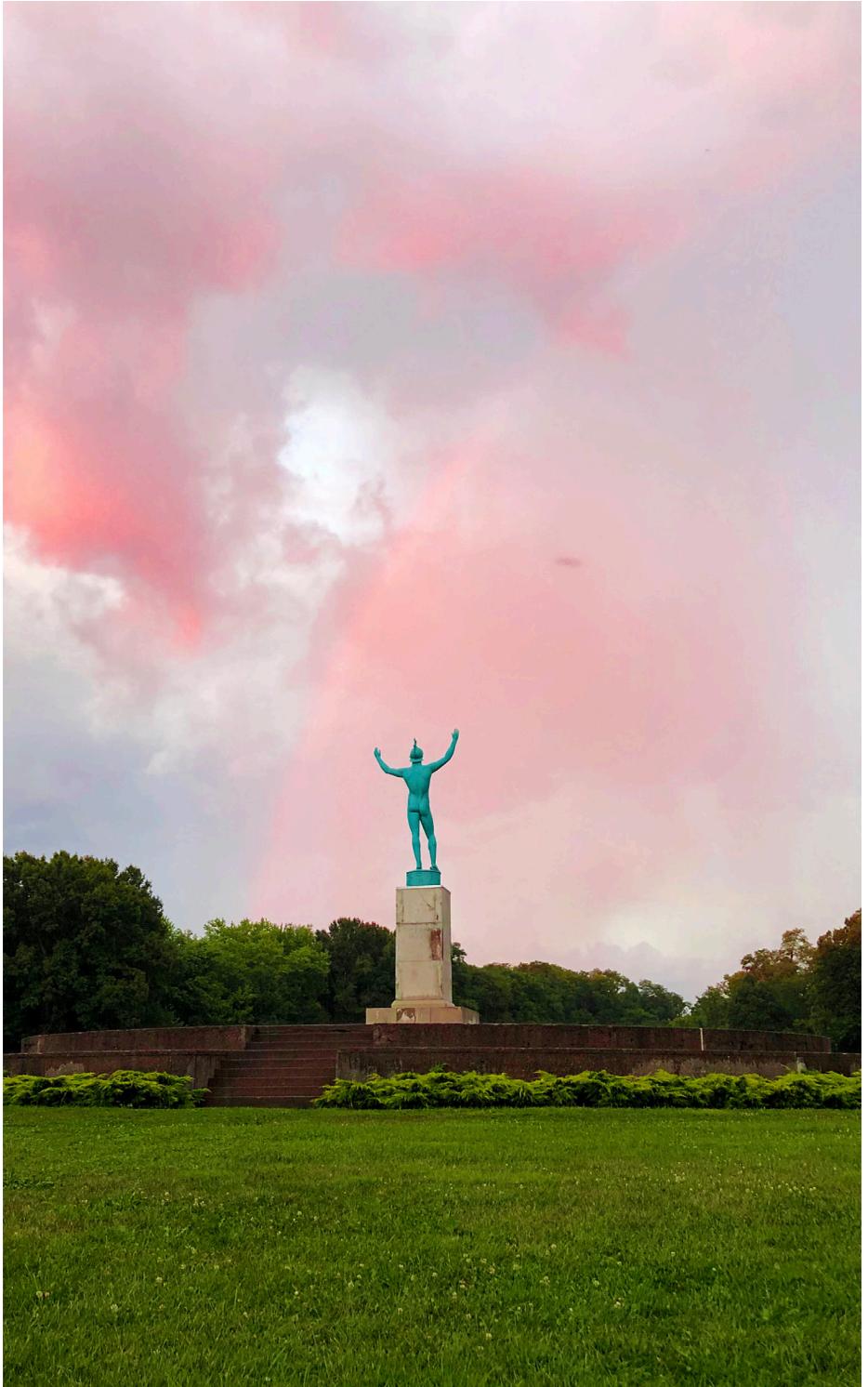




2021

RETREAT & REVIEW

I





FROM THE DIRECTOR

I'm generally an optimistic person, but identifying the positive aspects of the past year was more difficult than I had hoped it would be. As has been the case for so many, 2020 was a year of inconceivable challenges. However, one positive for us has been the growth of community. We, the Allerton supporters, have stuck together. We linked arms, faced our convictions, and proved that we will not waiver in the face of adversity. It has been said that true growth only occurs with true hardships. So, perhaps 2020 was not only the year of challenges, but of growth.

Fortunately, in Illini nation, growth is part of our DNA. Our Midwestern values are rooted deep and they thrive on effort - where the soil is fertile, the weather is favorable, and perseverance pays off. We all know the saying 'knee-high by the Fourth of July' is no longer as relevant as it once was; advancements in agriculture have given us a new measuring

stick for growth. The past year has changed our measuring stick, so what was once an orange is now an apple, and a comparison is fruitless.

As we consider the coming year, we will keep in mind that the taste of progress has changed. We will calculate success in effort, commitment, and camaraderie, rather than gains and losses. We won't be counting our chickens, and we will be redistributing our eggs into new baskets. We look toward 2021 as the year of hard work.

We know this community isn't afraid of hard work. I'm pulling on my work boots and calling for all hands on deck. Bring your work gloves and join us as we rebuild, reimagine, and rebound. Add your voice to our rallying cry – "We are ALL IN for Allerton!"

DEREK PETERSON, DIRECTOR

2020 TOP TEN CREATIVE MOMENTS

10. WORKSHOPS

Whether it was cooking, photography, hand-lettering, or seed starting - our staff and volunteers came together to bring our knowledge to you, and had a pretty darn good time doing it!

9. YOGA

Both virtually and distanced in the Meadow – we found there's no such thing as too many deep breaths or calming poses.

8. LIVE! TUESDAY TOURS

From behind the scenes tours to Fu Dog Jeopardy, Myisha and Ashley braved Facebook Live in hopes of bringing you a little closer to this cool place we have here.

7. EXPLORE BILTMORE TOUR

We don't have their 43 bathrooms or 65 fire places, but it was fun to learn about similarities and differences during this specially hosted "tour"!

6. VIRTUAL CONCERT SERIES

No where close (We repeat: No.Where.Close) to the live thing, but the Summer Solstice Concert Cruise, Midsummer Blues, and Tunes in Blooms got us through the 2020 Concert season, and we loved every minute!

5. SUNSET DRIVE-IN MOVIE SERIES

Idyllic setting on the side of a 100-year-old red barn, with cars and families spread out in the field. Not a bad way to spend a fall evening.

4. PEACEFUL MONDAY HIKES

Turns out, even virtual time spent in nature is soothing!

3. PLANT SALE

12+ socially distanced, masked staff in an off-site location filling 350 online orders for 14,213 plants to safely facilitate your spring gardening... totally worth it!

2. CREEK CAM 4

"When no one else does, believe in yourself." -Bigfoot

1. WINTER WELLNESS WALK

Although it was our fifth year of the Kirby Winter Wellness Walk, this year felt different. Well, it was different! We had more sponsor support, visitors, and donations than ever before.... A LOT more! Seeing guests share their pictures and hearing how grateful they were to have a safe activity to enjoy this winter meant so much to our staff. *Thank you.*





THE AGE OF RENOVATION

JORDAN ZECH, RETREAT CENTER MANAGER

It is hard to imagine that this grand Mansion was once Robert Allerton's home. When Allerton donated his estate to the University of Illinois in 1946, he gave away or auctioned off most of his furnishings before moving to the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Although a few original pieces remain, the Georgian-style Mansion is filled largely with an assortment of furniture, décor, and rugs that have been pieced together through the years. As we opened up the Mansion doors to the public about five years ago, we decided it was time the décor and furnishings matched the grandness of the house itself. Historically inspired spaces, along with more comfortable and consistent amenities, will encourage guests to come back for future visits, creating much-needed revenue to maintain the 120-year-old property.

A lack of indoor guests due to the pandemic, plus generous donations from local couples, created an opportunity to get started. Local interior designer Anne Carlson, a member of our Buildings and Grounds Committee,

had helped create the vision for the Mansion, utilizing historic photos, information about Robert's travels abroad, and the few original pieces to inspire each space. She is passionate about Allerton and has done a wonderful job keeping in mind appropriate design, as well as functionality. I continue to be blown away by her attention to detail and expertise!

With the vision in place, we began conversations with couples who wanted to help fund not only the improvements, but endowment funds for long-term care and maintenance of each space. Gifts from Deborah and Michael Westjohn, Debra and David Rathje, and Susan and Steven Zumdahl have funded updates to, respectively, the Butternut Room, Robert Allerton's room, and the Library (in progress). In addition, donations made in memory of Jane Gregg Schowalter have begun initial improvements to her uncle John Gregg's room, while Friends of Allerton have helped fund third floor guest rooms and the Marble Hallway.

Like Deborah, the Butternut Room is one of my favorites in the Mansion, and I was so excited to see it come to life! An original Kazak rug provided the color scheme for the room, which saw the addition of window lambrequins that replicate the original shape, a table that is similar in style to what was once there, and other time-period appropriate artwork.

Of the 17 Mansion hotel rooms, four are original Allerton family rooms - the most popular of which is Robert Allerton's former bedroom (room 5). With its rich green leafy design and sparkling gold accents, returning Robert's original wallpaper to his room set the tone for the elegant and enchanting upgrade, which an enthusiastic overnight couple compared to the Ritz!

While John Gregg's bedroom (room 4) and the Library are still in-progress, we are excited to showcase all these improvements as we begin to open our doors once again for wedding couples, corporate retreat and private events. Although the Mansion was grand before, the historically inspired updates have created warm and inviting spaces that make for a truly unforgettable experience. *(For more information on current reservation policies, see the Q&A on page 17.)*



Robert's Room before



Robert's Room after



Butternut Room before



Butternut Room after



Donations from Friends of Allerton helped support updates to the Marble Hallway



The Allerton Park Bird Club (APBC) was started in 2019, and represents and supports the birding community of Allerton Park and Piatt County, IL. The mission of the APBC is to: promote observation, enjoyment, and study of birds; to provide opportunities for birders to become acquainted and to share information and experience; to maintain well-documented records of bird sightings in Piatt County; to support the protection, conservation, and research of birds and their habitats; and to promote educational opportunities in bird and nature study. "Like" them on Facebook or tune into the APBC for more information!



Natural Areas Manager Alex Lourash holds two female mudpuppy salamanders as he assists Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) staff with their 2020-21 Mark and Recapture Survey last December. Marissa Jones, University of Illinois Springfield graduate student and IDNR Natural Heritage Database Graduate Public Service Intern (GPSI), explains: *"The purpose of the study is to survey known locations of the mudpuppy in an effort to gather baseline data of the species' population size... The survey will support the Illinois Natural History Survey's proposal for a State Wildlife Grant (SWG), which would be used to better understand mudpuppy populations sizes and distributions across Illinois... Mudpuppies are the only host for the salamander mussel, thus a better understanding of how to protect and conserve the species can also increase the successful reproduction of the salamander mussel. The refinement of mudpuppy sampling protocols across the state is an additional benefit of the regional sampling that will support the future SWG project and overall conservation of the species."*



(L to R): Bridget Frerichs, Deborah and Michael Westjohn, Peter Lichtenberger pose in the Brick Wall Garden



A LABOR OF LOVE

MICAH PUTMAN, FACILITIES SUPERVISOR

Originally a vegetable garden, the Brick Wall Garden is the oldest garden at Allerton, designed by the same architect of the Allerton Mansion, John Borie. It has come a long way since its construction in 1902, and now stands as a classic example of an English walled garden, with clipped boxwood parterre hedge, espalier apple trees trained to grow against the walls, and, thanks to recent donations, the addition of 1,300 new plants, 25 yards of mulch, and accessible sidewalks.

Deborah and Michael Westjohn funded the new plantings, as well as a generous endowment, ensuring the garden will be well-cared for in perpetuity. Yearly income will be used for seasonal help, replacement plants, and supplies to maintain the newly renovated garden, which the Westjohns endowed in honor of “all who labor and love for Allerton.”

Along with our dedicated volunteers, Allerton staff carried out the plantings, selecting plant materials based on each

flower bed’s individual “microclimate” created by the brick walls and surrounding trees. The color palette includes whites, purples, pinks, burgundy, and yellows, mainly in muted or washed-out tones to keep the feel relaxed.

Although the garden’s brick walls were completely rebuilt in 2009, at the time funding only allowed for the center sidewalk to be paved. The Westjohn’s generosity spurred another individual donor and the University of Illinois Office of the Provost to fund an ADA accessible path throughout the entire garden, replacing pea gravel paths with aggregate concrete. As Allerton seeks to become more accessible for all, projects like this are increasingly important to create the same experience for a wider audience.

Like most initiatives at Allerton, the Brick Wall Garden renovation was an ALL IN effort, and will ensure many more years of garden bliss.



Buck Schroth Trail shot on the drone



A VIDEO'S WORTH A THOUSAND LIKES

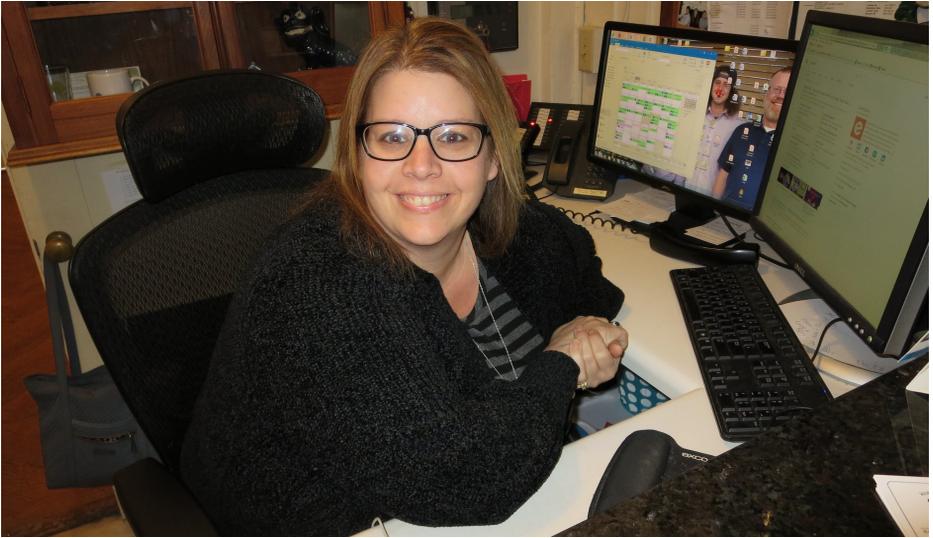
ALEX LOURASH, NATURAL AREAS MANAGER

What started with placing a trail camera on a creek crossing to see what footage I could get turned into one of our most popular social media posts ever! I checked the camera about two weeks later to find numerous videos of all sorts of species using the creek/crossing. A lot of the clips were of deer jumping across the creek and continuing on their way, but the longer the camera sat there, the more interesting the videos got. The most interesting (and most common) footage was raccoons fishing in the creek. They would walk back and forth in the water, lifting up rocks and searching blindly underneath for anything they could find – sometimes fish, but mostly small crayfish.

As spring arrived, we saw fawns, kits (young raccoons), and lots of robins. You could count on the same twin fawns running down through the creek just about every day. As 'stay at home' orders grew longer, people seemed to enjoy the Creek Cam videos even more, so we started finding more locations for more cameras. Before we knew it, we had tens of thousands of views and people asking for more. Finding these "hot spots" takes a little bit of time, especially when you need to have a place to attach the camera.

If we found a spot that didn't have a handy tree nearby, we would cut a fallen branch into a post and drive the branch into the ground so that we could get the best angle possible. Since the start of the Creek Cam we have been fortunate to catch some very cool species in action, including: river otters, great blue herons, pileated woodpeckers, beavers, mink, weasels, and much more! We eventually started the Beaver Dam Cam, Pileated Nest Cam, Beaver Tree Cam, and a few more still yet to be released!

In addition to the trail cams, I've gotten some use out of our newly-acquired drone. I always seem to get the drone out when the setting is different from what I am used to seeing in my everyday schedule. Having some background in video editing, I know what I want my video to look like even before I start flying the drone. I just have to make sure I capture those shots with the drone and be able to put it all together with good music and transitions. I really enjoy sharing these videos and photos with all of the Allerton fans that either are stuck at home due to COVID, aren't able to get around like they used to, or are far away from Allerton but still love seeing our awesome gift.



We will be creating a space on the Solarium Terrace to remember our dear friend and coworker, Stephanie Shonkwiler. Steph's favorite spot at Allerton was the Koi Pond - she thought it was so relaxing to feed the fish, and always enjoyed visitors coming to get fish food from the front desk. Her memorial bench will sit next to the brick courtyard wall, which will have newly planted Eastern redbud trees pruned espalier style against it. Steph was passionate about her family and friends, and was a well-known leader and helper in her community, Bement, whose school color is purple. When we see the redbuds' radiant purple blooms every April, we will forever be reminded of Steph, our "mother hen", and her bright smile and loving spirit.



We were honored to remember Laura Hahn with this year's annual flower plantings. Thousands of people visited Allerton to enjoy the beautiful gardens that she made possible. As an avid gardener and a life-long patron of the Park, we hope Laura would have been proud of the displays that were created in her memory, and the peace and joy they brought to Park visitors. Thanks to the Hahn family and Laura's friends and colleagues for choosing to honor Laura in this way.



PLANS REALIZED

BRIDGET FRERICHS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT

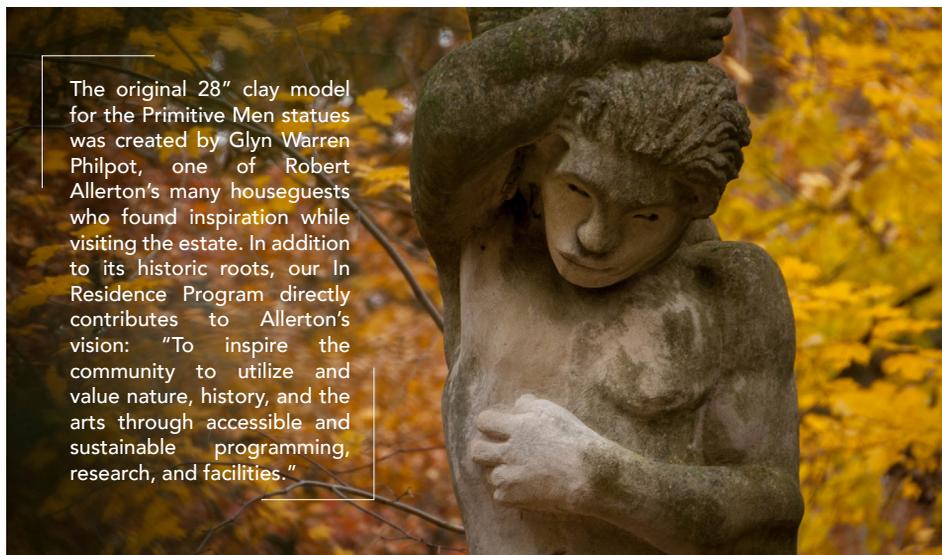
The 2015 Master Plan laid out a vision for conservation, appreciation, and development of Allerton's physical property, which has always seemed perhaps overwhelmingly ripe with possibilities. One of the most intriguing ideas was converting Robert Allerton's former ice house to serve as lodging for a resident who would create while living at the estate. We were immediately drawn to the idea of an In Residence Program, which would recreate the intimate experience Robert Allerton provided his guests, great thinkers and makers, who found inspiration while visiting the 1,500 acre property.

Thanks to the support of two generous couples, our In Residence Program is no longer just a plan, but a reality! Long time Allerton users Joan and Peter Hood donated an endowment which will provide yearly funds for the resident stipend and public programming, while Central Illinois natives and Allerton enthusiasts Dana Brehm and Larry Baumann supported the ice house renovation and endowment.

This March, we are thrilled to welcome Chicago-based multimedia artist/educator and University of Illinois alumnus John E. Bannon (FAA, '90) as our inaugural resident! Bannon, who has been inspired by Allerton since he visited as an undergrad, has work in public and private collections worldwide, and plans to create something that incorporates the already unique and unexpected experiences of the Park. You may recognize some of his past work, *Eye Candy*, *Live and Breathe*, and *Universe*, which we proudly displayed during our 2020-21 Kirby Winter Wellness Walk.

Working with these visionary supporters to make this program possible has been less like "work" and more like enthusiastically brainstorming with friends. As we discussed the seemingly endless potential our unique setting holds, it was clear they had a genuine interest in providing public educational opportunities while supporting the meaningful work of artists and naturalists. Matching their philanthropic goals with Allerton's future plans was truly a win-win, and we can't wait to involve you in the final product!

The original 28" clay model for the Primitive Men statues was created by Glyn Warren Philpot, one of Robert Allerton's many houseguests who found inspiration while visiting the estate. In addition to its historic roots, our In Residence Program directly contributes to Allerton's vision: "To inspire the community to utilize and value nature, history, and the arts through accessible and sustainable programming, research, and facilities."



2020 CONGRATULATIONS!



Mindy Brand has been with Allerton since 2011, and recently took on a new role as the Assistant Director of Annual Fund and Programs, connecting with our wonderful supporters and helping them find opportunities to get involved and make an impact. *"Everyone has their own Allerton story, memories of the Park that have stayed with them. I am honored to hear these stories and help people find a match between Allerton's needs and the areas they are passionate about."*
-Mindy



Congratulations to our Piatt County Master Gardener volunteers for receiving the State Master Gardener Teamwork Award for their work on the Welcome Garden! The award recognizes projects that are impactful, innovative, and replicable statewide. Thank you to these talented and generous volunteers who have worked over 700 hours in the garden since 2015.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESS AT ALLERTON

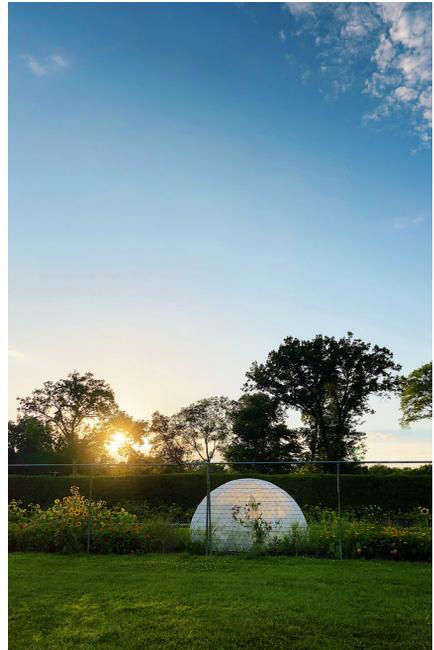
On July 28, 2020 we held the first official meeting of Allerton's Diversity, Inclusion, and Access (DIA) Committee, consisting of 9 staff members representing nearly all departments. The Committee, which meets bi-weekly, focused first on creating a mission specific to our organization and defining key terms (diversity, inclusion, and access) as they relate to Allerton. Our mission, below, will guide future actions and remind us of our purpose within the context of Allerton's overall mission. We look forward to sharing updates from the Committee, and taking the necessary steps towards a more diverse, inclusive, and accessible Allerton.

DIA Committee Mission: Create, promote, and sustain an environment where all are welcomed to engage with and be inspired by nature, history, and the arts. We will be persistent and intentional in our efforts to ensure diversity, inclusion, and accessibility throughout our programming, events, formal and natural spaces, while celebrating the uniqueness of all individuals, Allerton Park, and its legacy.





"Even in the midst of a pandemic, the formal gardens at Allerton were better and brighter during the 2020 growing season! Our garden staff and summer extra help managed to keep up with the seemingly endless tasks necessary for providing Park visitors with an awe-inspiring landscape experience - from planting thousands of annuals, shearing 2+ miles of hedge, mowing acres upon acres of turf, and constantly pulling weeds. I greatly appreciated the hundreds of hours put in by our dedicated volunteers to help with this garden work. My personal highlights of the season include the spectacular display of the peony garden in bloom in May (imagine a football field full of blooming peonies!), the successful newly restored planting of the Brick Walled Garden (see page 8), and the new butterfly dome in the Annual Garden!" -Peter Lichtenberger, Park Supervisor





One example of accessibility already in place is the winding path from the Visitor Center to the Mansion



RECREATION FOR ALL

MINDY BRAND, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
OF ANNUAL FUND AND PROGRAMS

While going through the University of Illinois Recreation, Sport, and Tourism Master's program last year, I found that people are very curious about what it means to study recreation. It turns out that the word "recreation" actually means a lot. And not just abstractly - it means a lot to your life. The verb form of the word may shed some light: to "recreate" is something we all do regularly, whether we realize it or not. We recreate when we watch TV, take a walk, or socialize with friends. But, how we choose to recreate also matters a lot, especially considering the past year we've had. Differences aside, we all have one thing in common - this year has been stressful. And during stressful times, we need recreation the most.

Synonyms of the word recreate include: reinvent, restore, and remake. Recreation is an opportunity to replenish your mind and body, and outdoor recreation has the power to make us healthier and happier. You are likely familiar with the well-documented health benefits that come with spending time in nature: the increased level of oxygen in your body, the way your brain reacts to the color green, the calming sound of wind and cheerful call of birds. These things are inherently good for you.

We are taking a closer look at who in our community has access to these benefits and who does not - specifically, who has access to Allerton and who does not. The historic nature of Allerton, and the fact that it was once a private residence, means many areas are not physically accessible. Thanks to recent donations, updates have been made to the Brick Wall Garden (see page 8) and Solarium Terrace to make those spaces more accessible. Another opportunity we have identified is the need for a physically accessible woodland path, in addition to the existing 14 miles of hiking trails. The first phase of our Children and Family Area will allow for this addition, creating a quarter mile paved loop through the aptly named "Wandering Woods", between the Main Parking Lot and the Fu Dog Garden.

Whether you're pushing a stroller, walking a circuit, or adventuring in a wheelchair - the accessible path will be a useful and safe way to experience nature. Our focus now is to secure the funding necessary to make the path a reality. Individual donors have had a tremendous impact on the improvement and increased accessibility of Allerton, and this project provides another opportunity to make a significant difference for the health and wellbeing of many who visit.

YOUR QUESTIONS – ANSWERED!



Q: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE UPROOTED TREES?

A: On April 8, 2020, a gustnado with winds of between 80-90 mph caused damage throughout parts of Piatt County. This weather is described as “a strong whirlwind at the leading edge of a storm front” and differs from a tornado by starting on the ground and not connecting with the storm above. Over 50 trees were downed at Allerton, along the roadsides, trails, and Meadow, and in some of the formal gardens.



Q: WHAT'S ALL THAT SMOKE?

A: The application of fire to an area for management purposes is called “prescribed fire” and is an important land management technique. Most of our native plants are adapted to fire or depend on its complex effects for seed germination, nutrient recycling, reduction of competition, or maintenance of open tree canopies. Returning the natural process of periodic fire helps to restore and maintain hundreds of native species that would otherwise be lost from these sites.



Q: ARE YOU OPEN FOR EVENTS/LODGING?

A: Yes! The Mansion opened in late July, with safety policies and procedures in place. We are currently open for small events and overnight lodging, and will continue to follow guidelines from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the University of Illinois to allow our guests to safely experience Allerton.

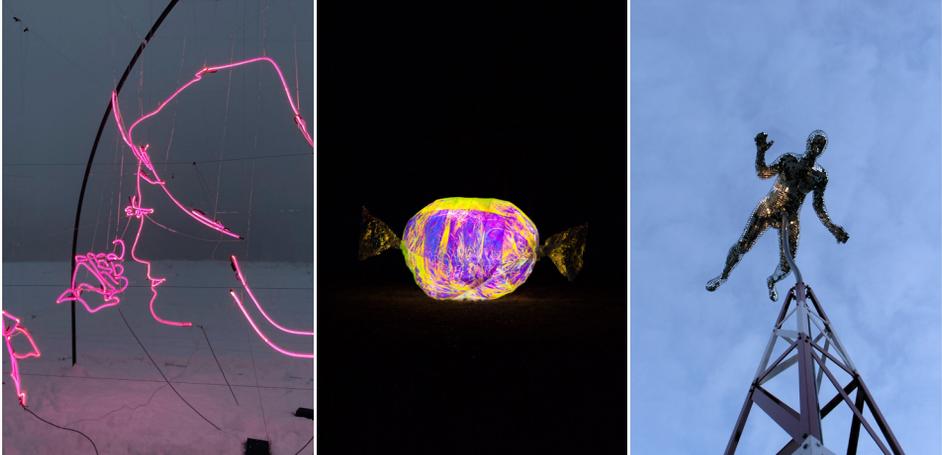
2020 Matching Gift Challenge

MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN

- \$86,486** from individual donors
- \$60,000** in matching gifts from 12 board members
- 347** first time donors
- 61** days

TOTAL RAISED: \$146,486 !!
(Surpassing our goal of \$120,000!)

A Friend of Allerton generously offered to match every donation Allerton received from November – December. After quickly reaching our initial goal of \$25,000, the Allerton Park Advisory Board joined the challenge, matching donations up to \$60,000! With the help of hundreds of supporters, we exceeded this goal as well, ending the campaign with more than \$146,000 in donations. We are grateful for those who choose to invest in our future. Thank you for being ALL IN.



"I am very happy to show these three pieces together. This is definitely the most interesting venue I've shown them at... The people who run Allerton make all the difference between what it used to be and what it is today." – John E. Bannon, Chicago-based multi-media visual artist/educator and Allerton's inaugural Artist In Residence



BUDGETING DURING A PANDEMIC

JAN GILL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS

As you can imagine, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the activities and events that normally occur at Allerton, which we rely on each year for our operating revenue. Weddings, conferences, and retreats were, and continue to be, canceled. Concerts, summer camps, and other special events were also canceled. So far, the financial impact of these cancellations has resulted in a loss of over \$1.2 million dollars from our revenue-generating activities since the start of the pandemic.

Fortunately, several years ago we implemented “reserve budgeting,” where we set aside budget for unexpected events or expenditures. Although these reserves are not nearly enough to cover the current revenue losses, they will greatly help us to bounce back from the financial impact of this pandemic.

Additionally, we looked at opportunities to reduce expenditures given our slow-down

of business and took appropriate action to eliminate those costs. We’re also utilizing unrestricted gift funds and a portion of earnings from the original Allerton endowment, as permitted under Robert Allerton’s indenture, to help cover costs that would normally be funded through events and other revenue-generating activities.

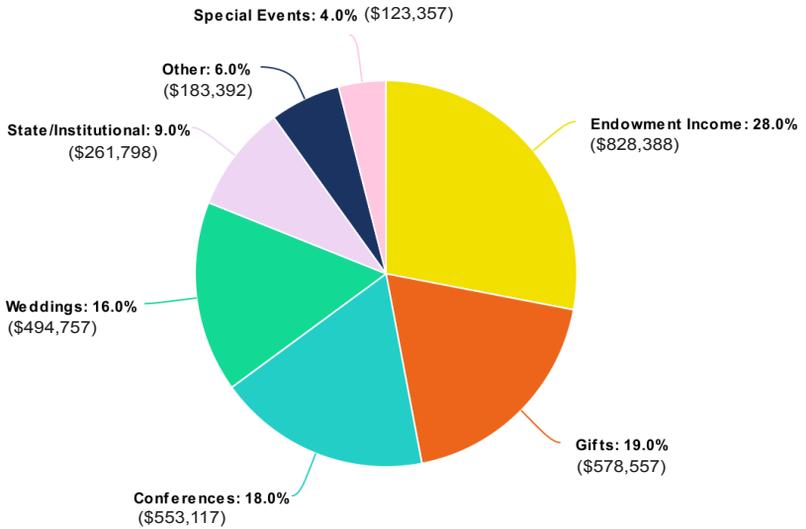
Over the past several years, our development staff has actively pursued endowment gifts to fund special projects in the Park and Retreat Center and generate ongoing income to maintain those projects. We have also added new fundraising efforts, such as posting wish list items on our website, inviting gifts on our virtual events, and the recent Matching Gift Challenge, all of which have increased our gift revenues. We’re very thankful for our many Allerton supporters who value what we do and what they experience at Allerton Park and Retreat Center.



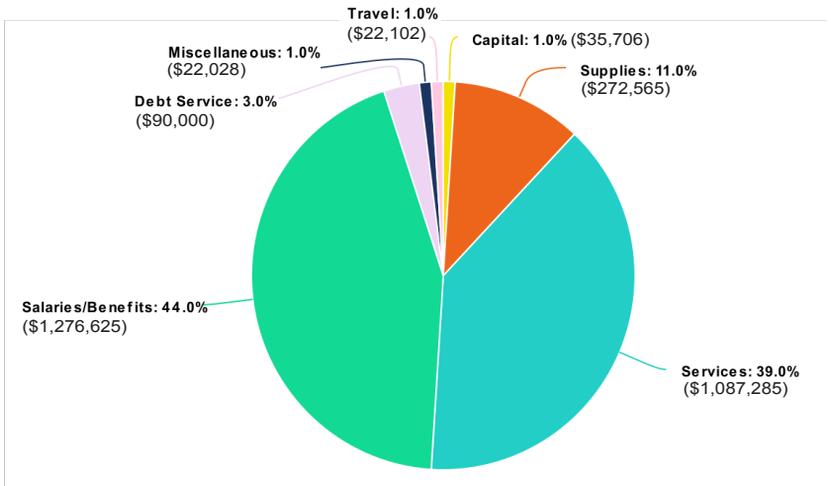
A SNAPSHOT OF ALLERTON'S FY20* FINANCIALS

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS, CONTACT JAN AT JKGILL@ILLINOIS.EDU.

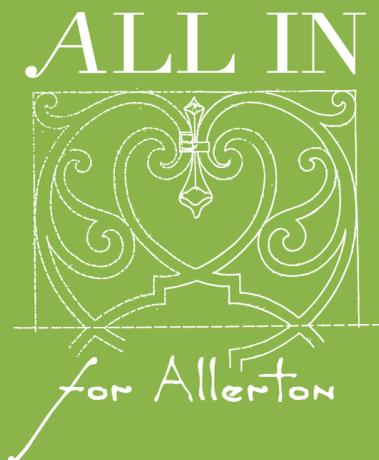
FY20 REVENUE BREAKDOWN



FY20 EXPENSE BREAKDOWN



*FY20: JULY 1, 2019 - JUNE 30, 2020



ARE YOU ALL IN FOR ALLERTON?

We wouldn't be where we are without the support of our donors. Join a family of loyal patrons today, by giving to Allerton Park & Retreat Center! Find out more at allerton.illinois.edu/all-in-for-allerton.

PLEASE MAIL THIS COMPLETED FORM WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

University of Illinois Foundation
P.O. Box 734500, Chicago, IL 60673-4500

To give by credit card, please visit
allerton.illinois.edu/donate-to-allerton

Your tax-deductible gift will be processed and received by the University of Illinois Foundation.

For more information on giving opportunities or specific projects, please contact Bridget Frerichs at bridgetf@illinois.edu or 217-333-3287.

YES! I'M **ALL IN** FOR ALLERTON!

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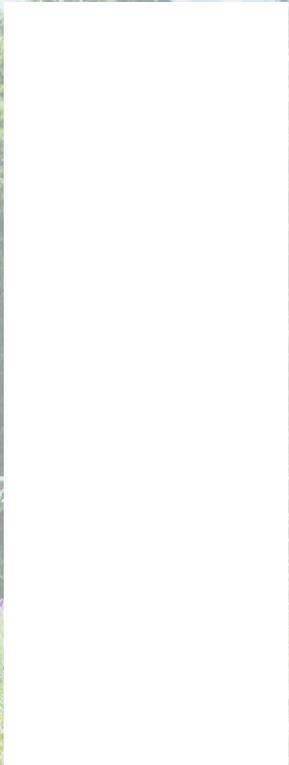
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