



ALICE FERGUSON FOUNDATION

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

[fergusonfoundation.org](https://fergusonfoundation.org)





*Alice Ferguson Foundation's mission is to connect people to the natural world, sustainable agricultural practices, and the cultural heritage of their local watershed through education, stewardship, and advocacy.*

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# FROM THE DESK OF THE Executive Director



Theresa Cullen,  
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The past year has challenged us all. We've had to pause our normal daily routines in ways that were scary, tense and uncertain. During this difficult year, we also found moments of grace - chances to spend time at home with family and to reconnect with the natural world that surrounds us.

For decades, our work has been about bringing groups of children, teachers and volunteers into nature for memorable (and educational) experiences. Suddenly, we couldn't do that any more. So instead, our educators took the essence of what makes our programs so special, and crafted live virtual experiences so that thousands of children and families could engage with science in a real and hands-on way.

With the 2020 year behind us, I reflect on the resilience our staff, schools, and community have shown. In 2021, we continue to head into the unknown. With your ongoing support, I know we will be able to continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands of children, their teachers, and their families.



*Our transformative environmental education programs reaffirm the importance of using the outdoors as a tool for learning and ensure more local children form an appreciation for the world they live in.*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steve Kim, *Chairman*  
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Michael Berger, *Treasurer*  
Kent Hibben, *Secretary*

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Gail Dickert  
Christy Goldfuss  
Sue Jones  
Nakita Reed  
Kay Powell  
David Sloan, Jr.  
Kate Zabrieske



# SURVIVING 2020



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## THE YEAR OF POTENTIAL THAT BECAME A STORY OF SURVIVAL

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In January of 2020, our educators and staff were gearing up for a spring full of student visits, ready to explore the sights and sounds of nature with kids in a way that inspired a love of learning and made science real to kids for sometimes the first time in their lives. However, things quickly changed as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the country in mid-March. We suspended all of our planned education programs, paused our community outreach events and cleanup efforts, and cancelled all of our events.

***In the blink of an eye, our 330-acres Hard Bargain Farm environmental campus was empty. Our gates were closed.*** Laughter no longer filled the bunkhouses before bedtime of an overnight field trip. Our dairy cows missed their young visitors who helped with daily milkings and farm chores and our portable science equipment was put into storage. We crossed our fingers, and hoped everything would get back to normal in a couple of weeks.

As March became April, we realized the pandemic was here to stay. We had to do

something. So we took the science concepts we taught to kids during the fun, hands-on adventures in nature, and found ways to recreate them through a computer screen. We grabbed our phone cameras, and took virtual groups of kids to the barnyard, down the winding nature trails, and to the shoreline of the Potomac River. By the end of the summer, we had transformed two rooms in our offices to studio spaces, set up our microscopes and critter tanks, and were ready to hit the ground running with live virtual learning programs.

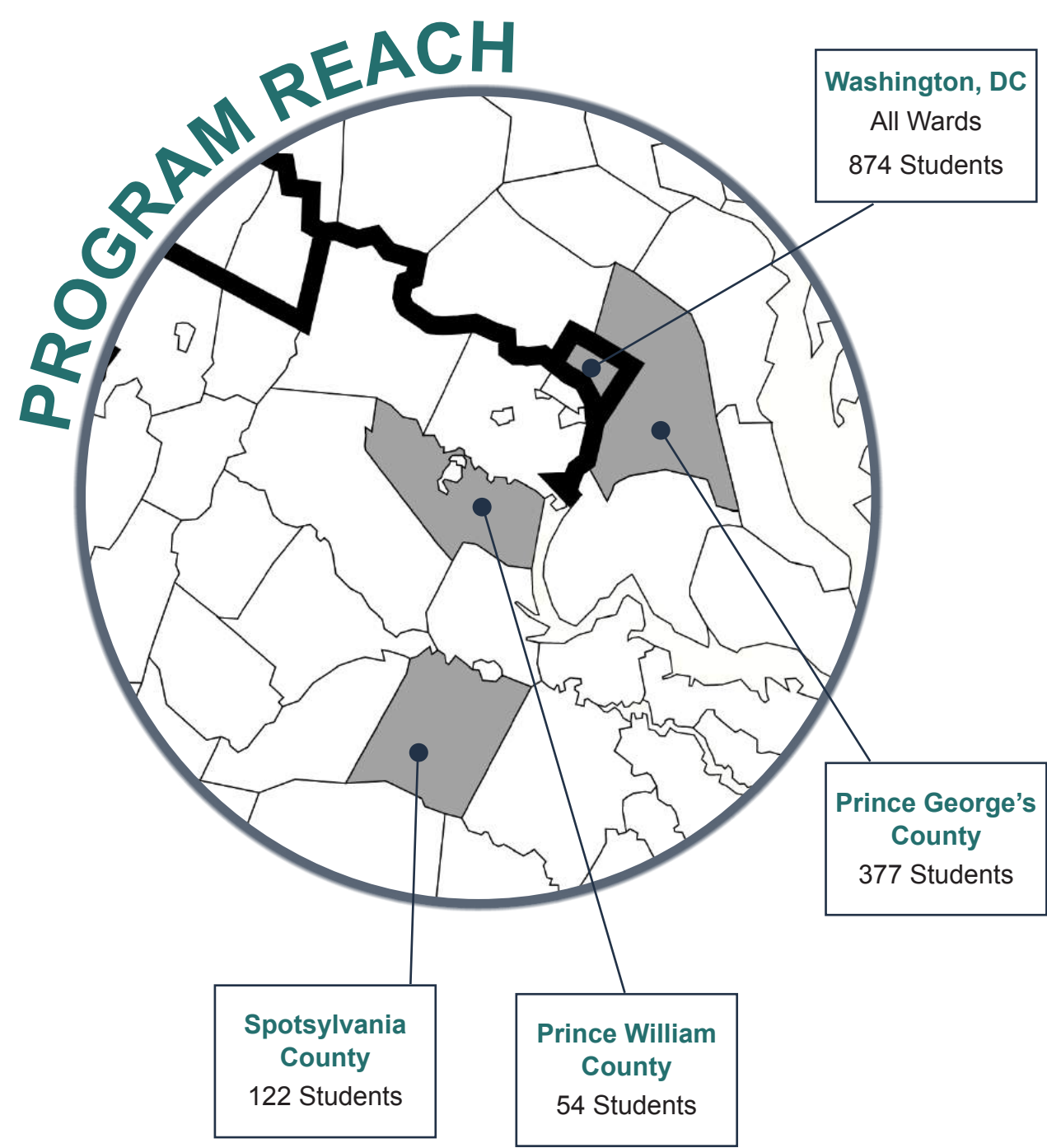
As we struggled to navigate the uncertain future of our Foundation, students, teachers and families alike were challenged with the new concept of “virtual learning” from home. **We couldn’t ignore the pressing needs of our community for classroom programs that got kids excited about learning. We refused to let 2020 be the end of the Alice Ferguson Foundation.**

**In this report, we are proud to share with you our survival story.**



# OUR PROGRAMS

## By The Numbers



WE BELIEVE THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT AND CONNECT WITH THE NATURAL WORLD. ESPECIALLY NOW.



**2,534**  
students and teachers from **37 schools** connected to nature through virtual programs and field investigations.

**1,421**  
cleanup volunteers from **61 events** helped remove more than **56,000 pounds** of trash from our local communities.



**188**  
students experiences from **10 schools** were recorded after completing a school-wide waste footprint analysis.

**60,000+**  
individuals engaged with our **37 activity videos** and **13 free learning resources** shared on across social media and website.





## BRINGING NATURE HOME

# Virtual Programs

### Spring 2020

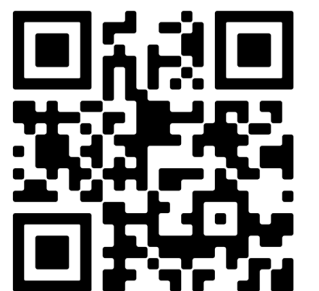
To support teachers and families through the end of the school year, **our educators developed 13 virtual lesson plans and 37 distance learning videos** that took the activities of our onsite programs and made them into something kids could do from home or from their yard.



To close out the 2019 - 2020 school year, **our barnyard friends** wished students from 40 classes a wonderful summer, virtually. Classes joined us for a meet-and-greet session with our furry and feathery friends, say hello and ask questions about life on the farm.



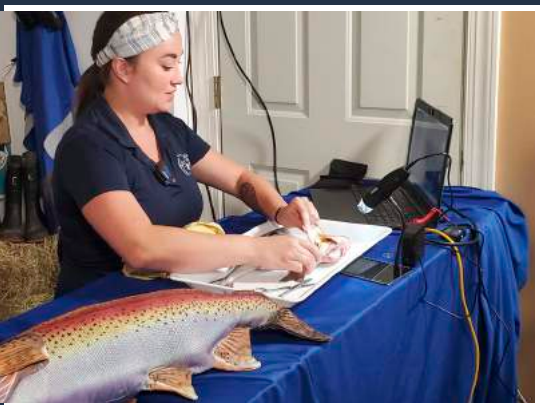
Educators also filmed fun videos to brighten the days we were stuck at home, including searching for unique signs of spring, special behind the scenes features with farm staff and our resident puppet Zeke, and cool at-home experiments and projects to try. Scan the code below with your phone camera to view our at-home activity videos!





# Summer and Fall 2020

*With the new school year approaching, it became apparent that virtual school was here to stay - and that kids were starting to get burned out on virtual content. Educators developed virtual lessons and activities that modeled our in-person programs - full of hands-on activities that engaged kids beyond the powerpoint.*



## June

Educators kicked off ten weeks of virtual summer camp. This online camp experience featured interactive, hands-on activities and live sessions for kids to enjoy the fun and camaraderie of summer camp. More than 75 kids joined us for virtual camp adventure.

### SUMMER CAMP SESSIONS

Watershed Warriors  
Eco Explorers  
Crazy Critters  
Fantastic Farmers  
Plant Power



## July

Virtual summer camps are in full swing. Also during the summer, educators hosted several virtual workshops for teachers to guide them in best practices for teaching environmental education to their students from home. Over 40 teachers participated.

## August

As virtual summer camps came to a close, educators put the finishing touches on their preparation for the upcoming school year by piloting live, virtual programs to students, teachers, and school partners. Teachers can now select from eleven curricula aligned one-hour live virtual lessons and a choice of four 3-hour field trip modules.



## September & October

Rather than greeting students in-person as they arrived to Hard Bargain Farm, educators logged into Zoom and gave a virtual wave as they began live lessons.

As restrictions loosened up a bit, we re-opened our gates to small play pod groups as a way for children and families to safely enjoy the outdoors.

### VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Birds Up Close  
Enviroscape  
Talking Trash  
Fish Seining  
Hero Wigglers  
Macro-Investigation  
Garden & Pollinators  
Fish Dissection  
Eco-Consultant  
Great Terrain Robbery  
Discover the Farm



## 2021

**Happy New Year!** Virtual programming and modified onsite programs continue. We remain hopeful we will be able to welcome students and teachers back to the Farm sometime this year.



# PLAY POD ADVENTURES IN The Great Outdoors

*An outdoor program for early childhood and elementary-age students, filled with outdoor adventures, laughter, and learning.*

With everything shut down and social-distancing rules in effect, children stuck at home needed safe ways to engage in active and healthy social and emotional learning. Local families needed options. To serve our immediate community, we offered safe and socially-distant on-site activities for children to “unplug” and safely experience the outdoors. Our play pod programs met every Wednesday for two five-week sessions and followed all local and federal safety guidelines.



Kids visited the barnyard animals, became detectives into scavenger hunts and hiking, used their creativity to make seasonal nature masterpieces, and so much more. Our outdoor space provides the perfect outlet for kids to escape the digital world and connect with the wonders of nature surrounding them. The play pod groups became the best of friends, as did the parents. Adults who stayed onsite during the each session bonded through conversation, nature walks, group lunches and registering together for the upcoming spring sessions.

The two fall sessions filled quickly, as local and federal restrictions only allowed social gatherings of ten at the time. A total of 15 fifteen families participated in at least one of the fall sessions. We’re looking forward to the three more play pod programs this spring!

*“I love that my son gets to make new friends while spending time outside in a safe environment, and I look forward every week to hearing about his adventures.”*

*Nature Nuts Parent, Fall 2020*



## USING NATURE AS A FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING AND ART



### Woodland/Fairy Houses

Children take a nature hike to collect natural materials found along the trails or shorelines to construct their own woodland/fairy houses.



### Leaf Crowns

While on a walk in the woods, kids collect the fallen leaves to make their leaf crowns.



### Bird Feeder using pine cones

Children collect pine cones, cover with peanut butter and roll them in birdseed, and attach a string so it can be hung for the birds to enjoy.



# A NEW KIND OF Trash Cleanup

INSTEAD OF HOLDING LARGE CLEANUP EVENTS, VOLUNTEERS WERE ENCOURAGED TO DO SMALLER CLEANUPS WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES. THE ALICE FERGUSON FOUNDATION PROVIDES RESOURCES ABOUT HOW WE CAN STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY WHILE STILL GIVING BACK TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

Each spring we support more than 300 cleanup events throughout the Potomac River Watershed with free site leader trainings and free supplies including bags and gloves. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and safer at home guidelines, the 32nd Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup was cancelled. This cleanup marks only the second time in its 30-year history that spring cleanups were either cancelled or postponed.



Virtual workshops and at-home cleanups replaced the usual in-person trainings and the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which draws more than 10,000 volunteers each year. This year, our educators hosted seven virtual events for a total of 110 volunteers who learned how to safely organize and lead a successful cleanup.



## Celebrating 50 Years of Earth Day

April 22, 2020 marked the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, a day to raise awareness about pollution and ways to maintain clean habitats, waterways and communities. To commemorate this special milestone and our cleanup efforts, we designed and sold limited edition t-shirts. All proceeds supported the upcoming cleanup season.

On September 26, we kicked off our annual cleanup events season by celebrating National Public Lands Day and cleaning up our Living Shoreline on the shore of the Potomac River in Piscataway Park, marking the first cleanup of the year after our annual spring cleanups were postponed from April due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2020 Cleanup Results

**56,336** Pounds of Trash Removed

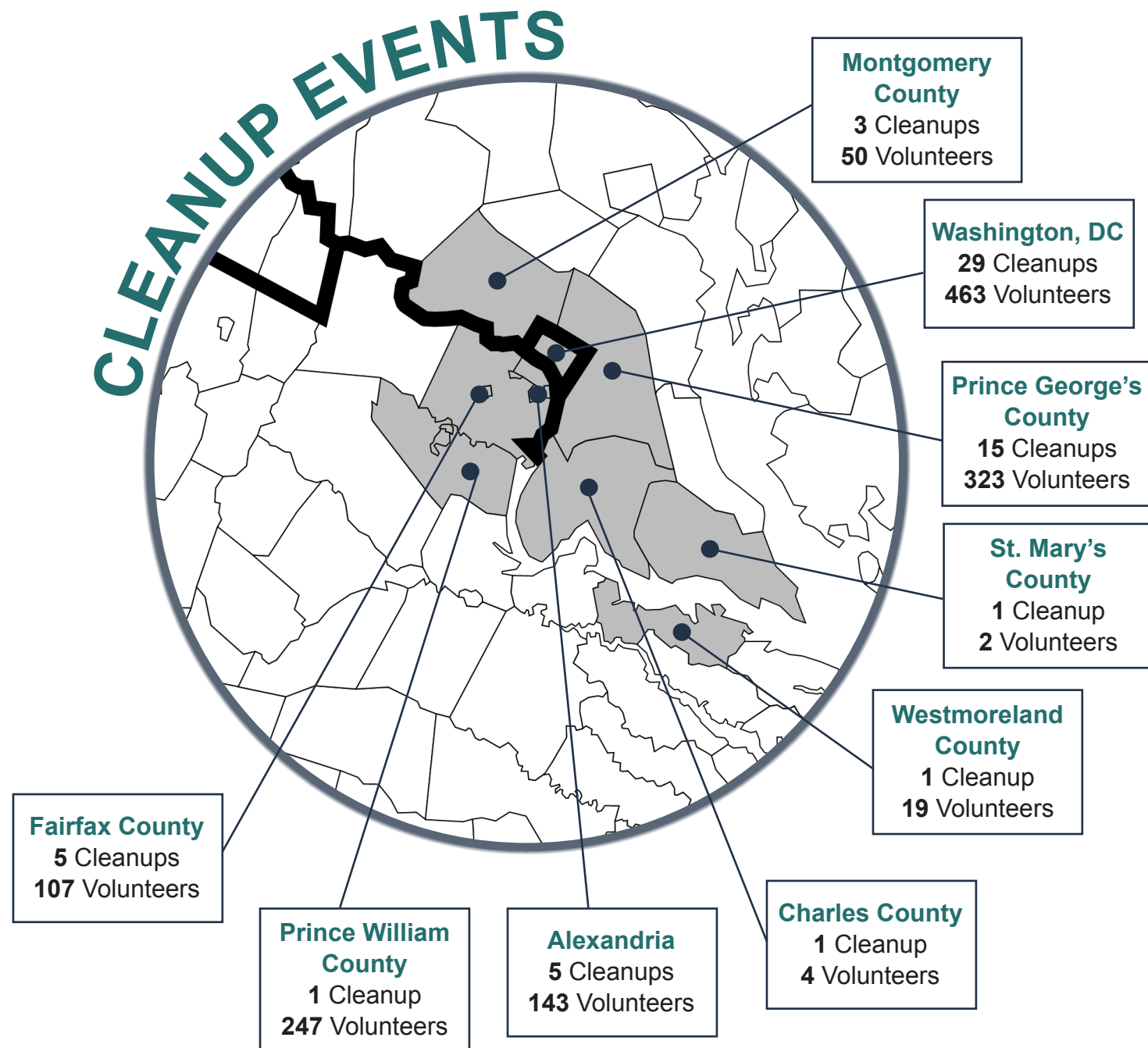
**1,421** Volunteers Donated Their Time

**61** Cleanup Events Organized



# 2020 CLEANUPS

## By The Numbers



SINCE 1989, OUR ANNUAL CLEANUP HAS ENGAGED 170,000+ VOLUNTEERS TO REMOVE MORE THAN 8 MILLION POUNDS OF TRASH FROM OUR COMMUNITIES.





# GO GREEN WITH Your Next Event

**A magical  
retreat away  
from the  
bustle of the  
city, just a  
few miles  
south of  
Washington  
DC.**

Experience a day at our 330-acre historic farm, nestled in the forests and wetlands of Piscataway Park. Find yourself in a warm and inviting private space in our 1930's farmhouse, amid historic items from the Ferguson collection, or host your meeting in our state-of-the-art "Living" conference center. The rolling hills, sweeping forests and shoreline boardwalk provide breathtaking, scenic locations that feel a world away from the hustle and bustle of the city.



## Welcome to the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Environmental Education Center

One of the most innovative, inspiring educational facilities in Maryland, the Cafritz Environmental Center is the perfect place to learn about the environment *and* demonstrate how to build in a more sustainable and enduring way. This state-of-the-art building provides a spacious setting for a variety of meetings and events.

Contact us at [speialevents@fergusonfoundation.org](mailto:speialevents@fergusonfoundation.org) to learn more about our full day and overnight rental options.





# PICTURE YOUR EVENT

## At The Farm

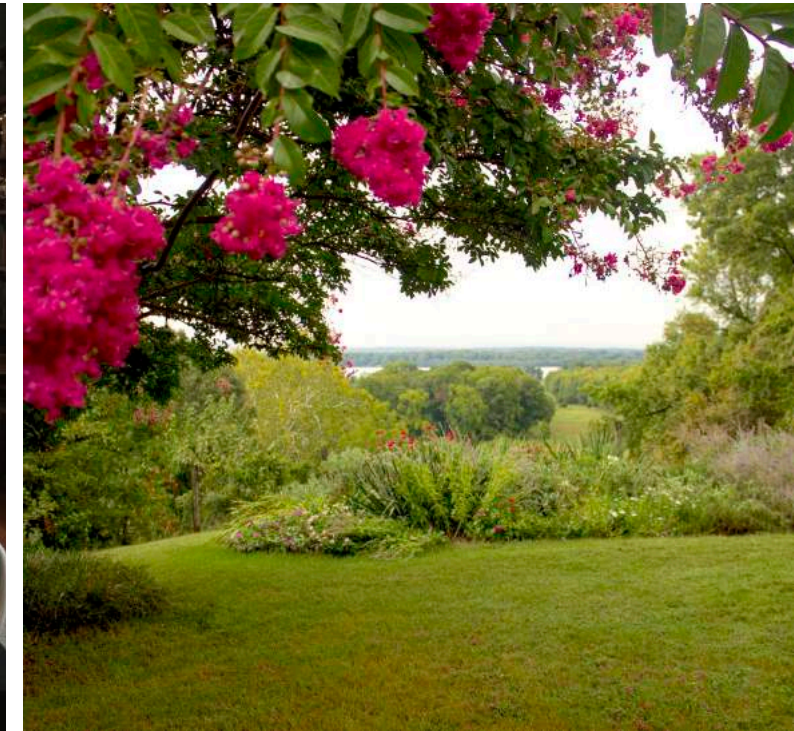


**NOW  
BOOKING**

*Private Events  
Corporate Retreats  
Volunteers Days of Service  
Holiday Parties & Events*

### Historic Farmhouse & Hilltop Gardens

The hilltop Ferguson farmhouse, collections, and gardens embody design trends and lifestyle from the Country Place Era (1890-1940). The house and gardens are perched on a hilltop with views to the Potomac River across to Mount Vernon and up river to Washington, DC. Small group meetings and large reception events welcome.



### The Barn at Hard Bargain Farm

Rustic elegance will greet you and your guests at The Barn, where you will be surrounded by authentic and original character of the 1920s. With a combination of bright natural light and rich woodwork, it provides a variety of options for both small and large groups.

**TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE FARM**  
[fergusonfoundation.org/the-farm](http://fergusonfoundation.org/the-farm)







# CONNECT WITH US

FIND US ON



## SUPPORT



Help keep our programs within reach with a gift today.  
[fergusonfoundation.org/support](https://fergusonfoundation.org/support)



Connect with friends and neighbors as you give back.  
[fergusonfoundation.org/volunteer](https://fergusonfoundation.org/volunteer)

## VOLUNTEER

## VISIT US



Enjoy a program with friends and family at the farm.  
[fergusonfoundation.org/visit-us](https://fergusonfoundation.org/visit-us)



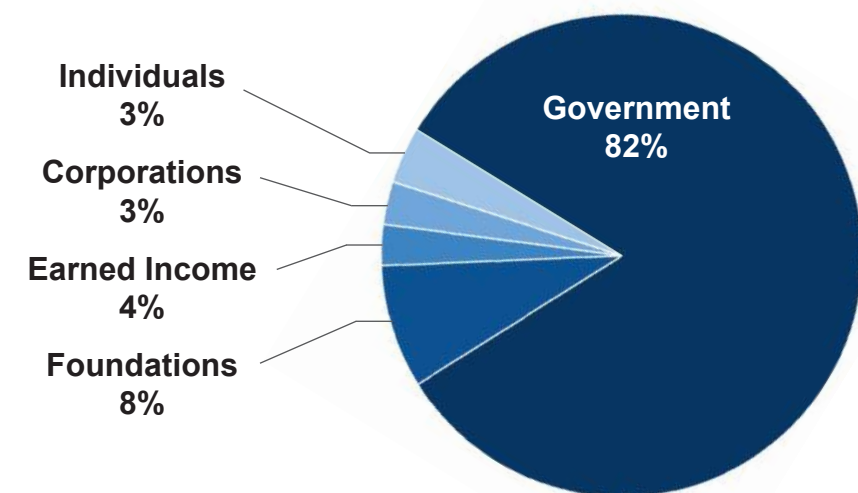
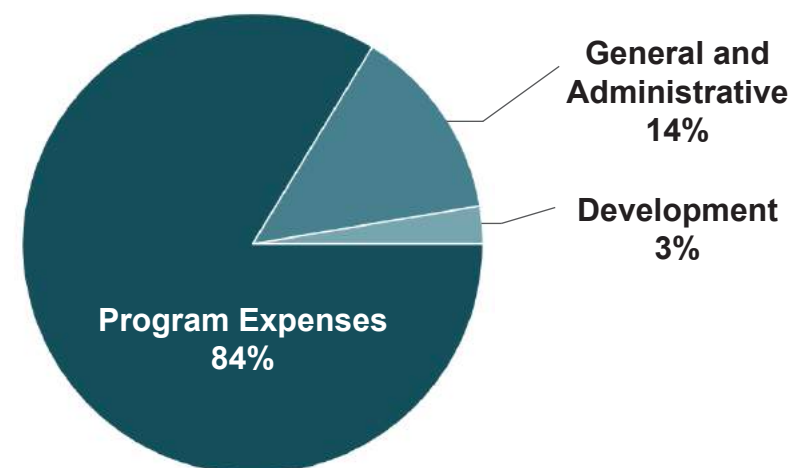


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Sandy Spring Bank  
Silver Diner  
SMECO  
Washington Gas



## 2020 EXPENSES & REVENUE







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