We are pleased to announce that the administrative assistant for donor development position has now been filled. Julia Guth will start after the first of the year. Julia has worked in development and event planning roles at the Champaign Park District and at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. For the past few years, she has been working independently as a nonprofit management consultant.

With low turnout at the two strategic plan public input meetings, staff placed signs in all the preserves to seek additional feedback on the draft. This has elicited some additional survey responses bringing us to a total of 89 at the time of this report. The input will be evaluated, organized, and attached as an appendix to the strategic plan.

In late November I participated in a conference call with the directors of other forest preserve and conservation districts around the state. The call focused primarily on legislative items that may be proposed by the group in the coming years, including adding design-build language to the forest preserve district code to match park districts or municipalities, requesting an extension for state-funded grants to three years from the current two years or allowing agencies to request extensions under certain circumstances, and advocating for an increase in the Debt Service Extension Base. If any of these are moved forward for inclusion in the legislative platform, I will let you know.

On December 11, we held our annual District-wide holiday potluck. This year’s event included a tower of cans competition designed to encourage the collection of canned goods for Eastern Illinois Foodbank. Also at the event we recognized Ed Hutchinson and Mike Fry for five years of District service, and Pam Leiter and Matt Kuntz for fifteen years. Photos of the service awardees and some of the winning can towers are shown below. More than 1,000 food items were donated. Many thanks to Dara and Mary for organizing an exceptional holiday gathering.
Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Filed the 2019 tax levy with the county clerk.
- Distributed tentative appropriation ordinance #19-2 for public review throughout Champaign County and posted notice of the appropriation public hearing in the News Gazette.
- Reviewed 2019 projected expenses to ensure no 2019 Board appropriations were exceeded. All projected expense totals are well within appropriation limits. Therefore no Board appropriations transfer action is necessary this year.
- Updated projections to determine available District capital reserve funds. Provided this information to executive management for identifying particular capital projects, equipment or commitments to propose to the Board for funding.
- Received the initial results of the District IT audit. Craig Williams of ClientFirst met with the IT Committee November 25 and toured District facilities and IT infrastructure. ClientFirst will recommend a five year IT plan with budget for the District in January or February. The IT Committee will continue to meet and is ready to work on the initial recommendations which include implementing cloud backup instead of current local solutions, upgrading our firewall to current standard protections, replacing Homer Lake DSL with WiFi in the Parks satellite service, and defining an IT role to provide in house end user support, administration of District software applications, training (particularly cybersecurity but also for optimizing current applications like ActiveNet and Paylocity), and hardware inventory and purchasing.
- Issued longevity bonus payments to eligible District employees.
- Issued year-end closing instructions for departments and employees on purchasing, payroll, and deposit transactions, including notice of a December 31 accelerated payroll processing since the District will be closed on January 1 which would have been the regular payroll processing day.
- Scheduled CliftonLarsenAllen’s internal controls testing for January 8-10, 2020 and the 2019 audit fieldwork for roughly March 30 to April 10, 2020.
- Proposed to District supervisors that the District change its payroll calendar from a Wednesday-Tuesday to a Sunday-Saturday pay week. Based on supervisor feedback and Executive Director approval we adjusted the plan to a Monday-Sunday pay week and will implement this with the third January payroll. Because the change will shorten one pay week to 8 work days from 10, the District will allow employees to use leave or work additional hours to be paid for the normal 80 hours if they choose. This change will make supervisor time card reviews more efficient and
eliminate the need for accelerated payrolls. Employees will continue to be paid every other Friday on the same schedule we currently use.

- Reviewed and approved RFPs and contracts for purchasing the OSLAD project floating dock and for renovation of ten bunkers, both 2020 projects. The Activity Center, Interpretive Center, and schoolhouse roofing projects are complete except for two schoolhouse punch list items.
- Received $30,036 in 2019 farm sales from 2708 bushels of corn and 2530 bushels of soybeans.
- The District items approved by the Board last month for sale on e-bay generated $19,168 which is much more than we had estimated. Proceeds from e-Bay sales are used for District needs when equipment fails or for minor facility repairs that are immediately needed.

**Human Resources (Dara Edgington)**

- On 11/7, CCFPD supervisors attended the EEOC’s “Leading for Respect” training, held at the Salt Fork Center. This highly interactive workshop goes above and beyond typical compliance training, instead focusing on practical behaviors that foster a more respectful and inclusive workplace. As the District continues to strive toward increased equity and inclusion for all its stakeholders, it is the hope that this training will serve as base line for behavioral expectations. The counterpart training, “Respectful Workplaces” will be held in Q1 of 2020 for employees in non-supervisory positions.
- Ryan Pankau was the guest speaker for 2019’s final Lunch and Learn, held at the Salt Fork Center on 11/7. We ended the year on a high note, with roughly 30 volunteers and staff members turning out to hear Ryan speak about tree identification and go on a quick hike to practice the tips they had learned.
- Open enrollment for 2020 benefits was held from 11/12-12/4. This was our first year using HR Connection, our new, online enrollment platform. The launch was not without its hiccups; however the system has provided us with greater efficiency and flexibility and will serve us well moving forward.
- Dara joined Mary Ellen and Lisa for the IAPD Legal Symposium on 11/14. As we all know, Illinois passed several legislative updates in 2019, so it was good to hear the latest on several different topics, including new requirements around sexual harassment prevention training, overtime rules, and, of course, cannabis regulation.
- The United Way campaign wrapped up on 11/13, and I am pleased to report that 20 staff members contributed to the cause—up from 17 staff members in 2018. Additionally, there were three departments that had a participation rate of 75% or higher. Thanks to all employees who chose to donate, and a special thanks to Mary Beck for coordinating the campaign with excellence!
- The annual Safe, Happy and Healthy Holiday Challenge launched 11/28 and will continue through 12/25. The aim of this challenge is to encourage employees to continue making healthy choices throughout the stressful holiday season. Thanks again to Mary Beck for coordinating!
- As reward for CCFPD’s excellent safety record, PDRMA has once again awarded us a $1,500 cash bonus for our loss prevention efforts. Thanks to all staff members for practicing safe work habits and holding safety as a top priority.
**Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)**

- Lisa participated in a webinar on November 26, entitled Graphic Design Basics.
- We’ve started a new video post on our Facebook account, Nature Minute. This is a quick minute video where we talk with different staff throughout the District on a different topic. Stacey Clementz did the first two videos – one on the black rat snake and the other on why the Maple Sugar Grove is a favorite spot to her. Currently the videos have 1.6K and 1.1K views.

**Social Media Monthly Numbers**

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**Grants (Jarrod Scheunemann)**

See attachment

**Planning and Construction Department (Mike Fry)**

- Michael Daab has spent his first weeks in his new role as Deputy Director for Planning and Development catching up on current and future project needs, meeting with staff, and jumping into the discussion of final decisions to be made for the 2020 budget.
- We have concluded the open application period for the Director of Natural Resources position and have a strong candidate pool as we head into interviews.
- This month the Construction Department was able to focus some of its efforts on the District’s sustainability goals:
  - As a member of the Sustainability Committee, Tim Sullivan attended a meeting conducted by the University of Illinois Environmental Sciences students focusing on an energy analysis for the Urbana Park District. The group hopes to complete the same efforts for us in the future.
  - Pictured is the new drinking fountain and bottle filling station in the maintenance shop. It operates more efficiently than the 1984 model that was removed, and provides filtered water from both the fountain and bottle filler. As a way to keep track of filter usage, and encourage reusable containers, it has a bottle counter that keeps track of how many plastic bottles are saved by using it. After two days of use, we have already kept eight plastic containers from becoming waste.
  - New bathroom stalls were put in the Rayburn Purnell restrooms. They are composed of at least 33% recycled material, and should last for years. To also add to this project, occupancy sensor light switches were installed. These save
energy by minimizing the time the lights are on, and eliminating the possibility of lights being left on when the bathroom is unoccupied.

- Work continues on several other projects throughout the Preserves as the year winds down. It has been a busy year for us, and we feel much progress has been made. There is always more to do, and we look forward to the challenges ahead in 2020.

**Natural Resources**

- In early November, Natural Resources staff conducted a prescribed burn on nine acres in the Buffalo Trace Prairie. Unfortunately, weather this fall has not been ideal for achieving our prescribed burning goals. We continue to look out for good burning weather from now through spring.
- We have completed seed milling and cleaning for 83 different collected plant species in preparation for our winter plantings, and have 52 species left to prepare.
- Rye grass was planted as a cover crop in the north-south ditch area at Buffalo Trace earlier this month. The area is a focus of invasive reed canarygrass control, and has been managed throughout the years with mowing and herbicide application.
- Invasive woody species clearing projects have begun for the season, focusing on a small section of woodland and old fencerow at Buffalo Trace. This area, with an understory primarily composed of honeysuckle and autumn olive, was opened up in preparation for a north-south trail that will connect the northernmost grass path with the paved path.
- Another clearing project involved the cooperation of Park Hills Subdivision residents along our North Bike Path at Lake of the Woods. Five private residences in the subdivision abut district land, and the department received permission to clear honeysuckle on the edge of district property and into private property. We hope to undertake more projects like this in partnership with the neighborhood.
• Other projects include utilizing the landscape rake on our planting units at Stidham Woods, Buffalo Trace, the Ameren right-of-way on the Kickapoo Rail Trail, and K-12 Pollinator project at Homer Lake. This raking helps to remove obstructing debris and prepare the soil surface to receive seed.

• Michael Daab and Peter Goodspeed attended the “Leading for Respect” session for supervisors at the Salt Fork Center on November 7. Staff appreciated that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sponsored training focused more on how to positively influence the workplace environment, rather than simply addressing regulatory issues.

Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Joie Torres)
• November is generally a mixed bag of weather for outdoor golfing opportunities and this year was no exception. The course remained open for play through the end of the month, with some small interruptions from cold and snow along the way. In comparison, we closed for the season in 2018 on November 11. We had 481 players this November, which is about average for the month over the past 5 years (a high of 1076 in 2016 and low of 105 in 2018 over that time period). Our revenue for the month was $23,154.98, which is slightly below average over the past 5 years. If you take out the Anniversary Pass Sales from 2018, we did increase November revenue by $6,000. One reason for a below average number was the date of Thanksgiving/Black Friday. It was the latest it could possibly be, giving us only two days to get our Black Friday sale on Full Season Passes underway.

• Our golf simulator season is fully up and running, officially opening for business on November 11. We worked diligently through the month to get the new simulator compatible with our old system. The new system has completely different software, making it difficult for us to run a weekly league on both machines. We spent a lot of time in dealings with TruGolf (our simulator company) to get this issue resolved. The old version of software (1.6) is no longer in use and therefore cannot be updated. The newer version (E6 Connect) is still in the process of being Beta-tested and does not currently have many of the features we need to successfully run the league. In the end, we convinced TruGolf to download the old 1.6 program on to the new computer, so we can still run a league via both machines, saving us from a potential scheduling nightmare moving forward. The 2-person league begins play at the start of December.

• A Cut Above and Bud’s Tree Service continued to remove dead and hazardous trees from the golf course property when weather allowed. We were supposed to host a regional chainsaw training seminar on November 13-14 (which would have eliminated approximately 15-20 more trees), but it was cancelled due to cold and windy conditions.

• Along with many other supervisors from across the District, David and I attended the EEOC: Leading For Respect training at Homer Lake on November 7.

• Once again this year, we are offering a “Black Friday” special on Full Season Pass sales. This offer, which is good until December 22, gives $50 off any regular priced season pass. For renewing members, we also are offering a guest pass for three players, a 10% discount on all full priced merchandise, and a locker for the 2020 season.

• Golf Course Maintenance staff are currently working in the shop spin grinding reels, sharpening blades, servicing all equipment and servicing the golf cart fleet. The maintenance crew will be
finishing up mulching leaves and picking up sticks during the last weeks of year. The course closed on Monday December 9 for the season.

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The staff of the Museum of the Grand Prairie received four awards at the Illinois Association of Museums Annual Meeting. Submitted by Mark Hanson, An Award of Excellence was given in the category of Best Practices in Collections Conservation for the Digitization of East Frisian Audiocassettes. Another Award of Excellence was given for Frieda Mumm’s Discovering Home. An Award of Merit was earned by Katie Snyder for Boneyard Arts Festival: MGP and Centennial High School Celebrate 50 years in the category Best Practices in Community Partnerships. Another Award of Merit was taken home by Pat Cain for Best Practices in Special Projects for his 1968 Speaker Series.

- Barb Garvey, Mark Hanson, Pat Cain, and Katie Snyder presented a conference session entitled, “Going Down to the Crossroads: A 1968 exhibit that links a museum’s past and present” at the Illinois Association of Museums Conference on November 19.

- Barb Garvey delivered a hands-on presentation for the Sons of the American Revolution at the Champaign County Country Club on November 20.

- Barb Garvey gave a talk, Native Americans of East Central Illinois at Windsor of Savoy on November 24.

- The Homer Lake Interpretive Center has received a new roof! Work was completed on December 6.

- Also, The Hensley Town Hall, better known as the one-room schoolhouse, was reroofed on December 5 and 6. With its fresh coat of paint done this summer by volunteers and the Construction Department and a new roof, it is looking wonderful!

- The MGP’s Archaeology Open House now in its 7th year exceeded all expectations with over 200 participants! A lecture by Holly Labisky on Pioneer Cemeteries brought an additional audience.

- The Lincoln Lecture Series concluded with Historic Houses of Lincoln’s Illinois on November 17, based on Erika Holst’s book by the same name. Holst is the curator of Decorative Arts at the Illinois State Museum. Her books were for sale in the gift shop.

- Department staff assisted with the Volunteer Lunch and Learn on November 7. Ryan Pankau, UI Extension Educator, spoke on the topic of Trees in Winter and took volunteers on a walk to observe the trees identifying marks in place.

- Pat Cain attended the University of Illinois’ Public History Network meeting on November 8.
• Yoga by Lola Glow was arranged for yoga enthusiasts at Izaak Walton Cabin on Sunday, November 10.
• Mark Hanson, Jennifer Grove and ME Department staff have been working diligently to empty Large Artifact Storage of remaining artifacts and contents so that it can be demolished in the new year.
• Homer Lake Interpretive Center (HLIC) staff installed a new ramp and platform for the box turtle enclosure, with help from HL Operations. This provides variety in his enclosure, and gets him closer to a heat source.
  (Right)
• Wild Birds and More donated four 40lb bags of Less Mess Blend bird seed this month. And, we are also happy to report that the new birdfeeders we installed earlier this year allow for a much more efficient use of birdseed.
• The IT Committee, with four Museum and Education Department members has been making good progress identifying and addressing solutions. We have been meeting with a consultant, which has proved very valuable. And it sounds like we may have good options for providing faster internet speed at Homer Lake and Middle Fork offices.
• Stacey Clementz is serving as a mentor for the Lincoln Trail Science Olympiad Backyard Biologist competition. This year they will need to learn 41 different Illinois birds including how to identify them, what habitat they live in, what they eat and their physical and biological adaptations.
• Jennifer wrapped up the 2019 Frog Call Survey season by sending the compiled data for the year to all Frog Call volunteers.
• Barb Garvey, Pam Leiter, Mark Hanson, Katie Snyder, Pat Cain and Stacey Clementz attended the CCFPD supervisor training, Leading for Respect.
• HLIC’s Seasonal Naturalist, Jolene Kuehn, put in her last day this November. She was an invaluable member of our team since April and we will miss her.
• Our Interpretive Center Assistant, Christine Cunningham, also rounded out the season. This was the first year we tried out this new position, and Christine was a huge help.
• Jennifer Wick and Pat Cain served on the interview panel for the new Volunteer Coordinator.
• Pam Leiter was voted in as Vice President of Grand Prairie Friends.
• HLIC staff earned a homemade lunch as part of the United Way staff giving initiative!

Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River Forest Preserves (Doug Sanders, Tammy Bruehl, Michael Dale)
• On November 26, a park patron reported an injured owl to staff. Tammy Bruehl and Mike Fry responded and found a great horned owl near the Rayburn Purnell Woods in close proximity to the bike trail. The owl was transported to the University of Illinois’ Wildlife Medical Clinic for treatment. Unfortunately due to a fractured wing and head trauma the animal was euthanized.
• The **REINDEER** are **BACK**! Yes, for the third year in a row the deer made of recycled tree limbs have come back to LOW, along with other festive decorations. Thanks to Michael Dale and staff for providing the festive decorations throughout the park for staff and visitors to enjoy throughout this holiday season.

![Image of reindeer decoration](image1)

• Cooperative tree removal efforts have begun at LOW by the Operations and Natural Resources departments. This annual project will include the removal of a number of ash trees, seven trees related to the spillway renovation, and other miscellaneous trees throughout the park grounds. This work will continue throughout the month of December into the new year. A portion of this season’s wood will be donated to the Habitat for Humanity in Monticello so they can raise money for their annual projects.

• Staff have finalized the winterization of all the facilities and amenities and snow/ice removal equipment is on standby. Staff are keeping their fingers crossed for a mild winter!

**Middle Fork River Forest Preserve (Matt Kuntz)**

• Middle Fork staff have been working at the northern end of the preserve, Miners Trail, removing and spraying honeysuckle patches throughout the parcel.

• Middle Fork staff have been working just north of the campground removing large patches of autumn olive and honey locust sprouts throughout the prairie. We are using a tree puller attachment on our skid steer. We feel this method eliminates return efforts on resprouts and herbicides are not needed. It also greatly reduces soil disturbances which could encourage more invasive growth in the near future.

• Interviews for the campground host position will begin this month.

**Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

• Roy and I attended the EEOC training with all Forest Preserve managers that focused on skills that supervisors can utilize to enhance respect in the work environment.
The new radiant tube heater was installed in the maintenance facility replacing a very inefficient forced air unit that was 28 years old. We expect lower propane usage and much better comfort while working in the shop this winter.

I plowed snow on Veterans Day for the first time ever. I hope this is not an indication of the winter ahead.

The construction crew began the installation process for the new entrance sign. The timing could not be better as the old sign was in serious need of an overhaul.

**Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)**

- At the Foundation’s November meeting, the board agreed to purchase the Sun King for the KRT at the artist’s discounted price of $14,000. One donor has stepped up so far and made a $1,500 gift toward the purchase.
- The District has received a few complaints of two loose, aggressive dogs on the KRT near the Salt Fork River bridge. A county Animal Control Officer visited the home and spoke to the dogs’ owner. We will continue to monitor complaints and the ACO also pledged to keep her eye on the situation.
- A public meeting was held in Ogden on Thursday, December 12 to gather input into the design and construction of Phase 2b – from Seventh Street in St. Joseph through Ogden to the Vermilion County line.
- KRT at Sleepy Creek event was a huge success again this year with over 160 people in attendance. The evening included appetizers from Applewood Foods, live entertainment from The Live Jukebox Show with David Howie, a silent auction, a 50/50 raffle, and a wine pull. Total profit for the evening was more than $9,200 which was up $2,400 from the 2018 event!

**District Cultural Competency Initiatives (All)**

- Pam Leiter has been serving on the Steering Committee for the New American Welcome Center’s Immigrant Integration Plan, and we have an exciting update. Data collection is complete, and Working Groups are starting on drafting their sections of the plan. The group hopes to roll out the plan in 2020. Connections gained along the way have also proved helpful in other ways.
- Katie Snyder is working with Franklin STEAM Academy’s Sisterhood group to develop an art piece to accompany the Woman’s Suffrage exhibit next year, expressing their notions of women’s rights.
- Katie and other department staff hosted a field trip from the Sisterhood group to the museum on November 22. The girls studied women’s rights while learning about museum careers/museum work investigating programming, education, collections care and exhibit design.

**Sustainability Committee**

- Stacey Clementz attended the Urbana Park District’s Green Team meeting; we are looking at working together on some sustainability initiatives and are welcome to attend future Green Team meetings.
• Stacey also attended the University of Illinois students’ presentation on sustainability and climate resilience plans and actions for the Urbana Park District. Warren Lavey is the professor of this class and hopes his future classes can work on a plan for CCFPD.
• The U of I NRES students who are working on two projects for the Sustainability Committee will be presenting their finished projects to the committee on December 16.