & development of the Robinson Nature Center. Gary was instrumental in bringing this project to fruition for the people of Howard County.

He grew up in Baltimore and attended Clemson University on a football scholarship, graduating in 1969. His career in recreation and parks was long and varied, beginning in South Carolina and later in Baltimore County. He was Director of Recreation & Parks in Ocean City, MD before coming to Howard County.

Gary was a loving husband, father, and grandfather, who valued family above all else. He was a dedicated professional and leader whose vision, humor, work ethic, and respect for others earned the respect and affection of his coworkers, friends, and partners in the community.

He was extremely proud of the new facility in the making. Though gravely ill with cancer, he asked his wife to drive him to the Robinson Nature Center construction site for one last visit. He left us a week later, on May 27, 2010. We know he will be with us in spirit when the Center opens in 2011.”

– Mark Raab, Member, Robinson Foundation Board of Trustees, and Superintendent, Natural Resources Division, Howard County Recreation & Parks



Green Footprint Awards

The Green Footprint Awards aim to recognize and encourage outstanding local leadership in nature conservation, environmental sustainability, and caring for the natural world. In 2009, 12 Howard County public high school students were honored with the first James and Anne Robinson Award for Student Environmental Leadership. In 2010, the program was expanded to acknowledge outstanding education and community leadership as well as high school student leadership.

Two Green Footprint Awards, one for Education and one for Community Leadership, were presented April 17 at Howard County GreenFest. Jeff Agnor, chair of the Robinson Advisory Board, announced that the Community award recipient was Conscious Corner, a co-owned Howard County business that includes Roots Market, Nest, Bark, and Great Sage Restaurant. Mr. Agnor said, "The Foundation believes that Jody Cutler, Jeff and Holly Kaufman, and Anastasia MacDonald represent exemplary sustainable business owners and community leaders in our County and will lead entrepreneurs and others in our community to follow in their economically and ecologically green footsteps."



"It is truly an honor to have been selected as the first recipient of the Green Footprint Education Leadership Award from the Robinson Foundation. James and Anne Robinson would be proud of all the organizations, agencies, educators, and volunteers in our County who are committed to teaching our youth about the importance of preserving and protecting the world we share. The Robinsons' legacy and the important mission of the Foundation inspire all of us to work together to nurture youth stewardship and foster appreciation of our fragile Earth."

– Karen Learmouth, Elementary Science Coordinator, Howard County Public Schools, and Green Footprint Education Award recipient, 2010



The award for Education Leadership was given to Karen Learmouth, Elementary Science Coordinator for the Howard County Public School System. "She has been a driving force in the Green School movement," said Mr. Agnor, "and has shared her love of nature with children by developing environmental science curricula for kindergarten through fifth grade. Karen represents the finest of teachers throughout our County and will inspire others to follow in her very green educational footsteps."

Recipients of the Education and Community Leadership Awards received engraved plaques, beautifully designed by Foundation volunteer Suzanne Probst. This year's recipients of Student Leadership Awards again received copies of Ned Tillman's book, *The Chesapeake Watershed: A Sense of Place and A Call to Action*, and an honorarium.

Congratulations and many thanks to all of our Green Footprint Award recipients.

"Thank you for your kind and generous award. I hope in the future to live up to the ideals of your organization."

– Recipient of Green Footprint Award
for Student Environmental
Leadership, 2010



Events in 2010

The Robinson Foundation joined a national celebration of author and ecologist Aldo Leopold on March 6, 2010. Naturalist Jo Solem led a walk through the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, pointing out the important efforts underway to improve habitat for American Woodcocks. Leopold writes about the dramatic courtship flights of woodcocks in his classic book, *A Sand County Almanac*, and walk participants were delighted to learn that more of the birds will be sky dancing near us thanks to the MPEA.

Many of the Foundation's other events for the year focused on spreading the word about the Robinson Nature Center. Some of the places we appeared included:

- Howard County GreenFest, April 17, 2010
- Live Green Howard County, August 14, 2010
- River Hill Village Board Meeting, September 27, 2010
- Greentober Fest, October 9, 2010
- 50+ Expo, October 15, 2010

Many thanks to everyone who stepped up to our displays to learn about the Center—and stayed to sign up for more information and volunteer opportunities. We hope to see you more often in 2011.



“When I took on the role of volunteer Outreach Coordinator early in 2010, Foundation volunteers were excited and inviting but few in number. We just needed more of them – and the Nature Center needs lots more. Plans are shaping up. Strategies for recruitment and priorities for promotion are in place. Our first real effort was the 50+ Expo at Wilde Lake High School on October 15. Our booth was busy with visitors, happy to learn about the Nature Center and wanting to get involved. Many of them had wonderful ideas of activities and programs they would like to see at the Robinson Nature Center. We left with 50 names of potential volunteers and friends for the Center. Our computer volunteer database is growing, managed by another wonderful volunteer, Abel Folarin. Yet another volunteer, Susan Matthews, began the planning for the first volunteer training sessions in spring, 2011. So many dedicated people are giving their time to help the Foundation support the Robinson Nature Center. Let me know if you want to join us!”

– Barb Matheson, Volunteer Outreach Coordinator for the Robinson Foundation



In Kind Donors

Waverly Real Estate Group, LLC

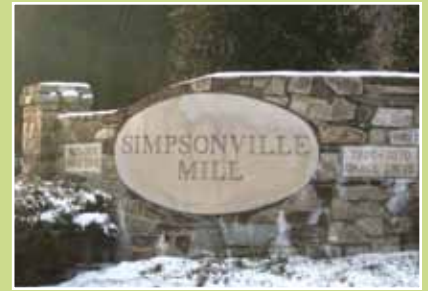
- One month rent abatement for the month of December

Christian Services of Howard County

- Office furniture including conference table plus 12 chairs, 2 office tables, 2 storage cabinets, 4 office chairs, 2 book cases, laser jet printer, dishes, and kitchen supplies

Stan Sersen, Architectural Support Group

- Phone system



“Mim Dubin is one of the founding members of the Advisory Board of the Robinson Foundation. She is both a successful entrepreneur and a respected business leader, and has contributed invaluable knowledge and insight as our representative from the business community. Mim also has a profound love and respect for the natural world and understands that business success and sustainability are compatible goals. Mim has helped us find the right balance. It has been a great privilege to work with her.”

Mim recently announced that she is stepping down from the Advisory Board to spend more time with her growing family. Many thanks to Mim for her contributions in advancing the mission of the Foundation during a very critical time in our development. We wish Mim all the best in her future adventures, and we look forward to her continued involvement with the work of the Foundation.”

– Jeffrey T. Agnor, Chair,
Robinson Foundation
Advisory Board



Volunteer Shout Out

Volunteers are essential to the Robinson Foundation. In 2010, these talented individuals devoted an impressive 517 hours to support Nature Center development and all of our efforts throughout the year.

We try to thank them often for their many contributions, in words and deeds. Two volunteer appreciation events were especially memorable this year. A fall walk through the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, led by naturalist and photographer Pam Franks, introduced some of our most dedicated volunteers to the MPEA and to each other. We also gathered at the Howard County Conservancy's Fiddlers and Fireflies outdoor concert, to talk, listen to music, and share gazpacho and other delicious picnic fare prepared by Marianne Pettis. We hope that each plateful of food expressed our enthusiastic "Thank you!"

Two of our most dedicated volunteers came to us again through HoLLIE, Howard County Legacy Leadership Institute on the Environment. HoLLIE is an innovative training program that provides 80 hours of intensive instruction in environmental science and leadership skills, plus 150 hours of volunteer field placements with local environmental organizations. Abel Folarin, a mining engineer, has become our in-house expert on computer databases, and Ernest Hilsenrath, a former NASA physicist, used his technical expertise to develop a PowerPoint presentation on the Center that focuses on its sustainable design features.



"As the Robinson Foundation prepared and staged for the opening of the Robinson Nature Center in the Spring 2011, they solicited pre-opening "friends" for which I was pleased to enroll. I took advantage of several pre-opening activities that made me more aware of the natural environment surrounding the new Nature Center such as the informative nature walk/hike in the adjacent Middle Patuxent Environmental Area hosted by fellow volunteer Pam Franks. I am looking forward to similar activities to be sponsored by the Foundation that connect volunteers to the Nature Center and its natural environment."

– Al Pflugrad, Volunteer



Volunteers have contributed to the Foundation’s work in many other ways too. Here are just some of the ways they’ve helped:

- Library display on Robinson Center
- Foundation display at events around County
- Meetings with potential volunteers
- Computer and technical assistance
- Relocation assistance
- Photography and graphic design
- Events and activities planning
- Awards program coordination

In November, Pam Franks led a thank you outing for fellow volunteers in the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, pointing out the shapes, colors, and textures that the coming winter reveals in nature. It was a fitting way, at the end of the year, to remind everyone what we’re working for. Many thanks to Pam and to all of our valued volunteers for everything you do.

“I am excited about being a volunteer with the Robinson Foundation because I love nature. Having a nature center built in my area is like a dream come true. I hope I’ll be able to inspire young children and even adults to become as interested in insects and other creatures that surround us as I am.”

– Mia Dubin, Volunteer

“Almost as soon as I learned of the Robinson Foundation and its endeavor to build a nature center and encourage the community to protect, preserve, and appreciate our natural resources, I knew I wanted to get involved. Being outside with my children, seeing their wonder and curiosity at the natural world has opened my eyes to the importance of these efforts.”

– Rena Dubin, Volunteer



Robinson Advisory Board

Since its creation in 2009, the Foundation's Advisory Board has benefitted from the talented leadership of Jeff Agnor as Acting Chair. In August 2010, Jeff was unanimously elected to be the group's first Chair. His guidance will help direct the Foundation's work in the crucial months leading to the opening of the Nature Center and in the first years of its operation.

Jeff Agnor is an attorney with Davis, Agnor, Rapaport & Skalny, LLC in Columbia, Maryland, where he represents businesses, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit organizations. In addition to his work with the Robinson Foundation, Jeff serves on the Board of Directors of the Howard County Green Business Council. He is also Chair of the Advisory Board for the Howard Community College Center for Entrepreneurial and Business Excellence.

The Foundation is honored that Jeff generously shares his time and talents to further our mission. Says Marianne Pettis, "Jeff Agnor is the kind of person who is not afraid to look into the future and see great things for the Foundation. Through Jeff's vision, the Foundation will become a meaningful partner not only of the Robinson Nature Center but also of the entire community through support for environmental initiatives throughout the County and beyond."



The mission of the Robinson Foundation Advisory Board is to provide non-binding advice to the Board of Trustees, to raise public awareness of and support for the Foundation and the Robinson Nature Center, and to generally support the mission of the Foundation.

*THE JAMES AND ANNE
ROBINSON FOUNDATION
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The James and Anne Robinson Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting the Robinson Nature Center and environmental education in Howard County, Maryland.



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Drawing on the legacy of Anne Robinson, our founder, the Robinson Foundation supports environmental education initiatives in and around Howard County, Maryland.

Our primary focus is support for the Robinson Nature Center; other focal areas include the teaching of natural science programs and the ethics of environmental stewardship and sustainability. In carrying out our mission, we seek to think globally and act locally and to partner with other organizations that share our values.

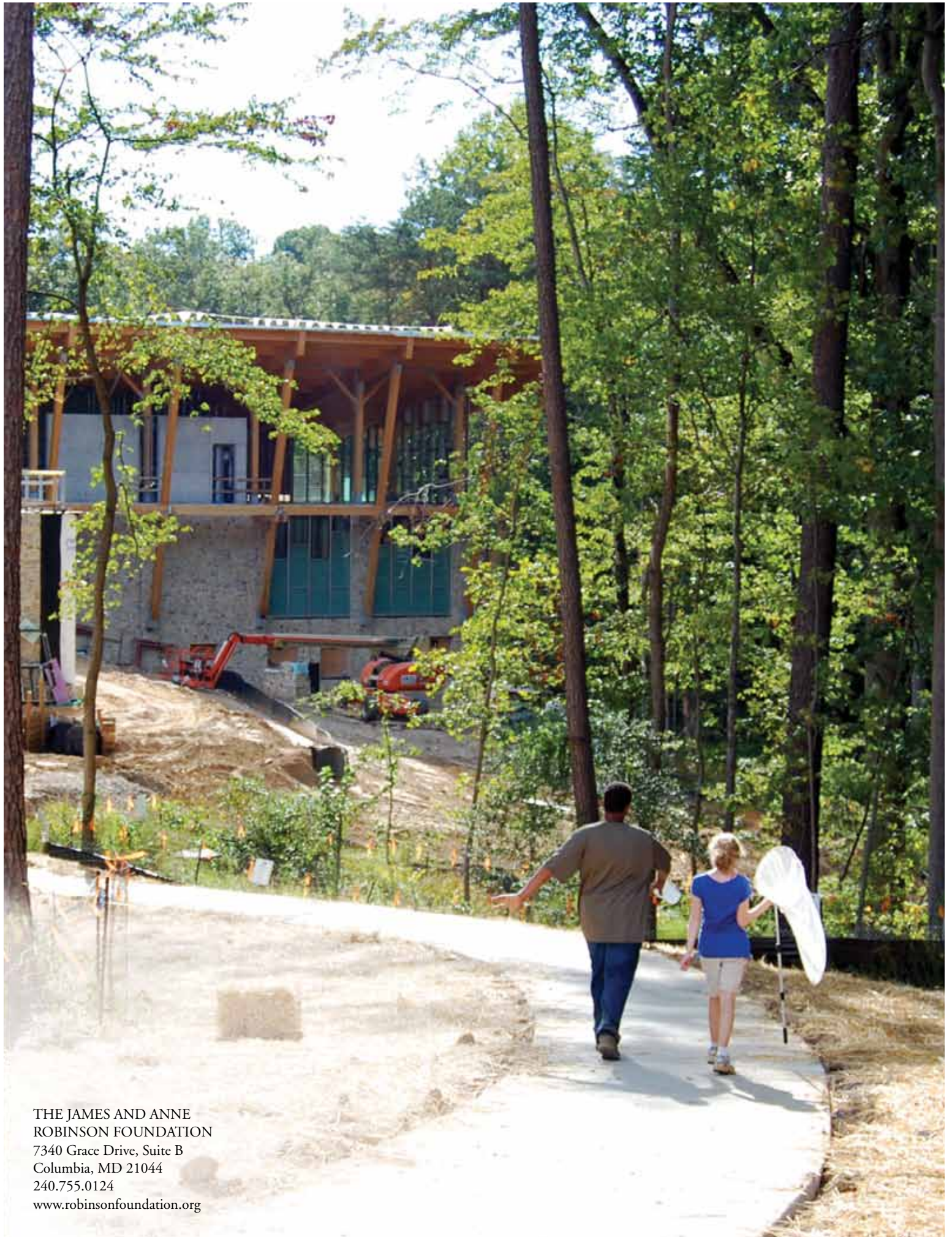
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Graphic Designer: Suzanne Probst

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Other photos by Rena Dubin, Julie Dunlap, Marianne Pettis, M. Lee Preston Jr., Suzanne Probst, Mark Raab, and Lucille Walker

Stained glass woodcock window created by Leon Bezdikian



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