



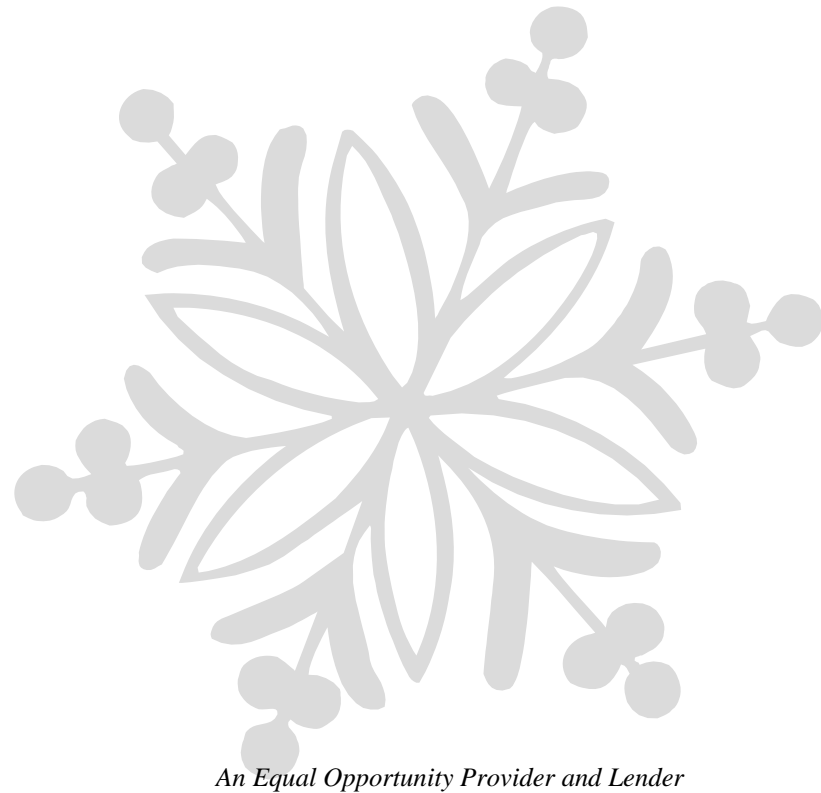
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Coordinator: David King Program Assistant: Tracy Meredith



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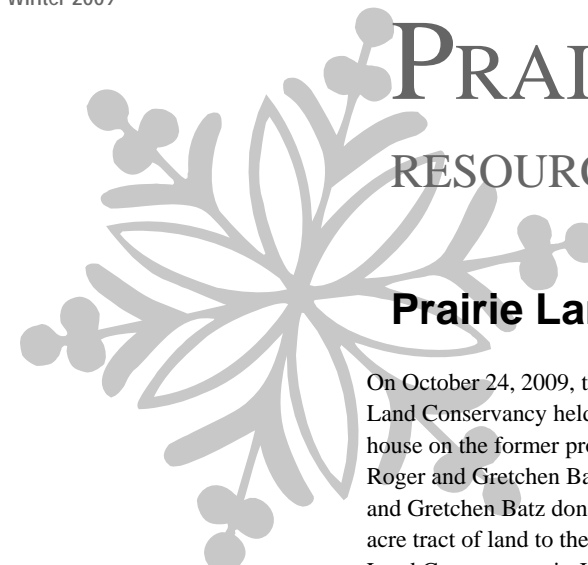
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PRAIRIE HILLS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Prairie Land Conservancy holds Open House

On October 24, 2009, the Prairie Land Conservancy held an open house on the former property of Roger and Gretchen Batz. Roger and Gretchen Batz donated the 196 acre tract of land to the Prairie Land Conservancy in July of this year.

Special points of interest:

- Prairie Land Conservancy holds an open house at donated property Stony Hills in Hancock County West Central Officials Association helping raise funds for the READY Bus

The open house provided the Prairie Land Conservancy an opportunity to meet interested individuals and provide information about the land donation and what the Prairie Land Conservancy group is comprised of and what goals it is striving for.



Roger and Gretchen Batz welcome those attending the open house and give a brief history of the 196 acre tract of land generously donated to the PLC..

This property is dedicated as a Nature Preserve thru the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. It is the second largest privately held Nature Preserve in Illinois.

used on site at a later date. This provided interested individuals an opportunity to learn more about conservation easements, nature preserves, and how their involvement is needed to help get Prairie Land Conservancy's message out to the public. It also provided an opportunity for Prairie Land Con-

servancy to show their gratitude to Roger and Gretchen Batz for their generous donation.

Prairie Hills RC&D and Prairie Land Conservancy would like to thank all those who dedicated many hours of volunteer time to prepare for the Open House. These individuals exhibit a great example of pride and commitment to the organization and lay the foundation of what Prairie Land Conservancy is built on.

Over 50 individuals attended and participated in a nature walk, learning about the property and even collecting prairie grass seed to be

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Lisa Gruver, Prairie Land Conservancy member, educates participants about prairie seed collection. Prairie grass seed was collected and will be used on site at a later date.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Prairie Land Conservancy or would like more information, please contact the office at (309)833-4747 or go to their website at www.prairielandconservancy.com.

Council Meeting

On October 22, 2009 Prairie Hills RC&D held a council meeting that had IL State Senator John Sullivan as guest speaker. He discussed the current State budget and problems plaguing the state. He spoke of some possible scenarios that may be done in FY 2011 to help balance the state budget and mentioned that it will take several years for the State to get back on it's feet.

Prairie Hills appointed former council member Ed Owen to represent Hancock County replacing Brenda Pyatt. Welcome back Ed, we look forward to working with you again! Lyle Johnson, current council member, was appointed to the executive board as a replacement for Dale Parsons, Knox County. Thank you Lyle for joining the executive board!

Updates for the Small Business Loan Program, Prairie Land Conservancy, READY Bus, and the Building addi-

tion were discussed.

New projects were discussed and included the Brownfield's Hazardous Substance proposal, Brownfield's Mined Scarred Proposal. A re-



Senator John Sullivan addresses the council regarding State issues.

view of the new Privacy Policy and Ethics Policy was conducted.

The other guest speaker, Jim Elliott, President of Illinois Association of RC&D's, spoke to the council regarding expectations of Illinois RC&D's for 2010. He also congratulated Prairie Hills RC&D for becoming a Circle of Diamonds member. Currently in Illinois there are only two RC&D's in the Circle Diamonds. The Circle of Diamond's recognizes RC&D's who have maintained a certain integrity and proven it's ability to conduct business on a professional level. Prairie Hills received recognition for this at the National Association of RC&D's earlier this year and was presented the award at the annual Illinois Association of RC&D's in October. It was recommended at the IARCD annual meeting held in October that the remaining 11 RC&D's become qualified members of the Circle of Diamonds by the end of 2010.

READY Bus receives a grant and large book donation

Early this summer, Prairie Hills READY Bus was contacted by the Warren County Home and Community Education Association. Loretta McKee, representative, asked if Dave King and Tracy Meredith would come speak to their group regarding the READY Bus, as they were interested in adopting it as their program for the summer.

After meeting with the group, the Warren County Home and Community Education Association adopted the READY Bus and collected books throughout the summer. At the annual meeting for the HCEA, the group presented the READY Bus program with over 500 books and a small monetary donation to be used for the purchase of new books. This was a wonderful and appreciated donation that helped stock up the bus!

In September of this year, Dave King received word from Dollar General that the READY Bus was awarded a \$3,000 grant for the purchase of books!

With these two recent and previous donations, the READY Bus will be fully stocked with books and prepared for the upcoming 2010 year! To date, the READY Bus has received well over 3500 donated books, and has given out over 2500 books and attended approximately 23 events since April of 2009. This is well above our intended goal of

15 events per year.

The outpouring community support of this program has been tremendous and more than we could have ever expected! Thank you to all individuals and organizations who have contributed to this needed literacy program!



Tracy Meredith, Program Assistant, drives the READY Bus in the Monmouth Prime Beef Festival parade,

Although our program normally takes book donations year round, due to the enormous book donations received thus far, the only books the READY Bus is in need of currently is 6-8 grade level reading books. We will announce when we will be taking additional prek-5 grade books. The READY Bus is in need of monetary support to help offset operating expenses and aid in the purchase of educational programming materials. If your group or organization would be interested in making a monetary donation, or booking the READY Bus at an upcoming event, please call the office at (309)833-4747.

Small Business Loan Program Updates

Prairie Hills Small Business loan program is as busy as ever. In October, the Prairie Hills loan committee closed on a new loan with Frank Tournear of Tournear Vending from Vermont, Illinois. Frank owns and operates the Vermont Arcade and Tournear Vending route covering several cities in Illinois.

The small business loan program is also currently working with several other applicants for new and refinanced loans. Prairie Hills is anticipating the restructuring of an existing business in Macomb, which will assist in the reduction of high interest loans and expand their current operations. Another

potential new business is a grocery store on the west side of Macomb which will be an upscale niche of traditional and organic foods.

Prairie Hills Small Business Loan Program takes pride in helping out the local communities small business owners by providing low interest flexible term loans for new, existing, expanding and retaining businesses. The loans made have ranged from businesses in trucking, to spa's, to printing, to bridal, to restaurants and so on. The loans obtained have assisted with the purchase of equipment, expansion of the current business, job retention, debt

consolidation, purchase of a new business and so forth.

Since the program's beginning in 1998, Prairie Hills has provided loans to fifty-one businesses who have employed over 300 people. Prairie Hills has leveraged \$13.5 million of private and public sector funds with \$2.06 million of USDA Rural Development funds and \$1.02 million of Prairie Hills funds.

If you are interested in learning more about the Small Business Loan program, please contact the office at (309) 833-4747.

West Central Officials Association helps the READY Bus

Have you ever been to a baseball, softball, basketball, football or volleyball game and yelled at the referees for making a call that you didn't particularly like?

Have you ever wondered who those men and women are dressed in blue or black and white stripped shirts who usually have a stoic look on their faces that take verbal stabs from fans, players and coaches and how they can just ignore all the abuse?

You may think that they are hardened, crusted souls who like to influence the game to be sure the home team wins. Ever been there and done that?

Well, these extraordinary people are just like you and I who enjoy sports, enjoy

being around athletes and the students of the games they officiate. They study the rule books, take a 100 question test for each sport, go to clinics and really try hard to call the best game and then improve upon that the next game. They are also Mothers, Fathers, brothers, sisters, parents, and citizens of the communities they live in.

They work, pay taxes, pray, and are civic minded. They also like to give back to the community in which they work, live and play.

The West Central Officials Association is made up of about 140 officials in five sports played at the junior and senior high school level. They are men and women who are members of the IL High School Association and pay about \$100 in membership fees.

The WCOA is giving back to the community this year by adopting the READY Bus Literacy program and donating a "game check" to Prairie Hills to purchase books and defray operating expenses of the bus.

This is a new adventure for the WCOA because they have never as a group collectively donated funds to a charity. Prairie Hills was picked at their annual meeting this past September and for a year officials will contribute a game check which is tax deductible.

WCOA President Shawn Dobey says that officials have the privilege of getting paid to work with youth and would like to give back to the community to benefit a needed service. THANK YOU WCOA!