**Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center**

**OUR NEWS**

**UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**BENEFACTOR’S MEMBERSHIP**

$500 to $999

$100 to $499

$750 for transportation and substitute teachers to come.

**YES! TO EXPAND IN 2009-2010**

**YES! receives Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award as outstanding Environmental Education Initiative for 2010.**

Receiving the 2010 Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award for Environmental Education on behalf of YES! were Front Row Left to right: Tami Bennet-Tait (ACGC Coach), Kayla Morse (ACGC Student), Chystal Dunker, Amanda Meyer (Springfield Coach), Rebecca BellBlack Row Left to right: Jayne Fast (Springfield Coach), Mike Sverson, Austin Nash (Springfield student), Cheryl Glaser

YES! was honored to receive the Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award as the outstanding environmental education initiative in Minnesota for 2010 at an award ceremony on Nicollet Island in Minneapolis on May 27, 2010. MEI’s program honors projects that have achieved extraordinary outcomes for Minnesota’s environment by harnessing the power of partnership. The Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI) brings together nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies to find consensus on critical issues and respond with actions that have measurable, positive environmental outcomes. Congratulations to all YES! teams for this excellent accomplishment. For more info see: www.mn-ei.org/awards/finalistswinners.html

**11TH ANNUAL YOUTH ENERGY SUMMIT (YES!) 2009-2010**

In 2009-2010, The Youth Energy Summit (YES!) will be one of the key education and action initiatives during the 2010 Minnesota Energy Education (MEE) campaign. YES! is a community-based environmental education initiative in Minnesota that uses hands-on education and energy action projects to address renewable energy opportunities and issues in our communities and our region. YES! was honored to receive the Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award for 2010.

YES! was also honored to receive the Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award for 2010 as the outstanding environmental education initiative in Minnesota. The YES! project was nominated by the Prairie Ecology Bus Center of Minnesota.

The Prairie Ecology Bus Center of Minnesota is now a part of the YES! project.

YES! To Expand in 2009-2010

**More Communities to Field YES! Teams**

**Thank you for your support.**

**Prairie Woods**

**Environmental Learning Center**

12718 10th St. NE

Spicer, MN 56288

**Return Service Requested**

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**Prairie Woods**

Environmental Learning Center

12718 10th St. NE

Spicer, MN 56288

Questions or comments? Please call us at 320-354-5894 or e-mail us at pwelc@ck.kandiyohi.mn.us
Greetings from Prairie Woods. This newsletter is all about community connections and collaborative efforts resulting in good work in the communities served by Prairie Woods.

Notes from the Executive Director

While driving into Prairie Woods before the annual trustees meeting I noticed a bluebird sitting on the front gate. I thought of Ron Erpelding who has developed and maintains an extensive bluebird house project at Prairie Woods. Further along I noticed that most of the yellow forbs have passed their prime and the big blues are showing some transition to fall coloring. My thoughts shifted to Joel Schmidt and all of the people that have assisted with prairie burns and prairie reconstruction. As I topped the ridge and descended toward the education building, I saw the faithful Jacobs wind turbine which has worked day and night to put power out onto the grid. My thoughts shifted to the good folks at Kandiyohi Power Cooperative and Kandiyohi County who helped with the wind turbine project. Finally, as I pulled into the parking lot I thought of the road itself which conjured up the images of Wayne Thompson, former county coordinator and Gary Danielson, head of Kandiyohi Public Works who were largely responsible for the road being built and how it was built.

A list of everyone who has helped to create Prairie Woods, and the stories of how they have helped, would fill volumes. Nearly every thing at Prairie Woods seems imbued with the spirit of a person or group who has cared enough to make a difference.

At the Trustee’s and Membership meeting we went around the circle with introductions and each person shared a bit about how they were connected to Prairie Woods. Mike O’Brien talked about sitting with Gary Westby and Steve Hage on the hill where the Westby Observatory now sits and sharing dreams about one day having a learning center here. Dennis Peterson spoke of having farmed the 90 acre parcel, now restored to prairie, that all visitors drive through to reach the center. (Dennis also commented that the hilly land was better suited for a learning center than it was for farming). Jeff Danielson mentioned that his great grandparents (Anders and Anna Danielson) were the original homesteaders of what is now the Prairie Woods farm site. Everyone at the table had a story of a meaningful connection to Prairie Woods—some old some new but all meaningful.

As I tied up the Westby Building after everyone else had left I continued to appreciate how we are deeply connected by places, stories and twists of fate. My thoughts included Gary and Cindy Westby, Earl B Olson, Wilt Cronquist, Ruth & Helen Peterson and others who have passed on, who so greatly nurtured the dream of Prairie Woods.

The dream of Prairie Woods is still unfolding and we are all capable of adding to the personal stories of contributions and creativity that fuel the dream. Please get involved with Prairie Woods today by sharing your Prairie Woods stories and dreams with others. Come to the 3rd Annual Event Under the Prairie Stars if you can, get involved with committee work if you are so inclined, consider a contribution of time, money or materials to fuel the dream.

Thanks for taking time to catch up on the news from Prairie Woods. I hope you enjoy reading about how our staff, volunteers and partners are helping to shape a Prairie Woods story that will be worth telling for years to come. Thanks for being a partner with Prairie Woods!

Sincerely,

Dave

United Way continues as strong partner in 2010

Prairie Woods has been very fortunate to have United Way of West Central Minnesota as a longstanding partner in our service to the region. We recently received a grant for $16,000 in support of three important program areas at Prairie Woods: Serious Fun!, Everyone Outside! And Bridging Ages and Cultures through Time Travel and Living History. The Serious Fun! Grant helps us to provide team building and confidence building experiences for groups of all ages (elementary through adult) primarily utilizing our challenge course programs. Everyone Outside! supports environmental education and outdoor recreation programs for youth and families. Time Travel programs help kids learn about the early immigrant history of our county and how our relationship to the land and each other is shaped by the technology of the day. All of these programs provide outstanding hands-on learning opportunities for our students with the goal of connecting kids to self, others and the environment. Thanks United Way of West Central Minnesota!

Volunteers Needed

• Cut firewood and assist with trail work
• Assist w/ 3/4 to 1 ton) for plowing snow
• Gravity box grain wagon for hauling corn and wood pellets
• Contributions to help Prairie Woods purchase a pre-owned vehicle to support outreach programs (total need: $15,000)
• Portable clay target thrower ($700-$1200)
• Table and chair replacement fund ($25- $100/table)

Please remember Prairie Woods in your estate planning and annual giving.
Welcome Kory Klebe as our new Environmental Education Coordinator.

Kory comes to us from Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center in Michigan where he served for six years as a Senior Outdoor Educator. Kory brings over twelve years of experience as an environmental educator and a passion for getting kids involved in the outdoors and caring about their environment. Kory and his wife, Mari, also a seasoned professional outdoor educator, are living on the grounds in the farm house at Prairie Woods.

We are delighted to have Kory and Mari in our community.

Anne Dyrbayter has returned from a three month maternity leave to resume her duties at YES! Project Coordinator. Welcome back, Anne! Thanks to Becca Bell, lover of many hats, for filling in for Anne and lending a hand at a critical time to help with the LCCMR proposal and preparing for YES! 2010-11.

Thanks Gary Duncumb for serving as interim EEC over the past year. Gary will glide happily back into our on-call pool of facilitators and re-dedicate himself to the work of retirement.

We also welcome Paul Hellenschmidt as our full-time Building and Grounds Steward. Paul brings a wealth of experience to Prairie Woods (as well as the occasional loaf of his artisan bread). Paul hit the ground running in July and he is has been very busy with maintaining and improving our buildings, grounds and equipment. Paul has a strong background in wood working, construction, maintenance and repair. He also has a degree in forestry and is a skilled carver. Be sure to meet Paul when you visit Prairie Woods.

Thanks to Mike Bundy for a stellar job working part-time (and often more) to cover maintenance during a six month interim period. Mike, like Gary, is also sliding back into retirement but will continue to serve in our on-call pool for facilitators as well as assisting with the occasional maintenance project.

Ryan Block has left Prairie Woods to start a graduate program in Colorado. We wish Ryan the best as he trains for a new career in youth ministry. Ryan initiated a number of good programs as the first coordinator of youth sporting programs at Prairie Woods. Kory Klebe will now be the key contact for the youth sporting programs and other groups wishing to use the sporting clay range.

Ann Phillips isn’t tanning anywhere but stays busy keeping things in order. We just thought we should include a picture of her here so you can see the face that goes with the friendly voice at Prairie Woods.

Dan & Beth Tepfer—contributed at the benefactor level

Bill Naylor—contributed at the donor level

Bill Naylor is a proud supporter of Prairie Woods and over the past several years has been instrumental in many of the fundraising efforts at Prairie Woods. Bill has served on the Prairie Woods Board of Directors and was the original architect and financial supporter of the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center.

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The clubs set up headquarters in the barn and welcomed novice and expert archers alike to enjoy walking the trails at Prairie Woods and taking aim at challenging and sometimes amusing targets (i.e. a huge mosquito and dinosaur). The Dinosaur target was a favorite amongst the youngsters, while targets such as the Antelope, Elk and Mule Deer gave shooters a challenge in the open prairie grass. Thanks to all of the volunteers from the Little Crow Archers and Swift County Archers for the many hours of work invested in putting on this high quality family friendly outdoor recreation event. Put this on your list of fun events to experience next summer!

Update from the “Prairie Woods-West” Fundraising Committee

Thanks to Bob and Shirley Caine for once again sending proceeds to Prairie Woods from their Celebrate Life Summer Solstice Golf Event held annually at Bennett Valley Golf Course in Santa Rosa, California. Each year Bob and Shirley invite 40 friends to join them for fun, fellowship and fundraising over a round of golf. Participants are invited to purchase “mulligans” which according to Bob are “good for one year.” Bob’s mother Arline Caine Whitehead grew up on a homestead situated on land which is now part of Prairie Woods. Bob’s challenge from Prairie Woods West is out for Prairie Woods-East, Prairie Woods-South etc. Picture Bob and Shirley standing on the golf course chanting “we’re Prairie Woods West and couldn’t be prouder—can’t hear us now we’ll yell a little louder!” — Who’s next to take up the challenge for this emerging national fundraising competition?

In the last newsletter we reported the good news that Prairie-Woods had received a grant award of $54,000 from the DNR to increase our renewable energy power generation capacity to very nearly meet or exceed 100% of our electricity needs. The grant covers 75% of the total cost of a project to add 8kw of photovoltaics (5 kw of fixed panels and a 3kw pole-mounted solar tracker). Other components of the project include a power monitoring system and educational display; 3 solar tubes to increase day lighting; and additional insulating shades which help to retain heat in the winter and block solar heat gain in the summer. It is a great feeling to know that Prairie Woods has pre-paid the majority of our electricity costs for the next several decades; dramatically reduced our carbon footprint, and has become one of the very few educational facilities of our kind in the nation to approach the goal of 100% renewable energy.

Funding for the Solar Legacy Grant comes from the Parks and Trails Fund created by the Minnesota Legislature from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment approved by voters in 2008. The funds were awarded on a competitive basis to parks and trails of regional significance. Prairie-Woods qualified on three counts based on our grant-in-aid ski trail, and the fact that a major snowmobile trail bisects the property in addition to the 20,000 people that visit Prairie Woods each year for educational and recreational opportunities.

Little Crow Archers and Swift County Archers hold 2nd Annual 3D 60 Archery Shoot at Prairie Woods.

191 archers from across the state converged for two days of 3D archery shooting on August 16 & 17 at Prairie Woods. Towns represented included: Revillo, SD, Ortonville, Morris, Fergus Falls, Staples, Montevideo, Boyd, Herman, Avon, Cold Spring, Osseo, Zimmerman, Lonsdale, Delano, South Haven and more.

The cub scouts headquarters in the barn and welcomed novice and expert archers alike to enjoy walking the trails at Prairie Woods and taking aim at challenging and sometimes amusing targets (i.e. a huge mosquito and dinosaur). The Dinosaur target was a favorite amongst the youngsters, while targets such as the Antelope, Elk and Mule Deer gave shooters a challenge in the open prairie grass. Thanks to all of the volunteers from the Little Crow Archers and Swift County Archers for the many hours of work invested in putting on this high quality family friendly outdoor recreation event. Put this on your list of fun events to experience next summer!

SOME OF THE NICE THINGS DONE FOR PRAIRIE WOODS by People Like You

• Dan & Beth Tepfer—contributed at the benefactor level

• Willmar Municipal Utilities contributed $2000 toward our Electric Vehicle project.

• Dennis Neese donated a water wagon

• Terry Myllenbeck donated time and equipment to make improvements at the range. Terry also donated solar chargers for the batteries that run clay target throwers at the range.

• Bill Johnson contributed a substantial gift to be used where needed.

• Bill and Jeff Huff contributed funds for youth sporting programs

• General Mills contributed a $500 matching gift initiated by Lois Quam

• Other contributors included: Mary and Dick Huesing, Glenn and Eunice Buchanan, The Northeast Montana Shooting Society, Lois Oland in honor of Doug & Peg Mossberg, Lenore & Ramsey Schaffnit, Shad and Melissa Ketcher in honor of Bill Johnson.

• Family and friends made memorial contributions in honor of:
  Bill Naylor
  Dr. Milton Kaiser
  Melvin Landin
  Ray Rote
  Ted Van

DNR Solar Legacy Grant Update

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A gift to the Prairie Woods Sustainability Endowment lives forever.
**The Time Travel Program - Teni Wermerskirchen**

As she was picked up from a Time Travel Program a young girl told her grandmother, “Now I know what it was like when you were young Grandma!” Although it had probably been her grandmother’s grandmother that had lived in the 1800s when many of the Time Travels take place, the experience had made the child feel that she had been transported to a different period of time. Now she “knew” what it was like to live without electricity, running water, computers and cars. She knew what children would be doing. She had ‘experienced’ the culture of that time.

Time Travel programming can include a variety of activities such as learning old arts, keeping house in a log cabin, making a hand-made toy and dancing to fiddle music. From the shorter ‘Pioneer Cabin’ program to the more involved ‘Time Travel’, it is a unique and fun way to glimpse a bit of our past.

**TAK SA MECKA (THANKYOU)**

A great big ‘Thanks’ to all who answered the call to volunteer for the Time Travel Program. Becky West, Stephanie Klamm, Jeannette Jacobson and Deb Wilson spent many hours sewing beautiful pioneer dresses to fit the young first-graders; Dean Mortenson, Ildi Sundheim, Arlys Ousman and others gave many hours as Program Facilitators. Eleanore Pederson donated material and aprons for costumes. Thanks also to our special guest Mary Ellen Trueman who taught Huck Weaving to young girls at Pioneer Girl’s Day.

**Christmas**

It’s hard to think of Christmas when it is 90 degrees out but just a note about a new possibility for entertaining this year. Consider having friends or family gather for a unique evening at our Pioneer Cabin. We’ll make Christmas ornaments from nature’s materials, sip hot chocolate around the wood burning stove and sing Christmas carols to the music of a fiddler. Proceeds help fund the Time Travel programs.

**JYM Victory Run Report - Deb Anderson**

On June 19 we held another successful JYM Victory Run. We had about 700 people attend and participate in the walk/run. The results can be seen at pickleevents.com. I was excited to see so many young people and kids participate. There were many proud parents watching from on the hill as their children ran across the finish line. Some even came down to run across along side of their kids. It was great to see the families and a great event to do together. Thanks to North American State Bank, Bayer Built Woodworks, Mickis, Halvorson Agrability, PWELC, Rainbow, Chad Mithaugen, and Precise Ice. You all made the day possible. Thanks again!

It is not too early to start spreading the word for next year. The date for the 2011 Victory Run is Saturday, June 18. Pass on the information to any and all the might be interested in this great family event. We will be getting the information up on the Prairie Woods website soon at www.prairiewoodselc.org. Thank you Jesse for the life you lived!!

**CHALLENGE COURSE REMINDER:** Sign up now to get your group out on to the challenge course this fall. Dates fill fast once school starts. Also, remember that Prairie Woods can bring teambuilding programs to you. Keep the fun going when the temps drop by scheduling time on our indoor climbing wall and indoor cargo net event. Call Deb to talk about great options for athletic teams, school groups, 4H, FFA, church youth groups and birthday parties.

**GARDEN UPDATE**

As any visitor to the farm site can tell, Deb Schmitzerle and her group of dedicated volunteers has continued to transform the farm site with the expansion of beautiful flower gardens that attract birds and butterflies. Several benches, donated in honor of Danielson family members provide pleasant resting places for visitors. This spring, 7 apple trees were planted in the farm site in memory of Don Danielson by his seven grandsons.

Thanks Deb and the Danielson Family for all of the hard work.

**DNR invites Project Eco-Voyageur to two state parks.**

Park visitors at Glacial Lakes State Park near Starbuck and Lake qui Parle State Park near Watson, MN were able to experience Project Eco-Voyageur this summer thanks to a pilot project conducted by the DNR. Prairie Woods staff Kory Klebe, Jonathon Carlson and Gary Duncanblom trailer the 34’ canoe to the parks and enjoyed seeing families climb aboard for an interpretive cruise in the big canoe. The events were both successful and we look forward to more days in the parks next year. Check out the DNR website for special events in the State Parks next year when you start planning your summer adventures.

**THE PRAIRIEWOODS 34’ VOYAGEUR CANOE IS READY TO TRAVEL TO A LAKE NEAR YOU.**

Get your kids out on to the water and help them learn to care about their local waters and local environmental issues. Call Kory to discuss a customized adventure for your class or youth group.
PROGRAMS FOR GROUPS OF ALL SIZES.

ASK ABOUT MULTI-DAY, OVERNIGHT

S h o o t i n g  R a n g e U p d a t e

Morning, Noon, and Night. . .

PRAIRIE WOODS
www.prairiewoodselc.org 320-354-5894
pwelc@co.kandiyohi.mn.us Spicer, Minnesota

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center Presents...

An Evening Under the Prairie Stars

an earth conscious benefit for the environmental education of our youth

Friday September 10th  5:30pm
Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center  Spicer, Minnesota

For Tickets Call  320-354-5894  or  visit www.prairiestars.com

Event Underwritten By:

(continued)
SQUIRREL SOCIAL ...........................................$10 per person

-A great time challenging (and hopefully)
-finding your treasure. We will meet on Thursday after school for 4 weeks. A great opportunity to fill after-school time.
Thursdays Sept 23, 30, Oct 7 and 14th 4:00-5:30
Grades 3 and up * Minimum of 10

FOURTH & FIFTH GRADE NIGHTS...........Cost: $25 per person

-A great opportunity to fill after-school time.
Thursdays Sept 23, 30, Oct 7 and 14th 4:00-5:30
Grades 3 and up * Minimum of 10

SQUIRREL SOCIAL ...........................................$10 per person

-A great opportunity to try the ride that lets you

-surfing squirrels. We will also learn
-something about teamwork and trying our best. We will end this class with
-a "nutty" snack time for the squirrels!!

-Tue. Sept 28 • 5:45-5:00
Grades 1 to 6 • Minimum of 12

-**Coming to pick up your child? Please note that the cabin is not lit by electricity, but by candlelight and is back at the farmsite.

-FULL MOON CANOEING: $20 per canoe (up to 2-1 per canoe)
$10 max for families

-Full Harvest Moon will rise as the sun sets during this canoeing
adventure on a peaceful pond. All equipment and introductory
instruction provided. Children must be at least 7,
and accompanied by an adult.

-Thu, Sept 22 • 6:30 pm-8:30 pm

-Call Kory To Schedule Your Group For A Folk Wing Shooting Tune Up On The Sporting Clays Range, Call For Information About Fall Sporting Clays Leagues

-COST WILL BE $16.00 PER PERSON FOR THE SEASON
CALL PWELC 320 354-5894 AND ASK FOR TERI IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

-PIRATES OF THE CARIBINER ............................$20 per person
Rrrr Matez!!! This is your chance to come to Prairie Woods and become a pirate of the Caribinnner. We will be sailing in the pirate’s ship, climbing the cargo net, walking the plank, and searching for (and hopefully)
-finding your treasure. We will meet on

-Thursday after school for 4 weeks. A great opportunity to fill after-school time.

-Sept 23, 30, Oct 7 and 14th 4:00-5:30
Grades 3 and up * Minimum of 10

-When the snow falls... Check the Prairie Woods website for winter activities!
www.prairiewoods.org
Remember we have skis and snowshoes for rent and seven miles of groomed ski trails.

-OVER 50? CELEBRATE!
Celebrate in the outdoors with a sampler of activities at PWELC!
One evening a month, 1st, 3rd, or 5th, 6-8:30 PM. We choose from a variety of activities: Climbing wall, canoeing, archery, birding, etc.

-1st Celebration is Tuesday, September 14, 6-8:30 pm.
-We’ll start with canoeing or climbing.
-Together we’ll come up with a fun name for ourselves and decide on the next couple month’s activities.

-CALL KORY TO SCHEDULE YOUR GROUP FOR A FALL WING SHOOTING TUNE UP ON THE SPORTING CLAYS RANGE, CALL FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FALL SPORTING CLAYS LEAGUES

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