



## Why Knot!

*Local conservation group celebrates river stewards.*

By CU Maurice River

CU Maurice River incorporated in 1986 founded in 1979, is a non-profit organization, that was pivotal in the designation of the Maurice River into the National Wild and Scenic River System. CU Maurice River is dedicated to promoting the well-being and quality of life in the region known as "Down Jersey." CU Maurice River sponsors a variety of educational, fieldwork, and research initiatives that contribute to greater understanding and appreciation of the area's natural treasures. The organization also creates opportunities for the public to enjoy the ecological, cultural and recreational aspects of the area. This is made possible by their staff orchestrating hundreds of gifted volunteers who donate over 10,000 hours annually to its mission.

Some well-known volunteer activities include horseshoe crab rescue, citizen science, biota monitoring, student education, wildlife journaling, eagle nest monitoring, osprey platform construction, natural space clean-ups, native garden maintenance, fundraising

event preparation, cooking for the shorebird recovery team, vegetation monitoring/restoration, and help with a host of outings and presentations.

Since 2006, CU Maurice River has been recognizing the exceptional contributions made by volunteers with an Ah Why Knot Award.

The award's name is derived from volunteers' response when asked to help out - "Ah, Why Knot?" The 'knot' is a play on words because the award since its establishment has been a wood carving of the nationally-threatened shorebird species called the red knot. CUMR later added the Sanderling Award to celebrate the achievements of youths, the Executive Director Award to laud volunteer leaders for new accomplishments, and the Presidential Award whose recipient is always a surprise.

The 2023 Ah Why Knot Award winners and their work:



## **Roger Asselta**

Hails from South Harrison Township with a long history of involvement in CU Maurice River. Be it bringing his grandchildren to band osprey or going frog diving at the Frog Slog, Roger is all in. He has been a Chili Bowl chef and guest for many years and hosts a table of

participants. He likes experiences that teach children about nature and supports those programs.

Roger founded Auxilium Packaging Advisors and is a world-class expert in packing and closure systems for glass, plastic, and elastomers. He is well-known in the pharmaceutical trade and holds several patents in his field.



## **Cindy Berry**

Lives in Millville. In recent years she retired from Holly Heights Elementary School, where she was a fourth-grade teacher. As a teacher Cindi recognized the

need for outdoor education, using her classroom time to connect students with principles of environmental science and stewardship. She took her classes on nature walks to the Menantico River just behind the school where she helped them to interpret nature. On the schoolgrounds she managed a bluebird trail. Cindi hosted Allen Jackson, CU Director of Wildlife Management, who offered a banding demonstration and expanded the students' knowledge of bluebird natural history. Allen set up a feeder next to Cindi's classroom so the students could observe winter birds.

Cindi has continually been an advocate for Holly Heights' participation in Wild About Cumberland, enabling 600 students, during

her years of involvement to explore the wilds of Down Jersey with CU Maurice River. Since retirement Cindi has never missed an opportunity to be a leader at Wild About Cumberland.

Each year she dedicates hundreds of volunteer hours to managing bluebird trails within the Wild and Scenic Maurice River Watershed.

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**Michele and Steve Borek**

These Vinelanders have been a part of the Chili Bowl for some years. They are involved in the many days of preparation that the event entails, including auction preparation, set-up, tear down and debriefing in preparation for the following year.

Michele makes working fun; her sense of humor and good spirit propel those around her. Michele is a pharmaceutical corporate consultant, and her husband Steve is an electrician and detail guy who brings excellence to each task he takes on.

Steve is involved in osprey pole erection and repair. He also worked on trail preparation prior to the Wild About Cumberland school event.



## **Linda Finch**

Linda Finch of Millville - Be it contributing to Chili Bowl, Raise the River, and Autumn Dinner event

Committees, working in the wildlife gardens, co-leading exploratory

field trips for youths, or cleaning up natural spaces, Linda is enthusiastic about the task at hand. She has been an invaluable member of fundraising committees, arranging flowers, picking up tablecloths, putting together auction baskets, giving the halls a special look, engaging volunteers, and organizing paddle events. When Linda shows up at a work group you know things are going to get done and friendly chitchat is going to ensue, making the experience all that much more enjoyable for everyone. For several years, she has been coordinating a



meal with a crew for the Shorebird Recovery Team.

Linda is a regular participant at CU Maurice River in events designed to highlight the connection between natural resource integrity and historical developments. Her enthusiasm for local history is contagious.

A Down Jersey gal, Linda worked in municipal government at Millville City Hall for years. Recently she donated a dinner experience on the Lake along with her husband Dale and the Geigers. Linda is a role model of gracious manners and good spirit.

(above photo: left: Linda Finch, right: Kathy Geiger working on garden)

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## **Bill Garwood**

A resident of Millville, Bill works well with others and adds ornery banter and a distinctive chuckle to many work parties. He lends a hand in CU Maurice River's fieldwork

opportunities like wetland vegetation mapping, osprey platform installation, and waterway clean-ups. He has been a leading figure at the urban wildlife and rain gardens, so much so that at times staff has shown up at a garden to fix an existing issue only to find that Bill has already solved the problem.

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## **Greg Staman**

Greg comes to us from Williamstown. He is a retired healthcare worker and exudes kindness. He and his wife Stacey have only been active with CU Maurice River since 2020; however, they have been making waves since arriving. We are excited for this opportunity to recognize Greg for his volunteerism and stewardship.

Greg has helped map native wetland plant communities, collected biota for mercury sampling, managed bluebird trails, installed osprey platforms, cleaned beaches in preparation for the spawning and shorebird season, rescued horseshoe crabs from all sorts of impingements, and participated in the removal of major debris from freshwater

tidal wetland habitat. He continually shares his appreciation for the great out-of-doors. He has hosted observation decks during the Cumberland County Eagle Festival. He leads outdoor education programming for CU Maurice River, including field trips at the Bayshore Center as well as climate change awareness activities for school children at the Millville Bluffs Preserve.

Recently Greg assisted staff members and a volunteer team in preparing 25 rain barrels for a make-n-take property stewardship workshop to promote the percolation of over 32,000 gallons of rainwater per year back into the aquifer. Greg is an active member of the Raise the River Fundraiser, which gets people on the river raising money for stewardship and education.

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## **Stultz Taylor**

Stultz, who hails from Newport, works quietly behind the scenes for CU. This year his company, STS Sheet Metal, cut and donated all the osprey guards. These prevent predators, ie. raccoons and

snakes, from accessing the nest from below. One year when an event's venue wasn't up to snuff, Stultz took it upon himself to solve the physical and emotional emergency by sending a crew of people to set things right.

When our biota dip nets began to fall apart, rather than replacing them his welding team, who can "weld a broken heart or the crack of dawn," fixed them. He has been more than generous at fundraisers in providing necessary provisions. He is unstinting with his talents, time, and varied contributions. His Bayshore knowledge has also proved

invaluable on many occasions as he hooks us  
up with needed contacts.

(above photo: left: wife Sandy Taylor Right: Stultz)

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## **Mary Watkins**

Mary, a former CU Trustee and a Presidential Award Winner, resides in Bridgeton. A retired teacher who works in healthcare, Mary is continually teaching others at CU Maurice River about the great outdoors.

She leads numerous outings including the Duck Waddle, What It's Like to Be a Bird, 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Walks, and Purple Martin Cruises. A naturalist on the observation decks during the Annual Eagle Festival and the Mauricetown RiverFest, where she also led walks, Mary works to build awareness of southern New Jersey's rich avian diversity.

She tunes children in to the wonders to be found outdoors at Elevate, Wild About Cumberland, and other educational

programs. At the WheatonArts Eco Fair she leads the Scavenger Hunt.

Mary is an active member of the Chili Bowl Planning Committee and a regular Chili Chef.

She is also the Captain of CU Maurice River's World Series of Birding Team. Additionally Mary manages bluebird trails. Each year she dedicates over 100 hours to growing CUMR's reach in the community, helping to build the next generation of stewards.

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**Meghan Martin**  
**Executive Director Award Winner**

Meghan lives in Bridgeton with her husband Tom and their daughter Tyler. You might remember her as CU Maurice River's Assistant Office Manager. She left us during the uncertain times of the pandemic, and since that time she has married and become a mother. As Meghan now dedicates herself to one of the most demanding jobs, without

a start and end time, she has also been in the background helping us all to be more efficient stewards, continuing to return to the office to train new staff members in the ins-and-outs of the jobs there.

Recently Meghan worked with CU Staff to help iron out the wrinkles of new auction software that provides the Chili Bowl Committee with a bigger toolkit. This year she has also signed up to help plan the fundraiser called Raise the River. Meghan never asks for acknowledgment and does not strive to be in the limelight, but her contribution to CU Maurice River's mission from behind the scenes is exemplary.

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**Sue Milner**  
**Presidential Award Winner**

Sue Milner of Bridgeton has a long history of community service. She has made meals for the Shorebird Recovery Team and for several years has served on CU Maurice River's Events Committee. A retired hospital administrator who handled logistics as Director of Construction and Renovation at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Sue brings to CUMR's table a commitment to professionalism. She always notices omissions and areas in need of improvement and then follows through to address them.

She takes it upon herself to continually monitor the Event Committee's lists and minutes for necessary revisions and has added capacity to the Chili Bowl. Sue is an organizer extraordinaire.

If you would like to get involved in CU, explore our website or contact the Millville office at 856-300-5331.