

Burlington County Times

# Fundraiser planned for Rancocas Nature Center

- [Story](#)

Posted: Monday, July 7, 2014 1:00 am

By Jeannie O'Sullivan Staff writer

WESTAMPTON — To thrive, people need meals, and the Rancocas Nature Center needs funds.

One way to satisfy both appetites is to dine at Charlie Brown's Steakhouse on Wednesday. The restaurant will donate 20 percent of the day's receipts to the 130-acre center on Rancocas Road, which includes trails, wildlife, and a museum steeped in rich history. The Route 541 restaurant is open from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The proceeds will benefit various initiatives at the 37-year-old complex, a nonprofit that now operates through a joint effort of the municipality, county and state.

"How easy is this? Just eat lunch and or dinner at (Charlie Brown's), mention (the) Rancocas Nature Center, and you've suddenly supported environmental education and nature," said Rich Chichester, co-chairman of the Friends of Rancocas Nature Center. The group formed in January 2013 after New Jersey Audubon, the center's former operator, abruptly announced it was closing the financially troubled venue. It has run the center independently for more than a year through a partnership with the Burlington County Board of Freeholders, New Jersey State Park Service's Division of Parks and Forestry, the municipality and Rancocas Conservancy.

Donations and fundraisers represent the financial core of the center, where visitors can hike a 2.7-mile trail system, take interactive lessons in maple syrup making, and learn about monarch butterflies, reptiles, bugs, seeds, ecosystems, frogs, habitats and more. The center's summer day camp is in full swing.

The center's stakeholders work regularly to raise the \$125,000 needed to sustain it annually. Fundraising is "crucial" to the mission, said Friends co-chairwoman Toni Price, who recently started a monarch way station habitat at the center.

"One of the things that we are very aware of is that we have a unique niche program here," Price said, noting how the center is next to Timbuctoo, a former colony of freed slaves, and served as a settlement for Quakers and Lenni Lenape Indians.

For more information, call 609-261-2495 or visit [www.RancocasNatureCenter.org](http://www.RancocasNatureCenter.org).

Jeannie O'Sullivan: 609-267-7586; [josullivan@calkins.com](mailto:josullivan@calkins.com); Twitter: @jeannieosulliva