

R.E.A.D.Y. Bus Update

By Tracy Meredith

The READY (**reaching educating and developing youth**) Bus has been working hard to get the bus prepared for its scheduled children's events throughout its six counties of Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough and Warren. The READY Bus literacy program was developed in 2008 to reduce illiteracy by providing pre-k through eighth grade children an educational presentation on conservation, wildlife habitat, or the environment, plus give them a free book of their choice to keep and read.

According to national surveys, roughly 1 in 5 American children grow up functionally illiterate, 61% of low income families have no books at all in their home for their children, and there are currently 44 million adults who are unable to read a simple story to their child. The Packard & MacArthur Foundations reported that the average child in a middle class home has been exposed to 1,000 hours of one-on-one reading versus the average child in a low income home has only had up to 25 hours of on-on-one reading. The National Adult Literacy Survey approximates 44 million people in America cannot read well enough to fill out an application, read a food label, or read a simple story to a child. These are shocking statistics and Prairie Hills READY Bus is striving to address these issues through their literacy program.

The READY Bus attended its first event April 17th in Monmouth Illinois at the "Farm in the Park" program for kindergarten through third grade children. Sandy Bertelsen, Ag Literacy Coordinator for Warren and Henderson Counties, organized the event. Other events attended to date are "Conservation Days"



Prairie Hills RC&D's READY Bus, with Tracy Meredith, Program Assistant, far left and David King, Coordinator, far right with a 1st grade class at the "Farm in the Park" program in Monmouth Illinois April 17th, 2009.

in Hancock County, "Reward Days" at United North, Alexis IL, "Touch a Truck" at the Lake Storey Pavilion in Galesburg, IL, "Barnyard Days" at Maples Mill Church, and "Roseville Ag Days", in Roseville, IL. Over 1,100 books have been given out at these events! The children have been so appreciative and excited to receive a free book, which is so touching.

Upcoming events will include the following: June 11, "Read on the Wild Side" Carthage Public Library, "Farmers Market" in Macomb and Carthage with time and date TBD, Fulton County Fair, July 21, Henderson County Fair July 22, "Bugs" at the Galesburg Public Library, July 30, Abingdon Community Festival kids Day, August 16, and the Boys and Girls club set for the end of August with the date and time TBD.

The READY Bus needs your group or organization to donate new or good condition used books or a contribution of cash to purchase books and educational material. We have depleted our k-3 grade books and need to replenish those grade levels as soon as possible. The books need to be age and content appropriate. Prairie Hills Resource Conservation and Development is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and therefore any donation may be tax deductible. To make arrangements for book pick up or to donate funds, please call the office at (309)833-4747, or email us at prairie@macomb.com.

We appreciate the volunteer hours dedicated, supplies, books and other donated material! It has helped get the READY Bus on the road!



A classroom from United North elementary school, reading their books picked from the READY Bus at "Reward Days" in Alexis, IL.

In back, Tracy Meredith, Prairie Hills, with two girls enjoying picking out books at Conservation Days in Carthage, IL May 1.



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Prairie Land Conservancy's new logo

Prairie Land Conservancy

The Prairie Land Conservancy has been preparing for its first land donation of a nature preserve in Hancock County. This highly anticipated land donation, which is the second largest private nature preserve in Illinois, consisting of 196 acres, will occur in late May or early June of 2009.

The PLC committee has been working on various plans for the property and researching potential sources and venues for funding to help promote and maintain the property. This beautiful property provides enriching potential which will draw in public interest in time. The committee is working on management, stewardship, and land protection plans. Eventually the committee would like to have walking trails, a parking lot, and Kiosks for the property to provide educational events for the public. This has been an exciting venture thus far for the PLC committee. Their commitment, dedication and hard work on this land will get the property to the anticipated vision the PLC committee holds for it.

Other item's the PLC committee has been working on is promotion of the Prairie Land Conservancy to local community groups and organizations to get new members and promote the conservancy's program. Alice Henry, chair of the PLC, and David King, Coordinator of Prairie Hills RC&D, provided presentations at several speaking arrangements to the Land Use Council 4, the McDonough Ag Roundtable, and Two Rivers RC&D.

Other PLC committee members have volunteered their time setting up and working the PLC display at celebration Earth Day held at Spoon River College, and Western Illinois University's Ag Mechanization Show. This provided opportunity for the Prairie Land Conservancy to promote its services and provide educational information to the general public unfamiliar with land conservancy.

The Prairie Land Conservancy has almost finished its website. The finishing touches are being added and should be up and functioning by the end of the month. There will be an area for those wanting to become members or donate funds to pay online. Features about the Land Conservancy and its participation in events will be posted for viewer information along with many other items of interest. Please check for the PLC website at www.prairielandconservancy.org.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the Prairie Land Conservancy or would like information on becoming a member, or attending a meeting, please contact the office at (309)833-4747.

"A Land Trust.... Providing solutions to protect the places you love--- a living legacy"

Small Business Loan Updates

Prairie Hills Resource Conservation and Development's Small Business Loan Program has been very active in the past few months with new applicants and loans.

The most recent loan is for a Subway business in Hamilton Illinois. The owner's Peter and Kristen Sorenson already own or operate several Subway businesses in Fulton, McDonough, and Knox counties. It was only natural for them to expand and purchase the Subway business in Hamilton located in Hancock County.

Another recent loan is the Rialto Movie Plex in Macomb, Illinois. This will feature a 7 screen theatre located in the old Eagles Grocery store behind the Pizza Hut on East Jackson. This much anticipated movie theatre will open by the end of May or the first part of June. This project has generated great public excitement as Macomb currently has only one small movie theatre that provides two screens. The new

theatre will provide many choices in movies for local and out of town residents.

A few other loan prospects are in the works and the Prairie Hills Small Business Loan Program expects more interest and applicants throughout 2009.

If you are looking to start a new business, want to expand your existing business, renovate or construct a new building, or need working capital, contact Prairie Hills Small Business Loan Program to see how they can help. Loan information, applications and credit bureau information may be found at our website at www.prairiehillsrcd.org under the Small Business Loan Program link. You may also obtain more information by calling the office at (309)833-4747.

READY Bus Literacy Program receives grant from Macomb Wal-mart

By Tracy Meredith

On April 1, 2009, The READY Bus literacy program received a \$1,000 donation award from the Macomb Wal-mart. Those present were Tammy Hocker, Janice Roberts, Co-Manager of the Macomb Wal-mart, and Dale Parsons, Tracy Meredith, and David King of Prairie Hills Resource Conservation and Development, Incorporated.

The funds will be used for the Reaching, Educating, and Developing Youth (READY) Bus literacy program. The READY Bus will provide pre-k through eighth grade children a free book of their choice to take home and keep.

Prairie Hills RC&D invites schools, non-profit groups, and other child related organizations who would be interested in scheduling the READY Bus for a visit to call (309)833-4747. The public can donate age

appropriate new or good quality used condition pre-k through eighth grade children's books to Prairie Hills by calling the office at (309)833-4747, or dropping the books off at 321 W. University Dr., Macomb, IL.



Children selecting a book to keep at the "Farm in the Park" program in Monmouth, Illinois. The grant received from Wal-mart helped supply books, signage and a handicap ramp for the READY Bus program.



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Galesburg Public Library Donation

Upcoming Meetings

Below is a list of upcoming tentatively scheduled meetings. As the meetings get closer to date, information will be mailed out with more detailed information, or you may call the office at (309)833-4747 or check our website for more information.

Thursday July 23	Council Meeting
Thursday October 22	Council Meeting
Thursday June 18	Executive Board Meeting
Thursday August 20	Executive Board Meeting
Thursday Oct. 15	Executive Board Meeting
Thursday December 17	Executive Board Meeting

Prairie Hills will also be holding a special 30th anniversary open house this summer with the date and time TBD. Look for more information in upcoming mailings.



L-R Dave King, PHRCD Coordinator, Pamela Van Kirk, Head Librarian, and Dale Parsons, PHRCD Council. Prairie Hills donated \$50 to the Friends of Galesburg Library acknowledging their contribution of over 200 books to the READY Bus Literacy Project.