

View from the Hill

A newsletter for friends and members of Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. | SPRING 2016

Hey Nineteen!

Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist

There's a song that I've been singing as of late (very quietly at my desk, mind you)—*Hey Nineteen* by Steely Dan. Now I may be dating myself, but I remember when that song was released in 1980 and I instantly took a liking to its catchy notes and lyrics. Even now when I hear that song, it conjures up some really great memories, including those of our annual Spring Fever Fundraiser. Nineteen years ago, we held our very first fundraiser banquet and I am proud to say that I have been involved with the last 18 of them. I know that there are many volunteers, supporters and even staff members that have been affiliated with the nature center for an even longer period, but when I sit down and reflect on my connection to this wonderful facility and what we've accomplished over the past 19 years, I can't even believe time has gone by so quickly!

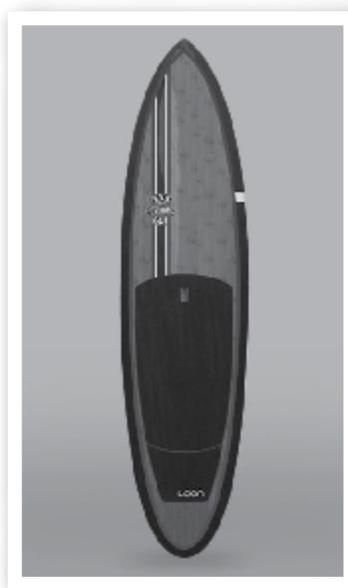
Nineteen years ago, former Mosquito Hill Director Jim Anderson and a troop of volunteer visionaries set into motion what is now our annual Spring Fever Fundraiser. Its intended purpose was to offset the more than \$775,000 price tag for an addition, allowing us to triple the size of our interpretive building. A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into that building design and fundraising effort. Because of it we now have a very functional space in which to offer both public and school programming

on a much larger scale. I tip my hat to Jim and the many dedicated souls who made that dream a reality.

By now you've heard that we are moving forward with our latest vision to renovate the original interpretive building and its exhibits. To do this, we will need to continue our annual fundraiser banquets for a few more years. If you haven't had the opportunity to attend one, you're missing out on some good food, great prizes, awesome attendees and lots of fun. Located right here in our sacred center, the 19th Annual Spring Fever Fundraiser will take place on Tuesday, April 19 (how apropos!), with dinner being served at 19:00 (seriously!). With odds like that, why wouldn't you want to join us? And did I mention the prizes? This year's big raffle includes two (yes, two) kayaks, a stand up paddle board, overnight accommodations with dinner aboard the Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad, and two (yes, two!) noteworthy cash prizes, not to mention dozens of other remarkable prizes at the banquet that you need to have (trust me).

One final note: this wouldn't be a proper article if I didn't express my gratitude to all of the wonderful volunteers, visitors and supporters of the center that I have met over the past 19 years. I get a little choked

up over the past 19 years. I get a little choked



2016 Spring Fever raffle includes this Badger Limited stand-up paddle board.



Our Mission

The Friends of Mosquito Hill support, promote and enhance Mosquito Hill Nature Center. We realize this mission through volunteerism, fundraising and our shared passion for nature.

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Hey Nineteen! *from page 1*

up when I reminisce about the friends I have made while working at the center and the dedication they have to this facility. All of us share the same passion—the desire to have wild places and green spaces in our community to go and become one with Mama Nature for awhile.

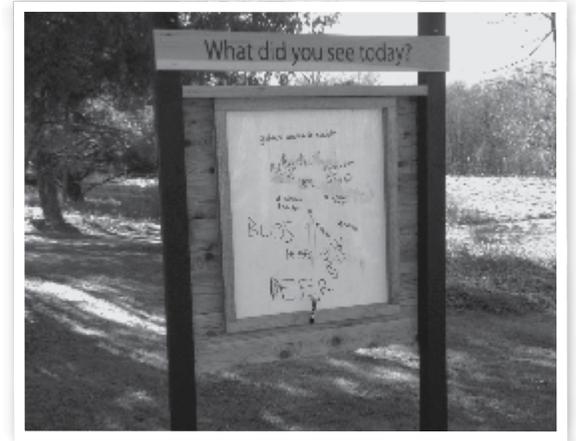
Please help us continue this legacy and help it grow and change. Your financial and/or physical support ensures we can keep a good thing going for another 19 (or more) years.

Eagle Scouts' Efforts Communicate Clear Messages

Cole Breuer, Troop 629, Oshkosh, designed and installed an outdoor *What's Happening Today?* dry mark board for visitors to write their nature sightings for others to look for or learn about. This board also helps the staff to know where animals like deer, fox or badger are being seen on the property. It's another step in engaging people of all ages with nature. Children in particular enjoy sharing their experiences and excitement with other visitors who will walk the trails.

Alex Kroll, Troop 618, Oshkosh, installed eight new signs that are highly visible at major trail heads letting the public know that pets and bicycles are not allowed on the trails or property. This ordinance benefits wildlife and other visitors using the center. In November, these professionally-made hinged signs are flipped down to alert hikers that trails are closed during the gun deer season and there is no hunting allowed on the property.

It's great having young men from northeast Wisconsin supporting MHNC on their way to achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Thank you Cole and Alex and congratulations on a great job!



Cole Breuer, Troop 629, Oshkosh, designed and installed the outdoor dry mark board.



Alex Kroll, Troop 618, Oshkosh, installed eight new signs.



Feather Fest Flying High in 2016

Mosquito Hill Nature Center has strongly supported the city of New London as a Bird City Wisconsin member. Each year International Migratory Bird Day is celebrated around the state by Bird Cities to raise awareness of migratory songbirds and how we can help them thrive in an urban landscape. This year Feather Fest, a free, family-friendly event is being held in the beautiful and rustic Hatten Park on New London's west side.

On **Sunday May 1 from 8:30 – 2:00** a variety of bird related activities will fill the day for all ages. Activities include a Big Sit, a presentation about wood ducks (including a nest box building workshop), horse drawn wagon rides, a bird ID hike, invasive plant ID hike, discovery bird chest, pinecone feeder making, vendors, concessions and more. For more details contact the nature center.

Playscape No Longer Just an Idea

Steve Petznick, Assistant Naturalist

It's always exciting when an idea goes from concept to reality. That's exactly what happened with the new Playscape at MHNC. The staff has talked about the growing concern over nature deficit disorder and how to combat it without people feeling like they are being "forced" to enjoy nature. As part of the display renovation in the interpretive building, there was the additional idea of creating a natural playground area where kids could jump, climb, run and balance in a safe but natural setting. Subconsciously young people want to do these activities anyway as part of developing large motor skills. Adults call it play. This past fall Ryan Handler, an online student from UW-Stout, chose to complete his environmental class assignment at Mosquito Hill. We discussed the Playscape concept and explained the need to encourage children to be outdoors. Ryan quickly grasped the bigger picture and our goal to create a multi-aged playground made of natural items.

The nature center's Breakfast Club, students from Catalyst Academy (a New London public charter school) and community service volunteers all assisted with the completion of the first phase, building activities known as Rock Hop, Log Walk, Timber Bridge and a sledding hill.

At first visitors didn't know we had a Playscape area because it looks like an area of rocks and logs, but this winter when the sign came out for the sledding hill, that changed everything. The sledding hill is located along Rogers Road on the side of the old amphitheater/quarry. The run is short but fast and people really



enjoy it! The newly built staircase makes it easy for people to get back to the top safely.

We plan to add more activities in the coming years including Boulder Climb, Tunnel Tour, slides and, hopefully, a whimsical tree house that will overlook the entire play area. We need people in the construction field or who can operate heavy equipment to volunteer their talents to complete the next phase of development. The tree house will require considerable time and talents to complete phase two. The tree house will take considerable financial backing, but the dividends paid back to the families and children who will use the house are priceless.

Our next steps are to place signs directing visitors to the Playscape. We will add activities as the opportunities present themselves. And remember, all good things in life start with a simple thought, an idea, and with the right people involved, great things happen.

The newly-built staircase makes it easy for people to get back to the top of the sledding hill safely.



Calendar of Events



www.mosquitohill.com



Opposites Attract

Look for this symbol indicating special astronomy events taking place this year. Many planets will be in opposition which means they will be closest to Earth. This will make for great viewing opportunities! Please plan to join us for one or more of these programs.

Outdoor Cooking with Cast Iron

Saturday, April 2, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Learn how easy it is to cook with cast iron over an open fire. We'll make a hearty stew with fruit cobbler for dessert. Dean Sauers, AKA the Brutal Gourmet, will lead you through the steps from food prep through clean-up. All ages are welcome.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH
Registration and payment due March 29.



Third Thursday Lecture Series: Forests of Wisconsin

April 21, 9:30 – 11:00 AM
Ron Jones, from Jones Forestry and a former forester with the Wisconsin DNR, will speak on Wisconsin woodlands.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH
Registration and payment due April 15.



Third Thursday Lecture Series: Aquatic Invasive Species— Concerns and Strategies

March 17, 9:30 – 11:00 PM
Learn about aquatic invasive species from Chris Kolasinski, Water Resources Technician for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The program will feature a general overview of aquatic invasive species looking at what they are and how they spread. Find out how the DNR, water resources groups and the general public are partnering to control populations of these undesirable and damaging plants.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due March 10.



Annual Midwest Crane Count

Saturday, April 16, 5:30 – 7:30 AM
The Annual Midwest Crane Count is a tradition dating back to 1976 and one of the largest citizen-based inventories in the world. It helps the International Crane Foundation to monitor the abundance and distribution of both sandhill and whooping cranes in the upper Midwest. Annually, the count involves more than 3,000 volunteers from 100 counties in five states. Anyone interested in assisting with the count needs to attend the training session on Saturday, March 26.

Basket Making Workshop

Saturday, April 23, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Learn how to weave a summertime wall basket with a handle. Instructor Jeni Mursau will lead you through the process of using flat reed to create a finished piece that is 8"x5"x6.5" Choose from a hummingbird, butterfly or dragonfly embellishment. Dyed reed will be used to create a grass and flower motif on the completed basket. No previous experience is required. Optional staining will be available for an additional \$3.
\$45/person. Registration and payment due April 15.



Annual Midwest Crane Count Training Session

Saturday, March 26, 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Be a part of the Midwest Sandhill Crane Count taking place on Saturday, April 16. Anyone interested in participating in the Count must attend this training session. We will review an instructional video, learn about crane biology, receive site assignments and learn how to enter our data into an online database. Sign-up for both Outagamie County and Waupaca County will be held at Mosquito Hill Nature Center.
No charge. Please call to RSVP.



Saturday Morning Bird Walks

April 23, 30, May 7, 14, 21, 28
7:00 – 10:00 AM
Join us for any or all of these Saturday morning walks. All skill levels are welcome. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars (or borrow a pair of ours), field guides and waterproof boots.
No charge.

Paddle the Lowland Forest

Saturday, April 30, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
This leisurely paddle through our lowland forest occurs only when the Wolf River floods its banks. If water levels allow, you won't want to miss this unique opportunity to explore the woodlands by canoe or kayak. Participants need to provide their own equipment including a properly fitting personal flotation device (PFD) for each person that must be worn while on the water. Children 15 and over are allowed to participate with a parent/guardian.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH.

Unless otherwise noted, advance registration and payment are required. Call 920-779-6433 or e-mail mary.swifka@outagamie.org.

Display Renovation Update

Mike Hibbard, Director

Our display renovation project is moving to the next level. A committee of volunteers and the Mosquito Hill staff are about to finalize a schematic design of our new exhibit space. In 2015 we rolled out a concept sketchbook of what new exhibits might look like. On March 22 and 23 we will meet with the design team from Split Rock Studios where we will prioritize exhibit ideas, brainstorm new possibilities and develop a formal plan.

The plan will include preliminary floor plans, descriptions and sketches of major display elements, a narrative walk-through of the exhibit space and a preliminary budget and timeline for the overall project.

The plan will be presented in a drawing and content book which will include scaled floor plans, elevation drawings of key display areas, descriptions of each display area including audiovisual and interactive components of the displays. This schematic design phase of the project will be completed over the next few months.

The drawings, budget and timeline developed will enable us to ramp up fundraising efforts. A sneak peek of some of the drawings and descriptions will be presented at the Spring Fever Fundraiser and will be on display in the interpretive building in late April.



Feather Fest

Sunday, May 1, 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM

See details on page 2.

natural beauty of four European countries. Travelling upstream on the historic and scenic Rhine River, this presentation with photographs will introduce you to Amsterdam, located below sea level, Germany, France's Alsace region and Switzerland, where the Bernese Alps scrape the sky at more than 13,000 feet. Mosquito Hill naturalist Mary Swifka and volunteer naturalist Dean Sauers will share highlights of their 3-week journey including windmills, castle ruins, quaint town squares, vineyards and high-altitude lodging.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH
Registration and payment due May 13.



Mars in Opposition

Saturday, May 21, 8:00 – 10:00 PM

Learn about the mythology of the Greek god of war, Ares, and the planetary science of Mars by special guest speaker Ken Fix. The history of past and current missions to the red planet, including what our robotic rovers are up to now, and the potential for terraforming and colonizing Mars will be discussed. Weather permitting, telescopes will be used for viewing and possibly photographing Mars.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH
Registration and payment due May 13.



Transit of Mercury

Monday, May 9, 8:30 – 11:00 AM

This daytime indoor and outdoor program will introduce you to the tiny, innermost planet of Mercury. During the morning hours of May 9, Mercury will travel between Earth and the sun. Special filters placed on nature center telescopes will give us the chance to see this phenomenon.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH.
Registration and payment due May 5.



Growing Green

Saturday, May 21, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

The 5th Annual Growing Green is a popular event dedicated to achieving a healthier lifestyle for people of all ages. Hourly presentations focus on gardening, healthy eating and healthy living. Vendors sell local or handmade wares including jewelry, plants, natural foods, clothing, artwork and much more. As always, we'll have our painted rain-barrel raffle and healthy concessions. Please check our website for vendor and presenter updates closer to the program date.



Saturn – the Ring King in Opposition

Friday, June 3, 8:00 – 10:00 PM

Saturn and its rings will be discussed along with its numerous moons. After the indoor presentation, participants will view the planet through telescopes, weather permitting. Dress in long sleeves and pants for possible mosquitoes; insect repellent is discouraged around optics.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors & FOMH
Registration and payment due May 28.

Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition

Wednesday, May 18

Watch for your invitation.



Third Thursday Lecture Series: From Sea to Sky—Travelling the Rhine River and Switzerland

May 19, 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Learn about the history, culture and

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Address Correspondence To:

Friends of Mosquito Hill
N3880 Rogers Road
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(920) 779-6433
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Interpretive Building Hours:

Tuesday-Friday:
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday:
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Staff:

Loren Dieck, Director, Outagamie County Parks
Mike Hibbard, Director/Naturalist
Steve Petznick, Assistant Naturalist
Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist
Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant
Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator

Newsletter:

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Wetland Room Renovation in the Works

Shiloh Ort, FVTC Intern

A new exhibit under construction in what is fondly known as the Frog Room offers a look at the different functions of wetlands, from a home or habitat for many creatures to a pollutant filtering bio machine. Enjoy the Wonders of Wetlands where imagination can lead to scientific discovery. As you crawl through the Busy Beaver Lodge, see birds overhead and live turtles swimming about in their display, it is easy to believe you are in a wetland. The Bog Bounce and Marsh Muck activities will offer a tactile learning environment to get everyone excited for the outdoors. Before you leave the room, don't forget to take a peek in the Wood Duck Window to see what happens in those boxes that are built and set out for our feathery friends.



Beaver Lodge under construction

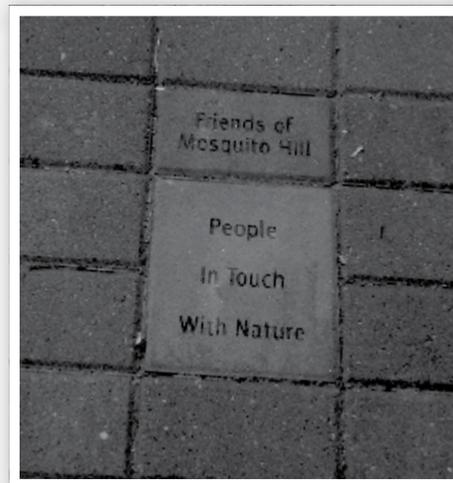
Shiloh Ort is a student in the natural resources program at Fox Valley Technical College. He completed his 40 hour internship at MHNC this past winter by designing the activities and helping with some of the building process. Watch for the completed exhibit soon.

Help Blaze a Trail This Year

The *Blaze a Trail Engraved Brick Program* is a fundraising effort of Friends of Mosquito Hill. Numerous engraved bricks have already been purchased and installed on the patio at the entrance to the *All People's Trail* since 2008.

This program is ongoing, and we would love to add more. The personalized bricks are available in two sizes: 4"x8" and 8"x8", with plenty of room for your inscription. They make a great gift to honor or remember a loved one. Proceeds from brick sales go toward further development of the *All People's Trail*, helping put all people in touch with nature, regardless of their physical abilities.

Forms may be picked up at the office or we can mail one to you. Gift brick purchases are a tax deductible contribution.



Welcome new volunteers!

Welcome Mike, Marihya, Dustin, and Bruce!

Volunteer Voice

*"You make a living by what you get, but
you make a life by what you give."*

– Winston Churchill

*Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator
e-mail: volparks@outagamie.org*

“You all did a wonderful job; this was great! Thank you for volunteering!” I’m passing on what I overheard at our Snowshoe Races and Winter Family Fun Day. Volunteers also said they were thanked by racers as they passed by on the trails, as well as at games, concessions, admissions and the office. Volunteers continually give their time and talents because they love being here and they believe in what we do. But to be thanked by people directly benefiting from their work means the world to all of us. April is Volunteer Appreciation Month. Volunteers are active in so many capacities in our communities. Let’s all make a point of thanking them as they do their part to make this world a better place.

Friends of Mosquito Hill is our membership organization. FOMH provides funding for this newsletter, supports our volunteer program, enhances educational programming and raises funds for Mosquito Hill Nature Center. The Friends board of directors is actively working on a fundraising plan for our exhibit remodeling and outdoor playscape. The annual meeting of FOMH is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18. This is an opportunity for all members of FOMH to hear the financial report from the board, and learn about future plans. If you have not yet become a member, we encourage you to do so. The financial support from memberships sustains activities and builds for the future of our nature center.

In conjunction with the annual meeting on May 18, we will recognize our dedicated volunteers with a meal and celebration. Watch for your invitation in late April, but mark your calendars now!

In past issues, we have shared our efforts to collaborate with other agencies, businesses and organizations. Our work continues with Harbor House and the *Warrior Princess Mud Run* and with the Fox Valley Memory Project and our *Memory Cafe*. This year’s Growing Green event pairs us with Wild Ones and TrustWorks, as we join to promote healthy living and sustainability. It helps us get the word out about

our individual organizations by reaching expanded audiences through our networking.

We are very excited to announce another collaboration in the works for early 2017. *Cash in Your Attic* is being planned with Donaldson’s Gourmet and Gifts, Hortonville and Water Street Vintage, New London. All we can say for now is, don’t be too quick to discard or pass on those vintage and unique items you may have stashed away. I hope we’ve sparked your curiosity.

Do you have some time to share?

We seek volunteers who are interested in fundraising, marketing and board positions. With exciting things ahead, we want to bring even more energetic people on board to rally our communities in support of MHNC. Please consider this opportunity to share your talents and gifts.

Children will be walking the trails regularly this spring. Help them remember this experience as a volunteer naturalist. Through working with staff and veteran volunteers, you will gain the knowledge and techniques to make these field trips a great experience for students.

With our big events, a lot of set-up takes place the day before, and a big mess is often left for clean-up the following day. Volunteers are welcomed in these spots as well, to make the events run smoothly and put the building back to normal.

Another way to promote our nature center is to staff our booth at community events or help at a brat fry. It’s a great opportunity to share your enthusiasm for MHNC, hand out newsletters and flyers and sell some raffle tickets.

In addition to booths, we get the word out through social media and posters. As you drive around the area, make a few stops to drop off newsletters and posters for events to increase our visibility.

Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.

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N3880 Rogers Rd. • New London, WI 54961
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