



To our members and friends:

June 2023 Newsletter

FAMILY CAMPOUT NIGHT RETURNS---FRIDAY JUNE 23

As announced in our May newsletter, we are pleased to bring this family camping opportunity back to the Preserve on Friday night June 23. Tents can be set up in the grounds area in front of Blackbear Lodge. We'll have a campfire going at sunset. Bathrooms will be available all night. We are collaborating with Goodspeed Cycle, who is organizing an "Off-leash Overnighter" event that same night that starts their ride from their store and continues into Griffith Indiana on Saturday. You can register for that bike trip on the Goodspeed Cycle website. (goodspeedcycles.com) That group will be camping in the meadow by the west picnic pavilion. Boy Scout troop 342 will also be camping out (east of the east pavilion) and they will cook breakfast for all campers (Mountain Man breakfasts which include egg, potato, and sausage cooked in Dutch Ovens, including a meatless option). So take advantage of this local and safe camping opportunity right here in Homewood. Cost for members is \$5 per tent; for non-members \$10 per tent. The Boy Scout breakfast can only be guaranteed for those who sign up for this event on our website in advance. But you can also just show up and set up tents that evening any time after 6p.

GAMES FOR EVERYONE! OUR TRADITIONAL JULY 4th VILLAGE PICNIC !

Last year, after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, we enthusiastically brought our traditional July 4 picnic back to the community which has been a local favorite in Homewood for decades. Last year's concept *Games for Everyone* (in lieu of the previous Park District Family Fun Fest) proved to be a big hit with enthusiastic participation across all age groups. So we will offer this event again this year but with better planning and organization !

The event follows right after the Village's *4th of July Parade* which steps off at 10a from downtown. Preserve volunteers provide the facilities and offer food and refreshments for sale (brats, hot dogs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, corn on the cob, corn pudding, gourmet sandwiches, soft drinks, water etc.) from 11am to 2pm

Games for Everyone will take place out by the pavilion in our east meadow.

*GENERAL GAMES for all ages will include foot races for young age groups, individual and 3 legged sack races for older kids, water balloon toss, egg toss and catch contest for adults and kids and potentially other games that we are working on. We will have prizes including Dairy Queen gift certificates for participants and winners. A schedule for all these games which will begin at noon will be posted on our website in advance and at the Preserve that day.

*TOURNAMENT GAMES will include **bag toss** and **volleyball** which will begin earlier at 11:30a. Teams finishing 1st and 2nd will receive cash prizes. Teams should sign up in advance on our website as **bag toss** will be limited to 16 teams of 2 players each and **volleyball** to 8 teams of 4 players each. All events will conclude at approximately 1:45p. Sign up in advance on our

1100 Ridge Road • Homewood, IL 60430



info@homewoodizaakwalton.com • tel:(708)-798-1850

website for all games. You can also “walk on” and participate in the games (but only if space is available for the bag toss and volleyball tournaments)

Furthermore, *Activity Stations* will be located around our beautiful grounds. Each activity station will be sponsored by a local organization or business that will offer fun things for kids of all ages to do. Participants so far include Homewood Science Center, Serendipity Yoga, Homewood Baseball, Goodspeed Cycles, John Harrell State Farm Insurance, Union Street Art Gallery, Fiddlesticks Forest School and perhaps others.

We have strong support from Board members to manage the event including Sam Casella, Jay Eagle, Shawn Straney, Todd Wittenberg, and Greg Busler. We’ll be calling on a loyal group of volunteers from past July 4 events to help with the event but we could always use more help. If anyone wants to volunteer to help, please send an email to info@homewoodizaakwalton.com.

So come on out and enjoy an old fashioned family oriented July 4 community picnic.

RESTORATION OF THE PIPELINE PATH BEGINS.....

As most of you well know, back in 2021, the Village of Homewood located a pipeline in the Preserve which was necessary to bring water to the Village from a new source, Hammond Indiana. The project required the clearing of a 50’ wide path of all vegetation and trees to allow room for the pipeline laying equipment to operate. At the time we called it the “path of destruction.” The swath of missing vegetation was somewhat shocking to observe. But we also need to remind ourselves that 90% of the removed vegetation was either undesirable or non-native, which unfortunately is common in many areas of the Preserve. The pipeline was successfully completed and after extensive and careful testing, the water from the new source began to flow in 2022.

As part of the contract with the Village, the contractor was required to provide a three year plan of vegetative restoration 2022-2025. The efforts of 2022 are still being analyzed by the monitoring requirement. The standard of success is replacement vegetation that is at least 25% native. Not a very high standard in our opinion but we don’t make the rules. It seems likely that at least some of the restoration efforts of 2022 were not successful, so the contractor may need to re-seed some areas along the path. Nevertheless, we now call this swath the “path of restoration.”

At the request of the Village, specifically the Public Works Department, we refrained from performing any of our own restoration work in and along the path until this year. We anticipated that we would also seize the opportunity to use the newly cleared out swath to reach further into the wooded areas on both sides of the path to remove more non-native trees and vegetation.

The mild winter of 2022-23 worked in our favor so on January 20, 2023, we began our restoration work on the west side of the path at the eastern edge of the Homewood prairie. With the guidance and direction of our Conservation Committee (Dave Zaber, Clayton Wassilak, Dave Sheppard, Carolyn Bury and Kevin Jennings), an enthusiastic group of volunteers cleared out that area which is about a 1/5th mile in length. Our contractors from Express Green, using their wood chipping machinery converted the removed material into piles of wood chips. On many additional days in February and March, the clearing work continued, done by this motivated group of volunteers including Greg Busler, Dave Zaber, John Sandala, Yan Deng, Gordon Pearce, Dan Galen, Warren Becker and John Brinkman.

.....THEN CAME THE NEW TREES

The clearing efforts allowed us to proceed with the acquisition and planting of 43 trees (all native species) along the path of restoration in mid-April. The species were selected by members of our Conservation Committee. Trees planted were Bitternut Hickory, Shagbark Hickory, Prairie Crabapple, Sour Gum, White Oak, Swamp White Oak, Hill's Oak, Red Oak, Eastern Redbud, Redpoint Maple, Virginia Ironwood, and Serviceberry. The same group of volunteers that did the clearing work also did the planting work. Dave Sheppard, who has extensive experience with trees, carefully directed the placement of each tree based on soil content and sunlight conditions. We hung Irish Spring soap in white pvc containers every 2nd or 3rd tree to keep the deer from nibbling on the delicate leaves. We are most pleased to report to you the success of this very large effort of restoration. Our plan is to continue the work, section by section, each spring and fall as resources and volunteer efforts allow.

RECENT BOARD MEMBER CHANGES

We report the recent resignations of two long term Board members: Dirk French and Steve Wlodarski. Both of these gentlemen have served with distinction for many, many years. Dirk served as president for two years after Bob Ahlf resigned in 2013. Dirk was vice president for several years before that, managed our plumbing needs and cut the grass in our grounds area for many years. Steve was our controlled burn coordinator for at least 10 years until 2019 and also visited our local schools conducting demonstrations of our controlled burn equipment. We will miss their contributions and enthusiasm for the Preserve but understand that personal circumstances can change.

Our By-Laws allow the Board to appoint replacement Board members to complete the three year terms of the departing members. We are most pleased to announce the appointments of Dave Zaber and Clayton Wassilak to our board; previously they both served on our Conservation Committee and will continue serving on that most important committee. They both bring wonderful conservation credentials to our collective efforts.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY CELEBRATION

On May 13, 2023, The Preserve hosted Homewood's first celebration of World Migratory Bird Day on behalf of Homewood's Public Works Tree Committee (see [World Migratory Bird Day in the Americas](#)). The event supported Homewood's becoming certified as a *Bird City Illinois* by the Illinois Audubon Council. Only a handful of Illinois cities bear that distinction.

Children and adults enjoyed a variety of indoor and outdoor activities including slide programs, birdhouse building, guided bird-watching tours, children's interactive games, and a photo exhibition of local birds. On that day, Audubon guides noted 61 species, a nice representation of birds that nest or live at The Preserve permanently or during migration. The guides trained a spotting scope on a Canada goose nest for public viewing.

Thanks go to local photographers Patricia Andersen, Jim Shover and Ken Pangburn, Boy Scout Troop 342, Chicago Audubon Society, Thorn Creek Audubon, and the Homewood Science Center Conservation Ecology Interns for contributing to a fun and educational celebration. Thanks to the Homewood Home Depot for donating the wood for the bird houses.

Your President, John Brinkman



FAMILY CAMPOUT

Friday June 23 at 6 PM

In front of Blackbear Lodge

See article in this newsletter for further details

