

May 6, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator

Re: May Staff Report

**Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)**

- Applications for the grants and development officer position have been coming in over the past month. Resumes are being reviewed and interviews should be conducted prior to the end of May or early June. Three members of the Foundation board have agreed to assist with the interview process.
- A donor solicitation went out for #GivingTuesdayNow, which was the philanthropic community's response to the COVID pandemic. A letter with a soft ask went out in time for the May 5 event, which has elicited about \$2,455 from 32 donors, with maybe a few more still coming.
- Unfortunately, the July 4 Freedom Fest celebration will not take place in 2020 due to the current restrictions on large gatherings. The committee had entertained the suggestion to offer an aerial-only display that would allow spectators to watch from home. However, amid concerns about parking and traffic problems this could cause, we all agreed that canceling the 2020 event would be the most prudent solution.
- Pedal boat rentals for 2020 will also be canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions, financial limitations, and the construction work planned for this summer on the peninsula. A press release announcing both the Freedom Fest and boat cancellations went out in mid-May.
- I will be working remotely with a student in UI-Chicago's School of Public Health who will conduct an analysis of the community health needs and benefits related to the Forest Preserve District's sites, facilities, and programs. The study could help guide future programs and activities of the District and help educate the community and local governments about the value of our preserves.
- We did just receive the executed copy of the ITEP grant agreement to begin work on the KRT amenities from Urbana to St. Joseph. A meeting will be set up with Engineering Resources Associates to get started on plans for rest nodes, signage, and a parking area in downtown St. Joseph.

**Planning and Construction Department (Mike Daab and Mike Fry)**

- We are happy to announce the hiring of Bridgette Moen as our new Planning and Projects Coordinator. Bridgette will be coming to us from the Champaign Park District, where she has been a park planner since 2017. Bridgette has Bachelor of Science in Earth Systems, Environment, and Society, and Master of Landscape Architect degrees from the University of Illinois. She also has experience in collecting plant and insect samples throughout Illinois as part of a team with the IL Natural History Survey. Overall, she is a perfect fit for CCFPD.
- We wish to thank Aaron Hoyle-Katz for his years working at CCFPD as our ArcGIS intern, and wish him well on his quest for a full-time career. Aaron helped us develop better maps and

materials for staff and the public, and his commitment to sustainability and the mission of CCFPD was inspiring to those who worked with him.

- We are excited to work with Lake Flato Architects to complete a concept design for a new Homer Lake Interpretive Center following a competitive selection process.
- We have been awarded an Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Land Acquisition grant to purchase an additional 94 acres of land along the Sangamon River north of Mahomet. The new land will expand on our current 5-acre land holding in the area, and provide options for public access to the previously-held land and the Sangamon River.

### **Business and Finance (John Baker)**

- Attended the April 30 IMRF rate meeting webinar. IMRF's 2019 investment gain was 19.57%, or \$6.2 billion. This increase impacts the employer reserve. The impact on the District:
  - The CCFPD employer reserve increased by 1.2 million from \$2.25 million at 12/31/2018 to \$3.45 million at 12/31/2019.
  - The CCFPD pension contribution rate will decrease from 8.59% this year to 7.93% for 2021.
  - The CCFPD pension funding rate (active members and retirees) at year end was 101% (market basis). NOTE: Retiree reserves are always 100% funded in the IMRF plan.
  - The CCFPD pension funding rate (active members only) at year end was 102% (market basis).
  - The CCFPD pension funding rate (active members only) at year end was 92% (actuarial basis).
  - 2020 market volatility is not included in the above statistics. IMRF employer rates and reserves are calculated annually with rates lagging market activity by one year.
- Attended an April 15 meeting with County officials on the 2019 pay 2020 extension. County officials were determined to get property tax bills out on time and did not expect any change in payment deadlines. They did not offer any projection on 2020 tax collections and distributions to Districts.
- Received the District's tax-capped levy extension from the County Clerk. The District levied \$4.57 million. Applying the tax caps reduced this to \$4,004,861 in property taxes to be extended. The extension exceeds the 2020 budgeted property taxes by \$33,856. Staff anticipated \$3,971,005 in 2020 budget for property taxes.
- Trained temporary staff to provide assistance with bookkeeping and purchasing. Most of the month was spent in this way, with ongoing training, careful review of work products and co-resolving vendor payment issues.
- Secured assistance from Royal Accounting to assist with finalizing Foundation audit preparations. Submitted documents and financial detail to CliftonLarsonAllen for the Foundation field work which began May 11.
- Finished reviewing applications for the Assistant Business and Finance Director position. Three of the candidates have experience in governmental accounting. Interviews are expected to begin the week of May 18.

### Human Resources (Dara Edgington)

- Preliminary work to offer bilingual (English and Spanish) job postings for 2021 has begun.
- Collaboration on the District’s Safety Manual continues; department-specific safety training and protocol information is currently being compiled and reviewed.
- In addition to her regular duties, Mary has been very busy pitching in to support other departments as she’s able: processing payroll, handling certain purchasing tasks/questions, and assisting with Foundation-related issues. A big thank you to Mary, and all our staff, who are going the extra mile to ensure smooth operations during this chaotic time.
- Mary participated in the first meeting of the newly-formed Volunteer Committee on May 7.

### Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Social media monthly numbers have spiked during the pandemic as individuals are finding more online outlets to learn about District offerings and share information.

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	4,202	+192	1,546	+146	533	+5
KRT	2,775	+46	58	+14	118	-2
MGP	3,302	+67	1009	+38	202	+4
HLIC	1,409	+58				
GC	1,355	+28	236	+3	74	+0
FPPF	210					

- Lisa attended online webinars put on by the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Association of Park Districts.
- We are holding our first ever photo contest. People can submit three photographs each with locations and animals identified in the pictures. The top thirteen photos will be part of a 2021 CCFPD wall calendar. We are accepting entries until June 1.
- Over the past eight weeks we have begun using the CCFPD YouTube Channel as an outlet for educators to upload video content for teachers and the general public. We have 38 subscribers, up from 9 in January, and 50 videos. In April there were 1,019 minutes watched, encompassing nearly 17 hours of viewing time!
- We are currently running four messages on eight MTD busses through Champaign-Urbana. The ads will be on display April – August 2020. The ads use famous quotes to highlight the altruistic messages that resonated with the public as identified in the fall’s survey effort.

**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

**“In wildness is the preservation of the world.”**

~Henry David Thoreau

[ccfpd.org](http://ccfpd.org)

Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1963

FOREST PRESERVES  
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

**“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”**

~ John Muir

**ccfpd.org**



**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

**“When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength.”**

~ Maria Montessori

**ccfpd.org**



**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

**“The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need.”**

~ Richard Louv, *The Nature Principal*

**ccfpd.org**



**Volunteer Coordinator (Sue Gallo)**

- Sue organized a volunteer committee of staff (Barb Garvey, Pam Leiter, Chris Edmonson, Doug Sanders, Emily Williams and Mary Beck) to revisit volunteer policies, procedures, recordkeeping and best practices. The first meeting is May 7.
- The Volunteer newsletter is now being sent through Constant Contact as an e-newsletter to better understand how many volunteers read it and what they are interested in and also to save time when creating it. Thank you to Lisa and Dara for helping with this change.
- Sue collaborated with Mike Daab, Emily, Jen Wick, Lisa, and Peter Goodspeed to get the word out to have existing and new volunteers pull garlic mustard individually rather than in group works days like usual. Kudos to folks for getting the word out so effectively! This generated much interest!
- Sue is preparing to overhaul the Volgistics database with a goal to record all volunteer names and original start dates, to improve background information, and to archive names of inactive volunteers. Mary Ellen, Julia and I decided it would be useful to indicate in the database when a volunteer is also a donor (and vice-versa).
- Sue contacted a number of other forest preserve district and park district volunteer coordinators to learn about their messaging to volunteers at this time regarding volunteer safety.

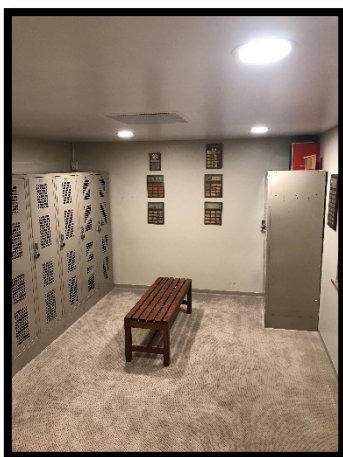
## Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- In April, the department concluded spring burn season by burning a section of the Point Pleasant prairie at Middle Fork and two phases of the Buffalo Trace prairie restoration.
- April marked the beginning of weed season and the techs got off to a great start by:
  - Spraying basal rosettes of garlic mustard, poison hemlock, and wild parsnip with herbicide solution at Homer Lake, Sangamon River and Lake of the Woods
  - Spraying reed canary grass emerging from restored prairies at Sangamon River
  - Hand pulling garlic mustard after bolting
- Garlic mustard season has been a great success and although we have not been able to host volunteer events, the department mobilized independent volunteer efforts via:
  - Maps and pictures on social media
  - News coverage from WCIA
  - Radio coverage from WILL
- On April 14, the department welcomed our new Natural Resources Technician, Nate Powazki, to the team. Nate brings with him a great deal of experience from the Ohio Nature Conservancy, where he previously worked for two seasons.
- Previous Canada goose deterrent methods at the Stidham Woods prairie restoration had mixed results, so the next step involved goose population control by:
  - Obtaining a Class E Nuisance Wildlife Control Permit from the IDNR
  - Following Humane Society guidelines to prevent goose egg development by covering them in oil
  - Since the program began, a total of 61 eggs have been oiled around and on the island at Stidham pond
- For the past few years, a large log jam has accumulated on the Sangamon River at the River Bend Forest Preserve. A volunteer from the Sportsman's Club is offering his time and his high hoe to remove the logs. NR staff spent an afternoon clearing a path from the mowed trail to the river so that the logs may be removed, stacked and burned.
- During rainy days, staff worked from home on projects related to continued education in:
  - Local ecology of sites under management
  - Additional prescribed fire training
  - Principles of ecological restoration



### **Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Joie Torres)**

- These are extremely uncharted and difficult times for the vast majority of us. To say that April 2020 at Lake of the Woods Golf Course was strange would be an understatement. Due to the COVID-19 virus and the State of Illinois Stay At Home order, we were closed for business, beginning on March 27. This lasted the entire month of April. This affected our business in many ways. First, the gate was locked and no one was allowed in or out, other than essential employees, service and deliveries. We drastically reduced Pro Shop staff, with David, Jason and I rotating shifts in the Shop and only working weekdays to answer phones and monitor the gate.
- This closure allow us to complete several projects:
  - Clean up the Pro Shop, Snack Bar, and Clubhouse (closets, file drawers, storage areas).
  - Assist Joie's staff with some light duty work on the course (raking, picking up branches, cleaning the driving range and woods of golf balls and debris).
  - Emptied the cart shed, cleaned and sanitized all golf carts, and discarded plenty of garbage.
- We developed an online store through [golftהלake.com](http://golftהלake.com) to enhance merchandise sales during this time.
- For the month of April, our revenue was \$4,865.78. This revenue was through online merchandise sales, special orders, employee food and beverage, and sponsorship payments. Obviously, any income is seen as a bonus, since we were completely shut down, but in context, it is really dismal. Our 5-year average for revenue in April is approximately \$70,000.
- Another project that was completed was the locker room renovation. Mike Fry and staff worked as they could (with employee and social distancing restrictions) to complete the project in April. We are extremely pleased with the final product. Attached below are some pictures of the result.
- We are looking forward to reopening in May, in any capacity. There will obviously be major restrictions, but it will be nice to have a little revenue bump and see players utilizing the course. We will have the appropriate amount of staffing to ensure all regulations are followed before, during, and after play.



### **Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)**

- Pam Leiter reworked the Homer Lake Interpretive Center's (HLIC) 2020 annual exhibit, *Our One True Home: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day*, into an online exhibit via a series of videos

on CCFPD's YouTube channel and also shared on Facebook. The exhibit will open in its original form when the Center is next able to be open to the public.

- Pat Cain and Barb Garvey presented a Facebook Live tour of the Museum of the Grand Prairie's special exhibit, *How Long Must Women Wait? Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights in Champaign County* on April 6.
- Stacey Clementz and Cathy Schneider developed a plan to efficiently provide good care for the Center's animals during this time. The aquatic turtles, the box turtle, and black rat snake moved to staff's houses. The catfish is still at the HLIC and has an auto feeder. We go out at least once a week to clean out its tank.
- Mark Hanson and George Groschen have worked out a schedule to regularly check on collections at the MGP and also at headquarters. Monthly temperature and humidity reports are being kept up to date on all areas of the museum.
- In-person school and public programs were cancelled by the shelter-in-place order through the end of May. Stacey Clementz & Cathy Schneider created videos for school programs requested by local teachers: Champaign Unit 4 Science Coordinator, Lori Clark of Mahomet High School, Debbie Young of Middletown in Mahomet, Patti Forbes of Mahomet Junior High. So far, they have developed six school program videos for area teachers. You can find them on the CCFPD's YouTube channel.
- At the MGP, Katie Snyder offered previously produced materials, e.g. PowerPoints and artifact discovery information generally used in MGP school programs, for teachers to use to supplement their lessons.
- Summer camps and most summer public programs which might attract over 50 people were canceled, and staff are exploring ways to offer virtual alternatives for those offerings. Videos and increased social media participation are being considered.
- Jennifer Wick & Pat Cain are helping Mahomet Daily with their *Mahomet Daily Together* project. This project brings together several Mahomet community groups and organizations, who contribute content to Mahomet Daily's Facebook page. Jennifer created a wildflower walk video at Stidham Woods and a virtual tour for River Bend Forest Preserve. Several staff also participated in an online interview with Mahomet Daily about the Forest Preserves and what we are offering during the COVID-19 shutdown period.
- Jennifer Wick worked with volunteer coordinator Sue Gallo and the Natural Resources department to create a video about garlic mustard for volunteers, attended ECI Master Naturalist Wednesday Teatime, and created a CCFPD bingo for Instagram.
- The interagency Climate Action Group worked together to plan CU on Earth Day as a social-distanced way to celebrate Earth Day this year. Stacey Clementz & Pam Leiter are part of this group.
- Pam Leiter presented a live webinar, *Exhibits on a Budget*, for the Environmental Education Association of Illinois.
- Pat Cain led several virtual tours of the museum during this shutdown time. On April 17, he led one through *Discovering Home*. On April 30, he led one through *Blacksmithing on the Prairie*. He is planning a further tour of the schoolhouse, with future tours to feature prominent cultural areas in the CCFPD. These tours air on Facebook Live and then the videos are saved in the MGP and CCFPD YouTube channels.

- Pat Cain developed a new social media interview show called *Mornings at the Museum*. At 10 am on Wednesdays, for one-half hour, Pat interviews his colleagues within the department on a variety of subjects. The first show was just a chat, the second show was about favorite places within the CCFPD. The next two shows will be called “A Few of My Favorite Things.”
- The MGP has begun a Good Reads reading group, this month Mark Hanson reviewed three books, *Balloons to Jets*, *Real Horse Riders*, and *Mavericks of the Sky* for discussion.
- Barb Garvey has been doing a series of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts on local Women’s Suffrage issues, as well as local experiences of epidemics of the past. WCIA interviewed Barb regarding the comparison between the Spanish influenza and the COVID epidemic. She’s also been cross posting these pieces on Champaign-Urbana History with great viewership which is generating some new viewers on MGP social media.
- Barb gave a Facebook Live version of her History on Tap, *Women Alcohol and the Vote* on May 6. Generally, our Facebook Live events have 20-30 viewers during the course of the presentation. This one had about 50 viewers in real time.
- Katie Snyder and the MGP were partners in the presentation of *Haiku from Home*, a community based social media project to promote thinking about nature and culture as they interacted during National Poetry Month. Urbana Arts and Culture, Chambana Moms, KOOP Adventure Play and Will Reger-Urbana Poet Laureate were the other partners. Thirty-nine haikus were published.
- Katie Snyder was on the development team and MGP was a partner in the Community Sing, “Sing a Song.” Katie wrote the history background to this community building project. Our partners in this venture were Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Koop Adventure Play, Unit 4 and Unit 116 schools. Seventy daring souls submitted video of themselves singing. This was compiled into a widely distributed video.
- Katie has been doing read-alouds via Facebook, supplemented by pieces in the museum’s collections and exhibits. On April 9 she read *If You Are Not From the Prairie*; On April 12 she read *Runaway Bunny*, on April 26 *Greta and the Giants*, April 29 *Life Doesn’t Frighten Me At All*, and May 7, *The Lorax*. Katie has been asked to feature on Chambana Moms as part of their Goodnight Chambana series. She will read Dr. Seuss’ *The Sneetches*.
- Mark Hanson is creating short videos featuring material from the East Frisian Oral History collection and posting them on Facebook. The videos include clips from interviews with Wayne Busboom, Frances Olson, Pauline Collins and Geraldine Osterbur, and Ernest Osterbur. We have made many connections with relatives that did not know we had this material. All videos referred to above have been or will be on CCFPD and MGP YouTube channels.
- Jennifer Wick began to work with the Museum’s project to transcribe a series of letters written between George Bowen Busey (son of bank founder Samuel Busey) and his wife and mother during World War I, the war in which he died. In addition, Stacey Clementz is assisting Lisa Sprinkle and ultimately the museum with a project to catalogue physical photographs collected by the CCFPD of its facilities and events over the decades. Ultimately all photos will be scanned for general use and physical copies will be catalogued into the MGP’s collections.



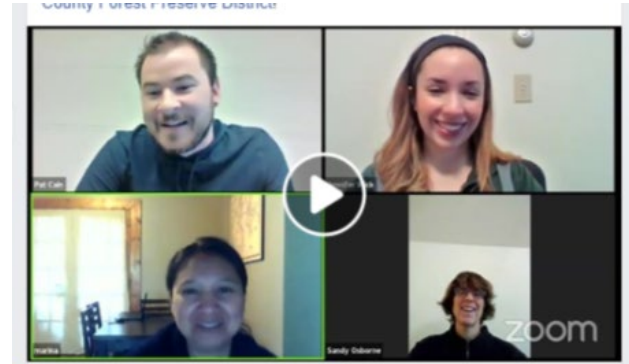
Exploring Nature



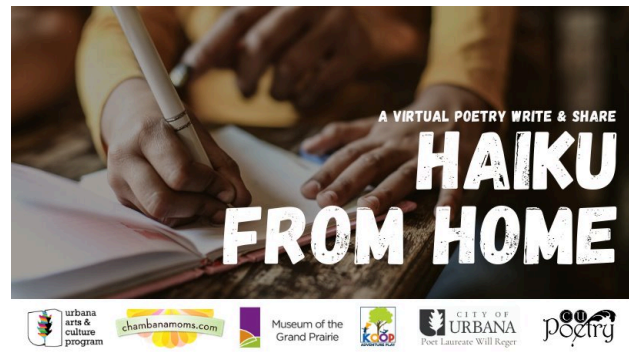
Fire and Ecological Succession



River Bend Forest Preserve Virtual Tour



438 Views



L to R, top to bottom- Video, *Exploring Nature*; Video, *Fire and Ecological Succession*; Video, *River Bend Virtual Tour*; Facebook Live Event, *Mornings at the Museum*; Facebook Event, *Community, Sing a Song*; Facebook Event, *Haiku from Home*.

- May marks Stacey Clementz’s official 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary working at CCFPD! Congratulations to Stacey!
- All staff are developing new skills by attending free or reduced cost online professional development opportunities & topics, including: the National Association for Interpretation Regional Conference, virtual summer camps, programming and Covid 19 impacts, financial management in a time of revenue loss, strategies for reopening, social media delivery, monarch migration research, smart energy grids + kids activities, leading in a time of crisis, resilience strategies, and more.

- Charlee Thompson, who was hired as a day camp educator, is now going to be working with the Natural Resources department for the summer. Christy Wallace, now in her 13<sup>th</sup> season as campground naturalist, is brainstorming ways to provide self-guided activities for visitors at Middle Fork for the season, and we are exploring ways she can help out the Middle Fork operations department to get hours in and provide needed support to them.
- AMT Photoworks has been a huge help with developing videos for environmental topics!

### **Lake of the Woods (Doug Sanders)**

- To a degree, staff are still in the process of winter cleanup and preparing the grounds for the summer season. This includes mulching, spraying, pest control, planting flowers, mowing, and general grounds cleanup.
- Even with the closures of rental facilities, bathrooms, and playgrounds there continues to be a tremendous increase in visitors at the preserves. It is rewarding knowing that we play a vital role in providing the public with a crucial outlet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)**

- The Harry L. Swartz campground remains closed through the month of May. Cancellations and refunds are being processed and campers are being notified of the delayed start to the season.
- Staff continue day to day maintenance and operations using best safety practices during the pandemic.
- The Middle Fork has been extremely busy the last few weeks. The public for the most part has been following guidelines while visiting the preserve.
- We have had several people volunteering to detail the preserve during these times, picking up litter throughout the user areas and shorelines, garlic mustard pulling and other invasive removals. Very impressive.

### **Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

- Visitation continued to grow in April after a record breaking March. Visitors have been enjoying every park and all that we have available for them to do. Fishing has been extremely good this spring as we have received reports and pictures of large bass, saugeye, and channel cat being caught. We know that the trails are heavily used by seeing how trampled down they are, and there has been an incredible amount of lake use with fishing boats and kayakers. Hidden Acres and Collins Pond are no longer the hidden treasures that so many enjoyed for the quiet seclusion that they offered.
- The construction crew and Homer Lake staff have been constructing the new Oak Ridge shelter and the old metal shelter has been repurposed for wood storage at the maintenance facility. Staff has taken advantage of not having facility rentals to deep clean some areas that we typically do not have time to work on during the normal rental season.



## **Kickapoo Rail Trail**

- Mary Ellen submitted a letter to both Senators Durbin and Duckworth's offices requesting their assistance on the impasse at the Glover Crossing east of St. Joseph. As a reminder, the Union Pacific Railroad has indicated they will not approve an at-grade trail crossing, which is the only feasible crossing that can be engineered for that location. Historically, protocol suggests that the line constructed first has priority to rail crossings, giving the KRT assumed leverage over UPRR at this site. IDNR and the Surface Transportation Board agree to this premise, but UPRR has not budged on its decision. The crossing is the only design work that remains incomplete in Phase 2b.
- Although launching a Friends group during a global pandemic seems counterintuitive, that is exactly what the KRT Steering Committee has planned. Staff from the CCFPD, along with Urbana Park District, Vermilion County Conservation District, and Champaign County Regional Planning Commission will host a first meeting on May 26, via Zoom. Pat Dullard of the Friends of the Constitution Trail will attend to share their decades of success expanding, supporting, and promoting Bloomington-Normal's miles-long trail system.

## **District Cultural Competency Initiatives**

- Pat Cain and Barb Garvey attended the AASLH seminar *Inclusivity in the Era of COVID and Beyond*, on April 22, 2020.
- A ramped up social media presence is one important way to diversify our audiences. As of May 11, the HLIC has 175 new Facebook followers since March 23! The MGP had 296 new Facebook followers in that time period.
- This has been a time of growth for understanding social media analytics as well. The cumulative Facebook daily engagement for that period for the HLIC page was 5,680; the cumulative for the MGP was 12,313. The daily organic reach for the HLIC page was 57,635; the cumulative daily organic reach for the MGP was 130,373. The Department has posted 30 new videos on CCFPD's YouTube channel, which now has many more subscribers than it had before. Daily engagement is defined as the number of people who engaged with your Page. Engagement includes any click or story created. Daily organic reach is defined as the number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen through unpaid distribution. This includes posts, stories, check-ins, social information from people who interact with your Page and more.