

Get to Know Our Volunteers



Mark & Lorraine Fritzmann — *Volunteering Couple* by Volunteer Coordinator Bob Menard

“Volunteering as a couple has been twice as rewarding for us because we experience together all the fun and interesting things about conservation and nature. If there is a program we care strongly about, we feel like we have made twice the impact by working together as a couple.”

In recent years, McHenry County Conservation District has started out the New Year with a Volunteer Fair at Lost Valley Visitor Center in Glacial Park. Individuals, couples or families looking to kick off the year discovering ways they can give back, stop by to learn about volunteering opportunities with the District. They are greeted by both volunteers and staff who share information about the numerous opportunities and activities available for volunteers to engage in at conservation areas throughout McHenry County. These range from educating people about nature and keeping local history alive to restoring habitat, preserving ecological diversity, and promoting public safety.

In January 2019, Mark and Lorraine Fritzmann stopped in the Volunteer Fair. Over the previous 10 years, they had led bird walks and assisted with bird counts for numerous Audubon groups in Illinois and Wisconsin and were now considering some additional volunteering opportunities, as they had both recently retired. While at the Volunteer Fair, they met volunteer Jim Johnston and learned about the District’s Safety Watch Education and Environmental Program (SWEEP).

SWEEP is coordinated by the Conservation District’s Police Department and combines recreational activities, such as hiking, biking or cross-country skiing with passive crime deterrence and public safety education. Safety watchers ensure that site users have a safe, enjoyable experience while visiting conservation areas, and report any potentially unsafe conditions or any suspicious activities.

As hikers and bird watchers, The Fritzmann’s decided that the SWEEP program was a good fit for them. It gave

them another purpose to go out hiking a couple of times a month, most often at Glacial Park. From that connection, the Fritzmann’s also learned about and volunteered with Conservation District Police at the annual National Night Out event in August. Mark and Lorraine went on to learn about several other volunteer opportunities, including those involved with the environmental education team. What sparked their interest was assisting as tour guides at the Festival of Sugar Maples, held each March at Coral Woods in Marengo.

Volunteers are needed two weekends to assist as tour guides and logistical support at the annual event that draws hundreds of people– and the only requirement is to attend a morning training session learning about the history of maple sugaring, tree tapping methods and modern day sap collection methods.

“Initially we thought we would focus on bird related programs only,” commented Lorraine. But Mark suggested prospective volunteers should be open to new areas of interest. “Go in with an open mind when learning about volunteering opportunities. And be sure you have the time, ability and drive to do what interests you.”

Lorraine and Mark didn’t stop there. They soon started volunteering to support a variety of public programs that helped educate participants on butterflies, frogs, wildflowers, and backyard birds. “I learned a lot while working at the butterfly events. It was interesting to observe the different stages of a Monarch Butterfly, up to and including their tagging and release,” said Mark. Another volunteer shift they picked up was assisting with setup, greeting of public, and popcorn making at the First Friday summer concert series - where they got to enjoy listening to a concert with a view of the sunset over the Nippersink valley at Glacial Park.

“Mark and Lorraine are always willing to

go the extra mile. They are approachable and a pleasure to talk with. They always make the public feel at ease and very comfortable. They are very dependable and an absolute pleasure to work with. I look forward to working with them in the future,” commented Amber Ross, Education Program Assistant.

“Mark and Lorraine work well together and for the District! They are always just as enthusiastic to get a job done well as they are to learn about the program topic. Their can-do attitude and hard work is always appreciated,” said Elizabeth Mays, Education Program Assistant.

“Volunteering as a couple has been twice as rewarding for us because we experience together all the fun and interesting things about conservation and nature. If there is a program we care strongly about, we feel like we have made twice the impact by working together as a couple. Often we share ideas when we get home on how to enrich the program,” said Lorraine. “We enjoy spending time doing something that aligns with our core interests which are nature and conservation, working with educators, and being outdoors surrounded by people with common interests!”

Lorraine and Mark enjoy spending time working in their yard and gardening. Birding during spring and fall migrations is a favorite past time. Glacial Park is one of their top locations to visit due to its diverse bird habitat. We thank Lorraine and Mark and all of our volunteers for their time and efforts supporting our public programs and keeping our trails safe. 

Interested in volunteering?
Contact Volunteer Coordinator Bob Menard
at (815) 338-6223 x1201
or Volunteers@MCCDistrict.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

HABITAT RESTORATION DAYS —

Want to make a difference?

Come check out these great outdoor service opportunities! Volunteers will help tackle invasive species, learn about the plants and animals who live there and have fun. *Families are welcome (minimum age 6 years old with parental supervision). Students fulfilling requirements and groups of five or more must register at least 1 week in advance.

RSVP Your RSVP helps up to plan appropriate activities, have enough equipment available, and alert you in case of cancellations due to weather. Due to COVID, workdays have a maximum of 10 participants until further notice. Please RSVP directly to the workday leader or sign up online here: MCCD.me/RestorationRSVP.

What Do You Need? All activities are outdoors and off trail. Come prepared for the weather and outdoor work. Wear close-toed shoes, long pants, and long-sleeves. Bring drinking water, work gloves, and insect repellent. Due to COVID, it is recommended to bring hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes for any tools used.

Sign-in & Waiver All volunteers need to sign in at workdays, since the sign-in sheet includes a waiver. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign a waiver before the start of the workday.

Workday Leader, Contact Info & Parking Contact information for volunteer Site Stewards and parking instructions are below. Some site stewards are happy to work with you individually or schedule a small group workday by request.



Get Outdoors and Give Back
Nov. 27 is #GreenFriday
Restoration Day!

Contact the Site Steward of one of these 5 sites for special social distancing instructions and meeting spot.

No experience necessary. Dress for outdoors and bring your own work gloves. Families welcome!*

- 9 a.m.–Noon @ **Exner Marsh, Lake in the Hills**
- 9 a.m.–1 p.m. @ **High Point, Harvard**
- 10 a.m.–1 p.m. @ **Pleasant Valley, Woodstock**
- 1–3:30 p.m. @ **Alden Sedge Meadow, Harvard**
- 3–5 p.m. @ **Coral Woods, Marengo**

(See contact information below)

All large groups or corporate workday requests should be sent to the volunteer coordinator at jbero@mccdDistrict.org.

	LOCATION — MAP ON INSIDE BACK COVER	MONTHLY SCHEDULE	SITE STEWARD — CALL BEFORE YOU GO!
SATURDAYS	Alden Sedge Meadow South, Alden/Harvard Parking: 15820 IL Route 173, Harvard	12/19, 1/16, 2/20; 1–3:30pm	Jack & Judy Speer, smallwatersNFP@yahoo.com or (815) 648-1372
	Boger Bog, Bull Valley Contact Steward for parking location	1/23, 2/27, 10am–12pm	Ders Anderson, danderson@openlands.org or (815) 451-8496.
	Dufield (McConnell Rd. Entrance), Woodstock Parking: 11418 McConnell Road, Woodstock	12/12; 9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Jeff Schumacher, schumacher.jeff1@gmail.com or (815) 337-9315
	Exner Marsh, Lake in the Hills Contact Steward for parking location	12/19, 1/16, 2/20; 9am–12pm	Len Bannon, lennsandy@gmail.com or (847) 669-1381
VARIABLE	Cotton Creek Marsh, Island Lake Parking: Lot behind St. John Lutheran Church 405 W State Rd #176, Island Lake	Sundays: 12/6, 12/20, 1/3, 1/17, 2/7, 2/21; 1–3 p.m.	Mike Bouska, MikeBouska@att.net or (815) 759-0731
	Coral Woods, Marengo Parking: 7400 Somerset Dr, Marengo	Contact Site Steward for dates.	Bonnie Leahy, bh.leahy@att.net or (815) 923-2208
	High Point, Harvard Parking: Varies — contact steward	Tuesdays: 12/8, 1/12, 2/9; 9a.m.–1 p.m.	Orrin Bangert & Randy Stowe, glaggan@yahoo.com or (815) 943-6333
	Marengo Ridge, Marengo Parking: Varies — contact steward	Contact Site Steward for dates.	Kevin Kucharski, kucharski.kevin@outlook.com or (815) 715-3231;
	Pioneer Fen, Johnsbury Parking: 4300–4598 Red Tail Ct., Johnsbury	Contact Site Steward for dates.	Pat Sullivan-Schroyer, psullivanschroyer@gmail.com or (815) 675-9004
	Pleasant Valley, Woodstock Parking: Varies — contact steward	Contact Site Steward for dates.	Greg Rajskey, quirkaceae@yahoo.com or (815) 814-5055
	Stickney Run, McHenry Parking: Varies — contact steward	12/12, 1/24, 2/13; 9am–12 pm	Pete Jackson, beepjackson@comcast.net or (224) 612-1803
	The Hollows, Cary Parking: Varies — contact steward	Contact Site Steward for dates. (Spring, Summer and Fall only)	Margie Szymanskyj; szymanskyj@earthlink.net