



Initiated 1994

During the week of May 1st to the 8th, over 40 volunteers came out for Vintondale Wetland planting week to plant the 7-acre wetland area of the Vintondale AMD&ART Park. This week long effort placed the finishing touches on the History Wetlands portion of the Vintondale AMD&ART park.

The planting was the last step in a long process of preparation. Last spring, the wetlands were excavated and transformed from a coal refuse wasteland to a promising habitat area. This spring, the wetlands were covered with a layer of rich mushroom compost in order to promote plant growth and water retention.

A partnership between AMD&ART and the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) created a plan for the wetlands planting that will maximize the wetland's potential as rich habitat. Marcia Maslonek, Director of the WHC Pittsburgh office, completed a Wildlife Opportunities Report to be implemented on the site.

Funding for the project was secured through a unique partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). AMD&ART was paid by PennDOT to construct wetlands in the Vintondale Park in order to replace those slated for destruction during a project on nearby State Route 22. Additionally, AMD&ART held a wetlands fundraiser in the fall of 2001 which resulted in donations totaling over \$3,000 from over 30 donors. The funding pro-

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002



(From left to right) Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps Cluster Leader Mark Simpson, Kristy Gerlich, AmeriCorps Volunteer Terra Heilman, and AMD&ART Board President Jeanne Gleason prepare holes for an edging of red maples.

vided by these two sources was used to purchase over 10,000 wetland plants.

AMD&ART AmeriCorps Volunteers Roman Chiu and Terra Heilman along with Vintondale Artist in Residency, Stacy Levy, lead the week long effort. By the end of the week, 10,000 plants from 31 species were planted over the entire 7-acre wetland.

The species of plants introduced to the site during planting included purple joeypy weed, blue flag iris, fragrant water lily, and highbush blueberry.

AMD&ART and the Wildlife

Habitat Council expect the wetlands to draw many mammal, bird, and insect species.

Aside from the habitat characteristics, the Vintondale wetlands contain a great deal of history. The foundation of the Vintondale Colliery coke ovens have been preserved and incorporated into the wetland's landscape.

With planting complete, the wetlands will now serve as not only habitat but also a teaching tool, giving insight into the environmental benefits of wetlands and also the industrial history of Vintondale.

Vintondale a "Special Place"

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has completed a case study entitled "Small Spaces, Special Places" that recognizes Vintondale as a community effectively addressing the environmental and economic fallout of the decline of the coal mining industry.

The Vintondale AMD&ART Park, constructed on the former Vintondale Colliery Site, existed as a brownfield site since the closing of the mines in the 1950s. The Vintondale site which contained plenty of coal refuse and acid mine drainage was perceived as contaminated by the town and consequently became the town dump.

Brownfields are defined as abandoned or underused industrial or commercial properties that have little opportunity for expansion or redevelopment due to real or perceived contamination. They have become a topic of interest in both the environmental and economic development arenas in recent years.

The great strides that Vintondale and partner organization AMD&ART have taken in transforming this previous town eyesore into a historic and environmentally friendly park qualifies the town as a model for small Appalachian towns faced with the environmental and economic degradation of the loss of mining.

ICMA, an organization that provides technical support and research to local governments, contains a special department on brownfields. Molly Singer, Brownfields Program Director, became interested in Vintondale after serving on a panel with AMD&ART founder T. Allan Comp.

Founder's Note

"Its About Vision"

"The AMD&ART program and its associated projects is a lesson in the power of vision" concluded the ICMA report cited on this page, vision by generations of AmeriCorps, VISTAs, interns and other staff, vision by our funders and partners and vision by the design team that worked with us all to bring the Vintondale site to its final completion. It's been nearly ten years since I first started thinking about some way to engage residents in addressing AMD with art as a way to encourage a larger engagement in environmental improvement and nearly seven years since Jeanne Gleason and I started the AMD&ART non-profit. As we look forward to a summer completing the signage installation, working on the Mine 6 Portal and Platform project and beginning a student design competition for some fitting tribute at the point where the water finally returns to the river, clean and refreshed, we can all look back with pride in the vision of so many -- and forward to new vision for a better future.

T. Allan Comp

She felt the Vintondale project matched an issue that ICMA has become increasingly interested in, rural brownfields. The organization decided a case study on successful rural brownfields, whose local governments are often restricted by limited resources, would make the point that brownfields are not only, nor should be, an just urban issue.

The Vintondale case study is one of three included in the "Small Spaces, Special Places" report. Anyone interested in rural brownfields can purchase the document on www.icma.org. Additionally, Vintondale, specifically the artful context of the park's design, is included in a second report entitled "Old Tools, New Measures: Cultural and Historical Redevelopment of Brownfields" also available at www.icma.org, under the bookstore link.

We're Going Digital....



In order to reduce paper waste, AMD&ART would like to send you our newsletter by email. If you wish to receive our newsletter in Adobe PDF format, please send an email to: amdandart@amdandart.org stating your request.

Staff Settles In

In March, AMD&ART welcomed two new AmeriCorps volunteers. Terra Heilman joined the organization as the Blacklick Creek Environmental Education Center Coordinator. Terra will devote her time first to completing the education center and then educational outreach and local involvement. Terra is a graduate of Oregon State University with a degree in Wildlife Science and an emphasis on public education.

Kristi Niekamp joined AMD&ART as Environmental Justice Grant Coordinator also in March. In October, AMD&ART along with partner organization Shade Creek Watershed Association (SCWA) were awarded an Environmental Justice grant from the EPA. Kristi will be working in the Dark Shade Watershed to build community capacity and awareness around environmental issues, especially acid mine drainage. Kristi is a graduate of Ohio State University with a degree in Wildlife Management.

(Left to Right) Rick Hogg, PennDot District 10 Engineer, Craig Chelednik, PennDot District 10 Engineer, Rosalyn Robitaille, AMD&ART Program Coordinator, Roman Chiu, AMD&ART Design Coordinator, Bradley Mallory, PA Secretary of Transportation, Kenneth Stockert, Skelly and Loy Consultants, and Jane Marines, Vintondale Municipal Authority President

Vintondale Receives PennDOT Award

The Pennsylvania Partnership for Highway Quality (PPHQ) awarded the Borough of Vintondale and its partners, AMD&ART and PennDOT District 10, the PPHQ Environmental Award for 2002. This award is presented "to the project that best exemplifies environmental achievements in the Highway Industry".

This award recognizes the environmental benefit of the 7 acres of wetlands constructed in the Vintondale AMD&ART park, which were purchased by PennDOT through their Wetland Mitigation Program.

Often while constructing new or improving old roadways, Penn DOT is forced to destroy roadside wetlands. Before work on such projects can begin, the de-

partment must make sure new wetlands are created to take the place of those slotted for destruction.

A widening project on State Route 22 called for the destruction of 7 acres of wetlands. The department contracted AMD&ART to build wetlands on the nearby Vintondale site. AMD&ART has incorporated the wetlands, some of the most habitat-rich in the region, into the larger Vintondale AMD&ART Park.

Jane Marines, Vintondale Municipal Authority President, Roz Robitaille and Roman Chiu, AMD&ART AmeriCorps volunteers, accepted the award with PennDOT officials at the awards banquet held at the Hershey Convention Center on March 7th.



AMD&ART would like to thank the most recent donors to the Wetland Planting Fund

Rose Hubner, in memory of First Lieutenant George A. Larish
Elizabeth Mayer & Michael Kane
Shelbie Knox & Dave Clark
John & Kim Kuriawa
Blacklick Valley Industrial Development Association

Foundation Awards Vintondale Resident Artist

In April, The Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation awarded a \$10,000 *Artists & Communities* grant to a partnership between AMD&ART, the Community of Vintondale, the Wildlife Habitat Council, and artist Stacy Levy.

Stacy Levy, an artist who is recognized as an authority on native plant materials and wetlands and whose work has centered on water issues, is leading the group effort to develop, design, and implement a 7-acre wetland planting on the Vintondale AMD&ART Park site. Stacy has been involved with the Vintondale AMD&ART Park since the project's inception including design of the Litmus Garden.

Stacy's work in Vintondale contains several components, some of which are already underway or complete. In April, she worked with AMD&ART staff to review the details of planting and interpretation of the wetlands. In

early May, she participated in the 8 day wetlands planting effort detailed on the cover page. She will spend the rest of her residency working with Vintondale residents and AMD&ART to establish "Wildlife at Work Teams" who will conduct a wildlife inventory throughout the site, write a management plan, and implement group projects. These teams will strengthen the community's involvement in the project and raise environmental awareness.

At the end of Stacy's residency in Vintondale, there will be 7 acres of prime habitat wetlands planted in native vegetation that interprets the history of the site by accentuating the former mining building foundations. Furthermore, trained residents will be in place to foster the historic and environmental potential of the 7-acre site, making it the successful project the town and its funders envisioned it to be.



Vintondale Artist in Residency, Stacy Levy, prepares red maple whips for planting during Vintondale Wetland Planting week.

MID ATLANTIC ARTS FOUNDATION



Artists and Communities, a program of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, is made possible by major funding from The Vira I. Heinz Endowment, The William Penn Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

Board News

AMD&ART would like to welcome Anthony Sossong, former president of Berwind Natural Resources Corporation and Dr. Andrew Rose, an Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown to the AMD&ART Board of Directors.

Additionally, AMD&ART would like to announce the election of Richard Burkert as Board Treasurer and Tim Phillips as Board Secretary.

AMD&ART in the News

- The January 8th edition of Watershed Weekly's web show highlighted AMD&ART and the October Grand Opening of the Vintondale AMD&ART Park. Go to www.greenworks.tv/watershed_weekly.index.htm under the archived shows link, season 3, to view footage from the Grand Opening and to take a virtual site tour.
- *Confluence*, a newsletter produced by the Ohio University Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD) ran an article on AMD&ART in their April edition. Go to www.ilgard.ohiou.edu/confluence to view the article.
- The Pittsburgh Tribune Review featured an article on AMD&ART on its Sunday March 3rd edition cover.
- Greenworks radio environmental reporter Gwen Shaffer visited the Vintondale site in March and interviewed AMD&ART founders Jeanne Gleason and Allan Comp along with AmeriCorps Volunteers Roman Chiu, Jill Byers, and Shannon Peterson. The radio spot based on these interviews has not aired on National Public Radio yet - keep checking www.greenworks.tv/radio/radioarchives to listen to the piece.
- The Spring 2002 issue of *Earth Light*, the Quaker Magazine of ecological healing, featured a four-page article written by Allan Comp entitled "Life After Coal" on the Vintondale AMD&ART Park. The article features interviews with Jane Marines, Vintondale Municipal Authority President, and Jeanne Gleason, AMD&ART Board of Directors President, and a strong introduction, all by Jo Hansen who assembled the pieces for publication and is the founder of the very successful public art program in San Francisco.

AMD&ART Receives Support for New Staff

The Potrero Nuevo Fund of the San Francisco based Tides Foundation has granted AMD&ART \$12,000 to fund new AmeriCorps members for the 2002- 2003 service term. The Fund supports community based non-profits in two primary efforts, art and environment.

While projects located within the San Francisco Bay Area are usually targeted grantees, Allan Comp met with Potrero Nuevo representatives who recognized AMD&ART and its interdisciplinary approach to AMD remediation as a true fit with their mission. AMD&ART will apply for AmeriCorps Volunteers from the Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps to continue the great work of those volunteers that have served the organization for almost 10 years.



Terra Heilman, Blacklick Creek Environmental Education Center Coordinator, third from left front row, participated in Portage High School's Earth Week. Terra presented before four high school classes on the history of mining and the effects and treatment of AMD. On April 18th, PA Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Dave Hess, center holding Earth Week t-shirt, spoke before the group at the Earth Week Assembly.

THANK YOU !!!

During the weekend of April 13th and 14th, a crew of Sea Bees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 23 of Ebensburg began construction on the much awaited pavilion for the Vintondale AMD&ART Park. The Battalion plans to volunteer one weekend a month until the pavilion is complete. The project, scheduled for completion in July, will incur no labor costs thanks to the battalion volunteer time; Robert Garvis, a Vintondale Resident who provided free back hoe operation for pre-construction grading and digging; and Brad Minemyer, battalion member and manager of the Laurel Highland Landfill, who provided free machinery use and coordinated the project. AMD&ART would like to thank Robert, Brad, and the Battalion for their great work. Additionally, AMD&ART would like to recognize the US Forest Service for their generous Rural Development through Forestry Grant which funded the project.



**AMD
&ART**

T. Allan Comp, *Founder*

Board of Directors

E. Jeanne Gleason, *President*

Dr. Mary Lavine, *Vice President*

Richard Burkert, *Treasurer*

Tim Phillips, *Secretary*

William Barbin, *Legal Council*

John Foreman

Tom Grote

Jane Marines

Dr. Andrew Rose

Anthony Sossong

**AMD
&ART**

411 3rd Ave.
Johnstown, PA 15906
Ph: (814) 539-5357
Fax: (814) 593-4345

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #5
Johnstown, PA

This newsletter was printed with funding provided by Canaan Valley Institute