

OVERTON PARK

notes

june 2025

Blazing a new trail in the Old Forest

Park users are just a few months away from having a new part of the Old Forest to explore.

Work started earlier this month to build a trail in the section of the forest that has been fenced since the 1980s. The 17-acre, mostly-forested tract was slated in the Memphis Zoo's 1988 master plan to become exhibit space, but the Zoo graciously agreed to return the land to the park.

Working with A2H – Engineers + Architects, the Conservancy selected Alliant Construction to build out the trail. Their crews have been trained by Bob Richards of Bob's Trails, Trees & Gardens to execute the design he created for the new path, which will be a loop that connects to the main Old Forest Loop to the south and the Green Trail to the east.

Bob brings nearly 50 years of experience designing trails to this project, and he is committed to making as small an impact as possible in the design and construction process. The trail will be only three feet wide, so the crews only needed a mini-excavator rather than a large bulldozer to do the work. Vegetation on either side of the trail (like tree branches that might hang in a runner's path) will be hand-cleared and pruned back to offer a comfortable experience that's consistent with conservation standards. In the limited areas where denser vegetation has to be cut through,



Conservancy Executive Director Kaci Murley tours the new trail with Bob Richards of Bob's Trails, Trees & Gardens and Jim Suggs of Alliant Construction

we'll leave "wildlife piles" that will serve as habitat for birds and small mammals.

The trail cutting process should be complete this month. In September, a contractor will come in for several weeks and remove the larger woody invasive plants that would be difficult for volunteers to tackle. This follows the trajectory the Conservancy

set when we had our landscaping contractor, Echo Systems, remove truckloads of Chinese privet in 2012, giving us a jumpstart on controlling harmful plants that could then be monitored and managed by volunteers.

This project is a part of the larger initiative that will remove cars from the Greensward by relocating the Zoo's maintenance area to the park's southeast corner, freeing up new space for parking at the Zoo. That project, funded by a Department of Housing and Urban Development grant secured by Congressman Steve Cohen, is also underway, with grading of the surface at the southeast corner beginning this month. After the Zoo completes its move and stripes a new parking lot, parking on the Greensward will end for good.

In the meantime, we're making plans to remove the fence around the new trail this fall, and we can't wait to welcome you into this "new" section of the Old Forest!

Conservancy, Zoo team up to save the monarchs

If you strolled by Veterans Plaza anytime between May and October last year, you did so in the company of many a winged creature! Overton Park Conservancy's pilot project to install pollinator-friendly gardens paid off in a huge way. Over the summer, we recorded more than 270 types of invertebrates using these plants as food and shelter, including 36 species of butterflies, 32 species of bees, and 50 species of flies!

We had so much fun taking care of the garden that when our friends at the Memphis Zoo told us about an opportunity to create more pollinator habitat, we jumped at the chance to partner. In the fall, we were jointly awarded a Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) grant from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums to focus on monarch conservation.

Monarchs have a multi-step migration pattern, where adults that overwinter in the mountains of Mexico fly north in spring, stopping to breed wherever they can find milkweed plants. Because milkweed is the only food their caterpillars can eat, any pocket of these flowers is likely to benefit monarchs. When this generation of caterpillars transform into adults, they then fly north and repeat the process. By the end of the summer, the continent is covered in a new generation of monarchs, the final brood of which begins to move back towards Mexico.



Zoo and Conservancy staff and volunteers plant the southeast corner bed.

Monarch populations have declined dramatically just in the last decade due to habitat loss, drought affecting the growth of host and nectar plants, and the use of herbicides and pesticides. The SAFE grant is intended to create new areas of habitat for monarchs and to educate people about how they can help conserve the species.

As part of our grant, this year we replanted the Veterans Plaza beds with even more milkweed and native plants (replacing the non-native lantana that was left over from years past). We also created a large bed adjacent to one of the greenhouses in the park's southeast corner, which we filled in with hundreds of native plant plugs supplied by The Works. A second plot will be seeded with native wildflowers. This all amounts to a safe haven for monarchs that will benefit hundreds of other insect species as well.

While we documented 270+ species last summer, this year we'll also be collecting baseline data of how monarchs are using the gardens. Over the summer, we'll conduct regular monitoring of milkweed plants and record the numbers of eggs, larvae, pupae, and adult monarchs to see the impact we're having.

We hope to create some programming by early fall that gives you the opportunity to check out the southeast corner plot, and we welcome you to visit the Veterans Plaza beds all summer long!



Left: The Veterans Plaza pollinator garden re-seeded itself with blanket flower, purple coneflower, and multiple types of milkweed.



Right: A monarch caterpillar shelters under the leaf of a butterfly milkweed plant at Veterans Plaza.

kaci's message

The year of the crow

Last year, my Overton Park Conservancy colleagues taught me about the tradition of spotting your first bird on New Year's Day and connecting it to the theme of your upcoming year. In 2024, my toddler, Celeste, and I lifted our sleepy eyes in Washington Park in Denver, CO towards two bald eagles, dancing an incredible duet. "Your double bald eagle year!" my friends cheered, and next thing I knew, I was selected as the Conservancy's newest Executive Director. Pretty powerful stuff, if you choose to believe.

On January 1, 2025, I found myself driving up Hwy 14 headed towards Covington, TN, on my way to my mama's plate of pork chops, greens, and black-eyed peas—a meal guaranteed to launch a year of good fortune. All I saw on this northern route were American crows—hundreds of them!

Some see crows as dark omens, but I'm an optimist by nature. And as I considered these birds more deeply, I realized how much they reflect the mission and magic of Overton Park.

Crows honor the past. They recognize human faces, remember kindness, and pass knowledge across generations. As the park approaches its 125th anniversary next year, we too honor a long legacy—shaped by the transformation of the Memphis College of Art into the Metal Museum, the next chapter for the Brooks Museum building, and the Conservancy's deepening investment in access, trails, and the Old Forest. Overton Park is a memory bank for Memphis.

Crows are highly social. They nurture each other, grieve losses, and teach their young how to navigate the world. In Overton Park, we see that same spirit of community—neighbors showing up to remove invasive plants, families exploring our NatureZen programs,

and teachers leading outdoor lessons in the Old Forest.. We see it in the work of our committed Board of Directors and staff, each bringing their own knowledge and passion to keep this place healthy and vibrant.



Crows are adaptable and resilient. They

thrive in cities and forests alike, learning and evolving with their environment. Overton Park, too, is a place of resilience—weathering change, responding to challenges, and continuing to grow. In 2025, the Conservancy is launching Tennessee's first certified therapy trail, expanding free wellness and environmental education programs, and welcoming 1.3 million visitors.

Crows are creative collectors. They build their nests with careful attention, using twigs, wire, string—anything useful or curious. I'm reminded of this when I come home from a walk and empty Celeste's pockets: tiny rocks, leaves, and seeds, all treasures from a morning of exploration. These aren't just souvenirs—they are evidence of wonder, learning, and memory. Like crows, our children are gathering pieces of the world, building their sense of place one pebble at a time. Overton Park is where that story begins.

Crows are resourceful. They can eat almost anything, live almost anywhere, and evolve with their environment. Their flexibility is their superpower. Likewise, Overton Park is a place of incredible breadth. Within its 342 acres, you'll find a convergence of culture, history, recreation, and wild space that is rare—exceptional, even. Overton Park is not just one thing; it is many things to many people, and that is its greatest strength.

So this year, we see the crow as a symbol of wisdom, resilience, and connection. We see you in that symbol, too. You, who give. You, who show up. You, who love this place.

From every tree and trail, from every echoing crow-call above: thank you. Here's to a powerful year—and to many seasons ahead.

We cannot do this work without you. Please consider making a donation today.



The Overton Park Conservancy staff and Board of Directors, coming together to plan for the park's future.

Saving the Old Forest oaks through research

When Overton Park Conservancy's Director of Operations, Eric Bridges, began working on his PhD in Forestry at Mississippi State University, he wanted to answer two questions with huge implications for the Old Forest State Natural Area: why are the forest's signature oak species experiencing such decline, and is there anything we can do about it?

Now, the newly-minted Dr. Bridges has some answers to those questions, a trove of data about the forest, and plans for future research and restoration that could give oaks a fighting chance.

Laying the Groundwork

Creating a plan for forest management requires us to understand how the ecosystem is currently functioning, and how it's changed over time. This meant Eric needed to develop a strong research foundation, a process he began more than 10 years ago by engaging students at Rhodes College as Urban Forestry Fellows. Since then, he has worked with interns from Christian Brothers University, the University of Memphis, and several local high schools to gather data in the forest.

A key piece of Eric's research was replicating a 1987 inventory of the Old Forest by Dr. James Guldin. At the time, Dr. Guldin noted that while oaks were the dominant species in the forest, the amount of young oak trees was worryingly low. This meant that as our mature oaks reached the end of their natural lifespans, there were fewer and fewer young trees that would grow up to replace them.

In 2019, Eric and his students replicated Dr. Guldin's research and found that the downward trajectory of the oaks was getting worse. The number of seedling oaks had declined by two-thirds since 1987. "The overstory trees are heading for the exit," Eric says, "and the seedlings can't get in the door."

But what was causing this decline? Were the seeds failing to germinate because of a lack of light on the forest floor, the moisture content of the soil, the heat of our summers, or the lack of cold in the winters? Or was the problem with their dispersal—the ability to get some distance from their parent tree and begin growing? The answer (or at least part of it) has four legs and a bushy tail.

Maybe They're Too Delicious?

In his next research phase, Eric created 12 experimental plots located throughout the forest,

where he planted acorns in order to study how invasive species, leaf litter, and seed predators like squirrels affect the ability of seeds to germinate and establish themselves. The amount of leaf litter, and whether invasive species were present, did not significantly impact whether the seeds sprouted. But there was one key factor: whether or not there was a cage over the acorns.

In the plots where there were no cages, "the squirrels just destroyed the acorn crop," Eric says. "There would be seven or eight squirrels in one plot just going to town." Using trail cameras pointed at the plots, he was able to watch them in action, sometimes excising the end of an acorn for a small snack that ultimately prevented it from germinating. The uncaged acorns hung on longer in areas where there was a gap in the forest's canopy (likely because squirrels were more vulnerable to hawks in these locations), but the end result was the same. The next generation of oak trees were winding up in someone's belly.

Before we stoke anti-squirrel sentiment, Eric is quick to point out that this was one experiment and the results can't be accepted as universal. In many years, oaks might produce so many acorns that squirrels couldn't possibly eat them all. And squirrels—along with blue jays—are actually crucial for the dispersal of acorns. Because the tannins in acorns can upset their stomachs if they eat too much at once, they often move and cache them to eat later. Today's forgotten acorn becomes tomorrow's mighty oak tree. Our squirrel population in Overton Park may just be too dense, and the forest too small, to spread them out properly (and keep them hidden from other predators).



A common sight on the trail cameras: squirrels trying to break into the cages to get to the tasty acorns inside.



Eric demonstrates proper planting technique to Compass School students, who helped us plant 100 oak seedlings that will form the basis of our next research project.

"We Have to Plant"

There was good news in this experiment, too: **the acorns that were covered by cages germinated at a rate of over 85%.** "They were germinating just fine if they got the chance," Eric says. If a key problem for the oaks is that their seeds are being eaten, that means we could help them along by intervening at that part of their life cycle. "That means we have to plant." Getting seedlings into the ground past the point at which they're appealing to predators gives them a better shot at getting established.

Creating a long-term planting plan will be the next phase of Eric's research work for the Conservancy, starting this summer with two student interns. But the experiments have already begun. Thanks to the Tennessee Division of Forestry, we've begun a pilot project with 100 oak seedlings in four different plots. By comparing how the seedlings fare in an open vs. closed area of the forest, and with competing vegetation either pared back or left alone, Eric and his students can see how to plant to give new oak trees the best chance at survival.

This research will expand into a larger seedling survival study, which will likely involve choosing three oak species and planting a few thousand seedlings in the forest. In some locations, Eric and his team will manipulate the surroundings, because it's likely that competition from other plants (especially non-native invasive species) is hindering the oaks' access to sunlight. This intervention could look like anything from spraying invasive honeysuckle plants once a year to trimming back some surrounding vegetation six times a year. We're looking for the sweet spot of how often to check in with these trees in their early years, given inevitable time and resource constraints.

This summer, Eric and his students will monitor the 100 seedlings planted this winter, to see if these plots provide a good model for the multi-year process of expanding out to thousands of seedlings. They hope to design the long-term study based on this data, with a goal of acquiring equipment, obtaining funding for seedlings, and preparing the sites this fall for planting over the winter. It all points to a busy time and a lot of opportunities for volunteers to get involved!

The Work is Just Beginning

Although Eric has finished his degree, he sees the potential for so much more in the Old Forest. "When we started working with students all those years ago," he says, "we had a vision that was so far away. The nature of ecological change means you need multi-year studies, but we first had to build the capacity with students to conduct those studies."

Now Eric—and the Conservancy—are dreaming big about what those studies could do for the forest. We are seeking support to create a Department of Conservation, Research, and Education that would continue the research that will allow us to create a more resilient forest. Urban old-growth forests are so rare that Overton Park's is one of only three that remains in the entire United States. To care for such a priceless resource is an incredible gift, and dedicating more resources to preserve it for future generations is a huge part of the Conservancy's reason for being.

Helping the oaks that give the forest its unique character will rely heavily on both financial supporters and volunteers, like the invasive-removal crew Bill Bullock has been leading since 2017. But that's one of the things that excites Eric the most. "The dream is a project led by a group like Bill's: they're planting oak trees in a way that was informed by the work and research they've been a part of." It's an investment that could pay off not just now, but for centuries to come.

If you feel moved to support this work, please contact Kaci at kmurley@overtonpark.org.



Bill Bullock leads volunteer events all winter in the Old Forest. His crews have removed countless invasive plants like English ivy, cherry laurel, and Japanese honeysuckle.

Calvin Johnson runs smart at Overton Park

When Memphis runners hear the name “Mr. Calvin Johnson” the common responses are “legend” and “icon,” and for good reason.

Calvin has been a smiling face in the running community since he joined the track and cross-country teams at Memphis State in 1969. He broke so many records at MSU in the early 70s that he’s a hall-of-famer! He started his competitive running career at Melrose High School in 1965 and continued competing until 2020, when most in-person runs came to a halt.

Calvin has represented the Breakaway Running team since they opened their doors in the early 80s, and he still runs every day (that is not a misprint!). His advice? “Run smart,” Calvin says. He trained under Glenn Hays (proprietor of Café 1912) in college and has never strayed from the simple, knee-saving formula of alternating one easy day and one hard day.



Calvin Johnson on a run through Downtown Memphis, and today in Overton Park.



Calvin includes Overton Park in his daily run from his home in Central Gardens, mostly training alone, but he has gotten to know “the regulars” and continually inspires other runners. He started running in the park in his junior year of college and has quite possibly clocked more miles in the park than any other Memphian, “except perhaps Mike Cody,” Johnson humbly adds.

Calvin loves the limestone loop and the primitive trails, “though watch those roots – take your time,” he advises. His favorite training zone is the unofficial “Paul Bannon Loop,” named for another MSU hall-of-famer, a running insider’s loop around OP9’s 8th hole. He says the topography makes for a great half-mile workout.

If you need a little inspiration to stay the course in your life, look for Calvin running smart and finding joy in the long game at Overton Park.

Jenay Boggs gives back as a Volunteer Ranger

Last fall the Conservancy launched our volunteer ranger program, building on the legacy of “Team Overton Park” volunteerism that has been shaping guest experience since 2012. Volunteers work individually during shifts created by our operations staff, and regularly pick up trash (the number one biggest need in the busiest park per acre in the city).

One of our volunteer rangers, Jenay Boggs, embodies the spirit of “Team Overton Park.” Jenay is a lifelong Memphian who has enjoyed the park all her life, and she is passing this love on to her children — the family spends time at the playgrounds and in the Old Forest weekly. Her husband, Alex, is an avid golfer, participating in the second annual OP99 tournament this year, and her mother-in-law Wight is on the Conservancy board.

As a busy mom of four, Jenay finds having a ranger shift a month a great way to “step away and create a little space for myself.” When trash pickup duties take her into the Old Forest, “it’s incredible that you can be in the middle of the woods and not be aware that you are surrounded on three sides by busy streets — like being in the middle of nowhere, in a good way!”

Not only is she passing on the love of the park to her children, she is also inspiring the next generation! The kids are fascinated by her vest and equipment — Jenay has invested in junior grabbers and she and the kids now regularly pick up in their neighborhood.

One of her favorite memories is when the rangers gathered together on a cold winter day to do a thorough pickup on the East Parkway side of the park. “It felt great to do mission-centered work with other park lovers.”

“It’s more than just picking up trash, it’s an investment in a place I love...and it feels great to give back.”

Visit overtonpark.org/things-to-do/volunteer/volunteer-ranger-program to learn more.



Jenay and Alex Boggs and family in Overton Park

Metal Museum takes shape at Rust Hall

The sparks are flying at Overton Park as the Metal Museum prepares to move into Rust Hall, the building that housed Memphis College of Art from 1959 to 2020. It's a big expansion for the museum, which has been welcoming visitors to its downtown campus since 1979, and a big win for the legacy of artistic expression in Overton Park.

One of the only museums in the world that's devoted solely to metalwork, the Museum features a permanent collection, rotating exhibitions, community education programming, and Metals Studios that help train metalsmiths. By moving all this into the park, the Museum can free up its current campus to offer fully-equipped studios to resident artists.

Construction began in August 2024, with the removal of several annex buildings to make way for the new Metals Studios, which will house a blacksmith shop, foundry, fabrication yard, and demonstration area. The building will also feature the Museum's first dedicated community education wing, galleries, a café, museum store, and rental space. Roughly two-thirds of the building will be open to the public, which means many people will experience this architectural landmark in ways they never have before.

One of the first changes visitors will notice is that they can now enter directly from the ground floor. "The entry plaza and the original ramps were not ADA-accessible," explains Madison Miller, Director of Development & Communications at the Metal Museum. Instead of changing the architecture of the building's iconic staircase, the Museum opted to re-grade the landscaping around it, opening up the plaza and creating a ground-level entry. Guests will come into a foyer with the admissions desk on one side and the museum store on the other, and can proceed to the education wing or to the main lobby from there. Upstairs, the main lobby will get a flood of light, as the walls on the west side have been removed in favor of windows.

The outside campus will also feature a sculpture walk, and the first piece guests will encounter will be a familiar one: "Ikon," the 11-foot-tall bronze sculpture that artist Edwin



Visitors will be able to enter from a new ground-level plaza surrounding the stairs.

"Ted" Rust created in 2001 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Overton Park. Ikon has been greeting visitors to Rust Hall (named after Ted Rust himself) ever since, and thanks to a Museum supporter, has been tucked away during construction until it can safely return to campus.

The Museum's new campus offers eight times the amount of space as its current home, and the team is using that for a big expansion of community programming. They plan to offer weekend and night classes in things like jewelry making and blacksmithing, as well as summer camps and after-school programs. "Memphis College of Art had such a rich tradition of community education," Madison says. "We're so glad to be able to carry on the legacy of arts education at Overton Park, especially introducing youth to career pathways they might not otherwise have encountered."

Madison is also excited that visitors will continue to meld their experience of the art with one of the city's natural beauty. "People came to the Bluff campus to show off the view over the Mississippi," she says. "In the same way, now they'll be able to come up to the terrace and look over this beautiful historic park."

Construction is set to be largely completed by April 2026. After that, the move-in begins, with a goal of opening the doors in September 2026. We can't wait to usher in this new era of art in the park with a museum that's just as unique as Memphis itself!



The new Metals Studios are being built to the west of the main building.

Hundreds of ways to enjoy Overton Park

When we launched our community programming a few years ago, we never dreamed how many people we'd have the chance to connect with! In 2024, the Conservancy provided a total of 230 opportunities for the community to engage with Overton Park, reaching around 3,400 participants. And the fun continues this year. Here's a little of what we've been up to.

Nature Education

This spring we introduced several new nature-focused programs: intensive courses on birding and oak identification brought participants to the golf clubhouse for classroom time and out in the forest to apply their knowledge. Former Conservancy board member Mary Wilder led a workshop on the basics of planting pollinator-friendly home gardens, with native plants available on-site from The Works. And twice-monthly Songbird Strolls took both casual and

experienced bird-watchers through the forest to experience spring migration and nesting season.

We also expanded on existing programs, offering both a public Owl Prowl and an outing just for high school students through BRIDGES. Our Third Thursday Treks provided casual walks on the topics of caring for native plant gardens through the winter, the early-spring bees that specialize on Old Forest wildflowers, copperhead movement in the forest, and the unique structures formed by gall-producing insects.

The Conservancy was once again the local organizer for Shelby County's participation in the City Nature Challenge, an annual global event focused on recording observations of nature in urban spaces. This year Memphians recorded 2,652 observations of 954 species despite a rainy late April weekend, putting us at 227th of 671 cities worldwide.



Clockwise from left: During Spring Break, we hosted several pop-up activities for kids, including creating stained-glass butterflies; regal chihuahua The Mayor won third prize at this year's Mardi Grawl dog costume contest, presented by Hollywood Feed; in May, we hosted our tenth annual breakfast station for Bike to Work Day; Park Ranger Payne Looney keys out a tree as part our Oak Identification course.

Outreach Activities

We partnered with Compass Midtown High School to plant oak seedlings in the Old Forest and to spread gravel on the limestone loop after April's flood events washed away significant portions of the trail. Programs Manager Dr. Malle Carrasco-Harris also visited Rhodes College students in Dr. Kate LeCroy's Conservation Biology class to share more about the journey to a career in conservation.

This summer, we're excited to host a weeklong camp with Brooks Museum, Memphis Zoo, and Overton Park Shell. Each organization will host campers from Neighborhood Christian Centers and Carpenter Art Garden for a day of activities spanning our fields of expertise, from music and art to nature and science. This is our second year putting on this "Day at Overton Park" camp, and this time we'll have three times as many students!

Social and Wellness Programs

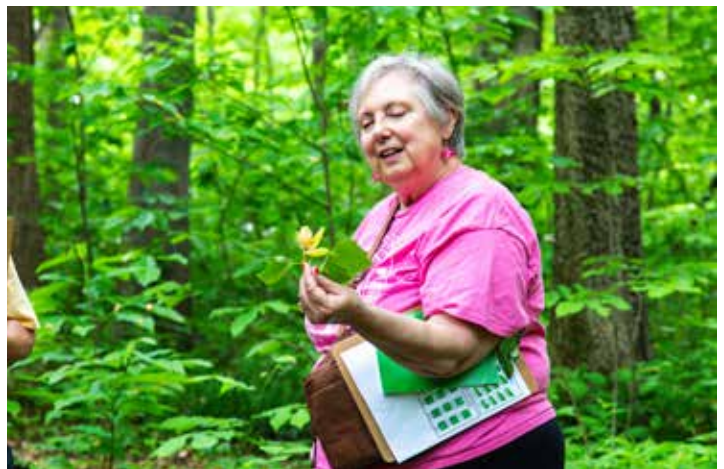
Tai chi classes with instructor Marjean Liggett are held every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:15 AM in the formal gardens through September 18. And on Sunday afternoons we've been hosting Greensward Games, inviting park users to do an art activity or play giant Jenga, Connect 4, or chess.

Creative Activities

This spring we held regular Nature Journaling sessions on Tuesday afternoons, developing a strong community around these tranquil outings. We expanded this program to four events with Creative Aging Mid-South, encouraging participants to notice the structures of leaves and develop written and illustrated responses to their time in the woods.



To stay up to date on park events, visit overtonpark.org/events or sign up for our e-mail newsletter at overtonpark.org/email!



Clockwise from left: Students from the Bridge Builders program joined us for an Owl Prowl; Christ Methodist Day School sixth graders picked up litter near East Parkway Pavilion for their Day of Service; we teamed with Creative Aging Mid-South to host nature journaling sessions in the Old Forest; Programs Manager Dr. Malle Carrasco-Harris showed Third Thursday Trek guests a structure created by a gall wasp.

Overheard at the Overton Park 99

9:30 AM - Round 3 of 11

"I've got multiple pairs of socks, underwear, shirts, and golf shoes, and I feel awesome."

"I'm hoping for rain and a 25 mph north wind."

"Let's not hit a magnolia this time, boys!"

The 21 golfers who braved the heat to play 99 holes of golf in one day earlier this month were unanimous about one thing: they were undertaking this feat of endurance for the kids. With proceeds of the second annual OP99 tournament benefiting the Overton Park Junior Open, the Loren Roberts Scholarship Fund at First Tee Memphis, and Overton Park Conservancy, their pain was the junior golfers' gain.

And they were ably assisted during the tournament by some of those golfers, as caddies with the Western Golf Association's Chick Evans Scholarship Fund helped ferry their gear around the course. The caddies receive college assistance based in part on volunteering at events such as OP99. Their help was especially welcome since none of the golfers uses a cart during the tournament, which means they take more steps during the day than a marathon runner!

2:30 PM - Round 7 of 11

"I'm on my third shirt, second hat, second pair of socks, and third dusting of my bathing suit area."

"I've had 18 bottles of water."

"Things got really spiritually dark for me on the eighth hole, but they're getting brighter again."

"I came really close to a hole in one on a par four. One foot away!"

"It's going to take days to do all this laundry."

Will Frazier, who organizes the OP99, says that he wasn't sure they'd be able to complete the tournament



The tournament took around 14 hours from start to finish. This is hour #1.

before it got too dark. With six more golfers than last year, and a constant threat of rain, he was doing the math in his head all day. The first golfers teed off at 5:40 AM, and the final group finished 15 minutes after sunset. "All the people who came out and supported us are the reason we finished," Will says. "The energy changed dramatically around 4:00 PM when friends and family got off work and came to encourage us."

5:00 PM - Round 9 of 11

"I started strong and faded in the middle, but I'm thinking about the kids and it's giving me the spark."

"I feel electric right now!"

"Vibes are high. On 9, 10, and 11, we're going hard."

After raising \$61,000 last year, the golfers set an ambitious goal for 2025: break \$100,000 in fundraising. As the day went on, the total crept up, and with all the birdies recorded, they realized they'd done it: over \$105,000 raised for youth golf, course maintenance, and Overton Park.

Andy Cates, who serves on the Conservancy board and played in the tournament this year, says it's exciting to see so many young people who are willing to raise funds and walk 30 miles in one day. "It's a testament to Will and to the OP9 committee that they've opened up such a great opportunity to support the park. And oh yeah...it hurt. You get excited at 4:00 PM that you only have four rounds to go, but then you realize that's actually five hours!"

"I told the guys that if this event was easy, everybody would do it. It's a grind," Will says. "But it's all about the fact that 100 years ago, people got together and created this park and this golf course for us to enjoy. And we're going to slog through heat and rain and mud if we have to so we can make sure it's around for another 100."



The golfers were still smiling as they got ready for their ninth circuit of the course.

Host your special event at the Golf Clubhouse!

The renovated Abe Goodman Golf Clubhouse is now available for rental, with proceeds benefiting Overton Park Conservancy! Bring your event to a place where Memphians have gathered for more than 100 years. The historic building, which can accommodate 75 guests standing, includes a common room with a wood-burning fireplace, small catering kitchen, and three televisions. The outdoor patio includes Adirondack chairs and picnic tables.

During regular course operating hours, the clubhouse is also open to all park visitors! Anyone is welcome to come enjoy snacks, drinks, and Wi-Fi, refill your water bottle, browse the pro shop, or relax on the patio. The outdoor terrace is pet-friendly.

If you'd like to host your holiday party, class reunion, or happy hour at the clubhouse, call 901-658-4795 or visit www.overtonpark.org/private-event-booking.



Left: Overton Park Conservancy hosted its Cookies & Caroling event at the clubhouse, featuring music from Opera Memphis
Right: last fall, the clubhouse welcomed the George Cates Chili Dog Open, a tournament honoring the legacy of the Conservancy's co-founder.

OP9 Supporters

The following are gifts received in support of the golf course, including commemorative pavers and sponsorship of the 2024 Overton Park Junior Open and the George Cates Chili Dog Open, from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. While not listed individually here, we are also grateful for the more than 300 supporters of last year's Overton Park 99 tournament!

\$25,000 - \$49,999

Mr. & Mrs. Robert McEniry
Nike, Inc.
Orgill, Inc.

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Independent Bank
LPI Memphis, Inc.

\$5,000 - \$9,999

City of Memphis
MAA Communities
Morgan Rose
Tennessee Golf Foundation

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Wight F. Boggs
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The fund was announced at October's A Magical Night at Overton Park, where a "Possum Posse" of Tina's friends celebrated her love of the park's underappreciated mammals. Pictured: Melissa McMasters, Kaci Murley, Leanne Kleinmann, Tina Sullivan, Laura Harris, Paige Walkup, Ashley Harper, and Jen Andrews

Our website, overtonpark.org, is all new! Visit for park info, history, events, and ways to support!



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Overton Park is one of the city's most iconic public spaces, spanning **342 acres** of recreation, nature, history, and culture. Whether you're looking to **explore an old-growth forest**, **enjoy a round of golf**, or simply **unwind in a scenic garden**, the park offers something for everyone.

It's more than a place—it's a shared space where Memphians come together for reflection, inspiration, celebration, and discovery.



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