



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

Summer 2009

Health of Urban Natural Areas Threatened by Severe Restrictions on Ecological Controlled Burning

With only two days notice, Friends of the Parks learned in July that the Chicago City Council would vote on an Air Pollution Control ordinance containing several hasty, last-minute amendments that would severely restrict ecological burning in parks and forest preserves within the city limits.

Many of you may already know that the fire-adapted woodlands, savannas and prairies of our region depend on periodic ecological controlled burns to keep out invasive plants, restore nutrients to the soil, germinate seeds and stimulate growth. The amendments to this ordinance would condemn hundreds of acres of woodland, prairie and savanna in Chicago to a slow death by suffocation and starvation as ag-

gressive invasive species take over.

Friends of the Parks and a number of other environmental organizations shifted into high gear to get the word out to our constituencies, who responded powerfully. By the time the ordinance came up for a vote, three members of the City Council spoke up and got the vote deferred. Great thanks to Aldermen Thomas M. Tunney, Eugene C. Schuler, and Helen Shiller for their support!

We heard from many people all over the city who called their aldermen, contacted the Mayor's office and wrote letters to editors. Thanks to everyone who acted! Thanks also to several open-space-friendly officials, and especially Cook County

Commissioner Larry Suffredin and U.S. Congressman Mike Quigley, for their help in reaching out to key aldermen.

The issue has not died - the ordinance will come up for a vote again, but we now have a little more time to work out better language regarding ecological burning in the city and to reach out to more aldermen to back us up when the ordinance comes up again. Friends of the Parks, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Sierra Club, Audubon, Openlands and several other environmental organizations will work together to strategize on next steps. We will likely ask you to contact your alderman again as we get closer to the vote. If you'd like to get involved, please contact Rebecca Blazer at BLAZERR@fotp.org or (312) 857-2757 ext. 17.

The Forest Preserve District understands and respects the safety concerns of homeowners who live adjacent to forest preserves. The District rigorously follows the safety and notification procedures required by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, which issues the District's burn permits. But the District also goes beyond these requirements by providing additional safety and notification accommodations to neighboring residents who have expressed concerns. And the professional ecologists and land managers of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County have successfully conducted controlled burns in our forest preserves with excellent results for more than 30 years, with zero negative incidents.

For more information about the Air Pollution Control Ordinance and how

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This aerial view shows the forest preserves along the North Branch of the Chicago River in Chicago, near Devon and Central Avenues. Red areas indicate the enormous volume of land that would be consumed by the 200-yard "buffers" where no ecological burning could take place if a proposed burn ban passed.

Friends of Spicebush Woods Fights Fly-Dumping

Neighbors and friends of Spicebush Woods hosted three productive cleanup workdays this spring and summer, each followed by a nature walk through this unusual Cook County Forest Preserve site in the Edgebrook neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest Side.

While the site boasts rare sedges, shrubs (such as the aromatic, red-berried spicebush, *Lindera benzoin*), wildflowers and numerous giant old oak and hickory trees, trash and debris have obscured its beauty and ecological value. Unfortunately, the site's long stretch of woods along Caldwell just south of Devon seems to attract litter from passing cars. Even worse, fly-dumpers use the isolated Forest Preserve District maintenance road that cuts through the middle of the woods to toss everything from old Christmas trees to concrete scraps to dead dogs into the woods.

But Spicebush Woods has strong new allies. Friends of the Parks helped organize a new "Friends of Spicebush Woods" advocacy and stewardship group, whose members clean up the woods and educate people about the site's special plant and animal inhabitants. At our August 1 workday, volunteers picked up litter along Caldwell Avenue and hauled an enormous amount of fly-dumped landscaping

waste out of the woods along the maintenance road. After volunteers alerted the Forest Preserve District to the dumping problem, the District quickly arranged to chip our gigantic pile of hedge trimmings, Christmas trees and pruned tree limbs and posted "No Dumping" signs at the entrance of the maintenance road. Kudos to the District for their fast response!

After a hard, hot morning's work dragging landscape waste out of the woods, the volunteers took a well-deserved shady hike under the oaks through a mini jungle of spicebush shrubs, many of which were heavy with still-green

berries. Highlights of the walk included hunting for caterpillars of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly wherever spicebush leaves were folded over (a favorite hiding place for the caterpillar) and visiting an area where a lush green carpet of a state-endangered woodland sedge covers the woodland floor.

Friends of Spicebush Woods will host the next cleanup and nature walk at Spicebush Woods on Sunday, October 4, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Please join us! For more information or to RSVP, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 ext. 17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org. 🌿



Spicebush friends take a break from hauling landscaping waste out of the woods.

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke Honored With Tree Planting in Cornell Park

In late June, Friends of the Parks, along with major assistance from **The Care of Trees** planted a grove of five native trees in Cornell Square Park (1809 W. 50th Street) in honor of Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke for her vision and work in establishing the Special Olympics.

Forty years ago, when Justice Burke worked as a recreation supervisor for the Chicago Park District, she organized the first Special Olympics Games, held in Soldier Field. Justice Burke has continued her involvement with the Special Olympics,

which now reaches the lives of children and adults from around the world.

Friends of the Parks honored Justice Anne Burke at this year's Parks Ball gala. The grove of trees will grow and thrive in a park where Justice Burke once worked.

We extend a very special thanks to the arborists from The Care of Trees who helped plant the grove of trees in Cornell Square Park. They also helped train our staff and volunteers on the proper way to plant the trees so that they will have a long, healthy life. 🌿



Volunteer Rosario Maldonado stands next to a tree she helped plant in honor of Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke.

Last Four Miles: Chicago Park District Should Acquire Mother Nature's New Beaches

Friends of the Parks released the Last Four Miles Plan in June as part of the Burnham Centennial Celebration. In Daniel Burnham's 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, also known as the Burnham Plan, the world-renowned architect and city planner called for a public lakefront park system. Since its inception in 1837, Chicago has implemented the plan for 26 of the 30 miles of Lake Michigan. This remarkable public lakefront envisioned by the early citizens of Chicago and later by the great planners and activists Olmsted, Burnham and Ward has helped make Chicago one of the nation's great cities. Even in the Great Depression and during wars, Chicago taxpayers voted affirmatively on 83 binding referenda to increase their property tax dollars to fund constructing lakefront parks on the North and South Sides of the city.

Friends of the Parks' Last Four Miles Plan presents a concept for completing Chicago's most important urban asset: Lake Michigan and its lakefront park system. The city can implement the plan over time as funds become available. The first phases, however, can be accomplished *with no public dollars*. Over 140 acres of lakefront land between the Calumet River and Calumet Park lie fallow and barricaded off from the public with razor wire.



Approximately five acres of new public beach has been created from Ardmore Avenue north to Lane Beach Park in the Edgewater Community.

A simple, zero-cost amendment to state legislation could transfer that land to the Park District for a future lakefront park.

A second *no cost public park expansion opportunity* exists on both the North and South Sides where Mother Nature has caused Lake Michigan to recede and, thus, created acres of new beaches. Recently, more than five acres of new beaches have appeared on the North Side from Ardmore Avenue to Lane Beach, thus implementing part of the Last Four Miles Plan naturally. Indeed, Friends of the Parks calls on the city and the Chicago Park District to claim

that beach as parkland. In year one, with no dollars expended, the city could finish the first 160 acres of the Last Four Miles.

In this era of automobiles and video games, completing the lakefront path for pedestrians and bicyclists is an investment in future generations, echoing the gifts bestowed on us by our ancestors.

You can receive a copy of the Last Four Miles Plan, described and illustrated in a beautiful 48-page booklet. Please submit a check for \$20 payable to "Friends of the Parks" and mail it to Friends of the Parks, 17 N. State, Suite 1450, Chicago, IL 60602. 🌱

Chicago's Ronan Park: the Upside of a Down Economy

Openlands Project, a city-wide environmental organization and partner with Friends of the Parks on many park issues, recently acquired seven land parcels in the Albany Park neighborhood to help expand Ronan Park along the Chicago River and increase access to open space for residents of all ages.

According to census data, Albany Park, located in the third most diverse zip code in the U.S., is a port of entry for immigrants from around the world.

One could also call Ronan Park a gateway - from there bicyclists, runners, birders and other outdoor recreationalists access miles of multi-use paths, including a link to the North Branch Trail, which

stretches as far north as the Chicago Botanic Garden, in Glencoe, IL. Also, Ronan Park connects directly to River and Legion Parks, offering soccer and baseball fields, playgrounds and a large park district swimming pool and field house.

"The increase in open space will provide additional opportunities for healthy recreation, relaxation, and discovery for residents of this community and beyond," states Openlands Executive Director Jerry Adelman. "This project really underscores our mission to protect and expand open space throughout the region to help enrich peoples' lives."

Slated for a 32-unit condo and townhouse development, 25% of which were pre-

sold, the parcels were purchased last year by Openlands on behalf of the City of Chicago.

"Once-closed doors are being opened to us," explains Robert Megquier, Openlands' Land Preservation director. "Land that was not for sale during a boom real estate market is now available."

Openlands Project turns the property over to the City of Chicago today, creating additional open space in a neighborhood possessing considerably less than the two acres per 1,000 residents recommended in the 1998 CitySpace Plan and regarded as the minimum by many land conservation groups across the country. Albany Park is more than 87 acres shy of that mark.

(continued on page 4)

Teen Summer Programs Focus on Environment and Fitness

Friends of the Parks offered apprenticeship jobs in Earth Team or Ultimate Fitness Team programs to 100 Chicago Public School students this summer.

Led by Friends of the Parks' instructors, Earth Team teens studied the environment and took care of Calumet, Humboldt, Horner and Sherman Parks. In Calumet Park, the Earth Team apprentices continued to grow and maintain the flower garden they planted in front of the historic fieldhouse. Earth Team students worked with Park District staff to plant the colorful garden four years ago.

On the city's West Side in Humboldt Park, a visual-arts-based Earth Team wrote and produced environmental-themed theatrical skits which educated and entertained local day-camp children.

On the North Side, in Horner Park, the teens in the Earth Team studied the impact of modern media on environmental issues, and created exciting "new media" platforms to promote green-friendly initiatives.

The Humboldt Park Ultimate Fitness program for the second summer continued to teach health and fitness in the parks through the youth-friendly sport of Ultimate Frisbee. The program provided a health and fitness clinic for Humboldt Park teens and day-campers.

Friends of the Parks' Nature Along the Lake program, an environmental program for elementary school students, went on

hiatus for the summer, and will resume in September. The program will bring more than 800 students to Chicago's Montrose Harbor and South Shore Cultural Center for environmental field trips to study Lake Michigan, the shoreline, air quality and sand dunes. Students will study birds and fish and the lake-shore environment, and will help care for the lakeshore. ♻️



Humboldt Park Earth Team teens clean up the lagoon as part of their summertime stewardship project. Pictured from left to right are Frank Jordan, Carlos Serrano and Giovanni Rosario.

Loyola University Hosts Last Four Miles Exhibit Through September 27

The Crown Center Gallery of Loyola University kicked off its 2009-2010 season of *Home, Homeland, Heartland* with an exhibition exploring a local issue especially relevant to the Loyola community, **The Last Four Miles: Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks**. Loyola presents the exhibit in association with Friends of the Parks. It features the results of a community-based planning effort to complete the lakefront path from the Indiana boundary on the south to the Evanston-Chicago border on the north. The plans include two miles of lakefront on the north near Loyola's lakefront campus.

Loyola University supports the process of community organizing and welcomed the opportunity to host this architectural exhibition. The exhibition encourages interaction and feedback regarding a development issue that impacts Loyola University, the Rogers Park and Edgewater communities, and the city as a whole.

You can visit the exhibit in the Crown Center Gallery, 1001 West Loyola Avenue, now through September 27, 2009. The gallery is open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and noon to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Visit gallery@luc.edu for more information. ♻️

Chicago's Ronan Park (cont'd)

"Openlands is an integral partner in the city's efforts to increase open space in Chicago communities," says Kathy Dickhut, deputy commissioner of the city's Department of Zoning and Land Use Planning.

For over thirty years, Openlands Project has employed a variety of conservation tools to help local governments and private landowners save over 15,000 acres of open space, valued at more than \$500 million. Founded in 1963, Openlands protects the natural and open spaces of northeastern Illinois and the surrounding region to ensure cleaner air and water, protect natural habitats and wildlife, and help balance and enrich our lives. ♻️

Big, Bold, Visionary: Chicago Considers the Next Century

The Last Four Miles is one of the architectural proposals selected for this exhibit sponsored by the Burnham Centennial Committee and the Chicago Cultural Center. Chicago Tourism Center (72 E. Randolph); free admission through October 4. Monday-Thursday 8am-7pm; Friday 8am-6pm; Saturday 9am-6pm; Sunday 10am-6pm.

The Burnham Plan: Impetus for Change on the Southeast Side

Features Burnham's lakefront vision and subsequent planning initiatives, including The Last Four Miles.

Southeast Chicago Historical Museum (Calumet Park Field House – 9801 S. Ave. G); free admission through mid-October. Thursdays 1-4pm; special openings on Friday, September 11 from 4-7pm and Saturday, October 3 from 11am-2pm.

Daniel Burnham and Chicago's Lakefront

History of Edgewater's lakefront with recent planning efforts, including The Last Four Miles. Edgewater Historical Museum (5358 N. Ashland) through December 19. Saturdays 1-4pm; free admission.

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.

Friends of the Parks Hosts 21st Annual After-Midnight Bicycle Ride Through the City

Thousands of bicyclists saw what Chicago looks like during the wee small hours of the morning during McDonald's L.A.T.E. Ride 2009 on Saturday night/Sunday morning July 12. Hosted by Friends of the Parks for 21 years, this event has become one of the city's finest traditions and has helped raise funds for Friends of the Parks' vital work. It has become a summer highlight for thousands of Chicagoans, suburban residents and a growing number of people from around the Midwest and beyond. One of the nation's largest recreational bike rides, more than 135,000 riders have participated since 1989.



Clad in their official L.A.T.E. Ride 2009 t-shirts, Nevin Govan, Valerie Govan, Al Bugg and Jennifer Bugg had big smiles before embarking on their 25-mile adventure through Chicago.

Starting as early as 11:00 p.m., participants enjoyed visiting sponsor booths and listening to live music at Buckingham Fountain. Members of the band Lubriphonic have toured with artists as diverse as Koko Taylor, Buddy Miles, Otis Rush, The Ohio Players and Lenny Kravitz. Clad in bike shorts and helmets, riders danced to Lubriphonic's blues, funk and rock mix. At 12:30 a.m., many riders flocked to the stage to join in our annual Best Lit Bike and Best Decorated Helmet contest, determined by audience applause!

Just before the 1:30 a.m. start, riders lined up along Columbus Drive for the start of the ride. Armed with tire pumps, hundreds of tubes and lots of tools, Village Cycle Center support vans and on-bike staff prepared to help with needed repairs



Photo: Pete Feyerherd

Friends of the Parks attracted thousands of participants for its 21st annual after-midnight bicycle ride through the city.

along the course. MINI Cooper provided pace cars that led and cheered on each of the color-coded "waves" of riders along the route. More than fifty fantastic volunteer course marshals and many Chicago Police officers helped to ensure riders followed the rules of the road.

The first wave took off at 1:30 a.m.! Five more waves, with thousands of riders in each wave, followed every ten minutes thereafter. Participants cycled past skyscrapers, heard shouts of "Opaah!" in Greek Town, cruised through the North Side, waved to surprised onlookers and watched a beautiful sun rise just after 5:00 a.m. over Lake Michigan. Plus, they enjoyed plentiful snacks at the rest stop along Foster Avenue and breakfast back at Buckingham Fountain.

"I've ridden nine years in a row. Under the stars after midnight, Chicago takes on a whole new personality. It's lots of fun to laugh, shake hands, see so many people smiling and having a good time. That's what brings me back every year," said Brian Sullivan.

This year, riders ranged in age from six to eighty-two (not counting sleeping toddlers in trailers!): 5% under 18; 15% 18-25; 33% 26-35; 21% 36-45; 18% 46-55; and 8% 55 and older. Males outnumbered females just by a bit, 53% to 47%. A few dogs and cats came along for the ride, as well! More than 85% of riders live in

Illinois, with roughly 35% of them from Chicago and 65% from the suburbs and beyond.

"I'm glad the money raised from the ride goes to Friends of the Parks," said first-time participant Ellen King. "I use Chicago parks all the time for biking and picnics, and my kids love the playground nearby. Friends of the Parks is a great organization!"

Friends of the Parks thanks our hard-working volunteer planning committee, a great group that works throughout the year to produce printed materials for the ride, design and update the website, select the t-shirt design, staff the packet pickups, and recruit additional volunteers.

About three weeks before the ride, dozens of volunteers meet in a warehouse at A. Finkl & Sons steel mill for five nights to assemble 8,000 rider goody bags. The day and night of the ride, over 200 volunteers help deliver equipment and unload three semi-trailer trucks worth of supplies, register riders, distribute food and drinks at the rest stop and at breakfast, patrol the route to guide and help riders, clean up, and attend to a million details. We couldn't do it without our volunteers!

Since 1989, Friends of the Parks' ride has grown by leaps and bounds, starting with a mere 350 riders in 1989. We now have 350 volunteers, helping thousands of riders! The event would not have become

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Neighborhood Park Briefs: Activities and Advocacy Around the City

Daniel Burnham Memorial Proposed for Grant Park

A memorial to Daniel H. Burnham is planned for the Museum Campus in Grant Park in front of the north facade of the Field Museum at the terraced, open green space. The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation sponsored an international competition and twenty architects from around the world submitted memorial designs.



A memorial to Daniel H. Burnham may soon grace the Museum Campus in Grant Park.

Annual After-Midnight Ride (cont'd)

so successful without the generous support of our sponsors, who donate more than a half-million dollars worth of food and beverages, equipment and services, trucks and vans, medical assistance, bicycle repair, printing and broadcast/print promotion. We wish to thank our very generous sponsors.

Title Sponsor: McDonald's

Presenting Sponsors: Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas and Sports Authority

Supporting Sponsor: Shape Magazine



L.A.T.E. Ride participants Andrea Rasmussen and Chris Greer enjoyed the sunrise near the end of their 25-mile ride.

David Woodhouse, a Chicago-based architect who also designed the pavilions surrounding Buckingham Fountain and the Rainbow Beach Park fieldhouse and beach house, submitted the winning design. David Woodhouse's design consists of two granite walls with a life-size statue of Daniel Burnham. The estimated \$5 million expense is expected to come from private donors.

Associate Sponsors: Keen and MINI Cooper

Media Sponsors: CBS 2 Chicago and WXRT Radio

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Special Thanks: Chicago Park District, Chicago Police Department and the City of Chicago

Please mark your calendar for next year's ride, tentatively scheduled for Saturday night/Sunday morning July 11, 2010. Check out our event website at www.lateride.org for updates! 🌱

Major Park Renovation and Construction in 2nd Ward Parks

The Dearborn Park, Printers Row and Central Station communities, located just south of the Loop in the 2nd Ward, have changed dramatically over the last 20 years from light industrial (printing and warehousing) and rail yards to residential.

When the locale was primarily industrial and rail, there was little need for a public recreational facility. But with the transformation of the area to residential, parks and recreational facilities have become an essential need. The Park District responded by acquiring and developing new parks to serve the growing residential community. The Park District constructed small pocket parks in these new residential neighborhoods, including Dearborn Park, Roosevelt Road Park, Mary Richardson Jones Park, Cotton Tail Park, Mark Twain Park and Webster Park.

For several years, the Park District has worked with the community and Alderman Bob Fioretti to identify a location for a Park District fieldhouse. Recently, the Park District acquired an existing building on 18th Street and Indiana Avenue which houses the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum. The plans include interior demolition and reconstruction of the first floor to add an indoor play area for children and several flexible rooms for dance and indoor recreation. The phase-two construction schedule includes installing a fitness room.

Dollars Allocated for Dunbar Park Restoration

Alderman Bob Fioretti has allocated \$1 million to restore Dunbar Park (30 E. 31st St.), which currently consists of 21 acres with outdoor ball fields, an oval track, basketball and tennis courts, and two children's playgrounds.

Broadway Armory Phase Two Underway

The Chicago Park District recently approved a contract to begin Phase 2 renovation of the Broadway Armory (5917 N. Broadway).


The Park District will renovate three floors of the interior of the old armory, including the first floor spaces adjacent to the gym, the second floor ballroom, new

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Community Service Days Help Improve Neighborhood Parks & Preserves

Friends of the Parks hosted over 25 community service events this summer in partnership with both the Chicago Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. More than 1,500 volunteers from organizations like Accenture, Baxter, Deloitte, Exelon, Ford Motor Company, Arthur J. Gallagher, Motorola, Pepsico, REI, Unilever, Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago, Build On, Chicago Public Schools, DePaul University, IIT, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago have helped clean and green parks and preserves throughout the city and suburbs.

These efforts benefit the public agencies we support as well as the Chicago neighborhoods we serve. The focused efforts of these volunteers helped revitalize ten playgrounds, mulched over a thousand trees, and remove tons of invasive plants and litter.

Friends of the Parks makes organizing a community service event easy. Typically, these events consist of groups from 15-100 people and benefit areas where the respective public agency has identified needs. For more information, please contact our Director of Volunteers, Mary Eileen Sullivan, at sullivanme@fotp.org. 



Unilever encouraged youth volunteers to give back to their community by sponsoring an event for the McCormick Boys & Girls Club at Margate Park.



REI sponsored a volunteer day for the Boys & Girls Club and University of Illinois Alumni during which volunteers mulched trees at Revere Park.



Volunteers from Arthur J. Gallagher & Company helped restore two playgrounds on Chicago's west side.



Ford Motor Company volunteered with Power House High School to rejuvenate Humbert playground on Chicago's south side.



Over 80 volunteers from Deloitte cleaned and rejuvenated Donovan Park on Chicago's west side by installing fibar (wood chips) and mulching trees.

Neighborhood Park Briefs (cont'd)

HVAC systems, washroom upgrades and all improvements required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The plan includes constructing a brand new state-of-the-art Culinary Teaching Kitchen on the second floor of the armory. The plan will expand the existing small cooking space and install new plumbing and electrical to create a primary cooking instruction facility. The new kitchen will have student work spaces and a reception area that can be used for community events.

The Park District approved the preliminary planning for the kitchen but, to date, the Park District has not selected a vendor or culinary institute to operate the kitchen or to fund the construction.

TIF Dollars Allocated for Browmann Park Expansion

Alderman Mary Ann Smith (48th Ward) has worked to expand Browmann Park (5400 N. Broadway) to the north along the west side of Broadway Avenue. The City of Chicago acquired property to the north and on July 8 the land was transferred to the Chicago Park District.

TIF dollars totaling \$350,000 were allocated to the Park District for the expansion of Browmann Park.

Community Helps Protect Abbott Park in Roseland Community

The City Council's Zoning Committee approved a zoning change to Board of Education-owned property adjacent to Abbott Park (49 E. 95th Street). A 23-acre park in the Roseland Community, Abbott Park has a small fieldhouse, athletic fields, a quarter-mile track and a swimming pool. Harlan High School is located on Board of Education land that is contiguous to Abbott Park. The zoning proposal stipulated rezoning Harlan High School from Public Open Space 1 to RS-3 zoning. When the zoning proposal was presented to the community, the community raised major concerns that the rezoning plan disguised an effort to take Park District land.

Alderman Fredderena Lyle held several community meetings and attorneys for the Board of Education stated that the school was zoned POS 1 in error along with Abbott Park. In order to make renovations to the existing school, the school needed an



We encourage you to visit Stearns Quarry Park (2700 S. Halsted) in the Bridgeport neighborhood. The former stone quarry has been transformed into a unique park like no other in Chicago.

RS-3 zoning classification. The attorneys assured the community and Friends of the Parks that Abbott Park would not be touched. The POS 1 zoning would remain on the entire park. The Board of Education gave assurances that no expansion of the school in Abbott Park would occur.

Friends of the Parks commends community members on their activism and advocacy to protect Abbott Park. The community attended the July Zoning Committee meeting and testified against any future school expansion in Abbott Park.

Stearns Quarry Park Opens

One of Chicago's most unusual parks, Stearns Quarry (2700 S. Halsted) in the Bridgeport neighborhood, opened this summer. The site served as a stone quarry from 1833 to 1969, then became a landfill for twenty-five years, and now, after years of development, a park. Turning a landfill into a park required extensive work to meet environmental standards and then to build a park. The history of the site gave it a terrain unlike any other park in the city, and because of environmental concerns the terrain could not be leveled or removed, so the planners worked with the uneven terrain.

The finished park includes a fishing pond and fountain, an athletic field, terraced wetlands and plantings, running paths, a hiking and sledding mound, and a multiuse open space for community events. It also presents a collection of 400-million-year-old fossils, most of small aquatic animals. From the top of a 35-foot mound in the park, you can see the buildings downtown, U.S. Cellular Field, and Soldier Field.

Kudos to the Chicago Park District and to Alderman Balcer on this wonderful new park!

Fundraising for New Playground in Gompers Park

The North Mayfair Improvement Association along with the Gompers Park Advisory Council have kicked off a fundraising effort to build a new children's playground at Gompers Park. The nearly-20-year-old current playground has exceeded its useful life. The Gompers Park playground has always served as a regional park; the neighborhood flocks to the playground as do citizens from the broader community who love the beauty of historic Gompers Park. Gompers Park sits next to the Cook County Forest Preserve, including the Irene Hernandez Picnic Grove, and within walking distance of LaBagh Woods.

Sheil Park Advisory Council Reaches its Fundraising Goal for New Children's Playground

On July 17, the Sheil Park Advisory Council (SPAC) hosted "IMAGINE the Final Fifty", a fundraiser targeted to raise the final funds necessary to renovate Sheil Park. SPAC's mission focuses on creating a contemporary, urban, colorful play space which meets the developmental needs of children and families, expands the green space environment of the neighborhood and appropriately reflects the strength and vitality of the Lakeview community. Alderman Tom Tunney (44th Ward) and Congressman Mike Quigley have been strong supporters of the renovation efforts since work began in late 2007. SPAC has been diligently working to raise \$250,000 for IMAGINE Sheil Park Playground Renovation.

Buffalo Park Celebrates its Renovation

On June 20, the Horner Park Advisory Council sponsored a celebration for

(continued on page 11)

A Prairie Is Born at the Dunning-Read Conservation Area

On Saturday morning, June 13, nearly 1,000 native prairie, savanna and wetland seedlings waited patiently in their pots for a flood of volunteers to descend upon the Dunning-Read Conservation Area, at Irving Park and Oak Park Avenues in northwest Chicago, to plant the seedlings in their new home. A few volunteers began to gather, but a steady rain began to fall, and the only flood that appeared likely was the watery kind.

But twenty hardy and determined souls braved the downpour that morning and managed to plant about half of the seedlings. Over the course of the next several weeks, a devoted core group of Dunning-Read volunteers gave up a number of evenings and weekends to make sure that the hundreds of remaining plants got into the ground.

Now, what used to be a uniform expanse of Eurasian grasses is dotted with

more than a dozen circles, 16 feet in diameter, planted with a matrix of 40 - 50 native grasses and wildflowers. Their deep roots will break up and revitalize the poor, clay-filled soils and their seeds will spread, expanding these little oases of prairie, savanna and wetland until the non-native meadow areas are completely replaced by diverse, lush native vegetation.

The Austin-Irving Community Council purchased the native plants through a Seed Grant from Friends of the Parks in order to give a big boost to the site's two-year-old habitat restoration project. With the seedlings planted and a new half-mile woodchip trail constructed, the Dunning-Read Conservation Area will finally have something to show the public.

To mark the opening of the site, Friends of the Parks, the Austin-Irving Community Council and the Chicago Read Mental Health Center plan a special, family-friendly Dedication and Opening Celebration event on Saturday, September 19, from 3 - 6pm. Take guided nature walks, bring kids for nature activities, see a restoration demonstration, and attend a short dedication program at 4:00 p.m. featuring comments from several of the local officials instrumental in the preserving the site. To volunteer for the trailbuilding and/or restoration workdays, and for more information or to RSVP for the dedication, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 ext. 17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org.



Photo: Al Opitz

Volunteers planted prairie seedlings in the rain at the Dunning-Read Conservation Area.



Two months later, the prairie is blooming!



This map of the newly-planted prairie shows the savanna and wetland circles. Proposed trails appear in yellow and orange.



Neighborhood Park Briefs (cont'd)

renovating Buffalo Park. The Advisory Council raised funds to install a new stone "council ring" and new plantings at what many consider the smallest park in the Chicago Park District system. State Senate President John Cullerton and Alderman Richard Mell (33rd Ward) attended to help the Ravenswood Manor neighborhood enjoy its newest public amenity.

Summer Shakespeare in the Parks

Once again this summer, Friends of the Parks helped to sponsor free performances of Shakespeare classics in several Chicago parks.

A new company in town, Purple Bench Productions, presented *Romeo and Juliet* in six parks over the summer, including Horner Park, Ravenswood Manor Park, Winnemac Park, Touhy Park, Skinner Park and Lakeshore Park. Friends of the Parks awarded a Seed Grant of \$750 to Purple Bench to help them produce the show, and assisted in finding parks suitable for performances.



Photo: Al Optiz

Friends of the Parks helped to sponsor free performances of Shakespeare classics in several Chicago parks.

Another new company, "Uncovered Theatre," spent much of the summer touring the country performing *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will*. Over a one-week period, they staged their show in four different Chicago parks, including Grand Crossing Park, Skinner Park, Ravenswood Manor Park and Portage Park. A Friends of the Parks' Seed Grant of \$500 was provided to Uncovered Theatre, and assistance from Friends of the Parks was also provided to get these shows placed in the parks.

This was our fifth year of helping to sponsor free Shakespeare in Chicago's parks. If you would like information on presenting a free Shakespeare play in your park next summer, please call John O'Connell at (312) 857-2757 ext. 16. 🌿

Events calendar

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

7:30 PM

Some of the Lyric Opera's most famous stars perform under the stars in Millennium Park. Sir Andre Davis to conduct the Lyric Opera Orchestra. The concert is dedicated to the men and women of the United States Armed Services. Free.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

9AM - NOON

Come help lay a woodchip trail and tend baby prairie plants at this workday of the Dunning-Read volunteers. The site is located on the campus of the Chicago Read Mental Health Center, 4200 N. Oak Park Avenue, on Chicago's northwest side. Tools and gloves will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 x17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17

6:30 PM

The Joffrey Ballet Company to present a ballet program that captures the beauty and athleticism in Millennium Park. Free.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

3:00 - 6:00 PM

To mark the opening of the Dunning-Read Conservation Area to the public, Friends of the Parks, the Austin-Irving Community Council, the Chicago Read Mental Health Center and the Dunning-Read volunteers are planning a family-friendly Dedication and Opening Celebration. Enjoy guided nature walks, nature activities for kids, a restoration demonstration, and a short dedication program at 4pm featuring comments from local officials who were instrumental in the preservation of the site. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 x17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org.

SEPTEMBER 21-23

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County will present its Daniel Burnham Sustainability Conference, in partnership with the University of Illinois and the Conservation Design Forum, Inc. The conference commemorates the 100-year anniversary of the Burnham Plan, which envisioned the creation of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as the first system of its kind in the nation. The purpose of the conference is to share ideas and formulate strategies that enable Cook County to host the most sustainable forest preserve system in the nation. All events are free and open to the public. Space is limited, RSVP (708) 771-1511.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 24, 7:30PM

SAT-SUN, SEPTEMBER 26-27, 2:00PM

A new play, *Thismia Americana*, will premier at the Historic Pullman Clock Tower Building. Come see this story about a unique botanical oddity found only once here in Chicago. Go to myspace.com/thismiaplay for more information.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Celebrate National Public Lands Day! Join Friends of the Parks at Columbus Park (500 S. Central Avenue) from 9:00 a.m. - noon, or Whistler Woods Forest Preserve (1340 S. Halsted) from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. to help clean

and green these important public open spaces. All tools and supplies will be provided. For more information, please visit www.FOTP.org.

THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

The Last Four Miles exhibit displays the planning process, preliminary and final architectural renderings for the Last Four Miles: Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks. Loyola University's Crown Center Gallery, 1001 West Loyola Avenue. Gallery hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and noon to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. For more information, go to www.fotp.org

THROUGH OCTOBER 2009

"The Burnham Plan: Impetus for Change on the Southeast Side" exhibit portrays the aspects of the 1909 Burnham Plan that relate to Chicago's Southeast Side and subsequent planning initiatives for the area. Southeast Chicago Historical Museum in Calumet Park, 9801 South Avenue G. See www.burnham-plan100.org for more information.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

1:00PM - 4:00PM

All are welcome to join Friends of the Parks and Friends of Spicebush Woods for a litter cleanup at this lovely site in the Edgebrook neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side, followed by a nature walk to enjoy the fall color of the woods. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 x17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

9:00AM - NOON

Join Friends of the Parks for a fall tour of several of our most beautiful North Side forest preserve sites. Selected sites and bus departure location to be determined. To reserve a seat on the tour or to be notified of additional details as they develop, please contact Rebecca Blazer at (312) 857-2757 x17 or BLAZERR@fotp.org.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

The tenth annual Calumet Heritage Partnership Annual Conference focuses on the Burnham Plan and its impact on the Calumet Region. The conference takes place at Chicago State University. Visit calumetheritage.org for more details.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

Participants needed for the Men's Health Urbanathlon™, a race unlike any other. Hit the concrete, climb the steps of Soldier Field, experience landmarks in unexpected ways, scramble through urban obstacles and never, ever forget it. Friends of the Parks is a beneficiary of this race. For more information or to sign up, visit menshealthurbanathlon.com today!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

7:00PM - 8:00PM

Join REI and Friends of the Parks as we celebrate the release of the PBS documentary by Ken Burns, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea." Erma Tranter will present a guide to Chicago's little known parks. Refreshments will be served and REI will raffle off a copy of this amazing documentary.



17 North State Street
Suite 1450
Chicago, IL 60602
www.fotp.org

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Health of Urban Natural Areas (cont'd)

it could affect the health of our urban
natural areas, you can read Friends of
the Parks' full statement about the topic
on our website, www.fotp.org. Under
"News," click on "Ecological Burn Ban
Deferred." You will also find links to:

- The actual text of the proposed ordinance (see pages 9 and 10)
- Maps showing how much urban forest preserve land the amendments in the ordinance would affect
- Our letter to the editor published in the online edition of the *Chicago Tribune* on July 29

Please help Friends of the Parks and open space advocates across the city convince the City Council to reject the amendments to the Air Pollution Control Ordinance that seek to shut down ecological burning in Chicago's parks and preserves. Help us convince the City Council to support an exemption from the ordinance for ecological restoration practices whose safety and notification practices are already regulated by the State of Illinois, as originally intended. 🌿

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

Don't Miss Men's Health Urbanathalon

On Saturday, October 17, you can help Friends of the Parks by participating in a one-of-a-kind event. Hit the concrete, climb the steps of Soldier Field, experience landmarks in unexpected ways and scramble through obstacles downtown. Part of the proceeds will benefit Friends of the Parks. For more information or to sign up, visit menshealthurbanathalon.com today! 🌿

Chicago Fire Soccer Fundraiser For Friends of the Parks

Support Friends of the Parks by purchasing Chicago Fire Soccer tickets! Tickets sold through this fundraiser are \$25 (normally \$28!) and \$5 of each ticket will go directly to Friends of the Parks. To purchase tickets for this event, go to www.fotp.org !

You have two games from which to choose: Saturday, September 26 and Thursday, October 22. Join us for the game at Toyota Park, a world-class soccer stadium and concert venue located at the corner of 71st and Harlem in Bridgeview, Illinois.

