



# PRAIRIE WOODS *Warbler*



A publication of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center in cooperation with Prairie Country Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council

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ISSUE 1

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1-320-354-5894

## Earth Day Event! Think Globally, Act Locally!

Saturday, April 22, 2006  
8:00 am to 1:00 pm

- ◆ FREE Omelets, served 8:00- 10:30 am  
For first 300 people.
- ◆ Keynote Speaker 11:30 am
- ◆ On-going Booths and Demonstrations

**FREE! Fun for all ages!**

Find out what's going on in your back yard, and get options for making better economic and environmental decisions locally. Keynote speaker Peter Ciborowski, climate change expert, will address the effects of climate change in Minnesota.

### Featuring.....

- Energy Efficiency Options
  - Wind and Solar Power
  - Corn Burning Technology
  - Hybrid and Grease Cars
  - 3-D Watershed Model
  - Kids Activities & Climbing Wall
  - Recycling Do's and Don'ts
  - Riverside String Band
- .....and More



**Sponsored By** Shakopee Creek Headwaters Project; Prairie Woods ELC; Crow River Organization of Water; Hawk Creek Watershed Project; Chippewa River Watershed Project; North Fork Crow River Watershed District; Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS); Little Crow Anglers; Kandiyohi County SWCD; and assistance by Spicer Sons of American Legion.

## HOT TOPIC: COMMUNITY ENERGY 5 Super-Star Reasons to Support Clean, Local, Renewable Energy.

1. Mercury. Coal-fired power plants emit thousands of pounds of mercury. Hundreds of Minnesota's lakes and rivers, including those near us, are mercury-impaired (see Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for lists and maps). Mercury exposure causes health problems and developmental delays.
2. Jobs. Four times as many jobs are created by each megawatt of renewable energy installed in Minnesota than by conventional energy (ME3). Ask around communities like Lake Benton, Pipestone, and Porter to hear first-hand about jobs created by local power.
3. Carbon. Carbon dioxide that causes global warming comes from burning fossil fuels. Do you want to live in a climate like Nebraska's? (See the MPCA for info.)
4. Limits. Supplies of petroleum (our source of gasoline, plastics, & other useful things) will likely decline in three decades or less (USGS). *Renewable* sources of energy are the only long-term option.
5. Cost. Increased investment in clean, local renewable energies can provide a consistent supply of energy at stable prices, separate from the volatile fossil fuels markets.

**Examples for your community & Minnesota:** Wind turbines. Solar panels. Biomass. Geothermal heating systems. And don't forget the difference conservation can make!

## Upcoming Events at Prairie Woods

\*\* Join us for our next great event. . . or miss out on the fun! \*\*

- ◆ Earth Day Celebration: Think Globally, Act Locally ..... April 22, 8 am to 1 pm
- ◆ Archaeology Day at Prairie Woods ..... May 13, 12 pm to 4 pm
- ◆ JJM Victory Run (5k and 1 mile run) ..... June 17, Registration 8 am, Start at 9 am
- ◆ Recycled Outdoor Gear Sale ..... June 17, 8 am to 5 pm
- ◆ Golden Triggers Event ..... August 2006



## Notes from the Executive Director

When paddling a 34-foot voyageur canoe, one paddler alone is not likely to go either very far or very fast. As more paddlers join in, paddling in rhythm, the canoe gains momentum and wonder unfolds. Instinctively, we recognize that paddling together is powerful and satisfying when we are all pulling together for a common goal.

In the last newsletter we reported on the generous gift of a 34' voyageur canoe by Prairie Woods members Charles and Marjorie Dickman. The Dickmans were willing to invest in launching an idea by helping Prairie Woods acquire a great program resource. The excitement continued as others began to climb on board as well. Mike Tebben of Tebben Enterprises in Clara City built us a trailer for the cost of materials, Bill Johnson and Ted Olsen assisted with trailer modifications, and Steve Rustad offered to haul the big canoe back to Minnesota from Idaho. Next Northern Environmental Support Trust joined in with a \$15,000 grant to help us provide outreach programs featuring the big canoe to twenty communities in a seventy-five mile radius of Prairie Woods. Everyone working together has helped to generate great momentum and the wonder unfolds.



The big canoe is an apt metaphor for the entire Prairie Woods story. Virtually every aspect of Prairie Woods holds a tale of a project that started out as an idea that was too big for any one person to move along on his or her own power. The fun began and the work got done as more and more people began to climb on board. Instinctively we all recognized that community involvement was the only way to effectively move big dreams. This newsletter contains stories of other dreams that are coming to reality at Prairie Woods as well, due to great community involvement: a wetland walkway, self-guided prairie and woodland trails, a growing sustainability endowment, progress toward 100% renewable energy use, as well as upcoming Earth Day, Archaeology Day, 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual JJM Victory Run and more. It's all happening because friends and members of Prairie Woods are contributing time, talent and resources to an effort that is bigger than any one person.

Thanks for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope you will be inspired to climb on board to help Prairie Woods fulfill our mission to promote an individual and shared commitment to the responsible use, management and preservation of natural resources.

Thanks,  
*Dave*

### **PWELC BOARD OF TRUSTEE PROFILE: BEN THOMA** by Ron Erpelding

Ben Thoma has a long history in environmental education, starting as a science teacher in 1957 and continuing to this day as a volunteer and member of the PWELC Governing Board.

Originally from St. Paul and a graduate of Murray High School, he continued his education with a Bachelor's Degree from the U of M and a Master's Degree from the University of Northern Iowa at Cedar Falls. His early teaching experience was at Bricelyn and Harmony, Minnesota, where he taught science for students in grades 7 through 12. Following graduate school he taught Chemistry for three years at Wisconsin State University in Superior. He became part of the original faculty of what was then Willmar Community College in 1961 and helped pioneer the development of what is now Ridgewater College, a two-year community and technical college with campuses in Willmar and Hutchinson. His 36-year career at the college centered on the teaching of biology and environmental sciences classes.

For 46 summers Ben also served Itasca State Park as their seasonal naturalist, helping give birth to the State Park Naturalist Program

across the state. In addition to creating and presenting thousands of programs to several generations of young people and adults, he also completed extensive research and authored articles on the history of the park and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Along the way, he started the Willmar Christmas Bird Count in 1962 and coordinated the annual event for the first 34 years, established the Outdoor Natural Area at the what is now Ridgewater College, served on the Board of Directors of the MN Academy of Sciences and the MN Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, received the MN Outstanding Environmental Educator Award, and served as volunteer manager of The Nature Conservancy's Ordway Prairie north of Sunburg.

Starting in 1973, Ben served on the regional environmental education councils where the idea of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center was born. Members, including Ben Thoma, at a statewide meeting of Minnesota Environmental Education Board decided that such a center should be created in our area. Young people, they felt, should not have to go to north-

(continued on page 9.)

### *Please Consider Prairie Woods.* . . IN YOUR ESTATE AND GIFTING PLANS.

A gift to the Prairie Woods Endowment Fund will literally keep giving for generations to come. Think what could happen if each person who cares for Prairie Woods directs a portion of their estate to funding programs at Prairie Woods.

*Thank you for considering a gift to PWELC's Endowment!*



## Community Network: Giving News

### NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT TRUST AWARDS \$15,000 TO PWELC FOR PROJECT ECO-VOYAGEUR.

We were thrilled to learn that Northern Environmental Support Trust (NEST) has provided a 50% matching grant to help Prairie Woods launch Project Eco-Voyageur. Project Eco-Voyageur will enable upper elementary students from 20 schools in west central and southwestern Minnesota to travel their local waters in a 34-foot voyageur canoe, learn about local environmental issues, perform a service project, and carry a message of environmental stewardship back to their communities. Project Eco-Voyageur will be co-facilitated by staff from Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and local natural resource professionals as well as teachers and high school students in environmental studies classes from participating schools. The project will commence in August of 2006 with teacher training workshops in preparation for four pilot eco-voyages during September and October. An additional 16 eco-voyages will be conducted in 2007. Come and check out the Big Canoe at the Earth Day Celebration on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and learn about how your school can participate in Project Eco-Voyageur. Thanks, Northern Environmental Support Trust!

### PACT 4 Awards \$3000 Training Grant

Thanks to a Discretionary Plus grant from PACT 4, Prairie Woods staff were able to attend the Association for Challenge Course Technology annual conference as well as the Heartland Region



Association for Experiential Education Conference. Information from these conferences will be shared with dozens of representatives from local schools, camps and treatment programs during upcoming

Adventure Co-op staff trainings. PACT 4 has been a great Adventure Co-op partner with Prairie Woods over the years.

**Thanks, PACT 4!**

## Giving Opportunities

- ◆ Sponsorships for groups to attend Prairie Woods programs range from \$1 to \$20 per student, and are greatly appreciated.
- ◆ Wood or corn fired heater for the barn: \$3500.
- ◆ Donations for book purchases to expand PW's library.
- ◆ New brush mower attachment for trail maintenance: \$750.

### ENDOWMENT CHALLENGE

An anonymous donor has pledged to match the next \$1200 given to the Prairie Woods Sustainability Endowment.

The Prairie Woods Board of Trustees has set a goal of 1 Million Dollars for the Sustainability Endowment by 2011. We are now



just over 10% of the way to our goal. Contributions to the endowment will serve as gifts for generations far into the future.

Interest on the principal sum will help to fund operations and programs each year. As the endowment grows, so grows the capacity of Prairie Woods to expand our work as well as increase our ability to weather economic downturns. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Prairie Woods Sustainability Endowment.

### PWELC RECEIVES SCENIC BY-WAYS GRANT

The Federal Highway Administration announced that Prairie Woods has received \$11,600 to support self-guided prairie and woodland interpretive trails. The project will provide scenic by-way travelers with a one-stop experience to inform and engage them in learning about the flora, fauna, history and culture seen throughout the Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic By-way. Prairie Woods presents wonderful opportunities for the scenic by-way traveler to understand and more deeply appreciate the uniqueness of the Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic By-way. Thanks to our friends at Prairie Country RC&D for collaborating with Prairie Woods on this project.



## Volunteer Opportunities

- ◆ Building & painting signs for special events
- ◆ Planning, presenting, and hosting at special events
- ◆ Assistance with newsletters and mailings
- ◆ Gardening and beautification of the grounds
- ◆ Research local history for Time Travel programs





## Event Updates

# Calling All FUNRAISERS!!

No, it's not a typo. We really do mean FUNraisers. Of course, we do intend to raise funds for the Prairie Woods endowment and annual program support, but we need your help and ideas to help establish a fun and productive annual event.

Please call or e-mail with your best ideas for an annual FUNraising event for Prairie Woods.

We're brainstorming here—it's okay to be wacky and way-out-there with ideas. When all is said and done, we expect to have an event that will have folks breaking down the doors for some serious FUNraising. We look forward to hearing your ideas.

If you would like to lend a hand planning or working at an annual FUNraising event, please give us a call.

### PASS IT ON. . .

If you know of a school or group looking for a high-quality environmental education or outdoor education program, please suggest Prairie Woods. We always welcome the opportunity to reach more students.

## Winter Fun Day

The Prairie Woods community joined together to celebrate the "last month of winter" (we thought so at the time!) at a Winter Fun Day on February 26. Nearly 200 people of all ages attended Fun Day, to enjoy free cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and indoor rock-climbing.

Ron Erpelding guided up-and-coming birders in observing late-winter birds.

Snowsnake races took place on Kettle Lake. Special thanks to Ann Phillips, Deb Anderson,

and Diane Henry for donating snacks and treats. Thanks also to volunteers Ron Erpelding, Ben Thoma, and Karen Schneider.



*"WHEN CAN WE GO BACK TO PRAIRIE WOODS?"*

Remember, we host  
**BIRTHDAY PARTIES**  
with lots of options for fun activities!

## UPCOMING 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL JJM VICTORY RUN BY DEB ANDERSON

5K CROSS COUNTRY RUN

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

9 AM START (8 AM REGISTRATION)  
\$12 FOR PREREGISTRATION BY JUNE 1

I am excited to announce that plans are well underway for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual JJM Victory Run. Last year the Walk/Run was a huge success, with about 230 walkers and runners of all ages. The Victory Run honors the name of Jesse John Mithaugen, a wonderful young runner killed in an automobile accident. Jesse's family, along with Prairie Woods ELC, started the idea of an annual memorial run for Jesse. It was great to come together from many communities and support this family. This year we will again "run with Jesse," but we also encourage the idea of a memorial run. We would like you to feel free to walk or run in anyone's memory. It would be great to have "family teams" participating in their family member's memory.

This is a cross country walk/run across open prairie, around scenic wetlands and through beautifully wooded forest areas. The walk/run consists of either a 1 mile loop or a 5K loop. For competitive runners, the race will again be professionally timed. We also invite leisure walkers or runners. (You do not have to be timed if you do not wish.) Awards and prizes will be given out.

I hope you can all come out and participate in this fun, uplifting event to enjoy and celebrate life!

Watch for information on more fun events going on at Prairie Woods that day. Please contact us if you would like more information or need registration forms, and check our website, [www.prairiewoodselc.org](http://www.prairiewoodselc.org). Please help us spread the word!

For registration and information, Contact:  
Deb Anderson: [deb.anderson@co.kandiyohi.mn.us](mailto:deb.anderson@co.kandiyohi.mn.us)  
Office: 320-354-5894. Home: 320-254-3530



## News & Developments

### WETLAND WALKWAY

A wetland walkway is taking shape on the pond to the west of the Westby Observatory. The project, coordinated by Michael Meyer,



is literally “coming together” as the result of a great collaborative effort. Partners in the project include Lucas Youngsma and the Shakopee Creek Headwaters Project; Instructor, Tracy Tebben and students from the NL-S Advanced

Mechanics class; Kandiyohi County, Experience Works; Kandiyohi Sentence to Serve; Michael Meyer and Jeff Vetsch.

The wetland walkway promises to be another great experience for students and walk-in visitors at Prairie Woods.

### U of M Electrical Engineering Program assembles mobile solar power system

Thanks to Paul Imbritson, U of M professor of electrical engineering, and Stella Mandango, a U of M electrical engineering student from Tanzania (both pictured below), visitors to the Prairie Woods yurt will enjoy electric lights and a fan powered by the sun. What

started out as a conversation over coffee two years ago with Paul, Stella, Melissa Pawlisch, Dorothy Rosemeier and PWELC Executive Director Dave Pederson



evolved into a nifty project for Stella and another great working demonstration of sustainable technology at Prairie Woods. Stella and Paul put many hours into designing the project, lining up materials and assembling the trailer mounted solar array. Thanks, Paul and Stella!

Thanks also to Michael Meyer for helping with the assembly, Dorothy Rosemeier and West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Melissa Pawlisch of Clean Energy Resource Teams, and Kandiyohi County for helping to provide funds for this project. The mobile solar array will be on display at Earth Day. Be sure to check it out.

### New Building & Grounds Steward

Jeff Vetsch has been hired to fill a newly created but long overdue position of Building and Grounds Steward at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. The position will insure that Prairie Woods takes excellent care of our buildings, grounds and equipment and fulfills our responsibility to “walk our talk” with sustainable technology and behavior. Jeff will oversee facility and grounds maintenance, coordinate site development projects, supervise volunteers and sentence-to-serve workers, and insure that our visitors have an excellent experience with the facility at Prairie Woods.

Jeff’s credentials include operating a home maintenance business, supervising grain elevator and home construction crews, a Bachelor’s degree in environmental studies and an A.A.S. degree in architectural drafting and construction estimating. Jeff has assisted with maintenance, site development and program instruction at Prairie Woods during the past year on an on-call basis. We expect Jeff to be a great addition to our team in the role of Building and Grounds Steward. Please join us in welcoming Jeff!

### RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE UPDATES

By 2007, Prairie Woods expects to provide 90% of our heating with renewable fuels. Check out our new corn-fired boiler system at the Earth Day celebration on April 22!

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO INVEST IN WIND AND SOLAR POWER.



INVESTIGATE INCENTIVES AND OPTIONS BY CHECKING OUT THE ENERGY INFO CENTER AT [www.commerce.state.mn.us](http://www.commerce.state.mn.us). VISIT [www.SolarMinnesota.org](http://www.SolarMinnesota.org)

By 2010, our goal is to become a Zero-Net-Energy facility, with grid-connected wind and solar installations on site at Prairie Woods. Watch the next newsletter for updates on our partnerships and progress toward wind and solar installations in 2006-2007.

**OVERNIGHT IN A YURT!**  
Group rental for the yurt: \$50/night.  
PW individual and family members: \$35/night.  
Non-members: \$50/night.



## Environmental Education Notebook

### WINTER 2006 UPDATE

Winter was a busy season at Prairie Woods, thanks in part to adequate (how I would love to say “abundant”) snow cover. We enjoyed cross country skiing and snowshoeing throughout much of December, January, and February, wrapping up with our Winter Fun Day (see page 4). In February alone, 625 students took part in group activities at Prairie Woods ELC.

#### Highlights

- ◆ A fourth grade student gave me a hand-written birding list that she had made for her visit, accurately noting the birds likely to be in our area in the winter season. She watches birds with her grandma.
- ◆ On a winter night hike with seventh graders, we laid on our backs under the stars and listened for owls and coyotes, and heard both.
- ◆ A group of Girl Scouts learned the basics of winter survival and successfully learned the art of nurturing a tiny fire to life.
- ◆ A hardy middle school group, all 22 of them, donned numerous layers of winter garb to go snowshoeing on an afternoon when the high temp was all of -12 degrees Fahrenheit. No complaints, lots of smiles, happy staff.



### Calling all adventurers! Bug-hunters! Flower-finders! Wall-climbers! Outdoor explorers!

Take advantage of this opportunity for students in grades 3 through 6: Adventure Club. Offered in 4-week series, Adventure Club is a great way to have fun experiences and make new friends from all over the area. Prairie Woods staff lead small groups on an array of activities and games. Watch for available dates in your Community Education flyer or by checking with Prairie Woods.

Fall 2005's Adventure Club went canoeing and investigated wildlife in Kettle Lake, as well as enjoyed wall-climbing. The winter group zoomed down our hills on cross country skis, searched for nifty stuff in the woods, and learned archery. Adventure Club Spring 2006 is underway now with orienteering and other activities. Look for more opportunities this summer and fall.



### CALL US FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Sometimes a school has an opportunity to take a dramatic field trip, but some students must stay behind in the classroom. Other times a long-distance field trip is not a good option for a class or a school. This winter we worked with one such school. To meet the needs of their students, Prairie Woods staff traveled to the school and provided a day of in-classroom programming. Outreach programs are available for different topics and various age groups. Call Prairie Woods to discuss your needs.

## Notes from EE: “Can I ask a favor. . . ?”

by Anne Dybsetter

But first, this brief story: My husband and I were lucky enough to enjoy a visit to Italy this winter. We trekked through castles, gaped at awe-inspiring cathedrals, and admired centuries'-old vineyards terraced into mountain slopes. How different from Minnesota!

Then, upon return to Minnesota, we hiked the prairie ridges of West Central Minnesota, tramped through oak woods, breathed clean air, and saw birds by the hundreds by local lakes. We wondered where we would take our Italian friends when they return our visit and show up in Minnesota. We might take them canoeing past granite outcrops on the Minnesota River. Or climb Mount Tom. Wander through Ordway Prairie. Watch birds at Minnesota's Salt Lake. See Blue Mound, Inspiration Peak, Devil's Kettle Falls, Lake Superior. Italy does not have these things.

I have traveled in Europe, the Middle East, and New Zealand, and

always feel blessed to call Minnesota home. We have open space, natural environments, relatively clean air, mostly clean water, and abundant wildlife in our state. But we still—and this is most important—must work to maintain and improve this situation.

So this is the favor I'm asking of you. Take a moment to remember how incredibly fortunate we are, in Minnesota, to live in such a beautiful environment. And after giving thanks, make a commitment to help us keep it this way. How? Planning for healthy, green development in your community. Promoting and buying clean, local energy. Taking responsibility for water quality in lakes, streams, and faucets near you. Fighting hard to reduce carbon emissions that cause climate change. Walking. Listening. Learning.

Please do me a personal favor. Recognize that Minnesota is a treasure, and do your part to keep it that way.





## Highlights from the Challenge Course

### “I AM A LUCKY PERSON.” by Deb Anderson

In my role as the Challenge Course Coordinator here at Prairie Woods, I consider myself a lucky person.

As I worked with a group of Girl Scouts on the Challenge Course recently, a young girl came up to me and said, “I have never gotten to do this before. This is one of the best things I have ever done!” My first reaction was that I was excited for that little girl and glad that she had gotten the opportunity to spend time at Prairie Woods. Later in the day, as the kids left and things grew quiet, I thought about the words of that excited Girl Scout. I began to realize what a privilege it was to get to share in this child’s experience. I smiled and thought, *I am a lucky person.*

In my mind, I began to think about all the other people, from young to old, now numbering in the thousands, that I have gotten to spend time with in the Challenge Course and share in all their experiences. Those experiences, that I am again privileged to be a part of, have been fun and exciting, rewarding and challenging, meaningful and sometimes life-changing. I am a very lucky person.

The calendar is now filling in for this summer and beyond. I am thinking ahead to the opportunities and experiences that are yet to

come. I think of the potential of all the school groups, church groups, scout groups, corporate groups, camps, 4-H groups and many more, as they discover things about themselves and their groups on the Challenge Course. I am excited that I will get to be with them as they learn to live well with themselves, others and the environment. I am a very, very lucky person.



I look forward to hearing from many of you who have brought groups out to the Challenge Course or who are considering coming for the first time. I would be glad to talk to you and schedule your experience on the Challenge Course so at the end of the day we can all say, “That was one of the best things I have ever done”.

## Time Travel Update

by TeriWermerskirchen

PWELC Time Travel took part in the Willmar Cultural Celebration in February. Grandmas showed their grandchildren how to churn butter and grind coffee beans. Children kept coming back to churn and grind some more. Others enjoyed dressing in pioneer costumes and having their photos taken. In the PWELC Time Travel program children go back in time and participate in the daily life activities of Swedish immigrants in our local history. Being a part of the history of this place we all share helps children appreciate cultural differences and the challenges that immigrants face—both in the past and in the present.

### Attention Teachers!

Bring your students on a trip they will never forget! Just like Ms. Frizzle and the magic school bus, you and your students can take a trip back in time too. Travel back to the year 1888 and join a Swedish immigrant family at their log cabin home. Share their daily chores and activities. Help prepare the meal, make a toy, sing songs and learn of times past. Call for more information: 354-5894.

### Attention Seniors, History Enthusiasts, Crafters, Retired Teachers, Students!

Ever thought it would be fun to go back in time? Here’s your opportunity!

Come and learn how to be a facilitator for the Time Travel drama at a Prairie Woods Training Day.

**April 20, from 9 am to 2 pm.**

Discover what the program is all about, gain insight into a specific time in our local history, try a mini ‘Time Travel,’ and discover what fun it can be taking children on a trip through time.

Call Teri at 354-5894  
to be a part of it.



## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO REGISTER: 354-5894

*Discovery Day Camps*

**Preschool Day Camp: Flower Festival** (ages 4-6, preK only)  
Bright colors, nice smells, buzzing insects. . . look for flowers in prairies, wetlands, and woods. We'll learn why flowers are special and why plants need them, using crafts, games, and fun activities.

- Thursday, June 29 and Friday, June 30. 8:30 am to 12:00 pm
- \$30 per student

**Preschool Day Camp: Wonder Cricket** (ages 4-6, preK only)  
Join Wonder Cricket and friends for two fun days learning about insects and other small critters. We'll explore all the places tiny creatures hide, plus play games, make projects, and do crafts.

- Thursday, July 27 and Friday, July 28. 8:30 am to 12:00 pm
- \$30 per student

**K-2 Day Camp: Animal Adventures** (K - 2<sup>nd</sup> Gr. Grads)  
Check out all the wonderful creatures that live near us. . . and some that live far away. Enjoy games, crafts, stories, and lots of outdoor exploring.

- Monday, June 26 and Tuesday, June 27. 8:30 am to 12:00 pm
- \$30 per student

**K-2 Day Camp: Groovy Garden Goodies** (K - 2<sup>nd</sup> Gr. Grads)  
What do you like to eat? Ever thought about where it all comes from? Join us to dig in the dirt, investigate plants, and eat some home-grown goodies.

- Thursday, July 20 and Friday, July 21. 8:30 am to 12:00 pm
- \$30 per student

**3-5 Day Camp: The Secret Nature of Stuff** (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Gr.)  
Join our detective squad to discover the past, present and future of objects all around us. Do modern-day archaeology to solve a mystery. Trace the travels of your own shoes. . . before you even owned them! Where does "stuff" come from? Where does it go?

- Monday, July 10 through Wed, July 12. 8:30 am to 12:00 pm
- \$50 per student

*Adventure Days*

**Butterfly Festival** (K through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Graduates)  
Learn about the beautiful "flying flowers:" butterflies. Meet butterflies up close, search for monarch eggs and caterpillars, and do butterfly crafts.

- Saturday, July 8. 9 am to 12 pm
- \$6 per student

**Garden Goodies** (K through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Graduates)  
Learn about where tasty treats come from. Join us in the garden to learn about some of our favorite foods. We'll even explore the nearby woods for some "wild edibles." Check out what plants need to thrive, and sample the results.

- Saturday, August 19. 9 am to 12:00 pm
- \$6 per student

*Adventure Days*

**High Adventure Day Camp** (Grades 3-6)

This is it! The day camp you have been asking about and waiting for. . . High Adventure! Spend a thrilling day at PW experiencing new adventures on the ground and in the air. Fly through the air on the Flying Squirrel, challenge yourself on the 40 foot climbing tower, use teamwork to climb the Giant's Ladder and much more. Bring a bag lunch and be prepared to have LOTS of fun.

- Thursday, June 8, OR Tuesday, July 25, OR Tuesday, August 1
- All dates run 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.
- \$20 per person

**Splash Bash** (Grades 3-7)

This is a Wet and Wild Day Camp full of games and water activities. Bring a swim suit or an extra change of clothes, because we will play games with water, canoe on the water and take a closer look at water. A fun, educational day of laughter and learning. Bring a bag lunch and a towel.

- Wednesday, July 19. 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- \$20 per person

**Squirrel Social** (Grades 1-6)

We are going nuts at Prairie Woods, so we need squirrels. . . flying squirrels! Come join us for your chance to try the activity that lets you swing through the treetops like a flying squirrel. We will also learn about teamwork, safety, and trying our best. We will end the class with a "nutty" snack time for the squirrels!

- Thursday, July 20. 9:00 am to 11:00 am
- \$6 per person

**Games Galore – Let's just play!** (Grades 1-5)

Let's just play! This day camp will be a day for the kids. We will provide lots of ways to have fun, fun, fun. We will be doing lots of exciting, mostly noncompetitive games that will keep your kids smilin' all day long. Bring a bag lunch and a smile, and we are in for a good time.

- Wednesday, July 26. 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- \$20 per person

**Investigate and Rescue Day Camp** (Grades K-4)

SSHHHHH. . . Where did all the animals go?? Investigate where they might be and how we can rescue them while learning about nature and about working together as a team. We might even have to rescue them from hidden places on the climbing wall. Be a hero! Help us rescue the animals. Bring a sack lunch.

- Thursday, August 3. 9:00 am to 2:00 pm
- \$20 per person

**Time Travel** (Grades 2-5)

Ever wonder what it would be like to go back in time? What was life like here over 100 years ago? Let's go back in time, to a log cabin, where you'll churn butter, grind coffee, and make toys. FEEL what it was like to be a pioneer in a new land.

- June 13, 1-4 pm; OR July 10, 9 am-12 pm; OR Aug 22, 9 am-12 pm.
- \$15 per person





## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO REGISTER: 354-5894

### Archery Club (Grades 4 and up)

Have lots of fun learning Olympic-style target shooting and practicing archery skills. We use compound bows and arrows. Enjoy improving aim, playing games, and ending each session with the now famous "Dollar Shoot." A great opportunity to get some practice before hunting season.

- Tuesdays, August 8, 15, 22, and 29. 9:00 am to 10:30 am
- \$30 per person

### Beginning Archery Class (Grades 4 and up)

Learn the basics of using a compound bow and arrow. We work on stance, safety, how to handle equipment, etc. Join us for a hands-on class of learning and fun, while practicing and playing archery games that all ages will enjoy.

- Saturday, July 22. 9:00 am to 11:00 am
- \$10 per person

### Hunting Adventure Club (Grades 6-12)

Many skills are involved in being a good hunter. Whether you are a hunter or not, this class offers practical skills helpful for anyone who enjoys the outdoors: archery, .22 rifle range, sporting clays, survival skills, orienteering, animal identification, and an ethics course. Of course, expect to have lots of fun while learning!

- Thursdays, August 17, 24, and 31. 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
- \$45 per person

### Woman's Sampler (Women age 15 and up)

Are you in too much of a routine? Is it time to get out and try something new? Sample fun and rewarding activities at Prairie Woods: Challenge Course, canoeing, sporting clays, archery. . . . Sessions will focus on fitness (options to get out and get some exercise) and family (trying out new family activities in a fun, noncompetitive atmosphere). Great mother-and-daughter class.

- Thursdays, August 3, 10, 17, and 24. 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- \$30 per person

### Open Climbing (All ages. Families welcome.)

Looking for fitness? Family outing? Challenge? Just looking for something fun to get you out of the house? Join us for open climbing on the indoor wall. A great family activity. (Also great for birthday parties!)

- Saturdays, 9:00 am to Noon. **By reservation only.** Call by Thursday (354-5894) to reserve climb time.
- \$10 per person for 2 hours (includes orientation & belay)

### Family Programs

#### Evening Canoeing

Bring your child, grandchild, neighbor or spouse to enjoy an evening paddle at Prairie Woods.

Check out the riches of nature as you float through the wetlands, and learn about birds, amphibians, and other aquatic critters. Enjoy a campfire gathering after the paddle. Basic canoeing instruction and equipment are provided. Children must be at least 7 years old and accompanied by an adult.

- Solstice Paddle: Thursday, June 22, 2006. 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
- Sunset Paddle: Thursday, July 20, 2006. 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
- Moon Rise Paddle: Tuesday, August 8, 2006. 6:30 to 9:00 pm
- \$6 per person or \$10 per pair

**YOUTH SPORTING CLAYS LEAGUE**  
is planned for Spring & Summer 2006.  
Please call Prairie Woods at 354-5894 to sign up and  
check on dates and times.

## Board Member Profile: Ben Thoma (continued from page 2)

ern Minnesota to connect with the environment--it should be available in this part of the state.

Early on some educators realized that educational experiences outside the classroom resulted in greater retention of knowledge. Environmental learning centers are great places for that learning to take place. Today, experiential learning is an important component of many learning activities for students of all ages. Throughout his years as an educator, Ben Thoma has subscribed to that concept, involving his students at the College Natural Area, Ordway Prairie and at numerous Wildlife Management areas.

Over the next 30 years the PWELC idea evolved to what exists today through a series of ups and downs not atypical of many volunteer organizations. Throughout that evolution Ben Thoma has been a key person in the process, having served on the initial PWELC Board starting in 1979 and continuing to serve the

organization as a member of the Board of Trustees and the Governing Board in 2005. In addition he has served PWELC as a member of the Program and Site Committees, volunteer instructor, financial contributor, preparer of the PWELC Land Use Plan, and all-around volunteer, providing his many skills and expansive expertise wherever needed.

When asked why he became involved with PWELC and his many other environmental education volunteer activities, Ben replied, "I had an interest and some education experience, and it needed to be done." Thanks to that interest, an exemplary level of volunteer involvement, and a commitment to outdoor education, Prairie Woods exists today and continues to grow in its ability to provide students of all ages with quality educational experiences.

Ben and his wife Louise have 3 grown sons and are active in St. Mary's Church, the Willmar Area Food Shelf and the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.



**PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**

12718 10th St. NE  
Spicer MN 56288  
1-320-354-5894  
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**WHY BE A MEMBER?**

- ◆ Know you are supporting programs you believe in at an organization that is important to your community.
- ◆ Receive information and invitations to special events at PrairieWoods.
- ◆ Benefit from discounts on equipment rentals and special programs.
- ◆ Continue to receive the *Warbler* newsletter three times a year.

*Thank you in advance for your support.*

*Join Us!*

**PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**  
*Annual Membership for 2006*

- New Member
- Renewing Member

**SUPPORTER'S MEMBERSHIP**

- Individual Membership ..... \$25.00
- Family Membership ..... \$40.00
- Organization/Business Membership ... Please call for rates.
- I / we are interested in volunteering at Prairie Woods.

**BENEFACTOR'S MEMBERSHIP**

- \$100 to \$499
- \$500 to \$999
- \$1000

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose payment to Prairie Woods ELC, and send to:

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center  
12718 10th Street NE  
Spicer, Minnesota 56288

Questions or comments? Please call us at 320-354-5894 or e-mail us at pwelc@co.kandiyohi.mn.us