



# ParkPeopleNews

Creating Citizen Connections to Our Parks

## Park People Spring 2016 Newsletter

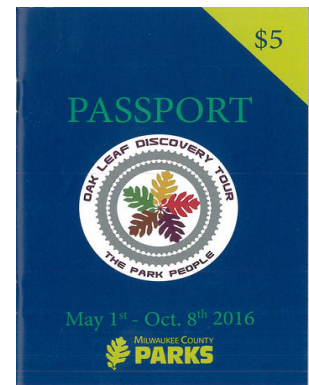
### Oak Leaf Discovery Tour



The Park People recently launched the fifth annual Oak Leaf Discovery Tour (OLDT). This summer long event was designed to encourage family exploration, healthy recreation (wellness) and awareness of our Milwaukee County Park System, its history, cultural opportunities and natural beauty. The OLDT is based on a participant "passport" that can be purchased at one of over 25 distribution points throughout Milwaukee County. This pocket sized book contains information about county park locations along or near the 118 mile Oak Leaf Trail. When participants visit these destinations, they collect special "keywords" in their passport. Prizes include impressive bikes, biking supplies, and gift certificates for local businesses and park venues.

This year the passport has QR codes for every keyword site that can be read with a smart phone (you will have to download a QR reader app). The QR code will take you to a web page with historical information for that particular site or information as to its cultural significance. If you don't have a smart phone or want to gather information about each Keyword site prior to planning your passport trip you can get this information by clicking on the passport image to the right.

For rules and general information about the Oak Leaf Discovery Tour, and places where you can purchase your passport click on the OLDT logo above.



### Featured Friends Group Doctors Park

Dr. Joseph Schneider practiced medicine in Milwaukee for 45 years and had an international reputation as a specialist in both ophthalmology and otology. He came to America in the early 1880s after practicing in Germany for 10 years. Amazingly, he saw more than one hundred eighty thousand patients, both rich and poor, during his career. The money that he collected daily went into a wastebasket to be counted at the close of each day. This was the money he used to purchase 65 acres of land. Dr. Schneider passed away in 1927. In his will, he gifted this land to Milwaukee to be known as Doctors Park. In 1937, the park was transferred to what is now our Milwaukee County Parks. Because he enjoyed gardening and nature, he wanted to ensure that others could enjoy the property that gave him and his family so much enjoyment.



Would he be proud of Doctors Park today? Definitely! Our Friends of Doctors Park (established 2012), have played a vital role in recent improvements of this treasure. This group of 10 had a vision. Working together, many goals were set and many have been achieved already according to their master plan.



This friends group continues working to increase woodland area in the park to support migratory birds on their annual journeys both north and south along Lake Michigan. With the help of 35 volunteers, 100 trees were planted in the fall of 2014. This initial planting happened in part from a grant from Robert W. Baird. The drive continues so that additional trees can be purchased. Other large and important projects include new directional signs and a new parking lot. This group of volunteers is great at finding funds and fundraising often through the skills and contacts of various group members.

There are also many hands-on activities that require attention. Like so many parks, invasive species have taken over native plants. Doctors Park is no stranger to Weed Outs. Still, there is time to sit back taking in scenery and good company at several socials including the celebration of the Summer Solstice, Friends Appreciation Night, and an upcoming visit from the traveling beer garden August 24 - September 5. Then it is back to business with beach and park clean-ups.

This group is full of dedicated volunteers. They have accomplished so much in only a few years. Park People is proud of them and certainly Dr. Schneider would be too.

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### Annual Friends Group Meeting Update

The annual Friends Group meeting has not been forgotten just moved to the fall. This year, the meeting will be combined with the Annual Meeting. We assure you that the meeting will be worth the wait. There will be a lot of new information shared including the direction of the Park People in the future, additional support of Friends Groups from the Milwaukee County Parks Department, how to participate in community matching funds, etc. Meeting details will be provided as they become available.

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### Weed-Out! Celebrates it's 20th Year



When landscape architect Margarete Harvey met dedicated amateur naturalist Ken Solis in 1995, something good was bound to happen. She was the Park People president at the time; he had surveyed about 25 area parks hoping to convince the County Parks Department that aggressive non-native weeds (a.k.a. invasive weeds) were rapidly overrunning and degrading natural areas and had published an educational brochure about the problem. Margarete recruited Ken to chair a new Park People Environmental Committee to investigate what might be done.

At its first meeting in October, 1995, the Committee set its agenda: to initiate a program to control invasive weeds like garlic mustard in parks that still had natural areas remaining by recruiting volunteers, seeking funding, working with Milwaukee County Parks Department and the union, and naming the project. WEED-OUT! was on its way due to committed volunteer organizers.

Jacobus, Grant, Lake and Whitnall Parks were targeted for the first WEED-OUT! in spring, 1996. About 500 volunteers, recruited by yard signs, publicity and contact with companies and school groups to form teams, pulled garlic mustard.

From the beginning, the Environmental Committee recognized that recruiting and organizing volunteers to control invasive weeds was only part of the solution. We also had to educate the public, media and public officials. Major efforts include:

- Publishing and distributing annual information brochures
- Producing educational slide presentations that are shown at conferences and schools
- Producing an educational video in cooperation with "Outdoor Wisconsin"
- Placing feature articles in the media
- Helping fund a school curriculum and major book on invasive weeds, written by Betty Czarapata, Park People WEED-OUT! Director from 1999 to 2001

Unfortunately, the WEED-OUT! project will need to go on indefinitely due to the aggressive growth and survival traits of invasive plants. Despite this daunting task, WEED-OUT! will continue to follow its mission:

To advance the preservation and restoration of Milwaukee County Parks' natural areas, in cooperation with park staff, by:

- Mobilizing volunteers to remove ecologically invasive weeds
- Educating citizens and public officials about invasive weeds
- Promoting ecologically sound land management policies



The alternative is to allow Milwaukee County's wildflowers, sedges, and ferns to be replaced by carpets of garlic mustard and dame's rocket; to allow our native oaks, walnuts, and pines to be replaced by buckthorn and honeysuckle thickets, to allow the songs of birds to be replaced by silence, and to allow the colors of fall to simply slip away. This is a future that the volunteers involved in WEED-OUT! work hard to prevent.

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## President's Perspective – Spring 2016

By Sue Spoerk

Sharing an update from the query posed to members in the last Perspective regarding whether The Park People should shed advocacy from its mission. In my last Perspective I asked the community their thoughts on The Park People's role with advocacy, since there was no response from members on our proposed change, we have indeed changed our focus to concentrate on raising friends and funds and rely on Preserve Our Parks (POP) to be the voice of advocacy for parks in the community.



A news search of articles on Preserve our Parks (POP) and The Park People (TPP) shows that POP is always identified in the media as a park advocacy or sometimes watchdog group. TPP however, suffers from an identity crisis of being

identified as a support group, volunteer group and most often an advocacy group. We also learned from studying our past that The Park People had considered these changes several times but never clearly implemented a policy. We are honoring the intent of our founders but also being nimble as there have been changes in community engagement and formation of a new (since TPP was formed) Park Advocacy Group (POP).

We agreed to adhere to core values that include: a) Selling Milwaukee County park land is never in the public's long-term best interest; b) Park lands must be maintained to ensure public engagement, public safety and community property values and c) A dedicated and secure funding source for Milwaukee County Parks is in the public's long-term best interest.

We feel good about tightening up our focus and agreeing as a board on our role in the community as to how we can best honor our Bylaws to preserve and protect Milwaukee County Parks while building and effective volunteer organization. We also completed the arduous task of reviewing all our internal policies and yes, even adopted a Policy on Policies!

Park People Presidents come and go (and I have one foot out the door) as do Executive Directors, County Board Members, County Supervisors, Park Directors and board members of The Park People. It is important however, that the institutional structure is optimized to best serve the organization's mission. The Park People is stronger than ever and here to serve.

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### **Park Director's Message By John Dargle**

As we pay homage to our treasured National Park System during its centennial celebration year, I'm humbly reminded that stewardship of our much-loved Milwaukee County Parks System is now in its 109th year! Much like the visionary leaders and stewards that came before us, we're called to work diligently to protect, sustain and strengthen our world-class park system today and for future generations. This year marks year two of our 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Exciting progress is being made on several critical initiatives such as national accreditation, filling new positions, and the completion of two significant regional/local planning documents - 2050 Parks and Open Space Plan and 10-Year Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan.



#### **National Accreditation**

By joining the elite 1% — the group of agencies across the country that have earned the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation, we will ensure responsible, best-practice management and administration of lands, facilities, resources, programs, safety, and services. To learn more about our Pursuit of Excellence through Accreditation, please visit <http://county.milwaukee.gov/PursuingExcellenceAccreditation2018>.

#### **New Staff**

We're pleased to announce the hiring of three new positions: Volunteer Services Coordinator, Trails Coordinator, and a Development Officer. These positions will play a vital role in strengthening our grants, alliances, partnerships, sponsorships, volunteers, and raising friends and funds to support the parks. We look forward to introducing these new team members in the near future.

#### **2050 Parks and Open Space Plan and 10-Year Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan**

The 2050 Plan will be closely coordinated with the development of our 10-Year Park and Recreation System Master Plan. In partnership with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), PROS Consulting will spearhead a benchmark and peer analysis; public involvement and outreach; leisure trends analysis; comprehensive operational and financial assessment; and a parks, facilities, open space, and program gap analysis. Critical to this process will also be a statistically-valid community needs assessment survey. Ultimately, key findings and recommendations will be provided to assist in guiding the future management and administration of our Milwaukee County Parks. Stay tuned to our Parks with Purpose campaign in the coming months.

In summary, these three strategic initiatives: national accreditation (internal assessment), enhancement of our public relations team (external alliances), and our collaborative master planning efforts (future framework) - will

move us forward in confidence for optimum service to county residents and visitors to the region. Thank you for your service and support of our Milwaukee County Parks.

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### **Park Market**

The best gift that one can give comes from the heart and fills others with warmth and joy. Park Bench and Tree donations are special ways to commemorate the loss of a loved one, an event in your life, or maybe you just want to show your love for a particular park. In any event, these donations are gifts that will last for years to come.

Summer is right around the corner and what better way to celebrate than to gift your favorite park with a Japanese Lilac Tree or a Douglas Fir bench. The Park People offers three types of trees; ornamental, evergreen, or shade. Some examples of previously dedicated trees are Crabapple, Red Bud, Maple, Oak and Birch just to name a few. You can choose from one of three styles of benches, all will include a personalized inscription plaque mounted on the backrest.

[Click here for more information on park bench donations.](#)

[Click here for information about tree donations.](#)

We look forward to seeing your memorable addition to your favorite Milwaukee County Park.

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### **Looking for new ways to have fun in Milwaukee Parks? There are several ways to get information about events and things to do this summer.**

- Check out the Milwaukee Parks Blog at <http://milwaukeeparks.blogspot.com>. This blog is full of photos and adventures from local author and Park People board member, Barbara Ali

- Purchase "101 Things to do in Milwaukee Parks - a guide to the green spaces in Milwaukee" by Barbara Ali at [www.amazon.com/author/barbaraali](http://www.amazon.com/author/barbaraali). This makes a good gift for anyone new to Milwaukee.

- Like the Facebook Page for Milwaukee County Parks at <https://www.facebook.com/MilwaukeeCountyParks/?fref=ts> so you get up to date information about park events and closures.

- Look for "This week in the parks" section at the Milwaukee County Parks website <http://county.milwaukee.gov/Parks>

- Get your copy of the Milwaukee County Trails Map & Park Guide from the Park People website <http://www.parkpeoplemke.org> so you'll know where to find trails, birding hotspots, beaches, beer gardens, dog exercise areas, pools, golf courses, and more.

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### **Park People Welcome New Board Members**

The Park People wish to welcome two new board members: Bob Mohr and Lucas Olivieri. Bob is a Financial Representative with Northwestern Mutual who enjoys international travel and live music, especially at Humboldt Park. Lucas moved back to Wisconsin after living in St. Louis where he had a mens apparel store. He currently works with Milwaukee County's Behavioral Health Division in the Human Resources Office. He enjoys cycling, and meeting new people at the beer garden at Estabrook Park with his fiance. Both men are avid volunteers with a number of local organizations. For more information about our newest members, check out their biographies on the Park People website.

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**Consider joining The Park People Board!**

**By Jim Ciurlik**

Looking for an easy way to help Milwaukee Country Parks? Interested on hearing the inside story of new initiatives in Milwaukee County?

Regardless of where you are in life becoming a board member is really a low risk, low involvement activity that can yield personal and community benefits for years to come. Join a team that is committed to making Milwaukee a better place to live for all citizens. Your donation of time, 3 hours a month, and a \$35 membership give you rights to join the discussion. No annual contract. No set up fee. Just come and join us for one of our meeting and see if the work we do is something you would feel good about being part of. As a long time board member, I am surprised how much personal gratification being part of The Park People has added to my life. Maybe you will feel the same way? Curious - call me (Jim Ciurlik 414-688-3553) or Jim Goulee (414-273-7275) with questions or the time/location of our next board meeting. We currently have opening for 2 new board members so I hope to hear from you soon.