

FRIENDS *Connection*

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Cathy Chybowski: A Quiet Observer

Cathy Chybowski remembers the day her mother returned to the house from the family's farm fields with downy baby pheasants tucked in her shirt. A neighbor had accidentally run over their nest, and her mother knew they wouldn't survive without help. "It was a lesson in compassion," she says, recalling how she and her brother and sister were excited to take care of the babies. "My mother was a quiet observer. She could sense when a person or nature was in trouble and figure out how to help."

Cathy's experience growing up on a farm in Kenosha County in southeast Wisconsin and watching her mother and dad led to her passion, her life's work and now teaching at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. "I define myself first as a naturalist, who observes, studies and is a part of nature," she says. "My mother instilled a sense of wonder about nature in the three of us. Often she took us for nature walks after a long workday."

Her parents raised their own food and had a steer, chickens and pig, "just enough for our family," Cathy says, sitting in her small cabin surrounded by vegetable gardens and a prairie garden she and her son created. "It was a lesson in how to live simply and healthily and not to have your lifestyle negatively affect the earth. I work on this every day, like how to get rid of plastics. If we are educated, we can make different choices."

When she was eight, her mother asked if she'd like to learn the piano and arranged for lessons, she recalls. But at the same time her mother built a treehouse and gave the children tiny binoculars to watch bluebirds in a nearby pear tree. "Piano or watching the bluebirds?" Cathy laughs. "My mother said, 'Maybe we will do piano lessons later.' She never forced."

After graduating from UW-Madison with a major in zoology and minors in botany and wildlife ecology, Cathy married and had two children and volunteered with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, which led to a job as naturalist and volunteer coordinator.

With a bird-banding permit obtained while working at the DNR, she learned of the decline of Eastern bluebirds, and on volunteer



time, was instrumental in making the public aware of the birds' decline. After she spoke on Outdoor Wisconsin, she said the station received more requests about how to help than were received on any previous segment. As a result of citizens' birdhouse building, the population has increased, Cathy says. But she continues that effort by teaching students in KVR summer camps to build bluebird houses.

When the family moved to Waukesha County, she retired from the DNR, returned to college to earn a master's in environmental science education, and taught at Kettle Moraine High School. "That's when I really found my niche," she says, recalling taking students on field trips

including a summer trip to an International Environmental conference in Costa Rica. She won the school district's Innovation in Teaching award for working with a volunteer at a nearby park on a student project planting seeds to restore a nine-acre prairie, and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Teacher of the Year award, which she highly values because her students nominated her.

"My approach was that this is a life skill they will carry on way after high school," she says. "I said 'I'm not going to tell you what to think. I'm going to teach you how to educate yourself and make your own decisions. You need to read both sides of an issue and look at the scientific data and then form an opinion.'"

Shortly after moving to the Driftless about four years ago, Cathy took her brother to explore the KVR and met Ben Johnston, who invited them to take part in the winter bird count and urged her to apply when an instructor position opened. Today, she helps collect data for bat, frog and toad surveys and the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas, and teaches all ages, from school groups and summer camps to adults through hikes and programs.

On the hikes, she asks the students to sit quietly and absorb everything and write or draw their observations in nature journals. "There are a lot of enjoyable things and gadgets inside," she explains. "I try to make this enjoyable to show there are some cool things outside."

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What's a Little Snow at a Spring Fling?



Quinn and Abe Scheder display their Poet of Merit ribbons. These brothers have won this honor for all of the Friends Earth Day Poetry Contests.



Staff Appreciation Dinner

Toasting our marvelous and magnificent KVR staff!



2019 Rustic Raft Rally





What starts like this ...

and ends like this?

An evening with the KVR Gardeners!

The garden at the Visitor Center was envisioned by Bernice Schroeder and created under the direction of Master Gardener Marlene Mason in 2005. The original planting included 50 varieties of plants, shrubs and trees. Plants were gathered from homesteads obtained for the proposed dam project, and additional plants have been added over the years. Another garden is maintained on Star Valley Road and Old Highway 131. An enthusiastic crew gathers every other Tuesday evening at 5:30 during the growing season to mulch, weed, prune and nurture. Gardening tips are shared and advice is given. At approximately 6:30, work ceases and the crew retires to the deck to share snacks and enjoy the beauty of KVR twilight. Nothing compares to the companionship shared in work clothes with garden dirt still under your nails. Consider joining in the fun next season!



Celebrate the Season! 2019 Holiday Happening is Saturday, December 7

Piles of homemade goodies will be available for purchase at the **Cookie Walk** beginning at 1 pm. **Local music groups** including the Viroqua Bell Choir, Piano Man Steve Hall and Whisky Chicken will entertain free of charge all afternoon and into the evening. Check the Friends website for performance times.

Search for the perfect gift at the **Craft Show** and Gift Shop or bid on a decorative wreath at the **Silent Auction**. Enjoy a **Soup Supper** with homemade soups, salad and bread.

Holiday Happening is your first opportunity to renew your Friends Membership. All new and renewing members at the event will receive a discount coupon for the Gift Shop.



Calling all creative Friends members to participate in the craft show! No entry fee is charged and no commission is taken. We are pleased to provide this opportunity to showcase the talent in our area! Contact Julie at juliehoel@icloud.com for more information.

BOARD CANDIDATES

The election of new Friends Board members will be held at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 2, 2019. The nominees for a three-year term are:



Sally Colacino moved to the Viola area 30+ years ago. She and her family spend time at the Reserve enjoying the trails and attending great programs offered by this incredible community resource. Sally is seeking a second term on the Friends board.



Heidi Krattiger lives in Viroqua with her husband Bjorn Bergman. She teaches 4th-6th grade students at Viroqua Area Montessori School; prior to that she taught special education for eight years. Heidi is an avid nature explorer, enjoying hiking, biking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing in KVR and other natural areas around the Driftless region. During gardening season she can be found tending, harvesting, and preserving the bounty.



Pam Saunders retired from Organic Valley after 20 years. She currently operates Nature Nooks Retreat with her partner Tom Lukens, where they are involved in many conservation projects. She serves on the board of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis. While living in La Farge, Pam made frequent use of the Old 131 Trail on her bike, skis and feet. She looks forward to giving back to the KVR.

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Her volunteer work at the KVR “uses everything I’ve got – my mother’s experiences, official education, experience with the DNR and high school teaching,” Cathy says. “It’s citizen science. I realize I’ve been doing this all my life, contributing real scientific data and encouraging other people to do this. I’m not going to go out there and try to conquer nature. I am a quiet observer.”

Contributor Joan Kent is a retired journalist who lives in La Farge with her husband Don and their cats Liza and Misty.

Clip here and save as your reminder! No other reminders will be sent.

Saturday, November 2, 2019
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

Friends Annual Meeting

5:30 PM

Agenda items include yearly reports, votes on by-laws revisions, election of two board members and update on the Exhibit Renovation Project. *Your presence is important!*

Appreciation Dinner

6 PM Social Hour with Dinner to follow

Joanne Shird will prepare another fabulous feast!



RSVP to Joanne by Saturday, October 26:
joannes@mwt.net or 608-625-2768.

The Story Continues.... Bring photos and stories of your experiences at KVR!

Old Highway 131 Autumn Auto Tour

Saturday, October 12th
Noon - 4 pm

Old 131 will be open to autos travelling north from the South Gate to Rockton. Stop by the Visitor Center for cider and cookies!

There's Still Time to Enter the Friends Photo Contest!

Entries for the 11th Annual Friends Photo Contest will be accepted through midnight Sunday, October 13, 2019. Submit up to three digital photos of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve at the Friends website (kickapoofriends.org – click on Friends Photo Contest in the header, then More, then Enter Here!) Entries are judged by a three-person team with the top 12 photos displayed at the Visitor Center November 4-30. The public is invited to vote for their favorite, and the Peoples' Choice Winner is announced at the Holiday Happening on Saturday, December 7. A \$50 cash prize will be awarded to the winners in both Adult and Youth Divisions.