2015 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

LAKE OF THE WOODS • MIDDLE FORK RIVER • HOMER LAKE • RIVER BEND • SANGAMON RIVER • KICKAPOO RAIL TRAIL
NEW HIRES

Jonathon Hasselbring, Planning Director
Austin Haskett, Natural Resources Technician
James Blythe, LOW, Maintenance Worker I
Michael Dale, LOW Asst. Site Superintendent of Grounds
Tony Sparks, LOW Maintenance Worker I
Megan McCoy, MGP Registrar
Monica David, MGP Garden Program Specialist

FAREWELLS

Adrienne Kizer, Marketing Assistant
Pat Simpson, Volunteer Coordinator
Kyle Welborn, Construction Worker I
Valerie Hall, Museum of the Grand Prairie Curator
Cara Grabowski, MGP Garden Program Specialist
Larry Beckett, Garden Supervisor
Tina Mobley, Garden Maintenance Worker
Andrew Combes, Maintenance Worker II

CHANGE OF POSITION

Tammy Bruehl, Maintenance Worker II to LOW
Asst. Site Superintendent of Facilities

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Dr. Christopher White
Phil Hult
Sarah Livesay
Dr. Andrew Kerins
Bobbie Herakovich

FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION

Tom Berns
Rod Beyers
Joe Lamb
Roger Laramee
Sarah Livesay
Daniel Noel
Meredith Mills
Daniel Olson
Terry Rathgerber
Will Timmons
Mary Ellen Wuellner

CITIZEN’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Gene Barickman
David Easter
Wendy Harris
Debbie Insana
Eileen Borgia
Denise Ingram
Bill Ford
Ellen Hartman

Meyer Capel Law Offices
Legal Counsel
Core conservation services, volunteer commitment, and visitor use increased substantially in 2015. The financial support we received from donors was at the highest level in our history. For instance, our friends stepped up on our major projects such as a three to one match from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation for conservation and restoration at the Sangamon River Forest Preserve that led to over $28,000 being donated to the effort.

We attribute our success to the many individuals that support our efforts. We continue to operate from a position of relative financial security because of the strategic mix of support we receive from private businesses, individuals, granting agencies and foundations, including the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation. Many of our projects such as the Kickapoo Rail Trail would not be possible without the support of donors and volunteers.

The Board of Commissioners is committed to continuing the District’s strong conservation, education and recreational mission while creating a sustainable future. We invite you to visit your preserves and see firsthand why activity is at an all-time high.

Dr. Christopher M. White
President, CCFPD

Daniel J. Olson
Executive Director
IN 2015, THIS DISTRICT WAS THE BENEFICIARY OF SEVERAL PRIVATE FOUNDATION GRANTS TO HELP ADDRESS IT’S HIGHEST PRIORITY PROJECTS. THESE GRANTS WERE AWARDED TO THE FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF DISTRICT ACTIVITIES.

- An Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation stewardship challenge grant provided a triple-match for donations to the Sangamon River Forest Preserve for savanna and stream corridor restoration efforts. A total of $21,000 was awarded to match $7,000 in donations. Another $4,000 is available once 400 hours of volunteer stewardship are logged at the site.

- The Lumpkin Family Foundation awarded $14,000 toward the preparation of a study of the Point Pleasant Wetland. Point Pleasant is located at the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve and provides important habitat for waterfowl and other aquatic species. The wetland has experienced degradation over the last few years. The Lumpkin grant funding will allow the District to determine the causes of that degradation and provide recommendations to address them.

- PeopleForBikes, a Colorado-based cycling advocacy organization, provided $10,000 in grant funding to assist with construction of the Kickapoo Rail Trail in Champaign County. These funds will help build phase one, which spans from Main Street in Urbana to Main Street in St. Joseph.
In 2015, the District received $4,825,650 in revenues, 76% of which came from property and replacement taxes. The District expended $4,455,760 with general government expenses at 30% being the largest share. The District received $369,890 more in revenues than it expended.
The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was established in 1983 to support the conservation, recreation, and education goals of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. Grants and donations received by the Foundation allow the District to acquire and preserve natural areas, conduct cultural and environmental education programming, and undertake capital projects that improve the quality of life. The Foundation also assists the District each year by holding events to raise public awareness and funding for forest preserve projects and activities.

The Foundation’s primary fundraising priorities for 2015 included the construction of the Kickapoo Rail Trail, the renovation of the pond and waterfall at the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, and the restoration of natural areas at the Sangamon River Forest Preserve. Overall, contributions to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation totaled $263,344—an increase of more than 32% from 2014.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation fueled donations toward the Sangamon River Forest Preserve restoration project by matching each dollar raised locally, up to a total of $7,000, with three dollars in challenge grant funding. Donors took just thirty days in December to meet the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation goal.

- Donations to the Foundation supported the installation of *Throne Rococo Nouveau* in the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden through a partnership with the Public Art League. This was the first art installation outside of the communities of Champaign and Urbana.

- The Foundation held its second annual River to Rail Ride, a September bicycle tour with routes between Middle Fork River Forest Preserve and Kickapoo State Park. The one-day event raised more than $3,100 for the construction of the Kickapoo Rail Trail.

- Foundation members supported and participated in many other community events throughout the year to raise funds and awareness for the District and its activities. These included Krannert Center’s Outside at Research Park, St. Joseph’s annual community festival, Freedom Fest at Lake of Woods, and the Illinois Bike Summit.
The Natural Resources Department has focused on creating additional woodland and restoring savanna, and prairie habitat to expand the restoration of Middle Fork’s Point Pleasant area. The expansion utilized areas which had been in row-crop agriculture for many years. A consistent rotation of corn and soybeans had provided weed free sites in which to plant. This project started with removing invasive trees and shrubs from adjacent land in order to minimize undesirable seeds entering this new habitat in the future.

One area was planted with a mix of tree and shrub seed in order to establish future woodland. In addition to the seed, the project was supplemented with 50 small trees and shrubs of mixed species by an Eagle Scout candidate and his fellow volunteers. A diverse mix of savanna seed was then broadcast over the site in order to establish native flora in what will eventually be the understory of the woodland. The savanna and prairie seed mixes will offer prime habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, as over 150 species were included. Plantings included seed that was collected by staff and volunteers, as well as purchased from vendors.

Preparation for future prairie and savanna plantings also continued at the site throughout 2015. A ten acre field of non-native grasses and weeds was converted to a cover crop of winter wheat to prevent erosion and fight weeds until we are ready with our next seed mix. The additional habitat, as well as a trail complete with interpretive signage, will make this gem of a natural area even more attractive to wildlife and preserve visitors into the future.
Visitation at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center and the Museum of the Grand Prairie is thriving beyond all expectations! Outreach has more than doubled in the past few years – touching twice as many lives with the natural and cultural heritage that connects us all. The Museum of the Grand Prairie has experienced an uptick in school programs and visitation over the past five years. Public programming numbers at Museum of the Grand Prairie have quadrupled in the last four years.

In 2015, exhibit openings had great public attendance for both special exhibits, *Hidden Underfoot: Historical Archaeology in Illinois* (at the Museum of the Grand Prairie) and *This Living Soil* (at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center). The new permanent exhibit at the museum, *The Grand Prairie Story*, funded by a Public Museums Operating Grant, was awarded the Illinois Association of Museums Award of Merit.

The Homer Lake Interpretive Center became a member of the Museums at the Crossroads Consortium, in recognition of our commitment to excellence. *Museum Mondays* program was presented with an Award of Excellence from the Illinois Association of Museums in the category of programs. We received over one ton of birdseed donations. A multimedia program, *Farewell to Lincoln*, was presented to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of Lincoln. A new maple syrup root beer from the Homer Soda Co. features the Homer Interpretive Center and it’s educational programs! A portion of the proceeds help support our efforts.
More than 9,000 campers enjoyed the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve’s Harry L. Swartz Campground. With over 60 campsites to choose from and unique amenities such as a swimming beach, a shower house, and a camp store, camping activities remained very popular. Added to that, visitors also enjoyed nearby fishing, environmental education programs, and numerous trails throughout our 1,800 acre preserve. With all of these conveniences available to the public, revenues from nights of camping increased over the previous two years.

**LAKE OF THE WOODS GOLF COURSE**

The scenic beauty of this Audubon International-certified golf course sanctuary brings players back to the tees. A total of 26,462 rounds of golf were played in 2015. Tournaments remained popular and we received over $32,000 in revenue from 606 tournament participants. The addition of Footgolf to par three course adds a new facet for all ages. FootGolf plays like golf, using a soccer ball kicked into a 21 inch hole. A total of 732 rounds of FootGolf were played in 2015. Our two indoor golf simulators remain popular with league play, driving range and 18-hole rounds available.

**VOLUNTEERS**

Over 7,026 hours of volunteer activity helped to advance our mission and diversify our core services. Based on the current rate at which volunteer time is valued in the state of Illinois, the gross financial contribution made by volunteers to CCFPD in 2015 was $173,820.

The hours reported to the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Program for Master Naturalists working at District sites is 1,750. Of all natural resource organizations receiving support from the program, the CCFPD garnered the highest number of hours. This represents a financial contribution of $43,295.

Volunteer hours associated with 2015’s Freedom Fest total 468 for a financial contribution of $11,566.

Fourteen organizations including churches, Boy Scout troops, service fraternities, and environmental groups worked with the CCFPD on a variety of events, including ground maintenance, river cleanups, seed collection at public programs and special events.
Thank You to Our 2015 Donors

INDIVIDUALS

Janet Anderson*
Anonymous 1
Tom & Darlene Halloran
Mark Lourance
Rosann Noel
Richard Noel
Victor & Bonnie Buraglio
Beverly Friese
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Anonymous 6*
Anonymous 7
Anonymous 8
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Joyce Eisold
Bryan Ericson
BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Andersons Inc. Charitable Foundation
Champaign County Bikes
Busey Bank, Champaign
Raynie Foundation
Community Foundation of East Central Illinois
Champaign Cycle
Heartland Properties
Prairie Cycle Club
Village of Mahomet
Wild Card Cycling
Champaign Surplus
Izaak Walton League, Champaign
Chapter
Homer Soda Company
Carle Foundation
Ford’s Theatre
Schoonover Sewer Service
Glodfelder Insurance Agency
P&P Heating & Cooling
Cycles Plus
Prospect Bank
Barham Benefit Group
Busey Bank, Mahomet
Champaign County Audubon Society
Durst Cycle & Fitness
Fuhrmann Engineering, Inc.
Looking for Lincoln
Sleepy Creek Vineyards
UI Dept of Rec, Sport, & Tourism
Sunrise Charitable Foundation
The Art Theater
Candlewood Estates
Champaign Sportman’s Club
Domino’s
Edward Jones - Michael W. Kessel
EE. Moran Security Solutions
First Mid-Illinois Bank & Trust
Fisher National Bank
Filippo’s Pizza

Forest Preserve Friends Foundation
Galen L. Dale, DDS
Grace Christian Church
Kirchner Building Centers
Mahomet Ace Hardware
Mahomet Chamber of Commerce
Mahomet IGA
Mahomet NAPA Auto Parts
Rotary Club of Mahomet
Mark N Williams, DMD
Micro Systems International
Midwest Commercial Coatings
Petlman Law Office
ReMax - Taylor Realty
Reynolds Towing
Robert W Shafer DMD
US Pro United Services
Walk Chiropractic & Accupuncture
Meijer Stores
Common Ground Food Co-op
Ezra Levin Foundation
Kickapoo Landing
Original Pancake House
Renk Adjusters/Roberts Adjusters
Swanson’s Roofing & Concrete
Taylor Studies, Inc.
UpClose Marketing & Printing
Valerie Woodruff, DDS
Casey’s General Store
CDC Paper & Janitor Supply
Champaign County Home
Extension - Homer Chapter
Chapter KE, PEO Sisterhood
Champaign Surplus Support Group
Champaign County Charitable Foundation
The Andersons Inc.
Central Illinois Produce
Burgwald Eye Center
Mahomet Small Engine Support Group
Mahomet Area Youth Club
Community Tire
Mahomet NAPA Auto Parts
Mahomet Small Engine
Wild Birds & More Store
Affiliates in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
Colony Square Cleaners
Maxwell Counters
Provisional Elevator Advertising
SpectroClick
We conserve, preserve, and restore natural areas.
We provide cultural, historical, and environmental opportunities.
We provide compatible outdoor recreation experiences.