

# Volunteer Quarterly

July / August / September 2026



3939 Nearing Lane  
Decatur, IL 62521  
217-423-7708  
MaconCCD.org

## Dates to Remember

### Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium  
Friday, July 17, 11:30 am – 1 pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, natural area restoration efforts, foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 13.

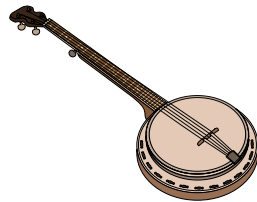


### Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center  
Every Wednesday, 9 -11 am

### Acoustic Jam Session

Rock Springs Nature Center  
Sunday, July 12, August 9,  
& September 13, 2 – 4 pm



### Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center  
Saturday, July 18, 10 am  
Saturday, August 1, 15, & 29, 10 am  
Saturday, September 12 & 26, 10 am

### Vintage Base Ball Home Games

Rock Springs Conservation Area  
Saturday, September 26, 9 am – 3 pm  
Douglas Cup Tournament



## History of the Macon County Conservation District

Rock Springs Nature Center  
Saturday, July 11, 2 pm

There are only five county conservation districts in Illinois. Have you ever wondered why Macon County has one of the five? Learn the early history of the Macon County Conservation District from longtime employee Melody Arnold. No registration required.



## Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area  
Saturday, August 8, 8 – 11 pm

Enjoy live music, children's crafts, and hot dogs over the fire, then view the stars, visible planets, and possibly even a shooting star or two. Bring a lawn chair to sit and stay a while. Register online by August 7.



## Welcome New Volunteers!

**Camps-** Lillian Askew, Angie Coorigan, Harlow Flannigan, Lacy Ledesma, Rebecca McCarty, Christian Stevens, Aryl Troxell, Autumn Yard

**Native Garden-** Kathi Knope, Kenton Turner

**Natural Resources-** Alexander McCrady

**Photography-** Paeton Hagen

**Quilter-** Sandra Belcher

**Special Events-** John Callison, Kylie Coverstone

**Special Projects-** Avery Huddleston, Riley Lane

**Trail Monitor-** Bob Hawkins

**Volunteers in Action:** Native Garden volunteers have been hard at work creating beautiful, welcoming spaces for both visitors and pollinators to enjoy. This season, the garden has expanded into the new Hidden Hollow area and the west side of the Nature Center, adding even more native habitat and natural beauty to the landscape. We are incredibly grateful to the 23 dedicated volunteers who have already contributed more than 120 hours of service this year. Their hard work and passion are helping these spaces thrive.

## Remembering Our Volunteers & Staff

Ed Brewer (Sep 1934 – Apr 2026)- Greeter  
Wayne Clarkson (Sep 1950 – May 2026)- Greeter  
Jerry Hunt (Jan 1936 – Apr 2026)- Greeter  
Erin Matherly (Sep 1964 – May 2026)-Staff  
Skip Mathieson (May 1935 - Mar 2026)- Greeter



### Volunteer Program Update

Jenny Garver, CVA - Volunteer Coordinator

We are so grateful to have you as part of our volunteer team! From January through May, an incredible 405 volunteers have generously contributed more than 3,825 hours of their time. Whether you volunteer once a year or dedicate hundreds of hours, your involvement makes a meaningful impact, and we appreciate every moment you share with us.

It has been a busy few months, and we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has helped make recent events a success. Sixty-five volunteers supported the Festival of Spring, while 110 volunteers braved chilly, muddy conditions to plant trees at Fort Daniel Conservation Area during the 1,000 Tree Foundation Event. These large community events truly require a team effort, and we could not do it without your energy, enthusiasm, and dedication.

We would also like to recognize some outstanding volunteers who have gone above and beyond so far this year. Two individuals have already contributed over 100 hours of service: Debbie H and Joan M. An additional eleven volunteers have contributed between 50 and 99 hours: Jerry C, Marsha C, John D, Mindy D, Shelby D, Tyler G, Angie H, Mara J, Mary M, John R, and Lonnie W. What an incredible demonstration of commitment and support!



*thank you!*

If you have not had a chance to submit your volunteer hours, do not worry. It is never too late. Simply reach out, and we will make sure your time is recorded and recognized.

With spring came our busiest season, which meant progress on some volunteer program projects slowed a bit. Even so, several important updates have been completed in recent months, including revisions to the volunteer application and volunteer handbook. Please use the QR code below to view the digital version of the handbook. If you would prefer a printed copy, please contact Jenny.



volunteer handbook



volunteer webpage

The volunteer page on the District website has also been refreshed to reflect current volunteer opportunities and program information.

Thank you again for all that you do. We are honored to have you as part of our volunteer family and look forward to all we will accomplish together in the months ahead.



### Volunteer Fun & Learning

#### Exploring Central IL Over 200 Years Ago

*Virtual Presentation*

*Thursday, July 23, 1 -2 pm*

In 1819, a German settler newly arrived in Illinois set off with a guide to explore Central Illinois and the Sangamon River Valley. Retrace their path and learn about what they saw and the people they met as they crossed the land that would become several present-day counties. This presentation will be given by Historic Sites Manager Brent Wielt. RSVP to Jenny Garver by 9 am on July 22. The Teams meeting link will be emailed to registered attendees.



## Volunteer Fun & Learning



### Trail Monitor Training

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Forest Classroom*  
*Saturday, August 1, 10 – 11:30am*

Help us keep our trails in top shape! Trail monitors are key volunteers who observe and report on trail conditions throughout our Conservation Areas. This session will include a brief overview of the role, followed by a guided walk to practice monitoring techniques. The walk will last about an hour at a relaxed pace and is a great opportunity for individuals or families to get involved. Please dress for the weather and trail conditions. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 30.



### Visit the Sites Volunteer Tour

*Rock Springs Nature Center,*  
*meet at the Information Desk*  
*Tuesday, September 15, 9 am – 3 pm*

Join us for a day-long tour of the natural areas and historic sites cared for by the Macon County Conservation District. This special outing offers volunteers an opportunity to learn more about the places they help support and the conservation work taking place throughout the District. Our first stop will be Willow Branch Conservation Area, where we will explore the site's history, learn about current conservation initiatives, and enjoy a short walk through the area. We will then travel to Fort Daniel Conservation Area for a tour of Woodbine Farm, followed by lunch, a hike, and a discussion about ongoing conservation efforts. The day will conclude with a visit to Kaufman Lakeside Conservation Area in the South Shores area. At each location, Operations staff will be available to share updates, answer questions, and provide insight into the management and stewardship of these special places. Lunch will be provided. Please dress for the weather and be prepared for walking on uneven terrain. Space is limited. Please RSVP to Jenny Garver by September 10. We hope you can join us!

## Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

May was a whirlwind month with school and youth groups visiting us every day for nature and history programming. We also spent several days off-site presenting programs to school-children. In May, we engaged with over 1,600 kids, which is incredible. We are grateful to work with so many schools and teachers as they wrap up their school year.

When we weren't busy with programs, we were getting ready for summer camp! Camps began on June 1, and the weeks prior were spent onboarding and training seasonal staff, finalizing plans, purchasing supplies, and all of the other fun things that are necessary for summer camp. The District runs five different camp programs that cover ages 1-15, and registration for most weeks is at capacity. We are looking forward to a full, busy summer of fun in nature.

Summer camps aren't the only thing we're doing in summer – we also visit a lot of regional libraries! Most libraries run a Summer Reading Program for kids in June and July, and we visit a lot of them to provide programming as part of that. Right now, we have 57 library programs on the calendar!

We also have some fun public programs scheduled this summer. The annual Summer Concert Series kicked off on May 31 and will continue every other Sunday through August 9. Open houses at Homestead Prairie Farm have begun and will continue every weekend, from 1-4pm through the end of October. On August 8 we will hold the annual Astronomy Jamboree at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Be sure to check out our website for more information about upcoming programs and events.



# Volunteer Opportunities

## Native Garden Workdays

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Thursday, July 23, August 27, & September 24, 9 am

Help the Master Naturalists maintain the native gardens around the Nature Center, including the tier garden, Hidden Hollow patio, and west-side garden beds. Workdays are held in the morning and typically last one to two hours. Volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves and basic gardening tools if available. The gardens feature a variety of native prairie and woodland plants. Please RSVP to Jenny Garver or Melody Arnold ([melody2a@hotmail.com](mailto:melody2a@hotmail.com)) at least one day in advance so we know who to expect.



## Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, August 8, 8 – 11 pm

Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this “star party” at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Call Alysia Callison if you’re interested in bringing your scope. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with fire tending, children’s craft, and snack station. Contact Jenny Garver if you are interested in these opportunities by August 4.



## Native Seed Collecting

Fort Daniel Conservation Area,

Meet at Woodbine Farm

Saturday, September 5, 9 am – 12 pm

Help harvest native wildflower seeds from Fort Daniel prairies to diversify other sites. This light intensity work involves picking seed from stalks and walking through tall vegetation. No experience is necessary. Dress for the weather, wearing long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy work shoes. Gloves and all necessary equipment will be provided. For all ages. We will meet at Woodbine Farm parking lot located at 7206 Sefton Road, Dalton City. RSVP to Mitch Lovgren by September 2.

## Fall Harvest Festival

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, September 12, 12 – 4 pm

Volunteers are needed to help in a variety of areas during this annual event. Volunteer opportunities include archery, canoeing, games, crafts, Homestead Prairie Farm tours, pumpkin painting, photography, and more. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by September 4.



## Prairie Pedal

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Sunday, September 27, 6:30 am – 3 pm

The Prairie Pedal bicycling event raises funds for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. All proceeds support natural areas and wildlife diversity in Macon County. During this event cyclists ride 20, 40, or 62 mile routes. Volunteers can choose from time commitments of 2 to 5 hours. Volunteer stations include rest stops along the bike routes, lunch cleanup, photography, and clean-up. For more information about the event or to sign up, contact Ashton Dukeman.



## Archaeology & Artifacts

Rock Springs Conservation Area,

Homestead Prairie Farm

We are seeking volunteers to help sift through dirt for artifacts from the 2018 excavation beneath the farmhouse. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Brent Wielt.



# Volunteer Opportunities



## Heirloom Gardener

*Rock Springs Conservation Area  
Homestead Prairie Farm*

The Heritage Garden is thriving, and we are looking for additional volunteers to join the garden team. The garden supports educational farm programs, features heirloom varieties grown from 1860s-era seeds, and donates fresh produce to local food pantries throughout the growing season. Volunteers help with watering, weeding, and harvesting, and no gardening experience is required. Garden rows are clearly marked, making it easy for gardeners of all skill levels to participate. To learn more or get involved, contact our lead Master Gardener, Carla Pohl, at [carla.pohl20@gmail.com](mailto:carla.pohl20@gmail.com).



## The More You Know

It's time to enter the time-warp and travel back more than 60 years to the beginnings of the Macon County Conservation District.

In 1963, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Conservation District Act (70 ILCS 410), allowing counties to create conservation districts through a public referendum. A conservation district is a local unit of government formed by voters to acquire, protect, and manage natural areas "wildland, open land, scenic roadways and pathways...for the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public." These districts are funded through local property taxes along with grants, donations, and user fees. Today, there are only five conservation districts in Illinois: Boone, Macon, McHenry, Putnam, and Vermilion

Our local story began on June 12, 1965, when Norman Greenberg, O.T. Banton, and Lee Slider addressed the Macon County Board to explore what type of park system would best serve the community: a forest preserve or one of the new conservation districts. The Board formed a sub-committee chaired by Norman Greenberg, with Floyd Grise, William Mattson, and Louis Claypool.

A 14-member community steering committee was then assembled to gauge public interest and share the vision countywide. Members included Norman Greenberg, O.T. Banton, Lee Slider, Donald Berg, Elbert Bonn, Margaret Bringer, Lillie Colander, Ruby Cook, Sam Gibbons, Alice Irwin, Lloyd Latendresse, William Much, Betty Myers, and Robert Stroyeck. These community volunteers spoke to civic groups, neighbors, and local organizations to build awareness and support.



Their efforts culminated on November 8, 1966, when Macon County voters were asked: "Shall there be organized...a conservation district co-extensive with the boundaries of Macon County?" The answer was a resounding yes with 25,033 in favor and 11,574 opposed.

Because of their vision and the community's support, the Macon County Conservation District was born, creating a lasting legacy of natural spaces for all to learn from, enjoy, and protect.



## Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations

The growing season is in full swing. Operations staff have opened all facilities, started turf maintenance, facility maintenance, and Natural Resources maintenance. Seasonal employees have returned and are performing their normal duties. We welcome them back and appreciate all the hard work they do.

Stormy weather has caused trails to need debris removed, grading, tree removal and general inspection for safety. Staff have worked hard to get trails open for our guests to enjoy. District-wide, we have around thirty miles of trails to maintain.

Natural Resources, along with the help of Operations staff, had a very successful burn season. The goal is to burn around 1,000 acres each year. The burn crew reached that goal and then some. Fire is a crucial tool that we use to fight the battle of exotic and invasive species. Now, staff will start spraying season and use herbicide to fight the exotic and invasive plants.

Woodbine Farm at Fort Daniel has a new pavilion with two restrooms constructed at the site of the old garage. The pavilion will get its first use at the Wine in the Wild event in June. The Pothole Prairie restoration is progressing, and we hope for completion soon. Eighty acres of prairie have been planted. The remaining acres will be planted once excavation is complete. The thirty-five acre savanna has had trees planted as well as a savanna seed mix. The trail will be seeded as well once excavation is complete. Once the turf trail is established, we will look at opening the site for public use.



## Tidbits of Information

- **Holiday Closures:** Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed **July 4**. Administrative Offices will be closed **July 3** and **September 7**.
- **Summer & Seasonal Staff Update:** There are plenty of new faces at the Nature Center this summer! Bailey Mitchell has joined us as the Historic Sites Intern, while Reese York is serving as our Intern Interpreter. Felicity Hunt and Carol Navarro Pereira are the Audubon Interns for the season. We're also excited to welcome our Summer Camp Counselors: Emma Fawley, Adriana Hernandez-Santana, Izzy Ledesma, Miranda Tatum, and Timber Ziegler. In addition, we have two interns from the Decatur Civic Leadership Institute – Kyle Morris and Nia Morris – who will be supporting various summer projects. Be sure to say hello if you see them around!
- **Volunteer Gear Reminder:** Just a quick reminder that we have volunteer t-shirts, hats, and lanyards available! The t-shirts are a light blue 50/50 cotton blend, and the hats are light gray with a classic ball cap style. If you'd like a shirt, hat, or lanyard, please reach out to Jenny Garver. We'll be happy to get you set up.
- **Volunteer Discount:** Don't forget your volunteer discount! Active volunteers receive a 50% discount for off-site public trips priced at \$25 or less and a \$15 discount for trips priced above \$25.

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## To RSVP or Contact Staff in This Issue



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