



Friends of the Sangamon Valley



Spring 2009

Volume 10, Issue 1

Congratulations!! You Did It!

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley has completed its first property purchase. With help from our members and all those that responded to our land acquisition capital campaign and the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, we have been able to protect Boyle Woods, a 50-acre sand forest in Cass County.

A year ago, we reported the *Friends* had closed on the property. This was indeed the case, but we had a balance to pay on the mortgage. As of January 2009, the *Friends* are paid in full and we look forward to starting a controlled burn with the mortgage.

It's been a long two years for the *Friends* board as we stretched ourselves to reach a fundraising goal far beyond what we had accomplished in the past. We reached our target by direct mail solicitations to our members, our fall fundraiser at the Baugher property, fundraisers including a shotgun raffle and a weekend getaway, generous donations from business associates and one big grant.

Our sincerest thanks and appreciation go to the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, Rich Wagoner and Ghost Hollow Ranch, Jim Kolba of J&R Sporting Goods, Avrom Systems, Barefoot Nursery & Restoration, Kaskaskia Engineering Group LLC, LaGessee and Associates, Moore Bulldozing, and Connie & Russ Baugher for helping us raise the funds for the purchase.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation provided 70% of the needed funding for the property. Direct donations from members during our land acquisition

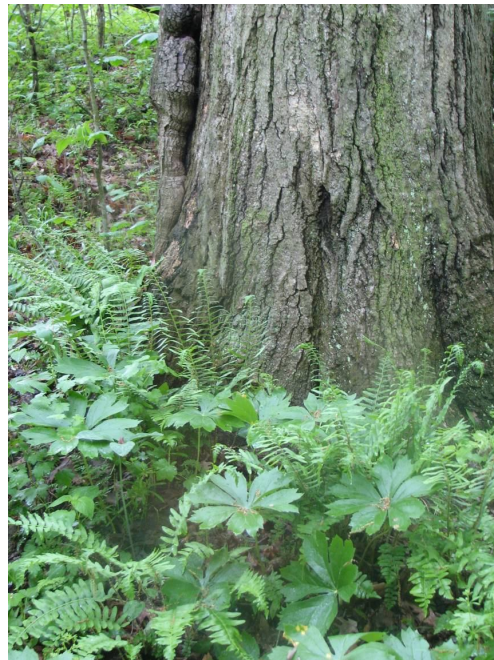
capital campaign amounted to a little less than 20% of the total needed, or a little more than half of the *Friends* portion — over \$33,000. We were able to make up the balance from our operating reserves, funding that had been contributed by donors throughout our previous 10 years.

The *Friends* may talk and walk like a well-seasoned professional organization, but we are completely volunteer-run. We have few operating expenses beyond printing, postage and expenses associated with events. Our stewardship budget provides for hand tools, herbicide, and occasional big-ticket items like signage. While we do have insurance fees and other expenses that go along with being a responsible charity, you can rest assured that your donations are directly supporting our mission of restoration and protection.

We may be taking a short break this year from fundraising, but we have lots of stewardship to do. We need to complete installing signs at Boyle Woods and finish the work under our Landowner Incentive Program grant at the Wolf Preserve.

You've come this far, and now you're stuck with us. We plan on providing safe havens for central Illinois creatures for the long-term. It's nice to know we have you on our side.

We have lots of other friends, too, and on page 2, you can read about other organizations that we're teaming up with to bring restoration to Springfield and beyond.



An oak at Boyle Woods emerges from the forest floor covered in ferns. Photo by Vern LaGessee.

Making New Friends

By Vern LaGesse

We've taken some time to step back from our own work and take a look around. There's a lot happening in central Illinois conservation, and the *Friends* are happy to help out other local groups.

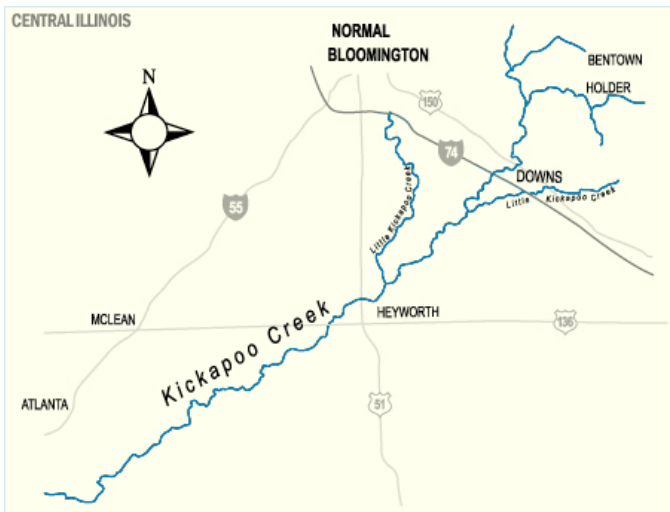


Adams Wildlife Sanctuary: The *Friends* has been partnering with the Illinois Audubon Society. With the renovation at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, the *Friends* has found a new home for our board meetings.

We recognize the value of this site and its location to the people of Springfield. I have started a restoration process for the whole 40-acre tract. Recently, the Illinois Audubon Society has received a gift of adjacent land, expanding the property by 12 acres to the north. I have started working with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Landowner Incentive Program staff, Sangamon County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff to design a small wetland, a few small ephemeral wetland pools, moist shrub plantings, and more than doubling the prairie for the site. The old orchard will be converted to more desirable hardwoods in a phased approach over the next 20 years, and we will initiate an exotic species control program.

If you are interested in volunteering for this project, call me at 525-1410 or Tom Clay, Illinois Audubon, at 544-2473. The first work day is March 14, from nine until noon.

Kickapoo Creek Watershed: Friends of Kickapoo Creek (FKC) is an organization that works with neighbors, surrounding communities and other conservation associations to promote stewardship of unique natural resources through advocacy, education and monitoring. They operate in and along the Kickapoo Creek watershed



Map courtesy of www.kickapooecreek.org

which lies just south of Bloomington/Normal and flows into Salt Creek.

Recently, FKC has asked assistance from the *Friends* in their programs. Currently, FKC cannot hold title to property or hold conservation easements. The *Friends* will be entering into an agreement to hold title for FKC and we'll work together on stewardship. This helps FKC function in their focus areas and helps us get the word out about work we do. If you want to find out more about FKC go to their website, www.kickapooecreek.org.

Washington Park Committee of the Springfield Parks Foundation: Recently, the Springfield Parks Foundation (non-for-profit associated with the Springfield Park District) received a restricted anonymous donation to restore the lagoon and rebuild the boathouse that once stood there. The Parks Foundation has formed the Washington Park Committee to organize and implement this project. George Rose, *Friends*' Washington Park steward, and I have been asked to serve on the committee. The committee meets monthly and has just established its mission: "To preserve and promote the historic integrity and naturalistic prairie style design of Washington Park through restoration, conservation, and education." Plans for the boathouse and a restoration plan for the rest of Washington Park aims to stay true to the original prairie design of the park as envisioned by Washington Park's original designer Ossian Cole Simmonds.

Annual Meeting 2009

On January 25, the *Friends* met at Trout Lily Café for our annual meeting. *Friends* president, Vern LaGesse, provided a re-cap of the year's events and discussed the coming year's goals. Members were presented with minor changes in the by-laws and voted on the slate of board of directors.

After a successful year of fundraising and land acquisition, this year's focus will be on increasing membership and branching out to work with other groups, such as the schools and local sportsmen. Partnerships with other local conservation groups will help us have more of a presence in Springfield itself and reach out to different groups.

The *Friends* Annual Meeting is held every January and is open to all members. See you next year.



Vern LaGesse tells it like it is at the Trout Lily Café.

WORK DAYS and EVENTS

March

14	Washington Park	10:00 am	
14	Adams Wildlife Sanctuary	9:00 am 'til noon	
21	Wolf Preserve	10:00 am	
28	Wolf Preserve	10:00 am	

April

1	Friends Board meeting	6:30 pm	Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
11	Wolf Preserve	10:00 am	
18	Revis Hill Prairie	10:00 am	
25	Revis Hill Prairie	10:00 am	Prairie Dandelion Count

May

6	Friends Board meeting	6:30 pm	Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
16	Wolf Preserve	10:00 am	
30	Washington Park	10:00 am	

June

3	Friends Board Meeting	6:30 pm	Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
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July

11	Photo Workshop	TBD	Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary
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Wolf Preserve

Assist volunteers with stewardship at the *Friends'* preserve in Menard County. Carpool leaves a half hour earlier from the Har-dee's at Walnut & Jefferson, in Springfield or meet us at the Preserve at the time listed above. Wear sturdy boots, bring your own work gloves. **Dates subject to change**; please contact Vern LaGessee, 525-1410 to RSVP.

Washington Park

Join George Rose in controlling exotic species in Springfield's Washington Park. Bring work gloves and a beverage. Volunteers will convene at the parking lot below the Carillon, at the head of the nature trail. Contact George at 787-1940 for more information.

Revis Hill Prairie

Join the Friends in restoration of one of Illinois' premiere hill prairies. Carpool leaves an hour earlier from the Howard Johnson's motel on Rt. 29 North near the Springfield Airport or meet us at the preserve at the time listed above. Wear sturdy boots and bring your own gloves. Work days last about two hours, followed by a walk or tour. **Dates subject to change**; please contact Charlene Falco, 525-1410 to RSVP.

Adams Wildlife Sanctuary

Join the Friends and Illinois Audubon for a new restoration project at this Audubon wildlife sanctuary on Springfield's north side. Parking available at the sanctuary. Wear sturdy boots and bring your own gloves. Workdays will last three hours. **Dates subject to change**; please contact Vern LaGessee at 525-1410 or Tom Clay at 544-2473 for more information.



Don't forget to visit our web site at www.fosv.org for latest updates.



A Carpenter Park Poem

By John Malan

I go for walks in Carpenter and Gurgens Parks,
following the hiking trails and,
when the ground is hard,
the deer trails through that old growth of trees.
I am yet to go there without something
that seems magical happening.
Seems magical, but is of course natural in every way,
except to my town-deadened eyes.

At first, the magic was sweet and mysterious,
as when I turned at the sound of a woman's voice in
the distance
and found a deer standing ten feet behind me,
trying to figure out what I was.

Or when a cardinal thought my red hat was a rival
and stopped himself in midair
when I raised my head,
catching the morning sun
full on his chest and outspread wings
so that he looked more like a scarlet flame
than a bird.

But lately the magic is dark and mysterious—
a deer pursued by four dogs passing me
less than twenty feet away in total silence
in the deep snow,

or a large patch of soft earth covered with
the mingled tracks of deer and dogs,
and on the ground a tuft of white hair
tinged pink by a little scrap of skin.

Or the skeletal remains
By the railroad embankment
where a deer curled up as if to sleep
and never rose again.

I can't explain this very well,
but the more often I go,
the more strongly I feel
there is some current
that runs through these woods
and the lives of all that live there,
and the town,
with its four-square habitations and landscaping;
a current of exquisitely tender and merciless love
flows through these places
as if they were one.



Vital Lands Illinois

The Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) is the catalyst behind a new effort to bring together conservation groups in Illinois to determine the landscapes in Illinois in critical need of protection. Calling their initiative Vital Lands Illinois, the foundation hopes to determine what lands are most in need of protection.

During this past summer, Friends of the Sangamon Valley president, Vern LaGessee, had been attending several meetings held throughout central Illinois at the request of GVF's Elizabeth Cisar (formerly with Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation). These meetings included small conservation groups, small land trusts, and national sportsmans groups represented in central Illinois. GVF has been seeking representation from non-profit organizations in Illinois that have land protection as a primary part of its mission.

In July, Vern was one of 44 representatives that came to Bloomington for a two day summit. They worked with GV staff, state-wide experts like Brian Anderson (Illinois Natural History Survey) and Jeff Walk (The Nature Conservancy) and folks from the Institute for Conservation Leadership and the National Wildlife Federation. Over the two days they worked on criteria for land acquisition projects to be funded by GVF and to create a shared vision on how to best encourage and support the development of land conservation in Illinois.

As the next step in the process, a statewide working group was formed to refine these two plans. Vern was elected to the 12 person working group which met for an in-depth summit at the end of October at Allerton Park. Other groups represented on the work group are: The Nature Conservancy, Illinois Audubon Society, CLIFFTOP Alliance, Prairie Land Conservancy, Land Conservancy of McHenry County, The Conservation Foundation, The Natural Land Institute, Openlands, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and

The Trust for Public Land. The group continues to work via conference calls.

The criteria for land acquisition grants has now been finalized and is going through the last GVF approvals. Land trust organizations will be able to apply for grants starting this summer.

In order to compensate the Friends for Vern's time, GVF has provided the Friends with a \$5,000 grant. The Friends put this toward the Boyle purchase. We'll continue to report on the progress of this initiative in future newsletters.

GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION

"The mission of Grand Victoria Foundation is to assist communities in their efforts to pursue systemic solutions to problems in specific areas of education, economic development, and the environment."

Grand Victoria Foundation was established in 1996 by the Grand Victoria Casino in Elgin, Illinois. The foundation makes grants to Illinois non-profits and granted more \$50 million during their first 10 years.

The Friends worked with Elizabeth Cisar when she was the Friends contact at the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation which has provided the Friends with two grants. We look forward to working with Ms. Cisar and the Grand Victoria Foundation.

Information on Grand Victoria Foundation taken from "Revitalizing Illinois Communities Place by Place" by the Grand Victoria Foundation.

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley extends our gratitude to our sponsors and partners for this fall's Walk in the Woods. We couldn't do it without you!!



Mike Dobron
President
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Cell 217-836-1563

MOORE BULLDOZING
Auburn, Illinois



Remember this little cutie? We saw a couple of them on our tour of the Baugher woodland during our fall fundraiser. We incorrectly identified it as a green tree frog. It's a grey tree frog. We sincerely regret the error.

Two New Board Members

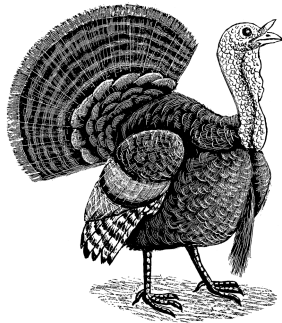
Meet our two newest board members, Kate Hawkes and Jim Kolba. Kate and Jim were voted in at our January Annual Meeting. Both have had ongoing involvement with the Friends and its great to have them on board.

Kate Hawkes

I am a life-long resident of Springfield. As a child, I first lived 1 1/2 blocks from Lincoln Park, where I spent hours exploring. We then moved to Val-E-Vue Acres, one of Springfield's first subdivisions, northwest of town, technically in the city limits, but definitely in a rural setting. They gave us a pony, and I spent 10-12 hours a day roaming the countryside, exploring wooded areas, anywhere I could get that pony to go. As an adult I have lived in Springfield proper, or in the countryside nearby. I have always had a love of the outdoors, camping, and learning about the wild things that grow where lawns don't. I find my spiritual connection in the woods. I raised my two sons to appreciate being out of doors; one would live in a tent or a yurt if he could (that's what happens when you take them camping as infants). While studying herbs is my true passion, I make a living running a coffee shop/café and a small bookkeeping business.



Jim Kolba



I have lived in Springfield my whole life and have always had a great interest in the outdoors. I grew up hunting and fishing from an early age which taught me great respect for habitat and conservation as a whole. I now work as a nuclear safety engineer for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency as well as operate a part time hunting supply business. I enjoy spending as much time as I can with my wife and two year old daughter Savannah. My wife and I are expecting our son on July 8th and look forward to teaching both the children all I have learned about the outdoors. With the children in mind my wife and I moved farther out to the country last year and have a wonderful wood lot near the Sangamon River that we are working to restore to its original condition. These things tend to keep me busy but it gives me great pride to give back to my family and nature.



As we gained two, we lost one. Mark Rabin has been a board director with the Friends since 2001 and treasurer since 2004 and is stepping down from the board. Mark guided us through our real estate transactions, insurance needs, budgets, government reporting and a myriad number of other things no one else ever wants to deal with. After all that, he remains a member in good standing. We are indebted to Mark for his expertise and are grateful that he has offered his services for any of our future land transactions. We're certain to be working with him in the future. Thanks, Mark!

New Photo Workshop Scheduled

The Springfield State Journal Register's Chris Young will be bringing us another great nature photography workshop this summer.

On July 11, join Chris and Vern LaGesse at Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary in Loami for tips on photographing natural subjects. The Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary includes a 100-acre prairie restoration and a series of wetlands.

One workshop will be held about sunrise and another at sunset to capture the variety of wildlife and light conditions.

There will be a fee for the workshop and pre-registration will be required. More details will be published in the next issue of our newsletter, on our website, and in the State Journal Register.

New Delivery Option Available

In order to save paper, the Friends are considering sending the newsletter to members electronically as a .pdf file. Another great advantage is the ability to see all our photos in color. If interested in receiving the newsletter electronically only, please send your e-mail address to us at: vlagesse@fosv.org and put "e-mail newsletter" in the subject heading.

If you choose this option, we will no longer send you a hard copy through the mail.

And, this is for the newsletter only. Other mailings, such as event announcements, will continue to be sent to the mailing address we already have.

Thank You!



The Friends of the Sangamon Valley acknowledges donations, new members, and membership renewals received since October 15, 2008:

Bill Atwood
Molly Becker
Sandy Bellatti
Viv Bennett & Dean Held
Bob Boyle
Michael Brewer
Debbie Bruce
Pj Burtle-McCredie & Roger McCredie

Charles L. Cali
Tom Carlock, Jr.
Thea Chesley
Alice Christensen & Tom Payne
Wynne Coplea
Linda & Kevin Cox
Robert W. Dickerman
Gregory M. Feeny
RJ Fehl
Jeff Foust
Virginia Forrer & Stewart Jacobson

Nancy Gorman
Dr. and Mrs. Donald Graham
Tom & Jeanne Handy
Robert & Maya Hardy
Donald Hanrahan

Dave Holloway
Richard Katholi Family
Mary Alice Keith
Mike & Jean Kienzler
Mike & Kathy Klemens
Robert Labonte
Greg & Sibyl Lakebrink
Rick Lanham
Peter Levin

Dennis McEvoy
Morgan County Audubon Society
David Newton
Polly Poskin
James R. Potter
Roger Ramirez
Mrs. Steven Read
Sally Robinson
Mark Russillo

Don & Mary Schaefer
David & Kay Smith
Adam Stock
Phyllis Summers
Don Tracy
Jean Tracz

Mike Tyner
John Weitekamp & Frances Matthews
Sharon Whalen
Karen & Randy Witter
Rip Yasinski

In memory of James Wiker:

Kathryn Call
Everett Cashatt
Donald & Judith Cully
Susan Dees
Charlene Falco & Vern LaGesse
Donna Ferguson
Kathleen Glenn
Dolores George
Roxanna Hollenstine
Michael and Melissa Paoni
Wayne Schall

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley gratefully acknowledges the following contributors to our Land Acquisition Capital Campaign, since October 15, 2008:

Tom Carlock, Jr.
Thea Chesley
Wynne Coplea
RJ Fehl
David Halpin & Patti Pace-Halpin
Dr. and Mrs. Richard Katholi
Polly Poskin

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley is a charitable membership organization dedicated to the preservation of our natural heritage by acquiring, restoring, and protecting ecologically significant lands in the Sangamon River Watershed.

Membership is available to individuals for \$25.00, and to families for \$40.00. Participation on various committees is open to members. We currently have openings on the following committees: membership, fundraising, and public relations.

Board and Officers

Vern LaGesse, President
525-1410
vlagesse @fosv.org

Mike Ewan
Jim Kolba
Catherine O'Connor
Sally Robinson
George Rose

Bill Crook, Vice President
522-3372

Kate Hawkes, Treasurer

Charlene Falco, Secretary
525-1410

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley's monthly board meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm. at the Lincoln Library, Carnegie South room.

Our web site provides updated information on volunteer opportunities and events, and may be accessed at www.fosv.org. This newsletter is published three times per year. Contributions are welcome.

Send checks for memberships to PO Box 13352, Springfield, 62791 or use our web site. Please contact any board member regarding the newsletter, membership, participation on committees or other volunteer opportunities.



**You can help Friends of the Sangamon Valley
in one or more of the following ways:**



1. Become a member of Friends or make a tax-deductible cash donation.
2. Support the purchase of ecologically significant lands by donating to the Land Acquisition Capital Campaign.
3. Volunteer your time for planting, invasive species control, fundraising events, etc.

Yes, I would like to:

- Be a member \$ 25.00 .**
- Make a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____.**
- Donate my time. Please let me know how I can help.**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Send this form and check to:
**Friends of the Sangamon Valley,
PO Box 13352 Springfield, IL 62791**

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Sangamon Valley**

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