



## To overcome fears, Ciera got out of her comfort zone

By Ciera Addison, Forest Preserve Experience Crew Member

The Forest Preserve Experience program was a very educational and unique way to spend my summer. During the program, I found myself experiencing things that I had never encountered before. Not only was I able to try new things, but I was also able to build bonds and network with different people. This definitely beat being at home, doing chores, and being on my phone everyday.

The biggest lessons I've learned from my time in the program is that consistent, hard work pays off and teamwork makes things much easier. Some of our daily tasks taught me this. From cutting and pulling invasives to clearing areas as much as we could, it was always more fun working in teams and working hard with our team members.

**Being in the forest has made me less afraid of the world around me and more open to trying new things.**

You can accomplish so much when working with Friends of the Forest Preserves. I even overcame a couple of my fears. I'm no longer terrified at the sight of a small spider. And I'm not afraid of entering a boat. Being in



Melissa Horther

Ciera Addison overcame fears and built bonds with fellow crew members during the Forest Preserve Experience. She worked on the Jurgenson Crew in Lansing, IL during the summer of 2017.

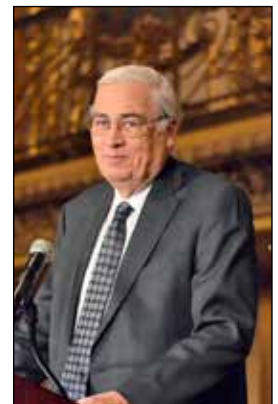
the forest has made me less afraid of the world around me and more open to trying new things.

One of my biggest struggles is trying to connect with others around me. Friends has helped me reach out to so many people because it is a program that requires communication with everything that's done. I now find that I'm less nervous when encountering new people. I really look forward to working with The Forest Preserve Experience program again in the future!

## In memory of Charles Kierscht

Charles (Chuck) Kierscht passed away peacefully at his home in Hinsdale on June 29, 2017. He served for eight years on the Board of Directors for Friends, five as Board Chair. Chuck was an amazing mentor, a calming presence, an excellent Board Chair, and simply a wonderful person.

Chuck received his bachelor's degree and Juris Doctor from the University of Iowa. After proudly serving in the Navy, he joined Kemper Financial Services as an attorney in 1966 and retired from the company in 1995 as chairman, president and CEO. Putting all others before himself, he generously gave his time volunteering for many organizations, including 26 years on the University of Iowa Foundation and 24 years on the Law School Foundation. He also served as Chairman of the Grant Park Music Festival. Chuck is missed by us all.



## News from around the Preserves

### 1 Conservation corps expands to 5 year-round crews

Friends of the Forest Preserves, in partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, will have five year-round conservation corps crews in 2018. With strong support of a broad range of foundation, government, private, corporate, and individual funders, the Friends community will have 30 adults working in the preserves for 30-hours per week, year round. The crews will be deployed with one in each of the five regions of the District.

### 2 Stewards, FPCC honored for work at Poplar Creek

The Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards and the Forest Preserves of Cook County were honored with a Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award. The Platinum Accreditation recognizes their excellence in habitat restoration and management of Shoe Factory Road Prairie Nature Preserve and Carl Hansen Preserve near Hoffman Estates. The awards showcase the region's best examples of natural areas that benefit both wildlife and people.

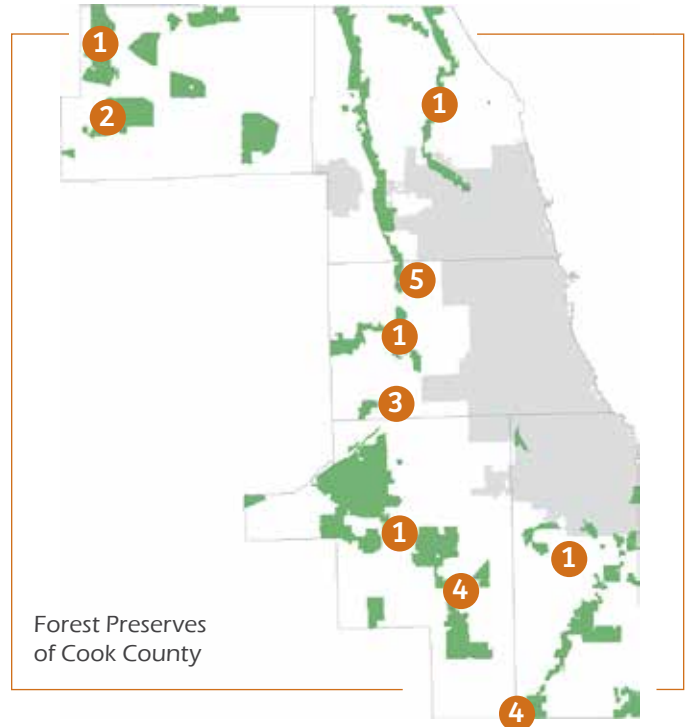
The 9-acre nature preserve is surrounded by more than 300 acres of prairie, savanna, and woodland and has been managed by the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards and the FPCC for more than 25 years. A rare gravel hill prairie is also protected at the site.

### 3 Friends founder honored by parks association

Barbara Birmingham, one of Friends' founders and a long-time steward at Theodore Stone Forest Preserve, was given an award by the Illinois Association of Park Districts. Barbara received the Outstanding Citizen Volunteer Award for being an exceptional force for the forest preserves and a tireless advocate for nature.

For the last 25 years Barbara and her husband, George, have served as dedicated site stewards at Ted Stone, lovingly protecting and restoring the preserve. Ted Stone is a 142-acre forest preserve near Hodgkins that contains a globally rare dolomite prairie, upland and remnant oak woodlands and prairie. Barbara also serves as the lead regional steward and helped organize the Des Plaines River Valley Restoration Project.

The Cook County Department of Public Health and the FPCC were also given an award. They were honored with Best of the Best Awards for their partnership to connect residents to the physical, emotional, and mental benefits of spending time in nature. The partnership enabled the FPCC to implement its Gateway Master Plan, build new and strategic relationships with healthcare providers, and expand its reach and leverage key resources.



### 4 31 more acres added to preserve holdings

The Land Conservancy of Will County donated a 1.05 acre parcel of land adjacent to King's Grove near Park Forest. The land has a value of \$147,390 and will provide a buffer to other holdings in the area. The existing pool and poolhouse on the property will be demolished by the donor following the closing on the property transfer.

The FPCC purchased 29.94 acres of land near Tinley Park. The parcel is an inholding of St. Mihiel Woods. The parcel cost \$2,152,000 and \$760,000 is funded by a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.

### 5 Dedicated restoration funds now in FPCC budget

After cutting restoration funds by 35 percent in 2017, the FPCC administration has made a strong move toward shoring up that funding over the long term. Previously funds for restoration were transferred from a reserve account, essentially a savings account, and were not part of its annual budget appropriation leaving the funding very vulnerable. The 2018 budget incorporates \$3.9 million for restoration into the regular budget as a line item, stopping the unsustainable draws from reserve funds.

But there is still much to be done. The goals set forth in the FPCC's Next Century Conservation Plan require \$40 million annually, with \$13 million of that just for ecological restoration. The Friends community believes that without healthy nature, the forest preserves fail in the mission to provide natural lands, together with plants and animals, for the education, pleasure, and recreation of the people in Cook County.

# Part 1 of 2: Trails are the great connector

By Douglas Chien, Advocates' Network Manager

Trails are emerging as a major point of both advocacy and partnership building between Friends and various community groups and fellow non-profits. Trails, whatever their shape, condition, or configuration, are how most people experience the forest preserves.

The forest preserves in Cook County contain about 350 miles of official trails, with approximately 150 miles paved and 200 miles unpaved ... grass, dirt, and gravel. There are also hundreds of miles of unofficial trails that range from narrow foot paths winding through prairies to 10-foot wide slashes through woodlands. While some of these unofficial paths provide needed access to areas for habitat restoration, far too many of them stem from visitors trampling the same route over and over regardless of the resulting erosional damage. The Friends community focuses advocacy and conservation work on both official and unofficial trails. People have and will continue to use all manner of trails to access the preserves, which is why the Friends community works to help maintain official trails and mitigate damage done by unofficial trails.

The Busse Woods Night Ride is a prime example of using trails to advocate for the preserves and build relationships. The Night Ride began as an idea in 2015 to expand community programming and outreach by Friends of Cycling in Elk Grove, an entirely volunteer-run group. It took collaboration with Friends of the Forest Preserves to turn this good idea into reality.

“The event provides cyclists of all ages with the unique experience of biking the Busse Woods trail at night. FCEG and FOTFP’s mutually beneficial partnership promotes



Douglas Chien

Volunteers make use of an official natural surface trail to explore Paw Paw Woods Nature Preserve in Willow Springs.

LaBagh Woods, on the northwest side of Chicago, also illustrates the promise of trails to connect communities. Over the last four years, LaBagh has been the focus of considerable investments by the volunteer stewardship community, Friends, Friends of the Chicago River, and

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**... trails are how most people experience the forest preserves.**

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the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Long standing volunteer stewardship work led by the North Branch Restoration Project is being bolstered and expanded by fresh recruitment efforts through the Centennial Volunteers program. The Chicago Ornithological Society is helping lead the transition from buckthorn-choked woods to thickets of native shrubs, which will maintain LaBagh’s status as an important migratory bird layover area.

Of regional significance was the opening this summer of an extended North Branch Trail, closing a gap and creating an off-street route from the Lakefront Trail in Chicago all the way to the Chicago Botanic Gardens.

This past September we held our first ever Beer in the Woods event at LaBagh. LaBagh was selected in order to showcase the ongoing ecological restoration work. It is also one of a handful of forest preserves in the City of Chicago and is accessible via public transit. Finally, with the newly expanded North Branch Trail, LaBagh now literally connects numerous communities.

Trails are a powerful connector of people and nature and will continue to be a priority for our community. When they are poorly built and maintained they can cause ecological damage and result in a negative experience for users. The Forest Preserves of Cook County currently has limited resources committed to trails. The Friends community will continue to prioritize trail advocacy and assist with maintenance where we can help.



Susan Brushaber

The Busse Woods Trail in Elk Grove Village plays center stage at the Busse Woods Night Ride. The event, a partnership with Friends of Cycling Elk Grove and FPCC, brought together over 250 people last fall.

the many benefits of local trails and allows both organizations to share the vast network of trails within Chicago and surrounding communities,” said David Simmons, FCEG President. The third annual Busse Woods Night Ride took place in September and the 2018 ride will be on August 25.

## Friends of the Forest Preserves 2016 Annual Report



Edward Vitralis

### *A letter from Board Chair Stephen Schlegel and Executive Director Benjamin Cox — sorry for the lateness of this report.*

Friends mission: We are the voice of a diverse community inspiring and organizing people to protect, restore, and expand the forest preserves in Cook County. Our community is made up of advocates, members, volunteers, partners, staff, board members, conservation corps members, funders, forest preserve users, and many more people. Thanks to each and every one of you we are stronger than we have ever been and we are getting more done than ever before.

At our core, Friends is an advocacy organization and always will be. From fallen trees blocking trails to potential land grabs, we work on a wide range of issues. We continue to advocate for footpaths and more resources for trail care, which will mean a better user experience. And, after more than 10 years, we are still hard at work with local neighbors and volunteers to ensure that we secure the best outcome possible for the Quentin Road expansion through Deer Grove, the nation's first forest preserve.



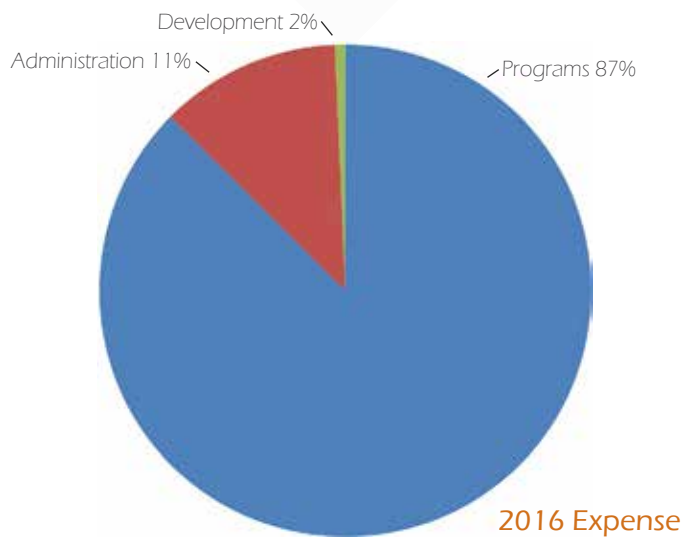
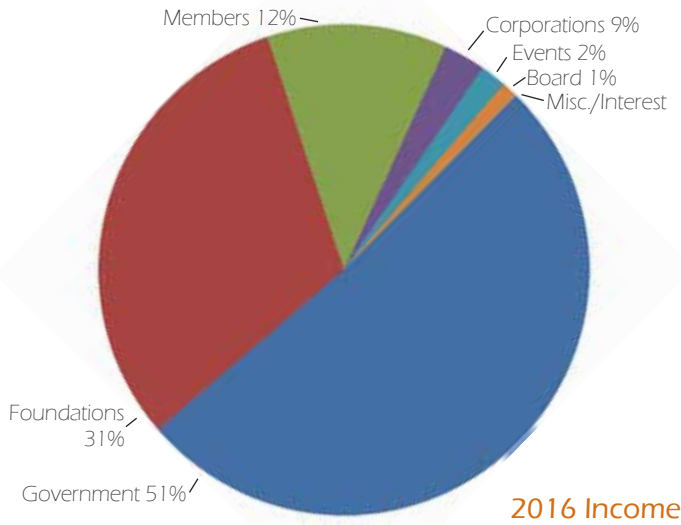
Michelle Puszka

Our community focuses heavily on ecological stewardship. The preserves are sadly impaired by invasive species and other outside forces like stormwater, roads, and encroachment. We believe that without healthy nature, the forest preserves fail in the mission to provide natural lands, together with plants and animals, for the education, pleasure, and recreation of the people in Cook County.

We started 2017 with two year-round adult conservation corps crews. We ended the year with four crews and the support for a fifth. In 2018, we will have 30 adults working full-time in the preserves year round. In addition, we will have 200 high schoolers and their leaders out this summer. We are adding another field organizer, for a total of three full-time and one part-time, to help recruit and empower volunteers and volunteer leadership. Collectively volunteers in our community contributed more than 28,000 hours of service in 2017.

We accomplish this work together through our collective voices and actions. Thank you.

# Friends of the Forest Preserves 2016 Annual Report



Income	2015	2016
Government	858,193	929,967
Foundations	367,260	565,245
Members	180,726	214,964
Corporations	153,643	50,094
Events	93,724	31,569
Misc./Interest	40,187	179
Board	27,187	18,860
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,720,948</b>	<b>\$1,810,878</b>

Expense	2015	2016
Programs	1,289,055	1,451,291
Administration	172,082	197,063
Development	24,588	11,228
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,485,725</b>	<b>\$1,659,582</b>

Assets	2015	2016
Net Assets at beginning year	333,693	568,916
Net Assets at end year	568,916	720,212
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$235,223</b>	<b>\$151,296</b>

## Current Board of Directors

Stephen Schlegel, Chair—Attorney, Stephen J. Schlegel Ltd.  
 Ed Woodbury, Vice President—President, McCaffery Interests, Inc.  
 Matt Haas, Treasurer—Dir. of Business Operations, Pegasus Partners Ltd.  
 Margaret Frisbie, Secretary—Exec. Dir., Friends of the Chicago River  
 Susan E. Brice—Environmental Attorney and Partner, Bryan Cave LLP.  
 Kathleen Bruch—President, Atrium Landscape  
 Walter Burlack—Dir. of Partnerships, Renewable Manufacturing Gateway  
 José Colón—Senior Associate, Jameson Real Estate  
 Dr. Charles Dillon—Asst. Professor of Medicine, Northwestern Univ., Attending Physician, Northwestern Memorial Hospital  
 Dr. Akilah Martin—Associate Professor, DePaul University  
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 Michael R. Mulcahy—Attorney, Vedder Price  
 David South—Senior Manager of Sustainability, West Monroe Partners  
 Dr. D. Vincent Thomas, Jr., Ph.D., M.T.S.—Professor, DePaul University | Operations/Maritime Law Enforcement Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard  
 Ted Wolff—Owner, Wolff Landscape Architecture

## Current Staff

Benjamin Cox—Executive Director  
 Fatimah Al-nurridin—Centennial Volunteers Field Organizer  
 Jillian DiCarlo—Administrative Manager  
 Douglas Chien—Advocates’ Network Manager  
 Ilana Federman—Outreach Manager  
 Radhika Miraglia—Centennial Volunteers Field Organizer  
 Zach Taylor—Conservation Director  
 Conservation Corps Managers  
 Brenda Elmore | Tyrone Murdo | Michael Raczyla | Bill Ritzenhaler  
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 Gregory Ferdinand | Henry “Riko” Harris | Bettina Kaphingst  
 Eric Johnson | Alexandra Noé | Thomas North | Tyler Polanski  
 Ginger Rubinstein | Gregory Russ | BreShaun Spikes | Dowan Triche  
 Dyrell Williams | Lance Williams | Lucinda Williams



More than 250 people enjoyed the third annual Busse Woods Night.



With 15 waves, the Night Ride offered something for everyone.

## Night Ride finds its stride

The third annual Busse Woods Night Ride was smooth sailing on Saturday, September 9. With over 250 participants, this year's event was the largest yet, bringing together biking and forest preserve enthusiasts from across the region. The broad range of biking options included an historical wave, a sunset wave, two extended waves, and the traditional 8-mile loop around the celebrated Busse Woods Trail in Elk Grove Village. With 15 waves to choose from, there was something for everyone.

### Join us for a paddle on Busse Lake at the Night Ride on August 25!

Back at the boathouse attendees enjoyed bonfires, s'mores, and free beer generously donated by Church Street Brewing. The jazzy sounds of the Jeff Parker Duo wafted through the night air as did the enticing aromas of tacos, made to order by Pollo Negro. Flint Creek Wildlife Center once again wowed us with a display of beautiful birds of prey. Meanwhile, attendees could meander among the various tents offering information and goodies from our supporters and event sponsors including Komatsu, HomeAdvisor, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

The Busse Woods Night Ride is coordinated in partnership with Friends of Cycling in Elk Grove and the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

## Friends gets 'organized' with two new hires

### Radhika Miraglia, Field Organizer-North

As the field organizer for five restoration sites along the North Branch of the Chicago River, Radhika gets to geek out with volunteers about local flora and fauna, as she empowers communities to care for nature. Radhika has been engaging people in conservation efforts ever since she led the environmental committee at her high school. She has a master's degree in conservation biology, with a focus in community-based conservation efforts, and has been working in the Chicagoland environmental community for almost 20 years. Most recently, Radhika worked as an interpretive consultant for the Forest Preserves of Cook County and at Internet of Elephants.



### Jillian DiCarlo, Administrative Manager

Jillian's responsibilities include accounting, payroll, billing, membership database management, human resources, and helping all of us be organized. Her work is vital to helping everyone focus on the important mission of the Friends community. Jillian joined Friends as Administrative Manager in June. Previously, she served as Data Manager for the Tree Research and Education Endowment Fund in Naperville, a position she found while earning her bachelor's degree at North Central College only a short walk away. She is excited to build on her experience working for an environmentally-focused organization to further the goals of the Friends community.



## Building community with beer, groundhogs, and lots more



PHOTOS BY FIVE LAKE ARTS



It wasn't Groundhog Day, but there was a lot of excitement when a groundhog was spotted at LaBagh Woods on the Northwest side of Chicago for Beer in the Woods, a beer and nature extravaganza on Saturday, September 30. Other animals on display included owls, hawks, falcons, frogs, lizards, snakes, turtles, racoons, porcupines, skunks, and even a coyote and wolves. While the animals drew big crowds, outdoor enthusiasts also enjoyed a camping gear demonstration courtesy of REI and a bird walk.

The more than 300 attendees enjoyed beer and cider from 30 local and craft breweries and were treated to aromatic hops thanks to Washtenaw Hops, and home-brewing demonstrations by Muntons. Food trucks were on hand for the hungry while VIP ticket holders enjoyed delicious vittles sponsored by Whole Foods.

Many thanks to all of our sponsors including Stantec, Stephen Schlegel, Christopher B. Burke Engineering, and Atrium Landscaping. The event raised more than \$13,000 to support the work of the Friends community.





Friends of the Forest Preserves  
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*The Friends community is celebrating our 20th anniversary in 2018. Help us make it a great year by making a donation today.*



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Lisa Culp

## Please donate today!

Birds of a feather flock together. We know you care about the preserves as much as we do and our community has wings because of YOU!

Please donate online at [fotfp.org](http://fotfp.org) or mail a check today. Your donation helps make our community stronger.

## Save the dates!

*Please join us to celebrate our 20th anniversary!*

**Swing for Sustainability Golf Outing**  
Friday, June 8

**Busse Woods Night Ride & Paddle**  
Saturday, August 25

**Beer in the Woods**  
Saturday, September 29



Douglas Chien