

Volunteer Opportunities

WANTED: Volunteers to go seed collecting on District sites on beautiful fall days!



Native Prairie Plant Seed Collection

New Volunteer Orientation

Tuesday, September 6, 7–8:30 p.m.
Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park

Join us to learn native prairie plant identification and seed collection protocol from the District’s Plant Ecologist. Additional field training will take place at the seed collection site. The time commitment is flexible—each week a list of forays is sent by email and volunteers choose convenient locations and times. In 2010 volunteers collected seed from 105 native species, which saved the District a total of \$46,000!

NOTE: Collecting seeds without permission is POACHING. Collecting of any kind is not allowed at Conservation District sites.



Volunteer Meetings

Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Rt. 31 & Harts Rd. in Ringwood.
 For more information contact Volunteer Coordinator Denice Beck at: 815) 338-6223 or DBeck@MCCDistrict.org.

Required for new Trail of History volunteers

Orientation & Costuming

Thursday, Aug. 11, 7–9 p.m. or **Tuesday, Aug. 16, 7–9 p.m.**

From 7–8 p.m. new volunteers will hear an overview of volunteering at the Trail. From 8–9 p.m. volunteers who choose to wear historical attire stay to receive instructions.

All New & Returning Trail Volunteers — Don't miss the fun!

Sign up Night & Social

Thursday, Aug. 25, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Sign up for your Trail schedule and favorite station. Enjoy light refreshments, raffles and fun! Catch up with old Trail buddies as well as share your experiences with new volunteers. Volunteers who cannot attend must contact the Volunteer Coordinator from Aug. 26–Sept. 2.

Costume Check & Skills Training

Is your new costume ready for the Trail? Drop in any time to have our seamstress check it out. Workshops are required for new and returning volunteers working at those stations.

Thursday, Sept. 22

- 6:30–9 p.m.** Drop-In costume check
- 6:30–7:30 p.m.** Cornhusk doll workshop
- 8:00–8:30 p.m.** Candle making workshop



HABITAT RESTORATION Volunteer opportunities open to the public year-round

Do you want to help save the environment—but only have a couple hours to spare? Individuals, students, small groups, and families with children over age six can contact a Site Steward from the list below and participate in restoring native habitat at Conservation Sites. No experience necessary. Wear sturdy footwear and clothing appropriate for outdoor work and weather. Some sites offer service opportunities for larger groups—contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (815) 338-6223 or DBeck@MCCDistrict.org to learn more.

	LOCATION	SCHEDULE	SITE STEWARD – CALL AHEAD
SATURDAYS	Boger Bog, Bull Valley	Fourth Saturday of each month, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.	Ders Anderson (815) 455-1537
	Grundstrom Woods, Wonder Lake	Second Saturday of each month, 9:30 a.m.–12 p.m.	Chuck and Ann Dubsy (815) 728-9199
	Harrison Benwell, Wonder Lake	First Saturday of each month, 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.	Pat and Emily Heald (815) 575-1684
	Glacial Park, Richmond	Third Saturday of each month, 1–4 p.m. Meet at Lost Valley Visitor Center.	Ed Collins (815) 678-4532
	Pioneer Fen/Dutch Creek, Johnsburg	Third Saturday of each month; 9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Robert Roe (847) 668-8559, rroee66@gmail.com; http://sites.google.com/site/dutchcreekvolunteers/
SUNDAYS	Alden Sedge Meadow South, Alden	Third Sunday of each month, 1–3:30 p.m.	Judy and Jack Speer (815) 648-1372 or smwaters@intergate.com
	Cotton Creek Marsh, Island Lake	First and third Sunday of each month, 1–3 p.m.	Mike Bouska (815) 759-0731
	The Hollows, Cary	Variable Sunday schedule, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Margie Szymanskyj (815) 479-0988
VARIABLE	Alden Sedge Meadow, Alden	Variable	Dan Wilson (815) 236-9749
	Coral Woods, Marengo	Variable	Kathleen Roberson (815) 245-4093
	Fel-Pro RRR, Cary	Variable	Nancy Williamson (815) 459-0931
	Fox Bluff, Cary	Variable	Connie and Paul Ridl (847) 854-5109
	Lake in the Hills Fen, LITH	Irregular Saturday/Sunday schedule, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.	John Scott (847) 658-6241
	Pleasant Valley, Woodstock	Aug. 14 (Sn), 9 a.m.–Noon; Sept. 5 (M) 10 a.m.–2 p.m.; Oct. 9 (Sn) 9 a.m.–Noon; Nov. 25 (F) 10 a.m.–2 p.m.	Greg Rajsy (815) 814-5055 or quirkaceae@yahoo.com

Get to Know Our Volunteers

Myrna Nelson

...one of the District's "go to" volunteers

Take a snapshot of environmental volunteers throughout McHenry County and it's likely that Myrna Nelson, of Island Lake will be in the picture. Since retiring six years ago, her volunteer accomplishments are exhaustive (and some would say just plain exhausting!). At the Conservation District Myrna volunteers with the Education Services Department for programs and special events such as the Trail of History and Festival of the Sugar Maples. In addition she is also a member of Plants of Concern helping to monitor and collect native prairie plants at Lake in the Hills Fen Conservation Area.

When a special need arises Myrna is one of those "go to" people the volunteer coordinator can always count on to fill in a position when a program is short-handed. Myrna also spreads her time out to volunteer with other local agencies including the Friends of Moraine Hills State Park, McHenry County Audubon Society, McHenry County Historical Society, and The Land Conservancy's "Project Quercus".

Growing up on the south side of Chicago, Myrna recalls playing in nearby woods and along railroad tracks that she and her friends innocently referred to as "the prairie". She admits to leaving outdoor interests behind when she got busy with a teaching career, then marriage



"Volunteering brings together such a diverse group of people; it's hard to imagine that our paths would have crossed if we hadn't encountered one another through our mutual interest in the environment."

—Myrna Nelson

and motherhood. It wasn't until Myrna and her husband, Gerry, left the city and purchased their home in McHenry County that she began to develop a real interest in outdoor activities again. The seed of her involvement with the Conservation District germinated at public programs where she learned about the environment. From there her interest blossomed as she began sharing her new-found knowledge and enthusiasm as an education volunteer, assisting at Prairieview Education Center programs. Myrna continued to develop her environmental interpretative skills and recently completed a program with the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) to become a Certified Interpretive Guide.

Although her schedule is filled with grandchildren and volunteer activities, Myrna still finds time to attend District programs and is often accompanied by her grandson. She goes on every bird walk she can find the time for and especially enjoys those led by volunteer and avid birder, Dave Miller at Glacial Park. Myrna particularly admires the majesty of great blue herons and red-tailed hawks, even though they are common to our area. She is also amazed at how frequently we see and hear the calls of sandhill cranes, once an unusual occurrence, now fairly commonplace in McHenry County. Myrna interprets this to mean that we are finally seeing the results of doing something positive for the environment, and she's proud to be a part of making that happen.

When asked about her favorite District event, Myrna cast her vote for the *Trail of History School Day* without hesitation. Each year, on the Friday prior to the third weekend in October event, the District hosts up to 1,500 students from fifth grade classes from McHenry County schools at a



special presentation of the *Trail of History*. "It's wonderful to watch the amazement on kids' faces as historical interpreters bring to life people who they never knew existed, but who once lived in the same place where they live and go to school now," said Myrna. "Children start to understand that even though life was very different a hundred years ago, people were still very much like them." These are some of the same reasons that Myrna also loves the *Festival of the Sugar Maples*—because it presents a slice of life that most modern people don't know about. "The Festival gives people an idea of how much simpler things used to be... could be... and maybe even how it should be today. Imagine that—getting your maple syrup straight from a tree!"

So, Myrna, who spent many of her formative years in an urban environment, now seems to be making up for lost time. She helps children explore the wonders of nature through programs such as "Pond Life", "Ice and Snow" and "Lost Valley Ventures." At the *Trail of History* and *Festival of the Sugar Maples*, she shows people that our way of life is not the way things have always been and helps them to appreciate our historic ties to the land. By monitoring rare plant populations and collecting the seed of native prairie plants, she helps to ensure that they will thrive.

"Volunteering brings together such a diverse group of people; it's hard to imagine that our paths would have crossed if we hadn't encountered one another through our mutual interest in the environment. My friends inspire me on a daily basis—and I hope that I can inspire them, too. When we moved to the country, it felt like the far end of the world, but I'm awfully glad I'm here now!" exclaimed Myrna. 