

Friends of the Wapsi Center Minutes
Thursday, Feb. 21, 2019
Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

Attendees: Naturalist Becky Baugh, Bill Robbins, Jim Ross, Erma Wiszmann and guest, Norm Nichols, Bob Bryant, Ingrid Bogdanowicz, and Joy Sheeley. The group met at the Eldridge Library.

The treasurer's report was approved. The current bank balance is 13,652.

Staff news: Applications for two 4H AmeriCorps members will be posted very soon. The positions call for one full-time person to work 900 hours, while the other will be part-time and work 300 hours. Their term will begin in March and end in August. Two new interns have already started at the Center. Carter Himmelman, a St. Ambrose student, will work Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Clarah Buhman, a Bettendorf High School student, will work Thursday afternoons.

Center Director Dave Murcia has completed the Friends Biennial Corporation Report for the current year, but asked that a Friends member be responsible for completing it in the future. Bill agreed to do it.

Becky told the group that Bob Bryant may create a memorial at the Center this spring in honor of his wife, who recently passed away.

Becky thanked the group for their support at Winter Fun Day and other recent events.

Grounds: Becky reminded the group to drive with care on the new blacktop as it can be slippery.

Facilities: Plans for converting the dormitory to classrooms are underway and construction will begin in the spring.

Becky reminded the group to monitor the bird feeders, filling them when necessary. There is still thistle seed and suet available. Hosts should also remember to lower the building temperature to its night time setting before locking up.

Education: In January, 5 groups, including 230 individuals, attended on-site programs. An additional 11 groups, including 2063 individuals, participated in programming off-site. This includes Bald Eagle Days. Four programs were cancelled.

On April 8, the Center will host an IADNR Frog and Toad Survey training. Participants will learn to recognize calls of native frogs, along with the protocol for collecting data and submitting it to the DNR's Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring program. Cost is \$5 to cover a CD of frog calls and informational binder. DNR Wildlife Diversity Biologist Stephanie Shepherd will lead the program.

Maple syruping sessions are planned for Feb. 23 and March 2. Both are full.

Old Business: Volunteers will meet to construct rain barrels for sale to the public at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, March 9, at the EcoCenter. The barrels and tools will be in the lab.

Becky reminded the group to record any gift shop purchase in the log book.

New Business:

The annual Volunteer Stewardship Workday will be held from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 20 in honor of Earth Day. Volunteer Orientation will follow from 12:30 to 2:30.

The group agreed to add "Paint by Nature" canvases to its gift shop offerings for \$10 per canvas. Whenever the Center offers a Paint by Nature class, two copies of the featured painting are produced. One copy of each painting will be kept on display in the EcoCenter, and with the second available for purchase in the gift shop.

Becky is thinking of organizing a Monarch Festival in September to expand on the monarch programs she has done in the past. She suggested that in addition to Monarch Watch and Monarch Health, some possible sessions might include pollinator habitat, a rearing workshop, and a face painting station. She is exploring the possibility of bringing in a food truck featuring Mexican food, or asking the group to provide a taco bar. She asked the group for their suggestions. Jim suggested running a migration video throughout the day.

Jim also suggested that the EcoCenter needs someplace to hang coats. We will look into possibilities for this.

Becky asked the group to please track attendance at the EcoCenter, as this data is useful for determining the number of positions that are needed at the Center.

We received a thank you from Quad City Interfaith for purchasing an ad for their publication. We also received a proposal from someone offering to put together a recipe book for sale at the Center. Jim will review this information.

Sharing from Friends: Bob Bryant told the group he plans to his plant survey work at natural areas in Scott and surrounding counties.

The Friends group will meet next at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 21, 2019 at the Wapsi River Center.