

Palisades Views



Volume XXXVII No. 9

September 2007

Don't miss out on weekend fun

It's not too late to sign up for the Piasa Palisades Group's annual Weekend in the Woods Sept. 14-16 at Pere Marquette State Park, near Grafton.

It's inexpensive, fun, educational and uplifting (if you enjoy spending time in the great outdoors and socializing with other environmentally minded people).

We'll be based at Camp Ouatoga, which has rustic cabins with bed frames and mattresses, a new bathhouse with hot showers and a dining lodge with a fully equipped kitchen.

Group activities will include hiking, biking, canoeing, birding, stargazing and roasting marshmallows. Saturday night's cookout will be followed by live music.

The cost is only \$5 per person per night for lodging and \$8 to \$10 for the cookout (\$6 for children). The registration deadline is Sept. 10. For more information, call Bob Freeman at (618) 466-0656 or the Sierra Club office at (618) 462-6802.



Favilla to give project update

It's September, and that means the Piasa Palisades Group is back from summer vacation.

Meetings will be held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month through June in the community room of First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby streets in downtown Alton. Plan on joining us!

On Sept. 10, we'll hear from Christine Favilla, a paid staff person who operates the Sierra Club office in Alton.

One of her main jobs is coordinating the group's Three Rivers Project. Its goal is to increase community awareness and environmental activism in downstate Illinois.

Favilla works on several fronts, building relationships with state and federal agencies, working in coalition with other organizations, expanding youth and local activism and educating the public, community leaders and the media about critical conservation issues in the region.

"We have had wonderful payoff from cooperation with state and federal agencies and non-profit institutions (on soil erosion, water and air quality and use of government funds for conservation)," she said.

Favilla works hand-in-hand with the Piasa Palisades Group Execu-

tive Committee, the Sierra Club's Illinois Chapter staff in Chicago and Carbondale, and local volunteers. She's interested in hearing your ideas and suggestions at the meeting.

"Sierra Club members help to shape where we are going and how we will address the environmental issues that face us regionally," she said.

WELCOME

The following people recently became members of the Sierra Club and Piasa Palisades Group: Clyde Austin of Brownstown, Dan and Betty Byrd of Maryville; Cathy Dondanville and David Asher of Alton; Karyl Dressen of Hillsboro; George Edwards, Jeri Lampman, Ashleigh Herman and Renee Kieffner of Edwardsville; Cheryl Elmore of Waggoner; Beth Guse of Highland; Patricia Lair of Girard; Holly Parker of Glen Carbon; Peggy Neal of Godfrey; Mildred Rantanen of Staunton; Karen Sharp of Vandalia; Pam Kodros of Brighton; and Jon Shields of Troy.

Dorothy Hart of Granite City is a continuing Sierra Club member who recently transferred into the local group.

Welcome! We hope to see you at meetings, hikes, bike rides and other activities in the future.

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Bond, Calhoun, Fayette, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison and Montgomery.

MIT grad learns by living with Amish for a year

By Richard Keating
Group member

Now that the general public is feeling the pinch of high fuel costs, we encounter more literature on energy conservation and experimental approaches to living.

“Better Off,” which I picked up at the Missouri Botanical Garden book stall, is very well written. Eric Brende is a Yale University graduate who went on to earn a master’s degree at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). By his own admission, he was as typical an energy and technology addict as any young person.

But Brende began thinking (the usual path of endangerment for the status quo), and he became convinced that modern culture was being held hostage by automation. By embracing the continuous onslaught of new gizmos, we were crowding out involvement with family and community.

Brende decided to search for a place where automation and fossil-fuel energy were not accepted. He and his new wife, Mary, settled on an

Amish or Mennonite community, which allowed them to become tenants on a farm and participate in a simpler lifestyle for a year.

BOOK REVIEW

“Better Off: Flipping the Switch on Technology”

By Eric Brende

Harper Perennial,
New York, \$13.95

Most of the book describes daily life and the process of adapting to essential patterns of labor and cooperation. (Brende calls the community “Minimite” and refrains from identifying its Midwestern location out of respect for the privacy of residents.)

To their surprise, the Brendes found that manual labor was not onerous; that tending to stock and gardens and using a hand-crank washing machine were cathartic. They looked forward to each day.

Big jobs were usually done with the cooperation of neighbors, and the Brendes quickly picked up on the most efficient ways of using tools. While the surrounding culture went to great lengths to avoid labor, this community went to great lengths to preserve it.

Brende sorts out many issues in the book, including lifestyle versus fundamentalist dogma held by some residents. He determined the latter was not essential to maintaining such a community.

Along the way, readers learn much about gender roles, friendship, respect, conflict resolution and many other issues that must be addressed head on in tight-knit communities, and how the human spirit is better for it.

These days, the Brendes live in St. Louis, where they’ve become urban pioneers in a restoration neighborhood. They practice crafts for a living and get around using a minimum of technology. It’s not for everyone, but they’ve created a rich life for themselves, and their experiences provide many lessons for the rest of us.

Chair’s corner: September is a time of transition

By Wayne Politsch
Group chair

I enjoy the edges of a summer day. At dawn, the sun begins to light the eastern sky and stars fade. At dusk, the process reverses itself.

I cherish the edges of September. Degree by degree, the days grow cooler and shorter. The season of droughts, forest fires, storms and floods is over. Mother Nature responds.

Spiders and caterpillars spin their silken webs, turtle doves begin congregating in large numbers and

hummingbirds go into overdrive, darting from flower to flower.

September still offers opportunities to shorten the distance between consumer and grower in the food chain. A walk in the garden or visit to a local farm’s market guarantees a handful of tomatoes, green beans or peppers from apprehensive plants.

As we approach summer’s end, it is also time to reconnect with monthly Sierra Club meetings. I hope to see you at our first gathering on Sept. 10.

Annual picnic

Despite temperatures around the

100-degree mark, 16 people attended the annual Piasa Palisades Group picnic at Beaver Dam State Park on Aug. 12. They went canoeing, enjoyed a potluck meal and exchanged nature narratives.

A very special thanks goes out to Executive Committee member Jon Byrd for supplying the brats and burgers and putting his grilling talents to work; to Kenny Freeman and Bob Larson for providing the water crafts; and to Sandy Wood and family for setting up the official Sierra Club lemonade stand and providing refreshing drinks to all.



CALENDAR

Monday, Sept. 10 Monthly meeting of the Piasa Palisades Group. Sierra Club staff person Christine Favilla will provide an update on the Three Rivers Project (see related article). Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the community room at First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby Streets in Alton. For more information, call Favilla at (618) 462-6802.



Tuesday, Sept. 11 Monthly bike ride, sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Take a 15-mile loop on the Nickel Plate Trail and Nature Trail in the Edwardsville area with an ice-cream stop. Meet at 6 p.m. in the parking lot between University Drive and Bluff Road, south of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Korte Stadium (near the church and portable toilets). For more information, call Jim Bensman at (618) 463-0714 or send an e-mail to jbensman1@charter.net.

Wednesday, Sept. 12 Knee-High Naturalists program at The Nature Institute in Godfrey for children ages 3-5 accompanied by an adult. September's theme is "To Bee or Not to Bee." Participants will learn about honey, carpenter, bumble, mason, mud dauber and leaf cutter bees. Morning session from 10 to 11 a.m. and afternoon session from 1 to 2 p.m. The \$5 cost includes a nature walk, snack, story and hand's-on activity. Register by Sept. 7. For more information, call Patti Brown at (618) 466-9930.

Friday through Sunday, Sept. 14-16 Annual Weekend in the Wilderness at Pere Marquette State Park, north of Grafton (see related article).

Sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Activities include hiking, biking, canoeing, birding, a Saturday night cookout, live music and socializing around a bonfire. Stay in rustic cabins at Camp Ouatoga. Register by Sept. 10. For more information, call Bob Freeman at (618) 466-0656.

Saturday, Sept. 15 It's Our River Day festival in Alton. Activities that promote education, recreation and conservation of Illinois waterways. Volunteers needed for shifts from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Alton is one of many communities across the state participating in the annual event, sponsored by the Illinois lieutenant governor's office. For more information, visit the Web site at www.cleanwaterillinois.org or call Christine Favilla at (618) 462-6802.

Monday, Sept. 17 Executive Committee meeting of the Piasa Palisades Group. All members are welcome to attend! Meet at 7 p.m. at the Sierra Club office, 223 Market St. in Alton. For more information, call (618) 462-6802.

Saturday, Sept. 22 Autumn equinox celebration at La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey. Celebrate the harvest with a meaningful afternoon of ponderings, poetry, procession and the turning of the sun staff as part of the Oblate Ecological Initiative. The center is at 4300 S. Levis Lane (follow directions for the moonlight hike, except stay on Levis instead of veering left on South Levis). Meet at 4:30 p.m. in the small garden next to the white barn. Bring a covered dish that's harvest-related, as well as

dinnerware, eating utensils and a chair. Donations are optional. To register, call (618) 466-5004.

Saturday, Sept. 22 One-day float trip on the Meramec River in Missouri, sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Meet in the morning at Ozark Outdoors Riverfront Resort, which is near Onondaga Cave State Park. If desired, drive down Friday night and camp at the park or resort. For more information, call Larry Tucker at (618) 462-0649 or Jim Bensman at (618) 463-0714.

Tuesday, Sept. 25 Discussion course called Healthy Planet, Healthy Children at La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey (see related notice). First in a series of eight weekly sessions. Meet from 10:30 a.m. to noon at 4300 Levis

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Palisades Views

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members.

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**DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER:
SATURDAY, SEPT. 22**



CALENDAR

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Lane. The cost is \$20. Registration required. For more information, call (618) 466-5004.

Wednesday, Sept. 26 Monthly moonlight hike, sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Explore Mississippi Sanctuary and Olin Nature Preserve in Godfrey. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Talahi Lodge. Take Godfrey Road (Illinois 3) northwest about 2 miles from Homer Adams Parkway (Illinois 111). Turn left on Levis Lane and veer left on South Levis. Bring a friend! For more information, call Sandy Wood at (618) 463-0358.



Wednesday, Sept. 26 Monthly evening walk at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. Conversation and exercise beginning at 6 p.m. The natural resources educator will answer questions. Dogs are welcome on a leash. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaeleen Gerken at (618) 692-7578.

Saturday, Sept. 29 Talk on reptiles and amphibians of Illinois at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville.

WANTED

CONTRIBUTORS — Palisades Views invites members to submit news items, feature stories, letters to the editor, poetry, cartoons, environmental tips, quotes, classified ads, artwork and whatever else you'd like to share with the Piasa Palisades Group. This is your newsletter!

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville biology professor Rick Essner will speak on the life history and identification of common and not-so-common herps. Meet from 9 to 11 a.m. at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaeleen Gerken at (618) 692-7578.

Tuesday, Oct. 9 Windows on Watershed presentation at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. Environmental Educator Jessica Pascoe will speak on the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, particularly its work to foster understanding of Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois river watersheds. Meet at 7 p.m. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaeleen Gerken at (618) 692-7578.

Saturday, Oct. 13 Paint-recycling drive at the Madison County public works garage in Granite City. Sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Volunteers are needed to work two-hour shifts between 8 a.m. and noon. For more information, call Christine Favilla at (618) 462-6802.

Sunday, Oct. 14 Computer-recycling drive at Edwardsville YMCA Meyer Center. Co-sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Volunteers are needed for shifts between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The center is at 7348 Goshen Road. For more information, call Christine Favilla at (618) 462-6802.

Saturday, Oct. 20 Alton citywide clean-up, co-sponsored by the Sierra Club. Volunteers are needed

from 9 a.m. to noon at the North Alton registration booth outside St. Peter's Hardware on State Street. For more information, call Christine Favilla at (618) 462-6802.

Friday, Oct. 26 Madison County Steam Sweep, co-sponsored by the Sierra Club. Volunteers are needed from 9 a.m. to noon at Horseshoe Lake and sites throughout Godfrey. For more information, call Christine Favilla at (618) 462-6802.

La Vista offers course for parents

How do advertising, media and our consumer culture influence a child's view of the world? How can parents create meaningful family time and healthy environments for their children while helping them to develop a connection to nature?

The public is invited to explore answers to these questions with other adults through an eight-session discussion course called Healthy Planet, Healthy Children at La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey.

Using a discussion guidebook, participants will share reactions to readings, as well as personal experiences, opinions and feelings.

Sessions will be held from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 9, 16 and 23 and Nov. 6 and 13. The cost of the guidebook is \$20. La Vista is at 4300 Levis Lane. To register or get more information, call (618) 466-5004.