

The Leaflet



Special Edition Nature's Appeal

New Dark Sky Trail *continued*

inaccessible for portions of the year. This provides an important source of year round recreation and opportunities to experience the exceptional habitats at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. These experiences are key to creating future generations of environmental stewards and promoting the value of restoring native habitats in our community.

The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation needs your support to expand access to nature in Champaign County. The Middle Fork Dark Sky Trail will also be the home of the new Star Walk, Champaign County's very own walk of fame, where you can recognize yourself or someone you care about as a true star of Champaign County. The Champaign County Forest Preserve District received a grant from the Illinois Department of

Recreation to cover half the cost of this \$800,000 project and the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation is only \$60,000 dollars away from making the new Dark Sky Trail a reality. Your donations today will help provide greater access to nature for everyone in Champaign County.



Scan here or visit secure.qgiv.com/for/darkskytrail to contribute.

New Dark Sky Trail

In 2024, the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve will be home to a new Dark Sky Trail. This trail will provide a dedicated space for stargazing at the preserve and serve as the home for the Forest Preserves Dark Sky education and programming. In addition to the supporting the Forest Preserves' Dark Sky initiatives, this project will create an accessible trail at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve that can be enjoyed, day or night, all throughout the year and allow greater access to the amazing habitat restorations at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. This is an important step to ensure ALL residents of Champaign County have the opportunity to connect with nature.

The Dark Sky Trail at Middle Fork

River Forest Preserve will create a home for astrotourism in Champaign County and will include educational opportunities, stargazing nodes, an observatory, expanded parking, and Dark Sky friendly campsites. These valuable new amenities center

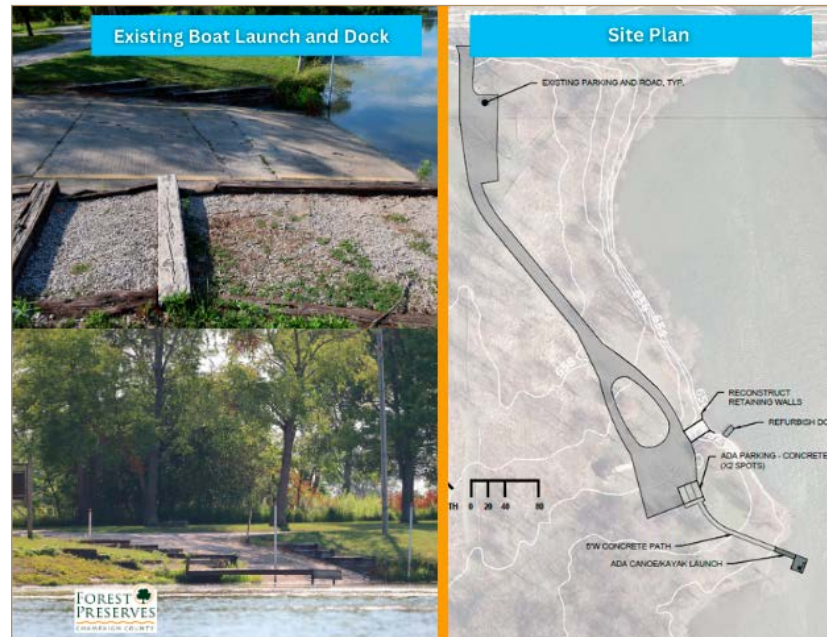
around a mile long accessible upland trail. This will provide a year-round trail that can be more easily enjoyed by people using wheelchairs, strollers, and anyone with a mobility limitation. The new upland trail will experience less flooding than other existing trails at the preserve, many of which are ▶



Homer Lake Boat Launch

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District needs your help to address the lack of accessible water recreation at the Homer Lake Forest Preserve. Since its initial construction, the North Boat Launch has been a popular spot for patrons to access Homer Lake. However, the current amenities do not meet the demand created by the popularity of the site, nor does it provide sufficient means for patrons with mobility limitations to access the water. To address these needs we are planning to improve the existing boat launch by replacing the supporting retaining wall, restoring the existing dock, and adding ADA features, including a canoe/kayak dock, ADA parking, and accessible paths. Improvements made possible by your donations would allow the Forest Preserves to support long time patrons of the preserve and broaden opportunities for new patrons.

Forest Preserve Friends Foundation is \$15,000 away from providing greater access to one of Homer Lake Forest Preserves most popular recreational amenities. Please consider making a donation to fund the Homer Lake North Boat



Launch Improvements. Your support of this project will make an immediate and lasting impact on accessible recreation in Champaign County.



Scan here or visit secure.qgiv.com/for/ccfpff to contribute.

Three Rivers Society



In 2023, the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation launched the Three Rivers Society. The Three Rivers Society is a giving society created to protect and preserve Champaign County's natural and cultural resources via a strong, proud, and generous group of people that consistently donate funds dedicated to our mission. This group of dedicated supporters have accomplished a lot in their first year. With the funds raised through their membership the Three Rivers members have supported educational programs throughout the district, planted a new 75th Anniversary Grove at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, made improvements to the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, sponsored the Night Lights event at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, and added accessible amenities across the county. The Champaign County Forest Preserve District is

deeply grateful for the support offered by these generous members of our community.

Donors receive membership with an annual unrestricted gift of \$1,000 or more. Members receive access to a special bi-annual newsletter, invitations to special member's only events, early access to district events and project openings, and will be featured in a special category in our annual donor recognition in our Leaflet. For more information, contact Ryan Anderson at randerson@ccfpd.org.



Scan here or visit secure.qgiv.com/for/threeriverssociety to contribute.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

See the full program descriptions online, ccfpd.org

● DECEMBER ●

Friday, December 1
WALK WITH A NATURALIST
Buffalo Trace Prairie- East Entrance, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.

For our final "Walk with a Naturalist" of the year, we are heading back to Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, our first forest preserve and the reason we are celebrating 75 years! We'll walk the trails of Buffalo Trace FREE. All ages. Space is limited; registration required by November 29 at ccfpd.org

Saturday, December 2
TO GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE WE GO!
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 4-7 p.m.

Join us for a favorite annual program! Visitors may have the opportunity to make and take home classic presents and decorations for their families and friends,

including popcorn garlands, pomanders, and more! FREE. All ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Friday, December 8
SIP & LEARN: HOT CUPS OF CULTURE
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 4-6 p.m.

Who doesn't love hot chocolate during the winter? Come join us for free hot beverages and learn about drinks enjoyed by some local cultures within Champaign County. Beverages will include American hot chocolate, Chinese tea, and more! FREE. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday, December 9
HOMER FOR THE HOLIDAYS
Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 1-4 p.m.

There's no place like Homer for the holidays! Join us at Homer Lake for our

natural approach to creating unique holiday gifts and decorations. Stations will be set up for children to make and take creations for their families and friends. We'll also create treats to hang from trees as our gift to wildlife. Come any time during program hours. FREE. All ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sunday, December 10
16TH ANNUAL LINCOLN LECTURE SERIES
VOICES OF OUR PAST: ELIZABETH KECKLEY
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 p.m.

Learn about this important figure in US history as Kathryn Harris, first-person interpreter, brings Elizabeth Keckley to life with an engaging and interactive presentation portraying the notable African-American seamstress, writer, and activist. FREE.

Friday, December 15
WINTER WHIMSY WITH NATURE
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 4-5 p.m.

Pine Cones, acorns and dried leaves will be our canvas. Decorate and make mini-ornaments for your winter decor. FREE. All Ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday, December 16
PRESENTATION BY AUTHOR OF MEADOWBROOK: A HISTORY
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 a.m.

How do park (and forest preserve) districts create parks? What kind of challenges do they face? Roger Digges wrote his new book "Meadowbrook: A History" to address these questions, and will discuss the highlights of the book, take questions, and sign books which will be available for sale. FREE. Recommended for ages 12 and up.

● JANUARY ●

Wednesday, January 3
MEET THE CRITTERS
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10-11 a.m. or 3-4 p.m.

Wrap up your winter break with a visit to the Homer Lake Interpretive Center to see what's new with our resident animals! We've been making some exciting updates and additions to our animal exhibits, and we want to show it off! Participants will have the chance to meet some of our resident animals up close. Register for the morning or afternoon session. FREE. Recommended for ages 3 and up. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Space is limited; registration required by January 2 at ccfpd.org.

Thursday Jan 18-Thursday Feb 29
SNOWFLAKE SEARCH
Champaign County Forest Preserves, Visit ccfpd.org for more info on open/closed times

Get out and explore your local winter wonderland in search of snowflakes! We've hidden creative snowflakes painted on tree slices throughout the Champaign County Forest Preserves. Bundle up and find as many as you can! Take a picture of your finds and share them with us on our Facebook and Instagram pages using the hashtag #champaignforests. Download a checklist to help with the search on ccfpd.org.

