

# The Leaflet

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

## The Kickapoo Rail Trail Triple Match



### The Kickapoo Rail Trail,

which currently connects

east Urbana to downtown St. Joseph via rail trail, is receiving updates this fall. Along the trail, signage, mile markers, and a few rest nodes will be installed. These nodes will feature benches for the weary hiker, interpretive signs, and wayfinding markers. In downtown St. Joseph, there will be an improved seating area near the post office with plenty of bike parking. Also in St. Joseph, a KRT parking lot will be installed. Parking, while not the most glamorous trail feature, is vital to offset nuisance parking along the trail and allow patrons who do not live nearby better access to the Kickapoo Rail Trail. The parking lot area will also feature additional bicycle parking and a fix-it repair station. Thank you to our generous donors, the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation, the Village of St. Joseph, and the Illinois Department of Transportation for their support of this project.

### Stop by Ippatsu Salon.

A portion of the proceeds from select items in the Roo Copiam line will benefit your forest preserves!



**The Kickapoo Rail Trail** is the recipient of another tremendous grant opportunity from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. The grant will match private donations — not once, not twice, but three times! That's right — for every \$1 you donate, ICECF will provide \$3!

The project kicked off on National Trails Day, June 5. To date, you have donated more than \$2,600 toward the \$7,000 goal. If you'll help us raise the remaining \$4,400, ICECF will kick in **\$13,200** (\$4,400 x 3). **Let's not leave that grant funding untapped!**

In addition to a wonderful recreational feature, the Kickapoo Rail Trail is a valuable strip of both remnant prairie and savanna ecosystems. With your donations plus the ICECF grant, Forest Preserve District staff will be able to restore 4½ acres of this important natural landscape and wildlife habitat. Non-native and invasive vegetation will be removed, and the land will be planted with native wildflowers and trees. Once restored, these ecosystems will allow birds, pollinator insects, mammals, and other wildlife to thrive.

Your gift today will get us to the \$7,000 goal that will be triple-matched with this grant. **Make your donation now at [onekrt.org](http://onekrt.org).** *And thank you for your support of nature!*



## PROGRAMS & VIRTUAL EVENTS

See the full program descriptions online, [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org)

### AUGUST

**Monday, August 9**

#### MUSEUM MONDAYS: GO GREEN!

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10:30-11:30 a.m.*

FREE. Space is limited. Registration required by August 6 at [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org). Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Wednesday, August 11**

#### MORNINGS WITH THE MUSEUM: FANTASTIC FRIENDS PART 3

*Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 10 a.m.*

FREE. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [pcain@ccfpd.org](mailto:pcain@ccfpd.org).

**Wednesday, August 11**

#### VIEWING THE PERSEID METEOR SHOWER

*Sugar Creek Shelter, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 8:30 p.m. weather permitting*

FREE. All Ages. Program may be cancelled if skies are cloudy. For more info and for cancellation updates: [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org) or (217) 896-2455.

**Thursday, August 12**

#### BATS AT THE BRIDGE

*Covered Bridge, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 7:30-8:30 p.m.*

All Ages. FREE. Space is limited; register by August 11 at [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org). For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Friday, August 20**

#### WALK WITH A NATURALIST

*Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.*

FREE. Space is limited. Registration required at [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org). For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Wednesday, August 25**

#### SUNSET PADDLE

*Walnut Hill Boat Launch, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6:30-8:30 p.m.*

Learn who comes out when the sun goes down as we explore aquatic life of Homer Lake via canoe. Previous canoe experience is required. All equipment will be provided; please wear closed-toe shoes and bring water to drink. Ages 15 and up; adults must accompany participants under 18. \$8 per person, or \$4 if you bring your own canoe. Space is limited. Register by August 24. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Thursday, August 26**

#### A WHOLE 'NOTHER BALL GAME: BASEBALL IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS, 1860s-1970s

*Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 7 p.m.*

FREE. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [pcain@ccfpd.org](mailto:pcain@ccfpd.org).

**Friday, August 27**

#### PRAIRIE WALK FOR HOMESCHOOLERS

*Buffalo Trace at Lake of the Woods, 9:30-10:30 a.m.*

Children must be accompanied by an adult. Ages 5-11; \$3 per child. Space is limited. Registration required at [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org). For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [mmontez@ccfpd.org](mailto:mmontez@ccfpd.org).

**Sunday, August 29**

#### CCFPD SUMMER CONCERT SERIES MUSIC ON THE LAKE: CORDUROY

*Walnut Hill Shelter, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 5-7 p.m.*

FREE. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [pcain@ccfpd.org](mailto:pcain@ccfpd.org).  
COVID-19 Backup Venue: Drive-in Concert w/ limited space and safety restrictions in place at the Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve.

### SEPTEMBER

**Thursday, September 2**

#### MOSQUITOES IN EAST-CENTRAL ILLINOIS

*Online Event Via Zoom, 7-8 p.m.*

FREE. Recommended for ages 18 & up. Registration required in advance For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Friday, September 3- Friday September 24**

#### STORYWALK® : BUTTERFLIES ON CARMEN STREET

*(Mariposas en la calle Carmen)*

*Timberdoodle Trail, Homer Lake Forest Preserve,*

*Daily during preserve open hours*

FREE. All ages. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Wednesday, September 8**

#### MORNINGS WITH THE MUSEUM: FANTASTIC FRIENDS PART 4

*Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie*

*Facebook and YouTube pages, 10 a.m.*

FREE. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [pcain@ccfpd.org](mailto:pcain@ccfpd.org).

**Friday, September 10**

#### WALK WITH A NATURALIST

*Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.*

All ages. FREE. Space is limited.

**Saturday, September 11**

#### PRAIRIE STORIES

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.*

All ages. FREE.. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [pcain@ccfpd.org](mailto:pcain@ccfpd.org).

**Wednesday, September 15**

#### NATURE AT NIGHT: BATS

*Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6:30-8 p.m.*

All ages. FREE. Space is limited. Registration required at [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org). For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

**Saturday, September 25**

#### TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE SCAVENGER HUNT

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10 a.m.-10:45 a.m.*

All ages. \$3 per child. Space is limited; registration required. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [mmontez@ccfpd.org](mailto:mmontez@ccfpd.org).

**Saturday, September 25 - Thursday, September 30**

#### TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE WEEK SCAVENGER HUNT CHALLENGE

*Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, During Interpretive Center regular hours*

Current open hours: Saturday 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.; Tuesday-Friday 1- 5 p.m.

FREE. All Ages. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [jwick@ccfpd.org](mailto:jwick@ccfpd.org).

## Exploring a New Path

Dear Friends of the Forest Preserves,



This has been a year full of transitions for many of us. I write to you today to announce that I am embarking on a big transition myself very soon - I will retire from the Forest Preserve District effective this September.

What an amazing journey it has been! This was a very difficult decision. I'm not sure which will be harder to leave - this important work or the dedicated staff. Cheryl Kennedy hired me to a part-time position at the Early American Museum (now Museum of the Grand Prairie) fourteen years ago after I stepped away from a long career in city government. I was in search of a new challenge, and the mission of the Forest Preserve District had always resonated with me. She offered me a position and I jumped at the opportunity.

As I look back over the years, what I brought to the District pales in comparison to all that I gained. What other job allows you to learn all about Lincoln's time in central Illinois, the natural resource benefits of native plants, how to churn butter and tap maple trees, how a wetland works, the ways that fire benefits the prairie ecosystem, and that turtles like to have their backs scratched? I got to drive down hiking trails in a Prius with Jerry Pagac, walk the Kickapoo Rail Trail when it was more rail than trail, manage a referendum campaign in the midst of a global pandemic, and constantly be the last person to spot a bald eagle flying overhead. I also met so many wonderful people who treasure and support these forest preserves.

I will continue to serve as a board member on the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation, so this isn't good-bye. I hope to visit with many of you in my new role. But I do want to say a heartfelt thank you for your trust and for your friendship over these last many years.

See you in the preserves!

Mary Ellen Wuellner  
Executive Director

## 2021 Tourism Impact Award

Middle Fork River Forest Preserve and site superintendent Matt Kuntz received a 2021 Tourism Impact Award from Visit Champaign County on July 28, 2021. Since its designation as an International Dark Sky Park in 2018, the preserve has seen an increase in visitation as visitors pack the user areas to view the milky way, constellations, Neowise comet, and other astronomical events happening throughout the year.



Located about 30 miles northeast of Champaign, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve provides a "phenomenal astro tourism experience right in the middle of central Illinois," stated Jayne DeLuce, president & CEO of Visit Champaign County. Illinois' only Dark Sky Park has drawn visitors from at least 13 states.

The preserve is open daily throughout the year to allow visitors a chance to view the darkest skies in Champaign County. The District is also putting together a variety of educational programs, both virtual and in-person. Go to the website, [ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org), to see what's happening.