



PRAIRIE WOODS

Warbler



Central Minnesota
Community Foundation
Engaging People. Building Community.



VOLUME 15

WINTER 2009-10

ISSUE 3

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Notes from the Executive Director

by Dave Pederson, Executive Director

The right time and place

There are times when I feel sure that Prairie Woods is in the right time and place. It would be hard to imagine a more interesting or urgent time to be involved in environmental education and the promotion of environmental stewardship.

We are living in a time in world history that challenges us to shift how we understand economics, the environment and each other. Although our capacity to build bigger pumps seems infinite we are realizing that the size of the well is not infinite. Our efforts at Prairie Woods to operate on 100% renewable energy are right on time.



Certainly the time is right for Prairie Woods to be working hard to get kids outdoors and engaged in the environment and in their communities. Terms like nature deficit disorder and childhood obesity, have become commonplace as have the terms climate change, energy crisis and renewable energy. Clearly, the time is right for Prairie Woods to be getting kids involved in healthy outdoor activity and also involved in the environmental, economic and social health of our region.

We are also in the right place. Prairie Woods is situated in a beautiful region that is rich in natural and human resources. We have wind, solar, water, agricultural and human resources that can contribute to a strong viable economy which meets the sturdy tripod test of sustainability (social, economic and environmental balance). We want our kids to understand that we live in a place of opportunity.

We are all in the right time and place to make a difference. The time to make a difference is now and the place is wherever we are in the moment. Thanks for taking this moment to catch up on programs, progress and plans at Prairie Woods. Thanks for being a partner with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center in promoting environmental stewardship in our time and in our place.

Sincerely,

Dave

Upcoming Events at Prairie Woods

Almost Free Ski DaySaturday, January 9th, 1-4pm
Winter Family Fun DaySunday, Feb. 7th, 1-4pm
YES! Winter Workshop,.....Wed., January 13, 8:30a-2:30pm
Earth Day Event.....Saturday, April 17, 8a-1pm.



*A Big Night Under the Big Tent.*

It is one of life's pleasures to enjoy an evening of great food, great music and great company for an important cause. The 2nd annual Evening Under the Prairie Stars Event featured great food provided by Chef Monty of the Green Mill, great music provided by the Mill Pond Jazz Band and the Fringe Band and great company provided by all who attended the event. This year's event raised nearly \$18,000 after expenses. These funds provide critical support for the work (and play) that gets kids engaged in outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship.

Please join us in saying thanks to the many supporters of the Prairie Stars event listed in this newsletter. If you see them on the street, please go out of your way to thank them for supporting Prairie Woods and this very special event. First and foremost we would like to recognize Jennie O Turkey Store, Lakeland Broadcasting, and the Prairie Woods Board of Trustees for underwriting the event. We can't say enough to thank these wonderful folks for helping to get the ball rolling. We send out a special thanks to Kristine Fladeboe Duinick of Fladeboe Auctioneers for a very entertaining and engaging live auction. Wow, if Prairie Woods could plug into Kristine's energy we could probably go without the wind turbine.

A huge thank you goes out to the Promotions Committee members who put together a wonderful evening. Committee members included Luke and Allison Geiger, Joel Schmidt, Ron Erpelding, Mary Merlin-Pelkey, Jim Tetzloff and Cindy Westby. Cindy Westby and Mary Merlin Pelkey co-chaired the event. Cindy, bless her, worked diligently on the event almost to the time of her death and provided great inspiration for the entire committee.

The Third Annual Evening Under the Prairie Stars Fundraiser will be held Friday, September 10, 2010. The Prairie Stars committee is already starting to plan for the 2010 event. If you would like to volunteer to help with this very fun and very important fundraiser for Prairie Woods please contact Dave at Prairie Woods.

~PRAIRIE STARS UNDERWRITERS- \$2500

Jennie O Turkey Store
Lakeland Broadcasting
Prairie Woods ELC Trustees

~ECO SPONSOR- \$1000

Affiliated Community Medical Center
Duinicks Construction
Family Practice Medical Center
Carmen Rohne

~PRAIRIE PARTNER- \$500

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Heritage Bank
Mary Merlin Pelkey & Russell Pelkey
Pioneer Heritage Insurance
Cindy & Larry Rice
Karen Schneider
Roger & Kay Strand

~VOYAGER- \$250

Darlene Bratberg
Ron & DeLayne Erpelding
Gary & Nancy Geiger
Gilbertson, Martinka Dentistry
Wallace & Donna Gustafson
Robert & Pauline Halvorson
Ron & Etta Holmgren
Jeff & Cheryl Johnson (MN Dark House Anglers)
Robert & Patricia Kaiser
Pat & Mary Laib
John & Mary Lindstrom
Charles & Marilyn Magnuson
Northern Factory Sales
Dennis & Karen Peterson
Joel Schmidt & Amanda Raetzman
Tim & Denise Smith

Ben & Louise Thoma
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West Central Sanitation

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Deb West



PRAIRIE WOODS SADDENED BY THE LOSS OF GOOD FRIENDS.

In the past few months Prairie Woods was saddened by the loss of good friends and longtime supporters. We were also deeply grateful to family and friends who sent memorial contributions to Prairie Woods in honor of the following people:

*We experienced the deep loss of board member Cindy Westby who passed away Sept 2, 2009. Cindy served as the co-chair of the Prairie Stars event up until the last month of her life. Cindy was a super person, a great parent to her children and a great friend of Prairie Woods. Not only was Cindy a blessing to Prairie Woods in her life but she also directed in her will that Prairie Woods should receive a \$25,000 gift from her estate.

We are deeply grateful to have known Cindy and we are greatly honored to be named in her will. Cindy and her husband Gary Westby were both tireless workers for Prairie Woods and they leave a legacy of inspiration that will serve Prairie Woods far into the future.

Don Danielson passed away on August 6, 2009. Don was a long-time friend of Prairie Woods and descendent of the Anders Danielson Family which homesteaded what is now the core of Prairie Woods. Don had an active interest in Prairie Woods and particularly enjoyed the farmsite. Don and his wife Lorraine could often be found assisting their daughter Deb Schmitzerle, in the garden projects at the Prairie Woods farmsite. Don's quiet thoughtfulness and deep respect for the land left a lasting impression on the many who knew him.

Dr. Patrick Malone passed away September 23, 2009. Dr. Malone was an early board member of Prairie Woods who maintained an interest in Prairie Woods and shared his love for the outdoors by writing several childrens books. Dr. Malone obviously touched many people during his lifetime. Over forty people sent memorials to Prairie Woods in honor of Dr. Malone and we were delighted to learn from his wife Wanda that the family intends to donate copies of his childrens books for the Prairie Woods library.

Galen Rohne passed away on June 8, 2009. I was fortunate to know Galen as the father of my daughter's friend Shannon. Our conversations generally occurred in the course of dance recitals, band concerts, volleyball games etc. and always revolved around the outdoors and family- two things that seemed to be closest to Galen's heart. Carmen, Galen's wife, stepped up with a generous gift to the Prairie Stars Fundraiser. Galen, a former owner of Northern Factory Supply, was a life member of Prairie Woods.

Jon Bratberg passed away January 26, 2009. Jon was respected as a gentleman and as a farmer with a lifelong interest in conservation. Jon served as a Prairie Woods board member in the early days. We are grateful to Jon and all of the others who invested time, energy and money into a dream which continues to grow.

UNITED WAY OF WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA

The United Way of West Central Minnesota, formerly United Way of Kandiyohi County, has been a great supporter of Prairie Woods for a number of years. Programs supported by United Way include; Everyone Outside!- an initiative to get kids and families outdoors and engaged in health recreational pursuits; Serious Fun! which helps support adventure-based community building experiences; and Bridging Generations and Cultures which helps kids connect with each other, their community and the environment through our time travel/living history programs. Funds provided by United Way help to support key program staff positions which keep our programs available and affordable for thousands of kids each year. Thanks United Way!

Needs & Giving Opportunities

- Utility tractor w/ loader (diesel)
- Scholarship and Travel Assistance Fund Contributions (any amount will help).
- Diesel pick-up (3/4 or 1 ton) for plowing snow.
- Smaller diesel passenger vehicle
- 300 gal fuel tank for storing bio-diesel
- Gravity box grain wagon for hauling corn and pellets
- 1-3 ton bin for storing fuel pellets and corn at the farmhouse
- Financial contributions to help build the sustainability endowment

TEACHERS AND GROUP LEADERS CHECK THIS OUT! FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY PRAIRIE STARS SCHOLARSHIP AND TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FUND + FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY MEEKER, KANDIYOHI AND STEARNS COUNTY CORN GROWERS.

A scholarship and travel assistance fund was established at the 2008 Prairie Stars Event and the tradition continued in 2009. The Prairie Stars fund is available to help groups to attend Prairie Woods for the first time as well as groups who have attended in the past but are experiencing financial hardship. Please contact the Prairie Woods office to learn how your group might receive program scholarship assistance from the Prairie Stars Fund.

The County Corn Grower Associations from Stearns, Kandiyohi and Meeker County have also stepped up to help groups come to Prairie Woods to take part in the History of Corn Exhibit. The exhibit tells the story of the development of corn over thousands of years up through modern times and helps raise awareness of the profound impact that agriculture has on our every day lives. Please give us a call to discuss either accessing or contributing to funding opportunities for school groups.

**TIME TRAVEL AT PWELC***Teri Wermerskirchen**-Experience our own 'Little House on the Prairie'*

You may have noticed that there was a Little House on the Prairie Musical at the Guthrie this past fall. There is something about these stories written by Laura Ingalls Wilder that continue to capture our interest even in these modern times. Could it be that in these hard times, we take heart in how Laura's family found joy in simple things like the sound of the fiddle and warm family relationships? Do we crave a simpler time because our lives are so full? Do we long for the kind of sharing that took place when the family gathered around their one source of warmth and light? Perhaps it is the story of the immigrants and the challenges they faced that so intrigues us. Whatever the connection, these timeless stories have been embraced by all generations. But you don't have to wait for the next musical to come around, because we have a unique pioneer program right here at Prairie Woods. You've read the stories, watched the reruns, but here you can actually step into and take part in your own pioneer story.

At the log cabin that stands on the original site of the Anders Danielson family, local folk reenact a day out of our local history. Teachers have told us how well the program compliments school and Virtual curricu-



lums. The program can be molded to fit any group. This fall, Pioneer Girls Day was a hit. The girls made corn husk dolls and churned butter as well as other fun activities. No matter what the program or the age group, over and over we hear from kids, "I liked everything! I would come back and do everything the same!"

In early December, **Pioneer Christmas** takes place at the cabin where young and old can share a cup of hot cocoa as they make Christmas ornaments and greenery. Mark your calendars for next year and bring the extended family or a group of friends.

Upcoming programming at the Pioneer Cabin includes: the **Heritage Sampler** where students can try some crafts and learn some skills from the pioneer times; **Winter Survival at the Pioneer Cabin** when the kids must get out and cut wood and look for animals in order to survive; or **Spring at the Pioneer Cabin** where they help the pioneers with their busy springtime activities.

In addition to the wonderful stories of the pioneers, the Time Travel program will also explore some other time periods....

-Explore the Times of the 'Ancient Ones'

When the Ice Age ended and the Mammoths and Mastadons disappeared, the people had to change their way of living to survive. We'll try some technology of the Archaic Period including special tools like the Grinding Stone and Mano and the Atlatl or spear thrower.

-A Unique Birthday Party Experience

Said best in a letter from a birthday girl's mom- "Everyone had great fun, laughed, sang, danced, ate, made ice cream, butter, crafts and had fun dressing up. We would highly recommend having a birthday party at Prairie Woods as an alternative, fun way to celebrate and at the same time educate children. Can't say enough good things about our experience. Our 6 year old said it best: "Mom, I wished it would have lasted all day!"

Plans for the spring include putting up an outbuilding that will house props and give shelter. Anyone interested in volunteering their time to make this happen please let us know!

WINTER ENVIORNMENTAL EDUCATION NOTES*Gary Duncomb, Interim EE Coordinator*

The signs of the changing seasons are all around us. The early October freeze robbed us of our annual fall parade of colors. The cool, dark days made outdoor activities here at PW difficult to schedule. Local farmers struggled to get their crops harvested. November has brought brighter, drier days. The harvest is progressing at a steady rate. Hunting seasons are in full swing. The deer firearms season has come to a close with muzzle loading firearms to begin at the end of the month. Archery deer and pheasant hunting season will continue until the end of the year.



The fallen leaves will provide an ample mulch bed to protect the small organisms and enrich the forest soils for the coming spring. The prairie has taken on its amber tones of autumn. The stiff stem of the native switch grass, big blue stem, and Indian grass stand tall against the winds and snows of winter. These grass species provide shelter and an abundance of seed that renew the stand and offer a high energy food source for hungry birds and mammals. The snuggest habitats for the coldest weather are the cattail stands that ring the many pothole swamps at Prairie Woods. These tall, stout, native grasses grow in dense stands around the fertile swamps. Pheasants, deer, fox, coyote and many other birds and mammals use them for wintering cover.

The annual Conservation Day at Prairie Wood ELC for area 6th graders proved to be a great success. Two hundred students from Atwater/Cosmos/Grove City, New London/Spicer, and Community Christian School joined in discovering the many facets of conservation. The students experienced sessions on fisheries, soil conservation, water quality, wood duck behavior, recycling, renewable energy, prairie habitat diversity, archery and wall climbing. Professionals from the DNR, Kandiyohi Power Coop, Kandiyohi Co. Recycling Center, NRCS / SWCS along with Roger Strand, Prairie Woods Trustee, and PWELC staff joined in presenting the ten different sessions in rotation. Blended groups of students from the different schools worked their ways through the sessions, learning a variety of strategies to use our resources in a responsible manner.

We are looking forward to some snow cover to help kick off our winter education session with area schools, youth groups, and community education programs. Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, winter survival, and wildlife tracking are some of our most popular outdoor winter sessions. Individuals and families please watch your community education publications for offerings. Teachers and youth group leaders please call Prairie Woods to set up your own customized program for your group.

It's never too early to be planning for next spring and the field trip season. Our calendar fills in quickly for the brief seasonal spring weather of April and May. Beat the rush by planning ahead and booking your dates early.



YOUTH ENERGY SUMMIT 2009-2010

EXPANDS TO 22 TEAMS

Program empowers area students to put energy into rural Minnesota communities

Anne Dybsetter, YES! Coordinator

For the 2009-2010 season, Youth Energy Summit (YES!) has engaged twenty-two teams of teenagers, along with adult coaches, from across southwest and west-central Minnesota. The students' initiative, imagination and hard work will be visible around the region as they begin work on energy action projects to increase energy efficiency and promote renewable energy.

YES! 2009-2010 held its first event Oct. 20 at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, with 135 students from grades eight through 12 and 20 adult coaches in attendance. Participants visited the Southwest Minnesota Career Expo, which featured more than 20 energy-related exhibitors. Teams also took part in a step-by-step action-planning process and team-building activities.

YES!, now in its third year, has partnered with Prairie Ecology Bus Center (PEBC) of Lakefield to expand its reach in southwestern Minnesota. Mike Swenson serves as the YES! Coordinator for PEBC, working with teams from Marshall, New Ulm, New Ulm Putting Green, Redwood Area, St. James, Springfield, Tracy, Westbrook-Walnut Grove, and Windom. Prairie Woods YES! coordinator Anne Dybsetter works with teams from

Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City (ACGC), Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian (BOLD), Eden Valley-Watkins, Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop (GFW), Hutchinson, Lac qui Parle Valley (LQPV), Litchfield, Morris Area, New London-Spicer, Ortonville, Willmar, and Yellow Medicine East. Community members are encouraged to show their support for their local YES! teams.

As a team-oriented youth program, YES! uses hands-on, experiential learning and energy action projects to address energy opportunities and issues in rural Minnesota communities. Each team has an Energy Action Project underway, which will be judged in April and awarded recognition for outstanding achievement. Students are provided with the knowledge, networks and leadership skills to place them at the forefront of the region's future renewable energy workforce. Through YES!, students build leadership skills and awareness of career, education and economic opportunities related to renewable energy, conservation, climate change and more.

YES! 2009-2010 is administered by the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), implemented through partnerships with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and Prairie Ecology Bus Center and funded in part by the Southwest and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundations and the Minnesota Renewable Energy Marketplace: An Alliance for Talent Development.

All slots for the 2009-2010 YES! program are currently filled or pending. For more information, visit www.youthenergysummit.com.



Home on the Range

Ryan Block-

Have you ever been interested in trying something new, really intrigued by something that has never been done or attempted by any of your friends or family? Did you try it? Or did you file it away as a dream after a couple of days, weeks, or even years of thinking about it? As adults we have the confidence, can generate the resources, and if we can find the time, we can give those dreams a shot. But, young people on the other hand may have difficulty turning their interests into reality. This is why mentors are so important.

Growing up, there were a couple of adults that I can think of that really went out of their way to make sure that I got some op-



portunities to try things that I otherwise would not have. Because of these mentors I was able to experience horseback rides, fishing trips, hunting adventures, days at the lake, camping, canoeing, building stuff and the list could go on and on. The point is that I don't consider all of these things I tried as hobbies today, but what it

did was fueled my passion for the outdoors and provided me with an example of what it means to give back. I can't think of one of those people that did not have something else to do or did not have busy lives, but they thought it important enough to have me tag along and be apart of what they were doing.

The reason why I chose this direction for this article is two fold. 1) I was looking over the Minnesota Pheasants Forever website the other day and read this: "Only 20% of youth who pass the hunter safety course actually grow up to be hunters. However, of those graduates that also attend a youth mentor hunt - 80% will hunt as adults." To me that just shows the importance of adults taking the time to give young people an opportunity in the outdoors. 2) This will give me a chance to thank all of those men and women that took the time to give me an opportunity and every one else who is taking young people outside and passing there interests down. So, thank you!!

Thanks also to everyone who helped make 2009 a great year for Sportsmens and Womens programs at Prairie Woods E.L.C. We were able to run our first ever Forkhorn Camp last July and we are looking forward to expanding our camp offerings in 2010. Why not encourage a youth you know to sign up for a Forkhorn Camp this summer or perhaps invite them out to Prairie Woods to experience archery, sporting clays, rifle range, climbing, canoeing, skiing or a host of other outdoor experiences at Prairie Woods. Now there's an idea for a Christmas gift and New Years resolution rolled into one.

Looking Forward to 2010,
Ryan Block



The View from the Top

DEB ANDERSON- CHALLENGE COURSE COORDINATOR

Here it is, the end of the year already. As I look back at the year, I feel like I am standing on the top of the climbing tower looking back at where I have just climbed. The view from the top is pretty amazing. Thousands of people were out on the Challenge Course again this year having great experiences and learning about life in a real and hands-on way.

Some of the athletic teams that visited the challenge course this year went on to have very successful seasons. Special congrats go out to New London-Spicer Volleyball team which realized a dream of advancing on to the state volleyball tournament. Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa and Ridgewater volleyball teams also had impressive seasons along with lots of others.

Community Education programs were well attended this year so keep signing up for those classes so we can offer even more. Pirates of the Carabiner was a particular favorite for staff and kids alike.

We are excited that many schools, even in some pretty tough economic times, are continuing to realize the value of our programs and are already calling to reserve time for next year. We are also excited about improvements to the indoor climbing wall. We are in the process of adding some indoor team events that will be a really good time on those days when foul weather might otherwise keep us on the ground. Stop in and check it out.

A BIG THANKS to all of the staff that helped out this year. Prairie Woods is fortunate to have some great volunteers and part-time staff who make a tremendous contribution to our work at Prairie Woods. On some of our bigger days we need more than 20 people to work. If you know someone with great people skills and an ability to inspire youth who might be interested in helping on the challenge course at Prairie Woods please give us a call.

Thanks also to all of the groups and organizations who came out for programs in 2009. Please give us a call and get on the calendar to come out again to where the view is pretty amazing from the top!!



The 2009 Special Hunt was held November 13, 14, 15

Mark Mertens, Dave Meutzel, Ryan Newville, Joey Wangen, Mike Anderson and a host of others put together the 9th annual special deer hunt at Prairie Woods. Eight hunters participated this year and thoroughly appreciated the hospitality and hard work of the volunteers. New this year, one camper from the Forkhorn I summer camp was selected to participate in the special hunt. Ben Blonigan and father Willie were lucky winners of the Forkhorn drawing which allowed Ben to participate in his first hunt. Hunters and helpers this year included:

HUNTERS

Aaron Cross
Mark Mertens
Al Hoffman
Jeremy Carlson
Scott Edman
Wills Kaunzner
Craig Voorhees
Ben Blonigan (Forkhorn Camper)

PARTNER

David Hollander
Mike Oleson
Rusty Elder
Randy Kardell
Mike Grant
Kent Scholin
Celeste Voorhees
Willie Blonigan

VOLUNTEERS

Dave Muetzel
Ryan Newville
Mike Anderson
Joe Wangen
Mike Gjerde
Bruce Pickard
Brad Fredeen
Doreen Hoffman

Jason — Checking on his last name

If you, or someone you know, may be interested in either hunting or volunteering to help with future wheelchair accessible deer hunts please call Prairie Woods at 354-5894.



Front Row (kneeling) L to R - Celeste, Ben
Sitting - L to R - Scott, Wills, Aaron, Craig, Mark
Back (standing) L to R - Mike G., Kent, Al, Rusty, Dave, Willie, Mike O.

TIME TO SKI AT PRAIRIE WOODS

A number of years ago Prairie Woods received a generous donation of cross country ski equipment from **Bill & DeeDee Johnson, Scott Johnson, and Jack & Diane Woodhall**. That gear served us well for ten years and although much of it is still in service we had a need to replace and upgrade equipment for the coming year. A grant from our friends at **Willmar Area Community Foundation** as well as a gift from the Vollen Family enabled us to purchase over 30 pairs of skis, boots and poles. **Thanks to Fitzharris Ski and Sports** in St. Cloud we were able to really stretch our dollars and acquire some great new equipment. The new gear will be available to individuals and families for weekend rentals. Check it out!

Remember that Prairie Woods grooms 6 miles of ski trail. The trail-head will be open for ski and snowshoe rental from 9am-5pm on Saturdays and Noon-5pm on Sundays throughout ski season. Please call ahead to rent equipment during the week.

A Haunted Halloween!

BECCA BELL

Dorothys, ninjas, princesses and others braved the snow and gathered together for an evening of fall fun at this year's Halloween Haunt at Prairie Woods. Popcorn, donated by Walt's Car Wash in Willmar, and cookies kept all the monsters satisfied as they took part in the various activities. Thanks to the generous donation of pumpkins from Country Stop Inc. of Spicer, everyone had the chance to carve out their favorite design and take home a pumpkin. The climbing wall was kept busy throughout the evening as climbers didn't let their costumes keep them from reaching new heights!

A special thank you to the volunteers from New London Spicer National Honor Society and Peer Helpers group — with their help, visitors were able to experience the Enchanted Creature Trail, have their face painted, win prizes in the game room, scoop out pumpkin guts and take home a nifty jack-o-lantern!



Update: EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN BY 2010



We continue to make progress on our five year march to 100% renewable energy by the end of 2010. During the past few months we have installed a new high efficiency biomass boiler that burns pelletized fuel and corn; installed a 400square foot solar air heating panel to help heat the indoor climbing wall and the education building; written grants for the expansion of the solar heating system at the maintenance building; and worked hard at running our buildings efficiently. As this newsletter goes to print, we are installing three solar tubes which will pipe natural daylight into the corn exhibit space, one of the staff offices and a bathroom on the main floor of the education building.

The West Central Sustainable Development Partnership will be working with us in the coming year to develop self-guided renewable energy tours and educational displays at Prairie Woods.

Events to keep in mind throughout the year:

THE ANNUAL RECYCLED OUTDOOR GEAR SALE

As you clean out the garage or contemplate what to do with some of the great outdoor gear that you just haven't used for a few years please consider donating items for the Annual Recycled Outdoor Gear Sale.



JJM VICTORY RUN

Why not put together a team to share in the fun of the Victory Run- A great time to remember lives well lived and get some exercise with friends and family on the trails at Prairie Woods.

AN EVENING UNDER THE PRAIRIE STARS

We would love to add members to the Prairie Stars Committee. We also welcome ideas and items for the live and silent auctions.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES AT THE LOG CABIN

Looking for a unique idea for a birthday party? Why not celebrate your birthday like Laura Ingalls Wilder and other pioneer girls and boys? Dress as a pioneer and play some games that were played in the 1800s! We'll make our own ice-cream and even make a toy to bring home. Choose from a variety of activities.

Call PWELC 354-5894 to plan your pioneer birthday party.

Please consider a gift to the Prairie Woods Sustainability Endowment Fund in your end of the year contributions and estate planning.

Site Improvements

* New high tech biomass boiler was installed in September. Thanks to Bob Ryan of European Energy Connections and Sunrise Agrifuel, Per Carlson of AbioNova of Sweden, Empire Plumbing & Heating and Orson Electric for completing a quality installation.



- * The wind turbine and solar panels equaled or exceeded our electric requirements from April through September. We are currently seeking grant assistance for the addition of an 8kw solar array which will meet our goal of 100% renewable energy by the end of 2010.
- * A Fujitsu air source heat pump has been installed to provide heat for the two staff offices which, combined with pellet burning space heaters, allows us to dramatically reduce the number of days that the boiler system is required to operate throughout the shoulder seasons and winter.
- * John Duevel of Three Seasons & More, along with Orson Electric and Prairie Woods staff installed a solar thermal heating system for the indoor climbing room.
- * Installation of an indoor challenge course event in the indoor climbing room is scheduled for completion in December.
- * We have purchased additional solar panels from MinnWest Technology Campus to expand the solar heating system at the maintenance building. We have applied for a CERT grant to assist with installation of the panels.

Help Wanted

If you are passionate about getting kids outdoors and have an interest in working as a part-time or volunteer program facilitator with Prairie Woods please give us a call.

We will be scheduling orientation and staff training opportunities in February and March.



LONG RANGE PLANNING SESSION SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY

On February 15th, the board of trustees and staff will meet with Kent Gustafson from the University Extension Service to work on a plan for the next five years. The realization of how quickly the last five year plan unfolded spurs us on to plan for the next five years. If you would like to commit to helping Prairie Woods make and meet our next set of 5 year goals please contact Dave Pederson, Executive Director or Ron Erpelding, Board Chair.

Volunteers Needed

- Help build a rustic shed for the Time Travel site,
- Cut firewood and assist with trail work
- Assist with newsletters, grant writing and marketing
- Help out as hosts for special events
- Program facilitators in all areas
- Make batches of bio-diesel with our on-site processor
- Join the Prairie Stars Event Committee
- Help out in the trailhead this winter

WANTED - NEW MEMBERS

If you are not already a member, we wholeheartedly invite you to join Prairie Woods and help us to recruit new members. Please consider contributing your time and talents to help Prairie Woods continue to grow and thrive as a premier educational and recreational resource for our region.

NICE THINGS DONE FOR PRAIRIE WOODS *by People Like You*

- Fitzharris Ski & Sport of St. Cloud gave us some great discounts on cross country ski gear which helped multiply funds invested by Willmar Area Community Foundation and the Paul & Sandra Vollen Family.
- The Willmar High School Nordic Ski Team spent a day in November preparing the ski trails for another season of training and racing at Prairie Woods.
- A group from Faith Lutheran Church in Spicer spent time on trails and site clean up during a rally day of community service in September.
- The Youth Build program from Willmar helped put up firewood for the winter and helped prepare for the special hunt.
- The 9th annual special hunt was made possible through the great work of a number of volunteers led by Dave Meutzel and Mark Mertens.
- Ben Thoma has recently retired from the governing board and board of trustees after many years of service to Prairie Woods. Thanks Ben for the many years of good work for Prairie Woods.
- Justin & Sara Bos and Mike O'Brien have joined the governing board. Welcome Justin, Sara and Mike!!
- We received a matching gift of \$500 from General Mills thanks to Lois Quam and Matt Entenza.
- We received a \$200 matching gift from Pioneer/Dupont thanks to Lori Carrigan.
- United Prairie Bank staff donated a day of staining and painting at Prairie Woods as part of the United Way Day of Caring.
- Dave Opsahl volunteered his time to replace lights in the watershed model.
- John Miller volunteered to assist w/ bio-diesel production.
- Marc Reese volunteered time to help maintain the log cabin.
- Roger Strand donated many hours to the wood duck project at Prairie Woods and helped hundreds of kids to understand the importance of conservation and wildlife habitat.
- The Prairie Woods board invested precious time in helping to guide Prairie Woods through a very productive year of service and several fundraising efforts.
- The Prairie Woods staff continued to invest huge amounts of time, energy and creativity into making each day a quality experience for our participants and visitors.
- Bob Ryan of European Energy Connections went far above and beyond the call of duty to assist Prairie Woods with the installation of the new biomass boiler.
- John Duevel gave his customary 110% effort to engineer and construct the new solar heating panel that integrates nicely with the front of the education building.
- New London-Spicer students from the National Honor Society and Peer Helpers groups provided a big assist for the Halloween Haunt.
- Kandiyohi County Commissioner Richard Larson has completed a two year term on the Prairie Woods governing board. Commissioner Richard Falk will join us for another two year term starting in 2010. Commissioner Dennis Peterson will serve one more year on the governing board. Commissioner Harlan Madsen will continue to serve on the PWELC full board of Trustees. Thank you Commissioners and thank you to Kandiyohi County for the great support of Prairie Woods over the years.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED: 354-5894

~TIME TRAVEL PROGRAMS~

HERITAGE SAMPLER.....Cost: \$36.00

How did the settlers pass the cold winter months? Take a step back in time and try some forgotten arts and crafts of the past. Each week we'll try a new craft or art project and you'll have some unique samples to bring home! Some of the things we may do are: rug making, spool weaving, knitting, and quilting, candle making, corn husk dolls etc. Just like the early settlers, we'll be sitting round the stove, making our creations by hand in the cozy log cabin.

Ages: 3rd-6th Graders

Time: 3:45-5:30pm (NLS Students take bus#5) • Dates: February 4, 11, 18, 25
(4 consecutive Thursday nights)

Minimum of 6 • Parents pick up children at the PWELC Log Cabin

WINTER SURVIVAL AT THE**PIONEER CABINCost: \$10.00 pp**

Come to the log cabin at PWELC and see if you could have survived as a pioneer! We'll be cutting wood for a fire, using candles for light and looking for signs of animals. We may have to use snowshoes or skis in our hunt! Then we'll warm up with a hot cup of cocoa over the fire....

Ages: 3rd-6th Graders

Time: 3:45-5:30pm (NLS Students take bus#5) • Date: Thursday, January 28

Minimum of 6 • Parents pick up children at the PWELC Log Cabin

SPRING AT THE PIONEER CABINCost: \$10.00pp

Help the pioneers with their busy springtime activities: preparing the garden, beating rugs, churning butter, shining up the buggy... then we'll make a handmade toy for you to take home.

Ages: 2nd-6th graders

Time: 3:45-5:30pm (NLS Students take bus #5) • Date: Monday, April 12

Minimum of 6

TRAVEL BACK TO THE TIMES OF**THE 'ANCIENT ONES'Cost: \$10.00**

When the Ice Age ended and the Mammoths and Mastadons suddenly disappeared, the people had to change their way of living to survive. Here's your chance to step **WAY BACK** in time. We'll try some of the technology of the Archaic Period, including special tools like the Grinding Stone and Mano and the Atlatl, or spear thrower.

Ages: Grades 3-7

Time: 3:45-5:30pm • Date: Monday, April 19

Pick up and Drop off at the PWELC Farmsite • (NLS take bus #5)

~SHOOTING RANGE PROGRAMS~

Beginner Archery ClassPrice: \$10/person

This class gives you the opportunity to learn the basics of using a compound bow and arrow. We will be working on form, safety, technique, how to properly use the equipment, etc. A hands on class of learning and fun while practicing and playing archery games that all ages will enjoy. All equipment will be provided or you can bring your own.

Date: Tuesday, April 6th • Time: 4:00-5:15 p.m. • Ages: 10 and up

Advanced Archery ClassPrice: \$10/person

All ready attended the beginner class or are looking to hone your skills a little more? Then join us for the advanced archery class. In this class we will be taking a closer look at our form and technique and how to take care of your equipment. We will get into ranging distances and down field shooting. All equipment will be provided or you can bring your own.

Date: Tuesday, April 13th • Time: 4:00-5:15 p.m. • Ages: 10 and up

After School Archery ClubPrice: \$36/person

It is lots of fun learning and practicing the skill of archery. We will be using compound bows to improve our skills. We will play games, shoot 3-d targets, do Olympic style archery, use the atlatl's, all while aiming to have a great time. Equipment will be provided.

Date: Thursdays, March 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th • Time: 4:00-5:15 p.m.

Ages: 10 and up

Open Range – Sporting Clays and .22's

Come with the kids or drop them off for some fun at the Gary Westby Educational shooting range. We will have the sporting clays range open as well as the .22 range. Bring your own firearm or use one of ours. All ammunition and targets will be provided.

Date: Tuesdays, May 25th & June 1st

Time: Range opens at 5:00 and will close at dark, come at your convenience

RSVP Encouraged • Ages: All ages welcome, 12 and under will need adult chaperone

Price: \$16 for a round of Sporting clays and \$4 for the .22 range

Prairie Wood's Sporting Clays Range is open to the public on a reservation basis call Ryan to schedule your group 320-354-5894. A great activity for scouts, 4-H, FFA, corporate groups and families.

~CHALLENGE COURSE PROGRAMS~

Climbing Club.....\$35 per person

This is a favorite. Join the climbing club and get to climb walls, learn to belay, learn about safety and equipment used for rock climbing. This is a great time!

March 18, 25, April 1, and 8 3:30-5:00 Grades 2-6

Partners in Climb\$20 per person

It's all about teamwork. Find a friend and head out to Prairie Woods ELC. This program will be using the climbing wall and games to explore teamwork and what it takes to be a good friend.

January 25 and Feb 1 3:30-5:00 Grades 3-7

Holiday Family Climb/Ski.....\$10 per participant

I'm bored! School's out for the holidays and the kids are tired of being inside. Come share some quality family time and get some exercise after the holiday feasts. Prairie Woods' climbing wall and ski trails are open and waiting for your family to come and have some fun.

Tues, Dec 29th 1 to 4:00 All ages

Base Camp (Mini facilitator's training)\$40 per person

This is where it all begins. At base camp we will experience and train on Prairie Woods' exciting challenge course. As we have a great time challenging ourselves on the challenge course we will also be training to help others and receive a Jr. Facilitators certificate.

Thurs, April 8, 15, 22, 29 3:30-5:00 Grades 5-9

~ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS~

Almost Free Ski Day-Everyone

Saturday, January 9th, 1-4pm

Rent xc skis or snowshoes for \$2 a pair (a buck a piece) and pick up some pointers from local ski enthusiasts (Thanks to the YMCA, Willmar Area Nordic Ski Club, and WHS Nordic ski team for helping with instruction.)

WINTER ADVENTURE: Cross Country SkiingGrades 4-8

Tuesday, January 12, 3:45-5:30PM • \$8 per person

Get outside and explore this winter! Hit the trails and have an adventure on the skinny skis. Prairie Woods has numerous miles of groomed trails. Instruction and equipment provided.

WINTER FAMILY FUN DAYEveryone

Sunday, February 7, 1:00-4:00 PM • \$5 per person, \$15 max per family

Celebrate winter at PWELC with fun outdoor activities for everyone in the family; snowshoeing, cross country skiing, winter birding, and animal tracking. Indoors, warm up by the fire and enjoy the climbing wall, refreshments and more. Ski and snowshoe rental is included. XC ski instruction will be provided by volunteers from the Willmar High School Nordic Ski team and the Willmar Area Nordic Ski Club.

WINTER ADVENTURE: Cross Country SkiingGrades 4-8

Monday February 22, 3:45-5:30PM • \$8 per person

Get outside and explore this winter! Hit the trails and have an adventure on the skinny skis. Prairie Woods has numerous miles of groomed trails. Instruction and equipment provided.

WINTER ADVENTURE: Snowshoe TrackingGrades 4-8

Monday, March 1 3:45-5:30 • \$8 per student

On snowshoes, you can explore "off the beaten path" and beyond the trails. Enjoy this magical adventure through quiet woods and hills, while watching for tracks and signs of our animal neighbors. Instruction and all equipment provided



**PRAIRIE WOODS
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**

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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 Prairie Woods.
- ◆ Benefit from discounts on equipment rentals and programs.
- ◆ Continue to receive the *Warbler* newsletter three times a year.

*Thank you for
your support.*

Join Us!

PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER
Annual Membership for 2010

- ☐ New Member
☐ Renewing Member

SUPPORTER'S MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ Individual Membership \$30.00
☐ Family Membership \$45.00
☐ 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