



Community Engagement Department Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director
Date: 9/9/2025
Re: August 2025 Report

Public Relations & Marketing

EVENTS, CONFERENCES, MEETINGS & TRAINING

Foundation Board Meeting: On Aug. 4, Communications & Marketing Supervisor Brittany Kovach attended the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation meeting to provide updates on centennial sponsorship, the golf outing, and to take minutes.

National Night Out: On Aug. 5, Director Metanchuk and PR Intern Jacob Purser participated at National Night Out. This event is a joint police-community initiative that encourages members of the public to engage with local law enforcement and emergency services, fostering positive relationships.

Muirhead Springs Overlook Meetings: On Aug. 7 and Aug. 19, Director Metanchuk and other staff met with Wight & Company to discuss the overlook project for Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve in Hampshire. The goal is to get people out into the prairie, to better see the various birds and other wildlife enjoying the prairie and wetland habitats.

Rusty Rodeo: On Aug. 9, Supervisor Kovach and Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick attended Rusty Rodeo in North Aurora. This community event is in partnership with St. Charles Park District, Fox Valley Park District and Friends of the Fox River. Members of the public helped collect and remove invasive rusty crayfish from the Fox River to protect and maintain our local waterways.

Cross-Training Meeting: On Aug. 12, Supervisor Kovach and Events Coordinator Kim LoCastro met with Administrative Specialist Missi Cate for cross-training purposes. Coordinator LoCastro will help at the front desk when Specialist Cate is unavailable.

Intergovernmental Meeting: On Aug. 14, Director Metanchuk attended the St. Charles Intergovernmental meeting to share forest preserve updates and brainstorm ideas from other agencies.

Harvest and Tri-Cities Meetings: On Aug. 19, Supervisor Kovach attended the Harvest Festival planning meeting with the Environmental Education staff to plan for the upcoming event on Sept. 28. Also on Aug. 19, Director Metanchuk attended the Tri-Cities Parks' Foundations Meeting at Peck Farm Park to collaborate with other Foundations in the area and for a tour at Peck Farm Park.

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Blanding's Turtle Release: On Aug. 20, Communications & Marketing Specialist Lauren Swanson joined Wildlife Biologist Bill Graser to take photos and video of the release of Blanding's Turtles.

Cougars' Meeting: On Aug. 28, Director Metanchuk and the leadership team met with the Kane County Cougars to hear their upcoming plans for events and utilizing their space.

PRESS COVERAGE

We published the following press releases in August:

- Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Hosts 2nd Annual Charity Golf Outing – Proceeds to Benefit New Nature Play Space at LeRoy Oakes, Aug. 1
- Discover the Rich History of the I & M Canal at “Learn from the Experts” Lecture Series, Aug. 4
- Protect Your Local Watershed at “It’s Our Fox River Day,” Aug. 22
- The Great Orb Hunt Returns this Fall: Search for Hand-crafted Orbs at Three Locations, Aug. 25

We received the following media coverage, last month:

Forest Preserve District of Kane County

- Cleanup Event Planned Along Fox River in Batavia, Chicago Tribune, Aug. 23
- Busy Summer for Wildlife Conservation for the Kane County Forest Preserve, Kane County Connects, Aug. 25
- Let Volunteerism Bring You Together, Shaw Local, Aug. 29

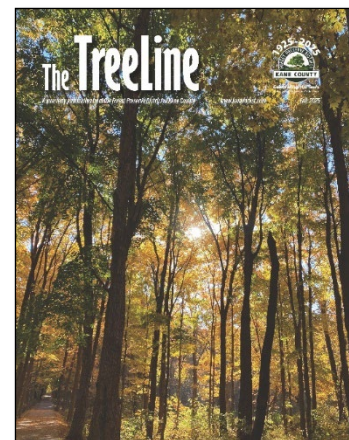
Nature Programs

- This Weekend’s Rusty Rodeo is All About Wrangling the Invasive Crayfish, WTTW News, Aug. 8
- Get a Behind-the-Scenes Tour of a Native Seed Processing Facility, Daily Herald, Aug. 19

TREELINE NEWSLETTER

Our current print subscribers total 5,415 (+8). Current email subscribers total 15,717 (+1), for a combined total of 21,132 subscribers (+9). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.

The Fall 2025 issue is out! See it at <https://kaneforest.com/the-treeline-newsletter> or pickup a copy at District Headquarters or Creek Bend Nature Center.



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Environmental Education

AUGUST 2025 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION REPORT



August Spotlight: Now in its 7th year, the Rusty Rodeo drew over 600 patrons to two sites along the Fox River: Island Park in North Aurora and Mt. St. Mary's Park in St. Charles. Along with our partners from St. Charles, Fox Valley Park District, and Friends of the Fox, we got families in the water to learn about invasive species and to remove exotic Rusty Crayfish from the watershed. Prizes were awarded for smallest, largest and most crayfish captured, and the entire catch will be used to feed ambassador animals in partner agency nature centers.



Many families were all in, with custom made crayfish-catching devices and crayfish-themed



"Wow, what an awesome LFE yesterday! You're [Naturalist Amber Ross] a natural out in the field (no pun intended). You touched on so many details of prairie restoration vs. reconstruction and outcomes of both. You speak with clarity – great work!"

"Prairie Ecosystems" Learn from the Experts program participant

"Lisa is outstanding and provides soo much knowledge. Love when she leads as I always learn from her."

"Nurtured by Nature" program participant

"Erica Lemon does an excellent job in all her programs!!!!

"Prairie Ethnobotany" program participant

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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	16	615	38	30	906	30
School	2	37	19	5	72	14
Scout	0	0	0	1	20	20
Community	4	78	20	12	320	27
Outreach	2	160	80	3	225	75
Learn from the Experts	2	55	28	3	77	26
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program Totals	27	945	36	56	1620	30
Nature Center Visitors		850			1971	
Total Attendance		1795			3591	
Revenues^	\$4,765					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees

^Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.

IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

- **PUBLIC PROGRAMS** – Each season, the naturalist team custom-curates new seasonal programs that interpret our local ecology, with the goal of inspiring connections with nature. Of the nine new public programs launched this month, of special note were:
 - In the third series of successful *Open Fishing Clinics* at Oakhurst Forest Preserve, partners from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Fishing Program joined



Naturalist Josh Libman to welcome 20 patrons to Lake Patterson. New anglers discovered the joys of fishing and the special features of inland lake ecology.

Not the size of the catch, but the joy of connecting with the waterway, brought a smile to this fisherperson!

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- Nineteen women gathered with Naturalist Ross at Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls for the 4th annual Women's Weekend. The women immersed themselves in a restorative weekend in nature, connecting with like-minded souls to explore the benefits of nature walking, botanizing, outdoor cooking, artistic creations and other therapeutic pursuits.

To attract return patrons and build a loyal following of citizen conservationists, we offer several series of programs that meet on a recurring basis. All are popular, and together this suite of serial programs serves a wide range of target audiences:

- *Bird Watching Walks*: Naturalist Josh Libman's monthly walks celebrate the changing seasons as he leads patrons on a hike to look and listen for birds and covers basic bird identification skills. In August, 45 attendees joined him at Burnidge and Muirhead Springs Forest Preserves.
- *Senior Stroll*: Started at Tekakwitha Woods Nature Center decades ago, this is one of our longest-running public programs and it draws a large and devoted group of active adults. This month, Naturalist Libman welcomed 30 attendees to Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls to learn about woodpeckers and enjoy social time in the lodge following their walk.



Seniors enjoy a leisurely stroll through the grasslands of Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls.

- *Yarn Art*: Naturalist Lemon invites crafters of all ages to bring their own yarn art project to work within a group of like-minded yarn enthusiasts. This month, 10 fiber artists joined the circle at the Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve.

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- *StoryTime at Creek Bend Nature Center*: Every month, our patrons join a librarian from the St. Charles Public Library for read-aloud stories, finger plays, and songs, staying to enjoy the interactive exhibits in the Nature Center following the program. We welcomed 60 folks in August.
 - *Little Saplings*: This monthly program, developed for 3-5 year olds by Naturalist O'Brien, explores seasonal themes in the natural world using a combination of stories, nature hikes, songs, games, and/or crafts. For August's *Creek Exploration*, ten children and their adults learned about animals that live in the water at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Wading in Ferson Creek, the children discovered crayfish, fish and shells while having fun in the water.
 - *Nurtured by Nature*: Naturalist O'Brien invites adults to experience the healing effects of nature. During this monthly series, she incorporates gentle stretching, deep breathing and a focus on awareness during hikes designed to nurture the mind, body and spirit. August's program at Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve drew 21 patrons.
 - *Trek with a Naturalist*: Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick designs and leads this monthly program for those who like active hiking - all year long. We visit different preserves each month, with August's being at Hoscheit Woods Forest Preserve for 32 patrons.
- **COMMUNITY & OUTREACH PROGRAMS** – A significant portion of the naturalist team's efforts involve traveling to and educating community groups, school classes and partner library patrons.

Community programs are given at or for private organizations like garden clubs, service organizations, church groups, private school/day care centers and senior centers. In August, the naturalist team hosted 78 special needs adults from four different agencies at LeRoy Oakes and Fitchie Creek Forest Preserves. The groups enjoyed learning about *Prairie Grasses and Flowers*.

Outreach programs are given at public schools, day care centers and libraries; in August we conducted two at the Santori branch of the Aurora Public Library. As part of Aurora's First Friday fest, Naturalist Intern Jemma Waldrop presented a tabling exhibit on river ecology for 150 visitors. Environmental Education Manager McKittrick joined Dark-Sky International Delegate Adam Kreuzer to present an evening program about the impact of light pollution on people, wildlife and plants.

- **SCHOOL PROGRAMS** – Summer is a slow time for organized school field trips, but we continue to serve the homeschool community. Naturalist Libman led two *Creek Walks* for a total of 37 kids from two different homeschool networks at Tyler Creek Forest Preserve.



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- **LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS (LFE)/KANE COUNTY CERTIFIED NATURALIST (KCCN) PROGRAMS –** During the *Prairie Ecosystems of Kane County LFE*, Naturalist Ross welcomed 26 patrons to LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve to explore the rich history of tallgrass prairie lands and learn how local prairie systems were shaped over the last 200 years. She explained the difference between a beautifully restored prairie, a recreated prairie, and one of the few remaining remnant prairies in Kane County.

Invited speaker Dr. Norm Moline, an historical geographer, shared a program at Creek Bend Nature Center on *The I & M Canal: Connecting Illinois Farms to the Nation and the World*. Norm was a highly knowledgeable and engaging speaker, enthraling the 29 attendees with the canal's history and its designation in 1984 as the nation's first National Heritage Area, a program of the National Park Services.

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 its innovative work to bring high-quality nature programs to folks via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In August, we released:

- **Praying Mantis Showcase** – Learn all about mantids in this informative video!
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1267393121297898>



Captive praying mantids were provided and tended by Public Safety Officer Tony Konecki.

PARTNERSHIP EVENTS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick worked with colleagues from Planning and Land Protection and Community Engagement to develop a requirements document and scope for the Urban Ecology Field Station design RFQ. The RFQ is due to release in September.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Naturalist O'Brien attended a 2-day workshop on *Teaching With and About Native Peoples* at the American Indian Center in Chicago.

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INTERN CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Each year, Naturalist Interns culminate their experience at the District with an end-of summer Capstone Project. This year, both interns independently developed and executed a public all-ages program on an ecological topic of interest. As a mushroom enthusiast, Naturalist Intern Marc DaVall led *Meet the Mushrooms!* The 23 participants at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve learned about the roles that fungi play in our ecosystems and how to identify different mushrooms.



Patrons learned about fungi on the foray through LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve's woodland and grassland trails.

With the tallgrass prairie exploding in late-summer color and texture, Naturalist Intern Waldrop offered a *Summer in the Tallgrass* program at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. She explained the history of tallgrass prairie in Illinois, then introduced the participants to the many species of flowers and grasses that are specially adapted to growing there.



Folks were delighted to see a life-size depiction of the large root biomass of typical tallgrass prairie plants.

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Rental Facilities

BARBARA BELDING LODGE AT BREWSTER CREEK FOREST PRESERVE

In August, the lodge hosted four meetings and one special event, totaling \$1,200.

CREEK BEND NATURE CENTER AT LEROY OAKES FOREST PRESERVE

In August, Creek Bend Nature Center hosted three special events, totaling \$5,150.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

GOLF OUTING

Golf Outing: The Kane Forest Preserve Foundation's Golf Outing is Thursday, Sept. 11th at Hughes Creek Golf Course in Elburn. We currently have 22 teams signed up. If you'd like to sponsor the event or register a foursome, there's still time! Visit the Foundation website at:

<http://www.kaneforestpreservefoundation.org>.



KANE FOREST PRESERVE
GOLF OUTING SPONSORED BY LOVE, TITO'S
FORE! KANE FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION

Check in at 9 a.m.
Breakfast sponsored by Chick-Fil-A Elgin
Bloody Mary Bar sponsored by Love, Tito's
Beverages (7 Drink Tickets)
Tee-Off at 10 a.m.
Boxed Lunches on the course
Golfing Ends at 3 p.m.
Steak Dinner
Raffles & Auction

**THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 11**
AT HUGHES CREEK GOLF COURSE
1749 SPRING VALLEY DR., ELBURN

Registration includes 18-holes
of golf, free on-course contests,
gifts, food & drinks.

\$500 Per Foursome (After 7/1)
\$150 Per Single Golfer
Scan the QR Code to register!

Proceeds from
this charity golf
outing go towards
a Nature Play
Space at Leroy
Oakes Forest
Preserve

www.kaneforestpreservefoundation.org

Sponsorship Opportunities available.
Email KovachBrittany@kaneforest.com

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A DAY OF
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GOLF FOR A
GREAT
CAUSE!

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