Taking Care of Business at the Annual Meeting

Approximately 45 members met at the Lexington Community Center on Sept. 12 for the ParkLands annual meeting, which began with a delicious buffet lunch. We learned that ParkLands owns 3,000 acres and 10 river miles of property. The membership stands at 387.

Outgoing president Angelo Capparella and other board members ticked off some highlights of recent years including: addition of the Sweeney-Hewitt farm into the Sweeney Woods Nature Preserve; the LIP grant which has made possible tree and prairie planting using specialized labor-saving equipment; the ParkLands office at 418 N. Main in Bloomington; and planning for a canoe launch on Letcher Basin property in partnership with the Mackinaw River Canoe Club. The launch is being named in honor of Wilma Erwin, whose family made a welcome donation for the new amenity.

Angelo noted some challenges our organization faces, particularly membership which has dropped by 114 in the last 10 years, and the continuing need for volunteers to help with maintaining 3,000 acres and building a thriving organization. Members offered several suggestions for these challenges, such as giving gift memberships, publicizing events open to the public and providing more flexibility for volunteers to maintain properties. The board welcomes all ideas, which may be submitted by e-mail to info@parklandsfoundation.org or by giving a board member a call.

We enjoyed an excellent slide presentation by board member Roger Anderson on ParkLands Foundation history, which he began by going back centuries. Land Steward Jason Shoemaker also spoke about the progress made in restoring ParkLands properties from their modern state to more environmentally sound conditions.

Treasurer Barry Brennenman reported that the organization is changing its fiscal year to run March-February, which works better with restoration program grant schedules and ensures more up-to-date information at the September annual meeting.

He will provide a more complete report in the next newsletter, but here's a hint about how ParkLands operates: 95% of revenue goes to the ParkLands program, while only 5% is devoted to management and general expenses.

ParkLands is in cyberspace. You can find us on Facebook and you can now pay dues using PayPal from our website.

Gretchen Monti
Newsletter Editor

Broadwing Hawk
Steven D'Amato
Meet Your Newsletter Editor — Gretchen Monti

Hello, this is your mysterious newsletter editor. I’m delighted to reveal myself so I can tell you how much I appreciate having ParkLands as an active, thriving organization that protects and restores the Mackinaw Valley environment.

I grew up in flat central Indiana, not particularly interested in nature. But I must have absorbed it from my parents, particularly my mother, who was an active birder when she found the time after raising five kids.

Education has been an important part of my life, beginning with a few years at Butler University and continuing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to earn bachelor’s and masters degrees in political science and library science. After four years at the law school library, I left paid work to raise two sons, take up gardening and become a fervid volunteer. We moved to Naperville, then Normal in 1979, then Near Normal on two acres of moraine-top woods in 1992. I worked briefly as a reporter for the Naperville Sun, took journalism classes at ISU and reported for WGLT for a couple of years.

I have devoted most of my volunteer time to the League of Women Voters, and it was through that organization that I became an environmental advocate at local and state levels in two states. I served on the Illinois League’s board, working on environmental and land use issues through the 1980s.

Central Illinois was disheartening at first, making me homesick for the gently rolling landscape of southwest Wisconsin, until I discovered the Mackinaw Valley! I joined ParkLands, took up birding with Audubon and learned up close just how beautiful prairies can be via Funks Grove and ParkLands work days.

My life took a new direction in 1987 when I used my expertise and contacts gained from League service to begin Monti Communications, Inc., an environmental communications consulting firm. I’m still working part time 23 years later. I audited several science classes at ISU (the way to learn!) to strengthen my skills.

In 2004 husband Joe and I began spending winters in Fort Myers, where I’m now a volunteer guide at Six Mile Cypress Slough Nature Preserve. I love showing off the cypress, ferns, wading birds, gators and occasional snake to people from almost everywhere. That is a dream of mine for ParkLands: to have more trained volunteers lead walks through our properties so we can have many more people appreciate and support the preservation of the wilderness that is in the Mackinaw Valley.

Go WILD

Why not become a Wild One?? Wild Ones is a not-for-profit national organization dedicated to natural landscapes using native plants. “Wild Ones promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities.” Whether you have a yard in the city or acres of land in the countryside, become a Wild One and learn how to incorporate locally native plants into your landscape.

An organizational meeting for a local chapter of the Wild Ones is being held on Monday, October 25th at 7 p.m. in the Community Room at the Bloomington Public Library, 209 E. Olive Street. Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter member Tim Lewis will be on hand with an informative presentation on “Why Plant Natives.” The meeting is free and open to the public. We hope this will be the first of many Wild Ones meetings. Come and learn what it’s all about. Hopefully you will become a Wild One, too. For more information about this meeting, contact Sherrie Snyder (sherrie.snyder87@gmail.com). For more information on the Wild Ones organization, go to www.wildones.org.

Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seed Collection</th>
<th>Seed Cleaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, Oct. 16, 9 a.m.</td>
<td>Saturday, Dec. 4, 9 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cayuga Ridge (Pontiac)</td>
<td>B’ton Parks &amp; Rec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet @ BP Station</td>
<td>Maintenance Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>175 Lexington exit</td>
<td>1813 Springfield Rd</td>
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Management Hunt
Preserves Closed
Nov. 19, 20, 21
Dec. 2, 3

Workdays Leader:
Jason Shoemaker
309-631-7065
shoemail@holmail.com

NOTE: Dates are subject to change. Join Jason’s email list or fog on to www.parklandsfoundation.org.

Have an article, idea or photo for the newsletter? Contact editor Gretchen Monti, 309-829-2450, or gretchen.monti@verizon.net

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