

The Leaflet

A year of IMPROVEMENTS



It's finally happening!

For many years residents and patrons have been anticipating the **renovation of Willow Pond at the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve.**

Due to leaks in the clay liner, water levels have made the pond inaccessible to swimmers for large portions of the summer. Low water levels result in poor water quality, making the water unsafe for

swimming. Project improvements include deepening the pond for better fish habitat and water quality, replacing the clay liner, removing the island, installing outcroppings for fishing, and planting the shoreline with native plants. The new clay liner is being sourced from material on site, which is great for sustainable construction.

The District has been working on plans for many years to address this issue, but because of the high cost of the project and the lack of grant funding for this type of work, the project was postponed. Thanks to increased referendum funds, the District is able to complete this project to reopen the only public beach in Champaign County later this year.

After receiving the support of the Champaign County residents in the 2020 election, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District took the increase in funds from the approved referendum and got to work right away in 2021 making good on the promise of maintaining and improving the infrastructure, buildings and facilities in the District!

First on the list was **updating heating and cooling systems** at the Middle Fork Activity Center and Lake of the Woods Elks Lake Pavilion. Replacing the dated units helps to improve the energy efficiency of the facilities

worst of the worst sections, but in 2021 the roads and parking lot at River Bend Forest Preserve were completely resurfaced.



This had not been done since their initial construction in 2006. Additionally, a portion of the Lake of the Woods Bike Trail through Stidham Woods was resurfaced and the parking lot near North Prairie View Road was expanded.

The **hallway windows** in the Pro Shop at Lake of the Woods Golf Course were replaced over the summer. These were the original windows that were still in place



and had either become loose, the seals had deteriorated or the window had completely cracked

so it was a much needed update that looks amazing and will help with the heating and cooling efficiency inside the building as well.

New decking was installed at the Salt Fork Center at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. The composite deck boards are made up of recycled pallets, carpet padding, and approximately



400,000 plastic shopping bags, making it a sustainable choice.

With several projects completed in 2021, the work continues in 2022. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to see what we're working on next.

Please **scan the QR code** (or use this link youtu.be/ZXW6IzoyH38) to see what improvements the Champaign County Forest Preserve District has made since voters approved the tax referendum in November 2020.



THE CCFPD SNOWFLAKE SEARCH
JANUARY 20-MARCH 1, 2022
HOW MANY CAN YOU FIND?
SHARE A PIC AND TAG US WHEN YOU FIND A SNOWFLAKE
#CCFPDSNOWFLAKESEARCH
CCFPD.ORG



as well as keeping the visitors comfortable. We will continue to replace units throughout the District over the next few years.

Two other big projects we were able to tackle were **resurfacing roads and trails.** In the past, this was usually left to resurfacing the

PROGRAMS & VIRTUAL EVENTS

See the full program descriptions online, ccfpd.org

• FEBRUARY •

Tuesday, February 8
ONLINE EXHIBIT OPENING: HEARTS AND FLOWERS
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 7 p.m. FREE.

Friday, February 11
WALK WITH A NATURALIST
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.
All ages. FREE. Space is limited.

Saturday, February 12
MY VALEN TINY GARDEN
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1-2:30 p.m.
For ages 5-11 with an adult. \$6 per child.

Sunday, February 13
HAPPY BIRTHDAY ABY BABY: LINCOLN'S AGING FACE
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 2 p.m. FREE.

Tuesday, February 15
OWL PROWL: ADULTS
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 p.m.
Ages 15 and up. \$3 per person. Space is limited; registration required by February 14 at ccfpd.org.

Thursday, February 17
OWL PROWL: ALL AGES
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 p.m.
Recommended for ages 5 & up. \$5 per person; children 3 & under are free. Space is limited; registration required by February 16 at ccfpd.org.

Thursday, February 17
GARDEN SPEAKER SERIES MEDICINE AND MATERIA MEDICA IN THE ILLINOIS COUNTRY
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 7 p.m. FREE.

Monday, February 21
THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.; bird walks at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.
Help us count the birds at the feeders and learn more about how you can become involved in this citizen science event! At 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., we will have guided bird walks. Between 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., bird-themed craft stations will be set up inside the Interpretive Center. FREE. All Ages.

Monday, February 21
SCHOOL'S OUT: LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1-2 p.m. or 2:30-3:30 p.m.
Children aged 5-11 (with an adult) can register to learn about our 16th president and make some fun crafts featuring one of Illinois' favorite sons! Registration is limited. \$5 per child. An adult must accompany children. Register for either the 1-2 p.m. slot, OR the 2:30-3:30 p.m. slot.

Wednesday, February 23
MAPLE SUGAR DAYS: REMEMBERING JOHN GARVEY
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 7 p.m. FREE.

Thursday, February 24
OWL PROWL: ALL AGES
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 p.m.
Recommended for ages 5 & up. \$5 per person; children 3 & under are free. Space is limited; registration required by February 23 at ccfpd.org.

• MARCH •

Saturday, March 5
FROG CALL SURVEY TRAINING
Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.
Ages 18 & up. FREE. Space is limited; registration required by March 4 at ccfpd.org.

Saturday, March 5
DINOSAUR MINIATURE GARDEN
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1-2:30 p.m.
Join us at the Museum to create a Dinosaur Miniature Garden. Plants, decorations and a planter will be provided to create a habitat for your favorite dinosaur. Ages 5-11 with an adult. \$10 per child.

Wednesday, March 9
REMARKABLE REPTILES HOMESCHOOL
Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.
This program is designed for children 6 and up. Parental accompaniment is required. \$3 per child. Registration is required by March 7 at ccfpd.org.

Monday, March 14 - Friday, March 28
SPRING BREAK AT THE MUSEUM
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve
An adult must accompany children. Ages 5-11 with an adult, \$5 per child.
Not sure what to fill your day with this spring

break? Stop by the Museum for fun-filled activities every day! Please note, in order to keep patron numbers low due to COVID concerns, these programs are being offered at two different times. Register for either the 1-2 p.m. slot, OR the 2:30-3:30 p.m. slot.

• **Monday, March 14**
SOAP FELTING: SPRING BREAK
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

• **Tuesday, March 15**
QUILL WRITING: SPRING BREAK
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

• **Wednesday, March 16**
BUTTER MAKING: SPRING BREAK
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

• **Thursday, March 17**
QUILT SQUARES: SPRING BREAK
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

• **Friday, March 18**
CANDLE DIPPING: SPRING BREAK
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

Tuesday, March 15 - Friday, March 18
SPRING BREAK AT HOMER LAKE
Homer Lake Forest Preserve
Enjoy unique programs for the whole family at Homer Lake during spring break!

• **Tuesday, March 15**
SURVIVAL SHELTERS
West Lake Trail (north parking lot), Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2-4 p.m.
For all ages and adults. FREE. Register by March 14 at ccfpd.org.

• **Wednesday, March 16**
MEET THE CRITTERS
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11 a.m. or 2-3 p.m.
Recommended for ages 3 and up. FREE. Space is limited; registration required by March 15 at ccfpd.org.

• **Thursday, March 17**
WOODCOCK WALK
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6:45-8:15 p.m.
Recommended for ages 5 & up. FREE. Space is limited; registration required by March 16 at ccfpd.org.

• **Friday, March 18**
WALK WITH A NATURALIST
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.

All ages. FREE. Space is limited; registration required by March 17 at ccfpd.org.

• **Friday, March 18**
SPRING CLEANUP
Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 p.m.
All ages. FREE. Register by March 17 at ccfpd.org.

Wednesday, March 23
MORNINGS WITH THE MUSEUM AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: THE YEAR IN REVIEW
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 10 a.m. FREE.

Friday, March 25
WOODCOCK WALK
Buffalo Trace Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6:45-8:15 p.m.
Recommended for ages 5 and up. FREE. Space is limited; registration required by March 24 at ccfpd.org.

Wednesday, March 30
GARDEN SPEAKER SERIES EVERYDAY USES FOR MEDICINAL PLANTS & HOW TO GROW THEM
Online Event, Streaming on the Museum of the Grand Prairie Facebook and YouTube pages, 7 p.m. FREE.



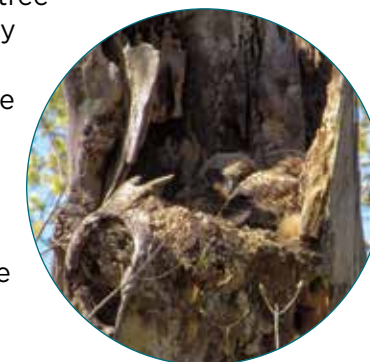
Winter TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT in the Preserves

Natural resources staff has been busy this winter working on timber stand improvement projects throughout high-quality forested sections of the preserves.

Timber stand improvement, or TSI, improves the composition and health of forest ecosystems with the selective cutting of trees. At the District, the shade from aggressive or invasive trees is eliminated by felling small trees and girdling large trees.

When girdling a tree, a sawyer will cut around the base of a tree just deep enough to sever the vascular tissue and kill the tree while it remains standing. This allows more light to reach the forest floor, promoting native tree regeneration and plant diversity. The dead tree that remains also becomes habitat for cavity nesting birds, bats and other animals.

If you happen upon a girdled tree in the preserves, consider the surrounding tree community and you'll likely see some nice oaks and hickories. Observe how the new gap in the canopy allows more light to fall on the forest floor and if you look for cavities in the tree, you may even see a small nesting animal.



CCFPD Friends Foundation profile



Rachel Smith-Bolton lived, studied, and worked on both coasts before the University of Illinois brought her to Champaign County, where she is an associate professor in the Department of Cell and Developmental Biology. While her professional life is focused on biology at the cellular level, she enjoys spending her recreational time outdoors exploring different ecosystems and watching wildlife. She and her family have visited

national and state parks and other wild spaces across the country, and when the pandemic kept them closer to home, they found refuge in the marvelous preserves maintained by the CCFPD.

Realizing that substantial resources are necessary to maintain these preserves, her goal as part of the Friends Foundation is to support the work of the CCFPD, continuing a long family history supporting and protecting local natural spaces.

Thank you, Rachel!