



Community Affairs & Environmental Education Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Affairs Director
Date: 6/11/2024
Re: May 2024 Report

Public Relations & Marketing

Our Approaching 100th Anniversary:



The District marked its 99th Anniversary on Saturday, June 8, by releasing a special 100th Anniversary logo, which we'll use leading up to and through our 100th year. You'll see the logo on various marketing pieces throughout 2024 & 2025. Over the coming 12 months, we're planning social media posts about the District's history, nature programs, special events and more, culminating in a public celebration at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn. (Johnson's Mound was our County's very first forest preserve. Executive Director Haberthur thought it would make an excellent location for a celebration to launch our second century of conservation, education and recreation.) Save the date on your calendars for June 8, 2025!

2024 Progress Report

Staff worked throughout the month to prep the 2024 Progress Report. This is our final recap of the 2017 Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum. Copies will be out in the next couple weeks.

Press Releases

We published the following press releases, last month:

- Enjoy Guided Kayak Paddles on the Fox River, May 7
- The Cicadas are Coming!, May 9
- Youth Kayak Fishing Program: Opening Exciting Opportunities for Grades 6-12, May 14
- Explore Local Waterways this Summer during our Creek Exploration Series, May 17



May 2024 Report

TreeLine Newsletter

Our current print subscribers total 4,268 (+1). Current email subscribers total 13,061 (+22), for a combined total of 17,329 subscribers (+23). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.

Environmental Education

May Spotlight

In the past year, we have made great strides in serving the local special needs community. During the last three months alone, Naturalist Amber Ross has worked with six different agencies to bring the wonder and joy of nature to 167 emotionally, physically and developmentally-disabled students and residents. Some of these programs have been done in partnership with Volunteer Coordinator Robb Cleave and Stewardship Coordinator Heather Herakovich, offering patrons a combination of stewardship and educational activities.



Awesome Life Academy (Oswego) adults and students with disabilities celebrate a day of service and nature education at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve.



"Amber's [Naturalist Ross] energy was great! She was very informative about the topic and did so in an approachable and even humorous way. It was a great start to Mother's Day."

"Wildflower Walk" program participant

“Today’s program was great, we walked away having learned new things about toads, and had the opportunity to be outside and see tadpoles, listen for birds, and even observe snakes. Lisa [Naturalist O’Brien] does a great job making the program engaging for little kids and presents the material in a way that appeals to parents.”

“Toadally Toads” program participant

Program Reach & Revenue Generation

Programs	Programs Completed (Monthly)	Attendance (Monthly)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Monthly)	Programs Completed (Total FY)	Attendance (Total FY)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Total FY)
Public	11	306	28	124	4915	40
School	16	743	46	105	3419	33
Scout	1	10	10	7	118	17
Community	5	172	34	42	860	20
Outreach	4	196	49	37	1947	53
Learn from the Experts	0	0	0	23	700	30
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	11	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Program Totals	38	1,427	39	349	11,959	35
Nature Center Visitors		1,257			9,809	
Total Attendance		2,684			21,768	
Revenues[^]	\$467					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees.

[^]Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.

In-Person Programs

- Public Programs –**
 Seasonal *Bird Watching Walks* with Naturalist Josh Libman have generated a dedicated following. Each month, new and seasoned birders join Naturalist Libman to hike, look and listen for birds, and hear a few interesting avian stories along the way.



Preserve.

Naturalist Ross created and introduced a *Family Scavenger Hunt* to 31 excited participants at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve in St. Charles. After getting directions and supplies, participants hit the trails to try to find everything on the list! Once done, they headed back to the shelter to claim a nature-themed prize. Naturalist Ross also wove a little bit of a scavenger hunt into the *Mother's Day Wildflower Hike* held at Burnidge Forest Preserve in Elgin, for 36 patrons. During the hiking portion of the program, adults learned interesting wildflower botany and folklore, while kids enjoyed the wildflower scavenger hunt.

During the first *Mushroom Monitor Foray* of the 2024 monitoring season, 19 monitors joined Environmental

Education Manager Barb McKittrick and professional mycologist Crystal McAllister for a woodland foray at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve in St. Charles. Together, the group discovered and identified over 20 species of mushrooms, putting folks in an excellent position to effectively and confidently monitor their assigned preserves for the remainder of 2024.



Monitors gather at the end of the mushroom collection walk to observe the intricate structure of different species.

The understory of Lone Grove Forest Preserve in Maple Park was exploding with Wild Geraniums, Great Angelica, Wild Hyacinth and so much more during the two-hour *Trek with a Naturalist* led by Environmental Education Manager McKittrick, attended by 33 patrons.

Twenty six patrons, including President Chris Kious and Commissioner Bill Roth, joined Naturalist Erica Lemon at Pingree Grove Forest Preserve for a *Dragonfly Migration* walk. After she explained how and why various members of Family *Odonata* travel different distances as the seasons change, the group spotted three species of dragonflies and one species of damselfly.

During Naturalist Lemon's monthly *Yarn Art Social Circle*, seven participants brought their own knit, crochet or other yarn art project to work in a group of fellow yarn enthusiasts, in the cozy confines of the Creek Bend Nature Center.

Naturalist Ross welcomed 40 seniors to Bliss Woods Forest Preserve in Sugar Grove for the May *Senior Stroll*. The large group enjoyed a leisurely hike through the woodlands, reveling in the show

of wildflowers and enjoying some ethnobotanical stories. Also at Bliss Woods Forest Preserve, Naturalist O'Brien led her monthly *Nurtured by Nature* program for 20 participants, enjoying a meditative and relaxing stroll through the woodlands.

For 16 members of the younger crowd, during a *Toadally Toads! - Little Saplings* program at Creek Bend Nature Center/LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, Naturalist O'Brien read a story about tadpoles, crafted a toad project and hiked the Creek Bend pond and woodland loop trails looking for toads and tadpoles. *Storytime at Creek Bend Nature Center* attracted 40 little ones and their caregivers to hear stories and play interactive games with a St. Charles Public Library librarian. Families were welcome to stay and explore Creek Bend Nature Center after the program and to enjoy the new *StoryWalk* along the nearby trail.



Each month, a new StoryWalk at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve highlights a seasonal nature-themed book.

- **Community & Outreach Programs** – Naturalist Ross took the *Birds of Prey Traveling Naturalist* program to Veterans of Edgewater of Del Webb in Elgin. More than 55 residents were excited to watch a presentation and explore bird mounts and feathers to learn about our local raptors. Other *Traveling Naturalist* programs in May included *Nature's Superheroes* at Alice Gustafson School (D101), given to 60 students by Naturalist Libman, and *Nature Detectives* for 40 students at Perry Elementary (D300), presented by Naturalist Lemon.

Staying with the bird theme, Naturalist Libman collaborated with Commissioner Suzi Myers of the St. Charles Environmental Commission to offer bird-watching programs for 38 folks at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, in celebration of both International Migratory Bird Day and the new designation of St. Charles as a "Bird City USA." In another St. Charles outreach program, Naturalist Ross gave a presentation on *Invasive Species of the Fox River* at the Baker Community Center in St. Charles as part of the Fox River Corridor Foundation's "A River Flows Through It" speaker series; 56 people were in attendance.

More than 40 Batavia Public Library patrons gathered to hear Environmental Education Manager McKittrick talk about the *Best Seasonal Hikes in Kane County Forest Preserves*. She shared an overview of ephemeral wildflower ecology before presenting some of the preserves best for viewing those flowers.

May 2024 Report

- **School Programs** – Since updating our school field trip curriculum to meet state and national standards and developing a brochure to promote our entire school offering, we had a record spring field trip season, welcoming more than 1,600 students from homeschool and traditional schools to nature-based field trips in March, April & May. In May, public school programs were held at LeRoy Oakes, Tekakwitha Woods, and Oakhurst Forest Preserve in Aurora. Themes included *Trees & Their Leaves*, *Discovery Hike*, *Wonderful World of Insects*, and *Tracks & Trails*. *Discovery Hike* programs for five homeschool networks were held at Brunner Family, Rutland, Bliss, and Big Rock Forest Preserves.



Perry Elementary (D300) students enjoy a game of Tree Needs, aimed at teaching them the concept that trees compete for limited resources of soil, water, air and sun.

- **Learn from the Experts (LFE)/KCCN Programs** – After six two-and-one-half-hour classroom sessions, four half-day field trips and 30 hours of additional volunteer or continuing education work, 21 members of the Kane County Certified Naturalist Class of 2025 graduated this month!

Nature, Virtually Everywhere! Online Programs

For patrons that can't come to the forest preserves, or choose not to gather in groups, the Environmental Education team continues to bring high-quality nature programs to folks via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In May, we released:

Guess the Preserve! - Curious about Forest Preserve District summer camps? Here's a sneak peek into all the fun that our "Week in the Woods" has to offer!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHaQDXt03Mc>

Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In May, the lodge hosted four meetings and one bridal shower, totaling \$700. Anticipated revenue for reservations to date totals \$11,325.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In May, we hosted a Mounted Rangers Meeting. Anticipated revenue for reservations to date totals \$21,000. We start our busy wedding season next month and have several special events scheduled throughout the summer and fall.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

Kane Golf Outing

Preparations are underway for our first ever Kane Forest Golf Outing. We're currently looking for sponsors and golfers for the Sept. 12 event at Hughes Creek Golf Club in Elburn. Contact Communications & Marketing Specialist Brittany Kovach for more information: kovachbrittany@kaneforest.com.

Additional information is online at www.kaneforestpreservefoundation.org and also:

- Sponsorship Packet: <https://bit.ly/kanegolfsponsorinfo>
- Sponsorship Registration: <http://bit.ly/kanegolfsponsor>
- Golf Flyer: <https://bit.ly/kanegolferinfo>
- Golfer Registration: <https://bit.ly/kanegolfer>

