

September 7, 2021

MEMORANDUM

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

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- With the latest mandate from the Illinois governor, we have now shifted to mandatory masks indoors. Most had already implemented indoor masking, but the few locations where it was still “strongly recommended” have now adjusted accordingly. This means that masks are required for all rental parties at indoor pavilions. As a result, some have moved their gatherings to outdoor shelters while a couple have canceled or postponed indefinitely.
- IPRA’s Forest Preserve and Conservation District group was officially approved by the agency’s leadership as a Section on August 26. This is the culmination of the work of the task force with which I participated over the last two years. Section benefits include greater involvement and participation in IPRA policy work, events, and trainings as well as more educational content focused on forest preserve and conservation careers. See the attached flyer. Staff who are not already IPRA members have been encouraged to join at the reduced introductory rate.
- Will Timmons, Ryan Anderson, Mike Daab, and I met with German Gurfinkel, designer of the Lake of the Woods covered bridge, a few weeks ago to update him on plans for its new roof. Now approaching 90 years of age, Professor Gurfinkel remains actively involved in the engineering department at the UI. He shared the story of his bridge design and, despite the fact that his work spans from the US to Cuba to West Africa, he considers the Lake of the Woods covered bridge one of his legacy pieces. I am pleased to report that Professor Gurfinkel has agreed to provide an oral history for our museum. Mark Hanson will conduct it in the coming weeks, and we have agreed to share the audio tape with the UI’s Civil and Environmental Engineering Department Archives.
- I have been clearing out fourteen years of files from my office and typing up procedures that I hope will be helpful to Lorrie upon her arrival. I look forward to retirement but leaving will undoubtedly be bittersweet. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve this organization, these amazing lands, and the people of Champaign County.

Planning and Construction Department (Mike Daab and Mike Fry)

- With Public Act 102-0460, the State passed new legislation allowing Forest Preserve Districts to enter into Design-Build contracts. This law also increased the minimum threshold for public bidding from \$25,000 to \$30,000. The District is not required to change our policy as a result of this change, but staff are reviewing existing procurement policies to identify any needed updates.
- The air conditioning unit at the Lake of the Woods Pavilion will be replaced this fall. Staff had hoped to schedule these for replacement in 2022, but one of the units has failed and cannot be repaired.
- Both the OSLAD and BAAD applications have been submitted to IDNR. IDNR received 160 applications for OSLAD and hopes to start site visits soon. There have been no updates on the

award timeline for the Public Museum Grant applications, but staff have received questions, which is a sign they are under active review by grant administrators.

- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and IL Department of Natural Resources grants have been submitted for land acquisition along the Salt Fork River.
- A committee dedicated to the development of an Upper Sangamon River Water Trail has begun meeting after a few years of inactivity. Participants on the committee represent municipalities, land trusts, non-profit organizations, and private landowners from Fisher to Monticello. Access, safety, and legality have been the center of initial discussions. Michael Daab and Scott Hays are representing CCFPD at these meetings.
- Construction is underway for the canoe launch and parking lot near Izaak Walton Cabin at Lake of the Woods.
- Construction will be starting any day on the KRT Amenities project in Champaign County. The work will be done in two phases. First, the contractor will complete all site work (concrete, detention area, etc.) while the weather is good. Then, they will install the signs and furnishings. Lead times have been long for these items so this will prevent project delays.
- Michael Daab attended the North American Invasive Species Management Association's "Racial Equity in Environmentalism" webinar on August 18.
- Construction Department staff attended IPRA's "Anti-Asian Harassment and Bystander" Training on August 25.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Met with Jim Kreiser of CliftonLarsonAllen's Business and Risk Services to discuss evaluating CCFPD's information technology systems to assess vulnerabilities to cyber threats. Kreiser reviewed the IT five year plan and commented that implementing the plan will indeed greatly limit any cyber vulnerabilities we might have. Kreiser indicated that a CLA evaluation will be inexpensive (under \$5000) since the District is currently a CLA client.
- The IT committee is considering the KnowBe4 application, a cybersecurity awareness training and simulated phishing platform. Both CLA and ClientFirst recommended KnowBe4 for reducing the potential for malware and ransom attacks. KnowBe4 includes significant testing of employee responses to simulated phishing attacks, training modules that address specific employee needs as demonstrated through the simulation responses, tracking employee training and the response rate to phishing attacks, and the ability to test suspect e-mail before following links, opening files, etc. Responses received through the IPRA IT network were universally favorable about how KnowBe4 has practically eliminated human errors responding to phishing attacks. The committee is considering implementing KnowBe4 this year.
- Met with CheriAnne Cameron, State Records Archivist for east central Illinois, about updating the District's retention schedule, particularly to address electronic documents not currently a part of our schedule. These include e-mail, video surveillance, drone footage, as well as electronic documents. Revising the retention schedule is underway.
- Met with Jerris Duncan of GiANT Worldwide regarding providing performance measurement training for District employees later this year. Finance staff are currently reviewing strategic plan outcomes submitted by departments and committees for the 2022 budget, one of the challenges is ensuring that outcomes are measurable and illuminating.
- Updated local bank and credit union investing list to ensure financial institutions meet District policy requirements and to set up automatic transfer functionality for ease of investing.

- Continued inputting 2022 budget requests and checked for any missing information to address any gaps. Met with affected staff about 2022 fee adjustments for rentals and camping.
- Blair participated in GFOA training for capital asset accounting and evaluating internal controls and IPRA's Anti-Asian Harassment and Bystander Training.

Human Resources (Dara Edgington)

- Mary has been working on a safety training video project with members of the operations staff. When complete, the video will become part of the District's video training library and be used during new hire orientations.
- Dara attended the Land Acknowledgement & Racial Equity Workshop hosted by the Volunteer Stewardship Network on August 31.
- PDRMA is launching its new risk management review software on September 15. This new platform is a result of PDRMA's campaign to revamp its Loss Control Review process, shifting to a more personalized focus on each District. Staff's first interaction with the new platform will be to complete a Slips, Trips, and Falls assessment.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- I wanted to share this email we received from Kay Speyer after her event at the Salt Fork Center in August. Positive comments after a rental facility gathering are not unusual, but the amount of detail in this one made it worth sharing. Great work everyone!

All: As you know, John McWilliams' celebration of life was held this last weekend. Each of you played a critical role in ensuring its success.

Angie - you were instrumental in showing me what a plaque and brass leaf would look like and coaching me through the process. I know from what Gail has told me, you were a tremendous help to her as well.

Peter - considering I missed the spring planting and really couldn't afford to wait until fall (given the August date for the event), you went out of your way to help with my request. You counseled me on tree type and location and exceptionally, went to a local nursery to purchase the sugar maple that will thrive in that location. It's perfectly located along the lake and on Saturday, many guests wandered over to view the tree. They were delighted with the tribute to John.

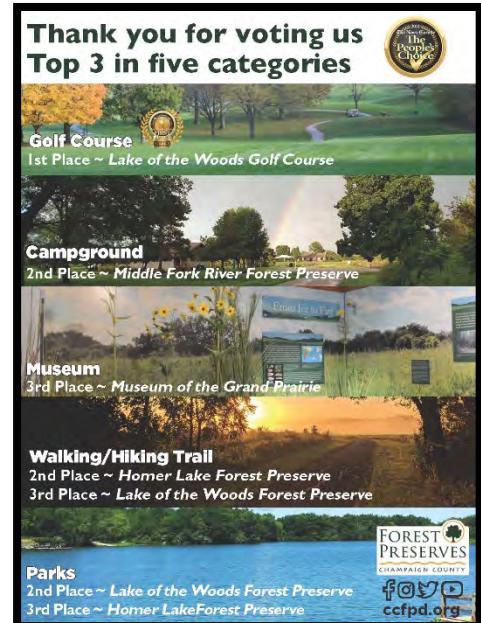
And Ryan - given the delay with plaque, you expedited its production so it was in place in time for the event. Despite my frequent emails, you were so patient and made it happen. The tree would have been a great tribute but was even more meaningful with the installation of the plaque.

Again, thanks to you all. I'm appreciative for your help and support.

Gratefully, Kay Speyer

- Media coverage last month included:
 - **Champaign County Forest Preserve District executive director taking a different path**
https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/champaign-county-forest-preserve-district-executive-director-taking-a-different-path/article_ffa31ea0-179d-5ae5-a0d9-32e2be15ec9c.html

- **Top of the Morning August 20, 2021**
https://www.news-gazette.com/business/top-of-the-morning-aug-20-2021/article_04387835-7bf3-51ae-b02b-7f4fab782fb2.html
- **Updates coming to the Kickapoo Rail Trail**
<http://www.sjodaily.com/2021/09/01/updates-coming-to-kickapoo-rail-trai/>
- **Prairie Stories at the Museum of the Grand Prairie on September 11**
<https://mahometdaily.com/prairie-stories-at-museum-of-the-grand-prairie-on-sept-11/>
- **Year of the Park, A to Z, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve: Video Feature**
<https://bit.ly/3sGqcCB>
- **Forest Preserve District celebrates life in the 19th century**
<https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/forest-preserve-district-celebrates-life-in-the-19th-century/>
- Congratulations go out to the District for receiving five Top 3 placings in the News-Gazette People's Choice awards this year! Winners received a special recognition on September 8 at the Winners Reveal Celebration party held at Riggs Brewery.
 - 1st place for Golf Course: Lake of the Woods Golf Course
 - 2nd place for Campground: Middle Fork River Forest Preserve
 - 3rd place for Museum: Museum of the Grand Prairie
 - 2nd and 3rd places for best walking trail: Homer Lake Forest Preserve and Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve
 - 2nd and 3rd places for Best Park: Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve and Homer Lake Forest Preserve
- Lisa attended IPRA's "Anti-Asian Harassment and Bystander" Training on August 25; Network for Good's "Host Successful Fall Fundraising Events with Confidence" on August 25; and CharityHowTo's "How To Create A Social Media Content Strategy That Converts" on September 8.
- Social media numbers continue to increase.



	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	5,574	+107	2,584	+87	554	-1
KRT	3,384	+103	113	+14	130	+3
MGP	4,393	+21	1,186	+10	248	+4
HLIC	2,903	+82				
GC	1,739	+17	323	+2	101	+3
FPFF	466	+17				

Volunteer Coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- Sue is working with Matt Kuntz, Mike Daab and the Middle Fork team to have a Middle Fork River clean up with Ryan Dallas Real Estate staff and other volunteers on September 16.
- Jennifer Wick and Sue collaborated with Tara Hohoff from the Illinois Bat Conservation Program to recruit and train volunteers to do a trial run of acoustic Bat Monitoring at Homer Lake and Lake of the Woods this fall. Volunteer interest in helping with this project was high,

and Sue is grateful to Jennifer for helping to make this happen quickly before the bats migrate or hibernate!

- About twenty volunteers joined staff at the Salt Fork Center for camaraderie, thanks, and an excellent talk on Mushrooms of Illinois by Dr. Andy Miller. Recent rises in COVID numbers and a heavy storm kept attendance at this appreciation event lower than Sue was expecting. Many thanks to Ryan Anderson, John Baker, Michael Dale, Mark Hanson, Brian Taylor, Jennifer Wick, and Emily Williams for attending and expressing our thanks to our volunteers. Special thanks to Lisa for making a PowerPoint of volunteer and scenic pictures as well as the volunteer hours posters.



Grants and Development Specialist (Ryan Anderson)

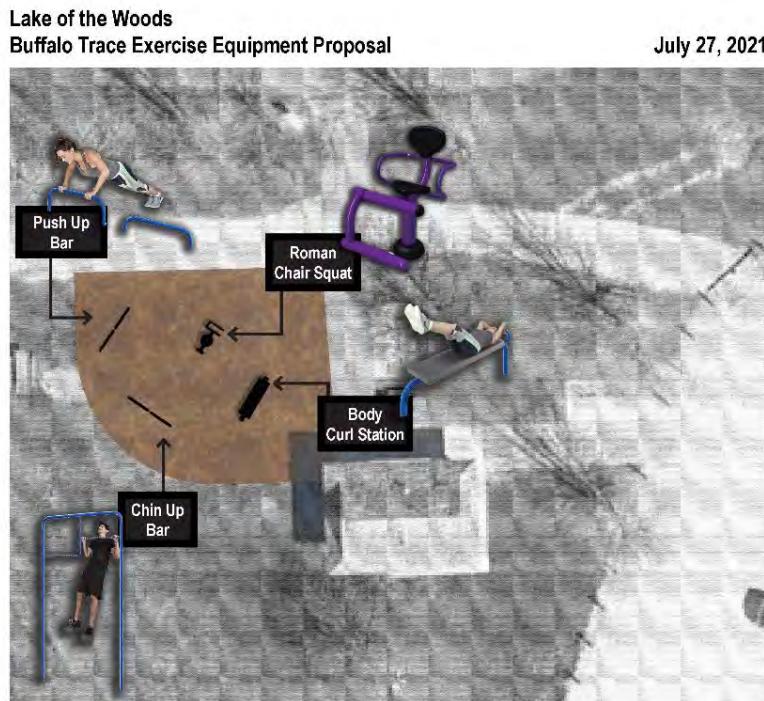
Applications

- **Foundation**

- NEEF 2022 Driving Mobility On Public Lands Grant-\$20,000
 - This project is a collaboration between the Mahomet Public Library (MPL) and the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) to initiate the installation of a permanent StoryWalk at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve. The MPL will help us select and acquire 12 books each year (one per month) for the StoryWalk. A StoryWalk is a way for children and adults to enjoy reading and time outdoors. Pages of a book are installed along a trail in sign-holders. We will enhance the trail with an accessible surface. The current path is a mowed grass trail but is not suitable for people in wheelchairs. The trail is a 0.6-mile loop on the north end of Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve. The trailhead is near one of the preserves' most popular facilities, the Museum of the Grand Prairie. This grant would cover the resurfacing of the trail.
- CFECI Annual Community Commitment Grant- \$7,500
 - Shade Structure near existing Homer Lake Interpretive Center. This would provide covering for the outdoor area that is used for environmental education programs and would also be available for public use.

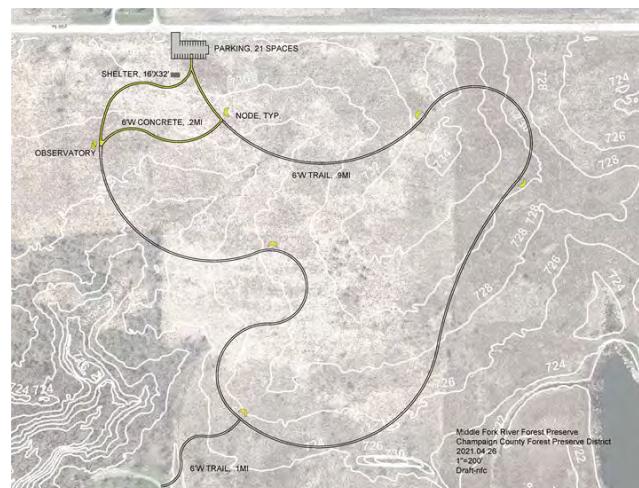


- ICECF Amenities- \$5,500
 - This project will fund the installation of an outdoor exercise area at Buffalo Trace. This amenity will be installed near the entrance off IL Route 47. The amenity will include a



push-up bar, Roman chair squat, chin-up bar, body curl station, and safety surfacing. The award will also include \$500 to cover the cost of holding a program at Buffalo Trace to encourage greater usage of the natural area. The grant would fully fund the project.

- **District**
 - IDNR OSLAD- \$294,000
 - The project includes the development of a Dark Sky trail and amenities at the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, the only International Dark Sky Park in Illinois. This project will include a Dark Sky trail with nodes for stargazing, a small observatory building, an open air shelter, a small parking lot, campground expansion, and a natural play area. This project would improve opportunities for dark skies viewing and will also provide enhanced recreational opportunities at Middle Fork.
 - IDNR BAAD- \$160,000
 - The proposed application is an improvement project at the existing North Boat Launch at Homer Lake



Forest Preserve. The scope of the grant project includes retaining wall replacement, installing a new ADA dock, an ADA path to the proposed dock, expanded parking, road improvements, and channel improvements. The channel improvements will improve access for those putting in boats at the existing launch, where the lake is very shallow. The new ADA dock will improve water access for users of all abilities and reduce congestion for kayak or canoe users who previously shared the existing launch with other watercraft. The additional parking will be of great use to both users of the boat launch and dock as well as those hiking the trails at Homer Lake. This grant is an 80/20 award. We plan to cover the remaining \$40,000 out of the District's capital project budget.

Awarded Grants

- **Foundation**

- The Nature Conservancy VSN Stewardship Grant- \$911.56
 - Funding the purchase of equipment for volunteer at the Interpretive Center and the Natural Resources Department.
- The Nature Conservancy VSN Community Convening Grant- \$1000
 - Grant will be used to fund a series of focus groups with the goal of increasing BIPOC involvement at the district and in programming.

- **District**

- Illinois Department of Transportation ITEP- \$ 1,228,320
 - The Champaign County Forest Preserve District will be constructing a 1.5 mile extension of the Kickapoo Rail Trail. This section of the rail trail will run through Ogden and extend to the county line between Champaign County and Vermilion County and provide important access to safe pedestrian and bicycle transportation opportunities.

Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Joie Torres)

- August was an up and down month at the golf course. We had some weather extremes that affected play (heat and humidity, heavy rains, lightning disruptions). All things considered, we still had a very good month of play. We had 5,599 rounds in August, which is about 1,000 rounds less than 2020, but better than the 5 year average of 4,604. For reference, August 2020 was one of the best months we have seen in the last 15 years (fantastic weather, pandemic restrictions eased). Our revenue for the month was \$128,653. This is well above the 5 year average of \$103,089.
- We had several group outings in August (see chart below). We also held our Men's Club Championship Tournament, with 37 participants. The Monday Night League concluded in August. We had a 12 team League this season, which is a 2-Man Match Play 9 hole league on Monday nights.

Outing	# of Players	Total Revenue	Merchandise
STM Athletic Boosters	96	\$4,370.00	\$480.00
Hildreth Group	48	\$1,440.00	\$0.00
Elder Group - BSF	16	\$815.23	\$51.00
Jason Smiley Memorial	68	\$3,110.00	\$340.00
Mahomet Christian Church	50	\$1,750.00	\$0.00

- We have reached the time of year when we begin to lose staff members. Many of our seasonal employees work over the summer between school (either as students or teachers). We have had some employees step up to take on other or expanded roles (cashier, snack bar, maintenance) to get us through the rest of the season. I am grateful to have a dedicated staff that is willing to embrace these changes and assist where needed.
- Securitas (formerly FE Moran) completed an inspection of our alarm system. There are several issues with the alarms in the facility, specifically door contacts not being recognized and our alarms not communicating with Securitas. We are looking forward to the IT Committee evaluating the current state of alarm systems throughout the District and seeing what possible changes we can make moving forward to make all facilities more secure and to simplify the procedure for alarm calls.
- High school golf season is in full swing. Our Golf Professional, David Sebestik is once again coaching the boys team for Mahomet-Seymour High School. We are the home course for the boys and girls teams from Mahomet, as well as a practice facility for Judah Christian School. We have already held a few golf dual meets and will be host to the Apollo Conference boys tournament in late September.
- The maintenance crew continues to do an excellent job maintaining the course in good shape.
- An irrigation leak on the #11 cart path was repaired and a new gate valve was installed after the repair was completed.
- Pump # 2 on the pump station went down, so irrigation has been running on two pumps. We await a visit from Illinois pump to come inspect the equipment and diagnose the problem.
- Fall armyworms have invaded our golf course along with other central Illinois golf courses and residential yards. The fall armyworms can wipe out a football field in 2-3 days if not treated. The Par 3 course and several areas on the rough on the big course have been invaded by these pests and we have lost turf. Insecticide has been applied to control this pest.
- Fall armyworms feed on all types of grasses, mainly cool season grass (Kentucky blue grass, fescue, ryegrass, and bentgrass). Your yard may look brown or dead and many people believe is caused by dry weather, but that is not the case. The best way to detect armyworms in your backyard is to use some Dawn dish soap mixed with water in a container and pour it around the lost turf. You will rapidly see the worms coming out of the ground. These pests are caused by warming climate, wetter weather (which we had in the months of July & August), or change in natural enemies, such as predators, parasites, and pathogens. If you are having issues with armyworms , there are several products on the market you can use. Key ingredients would be Bifenthrin, Carbaryl, and Permethrin.

Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- In August, staff mowed a number of sites for weed control and planting prep including several old fields at Buffalo Trace that will be planted to cover crop and ultimately converted to native grassland.
- Staff also forestry mowed the area north of John Potts drive to begin enhancing the site for the story walk project with the Museum of the Grand Prairie.
- Integrated pest management continued in August as staff began to focus more on woody invasive species control. This entailed doing follow-up foliar spraying of bush honeysuckle,

- privet, Japanese barberry, and multiflora rose in areas that were previously cleared via mechanical removal.
- Staff dedicated time in August doing tree removal at Homer Lake. Several large trees were removed across from the maintenance shop to make room for the construction of a new maintenance shelter. Many dead ash trees were also removed along the road.



Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The new snake enclosure that Stacey and Cathy designed has been built by Christopher Clementz Construction. Cathy is now putting the final touches on it before moving the rat snake to his new bungalow. Mark Hanson heat treated (using the new heat tent) the branches that will go in the enclosure.
- Homer Lake Interpretive Center (HLIC) is investigating options to relocate a groundhog that has dug a burrow right next to the HLIC's foundation.
- Teachers are slowly contacting both environmental and cultural/historical education staff to set up field trips for the fall as they receive approval from their administrators. Outdoor learning situations are much more popular in the wake of COVID-19.
- Updates to the 2021-2022 Expanding the Classroom booklet for schools are complete. The booklet will only be distributed virtually this year and includes new Zoom offerings and other virtual opportunities.
- Museum Mondays programs wrapped up in early August. Event themes to finish up the summer included "Let There Be Light" and "Go Green!" Programs were safe, successful, and provided patrons and staff an opportunity to experiment with in-person programming this summer while learning some valuable lessons for future museum programming!
- Pam Leiter, Pat Cain, and Katie Snyder contributed in the One Community Together Music Festival with some kids activities in downtown Urbana, organized by Sousa Archives in partnership with the Champaign County Museums Network; this was held in place of the Sweetcorn Fest.



- Pat and Barb hosted another *Mornings with the Museum* program on August 11 with a theme of “Fantastic Friends: Part 3”. Fellow members of the Champaign County Museums Network discussed latest updates and happenings at their institutions. The program included representatives from the Anita Purves Nature Center, Illinois Distributed Museum, and Sousa Archives and Center for American Music during this live virtual program streamed on museum Facebook and YouTube pages.
- The CCFPD Summer Concert Series wrapped up this month. Events in the series included concerts by The Hot Iron String Band on August 7th at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve's Sugar Creek shelter, Candy Foster and The Shades of Blue on August 15th in Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, and Corduroy on August 29th at Homer Lake Forest Preserve's Walnut Hill Shelter. Attendance for most of the concerts was average compared to previous years with attendance at the final concert being considerably lower possibly due to extreme heat, the recent surge of COVID-19 in the community, and the start of the school year. However, concerts were held safely with proper COVID protocols and safety measures in place. We appreciate the support of the League of Women Voters of Champaign County and all other sponsors for the series. We are very much looking forward to next year's series already.
- Homer Lake Interpretive Center staff were able to do many in-person public programs this month, including a program at Urbana Free Library on August 6, a campground program on August 7, a Perseid viewing on August 11, Bats at the Bridge on August 12 (unfortunately cancelled due to weather), Walk with a Naturalist on August 20, and Sunset Paddle on August 25. There were roughly 50-70 people in attendance at Middle Fork for the Perseid viewing, which turned out to be a great night. Sunset Paddle almost got rained out, but storms stayed away long enough for the group to get some time on the water.
- Barb and Pat worked to host the virtual program titled "A Whole 'Nother Ball Game: Baseball in Central Illinois, 1860s-1970s." The program was hosted on the museum's Facebook and YouTube pages and featured many of the same themes present in an exhibit of the same name being redisplayed this summer at the museum.
- Despite lower attendance to the museum during the COVID-19 pandemic, museum store purchases per patron have increased. In 2019, museum patrons were spending an average of \$1.10 per visit. In 2021, museum patrons are now spending an average of \$2.25 per visit. This increase in museum store purchases is a testament to the work museum CSRAs have done to merchandise the museum store with high-quality and affordable merchandise that aligns very well with the rest of the museum experience and mission. If these numbers hold when attendance numbers return to normal in a post-pandemic world, the museum store has the potential to bring in more revenue than ever.
- Pat continues to work with Looking for Lincoln and the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area committee to reevaluate the organization’s strategic plan and interpretive themes.
- Pat began a new class in his work towards a master's degree in history. The class is a graduate level seminar at ISU titled "HIS 424: History of Crime and Punishment in the US."



- Planning for large public programs at the museum continues. Pat is working to host popular annual events, such as Prairie Stories & Harvest Fest, in an in-person format. Many COVID safety protocols and guidance will be in place including hosting all event activities outdoors, requiring masks to be used by all staff, patrons, and volunteers when in close contact with others outdoors, free masks & hand sanitizer available, and less hands-on activities available.
- Mark Hanson has completed the East Frisian oral history project with a travelling exhibit and is coordinating venues to get it out into the community. The ISHRAB grant which allowed us to transcribe these oral histories done in 1994-1995, afforded us a small amount of extra funding to create an outreach exhibit.
- The heat treatment of artifacts for Rankin Center has begun. The heat tent was used in artifacts moved from within closed sections of the museum so that those can be reopened, e.g. the Discovering Home exhibit will soon be available to the public again.
- The return of our collections volunteers has helped with additional movement and processing of artifacts into the Rankin Center.
- Mark Hanson and Jennifer Grove completed the department emergency preparedness plan and assembled emergency response kits.
- The CAP collections assessor, Clara Deck, visited and worked with collections staff to inspect all collections, storage areas and exhibit spaces. The Collections Assessment full report including Clara Deck and Fritz Herget's professional opinions on our collections priorities will arrive in October.
- Mark spoke at the CU Sunrise Rotary Club about the museum's response to COVID and our upcoming projects.
- Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP) Staff has begun to discuss the 2022 special exhibit which will focus on community response, probably to health crises.
- Our two interns, Connor Monson and Bridgette Hammond, who worked on the Doris Hoskins archives, are completing their terms at the MGP.
- We welcome a new volunteer Martha Diehl, to the museum. Martha has volunteered previously at Chanute Air Museum and has a background in history and community involvement.
- Mark Hanson and Stacey Clementz worked on professionally cleaning some of the pelts used in education programs.
- George Groschen completed the LED retrofit for remaining fluorescent exhibit lighting.
- The Native American Lending Tub went to Next Generation School. It is the first lending tub to go to a school during the pandemic!
- On Saturday August 7, the MGP hosted Watercolor Birds Using Graphic Transfer with Shannon Percoco. It was our first completely full and first in-person, inside program during the pandemic – accomplished with masks and social distancing.
- Pandemics as a Portal to Change continued with community sponsored events, the most recent being a poetry event with the Champaign and Urbana Libraries.
- The Prairie Walk for Homeschoolers kicked off the homeschool season for MGP staff for the year. It was full and a great success!
- Marina Montez gave talk about the history of the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Gardens to Master Gardeners.
- HLIC Facebook stats, August 1-31: Average Daily Organic Reach: 624 (Sum: 19339); Average Daily Page Engaged Users: 33 (Sum: 996)

- MGP Facebook Stats, August 1-31: Average Daily Organic Reach 1119 (Sum 34691); Average Daily Page Engaged Users: 40 (Sum 1253)

Staff:

- September 1 was Jennifer Wick's five year anniversary working for the District! She started as the Seasonal Naturalist in 2016, and moved up into the Public Program Specialist position. She has taken public programs to the next level, and does an amazing job reaching her audiences to connect them with nature. Please congratulate her when you get the chance!
- To expand future programming, Jennifer Wick attended a Dark Sky webinar through the National Association for Interpretation.
- All museum & education department staff participated in the Executive Director candidate meet & greet sessions and appreciated the opportunity to talk to the finalists about their vision for the organization.

Lake of the Woods (Doug Sanders)

- Due to the heavy rainfall in parts of Ford and Champaign County on August 12th, the Sangamon River reached near record heights. The majority of the 1.4 mile trail at Heron View Forest Preserve was under water, sections of County Roads 600E and 2500N were closed due to flooding making the Sangamon River Forest Preserve and Riverview Retreat Center inaccessible, and the main road near the covered bridge and sections of the bike trail at LOW were shut down due to standing water. Photos shown here are of the road near the covered bridge and the entrance to the Sangamon River Forest Preserve.



- The majority of the Lake of the Woods' operations and botanical garden staff renewed their First Aid/CPR/AED certification this past month. This certification is on a two year renewal cycle.
- Over the past month staff have periodically been working at the Heron View Forest Preserve. Tasks have included the installation of a map box at the trailhead, some trail maintenance, and posting of boundary signage. Special thanks to trail stewards, Gene Barickman and Rick McMahon, for their continued work and for keeping us posted of the trail conditions.

- Several of the seasonal staff left the first part of August to return to school. After not having any extra help in 2020 due to COVID, it was nice to have the extra help throughout the summer. Full-time staff remain busy with their normal daily/seasonal tasks.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- The campground had a very successful Labor Day Weekend with absolutely perfect weather. Middle Fork staff also hosted several events for the weekend guests such as a bicycle parade, corn hole tournament, and nature scavenger hunt.
- Middle Fork staff have been spending quite a bit of time with several construction projects inside the preserve. These include updating or rehabbing old or out of date areas that the public use on a daily basis, such as grill and table replacements, re-decking of ADA ramps, and painting.
- Middle Fork staff are working on FY2022 budget preparation and research.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- We finally got a short break from weekly mowing so that we could remove brush and trees in the area where the new equipment shed will be located. There were the typical invasives, dead ash trees as well as cottonwood and sycamore that were still in the rows that IDNR had planted in the late sixties. (Picture below left.)



- Staff were able to mow all intersections along the Kickapoo Rail Trail and cut the edges back four feet on each side. The trail appears more narrow than it is when the plants along the edges are thriving and leaning in. (Pictured above right.)
- The construction crew continued work on the Salt Fork Center by applying sealer to the exterior and re-caulking all the windows. We are looking forward to having the new deck boards installed this fall. The exterior of the building will be nicely refreshed 23 years after it was built.

Kickapoo Rail Trail

- In lieu of an in-person fundraising event this November, the KRT steering committee has decided to hold an online auction event. COVID restrictions are too uncertain and we predict a low turnout if we hold it in person. Using the Sleepy Creek name will establish continuity with past and future events. We are in need of items to auction by October 22. Past auction items

have included wine collections, gift baskets, sports and concert tickets, art work, and vacation rentals.

District Cultural Competency Initiatives

- Several DEI members attended a webinar on Land Acknowledgements. As noted in the DEI plan distributed to the board last month, we are working on messages that accurately recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.
- As the lead of the New American Welcome Center's (NAWC) Health & Wellbeing (H&WB) Working Group, Pam has been working with NAWC staff to finalize the H&WB recommendations section of the Champaign County Welcoming Plan, as well as giving feedback on the overall Plan. She presented at the NAWC Advisory Board meeting in August. Our community is one of only a handful of communities in the U.S. who have developed a welcoming plan! The Welcoming Plan will publicly launch on September 15, 4-6pm at the I Hotel in person. All are invited!
- At staff's recommendation, the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation agreed to sponsor the Champaign County Welcoming Plan at the \$250 level. The NAWC estimates the printing and roll out of the plan to cost approximately \$6,000 so sponsorships are being requested from businesses, agencies, and government entities across the community.
- Jennifer Wick and Katie Snyder are putting together activity kits for children at Stratton Academy of the Arts as part of Welcoming Week, which takes place September 10-19.
- Jennifer developed a bilingual StoryWalk at Homer Lake Sept 3-24, which is also being promoted as part of Welcoming Week.