



The

PRAIRIE'S EDGE

www.exploresherburne.org

Summer 2016

Ribbon-cutting



There was plenty of help available for cutting the ribbon at the grand opening of the Oak Savanna Learning Center on June 7. Back row (l to r): Refuge manager Steve Karel, former Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, USFWS Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius, Puddles the blue goose, and USFWS Midwest Regional Chief of Refuges Charlie Blair. Front row (l to r): Zimmerman Elementary principal Gretchen Fisher; students Franklin Blake, Marie Dey, and Madison Fisher; former Friends president Sue Hix; and student Griffin Peck. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

Savanna Sunrise 5K Relay Planned for Festival Day

The Friends of Sherburne are sponsoring a 5K Relay Walk/Run on the Oak Savanna Learning Center trails, Saturday, September 24th at 7 AM. Runners and walkers of all ages are invited to participate in this team relay event, so sign up now with your 3- or 4-person team. Relay leg distances (subject to change) are .8K, 0.7K, 2.2K and 1.3K. Parts of the trail are uneven and rugged, so participants are asked to use caution and go at their own pace.

Prize categories include "friends' teams", "family teams" and "widest range of age teams." After the race, you are welcome to stay and explore the refuge until the Wildlife Festival opens at 10 AM.

Registration covers race number, T-shirt (register by 9/7/16 to guarantee T-shirt), time, post-race snack, and water. To register, go to SavannaSunriseRelay.com where you can register online or download a printable form.

Get your team together now and come out to enjoy the sunrise on the refuge with family and friends. It will be a unique experience you won't forget!

Benefits of Friends Membership

Your Membership Donation Gives You ...

- A tax deduction to the extent allowed by law
- Quarterly newsletter and updates about refuge events and programs
- Invitations to special members-only events
- Discount of 10% at the Eagle's Nest Nature Store (open M-F at the Refuge Headquarters and at events)
- Satisfaction of supporting education and conservation efforts at a local venue where everyone can enjoy nature



From the President

by Brad Johnson

This has been a wet but exciting summer. The Oak Savanna Learning Center is up and operational. The Friends have been very involved with refuge staff in making this happen. The chairs, tables, and state of the art audio/visual system we purchased have turned the classrooms into awesome meeting spaces. (See them in use at the Wildlife Festival.)

We have been involved outside the building, too. Our Be Wild funds were used for completing concrete sidewalks and the beautiful patio sitting wall. A wonderful new trail system has been started around the learning center. Refuge staff has done a great job of using the crushed granite we purchased to make long-lasting, ADA compliant trails. Next time you are there, walk down one of these trails leading to the new floating platform used for wetland education. The approach from the trail to the platform was completed just hours before the grand opening by Friends board members. Opportunities to be involved with refuge staff, educators, and local students who use the OSLC are numerous. If you are interested in sharing your talents to assist with the refuge's environmental education program, please contact Michelle Bengson, Visitor Services Manager, for more information.

In early June the Friends had our first "Friends-only event" during which we spread a variety of seeds on the refuge and then met at the OSLC for brats and hot dogs grilled by yours truly. We hope to sponsor more events like this. Let us know what you would like to see for future events; for example, would your family like to come to a Friends-only sandhill crane tour in the fall?

The Friends also hosted a reception for Be Wild campaign donors with 55 people coming to enjoy refreshments and tours of the OSLC and trails on a perfect summer evening. In August we met with Congressman Tom Emmer as he visited with staff and toured the refuge to learn about the refuge's habitat management and restoration work. He saw how water control structures enable the staff to manage water levels on refuge wetlands, and we showed him the oak savanna restoration project

underway on the "South Spur" of the refuge. By educating congressional staff and showing them the working cooperation among the Friends, our communities, and the refuge, we hope to see the rest of a planned facility that includes a visitor center and refuge headquarters at the OSLC.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the Wildlife Festival on September 24. We will have great food, outdoor activities, and for the first time, events in the OSLC. You won't want to miss it!



Refuge manager Steve Karel introduced the special **Friends-only seeding event** held June 2 to support oak savanna restoration off Brande Road at the refuge. Approximately 35 participants received instructions and then spread the seeds, which had been collected by refuge seed collectors in previous years. The event concluded with a cookout at the Oak Savanna Learning Center. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

HELP US BE GREEN!

Got an email address or need to update it? We'd be pleased to save paper and mailing expense by emailing you a link to the **full-color version** of the Friends newsletter! We'll also let you know about refuge events and other news that comes up between newsletters. **To update or send us your email address,** send a message to **friendsofsherburne@gmail.com** with "Newsletter" in the subject line. (And don't worry—we will not be flooding your Inbox with a lot of mail!)

Have you changed your mailing address? Help us reduce returned mail by updating your address. Contact us at the above email address or at our mailing address c/o the refuge.

Are We There Yet?

by Sue Hix, Chair, Be Wild Campaign for Youth Nature Education

It's been more than 18 months since we began our Be Wild Campaign for Youth Nature Education, and our goal is in sight! Counting cash gifts, pledges, and in-kind donations, we are within \$5,000 of raising \$250,000 to support the Oak Savanna Learning Center and its nature education programs. We are grateful to you—our Friends and community members, area businesses, and grantors for the support that has made this possible!

You may be wondering what we've been doing with all that money. Even before the facility was complete, the Friends were consulting with refuge staff and contractors about plans to provide furnishings and enhance the nearby outside learning spaces. Purchases so far have included tables and chairs, an audio-visual system, nature store fixtures, sidewalks with curb and gutter for the entrance area, patio sitting wall, wetlands education station on Schoolhouse Pool, ADA-compliant trails, information kiosk, and landscaping with native plants.

Next steps are to purchase educational equipment and supplies, interpretive signage, and additional trail materials. We have also begun formulating plans for donor recognition. This includes a special area for the paver bricks that will recognize those who have given \$500 or more to Be Wild as well as permanent recognition inside



The Wetlands Education Station (WES) on Schoolhouse Pool was made possible by Be Wild dollars and grants from generous foundations, including the Bernick Family Foundation (supported by the Central MN Community Foundation) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Here Michelle Bengson, Visitor Services Manager, takes advantage of the view from the WES to orient refuge education volunteers. Visit the WES on festival day to try your hand at dip-netting and then study the aquatic invertebrates you find!

the building for donors of \$1,000 or more. If you are in either of those categories, expect to hear more from us in the next few months.

Counting student visits, the May Pollinator Party, the grand opening celebration, the special Friends Be Wild donor event, and various other training sessions and visits, probably 1,000 people—including 700 school students—have already had an opportunity to tour the Oak Savanna Learning Center, walk the new trails, and visit the wetlands education station. If you aren't one of them—and even if you are—we invite you to join us at the Wildlife Festival on September 24 to experience first-hand what this special place has to offer. We think you'll be as impressed as we are with how this project has turned out. And we hope that you'll be impressed enough to continue your support as we make plans to welcome more students in coming years.

THANK YOU to Our Be Wild Donors!

We are still accepting Be Wild donations and are grateful for those who continue to make new or additional gifts to our campaign.

Thanks for Gifts Received Since Our Last Newsletter

Princeton Auto Center
Carol and Dan VanHeel
Sherburne State Bank - Becker
Clear Lake Lions Club
Princeton Rotary Club
Albert and Gunn Honican
Mary Ann Straley
Diane Stroschein in Memory of Bob and Vi Martens
Janet Brady in memory of Tom V. Brady
Princeton Lions Club
Big Lake/Becker Knights of Columbus
Sarah Foltz - Jordan and Nick Jordan
Deb Sorenson

Thanks for Recent In-Kind Gifts of Goods and Services

Prairie Restorations, Inc.
Connexus Energy
Howard Homes, Inc.
Stoneworks Architectural Precast, Inc.
Mary Korlath
Atlas Foundation/Structural Anchor Supply

**The Friends of Sherburne
gratefully acknowledge recent donors
New and Renewed Memberships through August 15, 2016**

New Lifetime Membership

Princeton Rotary Club
Clear Lake Lions
Stoneworks Architectural Precast, Inc.
Princeton Lions
Sherburne State Bank

Other Memberships

Cynthia Johnson
Duane and Lori Anderson
Betsy Kerr
Joyce Johnson
Robert & Gayle Herr
Margaret Moss
Sylvia Winkelman
Princeton Insurance Agency
Bremer Bank - Princeton
Teresa Warner
Mary (Karlle) Carlson
Bruno Gad
Myrna Menth
Shirley Eggersgluss
Shirley Miller
Mary K Carlson
Martha Fleck and Eric Tito
Nancy Blomgren
Gina and Dan Hugo
Marilyn Schroeder
Kristin Addison
Kathryn Rivers
Lynette DesChamps

Gail Hanson
Dennis Lebakken
Suzanne and Myron Angstman
John Gburzynski
Steve and Teri Erickson
Nancy McCreight
Kevin and Susan Brady
Mary Kay Harris
Bradley Bramer
Patty Murphy
Janet Rudd

**Memorials
for Helen DeLong**
Nancy Haugen
Sally Zodrow

for Dandy
Mary Kay Harris

Honorarium
For Robin DeLong
Wild Ones Prairie Edge
Wildlife Circle Donations
Monarch Butterfly
Edward Dayton
Robert Morgan
Delton Krueger

Corporate/Organization Members

Almost Anything LLC
Anoka Game Fair
Bank of Elk River
Bell Composites
Becker True Value Hardware
Big Lake Lions
Bremer Bank – Princeton Office
Connexus Energy
Crystal Cabinet Works
Elk River Chamber
Elk River Lions
Great River Energy
Howard Homes, Inc.
Knights of Columbus – Big Lake/
Becker
Metal Craft Machine
Pine Ridge Dental, P.A.
Prairie Restorations, Inc.
Princeton Auto Center
Princeton Lions
Princeton Used Clothing
Ray's Auto Body – Princeton
Princeton Insurance Agency
Sherburne County Swampbucks
Sherburne State Bank
SRW Products
Stoneworks Architectural Precast
Vela Strategy
Wetland Professionals Association
Zimmerman Dairy Queen



**Check out the new items at
the Wildlife Festival (*think
Christmas*) plus sale items
and our famous closeout bin!**

- *Children's craft kits*
- *Adult coloring books*
- *Sweatshirts*
- *New book titles*
- *Nature themed socks*
- *Stuffed animals*
- *3-D bookmarks, umbrellas, and much more!*

OPEN MONDAY-FRIDAY at Refuge HQ 8 AM-4 PM

and at the Oak Savanna Learning Center during events. Special holiday shopping dates: **Saturdays, Dec. 3, 10, 17, 9 AM-Noon**, at learning center.

**Friends Members receive a 10% discount.
Proceeds support refuge education programs.**

Thanks!

**Friends of Sherburne NWR
2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Brad Johnson—President
Myrna Krueger—Vice President
Susan Bialka—Secretary
Carol VanHeel—Treasurer
Darlene Antinozzi—Director
Sue Hix—Director
Cory Jendro—Director
Lee T. Johnson—Director
Su Johnson—Director
Dean Kleinhans—Director
Lisa Nelson—Director
Shawn Peck—Director

ADVISORS TO THE BOARD

Steve Karel – Refuge Manager
Michelle Bengson – Visitor
Services Manager

The Oak Savanna Learning Center – A Busy Place

By Michelle Bengson, Visitor Services Manager

“This is the best place ever!” exclaimed Madison, a first-grader on a spring visit to our refuge. Since acquiring the Oak Savanna Learning Center, we’ve had approximately 700 students visit our refuge for environmental education programming. Students of all ages, ranging from preschool to college age, of all backgrounds, and from as near as Princeton to as far away as California, have had the opportunity to experience our learning center and refuge.

The facility has made hosting and scheduling groups easy. We no longer have to worry about inclement weather cancellations or preparing coolers of thirst-quenching ice water, not to mention ordering portable toilets for refuge visits. Instead, we can now offer user groups a top-notch experience with a modern audio/visual system, durable education equipment, comfortable tables and chairs, and a fantastic shopping experience at the Eagle’s Nest Nature Store,



These Elk River preschool students are among the nearly 700 school students who have already benefited from an experience at the Oak Savanna Learning Center and the surrounding natural areas.

thanks to funds raised during the Friends’ Be Wild Campaign.

In addition to the education visits, we have used the facility this summer to train local teachers and refuge volunteers to use the refuge for nature education. These sessions helped prepare the teachers and volunteers who will be working with students and leading environmental education

programming for the many visits we have scheduled this fall. With our new, fully furnished center and trained teachers and volunteers, we are looking forward to hearing many more students making positive comments like Madison’s about our refuge!



Get Involved! New Refuge Photo Club

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Photography Club events take place the second Wednesday of every month at the Oak Savanna Learning Center and include field trips, educational programs, and other opportunities to hone your photography skills. **Contact Jill Beim, jbeim@outlook.com, or Mary ‘Karlie’ Carlson, maryc087@centurylink.net, for more information.** Photo by club member Andy Beim.

Share Your Talents with the Friends?

The refuge has a terrific volunteer program that you probably already know about. But did you know that the Friends of Sherburne also need skilled volunteers?

We invite you to get involved and contribute to the Friends in new ways by offering your time and expertise. If you would consider sharing skills and experience like graphic design, retail management, customer service, website management, communications, special event planning, or nonprofit board administration, contact us at friendsofsherburne@gmail.com to find out more about volunteer opportunities with the Friends.

THANKS to Our Plant Sale Donors!

Despite very cold and windy weather, our first Friends plant sale held at the Oak Savanna Learning Center as part of the refuge's Pollinator Party still made \$534. The plants that did not find a home that day found one the next weekend at the Sherburne County Master Gardeners' plant sale.

Many thanks to those who donated plants:

Cathy Hegg

Kevin Heitschmidt

Sue Hix

Nancy Howard

Gina Hugo

Susie Nosbush

Linda Secord

Amberly Suhsen

April St Aoro

Carol VanHeel

Marv Ziner

Sally Zodrow



Eagle's Nest Nature Store

A second location of the Friends of Sherburne Eagle's Nest Nature Store is open at the learning center during events and at other special times as announced throughout the year. The new store features expanded merchandise as well as more square feet of space. Mark your calendar for the first 3 Saturdays in December. The store will be open from 9 AM – noon on December 3, 10, and 17 for holiday shopping! The store location at Refuge Headquarters remains open from 8 AM – 4 PM, Monday – Friday (closed on federal holidays). Photo by Ken Brennen.



At the **Pollinator Party, International Migratory Bird Day, and Friends' Annual Plant Sale** events on May 14, there was a cool spring breeze, but fortunately we had our new Oak Savanna Learning Center to step into to warm up! Myrna Krueger, Carol VanHeel, and Nancy Haugen were dressed for the day, however.

This was the first public event in the new building and we had a nice turn-out of about 130 guests. Visitors enjoyed listening to local insect expert Sarah Foltz-Jordan from the Xerces Society, shopping at the new Eagle's Nest Nature Store, going on guided bird tours, scoping out the new trails, and learning more about pollinators. Photo by Mary 'Karlie' Carlson.



The Manager's Corner

by Steve Karel

Well, my Friends, WE DID IT! We broke the bottle of champagne on the side of the ship and welcomed it to the fleet! No, not really. I am metaphorically speaking about the introduction of the new Oak Savanna Learning Center to the National Wildlife Refuge System as we celebrated the grand opening on June 7, 2016. It was a perfect weather day and emotions ran high as numerous participants from around the community gathered to witness this long awaited event. To help set this ship a-sail was a fine group of VIPs that we had invited. These included the Midwest Regional Director of the USFWS, Tom Melius; the Midwest Chief of Refuges (and former manager of Sherburne), Charlie Blair; Friends of Sherburne president Brad Johnson; former Congresswoman Michele Bachmann; the principal of Zimmerman Elementary, Gretchen Fisher; the former Friends of Sherburne president, Sue Hix; and our young Friends and supporters Madison Fisher, Franklin Blake, and Marie Dey. And let's not forget our very own Puddles, the blue goose. Also present were several Sherburne County commissioners, staffers from the offices of Senator Klobuchar and Senator Franken, and my former supervisor, Jim Leach, who deserves a ton of credit for making the construction of this new building a high priority.

Once the VIPs concluded speaking, the ribbon was cut and the doors were opened. Beverages and snacks were provided by the Friends of Sherburne as visitors roamed throughout the new building, visiting the new Friends book store, checking out the new classrooms, and meandering their way down the trail to see the new floating education station on Schoolhouse Pool. This event marked the end of 20 years of waiting and hoping that this building would come to fruition. At the same time it marks the beginning of a new era when memories and lifelong experiences will be developed as people of all ages walk through the doors and enter a world of wonder learning about nature and wildlife.

Since construction was completed, the Friends of Sherburne have been very busy. They immediately jumped on outfitting the facility using funds raised through the \$250,000 Be Wild Campaign for Youth Nature Education. Items were purchased and installed, including an audio/visual system, tables and chairs, concrete sidewalks, kiosk, sitting wall, granite trail material, shelves and cabinetry for the book

store, landscaping, and the floating education station. Friends, volunteers, and staff came together to make sure the OSLC was ready for use ASAP.

You may have heard the term, "build it, and they will come!" Well, that is exactly what happened—from the day the hammers and saws stopped making noise. More than 700 students have already filtered through this new facility to experience the sights and sounds of Sherburne Refuge. As you can tell, an enormous amount of credit should go to all of you who have contributed to and supported this effort in one fashion or another. I thank you for your perseverance, persistence, and most of all a positive attitude to make the new Oak Savanna Learning Center turn from a dream to reality. For that, let's raise our glasses high and a big "cheers" to all of you!

Stay Wild, My Friends!

SHERBURNE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE 2016 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

September

Bird Tour

Saturday, September 3, **8am-11am**
Meet your guide at the Blue Hill Trail.

Wildflower Tour

Saturday, September 10, **10am-12pm**
Meet your guide at Refuge Headquarters for a car caravan tour.

Fall Wildlife Festival

Saturday, September 24, **10am-3pm**
See poster insert, this issue.

October

Sandhill Crane Tours

View thousands of cranes in late September and October. Stop at Refuge HQ for maps and information, or download info from refuge website, www.fws.gov/refuge/sherburne, in mid-September.

December

Winter Bird Bonanza

Saturday, December 17, **10am-12pm**
Join us for fun-filled activities as we teach children about birding during our annual bird count. Meet at the Oak Savanna Learning Center.

(Check a box below to select your category.)

	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>3 Years</u>		<u>1 Year</u>
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40	Corporate2-10 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Senior (62+)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40	. . .11-30 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	. . .31-60 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300
Family	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$95	. . .61-100 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> \$400
Organization (Student or civic group)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$95	over 100 employees	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500
Lifetime	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500			

Please send email link for the newsletter.
 Please send information about the Refuge Volunteer Program.

Other Ways to Support the Friends and Refuge Programs

(Check a box below to select the donation you wish to make.)

Friends' Wildlife Circle Donation

- Bald Eagle . . . \$10,000 and above
- White-tailed Deer \$5,000 – \$9,999
- Sandhill Crane \$1,000 – \$4,999
- Blanding's Turtle \$500 – \$999
- Monarch Butterfly \$100 – \$499
- Bluebird \$ 10 – \$ 99

Be Wild Education Fund

This gift will support the Oak Savanna Learning Center and its education programs and also defray transportation expenses for visiting student groups.

Memorial or Honoraium

This gift is in memory/honor (circle one) of:
Name: _____

- My employer has a matching gift program.
Employer: _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to Friends of Sherburne NWR, 17076 293rd Ave., Zimmerman, MN 55398
Membership fees and other donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Who Are The Friends? The Friends of Sherburne is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports refuge projects and educational programs.

THE PRAIRIE'S EDGE, the newsletter for the Friends of Sherburne, is published quarterly for its members in cooperation with Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. See us at www.ExploreSherburne.org as well as on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Contact the Friends c/o Sherburne NWR, 17076 293rd Avenue, Zimmerman, MN 55398, or at friendsofsherburne@gmail.com.



Wildlife Festival