

FRIENDS Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS OF KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE • (608) 625-2960 • kickapoofriends.org • Volume 18, Issue 1

KVR Director Marcy West on to New Adventure



Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true Friends will leave footprints in your heart. – Eleanor Roosevelt

After twenty-four (+) years of serving as the Executive Director for the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, I have resigned and will start a new adventure in May.

I couldn't help but take this opportunity to thank the Friends of KVR for their support over the years.

From the early days when Brad Steinmetz and Chuck Hatfield suggested the idea to the Friends' current status as a well-organized group that is vital to the success of the KVR, you are appreciated.

If you're new to the group, please know that you made the right decision to join. These are good people who can be credited with things we now take for granted. Did you know it was the Friends group who initiated putting the roof on Bridge 18? We skirted the State approval process a bit and I expressed my concern to Orville

Jensen and his reply was, "what are they going to do, make you take it off?" That got a good laugh out of his crew of volunteers – Jon Zahm, Jeff Everson and a few others if I remember correctly.

From incredibly successful events to the beautifully tended perennial garden, it never ceases to amaze me how a group of volunteers can come together and get things done. When we set the goal of raising \$600,000 to upgrade the exhibits it was thoroughly discussed, and I wasn't sure the Friends Board members would agree, but they did. Not great timing to fundraise during a pandemic, but we're now within reach of attaining the goal and in the thick of planning and design for the Discovery Center. I look forward to coming back for the unveiling in spring of 2022!

So, to the past and present Friends Board and members near and far, I thank you for giving me fond memories and leaving *footprints on my heart*. See you on the River!
– Marcy West

Celebrate Our Awesome Trails On National Trails Day!

National Trails Day is on Saturday, June 5. In conjunction with this initiative, the Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve will sponsor several events to celebrate the 50+ miles of our awesome trails. It's the start of the summer hiking season and a great day to explore a new trail or revisit your favorite. Various guided hikes will be offered throughout the day. (Check the website, kickapoofriends.org, before the event for exact times.) The Friends will sponsor a BYOB (bring your own blanket) event from 11 am-2 pm on the Visitor Center deck and back lawn. Brats and other lunch items will be available for purchase. Live music (remember live music?) will be provided by piano man, Steve Hall.

Current Adopted a Trail sponsors will be acknowledged at 1 pm. Information about

trail sections that need to be sponsored will be available. Trail Challenge materials will be available for inspiration.

A brochure is being created to highlight favorite treks. We currently have maps, but nothing printed that describes great routes. If you are a frequent trail user, would you be willing to write up a brief description of your favorite trek? Please include the route, the approximate distance, the time it usually takes you to complete it, the best season to use it and why you like it. In addition, would you be willing to offer a guided hike of your featured walk? Any time convenient for you on Saturday, June 5 is fine. You may limit the number of participants, and we



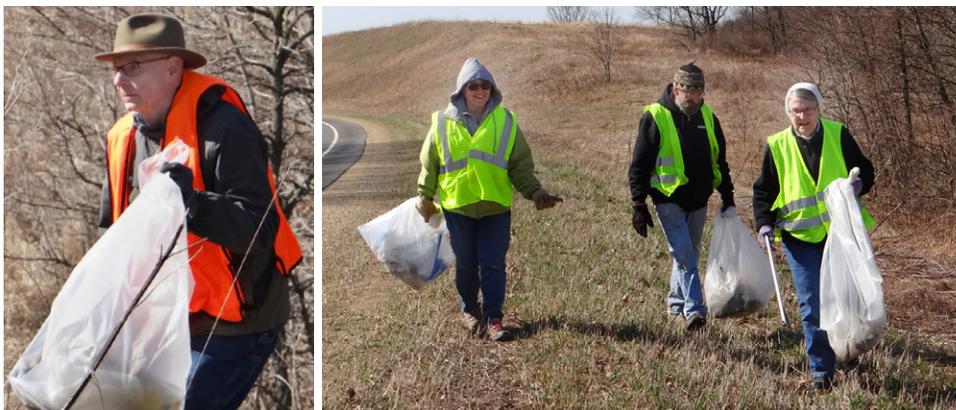
Photo: Karen Hemsen

will encourage covid safe practices in our publicity. There will be no pre-registration. (You could also describe your favorite hike for the brochure and choose **not** to give a guided hike.) If you are interested in participating in this capacity, please forward your favorite trail description to Julie Hoel at juliehoel@icloud.com.

Friends Still Help Out in a Pandemic



Holiday Happening 2020 clockwise: Cookie Walk, pandemic style!; Kim Wahl and Friends board member Patty Kinsey sell wreaths, and holiday decorations donated by Friends members; Joanne Shird's baguettes.



Getting the Reserve Ready for Spring from left: Friends board president Tom Miron; board member Patty Kinsey, volunteer Mark Katz and board treasurer Marcia Bader, doing road clean-up along Hwy. 131.

Garden Walk Dates Set

Last year's Garden Walk was so well-received we're going to have another one this summer!

The second annual Friends Garden Walk will be held 4-7pm Friday, July 9 and 10 am-1pm Saturday, July 10.

Gardens are located in and around La Farge, and feature prairie plants, vegetables and flowers.

Tickets, which cost \$20, will be sold online and at the KVR and selected gardens on the days of the walk. Purchasers will receive addresses and maps.

Further details will be emailed to Friends and available in area newspapers.



FRIENDS EVENTS

Events Schedule is uncertain at this time; check the KVR website for updates.

Trails Day

Saturday, June 5

Come hike your favorite or try a new trail, and enjoy a picnic lunch. Some guided hikes; others will be self-guided with a brochure. Volunteers needed; contact Julie at julievhoel@icloud.com for more information.

Drive the Old Hwy 131 Trail

Sunday, July 4 Noon-4 pm

Open house at the KVR: enjoy a leisurely drive on Old Hwy 131. One-way traffic from south to north – to enter, follow Seeleyburg Rd. to Corps Rd. Stop in for cookies and lemonade at the Visitor Center.

Garden Walk

Friday, July 9 4-7 pm

Saturday, July 10 10 am-1 pm

Come see flower, vegetable, and native plantings including prairies in the La Farge area. Ticket details and locations available soon by email and in area newspapers. Volunteers are needed at each of the eight gardens.

Dam Challenge

Saturday, Oct. 2

Possible Pasta Supper, Friday, Oct. 1. Volunteers needed to support the races.

Annual Photo Contest

Entries Due Oct. 10

Submit photos of the KVR Sept. 1-Oct. 10 at the Friends website, www.kickapoofriends.org. Judges select 12 finalists; vote for your favorite during the month of November.

Holiday Happening

Saturday, Dec. 4

Details to be announced.

Gift Shop Now Open

The Friends Gift Shop is open during KVR Visitor Center hours. It contains the work of Driftless area artists, plus items with the KVR logo and items geared to boys and girls, and campers and hikers.

Please send suggestions for items to carry in the shop to:
Info@kickapoofriends.org.

Marcy West Helped Kickapoo Community Heal

When a local committee hired Marcy West on Dec. 16, 1996, the Kickapoo Valley Reserve did not exist.

The approximately 8,600 acres had been known as “the government land” for 34 years after the U.S. Corps of Engineers condemned it to build a dam. The dam was never built, and the land became a place where people partied and dumped their garbage, and user groups trashed the land.

Several people, including national and state officials, representatives of the Ho Chunk Nation, and members of the local committee, took part in the drama to wrestle the land from federal control. But Ron Johnson, a member of the local committee, said the land may never have become a reserve without Marcy West.

The Ho Chunk Nation had concerns because the property contains Ho Chunk sacred lands, he said. “If we couldn’t come to an agreement with the Ho Chunks, it might still be government land.”

West wrote a memorandum of understanding with the Nation, which ended the impasse. “It was great working with her,” Johnson said. “Marcy was very diplomatic and she could put her ideas down on paper. That’s why we worked so well together. She worked well with all the people.”

Brad Steinmetz, a founder and longtime president of the KVR Friends Board, listed some of West’s accomplishments:

- Getting grant money to build the timber bridges along Old 131 Trail
- Starting summer school classes at the KVR
- Getting the new section of HWY P built across the Reserve
- Getting the Visitor Center built
- Working with former landowners to sell them on the idea of the Reserve
- Helping start a Friends organization
- Getting the Smithsonian Exhibit, “Between Fences” shown at the Visitors Center
- Working with groups after the many floods of the last 15 years and offering the KVR as a meeting place to discuss the future

- Negotiating a deal with the Town of Stark to acquire property near Rockton in exchange for Stark building at the dam site.

“Marcy knew people at the state and national levels to get things done,” Johnson said. “She brought important people from Madison and Washington to the table, and secured millions of dollars to create and maintain the Reserve, and helped bring grant money for flood control.”

During the controversial reconstruction of Hwy. 131 from Ontario to La Farge, Marcy got the federal government and the state

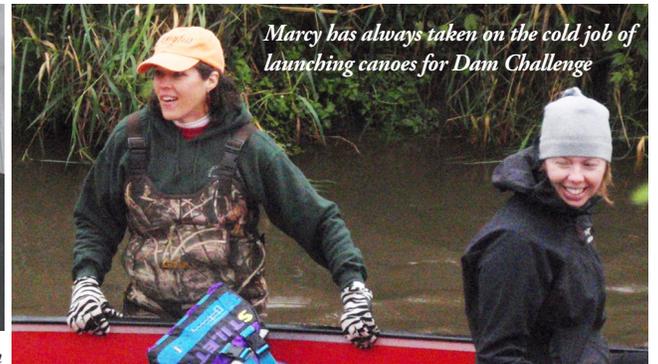
Department of Transportation to cooperate, he said. The feds had built a new road from La Farge to Rockton before the dam project was stopped. Marcy got them to agree to complete the highway, including the attractive bridges, up to Ontario. She also secured a federal grant so Vernon Electric Co-op could install utility wires underground to the north end of the Reserve property.

The state built the road, but the feds paid for it. In return the state paid for the Visitor Center. Marcy served as general contractor

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With “Moose” Speros, former secretary, WI Dept. of Tourism



Marcy has always taken on the cold job of launching canoes for Dam Challenge

New Classroom Building Underway

For the last several years, the Education Committee has been dreaming about adding additional classroom space to accommodate large school groups and an additional home base to house more summer camps. When KVR and the LaFarge School District were awarded a state charter school grant to create the Kickapoo Valley Forest School, the need for the extra space was even greater. This free public school will be on site at KVR. It will open this September for 32 4K and K students. Grades 1 and 2 will be added in subsequent years. (Find details of this innovative school at www.kickapoovalleyforestschool.org)

An amazing group of skilled volunteers has stepped up to create a super insulated passive solar design that will take minimal energy to heat and cool. Local donors Chuck and Gwen Hatfield, Brad and Carolyn Steinmetz, Julie and Gil Hoel and an anonymous donor created a start-up fund. Prairie Springs: The Paul Fleckenstein Foundation has pledged a very generous \$100K to enable us to complete the project. There is still much work to be done.



New Kickapoo Management Board member Scott Lind has agreed to serve as project manager of the build. And here’s where **you** come in! If you have experience with building projects, and a comfort level around the tools needed to construct a simple building, we are looking for volunteers to join our work crews this summer. Whether you have just a few hours or several days to give, we would like to hear from you; contact Julie Hoel at juliehoel@icloud.com. We truly appreciate your time as volunteer efforts represent the best of the KVR community spirit.

KVR is Surviving the Pandemic Too...

As with many other public properties, the pandemic resulted in people from near and far utilizing the 8,600 acres we know and love as a safe respite and escape from the news.

Trail and camping permit sales were 25% higher than previous years, canoe rental services on the Kickapoo River reported 2020 as their best year ever and social media hits were through the roof. It was wonderful to see so many people discovering the area for the first time and our patrol officers indicated most people were grateful to have enough space to really get away.

The most significant impact to the Reserve was having to shut down the Visitor Center to the public. It was especially difficult to not have our annual invasion of students on field trips and summer camps; their energy and enthusiasm are contagious. Fortunately, we were able to reopen the building on April 5th and a few schools have scheduled field trips for May and June with Covid-prevention measures in place. Summer camps will be held to continue the sense that things are getting a little closer to normal. Administratively, the loss of revenue in the Education program was difficult and we appreciate the support from the Friends of KVR to get us through.

Ironically, some things improved due to the pandemic:

- On-line payments for trail passes and parking permits save staff time in processing and are convenient for the customer so will continue.
- Leave no Trace principles fully implemented. The KVR is rustic and not intended to be a park. Efforts will continue to make sure people take care of their own garbage.
- Customer service comes in many forms. The KVR website, Facebook, Instagram, email and phone can answer questions and provide information in real time without sharing air droplets!

We all look forward to watching the progress continue. Spring hikes, Driftless Dialogue talks and planning for the annual Dam Challenge triathlon are additional indicators we're getting back to normal along with the rest of you.

– KVR Executive Director Marcy West

2020 Friends Photo Contest Winners

The pandemic disrupted so much in 2020, and KVR became even more important as a refuge for many of us. That included over 50 photographers who submitted entries in the 12th Annual Photo Contest.



The winners (clockwise):

Barb Harris (Rockton Trail Tree); Sharon Swiggum (Gathering Pollen); Gil Hoel (Immersion); and Emily Wolf Lewis (Goldenrod). Visit the Friends' website (www.kickapooofriends.org) to enjoy all of the entries.

It's not too early to start gathering snapshots for this year's contest, so take advantage of the spring weather to explore the KVR with your camera! Deadline for 2021 Photo Contest entries is 5 pm, October 10.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Friends are grateful for all renewing memberships – your continued support keeps education programs strong.

*A warm welcome to these new members!
(September 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021)*

Mark & Kelli Brave
Chris & Deb Abrahamson
Marilyn Adam
Anthony Adams
Ryan & Nichole Alderson
Kendra Avery
Susan & Doug Boecher
Jody Boettcher
Vicki & Greg Brickner
R Paul & Darlene Buhr
Todd Camlek & Family
Greg Cheeseboro
Teri Starry & Clay Jones
Michael Cody
Randahl & Lyrea Crawford
Jon-Paul & Kristine Da Prato
Mary Dombrowski
Mat & Cate Eddy
Marta Engel
Phillip & Margaret Farley
John & Denise Frank
Ned Gatzke
Dona & Joshua Goede
Dan & Tracey Goltz
Girard Gorelick
James Grant
Barb Harris
Katie & Nick Hayden
Bill (William) Heart
Trish Helgerson
Maggie Mae Hilliard
Rochelle Hundt
Erin Malone & Jason Vidas
John Gillies & Jean Brady-Gillies
Kathy Johnson
Bob Retko & Kay Wienke
Barb & Rick Kettner
Debra & Donnie Kleven
Vicki & Roland Koenig
Alan Koskelin
Kirt Kradle
Megan Krenz
Christina Landis
Robert Lange
Patricia Larson Nestor
Greg Lawton
JC & Laura Love
Bill Ludovice
Alice Lybek
Peter Mahlock
Ann Mais

new members continued next page

KVR Discovery Center Update

The re-make of the exhibit area in the Reserve's Visitor Center into the new Discovery Center continues on pace, with final design approval coming soon. A consortium of firms aided by local input is guiding the design process.

Fundraising for the Discovery Center continues with over \$420,000 already raised of the estimated \$600,000 cost. Donations are still being accepted and will be matched by the Prairie Springs Fleckenstein Trust (for every \$2 you contribute, the trust will donate \$1.) Find details for giving on the Friends (www.kickapoofriends.org) or KVR (www.kvr.state.wi.us) web pages.

New interactive displays centered around the themes of land, river, sky, plants, animals, and people will be created to highlight a uniquely Kickapoo perspective. Parts of the current exhibit, including the Rock Wall and Flood Pole, are being kept with modern adaptations added. The current Story Fire area will be undergoing major improvements. Some of the new exhibits will be movable to better utilize the space for other events held at the Reserve.

Construction is scheduled for the winter 2021-22 with completion in spring 2022. A special Grand Opening event for Extraordinary Friends will be held.

Your support in helping to tell the stories of this unique region is encouraged – and, thank you!

– Brad Steinmetz is campaign co-chair for Discovery Center fundraising

Marcy West Helped Kickapoo Community Heal

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though she had no former experience as a contractor.

Marcy helped the Kickapoo Valley community heal by including it in the management plan, standing tough when she needed to, and listening and compromising when it was important, said a founder and KVR Friends Board member Chuck Hatfield.

“Especially during its early years, everything dealing with the KVR could create heated controversy. In the winter of 2003-04, several former land owners brought a proposal for a memorial to the settlers of Star Valley to the Management Board,” he recalled. “The board was not in favor of placing memorials and markers there, envisioning an effort to put a memorial at each of the more than 140 properties. Strong feelings on both sides could have caused a serious community rift if Marcy had not worked behind the scenes with Brian Turner, Bernice Schroeder and others to develop an agreement.”

“The result is a beautiful memorial space in Star Valley, a tribute to all those who settled in the Kickapoo Valley,” Hatfield said. “It also set an example for many discussions that would follow. Even people who disagreed with Marcy knew these discussions would be

conducted with respect and thoughtfulness. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the Kickapoo Valley Reserve has become an integral part of the community.”

Steinmetz summed up Marcy's accomplishments: “When Marcy makes a decision about something dealing with the Reserve, she always keeps the mission of the place in mind. Some interest groups and individuals over the years have expressed frustration with some of her decisions, but in the long run those decisions are always what's best for this place in the Kickapoo Valley.

“She helped make this place special because she had the foresight to see what it could become. I enjoyed working with her for the past quarter of a century because of her dedication, not only to her job, but to this place.”

The Friends Board invites the community to honor Marcy's service through donations for the Discovery Center. Contributions great or small are appreciated. Please send a check (payable to Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve; write in the memo line Marcy West/Discovery Center) to:

Friends of KVR
Attn: Marcia Bader, Treasurer
S3661 State Hwy. 131
La Farge, WI 54639

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Christian Malanka
Brian Manske
Robin Butrick & Mark Gill
Julie Marquardt
Jim Martin
Sandra Martinek
Anna & Phil Marty
Raymond Bock & Maureen McCutcheon
Brian & Terri McGraw
Kevin McGuire
Kim McNelly & Family
T.J. & B.J. Mertens
William Milem
Michele Mockus
Curtis Moore
Michael Mossman
Kim Nowacki
Lance & Emily Oium
Tyler & Lorna Olson
Tim & Laurie Ott
Rebecca Palmer
Matt & Emily Patti
Paul & Amy Pedersen
Scott Pethan
Cole Quamme
Justin & Mandy Radloff
Kristina & Robert Ralph
Cynthia Rauls
Joe Rebholz
Joseph & Kathleen Reuter
Lucas Rioux-Maldague
Tim & Cheryl Roets
Randy & Lynne Roussel
Carolyn & Mark Sandberg
PJ & Nancy Sikorsky
Gregory Smith
Jess Starks
Amy, Rob & Emerson Stevens
Jay & Evelyn Sumer
Amy Swiggum
Alyssa Szepi
David Ware & Tamsen Morgan
Beth & Ashley Thayer
Ryan & Jennifer Thompson
Jared & Christy Torkelson
Cody & Jolynn Vanginkel
Laurie Voeltz
Jon & Amy Wedell
Jenny Werness
Keegan West
Tom & Kathie Wheeler
M'Lou Wilkie
Norman & Jill Wood
Dale Zimmerman



Friends Volunteer Gardeners

If you like to dig in the dirt, the Friends Volunteer Gardeners welcome you to join us in maintaining the KVR Visitor Center garden and memorial gardens on old Hwy 131.

We garden, starting at 5:30 pm, every other Tuesday, weather permitting, from spring through fall. The work includes weeding, cutting back last season's dead growth, and digging out invasive plants. This year it will also include selecting, purchasing and planting in newly cleared areas.

You'll need trowel, pruners, gloves and anything you want for comfort, such as kneepads.

After gardening for about an hour and a half, we adjourn

to the back deck for conversation, beverages and snacks.

If you'd like to join us this season, please contact Joan Kent at donjoan@mwt.net to receive the email notices.



Even More People Love the Reserve, Join Friends

A hearty welcome to new members!

Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve 2021 membership is already at an all-time high, and the number is expected to increase over the coming months as Friends membership includes an annual pass valid through December.

In addition to hiking, you might want to attend an event or take part in volunteer activities – monitoring and maintaining a trail, collecting nature data, gardening, or updating the Reserve on river and trail conditions. Events and volunteer possibilities are listed in this newsletter or on the KVR website: kickapoovalley.wi.gov/Get-Involved/Volunteer/

