



# Friends NEWS

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## Members advocating for expansion of Salt Creek Trail

By Doug Hoogstra

Doug Hoogstra is an Account Executive at Darwill, and he and his wife Rachel love to take their four children biking and out in nature together.

I have always enjoyed biking the Salt Creek Trail. I grew up in Westchester and remember it as one of my first tastes of freedom – to get on my bike and ride all the way to the Brookfield Zoo without my parents. Miles and miles of beautiful forest preserve, all accessible right from my neighborhood off 22nd and Mannheim.

After college, marriage, and kids, we settled in to Brookfield, just south of that very same zoo. I rediscovered the Salt Creek Trail and wanted my kids to enjoy it

*Riverside, Brookfield, North Riverside, and Riverside Brookfield High School are determined to build Phase I (see map page 6) of the trail extension this year and are committing about \$120,000. This is about half the projected total cost. The Illinois Department of Transportation and Cook County are being approached as potential sources for the balance.*

and build their own memories. It was then that I discovered to my dismay how absolutely unsafe it was to try and reach it.

We live less than a quarter mile from the trailhead at Brookfield Woods, on the north side of the Zoo. The only way to access it is around the zoo, then on a busy four-lane road, 31st St., for another quarter mile. While I am comfortable with that ride myself, I am terrified to have my 10-, 8-, or 5-year-old take this same ride.

Oddly enough when the 31st St. bridge over Salt Creek was rebuilt about 10 years ago it included a 10-foot wide sidewalk but apparently no one followed up to create paths to connect our neighborhood and this bridge to the trail. It truly is the “Bridge to Nowhere.”

The trailhead is so close, and yet inaccessible. I figured a few blocks of asphalt would solve the problem and wondered how hard could that be? Surely, once people were aware of this issue, it would not be that big of a project. Clearly, I had a lot to learn about how things work.

Three years ago, I attended a meeting at Riverside Brookfield High School about pedestrian safety. I met Randy Brockway, a Riverside resident who was also concerned about public safety. I mentioned my plight, and immediately found that he was willing to try and help.

For two years, we spoke with local mayors, city planners, Forest Preserve District staff, and the Zoo. Everyone

Continued on page 6



Doug Hoogstra

Members are working with local government representatives and elected officials to make a critical trail extension (looking east from a bridge on 31st St.) so that this trail no longer goes nowhere but a ditch.

## News from around the District

### 1 Founding volunteer group honored

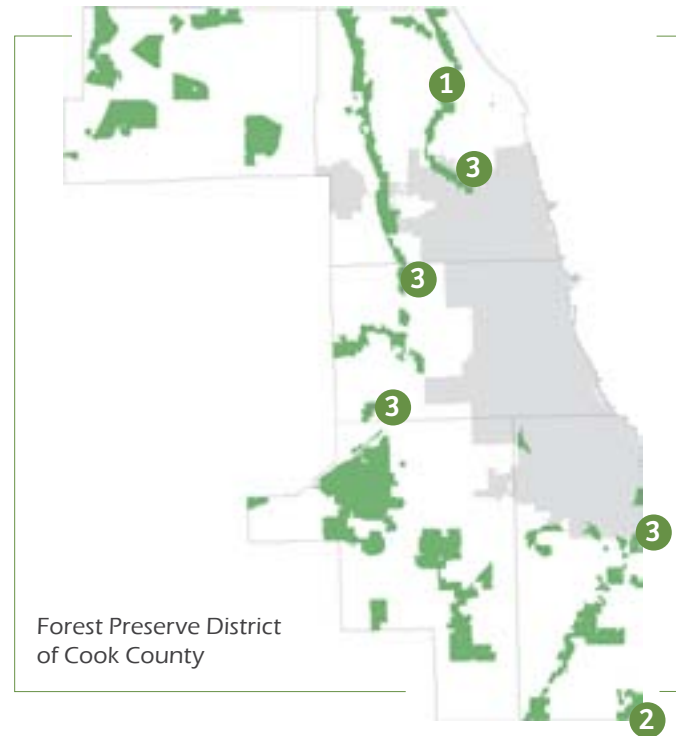
The world's first volunteer stewardship group was the North Branch Restoration Project. This leadership initiative was recently honored by the National Association of County Parks and Recreation. The nomination was submitted by forest preserve staff. Both staff and volunteers have established a fine model as they engage neighbors and preserve visitors in restoring and appreciating the forest preserve woodlands, prairies, savannas, and wetlands along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

### 2 Friends and partners restoring creek at Plum Creek

Friends of the Forest Preserves and the Forest Preserve District are working to restore Plum Creek in the far southeastern part of the county through a grant from the Sustain Our Great Lakes program. The \$161,004 grant will be used in the Plum Creek Forest Preserve to stabilize the banks, improve aquatic habitat in the stream for fish and aquatic invertebrates, and improve the quality and diversity of the plants along the stream. The total cost of the project is \$322,465, with \$125,000 contributed by the District. Matching funds will also be contributed, with \$35,661 from volunteers, interns, Friends in-kind staff time, and \$800 from Openlands.

### 3 Powderhorn recognized for restoration excellence

Powderhorn Marsh and Prairie Nature Preserve received Bronze Accreditation through the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program. The program is designed to recognize high-quality restoration sites and develop professional standards of excellence in natural resource management and ecological restoration. Edgebrook Woods, Thatcher Woods, and Theodore Stone Preserve



won Conservation and Native Landscaping awards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their exemplary ecosystem restoration and protection.

### 4 Trail Master Plan and Policy approved

In March, a Trail Master Plan and Policy was approved. Friends has advocated for a trail plan for many years and was very involved in its development. The trail plan identifies a variety of trail types and standards, methods for recognizing and improving trails, and other trail needs.

## New staffer for communications

Jennie van den Boogaard recently joined Friends' staff as the Development and Communications Coordinator. Jennie assists the Development Director with member support, and manages Friends' social media accounts, website, and print and email communications.



Jennie van den Boogaard

Before Friends, Jennie worked in development, communications, and event planning. Jennie studied Social Policy, Environmental Policy, and Gender Studies at Northwestern University. Originally from a small barrier island off Florida's Atlantic coast, Jennie now resides in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

## Friends lauds District's ambitious Next Century Plan

Friends of the Forest Preserves congratulates the Forest Preserve District of Cook County on the approval of the very ambitious "Next Century Conservation Plan." The plan was created by a blue-ribbon commission of local leaders, including staff and board members of Friends, appointed by Forest Preserve President Toni Preckwinkle in 2013 as part of the Forest Preserves' centennial anniversary celebration.



Download at [www.nextcenturyconservationplan.org](http://www.nextcenturyconservationplan.org).

The Next Century Conservation Plan aims to make the Cook County preserve system a national leader. It sets goals and priorities to be implemented over the next 25 years, and calls on the Forest Preserve District to develop annual

operational plans, set measurable targets, and refresh the plan every five years. There are four key priorities identified in the Next Century Conservation Plan: restoring native landscapes; making the preserves more inviting, accessible and engaging for all; demonstrating and expanding the economic benefits of the preserves; and ensuring future leaders sustain the focus on conservation and accountability.

"The Forest Preserves are one of the most important assets of Cook County and ensuring that they thrive as a source of beauty, inspiration, economic vitality and health is critical to the success of our region," Preckwinkle said.

## Construction underway throughout the preserves

The Forest Preserves of Cook County is rapidly moving forward with an ambitious plan of new trails, facilities, and improved public amenities this summer. This work is funded through bonds.

### TRAILS:

About 20 miles of new trails are being built.

Orland Grasslands: A new 5.4 mile loop with spur connections to several of the adjacent streets (171 St., 179 St., LaGrange Rd., 104th Ave.) is underway. This major new loop trail comes with some concerns over negative impacts along the eastern portion as the trail will isolate an important pond and wetland from the associated uplands.

Cal-Sag Trail: Once complete the Cal-Sag Trail will run 26-miles between the villages of Burnham and Lemont. Opening this fall is the west segment of 7.43 miles between Cicero Ave in Alsip and Rt. 83 in Lemont. Much of it in the Palos Preserves.

Oak Forest Heritage Preserve: Per the approved master plan this new preserve is being opened to the public with a paved and gravel loop trail (+2 miles), 28 car parking lot, interpretation signage, pedestrian bridge, and boardwalk.

Botanic Gardens/Mary Mix McDonald Woods: A short (0.8 mile) but critical link between the North Branch and Green Bay trails will finally be completed.

### CAMPS:

Camp Shabbona (Calumet City): utility work, new buildings (small cabins, shower and toilet facility, gatehouse, picnic/program shelter) tent pads

Camp Reinberg (Palatine): new sewer connections in preparation for the construction of new public camping facilities.

Camp Sullivan (Oak Forest): Phase I Group Development is underway to redevelop the group campsite, small cabins, shower and toilet facility, gatehouse, picnic/program shelter.

### PRESERVES:

Swallow Cliff (Palos): Plans going out for bid in July and we should see staging or some construction by late summer/early fall for the multi-use building and sculptural workout area located at the base of the stairs. FPCC staff are looking at adding a staircase on the west side of the sledding hill. The much maligned chutes and ladders idea, that would heavily denude the steep slope east of the stairs, seems to be gone but a much smaller boulder path geared toward fitness is being looked at.

Miller Meadow (Forest Park): The FPCC is working on coordinating the bid process that will include: relocating the model airplane field, a new off-leash dog area, loop path and additional walkways.

Thatcher Woods and Trailside Museum (River Forest): The Thatcher Woods pavilion lot will be resurfaced and lighting added. Since it is in the floodplain, the Trailside lot faced permitting and access challenges, so it is simply being resurfaced. No movement on formalizing the existing trail system.

Rolling Knolls (Elgin): Work on the main building will begin in late summer/early fall.

Dan Ryan (Chicago, south side): The visitors center will open this fall and the FPCC is applying for grant funding to construct a tree house, play area, and nature trail.

## Thank you!

Friends' Celebration of Art, Imagination, and Sustainability was a tremendous success raising more than \$2,000 for our advocacy efforts.

Thanks again to the artists for donating a portion of the proceeds of the art sold at the event at Mars Gallery: Mike MacDonald, Nate Otto, David Rettker, and Brent Young.



Chicago nature photographer Mike MacDonald with Joe Messer



## Friends of the Forest Preserves 2013 Annual Report

*Letter from Charles Kierscht, Chair, and Benjamin Cox, President*

Planning and growth were the keys to success for Friends of the Forest Preserves in 2013. Friends staff and members worked closely with forest preserve staff and elected officials, volunteers, partners, and more to ensure that we continued to advance our mission.

While Friends budget surpassed \$1.5 million, the core staff remained the same size at five full-time positions. We manage this by ensuring the bulk of the funds raised go out on the ground through internship programs and contractor-led ecological restoration work in the preserves.

The Forest Preserve Leadership Corps program, which previously had been run in partnership with another agency, was brought in house. This enabled us to offer better pay to these interns, while decreasing administrative costs. This nine-month program added one full-time leader position and five part-time positions to the mix.

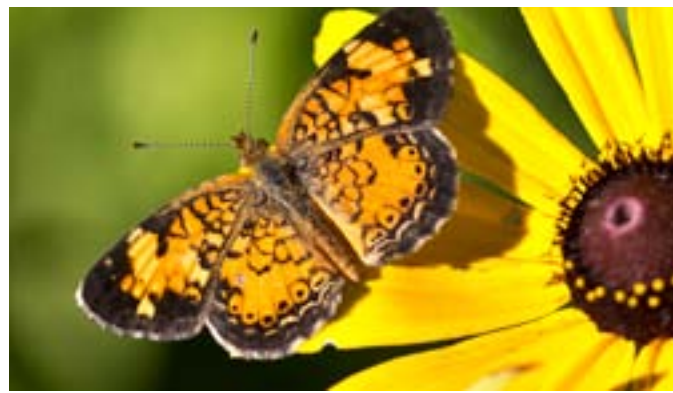
At the very end of the year, Friends learned that we were awarded a second two-year grant for our Calumet Invasive Species Corps, which had wrapped up its first two-year run in December. This program was also brought in house and runs from February of 2014 through January of 2016. Again, reduced administrative costs have enabled us to offer better pay and benefits to the five members of this restoration crew.

Friends members and volunteers have been hard at work expanding the Advocates' Network. Folks share information with forest preserve staff on challenges in local preserves, such as failing foot bridges, ATV abuse, and dumping, and then work with them to find solutions.

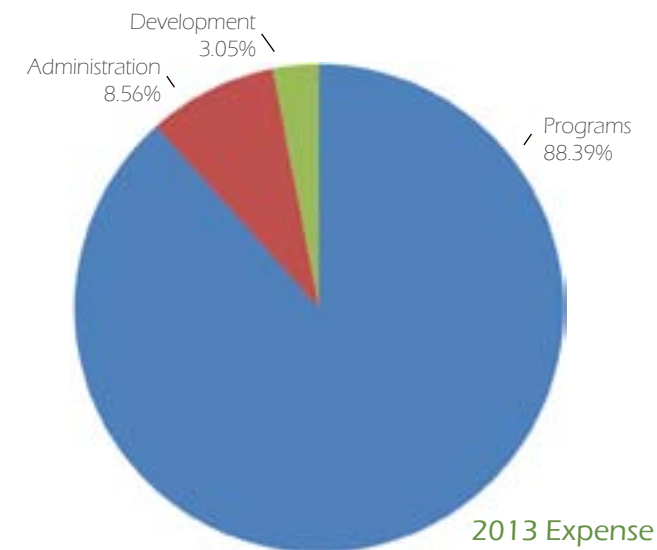
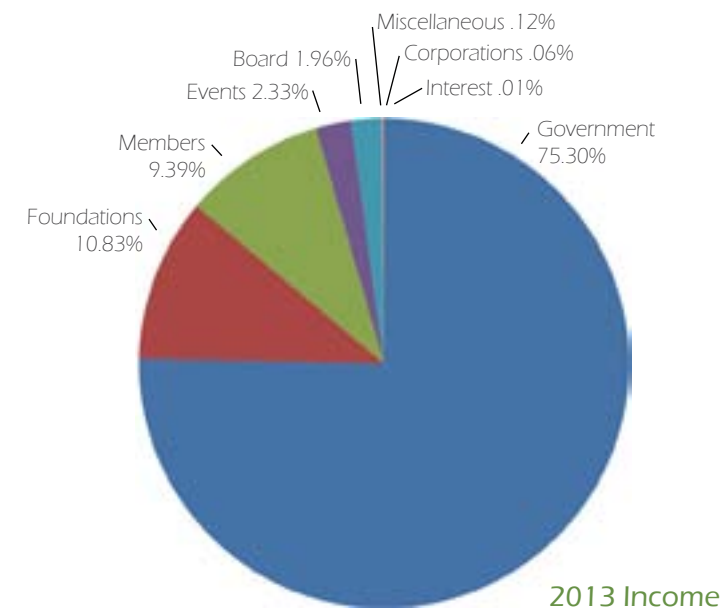
The Network also pulled together the Stewards' Council for ecological stewardship volunteers. One of the first big wins was working with the forest preserve staff to create a clear path to stewardship (see page 7). Now there are clear steps to take to becoming a leader for restoration in the preserves.

Friends staff and members also worked diligently with the forest preserve district on planning. From trails (see page 2) to campgrounds, recreation and the Next Century Conservation Plan (see page 3), Friends was busy doing what we do best ... working at the table to bring recommendations and solutions that will help ensure the preserves are here for all of us to enjoy for the next 100 years.

The 2,000 members of Friends are the core strength of action and support for this essential organization. Thank you for your strong support and we look forward to working together in 2014 to continue to improve the preserves for all of us to enjoy.



## Friends of the Forest Preserves 2013 Annual Report



Income	2013	2012
Government	1,196,128	681,974
Foundations	172,000	277,000
Members	149,085	134,230
Events	37,009	33,034
Board	31,207	28,300
Miscellaneous	1,884	335
Corporate	1,000	3,594
Interest	206	458
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,588,519</b>	<b>\$1,158,925</b>

Expense	2013	2012
Programs	1,318,825	799,839
Development	45,532	180,894
Administration	127,729	133,350
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,492,086</b>	<b>\$1,114,283</b>

Assets	2013	2012
Net Assets at beginning year	209,233	164,591
Net Assets at end year	305,666	209,233
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$96,433</b>	<b>\$44,642</b>

### Friends Board of Directors

Charles Kierscht, Chair—Retired, Kemper Financial Services  
 Stephen Schlegel, Vice President—Stephen J. Schlegel Ltd.  
 Ed Zelasko, Treasurer—Morgan Services Inc.  
 Ronald Milnarik, Secretary—U. of I. Chicago College of Dentistry  
 Barbara Birmingham—Co-Steward Theodore Stone Forest Preserve  
 Walter Burlack—Renewable Manufacturing Gateway  
 Stephen Christy, Jr.—Stephen Christy, LLC.  
 José Colón—Jameson Real Estate  
 Margaret Frisbie—Friends of the Chicago River  
 Barbara Hill—Political Chair, Sierra Club Illinois Chapter  
 Liesel Lavery—Conservationist, Northbrook  
 Akilah Martin—DePaul University  
 Stephen Packard—North Branch Restoration Project

Ginger Underwood—Friends of the Spring Creek  
 Ed Woodbury—McCaffery Interests, Inc.

### Friends Staff

Benjamin Cox—President & CEO  
 Jennie van den Boogaard—Development and Outreach Coordinator  
 Alice Brandon—Conservation Director  
 Devon Brown—Calumet Conservation Corps Crew Member  
 Douglas Chien—Advocates' Network Manager  
 Brenda Elmore—Calumet Conservation Corps Crew Leader  
 Daiva Gylys—Forest Preserve Leadership Corps Crew Leader  
 Deshawn Johnson—Calumet Conservation Corps Crew Member  
 Jon Labaschin—Development Director  
 Tyrone Murdo—Calumet Conservation Corps Asst. Crew Leader  
 Chris Spiewak—Calumet Conservation Corps Crew Member



## Check out our new website

Friends is excited to announce that we have redesigned our website. We designed the new site to be easier for everyone to navigate and enjoy, with a focus on being a resource for getting involved or getting outside. There are updated photos, content, and design. We encourage you to visit [www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org) and connect with your fellow members either by sharing your experience in the forest preserves or following us on one of our six social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Flickr. There's also a blog to keep you up to date with events, internship programs, and restoration efforts in the forest preserves.

Continued from page 1

felt like we did – it is something that should be done – but who is going to pay for it? Since everyone benefits a little, but no one party benefits the most, it was a difficult question to answer.

To be honest, at this point, I was slightly discouraged. When everyone agrees this is a good idea, and no one can actually help, what do you do? Suddenly, I remembered Friends of the Forest Preserves.

I received a call back from Douglas Chien, Friends Advocates' Network Manager. We met and he helped Randy and I understand the governing bodies that we needed to speak with. In a few short weeks, he helped us discover that we needed someone who connected all these parties and could solve the greater good question. Douglas set up a meeting with Forest Preserve District and Cook County Board Commissioner Jeff Tobolski.

We planned out our meeting strategy; determining who would cover what points, what our "ask" of the Commissioner would be, what visual aids to bring, and what our contingency plan was should the meeting go badly. Fortunately, we met with Commissioner Tobolski, discussed the difficulties of solving the safe trail access problem and he immediately supported the idea. Commissioner Tobolski began thinking of all the parties who needed to be involved and he set about getting them all in a room. He even broadened the project, citing concerns about students to and from RBHS as well. He immediately understood the impact this could have on families and students, and since then has helped champion this project.

We now have monthly meetings with Mayors of North Riverside, Brookfield, and Riverside, the Superintendent of RBHS, and the Superintendent of the Forest Preserve along with their planners and architects.

In three short months, we have drawings, we have costs, and we have a plan to work with our state and local governments to create these needed trail connections. Commissioner Tobolski has been an amazing advocate, a great

In addition, we're also launching an online video campaign to expand our Forest Preserve Leadership Corps. FPLC currently only runs for nine months and we're looking to increase the program to 12 months.

Crew members work 25 hours a week to remove invasive species and restore native plants throughout the forest preserves in Cook County. FPLC also has a greater focus on professional development, and encourages the 18 to 20 year old members to pursue careers and education in conservation.

Keep an eye out for the video campaign, which will include a short video with testimonials, and please consider donating to help expand this incredible program!

leader, and been very efficient in planning and moving forward this project each and every month. I feel confident that I will be riding with my children very soon making memories on the same path I enjoyed as a child.

This is the first time that I have ever worked within the political system to implement change. I have found nothing but receptive, hard working individuals coming together each month to try to find a way to do right by the citizens.



*Phase I - West side of 1st Ave. between 31st St. and RB High School*

*Phase II - West side of 1st Ave., south from 26th St. then along Golf View Road, crossing over 31st St. to the south side then going east to meet the Phase I section at the intersection of 31st St. and 1st Ave.*

*Phase III - South side of 31st St. between Prairie Ave. to the West and Golf View Road to the east.*

## Construction complete: Get on the Path to Stewardship

By: Douglas Chien, Advocates' Network Manager

The volunteer stewardship movement to restore the ecological health of our natural areas was born in the forest preserves of Cook County. In true grassroots form potential volunteer stewards were mentored by experienced stewards before being recommended for final approval by the Forest Preserve District.

Over time, this process had broken down, but recently a task force of volunteer stewards and forest preserve staff have completed the "Path to Stewardship." It describes the varying levels of volunteer involvement and outlines a clear way for one to become a steward of an ecological management site. This new Path to Stewardship clears a bureaucratic roadblock that prevented the certification of new stewards for several years. It also helped eliminate

uncertainty within the ranks of current stewards.

With the approval of the Next Century Conservation Plan, the Path to Stewardship is a vital process to attain the ambitious goals contained therein. Specifically, having 30,000 acres in good ecological health with a corresponding dramatic increase in volunteer stewards over the next 25 years.

The Path to Stewardship Task Force was a truly collaborative partnership between volunteers and FPDCC staff, and due to its success, a similar task force will soon be working on documenting best management practices for ecological management. Finally, recognizing that no program is perfect, the Path to Stewardship Task Force will meet this fall to review the program's progress.

Learn more about volunteer leadership and training opportunities at [www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org).

### Join us for a preserve tour!

Our 2013 tour season is underway with popular repeats from years past and new ones visiting far-flung locations. New this year is Plum Creek Forest Preserve in the far southeast. At nearly 1,200 acres this little known preserve is undergoing a major restoration project overseen by Friends' own Alice Brandon. The \$280k project will regrade and stabilize eroding slopes along Plum Creek and improve habitat for rare species.

The spring tour, led by master naturalist John Eliot, traversed the bluffs along the creek, healthy oak woods, a 30-year old reforestation, and former farm fields all while seeing and hearing birds too numerous to count. We learned how the Hart Ditch, dug around 1850, transformed the watershed by draining the swamp into which Plum Creek once terminated.

**Chicago's Plymouth Rock** - 10 am Saturday, Aug. 2

Preserved in Portage Woods Forest Preserve, a small unremarkable chunk of the Des Plaines River that was cut off years ago, is nearly the only site of Chicago's origins that has not been destroyed. This National Historic Site is a key link in Chicago's largely unknown birth story. Join master storyteller Gary Mechanic as he leads you back through time to discover how the portage was formed, how it was used, and how Chicago began. This tour, organized by Friends of the Chicago Portage, is about 1.5 hours long and traverses a gravel path through the woods. It



will run rain or shine. Meet in the main parking lot of Portage Woods: 4800 S. Harlem Ave., Lyons (just north of I-55 on the west side of Harlem).

**Spring Creek Forest Preserve** - 9 am Sunday, Sept. 14

Located in the far northwest corner of Cook County we will be exploring a tiny portion of this nearly 4,000 acre preserve. You'll forget that you're in a county with 5.2 million people! John Eliot will lead this tour.

Sign up for any tour at [www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org).



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## Save the Date

### Crystal Leaf Awards

First Annual

Fairmont Hotel Chicago

6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, September 10

*Honoring*

Forest Preserve President Toni Preckwinkle

Dan McCaffery, McCaffery Interests



## Ignite the Night

*A nighttime fall festival - Fun for all ages!*

5 - 10 PM SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2014  
SPRING CREEK FOREST PRESERVE  
BARRINGTON HILLS

Cookout Dinner (5 to 8 pm) • Beer & Wine • Great Raffle  
Blazing Bonfire • Live Music • Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides  
Flashlight Tours for Kids • Stargazing • Live Native Wildlife

Tickets: \$50 by OCT. 3, \$65 at the door • \$30 teens (13 to 17)  
\$10 children (12 and under) • tickets and info at [www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org)