



## Dates to Remember

### Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center,  
Harriet and Norman Greenberg Auditorium  
Friday, January 20, 11:30am-1pm

Hear the latest news from programming, natural area restoration, and foundation projects. Receive your quarterly update and ask questions. Lunch is provided. RSVP by January 17.

### Prairie Heritage Volunteer Meetings

Rock Springs Nature Center  
Thursday, January 12, 7pm  
Thursday, February 9, 7pm  
Thursday, March 9, 7pm

Prairie Heritage Volunteers fill many niches at Homestead Prairie Farm, from carpentry to costumed interpretation. Receive your monthly update. Refreshments provided.

### Rock Springs Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center,  
East Conference Room  
Saturdays, January 14 & 28, 10am  
Saturdays, February 11 & 25, 10am  
Saturdays, March 11 & 25, 10am



### Bluegrass Music Jam

Rock Springs Nature Center,  
Harriet and Norman Greenberg Auditorium  
Sunday, January 8, 1-4pm  
Sunday, February 12, 1-4pm  
Sunday, March 12, 1-4pm

### Eagle Viewing in Grafton

Saturday, February 11, 8am-4pm

Van trip to Pere Marquette State Park to view Bald Eagles along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. Enjoy lunch at the lodge, then tour the Melvin Price Lock and Dam. Dress for the weather. \$20/person. Only \$10 for volunteers! Register online by Feb 10. Min/Max: 5/12.

(continued on page 2)

## Welcome New Volunteers!

Dulcimer - Bruce Erickson  
Prairie Heritage Volunteers - Linda Knight

## Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

We had a fun action packed fall. Volunteers assisted with a variety of special events including Prairie Pedal, Fall Harvest, and Candlelight Tour. Our wonderful volunteer base makes events like these possible and we are truly grateful!

Our volunteers have been impressive in 2016! During the months of January through November, 487 volunteers have donated their time for a total of 11,664 hours. If you forgot to turn in some hours, it is not too late to turn them into Jenny. Thank you for all that you do!

Volunteers in Action: Dulcimer Club members lend their musical talents for the Volunteer Holiday Party.



## Remembering Our Volunteers

Phyllis Owens (January 1920 – December 2016)

## Dates to Remember (cont.)

### Eagle Viewing at Starved Rock

*Sunday, January 29, 8am-4pm*

*Saturday, February 25, 8am-4pm*

Join us on a trip to this popular state park to watch eagles on the Illinois River. We'll also visit the Lock and Dam Museum. Bring a lunch or purchase one from the Starved Rock restaurant.

Be prepared to spend time outside. For all ages. \$20/person. Only \$10 for volunteers! Register online by Jan 27 and Feb 24. Min/Max: 5/12.



### Volunteer Herbicide Trainings

*Saturday, March 4, 9-10am*

*At University of IL Extension Office, 3351 N.*

*President Howard Brown Blvd., Decatur*

**OR**

*Saturday, March 18, 9-10am*

*At Rock Springs Nature Center*

We invite volunteers interested in assisting with natural area restoration efforts throughout the community to attend this training. Both trainings will qualify you to use herbicides as volunteers on Conservation District and Decatur Park District lands. According to the Illinois Pesticide Act, this certification must be renewed each calendar year. This indoor training focuses on using herbicides to control common invasive species, such as bush honeysuckle and autumn olive.

Register by March 1 for the University of Illinois Extension Office training at 217-877-6042 or online at [go.illinois.edu/dmp](http://go.illinois.edu/dmp).

RSVP by March 15 for the training at Rock Springs Nature Center with Ethan Snively at 217-423-6796 or [esnively@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:esnively@maconcountyconservation.org).

## Volunteer Fun & Learning

### Ski & Snowshoe Rental Training

*Thursday, January 5, 1-2pm*

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Activity Room*

Help visitors explore a winter wonderland on skis or snowshoes. Ski and Snowshoe Rental Volunteers help fit visitors with equipment, provide basic instruction for first-time users, and answer questions. Added Bonus: Every day you assist with ski rentals, you earn 2 hours of free ski or snowshoe rental time for yourself. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 18+. RSVP by January 4.



### Eliminating Invasives in Your Backyard

*University of IL Extension Office, 3351 N. President Howard Brown Blvd., Decatur*  
*Thursday, March 16, 6-8pm*

Learn how to identify and control common invasive plants in Central Illinois, and identify native species that can be used as alternatives to traditional exotic landscape plants. Register by March 13 with the University of Illinois Extension Office at 217-877-6042 or online at [go.illinois.edu/dmp](http://go.illinois.edu/dmp).

### Who Works the Night Shift

*Wednesday, Feb 22, 1-2pm*

*Rock Springs Nature Center, East Conference Room*

Discover the special adaptations of the nocturnal owls of Illinois. What allows them to sneak up on, capture, and eat their prey? What is an owl pellet? Jeff Tish will lead this informative program. RSVP by Feb. 17.



### Children with Autism Informational Training

*Friday, March 17, 1-2pm*

*Rock Springs Nature Center, East Conference Room*

Autism spectrum disorder has become more visible in recent years. Jenny Garver will lead a class on autism from the standpoint of an educator and a parent of a child with autism. This class will include basic information on autism and how to work with children on the spectrum. RSVP by March 15.

# Volunteer Opportunities

## Cross Country Ski Rental

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Activity Room*

Once we have at least 4" of snow on the ground, the public may rent cross country skis from Rock Springs Nature Center. We are looking for volunteers that wish to be placed on our call list to assist with rentals. Staff will train you the day you volunteer. Added bonus: Every day you volunteer with ski rentals, you earn 2 hours of free ski or snowshoe rental for yourself. For more information, or to sign up, contact Jeff Tish (217-423-7708 or [jtish@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:jtish@maconcountyconservation.org)).

## Nature Center Greeter

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Information Desk*

Information Desk volunteers are an essential part of Rock Springs Nature Center.

Volunteers greet the public, answer simple questions, and assist staff with projects. Training is provided. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver (217-423-7708 or [jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org)).



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## Tidbits of Information

*Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator*

- Watch your mail for a 10 question volunteer satisfaction survey. We value your opinion and would love to hear your thoughts as a volunteer. Submit your survey by returning it in the mail or placing it in the locked survey box at the Information Desk. Please return surveys by Feb 1.
- Stop by the Information Desk or Jenny's office to pick up your 2017 pocket calendar. Beginning Feb 1, you may pick up a free volunteer issued hat or visor. Available first come, first serve.
- Welcome to Dan Hirst! Dan is a new Temporary Custodian in Program Services.

## Volunteer Facebook Group

Have you found our Facebook group yet? It is a closed group, which means that only members can see the posts. To find us, type "MCCD Volunteers" into the Facebook search bar or type this web address into your internet browser:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/maconcountyconservationdistrictvolunteers>

When you find the MCCD Volunteer group, click "JOIN" and a request will be sent to Jenny. If you have any problems please let us know, we are happy to walk you through the process or send you a direct link to the group via email. MCCD Volunteer Group contact: Jenny Garver (217-423-7708 or [jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org)).



Scan the QR code with your smartphone to visit the MCCD Volunteer Facebook Group.

## Volunteer Holiday Party

We extend a big thank you to everyone who attended the volunteer holiday party. Approximately 198 canned goods and non-perishable items to the Northeast Community Fund. Volunteers from many areas came, from quilters and dulcimer club musicians, to prairie heritage and natural area restoration volunteers.

With great food and good company the party was a success and reminded us again of our blessings here at the Conservation District. Thank you for your generosity. We hope you enjoyed happy holidays and we look forward to seeing you at our next Volunteer Quarterly Meeting on January 20.



## Program Services Update

*Richie Wolf - Nature Center Manager*

Hooray for 2017! A new year means many changes in the outdoors. The cold wind blows and it's time for bundling up. We are offering several opportunities for you and yours to participate in programs this year. Many of which involve staying inside. For example, you can take a behind the scenes tour of how care specialist, Chuck Hirst, takes care of our educational animals on January 15, from 2-3pm. On February 19, a program discusses Decatur's statues that honor Abraham Lincoln. Pre-register for programs at [maconcountyconservation.org](http://maconcountyconservation.org).

Looking ahead to spring? Our maple syrup day will be March 4 this year. We will learn the basics of this old fashioned way of life, tap a tree, collect the sap, and boil it over a hot fire. If conditions are right, you'll see the sap drip, drip into the bucket just like many generations did before us. On March 28 and 30, we will hold a boating safety class. This eight hour IDNR class will teach you how to maintain your vessel, abide by state laws, and prepare your boat for the sailing season. It's free and provides you with a certificate upon completion, as long as you pass the test!

Join us in celebrating a new year by participating in outdoor education. As always, thank you for your support in sharing nature with our community.

## Operations Department Update

*Shane Ravellette - Operations Manager*

Operations staff have been busy making the transition to winter. Falling leaves have been removed from the bike trail, and gravel roads and parking areas have been filled and graded. Trails are being trimmed and repaired after a long summer and a great fall. Our trails and public areas are a valuable resource to all our visitors and the continual review and maintenance would not be possible without dedicated volunteers like you.

2016 was a busy year. Not only did we renovate four rooms in Rock Springs Nature Center, but we addressed the old hedge row and landscaping. Thanks to a generous donation, by the time you read this we will have installed automatic door openers at the main door. Griswold has a new maintenance building, and the Friends Creek Campground comfort station had a well-received update. The new Willow Branch II Conservation Area prairie and savanna planting did very well in its first season.

2017 should be equally successful. We look forward to work on the roof and more improvements to the Nature Center entrance. The native planting beds will be redesigned, and we will also make progress on updating the Rock Springs playground.

As always, if you have ideas or concerns, please don't hesitate to let us know.

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Judy & Jim Oettel

*Jeff Tish - Program Services Manager*

Jim and Judy Oettel have volunteered for the Conservation District since 2004. That year, they started playing in the Dulcimer Club, and before they knew it, they had led the group to a whole new level. The club now has a guitar, penny flute, harp and a hammer dulcimer, as well as about 8 to 10 dulcimer players. The Dulcimer Club travels throughout Central Illinois, performing at churches, schools, and nursing homes.

Their favorite part of volunteering here is enjoying the company of other volunteers, nature, hummingbirds, and the Festival of Spring. They firmly believe that saving nature in the form of plants, animals, and land is beneficial to people of all ages. They also advocate for planting flowers and trees, placing bird feeders and bird baths, and leaving some of your yard natural for the benefit of wildlife and people.

They have always enjoyed nature as a couple. Bird watching and traveling has led them on many adventures. The Oettel's hope to visit Sanibel Island, Magee Marsh, and Cape May. They continue to give back to their community by volunteering with the Conservation District, Meals on Wheels, church, Decatur Audubon Society, and at the Hummingbird Festival.



Judy and Jim Oettel