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Springbrook Scholarships

Like many people right now, Nancy of Fridley doesn't have a full-time job. Her part-time job isn't enough to pay for her five-year-old son's activities. Thanks to the Springbrook Foundation's scholarship program he is looking forward to Nature Wizards. In another family, Granddad sponsored the two younger children's camp, but couldn't stretch to a third. The scholarship program made it possible for the oldest child to attend Nature Boot Camp.

This year SNCF budgeted \$2,000 for scholarships, but due to high demand the amount was increased by the Foundation Board. So far this year \$2,130 in camp scholarships have been awarded to 26 children. SNC staff work with school professionals to identify children who need and will benefit from camp.

Grants, Changes In Springbrook Future

Changes are happening at Springbrook Nature Center aimed at enhancing the park and making it more accessible.

Obvious to anyone driving along 85th Avenue is the bicycle trail that runs along the northern edge of Springbrook. It will be completed by the end of July. The trail passes through wetlands along 85th Avenue with boardwalks and two overlooks. The trail connects to the existing trail on University Avenue, and will eventually connect to the trail

on East River Road. The trail will end at the railroad tracks, awaiting completion to East River Road by the City of Coon Rapids. A federal grant provided primary funding with 20 percent of the cost coming from the City of Fridley.

A second project is the Lawrairie Beery Solstice Meditation Garden on the southwest corner of the Springbrook parking lot. It is the first phase of the Springbrook SPRING project. There are large stone benches, flowing water, flowering perennials, shrubs, and a view to one of Springbrook's open water areas.



This is the designer's rendition of the meditation garden with its large columns, whose shadows will point to summer and winter solstices.

In a third project, the Springbrook Foundation has received a grant from the McKnight Foundation to pay for half the cost of an architect for the conceptual plans and cost estimates for the SPRING project. The architect will put the SPRING project into sequenced phases with concept drawings that reflect actual space sizes, costs and materials planned for use in construction. By doing this the Foundation can assure that all of the projects will be done in an orderly fashion. The request for proposal is now completed and will be sent out soon.

Annual Auction Fundraiser Raises \$8,000 for Springbrook

About 125 people gathered at the North Air Event Center May 2 for The Springbrook Nature Center Foundation's annual Auction Fundraiser. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and socializing while bidding on the many interesting and attractive

silent auction items. Dinner with Mayor Scott Lund, a Toro lawn mower and consultation or work by the Springbrook Garden Club were auctioned off. Arlys Krauter and Cheri Sykes provided music, ending with a rendition of "God Bless America" as we

viewed a slide show of the Nature Center. The event netted more than \$8,000 to be used for the benefit of the Nature Center.

Thank you to all who attended and donated. A list of donors is on our website. Please patronize the many merchants who generously support us.

Buell: The Unusual Adult Volunteer Of The Year

About 70 volunteers and other people attended an enjoyable Springbrook Nature Center Volunteer Appreciation Dinner March 7. This annual event, hosted by the Nature Center staff, allows the staff to thank the many wonderful volunteers, recognize unique contributions and have some fun. Nature Center staffers Jan Swanson, Tara Rogness and Todd Miller did a superb job planning the event and conducting the recognition program.

Although not all volunteers are able to attend, one special volunteer did. He is the Adult Volunteer of the Year awardee – drum roll – Kent Buell. Kent also serves on the Springbrook Nature Center Foundation Board of Directors.

The purpose of the Foundation is fundraising and support. It is a not an organization of volunteers, per se, but virtually all of the members of the Board do volunteer. Kent more than most.

In the past three years, Kent has spent nearly 2000 hours at the Nature Center. His volunteering includes:

- Relieve the front desk staff (phone calls, taking reservations, answering questions, etc.)
- Helping with the preparation and organization of events

- Bird Banding program
- Audubon Feeder Watch program
- Helping with the Playful Polliwogs as Nature Santa
- Helping teach a portion of the school educational programs
- Helps to maintain the Nature Center web site

“I learned volunteering from my mother,” Kent said. Prior to moving to Minnesota, Kent had volunteered in leadership positions in his church, Junior Achievement, Cub Scouts, community theater, children's theater, the Berrien Birding Club (Michigan) and United Way drives.

When Kent first visited the Nature Center, he scheduled an appointment with Director Siah St. Clair. “The next week Siah had a traveling exhibit project for me, then another project,” said Kent. “I was hooked! Both my grandsons, Liam and Griffin, have volunteered at Springbrook. Griffin served last summer as a junior leader at the camps.”

On the Foundation Board, Kent



As Nature Santa, Kent Buell entertains a group of children at Springbrook.

manages the mailing list database and helps with fundraising initiatives. Although retired, Kent's career as a professional fundraiser provides very valuable insight to the Board. Kent's depth of experience and gentle demeanor are terrific assets to the Nature Center.

Several Changes On The Foundation Board

The Springbrook Nature Center Foundation Board of Directors enjoys a slow and continuous evolution of its membership; a very healthy dynamic.

In the past year, four new members have joined the Board. They are Corey Leet of Coon Rapids, Craig Jerome of Brooklyn Park, John Engstrom of Blaine and Brent Hodgeman of Spring Lake Park. The three members who resigned are Jeremy Powers, Bennie Loro and Joan Quade. The Foundation sincerely thanks these three for their many contributions to the Board and the

nature center. All three former Board members continue to volunteer on various activities of SNC or of the Foundation, including fund raising, the newsletter and special events such as Pumpkin Night in the Park.

Currently, the Foundation Board has 14 members and is continuously looking for new members. Any interested person is encouraged to contact the Chair of the Nominations Committee Jerry Hartlaub at 651.633.0281 or via e-mail at pj65@comcast.net.

Coopers Hawk Movie Stars

A Coopers Hawk nested and produced two chicks in May 2009 at Springbrook Nature Center, presenting a great opportunity to continuously observe the six-week-long chick development. Here's how. Several Foundation Board members and the Director Siah St. Clair undertook the amazing task of installing a small video camera 65 ft up a near-to-the-nest tree to view the nest and then wirelessly transmit the video signal for display in the Interpretive Center.

Foundation funds were used to purchase high tech equipment (camera, radio frequency [RF] transmitter, solar panel, 12-volt battery, voltage regulator, RF receiver, large TV monitor, recorder/player, laptop computer, and lots of cabling) for installation both near the nest and in the Interpretive Center. Former Board Member Jeremy Powers planned and purchased the equipment. Both Neal Hayford, another Board member, and Siah heroically scaled 65 feet up the observation tree several times during the installation. Jerry Hartlaub, a



The Foundation is working on bringing the lives of two Cooper's Hawk chicks to visitors of Springbrook. There were four eggs, three hatched and two survive.

Board member, spent many hours electrically testing and configuring the equipment. Care was taken to wait for the eggs to hatch so the mother would not be scared off by the tree climbing humans..

At this writing, all the equipment was assembled and made operational indoors, installed both inside and outside, and was partially operational outside. The team discovered that the heavy summer tree leaf cover between the observation tree and the

Interpretive Center greatly reduced the RF transmission range – much less than is needed. Work-arounds are being evaluated. Fortunately, the TV monitor and laptop computer provide an attractive continuous inside photo display. Also, a second short range video camera has been installed to observe close-to-the-Interpretive Center intriguing animal behavior. The entire high tech system should be an excellent natural world learning tool for years to



Medtronic Employees Restore A Prairie

A piece of native prairie at Springbrook has reclaimed itself a year after 30 Medtronic employees left their desks and labs to provide a vital service to SNC. They restored the one-acre overgrown parcel by removing invasive trees – mostly close-packed, stubborn buckthorn. The group was divided into teams of cutters, painters (cover stumps with Roundup®), draggers and pilers. Four hours, some humor and many scratches later, a tired Medtronic team had finished the job. A huge pile of cut buckthorn and cleared land was their product. The next step was for nature to reseed the cleared land, converting it back to prairie land. Foundation Board Member Valora Putnam, a Medtronic employee, recruited the workers via the Medtronic Mission in Motion initiative.

City of Fridley Recognizes Chairperson Mitchell's Efforts

Springbrook Nature Center Foundation's chairperson and long-time Fridley resident, Malcolm Mitchell, was formally recognized as an enthusiastic and tireless leader on behalf of the Springbrook Nature Center (SNC). As reported in the February 2009 City of Fridley newsletter, Malcolm joined the SNC Foundation Board in 2000 and has served as the Chairperson since 2004.

Under Malcolm's leadership the Board has successfully campaigned for a dedicated Fridley levy that afforded the SNC an ongoing and stable source of funding – in effect saving Springbrook. In addition, the Board has raised funds for many projects including boardwalk replacement, bridge replacement, construction of a handicap viewing platform, landscaping improvements, the installation of way-finding signs, and the implementation of a

scholarship program (enabling disadvantaged youth to attend summer camps).

During the last three years, Malcolm has worked tirelessly with members of the Fridley legislative delegation to raise state bond funding for expansion and improvement to Springbrook's Interpretive Center. The Foundation calls it the Sanctuary Protection and Renewal Into the Next Generation (SPRING) project.

Malcolm devotes much of his time to various Springbrook Nature Center causes. "I derive great personal satisfaction from working with the



Chairperson Malcolm Mitchell, right, with Fridley Mayor Scott Lund and "Elvis" at a Springbrook fundraiser.

Nature Center's staff and volunteers to provide a peaceful and accessible place for all people to enjoy and appreciate the outdoors," Malcolm said. His wife, Annette, is also a member of the Springbrook Nature Center Foundation Board and serves as its Secretary.

Springbrook Nature Center is a City of Fridley Park

The Friends of Springbrook is the membership and annual fundraising division of the Springbrook Nature Center Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.