



Friends of the Parks works to protect, improve and expand Chicago's parks and forest preserves in Cook County.

Friends of the Parks Advocate

www.fotp.org

Spring/Summer 2009

Friends of the Parks' "Last Four Miles" Proposal Would Open Entire Chicago Lakefront to the Public

One hundred years after Daniel Burnham first envisioned the concept, Friends of the Parks unveiled a plan on June 9 to open Chicago's entire lakefront to the public, by creating an unbroken string of public parks with a continuous lakefront trail hugging the shoreline from Evanston to Indiana.

Former industrial sites on the south side would be transformed with almost 400 acres of new parks and beaches, and on the north lakefront nearly 100 acres of new parkland would connect currently isolated small parks and beaches. The

new green parkland would improve the environment by reducing air pollution, creating habitat for wildlife and protecting the shoreline from storms and erosion.

If adopted, the proposal, known as *The Last Four Miles: Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks*, would culminate generations of work to achieve one of the core aspirations in Burnham's century-old *Plan of Chicago*: a lakefront park system entirely open to the public. *The Last Four Miles* proposes to remove the last barriers to that commitment by creating public parks along the four miles of lakefront that cur-

rently exclude the general public.

"The lakefront in Chicago, unlike other waterfront cities in the U.S., is public and was created with much sacrifice for all to enjoy," said FOTP President Erma Tranter. "The notion that the lakefront belongs to all of us has been deeply imbued in our character from the time of the city's incorporation. Burnham solidified the vision of a public lakefront in his iconic *Plan of Chicago*. One hundred years after Daniel Burnham set us on a course to provide full public access to the lakefront, we are just a

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In Memory of Leon Despres (1908-2009)

On May 6, we lost one of the truly great public servants in the history of Chicago. Leon Despres, or "Len" as he



was known to his friends, passed away at his home on Stony Island Avenue, overlooking the Jackson Park he had known since infancy.

Remaining personal and available to people and causes after 101 birthdays, Len was a longtime member of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Parks. He saw this city he loved grow from the brazen, sprawling Hog-butcher Colossus on the Prairie into one of the most beautiful and vibrant cities in the world, home to a progressive tradition of gorgeous lakefront and neighborhood parks, compelling arts and strong political governance.

Despres served as an alderman for twenty years, often the lone voice of reason and egalitarian values in City Council. He fought the first Mayor Daley and his Machine to protect the rights and property of the common folk.

The son of Samuel and Henrietta

Rubovitz Despres, Len was educated at the University of Chicago, receiving his B.A. in 1927 and his law degree in 1929. Len was an ardent liberal and an early socialist, who once brought a valise of clothes to banished Bolshevik Leon Trotsky in Mexico. After his special delivery, Len and his wife Marian vacationed there. He picnicked with Trotsky and Frieda Kahlo while Frieda's husband Diego Rivera painted Marian's portrait.

Len always took the side of the downtrodden, offering assistance to those hopeless from poverty or oppression. He became the general counsel of the Illinois Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. A disciple of Robert Merriam and Paul Douglas, in 1955 Len was approached to run for the City Council to represent the 5th Ward in Hyde Park. Narrowly defeating Machine candi-

(continued on page 2)

Leon Despres (cont'd)

date George Uretz, he went on to serve his ward faithfully and stoically, often clashing with Mayor Daley in Council Chambers, usually voting as a single voice against Machine-dominated measures.

Len often rode his bicycle to work at City Hall. He was shot during a mugging near his home in 1967. Some of his proudest moments were marching with Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965, and supporting King's mission to Chicago in 1968.

Len served 20 years in City Council, eventually serving as Parliamentarian, and then he went on to the Chicago Plan Commission. Columnist Mike Royko once said, "He has been in the forefront of just about every decent, worthwhile effort made to improve life in this city." Len joined the Board of Friends of the Parks more than 25 years ago, and remained on our Board until his passing. Landmarks and parks were always a high priority for Len, who with his wife Marian helped to save the Robie House from demolition, and whose biggest clash with Richard J. Daley was over the taking of land from Washington Park. A typical statement by Len would be (in the context of urban "renewal"): "...Now the issue is not only about the city taking away parks and shoreline from the ordinary people; but about the poor being taken away from the parks."

After 75 years of marriage and together raising two children (and one grandson), his beloved wife Marian died in 2007. Len naturally slowed a little after that, but still found time to get to his Loop law office at least once a week.

That same year, Friends of the Parks created its Lifetime Commitment to Parks Award, and naturally, the first person to receive that honor was Len Despres. We have named that award in his honor: a great humanitarian and a hero to everyman. Of his passing, fellow Hyde Park favorite son President Barack Obama said "Chicago is a richer and stronger city for having known Len Despres." 🌿

Burnham Centennial Lakefront Bus Tour Focuses on Chicago's Lakefront Parks System

Join Friends of the Parks and the Illinois State Geological Survey on a motor coach tour of Chicago's lakefront parks.

The tour will explain why Chicago, unlike any other city in the nation, envisioned, advocated and developed a public park system along the city's entire Lake Michigan shoreline. Today, public parks comprise 26 of the city's 30 miles of lakefront, and Friends of the Parks advocates completing the last four miles.

You will learn about the coastal geology of the Chicago lakeshore now and when it was first settled. Discover how early lakefront park development by the Lincoln and South Park Commissions set the stage for the 1909 Burnham Plan of Chicago.

Finally, you will get a preview of the Last Four Miles: Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks.

The next motor coach tour is scheduled to depart from 31st Street Beach (31st Street and South Lake Shore Drive) from 9:00 a.m. until noon on Saturday, July 18. Tours were previously conducted on May 16 and June 20.

Tour leaders include Mike Chrzastowski, Ph.D., Coastal Geologist, Illinois State Geological Survey; and Eleanor Roemer, Policy Director, and Erma Tranter, President, Friends of the Parks. The Lakefront Bus Tour costs \$25 and includes a seat on the motor coach and refreshments. If you want to join us, you must let us know: call Friends of the Parks at (312) 857-2757, ext. 10 to reserve a seat on the tour. 🌿

Village of Wheeling to Restore and Improve Potawatomi Prairie

After years of opposing the Village of Wheeling's proposal to use Forest Preserve land known as Potawatomi Prairie for a storm water retention pond, Friends of the Parks was finally able to give a thumbs-up to the Village's revised proposal to restore and improve access to Potawatomi Prairie.

The Village, under the leadership of new Village Manager Mark Rooney, met with representatives of Friends of the Parks and several other open space advocacy organizations to present their new plan and ask for feedback. The new

plan does not involve using Potawatomi Prairie to manage stormwater from the adjacent development. Instead, it provides for ecological restoration of the parcel, a circular walking path and a canoe launch to improve access to the forest preserves and the Des Plaines River.

Friends of the Parks appreciates Village Manager Rooney's sensitivity to the ecological needs of Potawatomi Prairie and his leadership in partnering with the Forest Preserve District, local business owners and others to make the vision happen. 🌿

Submissions Sought for Photo Contest

The *OutdoorIllinois* magazine is hosting a photo contest to celebrate the 500th site to be protected into the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The nature preserve / land & water reserve category is just one of many in the *OutdoorIllinois* magazine contest, but holds special significance

since the photos submitted under this category will be part of a statewide display of Illinois' highest quality natural areas that is slated for much more exposure. Check out the promotional page found on this web link: www.dnr.state.il.us/INPC/contest.html 🌿

Land Grab at Rainbow Beach Park by Board of Education

The Chicago Board of Education recently gained city approval to construct a new Powell School on lakefront parkland in Rainbow Beach Park between 75th and 76th Streets, east of South Shore Drive. The city's Plan Commission and Zoning Committee approved the plan even though it violates the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance and the current zoning as "Public Open Space," a zoning category enacted to prevent the taking of lakefront parkland.

Friends of the Parks argued that the plan violated 10 of the 14 policies of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance, including policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 14 of the city's Ordinance. The Park District acquired the land (formerly the location of the old

Thunderbird Motel) in approximately 1989 under former President of the Park District Board of Commissioners Walter Netsch. The Park District used tax dollars to purchase the land in order to fulfill Policy 1 of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance: "complete the publicly owned lakefront." The city further re-zoned the land as Park/Open Space (POS1) to protect it from development.

In addition to Rainbow Beach Park, only one other neighborhood-sized park, Rosenblum Park, serves the residents of the South Shore Community. Sadly, the Park District recently removed Rosenblum Park from public use for at least two years during the construction of a new South Shore High School. Thus, the South Shore Community now has *no* afterschool park

or recreational programs except for those at Rainbow Beach.

The Park District's Land Policy Plan identified the South Shore community as having a significant need for additional park facilities, including the need for ten baseball diamonds, six athletic fields, three swimming pools, three basketball backboards, four play areas, and three gymnasiums.

In a continuing pattern, the Board of Education grabbed park land for constructing schools, and Rainbow Beach Park and the South Shore Community lost. The Park District Board, the Plan Commission and the Zoning Board approved the transfer of the parkland to the Board of Education. 🌿

Two New Harbors Approved For Construction

The Park District Board of Commissioners recently approved construction of two new harbors. The Park District will construct Gateway Harbor parallel to the south side of Navy Pier, built along Dime Pier as the east-west axis. The existing, but eroding, Dime Pier will be completely rebuilt, widened and extended to link with Gateway Park.

Gateway Harbor will make 265 slips available for transient boaters visiting from other locations or other harbors. Lakefill to connect Dime Pier to Gateway Park will provide two additional acres of public parkland, along with a restaurant, public washrooms and amenities for boaters and the general public.

The Park District will build a second new and much larger harbor with 850 slips at 31st Street Beach. Community residents vetted the 31st Street Beach Harbor plan in a series of meetings sponsored

by 4th Ward Alderman, Toni Preckwinkle. Community and park activists wanted to ensure that there would be a net gain of parkland. They support submerging all surface parking lots below ground, which will result in eight additional acres of new park space. The Park District will reconstruct the outdated Bill Barry Playground and will add a new restaurant and a community center.

Funding comes from the sale of revenue bonds paid for by the rental of the slips. The Chicago Plan Commission must now approve both harbor plans under the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance. 🌿



This rendering shows the proposed 31st Street harbor.

Friends of the Parks Uses Outdoors For Environmental Education

Friends of the Parks' Nature Along the Lake program engages 725 students in outdoor classrooms at Montrose Harbor and the South Shore Cultural Center. The students come from 14 elementary schools to learn about the origins of Lake Michigan, the ecology of the Lake, the birds that populate Montrose's "Magic Hedge," and invasive fish species.

As part of the Nature Along the Lake program, 150 students celebrated Earth Day on April 22. The students walked from the nearby Disney Magnet School to Montrose Harbor. They started with yoga, cleaned up a dune, identified birds,

enjoyed an ecological beach-combing scavenger hunt, and made art works using recycled materials.

At the high school level, 210 teens participated in the Spring Earth Team Program, a Friends of the Parks / After School Matters partnership. Earth Teams, specializing in environmental science, completed studies at Calumet, Kelvyn, Humboldt, Horner and Norwood Parks. Our health and fitness initiative, Friends of the Parks Ultimate Team, participated in Douglas and Humboldt Parks in the 10-week program. 🌱



Kids enjoy birding at the Magic Hedge at Montrose Beach.

Friends of the Parks Donates Burpee "Money Garden" Seed Packets

Thanks to a very generous contribution from the Burpee Foundation, Friends of the Parks recently completed a giveaway of giant seed packets to individuals to start their very own edible garden. As a result, nearly 500 old-fashioned "victory gardens" and healthy, earth-friendly gardens will grow in Chicago this summer.

Burpee Seed Company offers a new item this year called "The Money Garden," an oversized packet containing six seed packets for different vegetable plants: snap bean, bibb lettuce, bell pepper, carrot, pea and tomato. Purchased separately,

the six packets would cost \$20, but Burpee Seed Company sells the package at \$10 to encourage first-time vegetable gardeners. If you plant the entire packet and all goes well, the garden can produce about \$650 worth of vegetables.

Through this kind gift from the Burpee Foundation, Friends of the Parks was pleased to distribute 500 packets of "The Money Garden" to community gardening groups, park advisory councils and the Park District's gardening clubs. Look for "The Money Garden" seed packet at your local garden store. 🌱

Odes to the Earth

Seventh grade students at Waters School in Chicago wrote poems celebrating the sky, lake and shore during a "Nature Along the Lake" program sponsored by Friends of the Parks."

Sky
Cirrus
Immortal
Infinite
Shining with light
Twinkling like twilight

Ghostly
Transparent
Forever high

Filled with white spots made out of shadows
A face with one hot eye warming us
A painting

Lake
Majestic
Mystical
Shocking
Sheer power
A body, the ice on it like sun tan lotion

Frozen like an ice cream pop
Broken
Cracking
Diamond
Unlimited
Ice lily pads
Slippery as oil
A winter coat of ice

Part frozen, part unfrozen, moving slowly
The unfrozen part was like an eye blinking
As if the lake was waking up from sleep

Shore
Golden
Frosted
Alive
Covered with a blanket of snow with the
Frozen lake reaching over it

Slippery like a freshly mopped floor
A flat sheet of mirror glass

Messy
Foreign
Quiet and lonely
Alien
Barren
Zebra mussel shells stuck on the ice
The sand is the hair on the body of the lake

Friends Indeed

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We gratefully acknowledge these important contributors who so generously support Friends of the Parks.

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* The Louis R. Lurie Foundation has provided a grant of \$225,000 to Friends of the Parks in support of our Last Four Miles initiative. See page 1 for more details about the Last Four Miles.

Friends of the Parks' 20th Anniversary Earth Day Parks and Preserves Clean-Up Draws 4,000 Volunteers

Friends of the Parks' 20th Annual Earth Day Parks & Preserves Clean-Up brought more than 4,000 volunteers out to 100 parks and 20 forest preserve sites, where they cleaned and greened their local parks or preserves and showed their support for cleaning the planet. HSBC was the Presenting Sponsor of the event.

Volunteers mulched trees, shoveled in tons of soft surface material in children's playgrounds, planted trees and planted gardens. Volunteers received Earth Day t-shirts, gloves, garbage bags and logistical support from Friends of the Parks. The Chicago Park District provided supplies, including mulch, fibar and tools.

Friends of the Parks sponsored an Earth Day T-shirt Contest among elementary school children, who submitted designs. Deja Scott, age 12 from the Brit-



Commercial Park Earth Day volunteers sign up for jobs and tools.

ish School of Chicago, drew the winning design. Adrian Elizarraraz, age 11 from St. Monica School, and Genesis Cruz, age

12, from Jensen Park, came in second and third place. We thank all the children who entered the contest. 🌱



Deja Scott's winning design graced this year's Earth Day t-shirts.



Volunteers celebrate after cleaning and greening on Earth Day.

Proposal for New Parks (cont'd)

few miles short of completion. Burnham's plan is not about the city's past. It's about creating a future with better opportunities for city residents to walk, swim, bike, fish, gaze at the lake and enjoy the recreational spaces provided by Chicago's lakefront parks."

Under the *Last Four Miles* plan, two miles of new parks, totaling nearly 500 acres of additional recreational space, would be created on the south between 71st Street and 95th Street and on the north from Ardmore to the Evanston border.

The proposed parks would include a mosaic of beaches, recreational fields, a continuous pedestrian/bike trail, natural areas and landscaping to promote aquatic and wildlife habitat. These features reflect input voiced by residents of neighboring communities during a series of public meetings FOTP conducted to shape the proposal. The additional public parks and beaches would reclaim existing landscapes that include the former U.S. Steel and Youngstown Steel plants, a waste disposal facility for contaminated sediments and waterfront monopolized by private residences.

Completion of the *Last Four Miles* proposal would help offset the dire shortage of park space that plagues city neighborhoods, according to the CitySpace Study. The

South Chicago, Edgewater and Rogers Park neighborhoods which border the proposed Last Four Miles lack a basic minimum of 2 acres of park space for every 1,000 residents, not even close to the 10 acres per 1000 residents, the standard of the National Recreation and Park Association.

The concept plans for the *Last Four Miles* were developed in collaboration with residents of the communities neighboring the sites. FOTP conducted a series of design charettes with community residents to gather input on their vision for the future of the lakefront parks. That feedback was factored into architectural plans with the professional assistance of architects Joanne Bauer & Julia Burns, BauerLatoza Studio; John Buenz, Solomon Cordwell Buenz; Thom Greene, Greene & Proppe Design; and Peter Kindel and Kareeshma Alli, Topografis; which were then reviewed by the engineering firm, AECOM.

"This plan would help the Southeast community achieve equality with the rest of the city by providing South Chicago and surrounding communities with increased access to Lake Michigan and a continuous lakefront park system," said Neil Bosanko, a resident of South Chicago who supports the *Last Four Miles* proposal.

Meanwhile, it also would perpetuate a tradition of public lakefront parks that hearkens back to the city's origins, when

the original township plat designated that the land east of Michigan Avenue should remain "forever open, free and clear."

"There are areas on the north lakefront where public access along the lake is blocked—and that is the antithesis of Burnham's call for a lakefront entirely open to the public," said North Side resident Ken Surdin. "It is time to build on Burnham's bold dream of public access along the lake. It is our charge as citizens to complete Chicago's lakefront park system with a continuous lakefront trail from the Chicago/Evanston to the Indiana border."

After decades of efforts to uphold that principle, public parks now span 26 of the city's 30-miles of lakefront, forming a scenic tapestry of green spaces that serve as the proverbial postcard image of Chicago across the world. That tableau is due to consistent support from our earliest citizen activists, to city leaders who fought to protect the lakefront in court, and city residents who supported park expansions at the ballot box.

"Chicago's lakefront is regarded around the world as a civic treasure," Tranter said. "The *Last Four Miles* would enrich that asset, enhancing Chicago's scenic front yard, which has been instrumental to the city's cultural life, international appeal and economic development." 🌿



A birds-eye view of the south lakefront shows the Calumet Park expansion south of the Calumet River. At the former U.S. Steel South Works site, additional lakefill creates a more natural lake edge that can be enjoyed by residents of South Chicago as well as the new lakeside development.

Friends of the Parks Honors Justice Anne M. Burke at 20th Anniversary Parks Ball Gala

At the 20th Anniversary Parks Ball gala on April 23, Friends of the Parks honored Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke for her commitment to helping children with intellectual disabilities and giving them opportunities for recreation and athletic competition.

We hosted the gala at the beautifully restored Palmer House. 300 guests attended the festive event and helped raise much-needed funds for our year-round park advocacy work. We began the evening with cocktails in The Empire Room, followed by dinner and dancing in the Red Lacquer Room.

Justice Burke began her career as a physical education teacher with the Chicago Park District, working with mentally disabled children. Out of that experience, she founded the Chicago Special Olympics in 1968. Over 1,000 participants from the U.S. and Canada participated in the first Special Olympics held in Soldier Field. Justice Burke later served as a director of that organization as it grew to become the International Special Olympics, which now operates in more than 160 countries and has changed the way people with intellectual disabilities see themselves and are seen by the world. After earning her law degree, Justice Burke continued her commitment to vulnerable young people, representing children, leading an effort to reform the juvenile justice systems, and establishing policies to prevent child abuse.



Lauren Moltz, Chairman of Friends of the Parks; John Cullerton, Senate President; Erma Tranter, President of Friends of the Parks; and John O'Connell, Vice President of Administration and Development, enjoy the festivities at the Palmer House.



Alderman Ed Burke joins his wife Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke, whom Friends of the Parks honored at the Parks Ball 2009.

Led by Parks Ball 2009 Co-Chairs Jackie Sloan and Pamela A. Munizzi, the planning committee worked for months to secure exciting auction packages like a Danube River Cruise from Viking Cruise Lines.

Many thanks to our Mistress of Ceremonies, Theresa Gutierrez, from ABC 7 News. And thanks to comedian Aaron Freeman who led our "Give for Green" pledge drive and helped to raise more than \$20,000 in 20 minutes! 🌱



Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, Kim du Buclet and Ivory Mitchell attended the Parks Ball.



Parks Ball Co-Chairs Jackie Sloan (left) and Pamela A. Munizzi helped raise significant funds for Friends of the Parks' advocacy work.

Park Advocates Honored at Friends of the Parks' 34th Annual Meeting

Friends of the Parks held its 34th Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon in February at the Chicago Cultural Center with over 150 guests in attendance. Ed Uhlir, Executive Director for Millennium Park, Inc, presented the keynote speech, titled "The 1909 Burnham Plan of Chicago and Its Impact on Parks."

At the February Annual Meeting, two new members were elected to our Board of Directors: Deborah Strauss and Robert Clark.

Deborah Strauss comes to us with more than 22 years of experience as the Executive Director of Lumity (formerly known as the IT Resource Center), a firm that specializes in technical training on systems and other needs for the Chicago non-profit community. She also has several years of experience as a fundraiser, and she currently consults with non-profits. Deborah holds a BA and MA from the University of Chicago, and has served as a board member of the ACLU of Illinois, the Donors Forum of Chicago, the Mayor's Council of Technology Advisors, and the Alliance for Nonprofit Management.

Robert Clarke has resided in Rogers Park his entire life. He serves as a public affairs consultant at The Haymarket Group in Chicago. Robert graduated with a degree in Classics from Loyola University Chicago. He served a tour in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq with the Second Marine Expeditionary Force. An active player in Chicago's political and civic landscape, Robert sits on numerous boards and committees throughout the City of Chicago, working on large and small scale projects.

2009 Awardees included the following persons and entities:

The Individual Award went to Augie Lehmann for her work to improve Abbott Park and for organizing the Dr. Burroughs Celebration in April 2008.

The Corporate Award went to REI for its environmental community service work and its outstanding commitment to improving the environment.

The Advocacy Award went to the Gale Park Advisory Council for its successful advocacy for a new community fieldhouse in Gale Park.


The Park Advisory Council Award went to the Nash Park Advisory Council for its work to improve Nash Park Community Center's programs and facility for the community.

The Community Service Award went to the Last Four Miles Design Team for its outstanding work over three years providing professional architectural services free of charge so the community could develop concept plans for new parkland and beaches completing Chicago's public lakefront parks. The Design Team includes: John Buenz, Solomon, Cordwell & Buenz; Joanne Bauer, BauerLatoza Studio; Julia Burns, BauerLatoza Studio; Thom Greene, Greene & Proppe Design; Peter Kindel, Topografis; and Kareeshma Ali, Topografis.

A Legislative Award went to State Representative Barbara Flynn Currie for securing \$175,000 for Nash Park and \$350,000 to restore a model boat basin in Burnham Park.

A Legislative Award went to Alderman Pat Dowell for securing \$3 million in TIF (Tax Increment Financing) funding to restore historic Fuller Park.

The Leon M. Despres Lifetime Commitment to Parks Award was awarded to Cindy Mitchell for her lifelong environmental commitment and dedication to parks and public spaces in Chicago.

Friends of the Parks warmly thanks all of the event sponsors, award winners and attendees for their work, advocacy and support of our mission. 

Neighborhood News: Activities Flourish Around the City

Park District Amends Code with Public Input

In December 2008, the Park District proposed amending various chapters of the Chicago Park District Code. Many of the proposed changes were cosmetic, including changes in job titles. However, one proposed change would have repealed Chapter XIII: Distribution of Services and Facilities, removing it from the Park District Code.

Friends of the Parks actively opposed the repeal of this chapter, which codified the Park District's commitment to the equitable distribution of tax dollars throughout the city. We reminded the commissioners that the Board of Commissioners in 1989 drafted and approved the addition of Chapter XIII after the U.S. Department of Justice signed off at the end of the six-year Consent Decree. At the time, the Board of Commissioners ruled that the District would remain committed to equal spending of tax dollars, both operating and capital, to all parks in the city.

Friends of the Parks worked with the Park District to draft new language for Chapter XIII. The Board of Commissioners approved the new chapter at its February meeting.

Jonquil Park Renovation Moving Ahead

The Jonquil Park Advisory Council reported that the Park District has finished more than 40% of the renovation of Jonquil Park (1001 W. Wrightwood Ave.), and estimates that it will finish the renovation in June 2009. The Park District completely rebuilt the children's playground with new equipment and soft surface rubber matting.

This spring, the Park District also began restoring Jonquil Park's signature sculpture, the "Eagle Columns", located at the main entrance at Lincoln Ave. and Sheffield Ave. The community loves the sculpture, created by world-renowned artist Richard Hunt. The project will restore

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the concrete and marble sculpture base and esplanade, and will clean, re-bronze and wax the sculptures to protect them from the elements for decades to come. Moreover, Richard Hunt has designed some additions to the sculptures and will unveil them at the grand reopening of the Park in June.

Wrightwood Neighbors, the Jonquil Park Advisory Council and the Chicago Park District provided funds for the Jonquil Park renovation.

The Jonquil Park Advisory Council is planning a Grand Opening of the new playground, new garden, new sitting area and new landscape.

The ribbon cutting is set for Saturday, June 27 from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Festivities include free music, food and fun for all ages. St. Jams, a local cover band, will play from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

New Children's Playground Designed and Approved for Erie Park (Park 511)

The Park District presented final plans to the River North Residents Association (RNRA) for the long awaited Erie Park children's playground. The RNRA serves as the very active Erie Park Advisory Council. The 6,900 square foot state-of-the-art playground will include two gated entrances from within the park, a rubberized "land form" surface, a water feature, a drinking fountain, integrated seating, and a wide array of play equipment for children in the 2-5 and 5-12 year old ranges. In addition, users with disabilities will have access to most of the park. The Park District expects to begin construction in late July or early August and expects to finish in three to four months.

Skateboarders Flock to New Logan Boulevard Skate Park

The Chicago Park District's first covered Skate Park opened April 1st under the Kennedy Expressway I-90/94 overpass in Logan Square (2430 W. Logan Blvd.). Even before the new skate park officially opened, when construction fencing still surrounded the site, eager skateboarders found ways to enter and use the pipes, curves and jumps. With the fencing now down, skaters use the Skate Park daily.

Proposed by the community in 2002, Friends of the Parks advocated for this

new activity jewel on Chicago's historic Emerald Necklace of parks and boulevards. The Skate Park transforms a barren highway underpass into a vibrant activity space for kids of all ages. The Park District plans to add public art and murals on the highway support pillars.

Kudos to Mark Heller, Logan Square parks advocate, for his ongoing advocacy to ensure that the Park District designed, funded and constructed the Logan Boulevard Skate Park.



The Logan Boulevard Skate Park is located under the Kennedy Expressway.

Dean Park Restored

The Dean Park Advisory Council and the Chicago Park District celebrated the reopening of the renovated Dean Park (1344 N. Dean St.) on April 18th as part of the advisory council's annual Earth Day Celebration. This was the 6th annual Earth Day Dean Park Clean-Up, a partnership with Friends of the Parks. Volunteers joined together to beautify their neighborhood park.

Alderman Manny Flores, a major supporter of the Dean Park renovation, joined the ribbon cutting. Alderman Flores contributed some of his menu money for the park restoration.



New Camera Club in Dvorak Park

Black and white film photographers have a new opportunity to practice their art or to learn how to take and print beautiful black and white photos by joining the Darkroom Club at Dvorak Park (1119 W. Cullerton St.). Members of the club do all the work of developing and printing. The club meets on Monday and Wednesday nights from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. For more information, call Krystin Grenon at (312) 746-5083.

Argo Tea ChariTEA Hosts After-Work Tea Party

Friends of the Parks hosted an After-Work Tea Party for people to mix and mingle. Guests of the Tea Party showed their support for Friends of the Parks by purchasing a ChariTEA drink. Argo Tea selected FOTP as their ChariTEA partner of the month for April. Argo Tea donated 10% of the proceeds from its ChariTEA drink during April to Friends of the Parks.

Friends of the Parks Sponsors Free Shakespeare in Chicago's Parks

For the fifth year in a row, Friends of the Parks is working with local theatre production companies to present free performances of Shakespeare classics in several parks around the city.

"We founded this free Shakespeare project to reflect some of the most basic values at Friends of the Parks: encouraging people to come out and see their parks as a place for positive recreation and entertainment," says Friends of the Parks' President Erma Tranter. "The innovative and children-friendly productions certainly fill an important void each summer, and we are proud to once again bring them to our neighborhood parks."

This year, Purple Bench Productions is producing a version of one of the Bard's most popular plays, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. "Our free shows in the parks would not be possible without the support of Friends of the Parks," states *Romeo's* producer and co-director Emily O'Neill. "It's a show about the greatest injustice of society," adds co-director Matty Zardisch. "Denying the love of two people has terrible consequences. Shakespeare

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Purple Bench Theatre presents Romeo and Juliet in several parks this summer. Featured are Taylor Roy as Romeo and Kyla Thomas as Juliet.

Progress with Whistler Woods Restoration

Since January, more than 100 people have joined in the campaign to rescue the ancient oak trees of Whistler Woods, a forest preserve along the south bank of the Calumet River at Halsted St. and 131st St. The Black and Hispanic Achievement Academy, members of the Alsip YMCA, students from the Illinois Institute for Technology, activists with Service for Peace, and other new groups have taken up bow saw and lopper to cut down the invasive plants that choke the old oaks.

This winter, Service for Peace selected Whistler Woods as one of the few locations for its Fourth Annual Martin Luther King Day of Service event. On January 19, about 20 volunteers braved the cold winter air and snow to cut brush at Whistler Woods.

Kudos as usual to Blue Island Bicycle Club for its strong and steady stewardship and for its fabulous Earth Day Clean-Up Event at Whistler Woods, which drew around 70 people, including kids and their families from the Blue Island School District. ♻️



Teens from the Black and Hispanic Achievement Academy help with brush-cutting at Whistler Woods.

Community Helps Clean Up Indian Road Woods



Senn High School IB biology class students triumph over invasive brush at Indian Road Woods.

Events calendar

SATURDAY NIGHT/SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 12 (MIDNIGHT TO SUNRISE)

Join Friends of the Parks for its biggest event of the year, McDonald's L.A.T.E. Ride, Chicago's only after-midnight bicycle ride! Cycle 25 miles through Chicago's neighborhoods and along lakefront. To register, log on to www.lateride.org today.

SATURDAY, JULY 18, 9:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M. MOTOR BUS TOUR OF CHICAGO'S LAKEFRONT PARK SYSTEM

Michael Chrzastowski, Illinois State Geological Survey and Erma Tranter, Friends of the Parks lead the tour. Call us at (312) 857-2757, ext. 10 to register.

JUNE 20 – JULY 26

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* will be presented at five parks this summer. The free performances will take place at 5:00 p.m. at Ravenswood Manor Park (4626 N. Manor) June 20 and 21; Winnamac Park (5100 N. Leavitt) June 27 and 28; Touhy Park (7348 N. Paulina) on July 11 and 12; Skinner Park (1331 W. Adams Street) July 18 and 19; and Lakeshore Park (808 N. Lake Shore Drive) July 25 and 26. For more information, log onto www.chicagoparkdistrict.com today.

Neighborhood News (cont'd)

knew this then, and today it still rings true. *Romeo and Juliet* is certainly about love—love in defiance of society."

This year, Friends of the Parks awarded \$750 to Purple Bench Productions to help them produce their show.

Performances will be staged at Touhy Park on July 11 and 12; and at Skinner Park on July 18 and 19. Performances in other parks are still pending. If you would like to book *Romeo and Juliet* this summer (or schedule a Shakespeare performance next summer), please contact John O'Connell at occonnellj@fotp.org, or 312-857-2757, ex. 16.

Additionally, this year marked the first year Friends of the Parks partnered with a new company in town, UnCovered Theatre. Conceived as a gift to Chicago, producer Katie Cheeley presented free productions of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will* in four parks this spring. Friends of the Parks sponsored UnCovered with a Seed Grant of \$500, assisting them with promotional and production materials.

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**Nineteen Seed Grants
Awarded Among Park
Advisory Councils and
Partners**

Friends of the Parks' Seed Grant Program builds stronger communities, develops alliances and fosters a sense of care for parks. Since its inception in 2000, more than 100 Chicago park advisory councils and community organizations have received grants to improve the parks through gardening projects, cultural programming and innovative recreation programs in neighborhood parks.

In 2009, Friends of the Parks received and reviewed 40 applications for Seed Grant support. In February, nineteen projects totaling \$15,000 were approved.

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation generously provided funding for the 2009 Seed Grant Program. 🌱

Neighborhood News (cont'd)

**Grow Your Garden Green in Your
Neighborhood Park**

Love to garden? Don't have a backyard? Really enjoy working with your neighbors and friends? Then consider designing a community garden in your local park. Your block club, neighborhood group or garden club can design, plant and maintain a garden in a local park by following the Park District's guidelines. You can plant an ornamental garden with annuals, perennials, small shrubs and more with no plants intended for food. Or you can plant a totally edible garden with fruits and vegetables that the gardeners take home to eat. Under the Park District's guidelines, you can also plant a combination garden with both ornamental plants and edible plants.

Currently, you can find edible gardens in Senn, Chase, Rainbow Beach, Kilbourn and Jackson Parks. Groups have designed and maintained over two dozen ornamental gardens throughout the city.

To get details on how to get started, go to the Park District website, www.cpdit01.com/resources/community_gardens. 🌱

We'd Like to Hear From You!

Friends of the Parks helps residents with questions, problems and issues concerning their neighborhood parks. If you have concerns you wish to discuss or help solve, you may contact us in one of the following ways:

PHONE: (312) 857-2757 / (312) 85-PARKS

FAX: (312) 857-0656

WEB SITE: www.fotp.org

ADDRESS: 17 North State Street,
Suite 1450, Chicago, IL 60602-2174

