



# The Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter

December 2014



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Tim O'Brien

## Become a volunteer in the **NEW** Trail Advocate Program

If you have a bit of time and a bit of talent, consider becoming a volunteer – a Trail Advocate – for the Illinois Prairie Path. Former board member, **Alan Bergeson**, is volunteering to establish and expand this new Trail Advocate Program.

He explains, "This new program provides an opportunity for members of the Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation (IPPC) to be more actively engaged in our mission by participating in advocate groups that are approved and recognized by the Board of Directors of the IPPC."

Trail Advocates must be: 1) current members of the IPPC or willing to become a member; and 2) willing to communicate via e-mail to assure accurate and timely communication with other members of the advocate group and the Board of Directors. **Two new programs are beginning:** **Kiosk Keepers** are volunteers who are willing to update the 15 kiosks along the Path. **Trail Reporters** are volunteers who will frequently travel a designated portion of the Path and report all safety and maintenance issues. Each program will have leaders (coordinators) who will communicate with team volunteers and the Board. Methods of communication will be at the discretion of the coordinators and the members of the team. Watch for more information about the Trail Advocate Program at [www.ippc.org](http://www.ippc.org).



Interested in volunteering?  
Contact Alan Bergeson at  
[AlanBergeson@comcast.net](mailto:AlanBergeson@comcast.net)



# Elmhurst Great Western Prairie – Volunteers will be needed in spring

**Work Days: Third Saturday of the month from March through November, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. in Elmhurst / Berkley Ave. and Prairie Path Lane (between Salt Creek and Spring Road).** Help pick up litter, clear weeds and brush, collect, spread and plant seeds.

Bring work gloves; wear work clothes and sturdy shoes. Contacts: David Price at [dprice@epd.org](mailto:dprice@epd.org) or 630-993-8909; or, Keith Olson at [keitholson@usa.net](mailto:keitholson@usa.net) or 630-834-7357.

On Saturday, October 18, long-time Path volunteers and former board members - **Keith Olson** and **Eric Keeley** - welcomed community volunteers and quickly began preparing them to help maintain the prairie.

They identified the different types of nearby prairie grasses - **Big Bluestem** and **Indian Grass** - and demonstrated how to run your fingers along the shafts of the grasses to gather seeds.

Approximately 50 volunteers logged in between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. They completed close to 80 hours of work. The group included volunteers from local high schools and members of Epiphany Lutheran Church.

Keith Olson helped establish the Elmhurst Great Western Prairie. He explains, "Prairie is our middle name – it's the Illinois **Prairie** Path and Illinois is The **Prairie** State."

"There isn't enough 'prairie' on the Prairie Path. A major problem of natural areas is connectivity - fragmented, isolated landscapes are landscapes in trouble. The IPP organization should promote additional prairie 'patches' on the IPP making the right-of-way a corridor for native plants and insects. Some of those patches could be Monarch Way Stations (see details at [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org)). What little prairie there is, needs attention. Invasive plants and woody growth all threaten a prairie, as do land grabs and neglect. As the Path needs continuity, the IPP organization and public spirited citizens need to resist encroachments and expand natural plantings including prairies."



*Legacy Volunteer Keith Olson, yellow jacket, welcomes and orients prairie volunteers. Keith has been involved with the Path since 1970 and he was present at the historic signing of the Path's expansion into Cook County in 1979.*



*Eric Keeley displays a praying mantis.*



## Plans under way to update trail signage in 2015

In 2015, you may see new signage along some of your favorite trails.

**DuPage County signage:** Have you ever noticed the very large system-wide trail sign mounted along the Illinois Prairie Path at Volunteer Park (located at the junction of West Liberty Drive and Carleton Avenue) in Wheaton? According to **Dan Thomas**, Principal Planner/Trails Coordinator, Department of Economic Development and Planning, the County will soon be replacing and improving the information on those large directional signs.

**Forest Preserve District of DuPage County signage:** **Jessica Ortega**, Landscape Architect Supervisor, Office of Planning explains, "A big component of the new signage plan for the Forest Preserve will focus on trail signage. Right now, we are reaching out to organized groups to get input and we've also provided an online survey on our website. " **To provide signage ideas, go to this link: [http://dupageforest.org/2014 Trail Signs Survey/](http://dupageforest.org/2014_Trail_Signs_Survey/)**

## How do you roll (or walk, run or ride)?



The Forest Preserve District is looking for ways to make it easier to get from point A to point B along the trails. If you've used a DuPage County forest preserve trail in the past six months, please take our survey and let us know what you like to do and which types of maps and signs help. [Click Here](#) to take the survey now. If you'd prefer a printed copy, please call our Planning office at (630) 871-6404. And thanks!

IMAGE © MANUEL DIAZ

## 2014 Annual Meeting Highlights

About 30 people attended the two hour Annual Meeting of the Illinois Prairie Path on Sunday, November 2, at the Wheaton Leisure Center. President **Erik Spande** honored attending Legacy Volunteers, and noted the passing of **Eugene Pomerance and Helen Bartlett**. **Susan Degnan** was nominated and approved to be the Vice President of the Board of Directors. Board Directors **Paul Mooring** and **Susan Terwedow** were nominated and agreed to serve three additional years on the Board of Directors. Paul has been an active member of the Board since 1971.

Treasurer **Rob Sperl** presented the Annual Financial Report.

The featured presenter was **Kim Butler**, Archivist at North Central College in Naperville, IL. Her presentation, **Preserving the Legacy of the Illinois Prairie Path** included an explanation of the archival process and how to access the archives, and photo highlights from the 50 year history of the Illinois Prairie Path

**Dan Thomas**, Principal Planner/Trails Coordinator, DuPage County Department of Economic Development and Planning provided a photo summary of Path improvements in 2014 and proposed improvements for 2015.

**Alan Bergeson**, retiring Board Vice President, announced two new volunteer initiatives – Kiosk Keepers and Trail Reporters. Alan has decided to continue on as a volunteer so that he can establish and expand these programs.



*Alan Bergeson and Erik Spande ask Kim if their IPP shirts are "archive-worthy" and should eventually be donated.*



*Kim Butler begins her presentation with the vision of founder and environmentalist May Theilgaard Watts. She notes the founders, including Dr. Warren Keck, held their first meetings at North Central College, now the home of the IPP archives.*



*Traditional foods served at former annual meetings – apple cider and rum cake (thanks Dick and Nancy Wilson) - were available following the meeting.*

## Community Presentations

On Monday, October 17, Kim Butler, Archivist at North Central College, presented the history of the Illinois Prairie Path at **Monarch Landing Retirement Community** in Naperville.

Approximately 45 persons attended the one hour program that included a film and a series of historic photographs depicting important moments in the Path's 50 year history.

Duane Mevis, former pastor and NCC alumni, introduced Kim and explained that he belongs to a biking group from Monarch Landing, and regularly enjoys the nature and beauty of the Path in all seasons.

On **Tuesday, January 20 at 7 p.m. at the Glen Ellyn Library** the **Prairie River Chapter of the Sierra Club** will be hosting a presentation by Kim Butler on history of the Illinois Prairie Path. The public is welcome to attend.



## In Memoriam

In 2014, Eugene Pomerance and Helen Bartlett passed away. They were both amazing volunteers who made significant contributions to the Illinois Prairie Path.

**Eugene Pomerance** was an IPP member for 46 years – from 1968 through 2014. He served as a board member with the founders from 1968-1973. He recalled, “We lived only a few hundred feet from the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin electric rail tracks. One day we saw bulldozers from the City of Elmhurst really messing up the right of way. We knew of the Prairie Path group from the publicity those girls had been able to get. I found one name (Helen Turner), called her, and she got the activity stopped. I was active with the Elmhurst Park District, and that may be why they reached out to me later to join the board.”

While on the Board, he worked with founder Helen Turner to create and publish *The Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter*. He developed the name, page layout and printing of the newsletters. His advice: “Keep it simple.”

He and his wife Ginny maintained one mile of the Path in Elmhurst, and in the late 1980s, they built the first gazebo. He also helped organize, secure and install the first street lights along the Path in Elmhurst. Most recently, he attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event in May 2013, the 2013 Annual Meeting, and he helped sort through all the IPP archives in the winter of 2013. His eye for detail, his brilliance and giving spirit will forever be part of the Path! His legacy contributions are preserved in his file at the IPP archives at North Central College.

**Helen Bartlett** began recruiting volunteers in 1993 to participate in the Illinois Prairie Path's Annual Spring Clean-Up. She continued recruiting through 2007. Over the years, she recruited *hundreds* of dedicated volunteers, who returned year after year to share their time and talent. She recruited so *many* volunteers, that often teams had to be assigned to work in other communities. Her commitment to volunteerism will forever be part of the Path!



**Gene and Ginny Pomerance in the first gazebo along the Path in Elmhurst. They built it from a kit.**



**Helen Bartlett (center) with Wheaton Annual Clean-Up volunteers**

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**Thanks for being an IPPc member! Invite your friends and family to become members and/or volunteers.** More information is available at [www.ipp.org](http://www.ipp.org) and Facebook. Contact the IPPc at [president@ipp.org](mailto:president@ipp.org) or call **630-752-0120**, or write The Illinois Prairie Path, P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60187.