



**Friends
of the
Parks**



**Annual
Report
2010**





Chicago's Best Friend

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Annual Report

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*We'd like
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.



Dear
Friend,

In 2010, with thousands of volunteers and hundreds of partnerships, Friends of the Parks worked to improve parks, children's playgrounds and forest preserves. With the Chicago Park District as a partner, more than 2,000 volunteers cleaned and greened parks on Earth Day as well as on 51 other community service days. Volunteers planted 112 trees in parks and mulched over 1,000 existing park trees. Groups added soft-surface wood chips to 20 playgrounds and planted and maintained gardens.

In a new initiative, Friends of the Parks partnered with Children's Memorial Hospital and the Grand Crossing Park Advisory Council on a two-day community build project. In June, 200 volunteers constructed a new, state-of-the-art playground in Grand Crossing Park with a climbing wall, five slides and three bridges.

Our advocacy for new parks moved forward on several projects.

Friends of the Parks, along with the River North community, advocated naming the river-edged park at Erie Street after park advocate A. Montgomery Ward, who fought for 20 years to protect Chicago's lakefront as a public park. Vilified in his life, and unrecognized for shaping Chicago's lakefront for 100 years, the park finally memorializes A. Montgomery Ward's substantial impact on the city.

Friends of the Parks assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Dunning-Read Conservation Area, a 25-acre woodland and wetland site. A team comprised entirely of volunteers planted 32 trees and shrubs, rebuilt a mile-long walking path and removed tons of invasive plants. We sponsored an Eagle Scout project to construct two wood bridges over the creek. In the fall, a rain garden was started, and the beginning of a native plant nursery was established.

Friends of the Parks developed a strategy to complete the lakefront park system. We began to implement The Last Four Miles Plan: A Plan to Complete Chicago's Lakefront Parks by advocating the transfer of over 100 acres of Port District land to the Chicago Park District for conservation and public recreation purposes. In addition, we worked to create a shared vision to link the completed south lakefront path to trails in South Chicago and the Calumet area. On the north lakefront, lower lake levels provided the opportunity to claim expanding beaches between Ardmore and Thorndale and between Albion and Pratt for public use.

We supported 30 park advisory councils by serving as their fiscal sponsor. The councils raised funds for new children's playgrounds, recreation programs for teens in parks, and new gardens. Also, Friends of the Parks awarded \$10,000 in Seed Grants to 20 park advisory councils.

Our Outdoor Environmental Education classes provided 800 elementary school children with multiple field trips to Montrose Harbor and the South Shore Cultural Center. Over 150 high school students apprenticed in After School Matters projects in four parks.

We extend our deepest thanks for your generosity and support. Together, we have much to celebrate in accomplishments in 2010, and we look forward to working with you in 2011. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lauren Moltz
Chair, Board of Directors



Erma Tranter
President

Volunteers in Parks and Preserves

Citywide Environmental Events

In celebration of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, Friends of the Parks hosted our 21st annual Earth Day Parks and Preserves Clean-Up on April 17, 2010. Over 4,000 volunteers from Chicago and Cook County neighborhoods cleaned and greened 108 sites in parks and forest preserves. Volunteers cleaned litter, mulched trees, planted new trees and removed invasive plants including buckthorn and garlic mustard. Twenty children's playgrounds were improved with the work of volunteers who added two tons of Fibar to protect children from injury.

Greening Chicago's parks and preserves

Friends of the Parks participated in the Chicago Public Schools citywide Global Youth Service Day by supporting 120 high school students who installed a walking path in Dunning-Read Conservation Area on the northwest side of the city.

With Friends of the Parks' assistance, hundreds of volunteers celebrated National Public Lands Day by cleaning parks in September 2010.

Community Service Work Days

In 2010, over 1,000 volunteers participated in 51 community service day events, improving the safety of playgrounds, mulching trees, building walking trails, planting native plant material and picking up litter.

The community service events took place in parks, children's playgrounds, forest preserves and at the 25-acre Dunning-Read Conservation Area.

Adopt-A-Park/Adopt-A-Preserve Friends of the Parks continued our successful Adopt-a-Park program at nearly 100 parks. Volunteer groups took responsibility for their neighborhood park or preserve, tending to dozens of public land sites throughout the year.

Tree Planting Project We planted 25 native trees in Humboldt Park with volunteers from Wm. J. Wrigley Co. With volunteers from Exelon Corp., we planted 25 trees in Jackson Park in honor of Parks Ball honorees Vicky and George Ranney. With groups of volunteers from PepsiCo and the Boy Scouts, we planted 60 oak saplings in the Dunning-Read Conservation Area. In May 2010, Friends of the Parks' volunteers and friends planted a grove of 25 quaking aspen trees in Garfield Park in memory of Michael Scott, past president of the Chicago Park District.

Volunteers planted trees in Jackson Park, gardens at Touhy Park, and made dozens of other improvements to Chicago's parks.



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.

We provided organizing support to more than 50 park advisory councils, attended dozens of local park advisory council meetings, and provided tools for park advisory councils to strengthen their relationships with the Chicago Park District. We hosted workshops on the Park District's budget and capital improvement processes to direct dollars to neighborhood parks.

Park Advisory Council (PAC) Network Friends of the Parks hosted quarterly workshops for the citywide PAC Network. The workshops included sessions on the proposed Chicago Park District budget, maintenance and operations, gardening and greening and on how to get things done at the Park District. We hosted a reception for the new Park District Board President, Bryan Traubert, introducing him at the reception to 50 park leaders.

Park Advocacy Conference With the Chicago Park District, Friends of the Parks sponsored a Park Advocacy Conference in 2010, which drew nearly 200 park advisory council representatives and activists. Alderman Leslie Hairston delivered a keynote address advising park advocates to work together with elected officials and Park District representatives to make things happen. Experts presented workshops on safety and security, edible and floral gardening, effective strategies for working with elected officials, and developing park framework plans.

New Children's Playground In June 2010, Friends of the Parks and the Grand Crossing Park Advisory Council,

along with Children's Memorial Hospital, designed and organized a community build project. Over 100 volunteers spent two days building a new state-of-the-art children's playground at Grand Crossing Park (7655 South Ingleside Avenue) with five slides, a climbing wall and three bridges. The playground was designed and built to be fully accessible to all children.

Funding and Planning a Memorial Playground

Friends of the Parks set up the Thomas Wortham IV Playground Fund and began the process to design and fundraise for a new children's playground in memory of Thomas Wortham IV, a slain police officer. Wortham was a member of Friends of the Parks' PAC Network and president of the park advisory council. Meeting with the Cole Park Advisory Council, a playground was designed and will be built with volunteers and the Chicago Park District in 2011.

Seed Grant Program Friends of the Parks awarded Seed Grants totaling \$10,000 to 14 park advisory councils. Seed Grants will pay for recreation equipment, park improvements, new gardens in parks, cultural programs and added recreational programs.

Fiscal Sponsorship Friends of the Parks acted as a fiscal sponsor for 31 park advisory councils. Because of our nonprofit status, all donations to park advisory councils are tax-deductible, facilitating the PAC's ability to fundraise. The councils fundraised for new playgrounds, new facilities, additional trees or to implement new recreational programs.

Supporting and strengthening park advisory councils to improve parks and programs

Friends of the Parks partnered with residents for improvements such as a playground at Grand Crossing Park.



Public Trust and Policy Initiative

The Public Trust and Policy Initiative focused on protecting parks in Chicago by influencing major policy issues and proposals that would impact Chicago's parks and preserves.

surface parking lots. Parking will be constructed underground with park land above the parking.

Last Four Miles: A Plan to Complete Chicago's Lakefront

Friends of the Parks presented recommendations to the Chicago Plan Commission regarding the nearly 500-acre U.S. Steel brownfield site on the south lakefront between 79th and 92nd Streets. Friends of the Parks advocated expanding park land terraced down to the level of Lake Michigan to permit the creation of beaches and usable park space for recreation.

Friends of the Parks worked to implement the Last Four Miles plan by: 1) working with the Chicago Park District to claim newly created beaches in the Rogers Park and Edgewater neighborhoods; 2) endorsing continuous public access along Lake Michigan between Hollywood and Devon Avenues as depicted in the Edgewater Environmental Sustainability Project; 3) promoting state legislation transferring 100 acres of property at Iroquois Landing not used by the Illinois Port District to the Chicago Park District for public recreation purposes; and 4) incorporating the Last Four Miles Plan in the GO TO 2040 Regional Plan, which includes trail connections with South Chicago and the Calumet area.

A. Montgomery Ward Park We successfully petitioned the Chicago Park District to rename Park 511 at 630 N. Kingsbury St. as "A. Montgomery Ward Park." Through many years of lawsuits and appeals, Ward kept Grant Park "forever open, clear and free" for the people of Chicago, but was vilified by city leaders and corporate colleagues who wanted to develop that land. A century after he won his battle for the people, the Chicago Park District commemorated his name.

Clean Chicago Harbors Program Friends of the Parks initiated a project with the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Yachting Association and Westrec Marinas to create a first-ever Clean Chicago Harbors Program for the Park District's nine harbors. In 2010, we developed a voluntary Clean Chicago Harbors Program to implement strategies to reduce fuel and oil spills, collect and manage used oil and petroleum, clean bilge water, improve boat cleaning in harbors and reduce litter, trash, plastic and fish waste in Chicago's harbors. The Clean Chicago Harbors Program enters its second year in 2011.

Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance Issues Friends of the Parks urged the City of Chicago's Department of Zoning and Land Use to revise the outdated maps (1972 Lakefront District) which are part of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance. As a result, the city hired a consultant to update the maps and include lakefront parcels and new beaches that the Chicago Park District has acquired.

New Harbors Friends of the Parks reviewed construction plans for two new harbors on Lake Michigan. After Friends of the Parks' recommendations for the reduced height of a harbor station building were incorporated, we added our support for the proposed new Gateway Harbor south of Navy Pier. On the south side, we advocated for an additional lake fill to create park land as part of the proposed 31st Street Harbor, as well as the reduction of

Protecting Chicago's park legacy

The Last Four Miles proposal for the South Works site, and dedication ceremonies at A. Montgomery Ward Park at Erie and the river.





Forest Preserve Policy Implementation Friends of the Parks worked to prevent land transfers to other municipalities for roadway expansions. The City of Des Plaines sought land to widen River Road for a proposed new casino. We argued that the width could be reduced, and that forested land was needed in exchange for an easement. As a result, the road easement was narrowed to a few feet, and the City of Des Plaines transferred eight acres of land contiguous to the same forest preserve to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

The City of Orland Park requested a permanent easement to widen a roadway. Opposing the permanent easement resulted in a reduction of the size of the easement, but more importantly, it resulted in the Village of Orland Park transferring 50 acres of land to connect two existing forest preserves in Orland Park.

Friends of the Parks served on a task force to review the forest preserve’s ordinance for encroachments on forest preserve land. We worked closely with the legal and planning departments to revise the existing code and

ordinance. The Forest Preserve District’s legal department began immediately to enforce the new code. Several encroaching fences and illegal uses were removed, and the land was restored for public use.

Stewardship and Volunteer Projects Friends of the Parks organized a series of workdays to remove litter and invasive species by several volunteer stewardship groups at forest preserve sites including Whistler Woods, Dan Ryan Woods and Busse Woods.

We continued restoration initiatives at the Dunning-Read Conservation Area in Chicago. Friends of the Parks volunteers constructed a mile-long walking path, rebuilt seating areas, planted native plants, trees and shrubs and removed invasives from this 25-acre site. Nearly 3,600 volunteer hours of work were provided to ensure that the Dunning-Read Conservation Area is a publicly-usable natural area.

Friends of the Parks organized and supported fifteen forest preserve worksites throughout Cook County. Hundreds of volunteers cleaned and greened these sites.

Education Friends of the Parks engaged in ongoing recruitment and training of volunteers in ecological management practices. We brought more than 100 Chicago high school students to nearby forest preserves to conduct ecological restoration work and learn about ecology.

Protecting Chicago’s natural heritage in Cook County Forest Preserves



Volunteers improved trails and cleared invasive species from forest preserves and the Dunning-Read Conservation Area.

Environmental Education

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

Nature Along the Lake We worked with 800 students from 12 Chicago Public Schools during the school year, providing outdoor science education at

two outdoor classroom sites: Montrose Harbor on the North Side and South Shore Cultural Center on the South Side. Students learned the fundamentals of Great Lakes ecology, dune formation and maintenance, tree species and bird identification. Students also learned how to fish.

Bringing the classroom outdoors

After School Matters Earth Team

In spring, summer and fall, Earth Teams were based at Chicago parks, serving teens from local high schools. During the summer, Friends of the Parks employed 75 teens in the Earth Team programs at Humboldt, Calumet and Horner Parks. The teens engaged in field work, lab experimentation, wildlife study and career-building activities. A few highlights from this year's Earth Team:

- Carver Academy students studied the ecology of Beaubien Woods and created an environmental music video filmed in the woods
- Humboldt Park high schoolers completed environmental art projects and created Earth Day park tours and activities
- Horner Park students encouraged community involvement in parks and green issues, arranging for park clean-ups, mulching and nature games for children.

Earth Team students became active caretakers of their neighborhood parks while learning about the natural environment.



Public Education and Member Events

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

The 35th Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon Friends of the Parks honored the work of individuals and organizations that most significantly contributed to the improvement of Chicago's parks and forest preserves. More than 150 guests attended to salute our awardees:

Matt Haas *Individual Award*

Greater Englewood Greening Association
Advocacy Award

Motorola *Corporate Award*

Representative Esther Golar *Legislative Award*

Alderman Robert Fioretti *Legislative Award*

Friends of the Eugene Field Park Playlot and the Eugene Field Park Advisory Council
Park Advisory Council Award

Ashe Beach Park Advisory Council
Park Advisory Council Award

Charles P. Schwartz, Jr. *Leon Despres Lifetime Commitment to Parks Award* for his four decades of devotion to improve parks

Symposia Rod Sellers of the Southeast Historical Society spoke at the Calumet Heritage Partnership Conference about adding 400 acres of lakeshore parks from 71st Street to the Indiana Border. That same month, at the Loyola University Burnham Centennial Symposium, Friends of the Parks took part in a panel discussion of the Last Four Miles Plan, which also calls for adding lakeshore parks on the North Side. The Edgewater Historical Museum exhibited the Last Four Miles Plan.

Creative Living in the City Lectures Friends of the Parks co-hosted with Active Transportation Alliance and the Chicago Cultural Center a free public lecture series featuring topics:

- Walkable Urbanism and the Green Future of Cities
- Treasured Chicago Destinations by Foot, Bike and Public Transit
- Biking in Chicago in Winter
- Trails, Trails, Trails: Completing the Lakefront Trail Linked to Regional Network

Parks Ball The Parks Ball honored Vicky and George Ranney for their lifelong dedication to parks and to the environment. Vicky Ranney co-founded Friends of the Parks, and both of the Ranneys have taken leadership roles in many public-spirited organizations and projects over the years. Both were among the first to advocate building park land over the railroad tracks adjacent to Grant Park in downtown Chicago, a dream finally realized when Millennium Park was built. The Ranneys developed Prairie Crossing, a nationwide model of environmentally conscious development. More than 225 guests came to the South Shore Cultural Center to honor the Ranneys, support Friends of the Parks, and, incidentally, to have a ball!

Activities flourished throughout the year

Friends of the Parks' L.A.T.E. Ride

In July 2010, thousands of bicyclists stayed up all night for Friends of the Parks' signature event—presented by Sports Authority and Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas—and pedaled 25 miles throughout the city after midnight. The 22nd annual nighttime bicycle ride raised funds for our vital advocacy work and gave cyclists a unique opportunity to bike through Chicago neighborhoods and parks under the moonlight.

Friends of the Parks' Junior Board

Friends of the Parks' Junior Board hosted two fundraiser events: a fall wine tasting at WineStyles and a winter event at Murphy's Bleachers. On Earth Day, the group volunteered at Lincoln Park Playlot where they removed litter and added Fibar soft surface material to the playground.

Thousands of cyclists at The L.A.T.E. Ride showed their exuberance at the start, and celebrated at the end.



Volunteer Profile

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 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. This profile highlights an exemplary volunteer for her achievements. There are many more out there. Thank you for your dedication to improving our communities.

There are those who complain about problems in our city, be it gangs, drugs or the condition of some of our parks. And then there is Maggie Martinez, who has made it her life's work to be an agent of change.

Born in Monterey, Mexico, she came to Chicago at age two.



As a seven-year-old at Skinner Elementary School, Maggie straddled the English and Spanish-speaking worlds, often acting as a translator, helping Hispanic adults communicate within the school system. "I have always been a connector," she remarks. "It's a gift!"

After graduating from Wells High School, she worked for many years, using that "connector gift" at the Chicago Board of Education, serving in the role of Community Representative. Yet it was after she and her husband Mario purchased a three-flat just west of Humboldt Park, more than 40 years ago, that her true calling emerged.

Maggie has witnessed first-hand the problems that hit idle youth the hardest. From dealers selling drugs "24/7" in the alley behind her home, to intimidation and assault by gang members, Maggie and Mario needed to make a decision: should they stay and raise their children, or move to the suburbs? She found her answer during a retreat sponsored by the Neighborhood Housing Service. What she thought was a chance to go to a Wisconsin hotel and do some swimming turned into a weekend of daylong sessions that changed her life. Energized by the experience, she became a neighborhood leader. "I never did get to swim that weekend," she notes.

Martinez started the Block Club Federation. For one of her first tasks, she enlisted a few of her neighbors and other children to clean litter out of Humboldt Park. From just 20 adults and children, her annual clean up of Humboldt has grown to attract more than 900 volunteers each April. For the past 10 years, she has coordinated that event with Friends of the Parks' Earth Day Parks & Preserves Clean Up. After a morning of cleaning and greening, which includes a tree planting each year, the afternoon is devoted to a celebration which includes donated food and fun activities for the children. So many people come to Humboldt Park



for Earth Day that their efforts now extend to other parks in the neighborhood, including Simon Park, Greenbaum Park and the new Park 514.

Maggie has expanded her involvement to include initiating youth programs to her neighborhood. Most recently, for example, she has started the Youth Innovation Program on Environment Education (YIPEE), which helps teach youngsters about environmental education, imparting to our next generation of stewards the importance of community service and giving back to our society. She beams as she describes how the program has grown to 80 children at two sites. “When they are young, it’s the best time to teach them these values. I tell them: ‘This is our park!’”

Maggie also established the Youth Making a Difference (YMD) in partnership with Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development (BUILD). YMD teaches children important social values as well as skills that will stay with them the rest of their lives. She gave as an example one former 10-year-old boy who is now attending Claremont College in California. Each summer, he returns to the old neighborhood to serve as a youth director, working directly with the neighborhood kids, and helping Maggie to write grants.

Martinez is particularly proud of her efforts a few years back, working with the Chicago Park District, the 26th Ward office under then-Alderman Billy Ocasio, then-State Senator Miguel Del Valle, Openlands, Friends of the Parks and Metra to claim a small parcel of land along a steep trestle. After raising \$350,000, the forgotten corner of West Humboldt was turned into a new park. Known currently as Park 514, it boasts a small pergola plus several plantings. The park is a pastoral gem in the middle of a vast urban expanse.

As if she has not done enough, Maggie volunteers to help staff the concessions stand at Little Cubs Field, recently constructed on the Kedzie Avenue side of Humboldt Park. She also attends regular CAPS meetings, partnering with police to help keep gangs and drugs out of the park. She has also established healthy eating workshops for parents,

teaching them about eating better food to improve their health and that of their children. In her spare time, she helps to maintain gardens at Lowell School, and she is active in her parish, Blessed Virgin Mary.

Maggie divides her plants and shares them with neighbors, increasing the green in the city every chance she gets. She acquired that special love of nature from her late mother Maria, who first gave Maggie her own plant to tend in their garden. Once she learned it was hers to keep alive, she was hooked on the “love of Mother Nature.”

Maggie and Mario, a retired chef, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary later this year. They raised four children and now boast seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She looks with satisfaction at the hundreds of children whose lives she has touched, many she doesn’t recognize now since they have grown up, but who all come back to thank “Mrs. Martinez” for making an important difference in their lives.

She has nothing but kind words when talking about Friends of the Parks and the partnership that has developed. “If not for Friends of the Parks, I would not have gotten involved in Humboldt Park. It’s only when you start doing something that things will change.”



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

George and Vicki Ranney (left) were honored at the Parks Ball, where entertainment included players from Redmoon Theatre Co.



Financial Statement

Unaudited figures for the period October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010

Expenses

Revenue

Membership Contributions	\$137,935
Corporate Contributions	164,798
Foundation Grants	239,250
L.A.T.E. Ride 2010	323,592
Parks Ball 2010	117,085
Park Tours and Special Events	10,456
EarthShare of Illinois	5,813
Miscellaneous/Interest	10,973
Total Revenue	\$1,009,902

Education/member services	100,117
Volunteers in Parks Program	143,138
Citizens Advocacy in Parks	149,539
Policy and Research Program	154,009
Environmental Education	77,013
L.A.T.E. Ride 2010	167,070
Parks Ball 2010	43,354
Park Tours and Special Events	5,246
Forest Preserve Initiative	69,300
Seed Grant Program	10,000
Administration	77,013

Total Expenses \$995,799

Excess of Revenue over Expenses \$14,103

Fund Balance

Beginning of year	\$338,206
End of year	\$352,309

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