



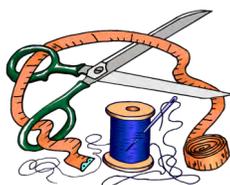
Dates to Remember

Volunteer Recognition Dinner

*Richland Community College, Salon I & II
Tuesday, April 5*

Join us for the 41st Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Registration starts at 5:30pm and a buffet dinner will start at 6pm. RSVP (217-423-7708) by March 25.

Rock Springs Quilters



*Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am*

Dulcimer Club

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Saturday, April 2, 16 & 30, 10am
Saturday, May 14 & 28, 10am
Saturday, June 11, 10am*



Acoustic Music Jam



*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Sunday, April 10, 2-4pm, Auditorium
Sunday, May 8, & June 12, 2-4pm,
Information Shelter*

Vintage Base Ball

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Beautiful Trobaugh Field
Saturday, May 7, 11am*



*Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.
McLean County Prairie Chickens vs.
Lafayette Square Cyclones*

Saturday, June 11, 12pm

*Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.
Belleville Stags*

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Welcome New Volunteers!

Desk- Cindy Grabowski

Garden- Celia Babcock

Prairie Heritage Volunteer- Sharon Andrews

Trail Monitor- Kevin Babcock

Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Did you know that April is Volunteer Appreciation Month? We have two appreciation events scheduled during April.

#1- The 41st Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner will be on April 5. This year we have 21 volunteers that will be honored for their service. Awards are given for every 4 years of active service.

#2- Volunteer Goodie Day will be on April 23 during the Festival of Spring. Drop by the Information Desk during the Festival of Spring to pick up a little goodie as our token of appreciation for all that you do. Limit one goodie per volunteer.

Thank you for being part of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family! In 2021, 398 volunteers donated over 6,790 hours of time. Wow! The year 2022 is off to a good start; during the months of January and February 79 volunteers have turned over 760 hours. THANK YOU!



Remembering Our Volunteers

Walter Babcock (November 1932 – February 2022)

Jody Beyers (September 1934 – February 2022)

Carl Brady (December 1952 – February 2022)

Don Meyer (August 1932 – February 2022)

Dates to Remember (cont.)

Rock Springs Ramble 5K Run/Walk

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, April 9, 8am



The Macon County Conservation Foundation will host their second annual Rock Springs Ramble this year. This race features a 5K, a Kid's Fun Run, and a one-mile Nature Walk. It will begin and end at the main

parking lot at Rock Springs Conservation Area and utilize portions of the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail. Registration is \$30/adult and \$5/child. In addition to being a great opportunity to exercise and explore nature, participants will receive plenty of swag, including top finisher prizes. All proceeds will benefit Macon County's natural areas and wildlife. Register at RunSignup.com/RockSpringsRamble

Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, April 23, 12-4pm

Celebrate Earth Day and welcome spring with an afternoon of outdoor family activities. Enjoy wagon rides, canoeing, a scavenger hunt, a live bird show from the Illinois Raptor Center, take home an activity kit, and learn what other organizations are doing in our community to protect water and wildlife.

Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon Society. Canoeing \$3/person. All other activities are free. No registration required. Visit our website for more information.

Independence Day 1860

Rock Springs Conservation Area,

Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, June 25, 1-4pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style. Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, check out the heirloom garden, and enjoy a performance by the Rock Springs Dulcimer Club at 2pm. Visitors are welcome to bring their own lunch basket and lawn chairs for a picnic on the lawn. Free. No registration required. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside the Rock Springs Nature Center.

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Farm Volunteer Training

Saturday, April 9 from 3:30pm to 5:30pm,

Washburn Classroom

Tuesday, April 12 from 10:30am to 12:30pm,

Greenberg Auditorium

Thursday, April 21 from 2pm to 4pm,

Greenberg Auditorium

Join the Prairie

Heritage Volunteers!

Share the sights,

sounds, and textures

of 1860 rural Illinois

with others. Learn

to give tours at

Homestead Prairie

Farm during a two

hour volunteer orientation. Choose one of three

dates above. Each session will meet at Rock

Springs Nature Center and conclude at Homestead

Prairie Farm, so dress for the weather. We would

like at least two volunteers or more to sign up for

each session to be held. This volunteer opportuni-

ty is for ages 13 and up. RSVP at least 2 business

days before the training

session.



Spring Volunteer Hikes

Wednesday, April 13, 11am at Friends Creek

Tuesday, April 19, 10am at Griswold

Monday, April 25, 1pm at Rock Springs

Friday, May 6, 2pm at Sand Creek

Thursday, May 12, 12pm at

Fort Daniel

Volunteers are invited to join us to learn a bit more about the different Conservation Areas while looking for flora and fauna. Meet us at the selected Conservation Area.



RSVPs appreciated, but not necessary. If you do register, we will watch for you and contact you if the volunteer hike is canceled due to weather.

Behind the Volunteer Scenes: Native Gardening

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Meet in front of Nature Center
Saturday, May 21, 10:30-11:30am & 1-2pm
Have you ever wondered about the plant and insect life found in the native garden in front of Rock Springs Nature Center? Join our volunteer gardeners for either session to learn more about the garden, future plans, and how you can create your own native garden at home. Rain date: Saturday, June 4. RSVP by May 19.



Summer Camp Volunteer Training

Rock Springs Nature Center, Greenberg Auditorium
Friday, June 3, 1-2:30pm



Helping with summer camps is a very rewarding experience. We offer opportunities to assist camp counselors with children ages 5-15. Volunteers help with activities, games, hikes, field trips, and more. RSVP by June 1.

Forest Bathing For Volunteers

Rock Springs Conservation Area, Meet at Homestead Prairie Farm Stage
Friday, June 24, 1-2pm
Slow down and learn about the calming effects of forest bathing. The practice of forest bathing encourages people to spend time absorbing nature around them in the moment. We will learn some history of its origins, then take some time to practice our new skills. RSVP by June 22.



Remembering Rodney Bruce Washburn

Lee Slider- Retired MCCD Staff Member & Norm Greenberg- Director Emeritus of the Macon County Conservation Foundation

An informal memorial to the vision, legacy, and unique personality of Rodney Washburn, who passed away in November 2021, will be held on Sunday, May 1, 2022, 2-4pm in the Rodney B. Washburn Classroom at Rock Springs Nature Center. Rodney was a past Deputy Director of Lands responsible for the initial amassing of land that comprise the holdings of the Macon County Conservation District.

Adept at writing land and program grants which allowed the District to increase its conservation and historic property holdings, Rodney obtained grants that required matching funds to augment the District's limited tax base. Later, Rodney and Jan Atkins sourced out other grants and money-raising opportunities—even in designing and selling souvenirs and selling food at District events. With the help of Norman & Harriet Greenberg, they organized in 1981 what would later become the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Rodney was Director Emeritus of the Macon County Conservation Foundation at the time of his passing.

Rodney had a light-hearted character, and it is in that vein that this memorial is being held. We are asking all who knew him to join us in remembering and sharing the stories, humor, and his legacy to the people of Macon County.



Volunteers in Action: A huge THANK YOU to Lonnie Williams for preparing the loaner fishing poles for the upcoming fishing season. Fishing poles are available for loan at the Information Desk. Ages 16+ are required to have a fishing license to fish on District property. Bait is not provided.

Volunteer Opportunities

Rock Springs Ramble

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, April 9, 6am-12pm

The Macon County Conservation Foundation is hosting a fundraising event featuring a 5K run, a Kid's Fun Run, and a one-mile Nature Walk. Volunteer opportunities include registration, assisting with the children's race, assisting with the 5K race, food service, photography, and more. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by April 1.



Sangamon River Clean-up

Rock Springs Conservation Area, Meet at Wyckles Road Canoe Launch
Saturday, April 23, 10am-12pm

Help clear trash from the banks of the Sangamon



River to make it a safer and more beautiful place for wildlife and people. Dress to get dirty and bring your own gloves. Bags will be provided. Come by yourself or bring the whole family.

Organized groups

should call 217-423-7708 in advance. Co-sponsored by the Community Environmental Council. Free. No registration required.

Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, April 23, 12-4pm

Volunteers are wanted to help in a variety of areas during the annual Festival of Spring. Volunteer stations include: canoe rodeo, wagon ride narrators, tickets for treasures, farmhouse tours, and more! This volunteer opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by April 14.



Independence Day 1860

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, June 25, 1-4pm

Volunteers are needed to help celebrate our nation's birthday 1860s style. We are looking for volunteers to lead tours. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information, contact Brent Wielt by June 17.



Summer Camp Volunteers

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Monday, June 6 - Friday, August 12



Volunteers assist trained camp counselors leading hikes, helping with crafts, and more! This volunteer activity is for ages 13 and up. For more information contact Jenny Garver by May 27.

Volunteer Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

The library relocation project has wrapped up and we are looking for volunteers to help out in our new location. Volunteers assist with checking out and reshelving books as well as maintaining our library collection. Our 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.

Vintage Base Ball

Macon County Conservation District



We are recruiting players for the upcoming vintage base ball season! Vintage base ball has attracted men and women for its slower pace, unique rules, showmanship, and sportsmanship. It's about friendship,

having fun, and showing people how base ball was played in the 1860s. Volunteers must be willing to travel to away games. Games are held a few Saturdays a month, with a few Sunday games scattered throughout the season. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 16 and up. For more information or to sign up, visit the Ground Squirrels Facebook Page [facebook.com/GroundSquirrels](https://www.facebook.com/GroundSquirrels) or contact Jenny Garver.

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.



To RSVP or Contact Staff In This Issue

Rock Springs Nature Center Staff: 217-423-7708

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Brent Wielt:

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"The purpose of life is not to be happy, but to matter- to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference that you have lived at all."

- Leo Rosten

Tidbits of Information

- Acoustic Music Jam is coming back! The first jam session for 2022 will be on Sunday, April 10. Music Jam will meet the second Sunday of every month, 2-4pm. Come out to listen to some great music and support our talented volunteers!
- Congratulations to Harvey Baker and Taylor Buley! Harvey was hired on as the Nature Center Custodian; he previously was a Seasonal Rock Springs Site Keeper for the Operations Department. Taylor has been hired on as a Weekend Naturalist.
- We provide nametags to volunteers that work with the public, if you need a nametag or a replacement contact Jenny.
- Volunteer Partner Feature: Are you a retired or senior volunteer, 55 or better? If so, are you signed up with Dove, Inc.'s Retired and Senior Volunteer Program? If not, please call Angie or



Kathy at Dove, Inc. (217-428-6616) to talk about the advantages of joining the network of AmeriCorps Senior



Volunteers who are serving in our community and making a difference in the lives of countless people.



Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Nature Center Manager

Spring is fast approaching and it seems Program Services will have a busy one! I'm pleased to say that we're booking more field trips and programs than we've been able to since COVID came along, and I hope that's a sign that things are improving. As I write this, we're in a series of warm days and we have had many people visiting the Nature Center and trails here at Rock Springs. I am optimistic of things to come.

As we look forward to spring, we start thinking about the Festival of Spring. This year's festival will be held on April 23 and while it will still be a bit different from 'normal' years, we have a lot of fun activities planned. In the morning, you can help with the river cleanup, learn about bird banding, or go on a hike. In the afternoon, enjoy activities like canoeing, wagon rides, a live bird show, farm and garden tours, a scavenger hunt, and more, including lots of great local organizations with displays and take-home activities for kids.

If you come to the Nature Center this spring, you might notice some changes and ongoing construction. The library recently moved into our lobby area, and the new EcoCenter exhibit should be open by the time you receive this newsletter. There is more going on behind the scenes as well, so please pardon our dust as we continue to change and improve the building!

We have lots of great spring programming planned and will be starting to work on summer programming (and summer camps!) very soon. I hope you'll join us for a wildflower hike, a canoe trip, Festival of Spring, or one of our other upcoming programs. Thank you for all that you do for the District!

Operations Update

Shane Ravellette - Operations Manager

If you have been on the trail north of the maintenance shop at Sand Creek, you may have noticed considerable work being done by our restoration team. Sometimes restoration can be a little unsightly. They are in the process of "opening up" a remnant oak and hickory savanna.

Savannas are a part of the native environment of Macon County and they historically appeared at the edges of prairies, especially as they border creeks and rivers. Ninety-eight percent of the original prairies in Illinois are lost, but if you look close, you can still find these savannas. They are often buried in newer forest and in invasive undergrowth.

Among our many priorities at the Conservation District is restoration of these native savannas. They fill a lost niche and they serve our local wildlife in ways others natural areas do not.

There are many benefits of this restoration:

- It will connect two prairies. Certain birds favor larger connected grasslands for longer flight paths and hunting areas.
- The white pines and red pines being removed are not native to Macon County. They were planted decades ago as windbreaks and as part of other outdated conservation practices. This little section has a great stand of young bur oaks which will be left to enrich the remnant savanna.
- Finally, the pines will be "recycled". This wood will be used for other projects that will improve District-owned areas and buildings. This will cut down expenses, saving the District money and reusing our "waste".

