

January 14, 2022

## MEMORANDUM

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

### Executive Director (Lorrie Pearson)

- Familiarizing myself with the District continued by visiting each staffed site, attending a Natural Resources/Volunteer event clearing bush honeysuckle at Homer Lake Forest Preserve, attending a Walk with a Naturalist program, viewing the exhibits at the Museum, and hiking Heron View and Sangamon River Forest Preserves.
- I personalized dozens of letters from the Foundation to donors who participated in Giving Tuesday or year-end giving and past donors who had not yet donated in 2021.
- I developed a 360° review process to measure my performance over the last three months.

### Planning and Construction Departments (Mike Daab and Mike Fry)

- Bridgette Moen presented on the progress and future opportunities of the KRT to the Prairie Branch of the American Public Works Association with Sam Cole, City of Danville Engineer.
- Willow Pond Restoration construction has begun, with the first steps of dewatering the pond and accessing the on-site clay to be used for the liner in progress.
- The Construction Department has undertaken a number of small projects, including refreshing the paint and carpet in the Lake of the Woods Site Superintendent office, repairing a damaged sign for the Sugar Creek Shelter, and replacing a fan in the greenhouse.
- Construction completed a donor recognition display for the OSLAD LOW Peninsula project by repurposing a damaged canoe from Homer Lake's fleet (picture attached).



### Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Met with Lake of the Woods Operations and Botanical Garden acting supervisors to provide assistance on purchasing and financial processes.
- Received training on from KnowB4 to set up a cyberfishing test of the District e-mail system.
- Began fiscal year end close out and responding to auditor requests for the 2021 Audit.
- Responded to Census Bureau survey of local government finances.
- Made final payment on the 2010 bond that provided for the Museum's addition of the Education Classroom and Small Artifact Collections Storage.

### Human Resources (Dara Edgington)

- During the month of December HR processed zero hires and twelve separations. Our current headcount sits at 63, including 45 FT staff, 14 PT, 3 seasonals, and 1 paid intern.
- The monthly turnover rate for December was 18.00%. This primarily represents seasonal separations and includes the separation of one full-time staffer as well.

- The District documented one employee and one property damage incident with PDRMA over the month of December.

## Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- **Media Coverage**

**This Forest Preserve in Illinois is one of America's most incredible dark sky parks**

<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/illinois/middle-fork-river-forest-preserve-il/>

**Take a StoryWalk at Homer Lake this week**

<https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/take-a-storywalk-at-homer-lake-this-week/>

**Snowflakes, lights, and Christmas tree recycling at Champaign County Forest Preserve District**

<https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/snowflakes-lights-and-christmas-tree-recycling-with-champaign-county-forest-preserve-district/>

**Best sledding in Champaign Urbana**

<https://www.chambanamoms.com/2022/01/04/top-sledding-hills-champaign-urbana/>

**Walk with a naturalist at Homer Lake Forest Preserve**

<https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/walk-with-a-naturalist-at-homer-lake-forest-preserve/>

**Osborne retires after 25 years with the Champaign County Forest Preserve District**

<https://mahometdaily.com/osborne-retires-after-25-years-at-champaign-county-forest-preserve/?fbclid=IwAR2iHshMjq43LALq4vS-g8M26tj6SrtjdXB-weTFURu2V11sjH13p4j4vvs>

**Inside Out | Lincoln Legacy Committee promotes Honest Abe**

[https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/inside-out-lincoln-legacy-committee-promotes-honest-abe/article\\_959ed7b6-016b-5892-ab1d-a542070a6a78.html](https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/inside-out-lincoln-legacy-committee-promotes-honest-abe/article_959ed7b6-016b-5892-ab1d-a542070a6a78.html)

**Talk of the Towns, January 8, 2022**

[https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/community-events/talk-of-the-towns-jan-8-2022/article\\_d6e73c06-08e0-5fad-a684-48fdd853cf23.html](https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/community-events/talk-of-the-towns-jan-8-2022/article_d6e73c06-08e0-5fad-a684-48fdd853cf23.html)

**Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Champaign-Urbana and Beyond**

<https://www.chambanamoms.com/2022/01/09/honoring-martin-luther-king-champaign-urbana-beyond/>

**Illinois' only Dark Sky Park is an amazing place to stargaze**

<https://1440wrok.com/illinois-only-dark-sky-park-is-an-amazing-place-to-stargaze/>

**Get your culture here: Three outdoor experiences to have in January 2022**

<https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/get-your-culture-here-three-outdoor-experiences-to-have-in-january-2022/>

- WCIA meteorologist Kevin Lighty reported Kevin's Weather on the Road from Night Lights in the Garden on Christmas Eve during the 5pm and 6pm Newscasts. It was a beautiful night and 921 people attended Night Lights that evening. Here's a link to the drone video he shot while at the garden, <https://fb.watch/avZ092bmPz/>
- We shared three Exploring Lorrie videos in December: Night Lights in the Garden (1.6K); Museum Store (2K); and Homer Lake StoryWalk (958)
- Top Facebook posts in December were: 12/13 Geminid meteor shower (6.5K, 30 shares); 12/20 Looking for a job (5.9K, 34 shares); 12/20 "Oh big stretch" Trail camera video of fox (3.7K, 15 shares); and 12/29 The residents of Champaign County (article link to dark sky park story) - (3.4K, 12 shares)

- Updated the website with 2022 and 2023 fees, new exhibits, CCFPD Snowflake Search, employee updates, and Foundation pages.
- Partnered with the Chambanamoms to host “Hot Cocoa Cheers to the New Year” on Monday, January 3 in the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden for a special viewing of the Night Lights in the Garden from 4-5:30 pm.
- Social media followers

|       | FACEBOOK | +/- | INSTAGRAM | +/- | TWITTER | +/- |
|-------|----------|-----|-----------|-----|---------|-----|
| CCFPD | 5,954    | +86 | 2,744     | +36 | 572     | +1  |
| KRT   | 3,845    | +19 | 133       | +2  | 138     | +0  |
| MGP   | 4,503    | +15 | 1,200     | +2  | 259     | +1  |
| HLIC  | 2,965    | +30 |           |     |         |     |
| GC    | 1,764    | +0  | 326       | +1  | 105     | +1  |
| FPPF  | 499      | +6  |           |     |         |     |

### Volunteer Coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- In December, new volunteer applications: three for regular volunteering and three different volunteers gave their first service.
- The Museum hosted an opening event for Night Lights in the Garden with ten occasional and regular volunteer helpers and Natural Resources hosted an invasive removal event that was attended by about twenty-five regular and occasional volunteers and staff. It was inspiring to see how much bush honeysuckle was removed! (photo) Sue applauds staff for hosting such welcoming and informative help events!
- December was filled with creating next year’s volunteer appreciation gift (thanks to Lisa for design help!), personalizing and mailing this year’s holiday card along with necessary updating of the database to more accurately reflect active and recent volunteers (so the mailing list is accurate). Additional tasks performed were year-end supply purchasing, nudging the volunteer policies and procedures manual closer to completion and getting a draft of youth and adult volunteer brochures started – thanks to Education staff for their input!



### Grants and Development Specialist (Ryan Anderson)

#### Giving Tuesday totals

- The Giving Tuesday total is \$39,954. Checks have still been coming in from Nature’s Appeal (which may include remittance envelopes placed at the donation boxes during the Night Lights in the Garden events). Breakdown of GT by restriction:

- Covered Bridge: \$34,260.55
- Unrestricted: \$2,192
- KRT General: \$1,550
- KRT Accessibility: \$1,202
- Animal Advocates: \$150
- Habitat Restoration: \$100

**Grant Awards**

- District Awards: \$1,886,555
- Foundation Awards: \$41,886.56

**Night Lights in the Garden**

- Donation boxes were installed for the Night Lights in the Garden event, which could be used at other events in the future.

**2021 Foundation Giving**

|                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total Funds Raised</b> | <b>\$175,189.22</b> |
| Number of Donations       | 625                 |
| Number of Donors          | 436                 |
| Donor Retention           | 48%                 |
| Average Transaction Size  | \$307               |

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

- December saw a player count of 536 rounds, which brought the total rounds played for 2021 to 36,702. This total is exactly 10,000 more rounds than the 5-year average and is our highest total since 2007! The structure and guidelines of Anniversary passes, extended nice weather in the fringe months, and course conditions and improvements all have played key factors in growing the total rounds. The weather was quite mild for the first half of December, but we closed outdoors for the season on December 17<sup>th</sup>, when the temps dipped below freezing, to prevent damage to the turf and greens.
- Revenue for December was \$36,589, which included Platinum Pass sales for 2022. Once again, we ran our “Black Friday” Platinum Pass Sale, which allowed players to purchase a full season pass by December 23<sup>rd</sup> to receive a \$50 discount. We sold a total of 51 passes via this special. We are in the middle of the 2-year Anniversary Pass, and with the success of the prior 2 promotions, we will look to introduce some sort of pass sale again in the late fall of 2022.
- With the continued playable weather outdoors and staff being limited, we held off on setting up the Clubhouse and opening the golf simulator until the first week of December. We have one simulator operational this season, and will look to sell our older model simulator, which has become obsolete for software updates and many hardware repairs. With only one simulator and

to ease the extra burden on the staff over the winter, we plan to be open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday each week. If demand dictates, we may open Sundays or stay open later in the evenings. The simulator is available for up to 4 people at one time, for practice on a driving range or play on over 80 courses. We had \$806 of revenue on the simulator in December, which is impressive considering the nice weather outdoors and the fact we closed all facilities for the holidays December 24<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>.

- Finally, in the last week of December, Golf Course and CCFPD maintenance staff, along with Bud's Tree Care, resumed work on removing hazardous and diseased trees from the golf course. This project began in the spring, but due to equipment malfunctions and golf course patron traffic, the project completion was put on hold until the fall. We hope this project is completed by the start of the 2022 outdoor golf season, for the improved aesthetics and safety of our patrons and staff.
- During the warm days at the course the maintenance crew cleaned the gutters at the clubhouse and leaves around the perimeter.
- Pumped stations were winterized for the winter. The Golf Maintenance department invited Dara Edgington (HR Generalist) to the holiday luncheon at the golf maintenance shop.

### Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- In December, the Natural Resources Department was hard at work removing invasive/aggressive shrubs and trees throughout the preserves. Some notable projects include:
  - Cutting aggressive hazelnut at Tomlinson Pioneer Cemetery in 0.25 acres at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve
  - Cutting and removing invasive bush honeysuckle in Maple Sugar Grove at Homer Lake Forest Preserve throughout 1.3 acres
  - Girdling aggressive trees throughout 5 acres of upland forest adjacent the Point Pleasant parking lot at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve
- On the winter solstice, staff hosted a volunteer brush clearing event at Maple Sugar Grove at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. 20 volunteers cleared an entire acre in two hours.

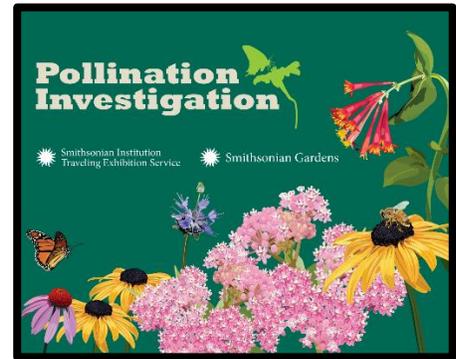


- Other activities in December included supply procurement, performing routine equipment maintenance, cleaning facilities, some trail maintenance, and cleaning seed for planting

### **Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)**

- Public response to the Homer Lake Interpretive Center's (HLIC) give-away of excess books, posters, and used binoculars has been overwhelming! They were much appreciated by many families and individuals, and the binoculars went to a local classroom.
- End of year donations at HLIC were quite strong this year: Over \$940 for Animal Advocates, 75lbs of birdseed, \$250 for the Center, and \$700 to purchase new binoculars from our Amazon wish list.
- Repairs on the Interpretive Center van were completed!
- Many thanks to Chris' Water Gardens this month for working so hard to troubleshoot issues with the Interpretive Center's water feature in the bird feeding area.
- Staff continued the deep clean/organizing of the Interpretive Center.
- As typical during the months of January and February, the museum will be closed to the public for annual maintenance and to begin exhibit updates
- George Groschen is updating about 30 fluorescent fixtures in the Education Center. These T-5 fixtures were not included in the Ameren replacements of LED.
- Mark Hanson, George Groschen and Mike Fry sorted out an issue with the HVAC humidifier in Rankin.
- Purchase of security cameras to replace the aging system in the Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP) was accomplished by year's end. However, with the supply chain issues, it may be several months before all parts are in and ready to be installed.
- Customer Service Retail Associates have begun the annual inventory process at the Museum Store.
- Pam Leiter and staff are working on annual renewals for the Interpretive Center's permitting, including IDNR permits, Herptile Scientific Collection Permit, Herpetoculture, Permit, State Salvage Permit, and Endangered & Threatened Species Educational Permit (for our Ornate box Turtle), and our USFWS Federal Migratory Bird Permit; Special Purpose – Salvage. These permits allow us to hold our current collection of biofacts and live animals, and salvage/acquire new ones as needed.
- Jennifer Grove and Mark Hanson began finalizing donations to the collection approved by the board in December.
- Barb Garvey and Mark Hanson continued discussions and research about removing or interpreting the Frank Kirby totem poles from the museum stairwell.
- Jennifer Grove and Mark Hanson began uninstalling the Woman Suffrage exhibit and processing out incoming loans.
- Mark Hanson worked with Pam and Stacey to finalize a series of deaccessions from the Homer Lake Interpretive Center (HLIC) education collection.
- Barb Garvey and Mark Hanson met with Jennifer Misuzu Gunji-Ballsrud who approved the Virtual Rankin Quilt exhibit and its release in February.
- Jen Grove and volunteer team continue processing artifacts into Rankin.

- Jen Grove and Mark Hanson are preparing for the relocation of the next load of artifacts from HQ basement, to include two shelving units.
- The new Pollination Investigation exhibit went up at the Interpretive Center in December. It will be up through March 18 during Interpretive Center open hours. The exhibit is in English and Spanish, and is made available by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. We have also had a lot of engagement on social media related to this exhibit.
- The MGP exhibit committee continues working on the upcoming disease exhibit with tentative opening set for May.
- Barb Garvey created a small exhibit for the Champaign County Courthouse. *J.O. Cunningham: Beloved Citizen* which details the life of an early judge, historian and philanthropist for whom Cunningham Children's Home, Township and Avenue are named. As the chair of the Lincoln Legacy Committee, Barb Garvey also organized, with Barb Wysocki, an event in the Champaign County Courthouse honoring Judge Cunningham. It was truly a collaborative event with Steve Beckett speaking and Greg Knott representing UI Board of Trustees emphasizing his contributions to law and the U of I. Cunningham Children's Home, the Alliance Chapter of the DAR, Courthouse staff and the Sheriff's office, the Urbana Free Library's Champaign County Historical Archives, the Champaign County History Museum, the Homer Historical Society, and the MGP all participated. (30 in attendance).
- Cathy Schneider hosted the HLIC's first *Animal Advocates Open House* for donors to showcase the recent enclosure improvements; five donors attended. In addition, she updated the summer camp Counselor-in-Training brochure and application for 2022.
- Jennifer Wick's *Homer for the Holidays* craft kits were very popular! All 50 kits sold out quickly. She also conducted her ever-popular monthly Walk with a Naturalist program with 12 visitors attending.
- Stacey & Cathy are partnered with B.T. Washington Elementary in Champaign on STEM programs: *Animal Behaviors in Winter* for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and *Animal Defenses* for 1<sup>st</sup> graders. They also did a Nature of Winter Naturalist in the Classroom program for Dr. Preston L. Williams, Jr. Elementary in Urbana. Total this month: 299 students.
- Stacey's afterschool *Nature Explorers* program at Middletown Elementary in Mahomet continued in December; she saw 12 students each for 2 days with a different topic each day. (total series was 6 programs, Nov-Dec)
- Stacey Clementz continues to work with CAC members on a sustainability education project and with Urbana Park District and the Farm Bureau on a climate change loan kit and a teacher workshop.
- Marina Montez-Ellis presented the virtual program titled "From Pleistocene to Present: A Brief History of the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, Buffalo Trace Prairie, and Surrounding Area." The program was streamed live on the Museum of the Grand Prairie's Facebook and YouTube pages and featured cultural and natural histories of these areas. (238 views)
- Pat Cain has begun talks with the CU Community Fab Lab and UIUC Department of Theatre on a potential collaboration involving a local history themed escape room at the museum. Initial plans target November/December 2022 for project completion and public debut.



- Museum and Education Department staff finalized programming for February/March 2022.
- Sandy Osborne retired and was honored by the Board of Commissioners, and her colleagues within the Department threw a small, masked socially distanced party in the Discovery Room for her. She will be featured on a *Mornings with the Museum* on January 27, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.
- Katie Snyder and Pat Cain worked at the opening night of Night Lights in the Garden with 45 pre-purchased gingerbread house kits distributed that night. Because of weather conditions the closing night of Night Lights in the Garden with activities and kits handed out, was cancelled. *Winter Wonderland Garden Kits* will be distributed by appointment. (21 kits)
- Sandy Osborne led her final field trip. It was a *Homeschool Holiday* program. 16 people total.
- Barb Garvey spoke to the Mahomet American Legion on December 7. The speech, “Remembering Pearl Harbor: 80 years On.” Featured local voices from the News-Gazette interviews of World War II veterans preserved in the museum’s collection. (45 in attendance).
- Barb Garvey spoke to Windsor of Savoy. The topic “O Christmas Tree” traced the popularization in American culture, including details about some local Christmas tree lots. (21 in attendance).
- HLIC Facebook stats, December 1-31: Average Daily Organic Reach: 789 (Sum: 24,447); Average Daily Page Engaged Users: 34 (Sum: 1,069)
- MGP Facebook stats, November 1-30: Average Daily Organic Reach: 1195 (Sum: 37059); Average Daily Page Engaged Users: 47 (Sum: 1465)

#### **Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River, Heron View (Tammy Fry and Michael Dale)**

- Lake of the Woods operations staff helped the Botanical Garden staff with Night Lights in the Garden.
- Christmas tree recycle numbers are good with 425 chipped to date.
- Operations staff worked on normal preventative maintenance and some deep cleaning at shop.
- Garden staff has been working with the Lake of the Woods operations staff to remove honeysuckle and other invasive plants in the covered bridge area when time and weather permit.
- The staff was focused on the weekly light shows in the Garden on Friday and Saturday nights which saw about 4,400 visitors over the 10 days we were able to have the lights. The Champanamoms group had a scheduled play date on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 4-5:30 for the lights as well. Staff has already made it out to purchase lights in anticipation for next year’s return of Night Lights in the Garden. Staff is now taking everything down and prepping it for next year.

### **Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)**

- Middle Fork staff continue to remove invasive species throughout the preserve. Areas of focus include the campground area, Miner's Trail, and Pt. Pleasant. We are focusing on autumn olive and bush honeysuckle.
- The Willow Pond renovation project has started. White Construction has started pumping the pond and removing topsoil at the clay excavation area. So far, pumping has been challenging with below zero temperatures. This week (Jan. 10) all water should be removed and excavation should begin.



### **Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

- It took several years but we have finally replaced all the old wooden picnic tables that have been in use since the seventies. Building picnic tables and benches has traditionally been a project that we try to do between the holidays.
- We want to thank the Natural Resources department and all the volunteers who participated in removing honeysuckle and autumn olive from the understory in the maple grove. It's great to see that area restored to a more pristine woodland. Our visitors enjoy being able to actually see into and walk in that area.

### **District Cultural Competency Initiatives**

- Katie Snyder worked with Sam Smith of KCPA to identify a member of the local Black community who could continue the work of collecting oral histories of local Black community members that we began this summer.
- Katie Snyder worked with Tracy Parsons of Community Coalition and the subcommittee of Race Relations, to fund work of the person who will continue the work of the oral histories. Community Coalition has granted us \$2000 from their United Way grant, specifically earmarked to pay a community member to collect 10 oral histories between January and June.
- Katie Snyder, Pat Cain and Barb Garvey met with members of the Champaign County Museums Network to plan a Women's History joint project for the month of March. The project will focus on women innovators and inventors.
- Lorrie Pearson attended an online symposium through Cornell University on addressing unconscious bias, promoting equity at work, and modeling inclusive culture.