



Friends of the Parks



Annual Report 2009





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to hear  
from you*

Friends of the Parks helps residents with questions, problems and issues concerning their neighborhood parks. Please contact us if you have concerns you wish to discuss or help solve.

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Dear  
Friend,

In 2009, Friends of the Parks reached major milestones on several multi-year projects. Friends of the Parks published and distributed *The Last Four Miles: a Plan to Complete Chicago's Lakefront Parks*. Released in June as part of the Burnham Centennial Celebration, the Last Four Miles Plan won three prestigious planning awards in 2009 from the American Institute of Architects Chicago Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects Illinois Chapter, and the American Planning Association Illinois Chapter. In 2010, we will work to implement portions of the plan including legislation that would transfer over 100 acres of Port District land to the Chicago Park District for a future lakefront park on the southeast side.

Our advocacy for new parks moved forward on several projects. The Park District completed Jesse Owens Park Fieldhouse in the Calumet Heights community area, with a neighborhood celebration gala in August. Friends of the Parks contributed \$50,000 for the construction of the Max Pastin Playground in Lane Beach Park. The Park District dedicated the playground to the memory of philanthropist Max Pastin, President of the Blowitz-Ridgeway Foundation.

After successfully securing legislation for a conservation easement on 25 woodland acres on Chicago's Northwest Side, we worked all year with hundreds of volunteers to prepare the site for public use. Volunteers removed invasive plants, planted 1,000 native plant plugs and installed a mile-long trail. The community celebrated the public dedication of the Dunning-Read Conservation Area on September 19.

The work of volunteers continued to expand with forty-eight volunteer community service day projects in parks and preserves. Together with our Adopt-a-Park groups, Earth Day volunteers, and corporate service projects, more than 4,000 volunteers cleaned and greened parks and preserves this year. Committed volunteers planted fifty new trees, mulched thousands of existing trees, maintained gardens, and improved the safety of ten children's playgrounds by spreading new soft-surface material.

Our partner park advisory councils raised funds for recreation scholarships for low-income residents, hosted yoga and karate classes, and created new neighborhood gardens. In addition, Friends of the Parks awarded \$14,000 in Seed Grants to 20 park advisory councils.

Our Outdoor Environmental Education classes provided 800 elementary school children in grades two to five with multiple fieldtrips to Montrose Harbor and the South Shore Cultural Center. In 2009, over 150 high school students apprenticed in After School Matters projects in five parks.

As members, partners, volunteers and supporters, you have all made this work possible. We extend our deepest thanks to you for your work and support.

Sincerely,



*Lauren Moltz*  
Lauren Moltz  
Chair, Board of Directors



*Erma Tranter*  
Erma Tranter  
President

# Volunteers in Parks and Preserves

Friends of the Parks' Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program partnered with park advisory councils, schools, universities, corporations, and community groups to complete forty-eight community service days in parks and preserves. The program also trained and educated Chicagoans about stewardship and environmental initiatives.

**Citywide Environmental Events** We hosted the 20th Annual Earth Day Parks and Preserves Clean-Up on April 18, 2009. Nearly 4,500 volunteers from Chicago neighborhoods cleaned and beautified more than eighty-five parks and fifteen Cook County

Forest Preserve sites. Volunteers mulched trees, shoveled in tons of soft surface mulch in children's playgrounds, and planted trees and gardens. Friends of the Parks provided Earth Day t-shirts, gloves, garbage bags and logistical support, while the Chicago Park District provided supplies, including mulch, fibar and tools. Twelve-year-old Deja Scott drew the winning design in Friends of the Parks' Earth Day t-shirt contest.

More than 400 volunteers celebrated National Public Lands Day in three parks and two forest preserve sites on September 26, 2009.

**Community Service Work Days** In 2009, Friends of the Parks organized forty-eight Community Service Days with 1,300 volunteers working in parks and preserves. The

service days included park cleaning and greening projects, as well as Fibar distribution for safer playgrounds at ten parks. Corporate partners included Baxter, Chubb, Deloitte, Exelon, Arthur J. Gallagher, Ford, Mizuho Corporate Bank, Motorola, PepsiCo, REI, Unilever and

Wrigley. Our educational partners included DePaul University, IIT, Kellogg, Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Wright College and the Chicago Public Schools.

**Adopt-A-Park/Adopt-A-Preserve** Friends of the Parks continued our successful Adopt-a-Park program at ninety-six sites. Volunteers took responsibility for their neighborhood park or preserve, tending to that piece of public land throughout the year.

We increased participation in our Adopt-a-Park Program, recruiting four schools located within parks to adopt their neighborhood parks, including Dyett High School in Washington Park, Corliss High School in Gately Park, Perspective Charter High School near Foster Park, and Senn High School in Senn Park.

**Stewardship Education** Friends of the Parks continued to collaborate with the Chicago Public Schools by sponsoring a Service Learning Park Program. Eighteen schools signed up to enlist their students in park and forest related projects. The students studied the environment in the outdoors, including tree identification, prairie and wetlands preservation, and how to identify and remove invasive plants.

*Greening Chicago's parks and preserves*

Community groups, corporate volunteers, and thousands of others helped clean up Chicago's parks and forest preserves.



# Partnerships and Advocacy in Neighborhood Parks

Friends of the Parks worked in partnership with park advisory councils, governmental bodies and citizen groups to add new parks and protect existing park space throughout Chicago's diverse neighborhoods.

Years of advocacy resulted in the completion of new park facilities in 2009. We celebrated the dedication of the new Willye B. White Fieldhouse (7631 N. Ashland) in the Rogers Park community and the completion of a new fieldhouse in Jesse Owens Park in the Calumet Heights community. Friends of the Parks contributed \$50,000 toward the construction of a children's playground in memory of philanthropist Max Pastin at Lane Beach Park in the Edgewater community.

A new Park Advisory Council (PAC) Network was initiated to strengthen our partnerships with and assistance to park advisory councils throughout Chicago. We hosted three Park Advisory Council Network meetings focusing on the Chicago Park District budget, recreation programs, and the code of the Park District. We broadened PAC relationships with local organizations providing technical information on protecting open land and expanding park programs for children, families and seniors.

Friends of the Parks provided organizing support to more than 50 PACs. We attended more than 35 local PAC meetings. We provided tools for local councils to strengthen their relationships with governmental agencies

so that they could influence budgetary recommendations and secure capital improvements.

We worked with Little Village Environmental Justice Organization to expand open space and advised the group on project financing. We assisted the Kenwood Park Advisory Council in broadening the council and resolving use conflicts where multiple sports reign. We helped establish a Park Advisory Council for the Major Taylor Trail, a 6.5-mile path on Chicago's South Side, and clarified jurisdictional land maintenance responsibilities, which led to significant improvements to the trail.

In the spring of 2009, Friends of the Parks awarded \$14,000 in Seed Grants to 20 park advisory councils for neighborhood park programs and activities. Recipients used their grants to beautify a park, promote stewardship within a nature area, purchase recreation equipment, introduce innovative programs to children and adults, offer arts and culture and promote park programming.

We partnered with Children's Memorial Hospital to complete a Playground Safety Survey of five hundred children's playgrounds in Chicago, and publicized it through local park meetings. We presented the findings to the Chicago Park District for implementation in its capital improvement plan.

*Supporting and strengthening park advisory councils to improve parks and programs*

*Friends of the Parks partnered with residents to improve and expand neighborhood parks.*



# Public Trust and Policy Initiative

The Public Trust and Policy Initiative focused on protecting parks in Chicago by reviewing major policy issues and changes proposed that would impact Chicago's parks and forest preserves.

Friends of the Parks analyzed and reviewed major public works projects including the Gateway Harbor plan for Navy Pier, the new harbor at 31st Street, a new pedestrian bridge over Lake Shore Drive at 35th Street, and the

Burnham Memorial Sculpture project. In three of the four cases, Friends of the Parks recommended architectural or land use changes. In each of those three cases, the city or Park District modified the plans in accordance with our recommendations to incorporate more parkland.

We published *The Last Four Miles Plan:*

*Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks* in June 2009, and distributed it to civic leaders and public officials. This was the culmination of more than three years of public meetings in which architects and planners worked with citizens, park advisory councils and community organizations to develop concept plans for completing both the south and north lakefront parks. We met

with key legislative, city and park district officials to gain support for implementing the plan. We presented the plan to the public in a lecture series and at conferences, exhibits and symposia throughout 2009.

We produced a Last Four Miles video with journalist Bill Kurtis narrating. *The Last Four Miles Plan: Completing Chicago's Lakefront Parks* won three prestigious awards in 2009:

- 2009 Daniel Burnham Award from the American Planning Association Illinois Chapter
- 2009 Planning and Analysis Award from the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects
- 2009 Urban Design Award from the American Institute of Architects Chicago Chapter

In addition, we advocated for new rules governing the decision-making process for determining major capital construction projects by the Chicago Park District. We monitored the potential impacts on Chicago parks if the proposed 2016 Olympics were awarded to Chicago.

Protecting Chicago's park legacy

A proposed harbor at 31st Street, a Last Four Miles community workshop, and a sketch showing the Edgewater neighborhood.



# Forest Preserve Initiative

Friends of the Parks accomplished goals in four key areas: Policy, Stewardship, Volunteer Coordination and Education. In the Policy area, we worked with Forest Preserve District staff and partner organizations to accelerate progress toward land acquisition goals. We testified to prevent the Forest Preserve District Board from approving land grab attempts, including the Illinois Department of Transportation's intended grab of nearly a dozen acres at Deer Grove Forest Preserve in Northwest Cook County, and the Village of Hinsdale's attempt to take 26 acres of forest preserve land for a municipal park. Further, we testified against allowing the Village of Westchester to install a water main through Wolf Road Prairie that would have damaged the prairie ecology.

Friends of the Parks helped to block an attempt by anti-restorationists to severely curtail ecological restoration in forest preserves and other natural areas in Chicago.

*Protecting Chicago's natural heritage in forest preserves and parks*

Friends of the Parks worked with a coalition of organizations and public officials to raise awareness among citizens and decision-makers about the disastrous consequences of restricting prescribed burns in forest preserves. Thanks to an outpouring of public support for restoration, the Chicago City Council deferred the vote on

the ordinance, and a proposed restrictive amendment was eventually dropped.

In the areas of natural area education and stewardship, Friends of the Parks organized a series of workdays to

remove litter and invasive species by volunteer stewardship groups at forest preserve sites including Whistler Woods, Spicebush Woods, Cermak Woods, and Busse Woods. Most of these sites were engaged three or four days last year.

We launched a new phase of our restoration initiatives with our new volunteer group at the Dunning-Read Conservation Area in Chicago. Thanks to a conservation easement we helped pass in 2005, we planted 1,000 native prairie, savanna and wetland plugs and removed invasives from this 25-acre site. We engaged more than 300 volunteers to construct a new mile-long woodchip trail. In September, the conservation area was dedicated and opened to the public.

Friends of the Parks engaged in ongoing recruitment and training of volunteers and leaders in ecological management practices. We brought more than one hundred urban Chicago high school students to nearby forest preserves to conduct ecological restoration work and learn about ecology.

We worked with a Chicago high school science teacher to develop a science-based curriculum to accompany service learning opportunities for urban high school students in local preserves. This curriculum allows students to hone their plant identification skills, and provides measurement standards with which to track and measure ecological improvements. We have posted this new curriculum online on our website, so it is available for teachers to use as they plan future forest preserve activities for students.

On Earth Day, Friends of the Parks organized and supported fifteen forest preserve worksites throughout Cook County. These sites were cleaned and greened by hundreds of volunteers that day and week.

*Volunteers replanted native vegetation and cleared invasive species from forest preserves.*



# Environmental Education

Friends of the Parks expanded its environmental education program for Chicago Public School students, connecting with a broad range of students, primarily from low-income communities.

**Nature Along the Lake** We worked with fifteen Chicago Public Schools during the school year, providing outdoor science education to more than 1,400 students at two outdoor classroom sites. We began a new partnership with the Uno Charter Schools network to bring several more South Side classrooms to the lakefront. We brought guest lecturers, including Brenda McKinney from the Department of Natural Resources, and graduate researchers from area universities to introduce students to careers in the natural sciences. Students learned the fundamentals of Great Lakes ecology and bird identification and behavior.

The Earth Day Clean-Up brought 175 fifth-graders from Disney Magnet School to Montrose Harbor, where they participated in a large student Earth Day event. Working with five educators, the students engaged in a variety of activities: recyclable arts and crafts, sand dune stewardship and clean-up, learning bird calls, bird-watching and games to promote sustainable everyday behavior.

**After School Matters Earth Team** In spring, summer and fall 2009, Earth Teams were based at Calumet Park, Horner

Park, Humboldt Park, Norwood Park and Kelvyn Park. The program served 150 teens from nine high schools. The teens engaged in field work, lab experimentation, wildlife study and career-building activities.

The Calumet Park Earth Team focused on the ecology of marshes and wetlands in the southeast area of Chicago, taking trips to the Hegewisch Marsh to study firsthand the effects of pollution and to observe the variety of organisms that thrive in the region.

The Humboldt Park Earth Team crafted an “Arts and the Environment” unit which combined environmental community outreach with puppetry to entertain and inform youngsters in the Humboldt Park community.

The Horner Park Earth Team put together programming to teach neighborhood parents and children about “green living.”

The Norwood Park Earth Team focused on archaeology in the forest preserves, taking field trips to Edgebrook, Robinson and Chevalier Woods to seek out Native American artifacts.

The Kelvyn Park Earth Team directed their studies towards water quality and soil quality testing and investigation.

**CYCLE (Chicago's Youth Changing Local Environments)** Through Friends of the Parks' CYCLE program, fifty high school students earned service-learning hours for graduation. Students at Bowen High School worked at Bessemer Park on ecological surveys and park improvement.

*Bringing the classroom outdoors*

Teens' clean-up efforts resulted in a restored waterfall in Humboldt Park.



# Public Education and Member Events

Throughout the year, Friends of the Parks hosted educational and social events focusing on parks and preserves.

In partnership with the Chicago Cultural Center and the Active Transportation Alliance, Friends of the Parks hosted a quarterly series of free public education lectures called “Creative Living in the City” to celebrate the urban environment. Topics included “Are You Game for the Games? Chicago’s 2016’s Legacy on Parks, Transportation and Local Sports,” “The Last Four Miles: Completing Chicago’s Lakefront,” and “Visions of Green: Burnham and Jensen’s Open Space Plans for Chicago.”

At our annual Parks Ball black tie gala, Friends of the Parks honored Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke for her commitment to Chicago’s Special Olympics program and helping children with intellectual disabilities and giving them opportunities for recreation and athletic competition. We hosted the gala at the beautifully restored Palmer House. Three hundred guests attended the festive

event and helped raise much-needed funds for our year-round advocacy work.

In July 2009, thousands of bicyclists stayed up all night for Friends of the Parks’ signature event—McDonald’s L.A.T.E. Ride, presented by Sports Authority, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas—and pedaled 25 miles after midnight. The 21st annual nighttime bicycle ride raised funds for our vital advocacy work and gave cyclists a unique opportunity to bike through Chicago neighborhoods under the moonlight.

In the fall, *Men’s Health* magazine hosted the Urbanathlon benefiting Friends of the Parks. Participants ran through the streets of Chicago and conquered obstacles at iconic landmarks of the historical Windy City. Over 2,000 people participated in the twelve-mile relay race. *Men’s Health* selected Friends of the Parks as one of the event’s non-profit beneficiaries. This unique event promoted park usage, encouraged good health and fitness, and showed off Chicago’s architecture.

*Activities flourished throughout the year*

*The L.A.T.E. Ride showed thousands of cyclists Chicago’s parks in a whole new light—dawn’s early light.*



# Jeanne Felknor

## Jeanne Felknor Commercial Park Advisory Council

Commercial Club Playground is located in the city's East Village neighborhood. Since 1903, neighborhood residents have been at the forefront of community volunteerism and neighborhood beautification. This commitment and enthusiasm is still visible today. Jeanne Felknor is recognized by the community and park patrons as a key contributor to the joy and energy which emanates at Commercial Park on any given day.

Jeanne grew up with her family of 11 in Gwinn, a small town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Gwinn, Michigan was established by a Mr. William Gwinn Mather, a forward-thinking business executive guided by a desire to create a community that would "promote good health, intelligence, contentment and industry of workers while discouraging sickness, accidents, ignorance and restlessness." Jeanne fondly recalls a childhood centered on the community clubhouse Mr. Mather inspired. When Jeanne moved to Chicago's East Village, she equated Commercial Park to that clubhouse of her youth. With her self-described small-town mentality, Jeanne saw that there were opportunities to improve her new neighborhood. She saw very clearly a connection between respect and worth for one's neighborhood and respect and worth for one's self—and she wanted that for the East Village community.

Since 1998, when Kate Mell, Tracy Stokes and David Stumm initiated the Commercial Park Advisory Council, Jeanne got involved. The focus of this dedicated team was and is to realize the full potential of Commercial Park. Jeanne says she is actively engaged with the parks because she recognizes that it is important for a community to have a gathering place. For her community, that place is Commercial Park. Visit Commercial Park and you are sure to witness creative decorations on the dynamic dragon watching over the children on the playground, a park

### *Consider...*

You drive by a previously brown open space in your community. To your surprise, you discover a beautiful, vibrant space recreated, seemingly overnight, into a wonderland of flowers and shrubs.

To your delight, you hear the cheers of parents, siblings and friends as the baseball diamond erupts with joy after a solid hit. After brief discussion with a spectator, you learn that the coaches are volunteers and that the uniforms were donated by the park advisory council.

Banners fly high on a public street. A dynamic park logo accompanies a corporate sponsor. You research the online website promoted on the banner and realize the

advisory council member volunteering her time in the marvelous arts and crafts room or a group of children playing basketball in the gym. You will also see residents of all ages getting down and dirty in the community garden, or a packed room of yoga enthusiasts calmly stretching their minds and muscles. Jeanne recognizes the importance of happiness and good health for all, and her optimistic outlook is contagious to anyone—young or old—who has the pleasure of meeting her.

Jeanne's advice to others looking to get engaged with their local park is to "give for the sake of giving; expect nothing in return." The opportunity to work with community residents on a team dedicated to improving the lives of others is priceless. Jeanne suggests that communication and teamwork is the key to working with a park advisory council. Each person has an opportunity to bring joy to others. Everyone should understand the objectives of the council, respect park rules and regulations and work cohesively with the park advisory council, park supervisor and community residents to improve the community environment. By creating a pleasing park community, it is natural that others will want to actively participate.

Jeanne credits a mutual respect for all team community members for the "magic" that occurs daily at Commercial Park.

*Jeanne Felknor leads a nature walk; the Christmas party at Commercial Park.*



## Volunteer Profiles

volunteer park advisory council is working to raise a significant amount of money to revitalize and renovate a local park.

How do these changes happen? Who is responsible? The answer is Park Advocates. Park Advocates are those concerned citizens who, through passion and commitment, help paid park and recreation professionals make ours a better world. These dynamic individuals create a sense of community that would not exist without their relentless commitment to drive positive change. These profiles highlight two exemplary volunteers for their achievements. There are many more out there. Thank you for your dedication to improving our communities.

### *Madiem Kawa*

*President, Washington Park Conservancy  
Site Steward, Washington Park Nature Area*

Madiem's energy, enthusiasm and dedication to the environment are inspirational. Madiem has been working in the parks since 2006 as a treekeeper. In 2007, she became a Washington Park volunteer nature area steward and in 2008, she founded the Washington Park Conservancy and became a master gardener.

Through the conservancy, Madiem has created initiatives and organized large, citywide task forces, partnerships and work groups to evaluate and conduct conservation and planting in the Washington Park lagoon, natural areas and the Washington Park Arboretum. She has organized training classes and public informational tours that have drawn visitors from the entire Chicagoland region. She has developed lectures with stunning photographs that show the importance and magnificence of Washington Park and its historic ecosystem. Madiem assiduously pursues partnerships with not-for-profits, universities and the community-at-large in her quest to improve the green landscape of her community.

## Madiem Kawa

Through a cooperative project, Madiem and the Washington Park Conservancy expanded the reach of the GreenKids program and went global! Madiem and her partner organizations welcomed teens from five Southeast Asian countries to experience Chicago's natural world. The wintery Teen Ecological Adventure introduced these students to seed collection and winter tree identification. Several highlights of the day were the discovery of ice (for the first time in their lives) and the fulfillment of a dream for a teen who had an opportunity to decorate a pine tree, again, for the first time.

Madiem attributes her passion for the parks to her family upbringing. Madiem fondly recalls a childhood collecting and pressing leaves with her grandmother, playing sports with her brothers and happily rolling in the grass in the parks. Madiem currently lives across the street from Washington Park and says, "I feel its heartbeat in my living room everyday. I'm honored to wake up each day to view its beauty through my windows. It's the least that I can do to help in its progress". While Madiem is committed to giving back to the parks, youth and community, she has received much in return. She has learned about biodiversity and about Illinois' geology, landscape and beautification history, including Olmsted's legacy. Many new friendships have been developed and nurtured. Madiem offers this advice to others interested in working with Chicago's dynamic parks, "it is important that you have a sustainable passion and a dedication for years to come."

Madiem has been recognized by Governor Pat Quinn for her efforts at the Washington Park Conservancy with a 2009 Environmental Hero Award.

*Madiem Kawa teaching neighborhood teens about the history and landscape of Washington Park.*



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Deborah and Harvey Strauss  
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Steven Duane Swanson  
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Anne and James K. Toohey  
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**\$100,000 and up**  
**The Louis R. Lurie Foundation**  
has provided a grant of \$225,000  
to Friends of the Parks in support  
of The Last Four Miles initiative.

**Thor Equities** provided generous  
hospitality and catering services  
for the Friends of the Parks Ball  
held at the Palmer House.

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Alphawood Foundation  
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Randy Neufeld  
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## Parks Ball 2009

*Friends of the Parks would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for their generous support of the Parks Ball 2009.*

### Tables of Ten

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#### Conservers (\$500 per person)

James Alter  
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Beatrice Crain, Crain-Maling Foundation  
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 Honorable Mary Ann Smith  
 Julie W. Stagliano  
 Kaye and Robert Wertz

*Special thanks to all of our guests, contributors and auction donors who gave so generously to Friends of the Parks.*

The Palmer House provided a handsome venue for this year's Parks Ball, as we honored Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke.



# Financial Statement

Unaudited figures  
for the period  
October 1, 2008 to  
September 30, 2009

## Revenue

Membership/Major Donors	\$148,829
Corporate Contributions	92,400
Foundation Grants	164,042
Foundation Grants released from restriction	285,267
Net from Special Events	208,640
L.A.T.E. Ride 2009	281,005
Parks Ball 2009	215,201
Park Tours/Special Events	9,411
Direct Costs	(296,977)
EarthShare of Illinois	7,980
After-School Matters	10,422
Bequest	2,000
Miscellaneous/Interest	3,718
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$923,298</b>

## Expenses

Last Four Miles Initiative	\$214,258
Education/member services	104,180
Volunteers in Parks Program	131,459
Partnerships/Advocacy in Neighborhood Parks	114,836
Public Trust and Policy Program	129,453
Forest Preserve Initiative	97,718
Seed Grant Program	14,010
Environmental Education	92,477
Administration	85,511

**Total Expenses** **\$983,902**

**Change in net assets** **(\$60,604)**

## Fund Balance

Beginning of year	\$398,810
End of year	\$338,206

**Yes!**

*I'll help preserve, protect and improve Chicago's parks.*

**Sign me up as a member today! Enclosed is my contribution.**

- \$25 Student/Senior     
  \$50 Family     
  \$500 Benefactor  
 \$35 Individual     
  \$100 Patron     
  \$1,000 Frederick Law Olmsted Circle  
 \$50 Advisory Council     
  \$250 Conserver  
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