



Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Wednesday, October 12, 11:30am-1pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, Nature Center upgrades, natural area restoration efforts, Foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP by October 7.



Volunteer Holiday Party

Harristown Community Center
Thursday, December 8, 12pm



Celebrate the holidays with us. Holiday Party invitations with more information will be mailed in November. Until then, save the date!

Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am



Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center
Rodney Washburn Classroom



Saturday, October 1, 15, & 29, 10am
Saturday, November 12, & 26, 10am
Saturday, December 10, 10am

Acoustic Music Jam

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Sunday, October 9, 2-4pm
Sunday, November 13, 2-4pm
Sunday, December 11, 2-4pm



Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you for making a difference! From January to August: 293 volunteers have submitted over 6,175 hours. Some of the most active groups during the last few months include: summer camp and vintage base ball volunteers. If you have yet to turn in your hours, it is not too late. Submit your hours by mail, drop them off at the Nature Center, or email them to Jenny Garver.



A huge thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the online July Volunteer Program Short Survey. We received 22 responses.

Questions asked were: *What is your favorite part of volunteering?* and *Why do you feel that way?* The responses blew me away and I smile every time I re-read the answers. It has been awe-inspiring to see what you enjoy and how volunteering has made a difference in your lives. I hope to have an online survey available every other month to explore different aspects of the volunteer program and what knowledge you may have about what we do as an organization. The September Volunteer Program Short Survey will be active until October 15. Visit www.tinyurl.com/5ehndjjs to answer the question *What do you think the Macon County Conservation District's mission is?* We will explore the answer to this question in the next edition of the Volunteer Quarterly Newsletter.

Did you know that we offer our volunteers a free volunteer t-shirt? The current volunteer t-shirt design arrived a few years ago. The shirt is light blue in color and comes in adult sizes S-XXL. If you need a volunteer t-shirt reach out to Jenny Garver with your size. Reserved t-shirts can be picked up at the Information Desk.

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Dates to Remember (cont.)

Archaeology Open House

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Homestead Prairie Farm

Sunday, October 2, 1-4pm



Due to a construction project, dirt was removed from under the farmhouse at Homestead Prairie Farm where it was undisturbed for over 100 years. The dirt came from areas that were once part of

the yard but as the house grew, it was built over and protected. Stop by Homestead Prairie Farm to see what artifacts we have found by sifting so far this year. Free. No registration required.

Fall Harvest Festival

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, October 22, 1-4pm

Celebrate fall at Rock Springs Nature Center with

fall-themed activities including archery, canoeing, pumpkin painting, a scavenger hunt, wagon rides, tours at Homestead Prairie Farm, and more. Archery, canoeing, and pumpkin painting are \$3 per person, all other events are free. No registration required.



Candlelight Tour

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, November 12, 6:30 – 8:30pm

Electricity and modern conveniences were not always at our fingertips. Glimpse what an evening in the 1860s was like at Homestead Prairie Farm, lit by candlelight and lamplight, as guides in period clothing walk you through the home. Refreshments will be served. Free. No registration required.



Welcome New Volunteers!

Archeology- Brennan Ramsey & Willard Sudduth

Bluebird Monitor- Marvin Hughes

Camps- Joel Blome

Desk- Sarah Swanson

Garden- Cathy Landreth

Library- Beverly Neureuther

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Fall Volunteer Hikes

Tuesday, October 4, 11am- Griswold

Monday, October 10, 1pm- Sand Creek

Wednesday, October 19, 12pm- Fort Daniel

Thursday, October 27, 10am- Friends Creek

Monday, October 31, 2pm- Rock Springs

Join us at each location for an educational hike to stretch your legs and learn something new. Dress for the weather. Please RSVP to 217-423-7708 at least one day in advance to receive any weather and location change updates.



Hike Leader Training

Rock Springs Nature Center

Rodney Washburn Classroom

Thursday, October 20, 2-3:30pm

Do you enjoy nature and working with kids?

Volunteer hike leaders are an essential part of our educational team throughout the year. A typical educational walk occurs at a leisurely pace and lasts approximately one hour, covering less than ½-mile in distance. We provide you with training, a packet of information for educational topics, and



the opportunity to observe another experienced hike leader in action. This opportunity is for ages 18. RSVP by October 18.

19th Century Medicine

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Wednesday, November 9, 2-3pm

With so many advancements in

modern medicine, it's easy to

forget just how far we've

come. Learn more about how

people in the 1800s treated

ailments, from ague to sore

throats, with natural remedies,

traditional medical practices, and

innovative drugs. RSVP by November 7.



Astronomy Volunteer Training

Rock Springs Nature Center

Washburn Classroom & West Lawn

Thursday, December 15, 6-7:30pm



Join us to learn how we host our astronomy events! We will go through the process of setting up our telescope, fire starting/tending, and learn about constellations/celestial bodies. Hot cocoa will be provided to warm our bones as we gaze at

the night sky. RSVP by December 13.

Volunteer Opportunities

Archaeology & Artifacts

Homestead Prairie Farm

A rare archaeological volunteer opportunity has been unearthed. We are looking for volunteers to help screen through dirt for artifacts from the 2018 excavation under the farmhouse. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information, or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Historical Upkeep

Homestead Prairie Farm

Did you ever think that it would be fun to be like Tom Sawyer for a day? Grab a paint brush and assist us with scraping loose paint and repainting the exterior of the yellow garden shed this fall. This opportunity is for ages 16 and up. For more information, or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Homestead Prairie Farm Volunteer

Homestead Prairie Farm

Share the sights, sounds, and textures of 1860 rural Illinois with others. For as little as an hour or two per month, after some training, you will feel the gratification of leading tours and programs through this rare, pre-Civil War homestead. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information, or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Tidbits of Information

- In late July, the Macon County Conservation District was awarded a generous grant of \$2,917,380.00 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation to add 236 acres to Fort Daniel Conservation Area. This grant helps the Conservation District add 236 adjoining acres to the existing 370-acre Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Check out the Operations Department Update to learn more about upcoming plans.
- Carolyn Mason Scholarship Fund: This fund was created in the memory of Carolyn Mason and her enthusiasm and love for preserving natural areas. She volunteered at the Macon County Conservation District and unselfishly shared her knowledge and time as the steward at the Leiby Hall Conservation Area, working to eradicate exotic plants so the native species had a chance to thrive. This scholarship fund, founded in 2015, provides an opportunity for individuals to share in Carolyn's endeavor to preserve the natural areas and give native species a chance to thrive. The scholarship fund is open to any Macon County Conservation District Staff or Volunteer to enroll in the Master Naturalist Program held by the University of Illinois Extension Office for Macon, Piatt and DeWitt counties. Three Scholarships are awarded each session providing \$100.00 toward the enrollment fee and is awarded upon completion of the program. Interested individuals should complete a scholarship form and submit it to the Administration Offices at Rock Springs Nature Center before registering for classes. The Master Naturalist Classes will begin in January 2023. If interested in enrolling in the class please contact Julia Duncan by calling 217-877-6042 or by email at julia8@illinois.edu.
- Stay up-to-date with the volunteer program by joining the MCCD Volunteers Facebook Group. The group is only viewable to individuals who click the join button. You can find information about upcoming events, volunteer needs, behind the scenes information, volunteer survey links, nature and history, and much more. Find us at www.facebook.com/groups/maconcountyconservationdistrictvolunteers.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

The new library looks fabulous! We are looking for volunteers to staff the librarian desk and assist the public. Volunteer librarians will check out, check in, and reshelve books, as well as maintain our library collection. The library is a great resource for educational programming and is open to the public. Morning and afternoon shifts are available. This opportunity is for ages 18 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Native Seed Collecting

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Rodney T. Miller Wetland Parking Lot
Saturday, October 22, 9am-11am*

Help harvest native wildflower seeds from Rock Springs prairies to diversify other sites. This light intensity work involves picking seed from stalks and walking through tall vegetation. No experience is



necessary. Dress for the weather, wearing long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy work shoes. Gloves and all necessary equipment will be provided. For all ages. For more information or to sign up, contact Ethan Snively by October 20.

Fall Harvest Festival

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, October 22, 1-4pm*

Volunteers are needed to help in a variety of areas during this annual event.

Volunteer opportunities include children's crafts, canoeing, campfire supervisor, children's games, Homestead Prairie Farm tours, pumpkin painting, wagon ride narrators, and more. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by October 19.



Fall Volunteer Restoration Day

Griswold Conservation Area

Meet at the large pavilion

Saturday, November 19, 9am-11am

Volunteers are requested to assist natural resources staff with bush honeysuckle removal at Griswold Conservation Area. This workday will involve cutting shrubs while walking over uneven terrain through



woodlands. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes like boots or tennis shoes, and prepare to get dirty. Tools and work gloves will be provided. For more information or to sign up, contact Ethan Snively by November 17.

Candlelight Tour

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, November 12, 6:30-8:30pm

Help bring Homestead Prairie Farm to life during this fun evening event. Volunteer opportunities include tour guides, trail guides, serving refreshments, and outdoor lantern tenders. For more information or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt by November 4.



Holiday Decorating

Rock Springs Nature Center

Wednesday, November 30, 10am-1pm

We are looking for some jolly elves to help decorate the Nature Center for the holidays. Volunteers will assist in decorating a holiday tree and the area around the Information Desk. Lunch and laughter will be provided. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by November 23.



Volunteer Spotlight

Jenny Garver – Volunteer Coordinator

Did you know that we have over 275 registered volunteers? In this issue, we get to meet Adib and Lyn Tashakkor. Lyn did such a great job bringing their experience to life that I thought her words would be better than mine.

“My name is Lyn Tashakkor, and I have been a Rock Springs volunteer for many years. I enjoyed listening

to the dulcimer music at various Rock Springs events and often thought about joining the group. It was difficult for me to take the first step, but thanks to my husband's encouragement, I finally went to a practice. That



first time I felt completely lost. However the group was very welcoming and helpful, and after two or three more practices, I began to enjoy playing. When I was younger I took piano lessons and always played solo, never in a group. Now I play in a group and love the camaraderie and performing in concerts. It is still amazing to me that I can volunteer doing something that I love. I also enjoy all the benefits of being a volunteer with the luncheons, trips, and informative programs. Rock Springs gives so much back to their volunteers, and I appreciate being able to contribute my part.

After a few years, my husband Adib started volunteering. He saw how much I enjoyed Rock



Springs, so he decided to volunteer too. He was first asked if he could do the fire for one of the Astronomy Jamborees. Since he likes doing campfires, this was a great fit. He enjoyed tending the fire and helping people roast

marshmallows. After the first few events, Adib started working at other positions. Adib likes special events like the Festival of Spring and the Fall Harvest Festival, and I usually volunteer with him. The Prairie

Pedal is one of our favorite events, and every December I put it on the calendar for the following September. Serving food and washing trays and bussing tables at the fundraiser makes us feel like we're directly doing our part to support the Conservation District.

We both feel volunteering is important and is a way to give back to the community in which we live. Besides Rock Springs, in the past we have delivered Meals on Wheels, worked at the public schools, delivered food baskets, sorted and packed food at food drives, worked at the library book sale as well as other activities. Currently I am a member of the Illiopolis Kitchen Band, which performs for nursing homes and is a lot of fun.

The two of us are now retired. I was a community health nurse at CHIC, and Adib was an electrical engineer with Ameren. We have two sons and a daughter-in-law who are also engineers. Fortunately for me, my granddaughter is not an engineer, but as a budding reader at only 2 years old, we'll see. When they were younger, we used to take our boys volunteering with us whenever we could. We wanted to teach them the value of giving to others at a young age, and we're proud they both volunteer in their own communities.”

Thank you Adib and Lyn for your service to the Macon County Conservation District. We are happy that you have chosen to give your time to our organization and the citizens of our community!

To RSVP or Contact Staff In This Issue

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Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services



As we draw toward the end of summer and the beginning of fall, I look back upon the last few months with both gratitude and relief. We had a very busy and very successful summer, with camps, library programs, and more,

and now in this transition period between the buzz of summer and fall field trips, Program Services has a moment to catch our breath! We are glad to have finally had a busy summer, after two years of quiet.

Looking to the fall, we have some fun programs planned. Wellness has been at the forefront of many of our minds, and we wanted to offer something to those who want to work on their wellness in nature. As part of this Wellness Series, you can enjoy yoga in the Pine Forest with volunteer yoga instructor Michelle Huttes, as well as nature journaling and forest bathing (it's not what it sounds like!).

Past that, we've also got a few special events coming at us, with Fall Harvest Festival on October 22 and Candlelight Tour on November 12. We're also starting a new program offering for homeschool children, so be sure to check our website for more information if you have any homeschooled kiddos in your life! As always, we have other programs sprinkled in as well.

All of these programs can be found online or in our Prairie Islander newsletter. In exciting news, **we now have a new digital E-Newsletter option!** You can now opt-in to receive the Prairie Islander newsletter via email, helping us reduce our usage of paper and increase our digital presence in this ever-changing digital world. To sign up, visit MaconCountyConservation.org and scroll to the bottom of the page. Of course, we will still offer the option to have a physical copy mailed to your home, so no need to worry if you prefer something you can hold in your hands!



Operations Update

*Shane Ravellette -
Director of Operations Department*

In the coming months, the Operations Staff will begin the work on a series of wetlands at Friends Creek. These wetlands will be a part of the recently announced grant the City of Decatur received to protect the watershed and the lake. The District is a partnering agency in this grant and our benefit will not only be protecting the watershed, but also supplying habitat for birds and other animals. It will also allow us to diversify our plant species and supply a feature that is missing at Friends Creek.

We will also be evaluating the new 236 acre acquisition at Fort Daniel. After the crops are harvested, we will be looking over the agriculture ground as we plan for the future prairie and wetland complex. The agriculture contract will remain in place for an additional two years and then the hard work will begin.



The Natural Resource Department's fall burn season will be here soon. Prescribed burns make sure the hard work of restoration continues and our mature prairies and savannas remain strong and healthy. If you would like to volunteer to help with burning or other restoration efforts, please see Jenny or Ethan.