



Community Engagement Department Memorandum

To: Ashley Monroe, Deputy Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director
Date: 12/09/2025
Re: November 2025 Report

Executive Summary

Community Engagement strengthens public support for the Forest Preserve District's mission by connecting residents to their forest preserves through communication, education, and outreach. These efforts benefit the District by building public appreciation, expanding stewardship, strengthening awareness, and inspiring the next generation.

In November, the Community Engagement team:

- **Boosted our social media engagements by 39.1% over last month**, and our engagement rate per impression by 4.9%
- Reached **1,275 individuals through programs and nature center visits**
- **Signed up 31 registrants to become Kane County Certified Naturalists**, beginning in 2026

Communications & Marketing

DIGITAL MEDIA

- **Follower Growth:** +0.7% over last month (Facebook +136, Instagram +24, LinkedIn +20, TikTok flat and YouTube +8)
- **Impressions:** 253,624 (+9.8% from last month)
- **Engagements:** 12,508 (+39.4%) with Facebook up 49.4% and LinkedIn up 53.2%
- **Top Facebook Content by Views:**
 - 11/26: *Guess the Preserve/Culver*; **2,457 views**
 - 11/5: *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline*; **1,040 views**
- **Website Traffic:** 11,000 users and 23,000 page views

TREELINE NEWSLETTER

Current print subscribers total 5,426 (+7). Current email subscribers total 15,728 (+3), for a combined total of 21,154 subscribers (+10). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email. The Winter 2026 edition of The TreeLine is published. Visit <https://kaneforest.com/the-treeline-newsletter> to view the issue.

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PRESS COVERAGE

We published the following press releases in November:

- Learn about Winter Wildlife during a free nature program series, Nov. 17
- Forest Preserve District Introduces Drop-Off Nature Program for Young Explorers, Nov. 19
- Forest Preserve Hosts Monthly “Nurtured by Nature” Wellness Hikes, Nov. 21

The following items garnered press coverage Nov. 1 – Nov. 30, 2025

Media Coverage

Natural Resource Management

- Controlled burns planned this fall at many Kane County forest preserves, Chicago Tribune, Nov. 3

Nature Programs

- Learn how to become a Kane County Forest Preserve District Certified Naturalist, Shaw Local, Nov. 2

Environmental Education

November Spotlight

Going into its 19th year, the Kane County Certified Naturalist (KCCN) program has now trained over 500 students and is poised to continue its legacy in 2026. Nearly 50 interested folks attended the KCCN information session in November, with many having heard of the program via word of mouth – a testament to the impact of the KCCN program in our community. We already have 31 registrants for the new cohort due to begin classroom sessions in January.

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	8	210	26	65	1,795	28
School	6	137	23	34	1,095	32
Scout	0	0	0	1	20	20
Community	6	160	27	27	807	30

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Outreach	3	171	57	15	2,167	144
Learn from the Experts	1	27	27	8	197	25
Virtual Public*	0	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program Totals	24	705	29	154	6,081	41
Nature Center Visitors		570			4,523	
Total Attendance		1,275			10,604	
Revenues [^]	\$680					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees ^Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.

Testimonials

"Please just keep up the fabulous work you all do. I am so thrilled to be part of this loving and kind community."

— "Squirrels of Kane County" program participant

"My son absolutely loves attending these programs, he compliments how kind and fun the instructor [Naturalist Lisa O'Brien] is and enjoys the company of the other attendees; he especially likes going on the hikes and often takes us later on the routes they do, to show us what he learned. Each time he has so many creative stories about what they learned and talked about. THANK YOU."

— Parent of a "Twigs to Trees" program participant

- **Nature Center Improvements** – In support of the Environmental Education Division's 5-Year Strategic Plan, Naturalist Josh Libman launched a new *Birding Nook* at Creek Bend Nature Center. He carved out an intimate corner of the nature center for patrons to relax while learning about and observing our most common regional bird species. With the expert graphic design assistance of Communications & Marketing Supervisor Brittany Kovach, Naturalist Libman created interpretive panels that describe the backyard birds of our area. He then deployed different types of feeders and foods that supply the nutritional needs of various local species. The outside feeders are already attracting a variety of different birds and our patrons are enjoying discovering them with binoculars and field guides.



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



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- *Bird Watching Walks*
- *Senior Stroll*
- *StoryTime at Creek Bend Nature Center*
- *Little Saplings*
- *Twigs to Trees*
- *Nurtured by Nature*
- *Trek with a Naturalist*

- **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. As a highlight of the six community programs given in November, Naturalist Ross presented a talk on *Wild Turkeys* for 80 Veterans of Edgewater at the Edgewater Del Webb community in Elgin. She explained the different subspecies, characteristics, and history of wild turkeys in Illinois and the U.S.

Outreach programs are given at public schools, day care centers and libraries. Of the three November outreach programs, of special note was a career fair/tabling event staffed by Naturalist Erica Lemon at Jacobs High School (D300) in Algonquin. Over 150 students stopped by to chat with her about careers and volunteer opportunities in conservation and ecology.

- **School Programs** – Naturalists Lemon and Amber Ross led an *Animal Adaptations* program for 45 students of Growing Place Preschool (Geneva) at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. For the middle school crowd, Naturalist Libman welcomed the GeoAdventure Club of Wredling Middle School (D303) St. Charles, to Campton Forest Preserve for a *Trees and their Leaves* field trip. Naturalists Ross and Libman led *Homeschool Hikes* for 78 students representing four different homeschool networks. Field trip themes included *Winter Adaptations*, *Discovery Hike*, and *Skulls*. Hikes were held at Johnson’s Mound (Elburn), Hoscheit Woods (St. Charles), Fox River Bluff (St. Charles) and Schweitzer Woods (West Dundee) Forest Preserves.
- **Kane County Certified Naturalists (KCCN) and Learn from the Experts (LFEs) Programs** – November’s LFE was *Squirrels of Kane County*, taught by Naturalist O’Brien at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. She explained to the 27 participants the different types of squirrels found in Kane County, their various habitats and unique characteristics, as well as citizen science opportunities for studying squirrels.

Nature, Virtually Everywhere! Online Programs

The Environmental Education team also offers high-quality nature programs via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In November, we released:

- **Guess the Preserve!** – How well do you know your Kane County forest preserves?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ur-TpKuK-o&list=PLzZ5U3f-FxWDr-jojJhD1VsJKVNXD8f3s>

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Partnership Events: Internal and External

In support of the University of Illinois Extension's proposed Research Farm on Peck Road in St. Charles, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick and Agricultural Coordinator Michelle Blackburn teamed up for a video interview. The Kane County Extension office will be using the resulting video to help secure University support of the research/demonstration farm.

Continuing Education

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick attended the Midwest Environmental Educators Conference in Makanda, Illinois. Naturalist O'Brien participated in the Native-Led Climate Conversation at Pleasant Valley Bison Ranch in Woodstock.

Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In November, the lodge hosted five meetings, totaling revenue of \$285.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In November, Creek Bend hosted one special event, totaling revenue of \$1,100.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

Nature Play Space

The Foundation continues preparation for building a Nature Play Space at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, funded by the Foundation as well as the Grand Victoria Riverboat Foundation. In November, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick led a meeting of internal departments involved in the construction of the Nature Play Space.

Save the Date: A Day With The Birds – Reception

The Foundation is planning a special reception to celebrate the opening of the temporary exhibit, "A Day With the Birds," coming to Creek Bend Nature Center in March. The reception will be held on Friday, March 13, 2026. Details are forthcoming.