



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

**In this month's edition of the Leaflet we decided to do a little something different.** With the COVID-19 pandemic still very much affecting all our lives, we thought it would be nice to take this opportunity to highlight and thank some of the people who make a difference for the Forest Preserve District.

**Thank you to our volunteer Board of Commissioners**

William Goodman, Scott Hays, Bobbie Herakovich, Andrew Kerins, and Sarah Livesay

**Happy 90th Birthday to Bob Espeseth**

**The Champaign County Forest Preserve District would like to wish Mr. Robert Espeseth happy 90th birthday!** We have been the lucky recipient of his 40+ years of volunteer work.

Bob was a commissioner for CCFPD for over two decades (1973 - 1986). During this tenure he was also a member of the board of directors for the Illinois Association of Park Districts.

Almost immediately after his arrival in Champaign - Urbana in 1967, Bob began to volunteer for CCFPD. Bob's name could be tied to almost every major CCFPD conservation, education and outdoor recreation project in the last 45 years.

Specifically, under Bob's leadership, volunteer efforts became focused on outreach, including new school programs, and weekend events to draw more visitors to the Early American Museum and gardens.

In 1989, he became a part of the CCFPD Foundation and has remained one of its most important

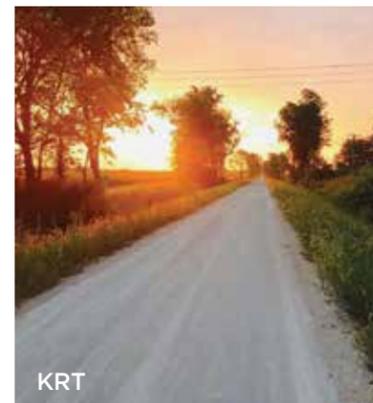
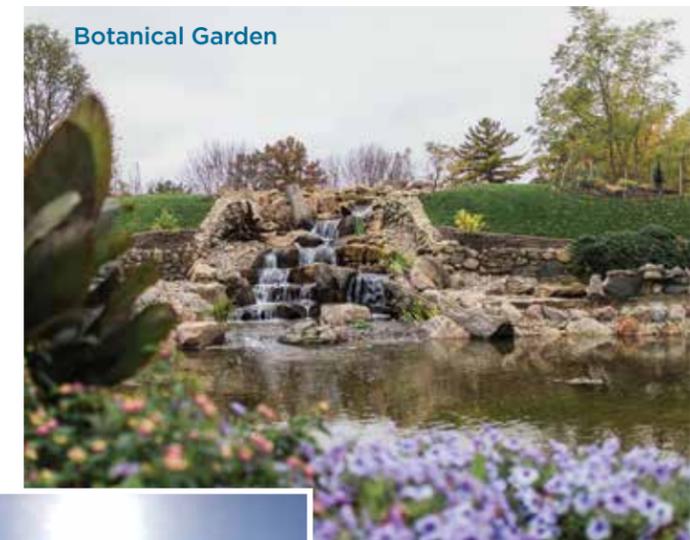
members to date. CCFPD could not possibly track his countless hours of support! The District has also been significantly impacted by his family's philanthropic support. Even to this day, Bob continues to volunteer as a trail steward, helps write plans, and has is a public advocate for CCFPD. Happy 90th birthday, Bob!



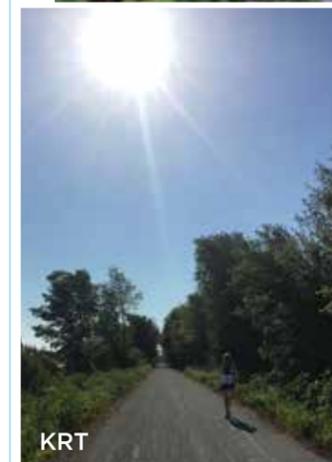
**The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation**

**The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation** is the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that raises awareness and financial support for the programs, projects, and activities of the Forest Preserve District. The Foundation was established as "The Harvesters" in 1978 to plan, promote, and support the exhibits and programs of the Early American Museum, now known as the Museum of the Grand Prairie. In 1989, the Foundation's name changed and its role expanded to provide support for the entire Champaign County Forest Preserve District.

From the development of the Kickapoo Rail Trail (KRT) to the Botanical Garden restoration project, the Friends Foundation's efforts are responsible for much of the work that happens each year at the preserves. Without the gifts they raise, many of these projects would never get off the ground.



- Rod Beyers
- Peg Busch
- Bob Espeseth
- Joe Lamb
- Roger Laramee
- Meredith Mills
- Dan Noel
- Will Timmons
- Jennifer Vallowe



## Golf Committee

The Golf Committee was formed in the fall of 2018 to provide the course with a voice from our clientele of all genres. The aim of the committee is to provide the course with feedback and suggestions on how to improve the course both aesthetically and financially, while providing a platform for volunteer work. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the committee would schedule to meet monthly to discuss what's been accomplished and what goals and opportunities needed to be addressed moving forward at the golf course. Currently, the committee is communicating through e-mail, and is looking forward to meeting again soon! The committee consists of Men's and Women's Association members, season pass holders, occasional players, sponsors, as

well as a Board Member and golf course staff, who serve as a sounding board and can provide answers and factual information to any questions. The committee is currently made up of the following people:

**Kevin Carroll**  
**Cheryl Easter**  
**Ryan Heiser**  
**David Guth**  
**Luke Hooper**

**Fred Kolb**  
**Kathy Lawson**  
**Rick Little**  
**Karl Newton**  
**Gordon Salm**

**Bill Goodman, Chris Edmondson, David Sebestik, and Joie Torres** are the Board and course representatives who attend the committee meetings.

## Citizens Advisory Committee

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of Commissioners. CAC members serve for three years on a voluntary basis, with terms expiring each year in December.

The committee advises and assists the CCFPD Board of Commissioners to:

- promote citizen awareness of District facilities, financial needs, and issues
- study needs of the District and the effects of programming
- provide support for studies and reports requested by the District Board
- implement programs and new policies

Recent projects included: collaboration with the CU Astronomical Society to obtain Dark Sky Park certification for Middle Fork Forest Preserve; promotion of and education aspects of the Kickapoo Rail Trail; research and care of Tomlinson Prairie cemetery.

Former projects have included making recommendations related to waterfowl areas, potential canoe trails, and firewood usage at District sites.

### CURRENT MEMBERS:

**Kayla Boparai**  
**Fred Bunting**  
**Roger Digges**  
**Nancy Elliott**  
**William Ford**  
**Steve Franke**

**Richard Harris**  
**Kristian Hopkins**  
**Marianne Lippi**  
**Fred Newport**  
**Greg Walburg**



## Thank you Museum Advisory Committee

Since the early 1990s, the Museum Advisory Committee has helped staff carry out the Museum of the Grand Prairie's mission. Museum and cultural history professionals on the committee lend their expertise on collections offers, policies and procedures, long-term and strategic plans, building campaigns, and of course grants, exhibits, programs, development and educational goals. One of the most visible tasks of the committee is to determine whether something offered to the collection should be accepted. Often the decisions are easy, but sometimes they are difficult, — will it be a burden to take care of? will we ever be able to exhibit the piece? and perhaps most importantly, does the piece tell a compelling story about Champaign County? Their advice is passed on to the CCFPD Board, which makes the ultimate decision. **Pat Miller**, Executive Director of the Illinois Heritage Association, has been on the committee since its inception and provides valuable insight and institutional memory to the staff. Other members include **Ray Cunningham**, a records management professional and director of the Homer Historical Society; **Kathleen Jones**, with three decades of experience as the registrar at Krannert Art Museum; **Claudine Rawdin**, 25 year volunteer in collections at the museum; and **Debra Reid**, Curator of Agriculture and the Environment at The Henry Ford Museum. Remarkably Dr. Reid, who had been a professor at Eastern Illinois University, asked to stay on after moving to Michigan, so she could continue to weigh in. Recently the Committee has been involved in an American Alliance of Museums initiative called Facing Change, aimed at advancing diversity, a task which they've taken on with enthusiasm. Museum and CCFPD staff are grateful for their support!

# CHARLES KELLER

Shortly after Charles Keller retired from teaching in the Anthropology department at the University of Illinois in 1992, the Museum of the Grand Prairie (then Early American Museum) managed to coax him out of retirement to carry on where his volunteering had left off.

Charlie Keller spent several years in the early 1990s as a volunteer at the museum securing the future of the Chesebro family blacksmith shop — now the core of the *Blacksmithing on the Prairie* exhibit. As a working blacksmith himself, Charlie was a natural as the museum's consultant during its donation. He drove to Saunemin to review its contents, inventoried everything in the shop, and in a professional archaeologist's fashion, recorded it with the utmost meticulousness. The shop, abandoned in the 1920s had remained virtually untouched for 70 years. From his photographs and drawings he developed a plan to dismantle the shop and transport it to the museum. Even unpaid, he guided the work of the museum staff throughout the project. He and his wife, Janet, recruited students to



interview the Chesebro family which provided rich material for the exhibit. Charlie developed a fast and warm friendship-borne of a love of blacksmithing — with Nina Chesebro, the surviving daughter of the original blacksmiths.

Soon after the research phase was completed, Charlie came to work for the museum as the collections manager. Having served on the Museum Advisory Committee for several years, he was already

acquainted with the collection. Charlie restarted a long deferred project to computerize the collection records cataloguing a substantial number of artifacts in PastPerfect, a system the museum still uses today. That certainly came in handy as he catalogued over 600 horseshoes from the Chesebro shop!

Just before Charlie retired in 2001, from his retirement job (at the museum), he fulfilled a promise to Nina, to create an exhibit around the blacksmith shop. No detail for him was too small or too big in accomplishing that task. Case in point, through those earlier interviews he determined that the Chesebro family had sold one crucial element of the shop, the Little Giant Triphammer. Charlie searched far and wide until he secured an almost identical triphammer from southern Illinois. Forest Preserve staff moved heaven and earth to get the triphammer into the museum. It's an impressive piece of equipment meant to bend, compact or flatten a piece of iron with much greater force than a single human could. Charlie, with the CCFPD construction crew, recreated a facsimile of the Chesebro shop, just as brothers Ralph and Elmer had left it. Because of its painstaking attention to detail, it is loved today by the casual visitor but is still admired by working blacksmiths as well.

He was a friend and colleague to so many of us at the museum, and in the CCFPD, and throughout the county — a kind man with a great sense of humor—someone who gave so much to the Museum of the Grand Prairie. Charlie passed away on April 17, 2020 at home with his family. He will be missed.



## Goodbye Good Friend

This year, the Friends Foundation lost one of its very good friends. **Terry Rathgeber** served on the Foundation board from 2013 to 2018. Retired from his position as associate dean for development with the University of Illinois' College of Veterinary Medicine, Terry brought a wealth of fundraising experience to our organization. His energy, passion, and ideas were instrumental in securing the private donations needed to complete phase one of the Kickapoo Rail Trail.

Terry's wry humor and love of a good story brought a levity to the board meetings that will not soon be forgotten. An avid St. Louis Cardinals fan, he backed his team win or lose, and as Terry was quick to point out to the board's Cubs fans, they won many more than they lost. Godspeed, good friend. We'll miss you.

