

The Leaflet

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2025

Wilderness Living Skills Workshop

Join us for an unforgettable experience at the Wilderness Living Skills Workshop!

This immersive event will take place at the Burr Oak Group Campground in the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve from October 10 at 6 PM until October 12 at 12 PM.

Spend three days camping in the beautiful hardwood forests of Illinois, where you'll learn to make use of the landscape around you. This exciting workshop offers hands-on practice in essential wilderness survival skills. Participants will learn to make rope, light fires using fire-by-friction,

build shelters that will keep you warm and dry, find food in the wild, and cook over an open fire. All this while enjoying the comfort of your own tent.

Our instructors are the highly experienced co-founders of the Wild Nature Project. With nine years of leading this workshop at our location, they bring a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm that will make your learning experience both enjoyable and enriching.



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FOREST PRESERVES
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

A Long Time in the Making: THE NEW CHANGING LANDSCAPES EXHIBIT

MARK D. HANSON, CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS
AND EXHIBITS

A new permanent exhibit at the Museum of the Grand Prairie opens on Saturday, September 13. *Changing Landscapes: Personal Stories from Early Agriculture in East Central Illinois* was a long time in the making. Sidelined by the Covid pandemic, other project priorities, and changes to staff, the exhibit has finally come to fruition.

Changing Landscapes explores early agriculture in Champaign County and the Grand Prairie region through the lives of Jane Patton, Allen Little, Jacob Earnest, and Ralph Chesebro. Their stories, like those of many others like them, embody hard work, hardship, and resilience. Visitors can connect with our diverse agricultural heritage and discover human experiences that changed our cultural and natural landscapes.

Successfully completing this project was a community collaboration and Forest Preserves family effort. Research support was provided by the Homer Historical Society, Champaign County Historical Archives at the Urbana Free Library, and the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail. Funding was made possible by donations from Harvey Hodges, in memory of his



Fabrication In Full Swing
The Forest Preserves construction department installing drywall and building partitions.

wife Adella, and support from the Forest Preserves Friends Foundation.

Within the Forest Preserves, Natural Resources provided fantastic images. Lake of the Woods Operations tackled demolition and cleanup. Construction renovated the entire gallery and fabricated exhibit furniture, while Planning coordinated multiple building infrastructure improvements. We also collaborated with the Museum and Education Department's educators and public programmers to ensure program compatibility and audience accessibility. Finally, our collections volunteers completed a myriad of tasks required to professionally exhibit artifacts.



The Guttled Gallery Space
Demolition is nearly completed, and fabrication is about to begin.

The *Changing Landscapes* exhibit was an ambitious project realized through fantastic support and generous collaboration. We are excited to share our work, because this project elevates our exhibition potential. Despite being a long time coming, we believe *Changing Landscapes* is worth the wait.



The Allen Grant Little Family, c. 1905
Allen Little (seated at right) with his wife, son, and in-laws.



Chesbro Brothers Blacksmith Shop, c. 1911
Ralph Chesbro (seated on the forge) and friend in the shop.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

See the full program descriptions online at champaignforests.org

August 2025

Saturday, August 2 **FREE**

IGNITE THE PAST

*Harry L. Schwartz Campground,
Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 2-5 PM*

Before the convenience of matches and lighters, how did people start a fire? Adult supervision of children 15 and under is required. No registration required.

Saturday, August 9 **FREE**

OUTSIDE IN CHAMPAIGN FORESTS

*Middle Fork River Forest Preserve,
10-11:30 AM*

Head OUTside in Champaign Forests, every second Saturday of the month where nature and community come Trail locations vary. For more info, email Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org to receive location updates and monthly reminders!

Saturday, August 9 **FREE**

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES: LOS TEXANO'Z

Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 5-7 PM

Food from local food trucks and alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase. Contact Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org for more information.

Tuesday, August 12 **FREE**

GROWING UP IN THE PRESERVES: TREE PLAY

*Natural Playscape, Homer Lake
Forest Preserve, 10-11 AM*

This program is for preschoolers ages 2-6 along with their grown-ups. No registration required. Groups with 5 or more preschoolers, please contact Morgan Duerksen-Balk before August 5.

Wednesday, August 13 **FREE**

CONSERVATION IN ACTION SERIES: HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 PM*

Learn clear steps that you can take to regenerate biodiversity and add your property to the Homegrown National Park Biodiversity Map. No registration required.

Saturday, August 16 **FREE**

DARK SKY SERIES: SKYWATCH

*Dark Sky Trail, Middle Fork River
Forest Preserve, 8-11 PM*

Park at the Activity Center, then follow the signs to walk a scenic half mile to the Observatory. No rain/cloud date. No registration required.

Wednesday, August 20 **FREE**

WALK WITH A NATURALIST

*Rayburn-Purnell Woods Trail, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 6-7 PM*

Join Master Naturalists from the University of Illinois Extension to explore the beauty of the Champaign County Preserves! Meet at the White Oak Grove Shelter. No registration required.

Sunday, August 24

PHOTOS IN A FOREST: A PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 PM*

All attendees must be registered. \$5 per person. Register by August 18 at champaignforests.org.



To register for programs scan the QR Code or go to champaignforests.org.

Programs may be altered or canceled due to weather.

September 2025

Sunday, September 7 

GROWING UP IN THE PRESERVES: SPECIAL GRANDPARENTS EDITION

*Natural Playscape, Homer Lake
Forest Preserve, 12:30-2 PM*

Celebrate National Grandparents Day by learning about animal families! This program is for preschoolers ages 2-6 along with their grandparents and other family members to learn as we play outside in nature! No registration required.

Thursday, September 11 

REMEMBRANCE WALK

*Possibility Pier Parking Lot, River Bend Forest
Preserve, 10-11:30 AM*

Ground yourself in nature by joining Forest Preserve staff for a contemplative 1.5 mile walk through the serene forest, and visit the 9/11 Memorial Woodland. No registration required.

Friday, September 12 

BATS AT THE BRIDGE

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 6:30-8:15 PM*

Learn more about these ecologically important mammals and what recent studies have shown about local bats. After a presentation indoors, we will walk to the Covered Bridge to look for the bats that roost there. No registration required.

Saturday, September 13 

PRAIRIE STORIES & EXHIBIT GRAND OPENING

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 12-5 PM*

All are welcome to go back in time and experience some pieces of life from nineteenth century East Central Illinois! In collaboration with the University of Illinois YMCA's Welcoming Week, the day will be full of artisan demonstrations and hands-on activities like candle dipping and butter churning. Enjoy 19th century schoolhouse lessons, discover many methods of textile work, and more! Many of the event's informational materials will be available in multiple languages. This year, we are also

celebrating the grand opening of the museum's NEW "Changing Landscapes" exhibit. No registration required.

Exhibit Grand Opening: "CHANGING LANDSCAPES"

Join us to experience our new exhibit, "Changing Landscapes", exploring early agriculture in Champaign County and east central Illinois. Through the personal stories of settlers, farmers, and tradespeople, visitors will discover how hard work, hardship, and resilience shaped the landscapes and communities we know today. Can't make it to the grand opening? Visit us anytime during open hours to explore this fascinating exhibit.

Wednesday, September 17 

SLUMBER STORIES: DREAM-INSPIRED CRAFTS AND STORYWALK

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of
the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 PM*

Embark on the enchanting StoryWalk at Lake of the Woods, where we'll immerse ourselves in the imaginative, bilingual tale of *A Perfect Season for Dreaming!* Recommended for young ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Monday, September 22 

WELCOME FALL HIKE

*Main Entrance, Sangamon River
Forest Preserve, 5:30-7 PM*

Join us for a guided hike to mark the first day of fall. Meet at the parking lot. No registration required.

Saturday, September 27 

CONSERVATION IN ACTION SERIES: TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

*Activity Center, Middle Fork River
Forest Preserve, 10-11:30 AM*

Whether you're a landowner, natural resource professional, or just interested in forest stewardship, this session will cover the basics of TSI techniques and how they are used at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes. No registration required.

Wilderness Living Skills

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This workshop is for adults only and costs \$225 per person. Be sure to register by October 3 to secure your spot. For more information or to register, please contact us at (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

Participants must bring their own food to cook each meal. For more details about the campground, visit the Harry L. Swartz Campground page on the Champaign County Forest Preserve District website.

For disability-related modifications for all programs, contact Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org or (217) 586-2612.

Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your wilderness survival skills and connect with nature in a meaningful way. We look forward to seeing you there!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For disability-related modifications

for all programs, contact Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org or (217) 586-2612.

Special Request Programs

Want to schedule a special program for your group? The Champaign County Forest Preserves welcomes all and will provide programs that offer unique, hands-on opportunities to experience nature and history. We will work with you to design a program that fits your needs — **scan the QR code and fill out the form** to plan your program today!



special requests

Pop Up Programs and Volunteering!

Pop up public programs and public volunteer opportunities will be offered throughout the summer and fall!

For pop up program and volunteer opportunity announcements, please follow Champaign County Forest Preserve District on Facebook and Instagram!



pop up programs

Scan here to sign up for the monthly volunteer opportunities e-newsletter on the volunteer webpage.



e-newsletter

Get Ready to Set Sail at the

2nd Annual Cardboard Boat Regatta!

Join the fun at the 2nd Annual Cardboard Boat Regatta on **Saturday, August 30**, at the **Middle Fork River Forest Preserve Campground!** This free, family-friendly event invites teams to build and race their own cardboard boats in a spirited competition on the water.

Boat construction kicks off from **1-3 PM**, with materials like cardboard and tape provided while supplies last. Teams can also bring pre-made boats. Each vessel should hold 1-2 team members. **Registration and inspection** run from **2:30-3:30 PM**, and the races begin at **3:30 PM** sharp!

Whether you're racing or cheering from the shore, it's a splashy way to end the summer. For rules scan the QR code. For more info, contact Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org or call **(217) 586-2612**. Don't miss this exciting day on the water!



PHOTOS IN A FOREST: PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

All photos by workshop instructor Fred Delcomyn

August 24, 2-3:30 PM
Museum of the Grand Prairie

Learn How to Capture Something Great!

Learn photography tips from local award-winner Fred Delcomyn in this fun, beginner-friendly workshop. Bring any camera—even your phone—get inspired by the surrounding Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden & Buffalo Trace Prairie.

More info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org



\$5/person
Register by August 18
champaignforests.org



P.O. Box 1040
Mahomet, IL 61853

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PERMIT NO. 746

Calling all PHOTOGRAPHERS!

We want to see your most stunning shots of the Champaign County Forest Preserves! Whether it's breathtaking landscapes, detailed close-ups of plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife, or vibrant images capturing the changing seasons and people enjoying outdoor activities, we want them all!

For official rules, visit champaignforests.org/photo.

Capture the beauty and diversity of our preserves and the joy of outdoor recreation. We can't wait to see your amazing work!

Winning photos will be featured in our 2026 Champaign County Forest Preserves wall calendar, displayed throughout the preserves, and showcased on our social media. Winners will receive a copy of the calendar and a framed print of their winning photo.

Submit your photos via email to photos@ccfpd.org between August 11 and August 31, 2025. Remember, you can submit up to five (5) photos, and all entries must meet the contest requirements.



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[@CHAMPAIGNFORESTS](https://www.instagram.com/champaignforests)

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