

West Virginia's 7th Annual Chestnut Festival was held on Sunday, October 12, 2014

The sun was shining the sky was blue, and the glory of autumn was on display – what better way than to showcase our annual, one-day chestnut festival, and to pay homage to “The Great American Chestnut Tree!

This, the **7th Annual Festival**, was every bit as exciting as the inaugural 1st Festival, back in 2008. The excitement comes from the multitude of interesting and enjoyable festivities in the Park, and across the street in the Szilagy Creative Arts Center - all crammed into one day. Imagine **Perry Como** singing, “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire...,” and you get the Park feeling. Our theme of course was to honor the heritage of our Great American Chestnut Tree, and to foster the mingling of the public and chestnut aficionados alike.

Biologist and WV Scientific Coordinator, **Mark Double**, hosted and coordinated the scientific program, which featured two speakers: **former TACF President and CEO Bryan Burhans** who delved into “What You Need to Know about The American Chestnut Foundation.” Bob Walters on: “Working with Wood, including the Great American Chestnut Tree,” cancelled out due to a family emergency. Mark Double was introduced as the 2nd speaker by Dr. William MacDonald, and gave an excellent program on American chestnut history.

Dr. John Brooks, an esteemed author and forest resources expert, joined the festival, as a distinguished guest and after-dinner keynote speaker. Dr. Brooks is a professor of Forest Biometrics at West Virginia University.



Vendors Charles and Randall Wotring display their wormy chestnut furniture and decor. Photo by J. Nassif



Don Riggs and others, roasting chestnuts on the open fire station. Photo by J. Nassif

The daily Festival activities ranged from the traditional fire roasted chestnut samplings to throwing chestnuts-in-the-well contests with prizes for the children in attendance. During the day's events, The **West Virginia Chapter** held a meeting, presided over by **Dr. Brian Perkins**. Vice Chairman, **Sam Muncy**, displayed many photos of a new hybrid American chestnut orchard on a Boy Scouts of America plot in Fayette County, which had been funded through the generous donations of **Duane Waddell**, TACF member.

The **Szilagyi Center for Visual and Performing Arts** featured a variety of exhibits, including: World War II, B&O Railroad Bridge Exhibit, 4-H History & Learning Center, and a Community Quilters room.

The showcase event, however, was the evening **Gala Banquet**, opening in song from the Preston High Madrigal Singers. They sang "O Chestnut Tree," which lead into the toasting and tasting of the new wine by **Co-Chair Shirley C. Hartley**, followed by the dinner of savory chestnut-flavored dishes. During his keynote address, **Dr. Brooks** discussed the Eastern forests, pre and post chestnut blight periods, which was very well attended. The evening finished off with the 7th Annual Crowning of "Mr. and Mrs. Chestnut," Bryan and Lisa Burhans, followed by the very popular auction.

Next year's Festival will be held on Sunday, October 11, 2015.

Mark Double, our Scientific Coordinator, is already working of an interesting speaker's program. Mark your calendar!



Distinguished guests that attended Park festivities, from left to right: Dick Will, Mark Double, Dr. Bill MacDonald, Bryan and Lisa Burhans, Don McCann, Dr. John Brooks, and Dr. Joseph Nassif. Photo by: Robert Meissner.

Comments about the Chestnut Festival.

The following Email was received December 8, from Dr. Anna Bettios, Washington, DC:

To: Joseph Nassif, DDS, MS

I wanted to take a minute to thank you and your staff for the wonderful time that we had at the Chestnut festival in Rowlesburg, October 12, 2014.

We attended the scientific lectures and it was revealing and amazing to discover the restoration efforts being made in order to bring back the wonderful American Chestnut Tree. We congratulate the researchers for their efforts and hard work.

We enjoyed very much the gala dinner banquet, including the chestnut flavored food, the after dinner speaker, and the auction that followed. The all-day event, obviously, took a lot of work and planning, and for this, we congratulate you and the Chestnut Festival Committee.

Also, my husband and I enjoyed the wonderful mountain scenery in and around Rowlesburg during the weekend.

Looking forward to next year's event! We will be there.

Best regards to all for a wonderful holiday!! With great respect,

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