



## Community Engagement Memorandum

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**To:** Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director  
**From:** Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director  
**Date:** 12/10/2024  
**Re:** November 2024 Report

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### Public Relations & Marketing

#### CONFERENCES, MEETINGS & TRAINING

**HISTORY PROJECT VENDOR MEETING:** On Nov. 12, Community Engagement Director Metanchuk and Communications & Marketing Supervisor Brittany Kovach met with a potential vendor in Hillside, IL, to discuss monuments for the upcoming Centennial Project.

**HISTORY PROJECT MEETING:** On Nov. 19, Community Engagement Director Metanchuk met with the District's contracted Historian Al Watts, to review an upcoming article in *KC Magazine* on the District's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Mr. Watts plans a series of articles on the District. First up will be a feature on the District's first four forest preserves: Johnson's Mound, Bliss Woods, Tyler Creek, Elburn.

**GOLDEN KIWANIS-ELGIN MEETING:** On Nov. 20, Executive Director Ben Haberthur and Community Engagement Director Metanchuk met with the Elgin Chapter of the Golden Kiwanis. Lyle Wolff, son of the late Forest Preserve District President Paul Wolff, is a current member of the Golden Ks. He reached out and requested a general presentation on the District. I'm happy to report that there were plenty of good questions as well as support for District initiatives.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRAINING:** On Nov. 24, Community Engagement Director Metanchuk completed I.T.-assigned training on Phishing (online scams trying to trick users into sharing personal information), Smishing (short-messaging service/texting phishing), Vishing (voice/phone phishing) and Quishing (QR code phishing).

#### LAND ACQUISITION & PRESERVE IMPROVEMENT REFERENDUM

**PUBLIC RELATIONS CHECK-IN:** On Nov. 1 and Nov. 8, Community Engagement Director Metanchuk met with her public relations counterparts at the Forest Preserve Districts of DuPage County and McHenry County and the McHenry County Conservation District. The group met virtually throughout their respective referendum information campaigns, to share progress and informational materials

**OFFICIAL RESULTS:** The District's Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum officially passed with 59% of the vote! "Yes" votes totaled 125,477 or 58.81%, while "No" votes tallied 87,887 or 41.19%.

November 2024 Report

**REFERENDUM DE-BRIEF:** On Nov. 18, Executive Director Haberthur and Community Engagement Director Metanchuk met with staff from The Conservation Foundation to discuss what worked well and what could have been improved in the public information campaign for the referendum. The group met at District headquarters in Geneva.

### PRESS RELEASES

We published the following press releases in November:

- Explore Winter Bird Watching Walks with the Forest Preserve District, Nov. 4
- Get Inspired this Winter at the “Nurtured by Nature” Program Series, Nov. 14
- Winter Warriors: Learn How Mammals Survive Winter, Nov. 15
- Warm Up and Unwind at “Yarn Art Social Circle”, Nov. 19
- Winter Trek with a Naturalist: Hike and Explore this Season, Nov. 22

### PRESS COVERAGE

The following items garnered press coverage in November:

- Centennial Celebration
  - Kane County Forest Preserve to Mark 100th Anniversary with Land Restoration and Art Display, Kane County Connects, Nov. 15
- Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum
  - Votes to go greener benefit the region, Chicago Sun-Times, Nov. 23
- Nature Programs
  - Birdwatching walks planned in Kane County, Chicago Tribune, Nov. 8
  - Nurture your mind and body with ‘Nurtured by Nature’ hikes in Kane County, Shaw Local, Nov. 15

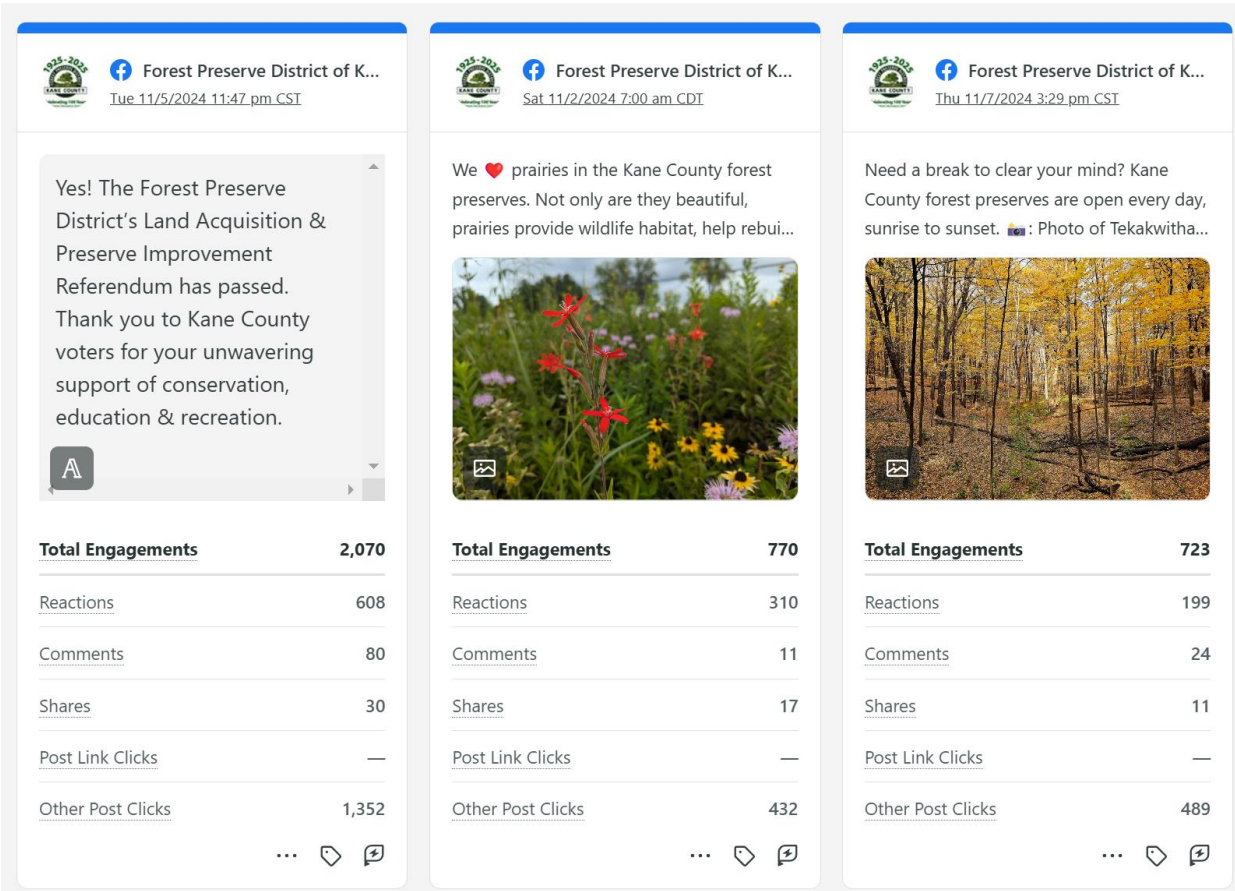
### SOCIAL MEDIA

The District manages social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, LinkedIn, TikTok & YouTube. Our November performance summary follows:

- **IMPRESSIONS** (Times content was displayed to users): 252,824 (+29%)
- **ENGAGEMENTS** (Times users engaged with our content): 12,783 (+7.4%)
- **AUDIENCE** (Number of users following our profiles) 20,227 (+1.2%)

November 2024 Report

Our top three social media posts, last month, were:



TREELINE NEWSLETTER

Our current print subscribers total 5,388 (+1). Current email subscribers total 14,626 (+417), for a combined total of 20,014 subscribers (+418). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: [http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve\\_Email](http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email).

Environmental Education

November Spotlight

Who has the energy and enthusiasm to conduct four back-to-back, 50-minute, interactive nature programs, each for ninety 6th graders, in a crowded, school library? Naturalist Josh Libman does, of course! For the past 10 years, he has been a driving force behind the *Changing Landscapes Traveling*

## Community Affairs & Environmental Education Department

### November 2024 Report

*Naturalist* programs at Rotolo Middle School (D101, Batavia). He customized each year's presentation to the school's changing curriculum. With just this one annual program, Naturalist Libman has shared the story of Illinois' changing landscape with over 3,500 students. Now that's making a difference!



*Naturalist Libman demonstrates the deep-root system of tallgrass prairie plants to explain the concepts of landscape change and plant adaptation.*

### 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	245	22	65	1,738	27
School	10	289	29	41	1,317	32
Scout	1	7	7	4	49	12
Community	2	28	14	26	1,120	43
Outreach	7	525	75	14	919	66
Learn from the Experts	0	0	0	10	212	21
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	1	125	125
Program Totals	32	1,094	35	165	5,480	34



## Community Affairs & Environmental Education Department

November 2024 Report

Nature Center Visitors		680			3,952	
Total Attendance		1,774			9,432	
Revenues <sup>^</sup>	\$553					

\*Note: Only webinars have live attendees.

<sup>^</sup>Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.



*"How do we capture his [Naturalist Josh Libman's] energy?! Thanks for always willing to come out to Rotolo and share with our 6th graders...especially last period of the day!!*

— 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher hosting a Traveling Naturalist program

*"Barb [Environmental Education Manager McKittrick] does a great job providing us with interesting facts about the nature area we are hiking through. Also, the length of the hike is very good exercise! I look forward to the hikes!*

— "Trek with a Naturalist" participant

### In-Person Programs

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS** – Our monthly *Storytime at Creek Bend Nature Center* always draws a crowd, but November was especially popular. Partners from the St. Charles Public Library shared nature-themed books, games, activities and songs with 57 preschoolers and their families. After the program, patrons were invited to explore the nature center.



*There was standing-room only during this month's Storytime at Creek Bend Nature Center.*

November 2024 Report

Naturalist Amber Ross led 30 patrons on the *Senior Stroll* at Oakhurst Forest Preserve in Aurora, focusing on the theme of fall phenology (how seasons and climate variations impact life cycles in plants and animals, as they hiked the inner-loop trail. In another recurring monthly program with a loyal following, Naturalist Lisa O'Brien led a meditative, *Nurtured by Nature* hike at Hampshire Forest Preserve.

Seventeen birders turned out to Campton Forest Preserve in St. Charles for Naturalist Libman's monthly *Bird Watching* walk. During the faster-paced *Trek with a Naturalist* monthly program, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick welcomed 14 patrons to the jointly-managed Prairie Green Forest Preserve in Geneva for a 4.5-mile hike through prairie, farmland and improved property, ending at Peck Farm Park's Summer Solstice monument.

The preschool program, *The Bears - Little Saplings*, at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve in St. Charles, took place during the first snowfall of the season. Naturalist Lisa O'Brien taught the preschoolers and their families about bear ecology. The group then had fun building bear caves and creating a bear craft.

In a joint presentation with Dark Sky International Delegate Adam Kreuzer, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick shared the beauty of a dark night sky with 29 patrons of the Batavia Public Library. The *Protecting Dark Skies* program closed with actions we can all take to reduce light pollution in our homes and communities.

Naturalist Erica Lemon welcomed 17 participants to a *Fall into Winter: Discovering Seasonal Changes* hike at Bliss Wood Forest Preserve in Sugar Grove. She explained the steps that local plants and animals take during autumn to prepare for the upcoming winter as the group enjoyed a brisk fall woodland stroll. Moving indoors later in the month, Naturalist Lemon was joined by nine fiber artists for her monthly *Yarn Art* class at Creek Bend Nature Center.

Eighteen patrons were *Wild about Turkeys* with Naturalist Libman at Pingree Grove Forest Preserve. Attendees learned the many differences between the domestic turkeys we enjoy for dinner and the wild turkeys that inhabit our forest preserves.

### COMMUNITY, OUTREACH & SCOUT PROGRAMS

— Naturalist Libman impressed the teaching staff and 360 sixth graders at Rotolo Middle School with his knowledge of Illinois landscape changes and his passion for engaging students in ecology lessons. During this *Traveling Naturalist* outreach program, students learned how the Illinois landscape, its communities and its uses have changed over time.



*Naturalist Libman explaining the role and evolution of native vs. non-native plants in a prairie ecosystem.*

November 2024 Report

Three environmental education volunteers joined Naturalist Ross to lead four *Papermaking* programs for more than 100 members of the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association (NISRA) and Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA) communities. Naturalist Ross provided an introduction to the science of papermaking, and then led participants in creating their own paper. Programs concluded with a discussion of ways we can all save paper and reduce, reuse and recycle.

In partnership with the Director of the Durant House Museum, Naturalist Libman welcomed 12 Junior Docents to a holiday gathering at Creek Bend Nature Center. Naturalist Libman led the volunteer docents on a short nature hike along Ferson Creek, after which they were treated to lunch in celebration of their volunteer service.

Sixteen Girl Scouts worked with Naturalist Ross on their *Wildlife Badge* at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. The girls learned about food webs and ways that animals are connected in that web. Naturalist Ross then led a night hike, complete with a multitude of sensory activities.

Our *Nature Detectives Traveling Naturalist* program was a perfect addition to the Batavia Public Library's monthly homeschool hangout. Twelve kids joined Naturalist Lemon to learn about local wildfire and touch various furs and skulls.

**SCHOOL PROGRAMS** – Naturalist Libman welcomed 71 homeschooling members from five networks to *Homeschool Hike* programs at Burnidge, Fitchie Creek, Buffalo Park, Freeman Kame and Big Rock Forest Preserves. Program themes included *Animal Furs* and *Fall Colors*.

On the public and private school front, the entire team of Naturalists was busy leading five school field trips for a total of 218 students. Schools served included Howard B. Thomas Grade School (D301), Seton Montessori School (Clarendon Hills), Growing Place Preschool (Geneva), Wredling Middle School (D303) and Olivewood Academy (Elgin.) Themes included *The Marvelous Prairie*, *Trees and their Leaves*, *Animal Tracks and Trails* and *Animal Seasonal Adaptations*. These field trips were conducted at LeRoy Oakes and Campton Hills Forest Preserves.

**LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS (LFE)/KANE COUNTY CERTIFIED NATURALIST (KCCN) PROGRAMS** – Over 40 interested people turned out to hear about the specifics of the *Kane County Certified Naturalist* certification classes at the 2025 Information Session. Environmental Education Manager McKittrick represented the FPDKC at this partnership program with St. Charles and Geneva Park Districts. The class of 2025 looks very promising, as 30 of the 35 available class seats were filled within one hour of registration being open!

### 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 offer high-quality nature programs via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In November, we released:

- ***Guess the Preserve!*** – Take a look and see if you can guess which forest preserve Naturalist Libman is visiting! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1fGUh0IHdM>

### External Partnerships

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick met with Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Natural Resources Education Program Coordinator – Northern Illinois, Frank Sladek, to develop a slate of partnership public fishing programs at Oakhurst Forest Preserve for summer 2025.

### Staff Development

The Environmental Education team spent a full day at the Barbara Belding Lodge in St. Charles to celebrate their 2024 accomplishments and update their divisional five-year Strategic Plan.

## Rental Facilities

### Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In November, the lodge hosted three meetings and one celebration of life, totaling \$225.

### Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In November, Creek Bend hosted a baby shower, totaling \$500 in rentals.