



THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

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More than Just a Prairie Path

Marci and Chris moved to West Chicago in 2016 and were fortunate enough to buy a house right next to the Illinois Prairie Path. It has been a staple in their lives ever since. They love to walk their dog, Duke, on the path almost every day. Sometimes, it is the only opportunity during the day they can spend time together, get exercise, be in nature, and talk about their day. Not only do they love walking, but in 2020 Chris ran the fastest known time on the Prairie Path (all three branches and 2 spurs) in just under 11 hours (59.98 miles). <http://fastestknowntime.com/fkt/chris-kane-illinois-prairie-path-il-2020-10-10>

The couple loves the path so much they took their engagement pictures on the stretch by their house and when they got married in April 2022, in lieu of favors, they made a donation to the Illinois Prairie Path.



Marci Kane, Duke, and Chris Kane enjoying the IPP Geneva Spur

Lost Mile Marker Installed

Members of the IPPC board recently installed a missing mile marker on the Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Branch. Mile marker 5 was replaced at the Warrenville Trailhead on Saturday, June 25th. Although the weather didn't cooperate, a large canopy was placed over the "dig site" before the rain began. During the first hour of installation, several passing runners commented favorably about the replacement of "mile marker 5" – the missing reminder of training distances covered.



Board member, Dennis Terdy, placing the 100 pound post in the 3.5 foot hole

We Say Goodbye

Two of our Board members, Heather Mahler, Secretary and Newsletter Editor, and Erik Andersen, 15 year board member, have "retired" from our board. We express our sincerest thank you for their service to the Illinois Prairie Path and wish them both the very best. Their presence will be sorely missed.

Bike Rodeos in Glen Ellyn and Warrenville

On Saturday, May 21st, the Illinois Prairie Path was represented at the Glen Ellyn Bike Rodeo. The event was held in the parking lots just adjacent to the Illinois Prairie Path west of the Glen Ellyn Public Library. The Illinois Prairie Path arranged a display with path organization information, maps, and IPP keepsakes. Sponsored by the Glen Ellyn Park District, this bike rodeo provided residents and their children opportunities to get bike safety checks, ride through a safety bike course and view displays by the Glen Ellyn Police Department, Bike Illinois, and other organizations.

In addition, IPPc Board Members also participated in the Warrenville Bike Rodeo held on May 14th.

Changing of the Guard for Prairie Maintenance

For several decades, we have enjoyed the dedicated service of Larry Sheaffer to maintain the prairie remnants and plantings along the path. These include: Volunteer Park at mile marker 0, Founders Park, President Street and Hoffman prairies along the main stem in Wheaton, Maywood, Prince Crossing in West Chicago and Wayne. Larry has provided a great summary (in this issue) of his time with the Illinois Prairie Path and the areas he has managed.

Earlier this year, we reached out to local companies to take over the work that Larry has done. The one selected is IMB Ventures LLC owned by Isaiah Bedrossian. Isaiah was raised on native plants and prairies, natural woodlands and bio swales. He has worked with his father who owns Bedrock Earthscapes LLC in Wheaton and his brother, Jason Bedrossian, who owns Native Torch LLC. They have taught him the various practices used in natural restoration and controlled burns. Jason feels it is an honor to take over our prairie management. He says Larry has done an amazing job keeping the native areas clean and it really has been an enjoyable experience. He is looking forward to improving the areas. Welcome to the Illinois Prairie Path, Isaiah!

Aidan Hall Inspired by the Path - Inspiration for Others

My name is Aidan Hall, I am 17 years old and live in Elmhurst. This may be my last summer here, since I am a high school senior. So, I was hoping I could make a difference for the prairie path before I go to college.

As a York freshman, I wanted to play soccer, but I got cut. I still wanted to play sports, so I joined the no-cut cross-country team. I found a new passion even though my initial times were almost the worst on the entire team. The summer after freshman year I wanted to get better. I needed to put in the miles, and I can't stress enough how vital the Prairie Path was. Once I got to the path and could start running on it, I felt amazing. Seeing other people running and walking made me even more motivated. I could just keep running and running on it every day for miles. When I returned to the covid-compromised cross-country season my sophomore year, I worked hard with the team, but even harder when our meetings were canceled. I was still happy to run alone on the path. I worked hard again over the post-sophomore summer. Finally, during my junior year, the work finally paid off. I became the most improved on our team, with my 3-mile times going from over 23 minutes to under 18 minutes. (Editor's note: in one year!!) I even got my first medal at a race, getting into the last spot that earns one. I also made the state team as an alternate, and I earned a spot in the Nike regionals race as well. It was amazing, and I have the Illinois Prairie Path to thank for all of it.

Aidan attended the June 14 IPPc Board of Directors meeting. His summer plans now include:

- Increasing awareness of the IPP for all ages.
- Creating a path for younger individuals to volunteer for the path rather than just the current demographic.
- Getting more feedback to the IPP on possible improvements from the point of view of HS students.
- Encouraging fundraisers (increasing necessary donations for more improvements).
- Spearheading a Maywood cleanup with friends on July 17.

The Illinois Prairie Path corporation will support his efforts this summer. We admire Aidan's positive attitude and motivation to make a difference! Visit Aidan's new website, eppv.org, to learn more about volunteer opportunities.



Aidan Hall's first medal

My Passion for Prairies and the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP)

I consider myself to be an amateur naturalist who, paradoxically, has spent most of his time battling natural ecological succession. Whether it is a few hundred square yards, like the remnants on the IPP, or a few hundred acres on The West Dane Conservancy in Wisconsin, prairies are transition communities that give way to woodlands once natural processes like fire and grazing are stopped. Woody plants must constantly be removed manually, or by prescribed fire, to keep the prairie plants in full sun.

I became interested in prairies while in Graduate School for my Master's Degree in Outdoor Education at the NIU Lorado Taft field campus in Oregon, IL. While there, I was introduced to prairies by a field science professor, Doug Wade, and his wife, Dot. We took many field trips to prairie remnants near the school to observe the prairie plants and to remove nonnative and woody plants. Dot began the first prairie plant nursery in the state of Illinois. I worked at her nursery and became a close friend of hers. I learned the names and how to identify the native plants, as well as the nonnative plants that would invade. My interest became a passion as I worked to restore existing remnants in Wisconsin as a volunteer for thirty years, and then as a contractor, to reconstruct prairies through plantings in Illinois. I became a member of the Illinois Prairie Path sometime in the 70's, and soon after, became a board member. There are very few prairie remnants left on the IPP: Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, Wheaton and West Chicago. I started

managing two small remnants on the Path near where I lived in Wheaton, one just east of Hill Avenue bordering Hoffman Park, and another just west of President Street. After clearing the areas of brush, with the help of the Sierra Club, I worked as a volunteer on these sites, weeding, seeding, and

burning annually, until I retired from teaching in 2003.

While maintaining the remnants, I coordinated prairie planting projects in Maywood, Bellwood, Wheaton, West Chicago, and Wayne. I view these plantings as an educational opportunity, not self-sustaining ecosystems. I compare caring for the plantings, to maintaining a garden with no rows. Because I know the plants and the history of each planting, I try to pause whatever work I'm doing to answer Path users' questions. They usually relate to the name of a plant, its availability, and possible use of a particular plant in their yard. They, and many others, express their appreciation for the beauty of the plantings.

At Founders Park in Wheaton, there is a memorial boulder commemorating the IPP Founders. Originally, a garden of roses was planted around it. That planting became overgrown and unmanageable, so it was replaced with a prairie planting, a flagstone path, and a bench. A couple blocks west on Liberty, a prairie planting was installed with seeds and plants on the newly constructed slopes leading up to the repurposed railroad trestle. That planting has survived two major construction disturbances, and, even though it cannot be weeded as thoroughly as the other plantings, it has considerable diversity and spectacular blooming times. I have enjoyed my time working on the IPP prairie projects and have greatly appreciated the moral and financial support of the IPP Board. I hope the projects that have been started will continue to be valued and cared for.

Larry Sheaffer

Best wishes, Larry!

With our deepest gratitude to Larry and his decades of dedication to the Prairie Path, its maintenance and the preservation of native species. (Editor)



Larry Sheaffer's "handiwork" at Volunteer Park Prairie

Earth Day Clean Up - 2022

After a 2-year Covid hiatus, this year's trail wide cleanup took place on April 23rd, and did the weather cooperate! With recent cleanups experiencing violent spring storms, non-stop rain, and even a brief blizzard, this year's weather was perfect – mostly sunny and near 80 degrees. With planning for this Earth Day cleanup beginning in January, we are elated to say we had 18 site coordinators and their "crews" covering primary sections across the 62-mile Illinois Prairie Path. We also estimate these crews consisted of well over 250 volunteers making valiant efforts to clean the pathway after almost 35 months! Thank you for keeping our path safe and clean for all users!



Volunteer Earth Day crews cleaning up South Elgin (above), Maywood (bottom left) and Lombard / Elmhurst (bottom right)



New Pathways

Upcoming IPPc events and plans:

- Watch for new and updated mile markers throughout the IPP in the coming months.
- In progress, for the past few years, the IPP has been working with the Village of Warrenville for a newly designed IPP Heritage trailhead and park near Butterfield and Batavia Roads.
- Ongoing collaboration/endorsement of Bellwood's Optimization & Beautification Project at 25th Avenue
- In progress - replacement of IPP kiosk at 1st Avenue Trailhead in Maywood



Membership Drive - Warrenville

On June 4th, in partnership with Recycled Cyclery, the IPPc held a membership drive in Warrenville, IL. Our focus was to inform the community about our organization and its goals. What was abundantly obvious from the first person we met was that trail users have an enormous passion for the Prairie Path. We heard many stories of people moving to the area because of the path, how the IPP helped them through the COVID lockdown, and how the path is a communal place for users to bond with their pets while walking or jogging, etc. We left that event with a renewed sense of purpose!

For some of you that are not aware, the IPPc is an advocacy organization, a sort of Lorax for the Prairie Path! We support the local communities from everything such as prairie plantings to maintaining the various map kiosks, to installing mile markers, to providing other path amenities, such as trash cans and benches, etc.

With our updated website, you too can easily become an IPPc member and assist as we continually improve the path for all users!

Finally, all of us at the IPPc would like to make a special call out to Recycled Cyclery for the impressive support of our event. Recycled Cyclery is located at 28W571Batavia Rd in Warrenville and if Jeremy, Bob, and his team's incredible customer service does not impress you, their compelling and unique business model will! Among many other services, they offer lightly preowned bicycles that have been completely refurbished and look like new all at an affordable rate. We encourage you to visit their website at: www.recycledcycling.com!



We look forward to visiting with you during our next membership drive!

Membership Drive in Warrenville

January | February | March | April | May

Thank you

Your membership and donations are used to provide services and fund improvements benefiting Illinois Prairie Path members and users.

Lifetime Members

Steve Hyett
Chris Kane
Thomas Mulvihill

Donations

Andy & Amy Ashta
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