



Willoughby Heritage Farm and Conservation Reserve

631 Willoughby Lane, Collinsville, IL 62234

618-346-7529

a facility of the Collinsville Area Recreation District

Spring 2014 Update

Willoughby Farm is a public park. Anyone is able to visit the farm from 9am to dusk, daily but please check the farm website (www.CollinsvilleRec.com/Farm.html) for information on closures due to private rentals. Schedule a guided farm or garden tour by calling Farm Coordinator Carol Frerker at 618-660-8668. Tours are free but donations are suggested. Groups of 10 or more are asked to contact Carol to make a reservation which assures the group is accommodated and can enjoy all Willoughby Farm has to offer.

Projects

The Turkey Bridge is complete. The ribbon cutting to officially open the bridge was celebrated along with the farm's 10 year anniversary on October 5, 2013, during Fall Farm Day. Chad Carter, Eagle Scout with Troop 1039, lead the Turkey Trail bridge project with his troop. The project was successfully completed due to a huge collaborative community effort from engineering students at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, guided by Oates Associates, Inc. and built with scouts and community volunteers thanks to funds from the SIUE Meridian Society. Turkey Trail is located on the edge of the conservation reserve, near the goat pen. The Turkey trail opens up new adventures to enjoy nature nooks along the creek; along with providing access to the farm's developing medicinal trail.

Staff is designing a water management system to harvest rainwater from the farmyard, house, restrooms and barns, which will help save money on the water bill, as well as responsibly decrease stormwater runoff.

Nicholas Carter of Boy Scout Troop 507 has completed a fun and safe way to enter the farmyard through a footbridge, located just to the left of the Willoughby Farm entrance sign.

A new rabbit hutch, which will be more inviting for visitors to enjoy and play with the bunnies, was built as an Eagle project by Kyle Teschendorf of Boy Scout Troop 1086.

Forest Releaf of Missouri recently awarded Willoughby Farm with a grant to purchase 38 native bushes and trees for its restoration efforts in the Conservation Reserve.

Farm staff is working with a home landscaping company to expand the three-acre hillside prairie located near the start of the conservation reserve trail system (down from the overlook platform). The expansion will be ~ ¾ acre for a "pollinator prairie" and will continue down the hillside to the Schneider creek bed. The focus for the pollinator prairie is to increase the pollinating opportunities for wildlife; especially insects such as the honeybee and monarch butterfly. Many pollinators (such as the honeybee and monarch butterfly) have suffered an extreme decrease in migration flights and reproduction due to various ecological factors. Visit www.monarchwatch.org, and www.ceh.uc.uk for more information.

Staff, along with guidance from the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners, is striving to exclusively plant and manage forbs specifically indigenous and supporting of pollinating opportunities for wildlife (and therefore our own food chain). This type of prairie will require time and patience, as a typical prairie to establish takes three years.

Staff also intends to create a smaller plot located on the perimeter of the farmyard. The 'pollinator solar plot' will be located on the hillside adjacent to our grid tied 3KW solar panels. Again, the focus will be to plant and manage specific native species of forbs (and grasses) to

assist pollinators, and beautify the farmyard perimeter. This will also serve as an educational opportunity of why we are planting, what are our goals, identification of easy-growing native pollinating species, and how anyone can begin to help pollinate the world.

1940s Garden by University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners

The Master Gardeners continue to make improvements (like modifying some of the raised garden beds and adding other garden structures, such as vertical gardening), expand educational opportunities, and attract visitors from all over the region. They provide fun and interpretive information and tours for visitors, as well as reinforce classroom goals for teachers. The gardeners provided hands-on learning experiences for over 850 school aged children in 2013, and many other scheduled tours for regional visitors.

Master Gardeners harvested 1802.5 pounds of produce from the garden in 2013. The produce was donated to community food pantries and bouquets of flowers taken to area nursing homes.

1920s Farm House

The house restoration project moved in leaps and bounds in 2013 at the very dedicated volunteers completed the first-floor living areas and the kitchen in the summer, and restored the three rooms on the second floor in the fall. Thanks to a generous donation, the first-floor bathroom has been restored to its original look and function of the era; including the vintage claw bathtub. Through the Park Enhancement Program grant from Madison County Planning and Development staff was able to install a handicap bathroom in the house. In fact, the entire first floor of the home is handicap accessible. Insulation of the home was also completed thanks to the 2013 PEP grant.

The farm house will be decorated for the holidays in the 1940s-style thanks to the Collinsville Garden Club. Be sure to visit the farm from 1-4pm on Sunday, December 8 for Christmas at Willoughby.

Animals

While the farm has its fair share of wild animals, there are a few “people friendly” creatures on the property during the spring, summer and autumn.

Goats, lambs, rabbits, pigs, chickens, roosters, and few miss the guineas that roam the farmyard gobbling up annoying buggy pests (fleas, ticks, wasps, flies). The goats, sheep, pigs and rabbits stay until late November and will return in early spring.

The poultry stay at the farm throughout the winter thanks to the Durham family. Kudos to Chris, Lisa “chicken lady” and Jacob Durham for donating their time and fowl.

The goats overreached their goals of devouring the bush honeysuckle and autumn olive (exotic invasives) that staff has needed to expand their grazing area. Another goat pasture will be added as the goats continue to help staff and volunteers remove the exotic invasive species that have strangled out the native plants. This pasture is adjacent to the existing pasture and our hillside prairie. This will also allow staff to better manage the prairie with over 150 different native grasses and forbs. Staff is hoping to build a goat bridge for the goats to access from one pasture to another. This will also allow for better control of target grazing.

This year, the two pigs were a wonderful addition to Willoughby Farm and definitely supported our farm’s educational mission and helping staff to emulate a ‘1940’s sustainable working farm’. They truly added to the farm experience; as we all enjoyed watching them grow,

and grow very fast. The pigs, named Ringo and Hamlet, were donated by SteinConing Dairy Inc and Craig Ammann of Highland, Illinois. A breed mix of hampshire and duroc, this particular type of pig is raised specifically for food. While their life span is short, staff was sure that the pigs were taken care of, respected, and even pampered. In November, the pigs were processed and over 315 pounds of meat was donated to the Collinsville Area Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry of Collinsville. At this time of the year, staff is truly grateful to have had the opportunity to provide many meals for families in need in their own community.

1931 Ford Model D Tractor

On loan from Dr. William Klopfenstein, the Model D is an example of the type of tractors driven in the Willoughby fields before tires and the convenient 'electric' start. Yes, it takes 'muscle' to crank start this engine (Fly wheel). Visitors are welcome to climb into the driver's seat for a picture, and capture the memory you shared with us at Willoughby.

Geocaching at Willoughby Farm

What is geocaching? It is part of a worldwide game, dedicated to GPS (Global Positioning System). If you have a GPS, you can play anytime, anywhere by visiting www.geocaching.com and entering a location for a list of caches (treasures) to find within a certain radius. There are three caches hidden at Willoughby Farm.

Kid Zone

Located near the Gindler Barn, this area includes a tree house, tire swing and new play structure. Staff hopes to install a wooden toddler and handicap swing soon.

Volunteer at the Farm

8:30am-2pm, every Wednesday. All ages welcome; no experience necessary.

Conservation Stewards

9am to noon, Saturday, November 9, November 16, January 25, February 15, March 22, April 12

Students from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Collinsville High School choir, Collinsville High School honor students, Boy Scouts, and community volunteers have graciously given one to two Saturdays a month to help restore the prairie, the trail system, and conservation reserve back to an Illinois native woodland.

Join volunteers one Saturday of the month at Willoughby Farm as staff helps you identify and remove unwanted invasive species and planting native seeds and plugs. No experience needed, kids welcome. Just bring gloves and a water bottle and dress for the trails and prairie (preferably long pants and good shoes or boots). The event will be canceled for inclement weather. Call Carol 660-8668 for any questions.

Adopt a Piece of Willoughby

No experience needed. Staff will provide all the information and guidance needed to create an educational and enjoyable experience. This program is great for individual or community service projects. Thank you to Foundations of Autism Services of Today and Tomorrow and Collinsville High School Life Skills class for each adopting their own part of Willoughby Farm.

Education at the Farm

Staff works with educators to choose/create activities to reinforce classroom goals while visiting the farm. Please call Carol at 618-660-8668 to schedule a 2-4 hour visit between 9am-2pm, Monday-Friday. Possible activities include guided nature walk, scavenger hunt (farmyard or conservation reserve), energy program, animal talk, rain garden, tree cookie, garden tour, tree talk. Students will also be able to enjoy the animals in the farmyard (May - October). Special projects are also available (Earth Day, restoration, gardening, etc). Structured activities for larger groups are dependent on the volunteers available to assist. Prices are subject to change dependent on the required staff, time and resources. Please refer to www.CollinsvilleRec.com/Farm.html for current price listings.

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