December 10, 2018

MEMORANDUM
To: Board of Commissioners
From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator
Re: January Staff Report

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- Dara Edgington, the District’s new Human Resources Generalist, began work on January 8. She has been working with staff on the seasonal staff hiring process and getting familiar with the preserves and facilities. Dara will provide her first HR report to the board in February after she has had time to get acclimated.

- Year-end fundraising for the Foundation exceeded last year’s totals. Much of the credit for the increase goes, not only to the Foundation board, but also to Administrative Assistant Megan McCoy. Stewarding of gifts has a significant impact on future donations, and Megan has greatly improved our stewardship process and timeliness in her first year on staff. Due to a time delay in receipt of online donations, totals and comparisons will be provided next month.

- Mike Daab and Jon Hasselbring provided excellent information to the Foundation at its last meeting about Middle Fork’s Willow Pond and Point Pleasant projects. Both projects are on the Foundation’s list of fundraising targets for 2019.

- As the result of an increase in coyote activity reported by visitors to Buffalo Trace at Lake of the Woods, the District has now posted warning signs at both entrances and near where the animals have been spotted. Signs not only inform visitors of the coyotes’ presence, but also offer suggestions on how to behave to protect themselves and their pets. We have also posted education on Facebook and will soon have an article about “living with wildlife” in The Leaflet.

- Due to the holidays, the Community Engagement Group did not meet in December. We will resume discussion of our financial needs at the upcoming January meeting.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Implemented year end closing procedures in our MSI financial system and set up the new year financial balances and codes for financial reporting.

- Filed the 2018 budget and appropriation ordinances with the County Clerk and posted on the District website along with the 2018 pay 2019 tax levy.

- Posted the approved 2018 budget in our financial database, on the District website and posted departmental budgets along with the total 2018 budget for supervisor use.

- With HR Assistant reviewed, entered, and verified all employee benefit changes and 2018 pay rates in Paylocity. Despite the number of changes made, the January 4 payroll processed smoothly with no pay or deduction corrections reported by employees.

- Reviewed District W2s prior to their issuance by Paylocity. Began reviewing 1099 requirements and their applicability to District vendors in preparation for 1099 issuance.
• Began issuing 2018 audit tasks to administration and other employees in preparation for the audit field work and to give a full and accurate picture of District finances and obligations as of December 31, 2018. Finalized the 2018 audit engagement agreement with CliftonLarsonAllen.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)
• Lisa promoted the Smokey Bear exhibit at Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Full Moon Hikes, and Letterboxing programs on CiLiving.
• Lisa pre-recorded interviews on School’s Out: Martin Luther King Celebration, Eskimo Pie Ride and Middle Fork River being designated an International Dark Sky Park at SJ Broadcasting for playback on Q96 throughout January and February.
• Four logos were created to identify Middle Fork River Forest Preserve as an International Dark Sky Park. The particular location and application will determine which of the four is used.

Social Media Monthly Numbers

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Social Media Annual Numbers

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Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)

- I am still waiting on a few numbers for a final accurate volunteer hour count for 2019, but should have that by the end of the month. In the meantime, our 2018 Top ‘Teer volunteers by month for 2018 were as follows:
  
  January 2018- Eileen Borgia  
  March 2018- Elizabeth Kirby  
  May 2018- Elizabeth Kirby  
  July 2018- Emma Diers  
  September 2018- Elizabeth Kirby  
  December 2018 – Emma Diers  
  
  February 2018- Darlene Dufrain  
  April 2018-Marianna Lippi  
  June 2018-Doug Mills  
  August 2018- Fred Newport  
  November 2018 – Elizabeth Kirby

- New for 2019! I am sending out birthday postcards to volunteers wishing them a “Happy Birthday” from the District. They will be sent out early in the month, each month, for all volunteers that have birthdays. Hopefully this will bring a few people back who may have been away for a while or continue to strengthen relationships with our already active volunteers.

Grants (Jarrod Schuenemann)

- We received word from the IDNR Grants Division that January 7 is their deadline for determining which OSLAD applications will proceed to the second round. If our application scores enough points to continue, we will travel to Springfield on January 22 to give a three minute presentation on our Lake of the Woods peninsula project. Hopefully, we will have good news for you by our meeting on January 17!

- Mike Daab, Pam Leiter, Stacey Clementz, Brian Taylor, Jennifer Wick, and Jarrod Schuenemann met to organize a grant application for the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. The grant funding would provide up to $10,000 in financial support toward restoring the 4.5 acre “Windsong Prairie” at Homer Lake. This ideal location would serve as pollinator habitat and educational space for our staff and the kindergarten classes at St. Joseph’s elementary school. The prairie area is located west of the Interpretive Center.

- In the past we have had success with the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation’s Public Amenities grants, receiving eight awards over the last two years. We were informed that each location is allowed only one lifetime application. Due to the high quality partnership that has been formed between the foundation and CCFPD staff, they will allow us to apply for locations that have previously received funding. These applications may receive lower priority, but are still worth the effort.

- IDOT has approved the replacement and/or restoration of a number of our brown highway signs. Jarrod and Lisa will work with the state’s highway and tourism departments to determine the viability and pricing of blue attractions signage for the signage that was denied.
- Pam Leiter applied for a $1,000 grant to support the restoration of Point Pleasant wetland through the Champaign County Audubon Society.
- Mark Hanson submitted our mid-term report for a grant he received from the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board. Funding from this grant has been used to digitize oral histories from our county’s East Frisian community.
- Jarrod Scheunemann attended CPR Training on December 6, 2018.
- Walmart approved a $500 mini-grant to support environmental programming at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center. Pam, Jennifer, and Jarrod are working out details to find the most beneficial way(s) to apply the award.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)
- Construction staff installed a new door and windows at the Walnut Hill restroom.
- The Planning Department issued a Request for Proposals to replace the golf course irrigation pumps and control panel. Proposals were due on January 10.
- The construction crew built a dugout canoe (pictured here) for the new Discovery Room exhibit at the Museum, and infilled the blacksmith wing window with an insulated wall.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)
- Natural resources staff continued invasive tree and shrub removal around Lake of the Woods and River Bend in December. One area of concentration was the west side of Buffalo Trace, where volunteer steward Jeff Butcher has made incredible progress in removing bush honeysuckle and autumn olive. Following up on Jeff’s work, staff gathered cut stems to burn them and clear the ground for follow up treatment and seeding of native plants. Staff was also able to access larger invasive trees which required cutting down or girdling with a chainsaw. The project area is on its way from an invasive shrub thicket to a native open woodland.
- NR Specialist Peter Goodspeed made great progress in getting the department set up to use ArcGIS and the ESRI Collector application in 2019. Through our use of available technology, we hope to better communicate project work needs within the department, as well as have more precise data collected for review of our work and reporting results.
- We thank NR seasonal Emily Steffes for her time and work with us during the fall. Emily was a valuable contributor to NR management at CCFPD, and we wish her well in her future endeavors.
- Staff has been cleaning our collected native seed and getting prepared for final seed mixes.
Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Doug Sanders)

- We were closed for play outdoors in December, but our revenue for the month was $86,087.63. This is almost a $62,000 increase over 2017, and is directly related to the Anniversary Pass sales. Sales continued to be brisk, as we sold 330 more of these limited time two-year passes during the month. We also sold fifteen Full Season passes, which put us at 749 Anniversary Passes and 36 regular full price passes for 2019. We will have a mail drop to 25,000 homes in the area in January and will continue the Anniversary Pass sale at least through the end of the month. We have had several returning pass holders purchase the Anniversary Pass and expect some of them to upgrade to a full pass, once they realize the restrictions do not fit their playing profile (these customers play in our leagues, associations, or before 9:00 a.m., so they would be paying a full green fee at these times).

- Simulator golf play continued to be strong. League play continued weekly up until Christmas, as we took the final week of the year off for the holidays. Outside of the league, we had several other players use the simulators for practice and/or play. Our December revenue for the simulators was $2,753.50, slightly above our 2017 total of $2,254.

- Some renovation work has begun on the course, which will benefit all abilities of golfers and also increase pace of play. Construction and operations staff have begun removal of the front bunkers on holes #4 and #14. These bunkers were in poor condition, difficult to maintain, and also were tough for many players to carry, resulting in a more frustrating and time consuming experience. These bunkers will be filled in and leveled out to enhance the player experience and ease the burden of bunker maintenance and mowing for the golf course staff. Also, some tree removal has begun for trees that have are diseased or in decline.

- The Golf Committee held its second meeting on December 6. CCFPD Volunteer Coordinator Kristin Tetzlaff attended and gave the committee an overview of the volunteer program. She also outlined tracking hours and the ability to use certain equipment at the course with proper training from a staff member when volunteering. Staff also discussed with the committee specific needs and goals for on course improvements in 2019 (sticks, branches, bunkers, pot holes, weeds, etc.). Fundraising potential and spring volunteer days were also discussed at the December meeting. The committee plans to meet again in late January.

- Golf staff will be repairing a 2-3” inch broken water line located north of the clubhouse just behind the 18th green.

- P & P Heating repaired an ignitor switch on the furnace located at the maintenance shed.

- Staff continue to perform service and repair of equipment.
Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The Museum and Education Department held their annual retreat on December 14. Agenda items included our annual report of good news, elevator training, a discussion of the District’s harassment policy, a discussion/training about generational diversity, and continued work on our strategic plan.

- On December 6, 2018, Katie Snyder and Pat Cain arranged a program, 1968: A Panel Discussion, at the Independent Media Center. Discussion panelists offered their own experiences of the era. They were: Vern & Vic Fein, Barb Thoma, Porter L Battle III, Paul Wisovaty, and Paul Smith. Dorothee Schneider’s UI class on the topic of 1968, which Snyder and Cain had spoken to in November, were there. It was also well attended by the community. Schneider wrote on the museum's Facebook page, “A moving and insightful discussion with some of C-U’s unsung historic people from the 1960s. Looking forward to more events in February!” A film documentarian, Gary Fritz, filmed the entire discussion and hopes to use it in further projects.

- The museum hosted a behind the scenes tour for the Emerging Museum Professionals Group in Champaign County on December 7, 2018. A tour of expansion storage was led by curator Mark Hanson, with a question and answer period. This was followed by refreshments and a self-led tour of the museum.
• The News Gazette did a story on the 50th anniversary of the museum featuring the 1968 exhibit, including a full page cover on the Entertainment section. They also featured a front page photograph on the New Year’s Day edition showing the balloon drop for Party Like It’s 1900. The New Year’s party was another smash hit with 240 in attendance.

• Homer for the Holidays at the Salt Fork Center had its highest attendance ever!

• The Meet the Critters program at Homer Lake Interpretive Center had a standing-room only crowd, with 50 people in attendance to get a close-up experience of the Center’s reptiles.

• The Smokey Bear exhibit at Homer Lake Interpretive Center, celebrating his 75th birthday, opened Jan 2. The Smokey Bear Exhibit Opening program had about 30 people come take their pictures with the bear himself and we made the front page of the News Gazette!

• Many thanks to Construction and Homer Lake Operations Departments for: 1) a transition strip to the storage room, making it much easier to move exhibits into storage while programs are going on; 2) a new, better-functioning, wheels on the aquatic turtle aquarium stand; and 3) working on replacing the thermostat in the front office after the baseboard heaters stopped working.

• Thanks also to Construction staff for the boarding up of an old window at the far east end of the blacksmith wing at the Museum of the Grand Prairie.

• Pat Cain has been attending the Chamber of Commerce Meetings in Mahomet. The museum will host a Chamber lunch in January.

• Barb Garvey participated in a webinar from the American Association for State and Local History entitled, History Check-In: Women’s Suffrage.

• Cathy Schneider completed her CPR/First Aid certification this month.
• For several weeks in December the museum featured an exhibit of pinhole camera photographs, and the pinhole cameras they created by students in Jill Lagerstram’s Photo Arts class at Urbana High School.

• In honor of both the 50th anniversary of the museum and of the opening of Centennial High School, Katie Snyder and Shannon Percoco (Centennial Art Teacher) received a CU Schools Foundation $965 grant to “immerse students in the events of the year 1968 to allow them to understand the experiences of local people in Champaign County.” The students will create artwork/music celebrating that year which will then be on display at the museum for the Boneyard Arts Festival. The Boneyard fee and a museum program fee are covered by the grant as is a small fund for creating a Learning/Lending Resource tub about 1968 that other teachers may borrow from the museum in the future.

Lake of the Woods (Doug Sanders)

• In honor of President George H.W. Bush, the American flags at LOW were flown at half-staff between November 30 and December 30, 2018.

• Along with several other District staff, Tony Sparks attended the in-house CPR/AED training and renewed his certification. The remaining operations staff are scheduled for renewal in 2019.

• As a follow up to last month’s cooperative tree work with the NR staff, operations staff have removed the tree stumps. Once the weather warms up these areas will be seeded with grass.

• Garden staff have been busy in the greenhouse with plant propagation for the spring season. In addition, they are renovating the Prairie Sampler Bed located directly south of the greenhouse.

• Under the direction of Michael Dale, seasonal staff member Tyler Courson installed identification tags on the majority of trees in the garden. This will help visitors and educational staff identify the different species and learn some facts about each.

• Staff continue to perform service and repair of equipment. This is part of the department’s annual preventative maintenance program.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

• Middle Fork staff have been removing large areas of Japanese honeysuckle on our northern property, part of the Miners Trail system.

• District staff have met to discuss celebration event planning for our Dark Sky Designation at Middle Fork.

• Campground reservations for the upcoming season are filling up fast. The three major holidays for this year are almost completely booked already.

• Several more soil borings were completed in December. These samples were made to ensure we have the amount of clay fill available to use for lining Willow Pond.
Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- The construction crew installed two new windows and a door at Walnut Hill shelter.
- Roy and I assisted the interpretive staff by installing new casters on one of their heavy display cases that was difficult to move from room to room.
- We have been doing some removal of autumn olive and bush honeysuckle as we find time and appropriate weather conditions during the winter months.
- Our thanks to Lisa and Mary Ellen for the nice handmade wooden bowls that Roy and I received for exceeding 25 years of employment. We were pleasantly surprised to find out that one of our neighbors and volunteers actually made the beautiful bowls.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)

- Mary Ellen met with the leader of a citizens’ group from St. Joseph that would like to create a spur connection from the KRT to the village’s community park on the east side of the community. The connection would take advantage of the at-grade crossing that goes under Rt. 150. The group is also meeting with village officials about its proposed plan. We will work with our engineers to determine feasibility of this spur connection as we develop plans for that section of the KRT.
- The District will be working with staff from the Urbana Park District and City of Urbana to submit a Champaign County First proposal. CC 1st is an effort of the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce to identify high priority projects that provide an overall economic development benefit to the county and its citizens. A team from CC 1st will advocate on behalf of chosen projects at the local, state, and federal level with one voice. The three entities will submit on behalf of the KRT and its eventual westward expansion through Urbana.

District Cultural Competency Initiatives

- Katie Snyder led an ESL group from Urbana Adult Education on a Tour of the Museum of the Grand Prairie on December 3.
- Katie also completed a continuing education course on Understanding, Supporting and Preventing Childhood Trauma.
- Katie, Mary Ellen, and Jarrod have been working with Latrelle Bright and Sam Smith (Krannert Center for the Performing Arts) to investigate programs and grants that would reach underserved populations. Based on very preliminary conversations, cultural connections to water is one proposed programmatic theme.