

Friends of the Wapsi Center Minutes
Thursday, September 19, 2019
Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

Attendees: Naturalist Becky Baugh, Bill Robbins, Lucia Dryanski, Norm Nichols, Bob Bryant, Carol Rogers, and Joy Sheeley.

Treasurer Report: The current bank balance is \$15,854.50. Becky said that we have not yet received 6 wind turbines that are on order.

Staff news: 4H AmeriCorps member Faith Heinrich will attend disaster relief training next week. After completing her half-time assignment in November, she will continue full time at the Wapsi Center for the next year. Center Director Dave Mercia recently completed 4-H Americorps Supervisor training.

Grounds: Garden maintenance continues with a large harvest of tomatoes and gherkins. It's likely there will be enough tomatoes to use for the noon meal on Fall Ecology Day, Oct. 5.

Facilities: Demolition has begun inside the dorm, and flooring choices are being considered. Separate water shut-off valves have been installed for the pine ring, dormitory and observatory, since they were previously all served by one line with no shut-offs. Outside the dorm, landscape and concrete work for a new entry way has begun.

Installation of a new door for the old pole barn is in progress.

Education: In August, onsite programs were given to 11 groups totaling 1124 people, and off-site programs were given to 4 groups totaling 64 people. No programs were cancelled. 17 people visited the Eco Center in August.

The monarch and bat education kits have arrived, and weather kits are on order. Becky thanked the Friends group for purchasing the kits.

Old Business: The gift shop has been updated with new items and a new record keeping system. Butterfly nets, children's books, nature guides, and t-shirts are some examples of the new merchandise. In the new record keeping system, each item has a coded price label, and Center hosts are asked to remove the label when an item is sold and to put it in a small spiral notebook in order to help track the inventory. Lucia said the gift shop took in \$217 during the Monarch Fest.

We discussed the possibility of moving the eagle mount to make the gift shop more accessible. Becky said it needs to be kept out of direct sunlight.

New Business:

The group agreed to purchase six pumpkins for use in Halloween activities on Oct. 26.

We will also purchase a half-page ad in the Quad Cities Interfaith magazine for \$350, as we have done in previous years.

The Monarch Festival was attended by 262 people. According to our records, 111 persons were served a taco meal, out of 212 registered. Many participants left before lunch, especially those with young children.

We discussed several possibilities for next year's Festival:

Monarch butterflies could be released twice during the day, rather than once. The butterfly talk could be shortened and offered twice to keep younger children's interest. Monarch Watch tagging and testing information could be presented during the actual tagging and testing activities instead of during the talk.

Seed bombs could be made as a craft, rather than as part of a separate presentation.

Taco trucks could be brought in to serve lunch, or the Pork Producers could be invited to serve “butterfly pork chops.” Participants would have to pay for their lunch if we chose either of those options.

A “costume parade” could be added, with children invited to dress as butterflies, bees, or other pollinators.

The Miss Mariposa bus would be available to come next year on Sept. 19, but not on the previous weekend. This date would still fall within prime migration time.

Lucia suggested that we reach out to various community groups to find more volunteers to help with crafts.

Miscellaneous: Carol shared photos of native plants that comprise a “tea garden” at the Scattergood School.

Becky said the Center will soon have four new baby turtles: two stinkpot and two soft shell, but they won’t be displayed right away. There is also a new baby fox snake, recently found in the pop machine, that will be kept for display if it is willing to eat in captivity.

Becky thanked the hosts and program volunteers; also Joy for making butterfly nets.

The Friends group will meet next at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 17 at the Wapsi River Center.