

# THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

## At age 125, Rock Creek Park to celebrate latest milestone

■ **Recreation:** Revitalization eyed by 'Green Ribbon Panel'

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"Find yourself in Rock Creek Park."

That's the theme of a yearlong campaign dedicated to celebrating the 125th anniversary of — and improving — one of D.C.'s most treasured resources.

Many of the park's greatest supporters came out this weekend to help kick off the special anniversary

year at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Woodley Park. The Rock Creek Conservancy and the National Park Service hosted the hotel-sponsored event.

Matt Fleischer, executive director of the Rock Creek Conservancy, said Sunday that the "find yourself" theme is "both a literal campaign for improving the people's experience and enjoyment of the park, and a reference to the ways they can refresh and nourish mind, body and spirit" there.

The 1,754-acre federally managed park is one of the largest urban

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# **PARK:** Website, mobile app to highlight offerings

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forested areas in the world. The country's third national park, Rock Creek Park is home to over 35 species of fish, 30 species of animals and 160 species of birds.

Rock Creek Park superintendent Tara Morrison told the 125 guests Sunday that "forming connections to Rock Creek Park is easy. It draws us in. We can all find meaning in the park."

Morrison's message was about moving forward and celebrating the past. "We must preserve the legacy of Rock Creek Park for future generations," she said.

To that end, Rock Creek Conservancy, a nonprofit support organization, recently formed a "Green Ribbon Panel" to work on protecting and revitalizing the park now and for the next 125 years. Its members include local elected officials, representatives of local environmental groups and more.

"Rock Creek Park was a prime part of my mission in Congress," said D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton. "All that wilderness and a city, too? You can't beat that."

"I know the theme is find yourself in Rock Creek Park, but I want to alter the motto to 'Lose yourself in Rock Creek Park,'" said Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett. He urged people to "build on what we've started so that we'll have the opportunity in 125 years to

say we've protected one of our greatest natural resources."

Along with the Green Ribbon Panel, the Rock Creek Conservancy has been working in partnership with the National Park Service on creating a mobile app for smartphones. The app will provide better maps of the park, list upcoming park events, detail trails and more.

"We're very, very excited about the mobile app," Fleischer said. "Now there is a way to find yourself, literally find yourself, in Rock Creek Park."

Also in the works is a comprehensive website, [RockCreekPark125.org](http://RockCreekPark125.org), which will include a calendar of recreational and educational events for visitors.

Sunday's event was one of several programs held to launch the park's 125th anniversary year. A main attraction for children was a "Who's Awake" presentation on Sunday morning at the Rock Creek Nature Center. Ranger Tony Linforth discussed the three different types of owls in Rock Creek Park, and then children and their parents dissected owl pellets to look for bones of prey.

This prompted questions such as "Do owls eat people?" "Would they eat my 3-year-old black lab?" and "Are owls magic?" Afterward, the children were sworn in as Junior Rangers. Superintendent Morrison led the pledge, presenting each child with a patch commemorating the induction.

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