Conservation Congress 2020 – February 8, 2020
Conversation #2 – The Pursuit of Healthiness
Delegate Congressional Sessions

What can we do to make McHenry County a regional hot spot?
Conservation District is doing a great job. They are making connections from one conservation area to another.

Easy access to conservation sites is critical; make sites easily accessible to kids, especially bicycle paths. We need to have ways for kids to use the sites on their own.

We need to continue efforts to make people aware of the open spaces and Conservation District sites available to them. We need to tie use of sites to cell phones and to other technology. This will engage more people.

We need both active and passive opportunities to be out in nature. Have a variety of activities and a broad spectrum of ways to engage with nature.

Have Conservation District participate in employer sponsored health fairs and wellness events. Leave Conservation District brochures out in the public spaces (cafeterias, break rooms, HR departments).

Additional Concepts/Ideas:

- PACE should have stops at Conservation District sites so that people can get out to the sites and be picked up.
- Encourage hunting and fishing.
- Market forest bathing
- Encourage geo-caching.
- Develop clubs and facebook groups based around outdoor activities
- Give awards for outdoor participation.
- Use Mapmyhike.

How can we use healthier communities as a way to gather support for our conservation mission?
Reach out to the healthcare community to intertwine the Conservation District and healthcare. This can pull in people who might not know about the District and conservation.

Let people who become highly involved in supporting the Conservation District have off-trail privileges. This can provide opportunities for “wow” moments that then foster a love for conservation and a sense of ownership of Conservation District sites.

Advertise the health benefits of Conservation District sites with signage and educational materials. For example, on the bike trail you can have a sign that says, “You’ve just ridden 10 miles! You’re going to feel a lot better!”, or show how many calories you can burn if you hike this trail (like the way restaurant menus show calorie counts). Can show study findings about the benefits of being outside (less stress, less inflammation, better cognitive ability, lower blood pressure, etc.)

Social media messaging about the health benefits of conservation.
How can our District grow partnerships with those in the health industry?

Host a meeting of health community members to discuss partnerships. DCFS and CASA are highly connected to the at-risk child community and might be open for partnerships/programs. Northwestern medicine recently bought Centegra – do they have existing programs of this nature and if not, can we develop any? Connect with the American Pediatric Association and the County Health Department, Insurance Companies.

Create education materials to be left in waiting rooms for doctor’s offices and the health department. Instead of looking at a 3-year old copy of Sports Illustrated they can look at Landscapes! Create a magazine targeted to the health benefits of getting outside. A brochure for Conservation District on how to use areas to benefit physical and mental health. Provide nature related mental health tips in newsletters and on website. “Did you know that McHenry County Conservation District is a healthcare provider? ...”

The development and use of Apps to aid use of recreational opportunities including “know before you go” type information. See Starved Rock App as an example on using that park. That App costs $2. Connect with retirement communities to promote District sites as opportunities for healthy living.

Encourage and involve local companies in getting people into employee health care fairs; employees do not need developed open space and natural areas in order to benefit from being in and/or near them. Provide some trainings and outreach to businesses. Healthcare providers to get reduced insurance premiums by providing programs for employees.

Several watershed groups in McHenry County are working to arrange to work together to promote activities within the watersheds; collaboratively communicating benefits to the public. Watershed groups have historically focused on erosion control etc. but could expand knowledge for the use of waterway to improve health and promote the cost/benefit of recreation; fishing, kayaking, walking, etc.

Additional Concepts/Ideas:

- Do health professionals need continuing education and could we provide those opportunities?
- Connect with the American Pediatric Association and the County Health Department.
- Create education materials to be left in waiting rooms for doctor’s offices and the health department.
- Need tax payers to understand values. Tree calculator – Morton Arb understand economic value of a tree in your own backyard.
- Appoint a Health Care provider as a board member on the Conservation District.
- Corporate Partners – Corporate Retreat to Conservation District.
- Faith based delegates and coordination.
- Promote the idea: You don’t want to be last generation to do _____ in nature.
What makes for a good life here in McHenry County?
Balance.
Good health. There’s not enough money in the world to replace good health.
Family is important. Use outdoor time as a way to encourage family togetherness. Picnics, reunions, games, camping, etc.
Grandparents go to see the kids play in organized sports but don’t then invite those kids to take a hike with them. Shift perspectives to remind people that spending time together outdoors is just as important as watching the kid at a soccer game.