Join Us!

PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER
Annual Membership for 2009

- New Member
- Renewing Member
- Supporter’s Membership
- Benefactor’s Membership
- Individual Membership: $30.00
- $100 to $499
- Family Membership: $45.00
- $500 to $999
- Organization/Business Membership: Please call for rates.
- $1000
- 1/ we are interested in volunteering at Prairie Woods.

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

Thank you for your support.

PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER
12718 10th St. NE
Spicer MN 56288
1-320-354-5894
www.prairiewoodselc.org
pwelc@co.kandiyohi.mn.us

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
As you read this issue of the Warbler, another summer is being deposited into our memory banks and we are looking forward to fall. Memories from this summer include another successful Victory Run, a productive Recycled Outdoor Gear Sale; the first Forkhorn Camp; many young smiling and sometimes straining faces wielding canoe paddles or muscling up to the top of the climbing tower; Pre-K Nature Days kids with eyes wide open as they made discoveries in the great outdoors; the sounds of banjo music plinking away at the log cabin; family reunions and wedding receptions at the Barn, Westby, Linder Tree House and the Earl B. Olson Addition; and watching an older gentleman just sitting on a bench in the bird garden soaking up the sights and sounds of a moment in nature.

Prairie Woods is a place of memories and connections made with self, others and environment. As we mature as an organization I realize that we are building our past at the same time that we are building for our future. Our memory banks swell, our history generates interest and our lives are enriched. If you haven’t made a Prairie Woods memory recently I encourage you to make a point to visit and enjoy this place that so many have worked to build. If you have a memory to share about Prairie Woods how about writing it down and sending it to us for possible inclusion in the next newsletter?

In this newsletter you will learn a bit about some of the memories that thousands of people will have as a result of their experiences at Prairie Woods. You will also learn about upcoming events and opportunities that are sure to contribute valuable memories to your own memory bank such as An Evening Under the Prairie Stars. Thanks for living like it matters and contributing to the work of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center.

Sincerely,

Dove

Notes from the Executive Director by Dave Pederson, Executive Director

We want 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.

WANTED – NEW MEMBERS

- Deb Wilson of Usborne Books has been selling children’s books at several Prairie Woods events with 50% of the proceeds given to Prairie Woods as book credits. So far her efforts have raised $446 for Prairie Woods. Thanks Deb!
- Bob and Shirley Caine once again donated proceeds to Prairie Woods for PWELC’s biggest event of the year, Fall Open House offers families a variety of activities for all ages. Come to sample many of PWELC’s exciting educational and recreational opportunities, plus enjoy special exhibits and displays.
- Thanks to funds provided by friends and family of Dorothy Bakken, we spread this one out into 4 weekly sessions.
- Deb Schmitzerle invested tons of time and love into the gardens to help Prairie Woods continue to grow and thrive as a premier educational and recreational resource for our region.
- MN Deer Hunter Association chapters gave scholarships to a number of campers attending our first Forkhorn Camp this summer.
- Bob and Shirley Caine once again donated proceeds to Prairie Woods from their Celebrate Life Golf Event in Santa Rosa, California. Thanks Bob & Shirley!
- Deb Schmitzerle invested tons of time and love to be part of our community.
- Fitzharris Ski & Sport of St. Cloud gave us some great discounts on skis for all levels.
- The Catt Foods Brut Stand fundraiser netted approx. $420. Thanks to Catt Foods and everyone who helped with the food stand. We heard a number of positive comments from the public.
- The promotion committee has been meeting regularly to prepare for the 2nd Annual Prairie Stars event. Please contact committee co-chairs Cindy Westby and Mary Berlin Polkey if you have suggestions or contributions for live and silent auction items.
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- Gang’s Ladder and the Outdoor Climbing Wall. It will be a fun and rewarding time during the after-school hours.

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED: 354-5894

Fall Sporting Clays Leagues
Fall Sporting Clays Leagues are forming now. Call Ryan to register your team.

Pirates of the Carabiner Club

Pirates of the Carabiner Club - $25 per person Monday, Oct 5, 12, 19, 26 3:30-5:00pm Grades 2-6 $8 per child Children must be at least 7, and accompanied by an adult.

Great Annual Halloween Haunt

Great Annual Halloween Haunt - $8 per child
Appropriate for ages 4-12 Free
Friday, October 30, 6-9 pm
Talk to creatures on the enchanted trail, carve a jack-o-lantern, and have a creepy critter painted on your face. Climb the Wall in costume. This Halloween party is the most fun of the year! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Fall Open House

Fall Open House - Free Sunday, September 20 1-4 pm PWELC’s biggest event of the year, Fall Open House offers families a variety of activities for all ages. Come to sample many of PWELC’s exciting educational and recreational opportunities, plus enjoy special exhibits and displays.

Community Cliff

Community Cliff - $10 per climber
Oct 15 6 to 8:00 pm
For families of all ages to come and climb together and spend some quality time. (Adults not required to climb) Parents, Grandparents, kids all welcome!

Squirrel Social

Squirrel Social - $10 per person
Monday, Sept 28 Grades 1-6 3:30-5:00 pm We are going nuts at Prairie Woods so we need squirrels…Flying squirrels. Come join us at Prairie Woods and get your chance to try the ride that lets you swing through the treetops like flying squirrels. We will also learn something about teamwork, safety and trying our best. We will end the class with a “nutty” snack time for the squirrels!

Pioneer Girl’s Day

Pioneer Girl’s Day - $8 per child
Monday, October 5 Grades 2-6 3:30-5pm Did you ever wish you could be a pioneer girl in a Little House on the Prairie like Laura Ingalls? Come to the log cabin at Prairie Woods and dress up as a pioneer and learn some crafts. We’ll make a corn husk doll and try some fabric arts of the past.

A Pioneer Christmas

A Pioneer Christmas - Grades 2-6 3:30-5pm
Child’s Afternoon - Thursday, Dec. 3, 3:30-5pm
Cost $25 per person
Family Evening - Thursday, Dec. 10, 6-7:30 pm …… $20 per family
A 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.

Full Moon Canoeing

Full Moon Canoeing - $6 per person
Thursday, September 3, 6:30 pm-8:30 pm
A 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.

Family Evening - Thursday, Dec. 10, 6-7:30 pm …. $20 per family
We will be doing our best to make it to the Giant’s Ladder and the Outdoor Climbing Wall. It will be a fun and rewarding time during the after-school hours.

PRAIRIE WOODS received the RIVERKEEPER 2008 AWARD from CURE (Clean Up the River Environment) at the CURE Annual Meeting in February. When it rains on Prairie Woods the water makes its ways into Shakopee Creek where it eventually flows into the Chippewa River and then on down into the Minnesota. We are all connected by water. We were honored to be recognized by CURE given the number of exceptional people and fine organizations working on the inseparable issues of water quality and quality of life in the Minnesota River watershed. Check out CURE at their website: cureriver.org
AN EVENING UNDER THE PRAIRIE STARS—SEPTEMBER 11, 2009... Save the Date!

The Second Annual Evening Under the Prairie Stars Fundraiser will be held Friday, September 11th. Come out and enjoy an evening at the Prairie Woods farm site and dine under the big white tent with 300 friends of Prairie Woods. This one of a kind event will feature a sumptuous meal of local foods prepared by Chef Monte of the Green Mill, some great live music and a number of unique live and silent auction items.

A hearty thank you to the Promotions Committee members who are putting in tons of time to make this event a success: Luke and Allison Geiger, Joel Schmidt, Ron Erpelding, Mary Merlin-Pelkey, Cindy Westby and Jim Tetzloff.

Last year this event sold out so please don’t hesitate to reserve your table.

If you have ideas for live and silent auction items or would like to assist with the event please contact our event facilitators in all areas: Cindy Westby and Mary Merlin-Pelkey, or the Prairie Woods Office.

5TH ANNUAL VICTORY RUN

Wow! What a day. On June 20th we held our 5th Annual Jesse John Mithaugen Victory Run. It was a beautiful day filled with beautiful people. We had just under 250 people participate in the walk/run. The results of the 5K run are posted on http://pickleevents.com. It was a great day filled with celebration, families, memories of Jesse and others.

A huge thanks goes out to Chad Mithaugen for the water, Precise Ice of Belgrade for the ice, Country Stop for the watermelon, North American State Bank for the donation toward shirts, Prairie Woods ELC for the facility and trails, Bayer Built for the door prizes, Micki’s for the door prizes, Halvorson Agribility for the hats and And all the people who helped make the day and this event a success.

Save the date for next year’s run June 19th 2010. Let’s try to double the number of participants.

“You Don’t Know What You’ve Got Till It’s Gone”

SAVE THE DATE!

THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP & TRUSTEES MEETINGS were held on Monday, June 15, 2009 in the Earl B. Olson Addition.

Thanks everyone who was able to turn out for the potluck dinner and annual meeting.

The following changes were made to the Trustee roster: Betty Cronequist, Ben Thoma and Doug Mosbush have retired from the Board of Trustees. We want to thank Betty, Ben and Doug for their years of service to Prairie Woods.

County Commissioners Dennis Peterson and Richard Larson will serve on the governing board in 2009-10. County Commissioner Harlan Madsen rotated off of the governing board to be replaced by Commissioner Richard Falk.

We want to thank all of our board members for making the time to serve.

TEACHERS AND GROUP LEADERS CHECK THIS OUT!

FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY PRAIRIE STARS SCHOLARSHIP AND TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FUND + FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY MEEKER, KANDYIOYH AND STEARNS COUNTY CORN GROWERS.

A scholarship and travel assistance fund was established at the 2008 Prairie Stars Event.

The fund enabled a number of groups to come to Prairie Woods who otherwise would not have been able to attend due to financial hardship. Thank you Prairie Stars for helping to establish this much needed assistance 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 through modern times and helps raise awareness of the profound impact that agriculture has on our everyday lives. Please give us a call to discuss either accessing or contributing to funding opportunities for school groups.
Howdy from interns Becca & Martin

Prairie Woods seems to be blessed each summer with excellent interns. This year was no exception.

Becca Bell - Intern, St. Olaf College

As a recent biology graduate from St. Olaf College, I was looking to gain experience in environmental work upon graduation. I was blessed to find this internship at Prairie Woods ELC through a friend and have loved my time here! Leaving “work” the other day was unusually happy and realized it was because I had spent the whole day being positive and encouraging with the groups that had visited us. What a blessing to work at a place where the visitors are not the only ones that enjoy their time here!

I plan to continue with environmental work, possibly environmental education and will cherish the confidence in skills and passion for this work I learned while at Prairie Woods.

Martin Nelson - Intern, St. Cloud State University

As I am just finishing up my degree in Recreation, Sports and Outdoor Education, my time at Prairie Woods has been a great transition from college to the workforce. I feel I have gained a lot of experience while working with the knowledgeable staff here, as well as insight while working with our participants. It has been a great summer here working in and out of doors. I will miss my days here once the summer is over, but will be confident that I will be prepared for my new career.

Mostl Gary Dumcomb

INTERIM ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the newest member of the PWELC staff. I have taken over the EE coordinating duties in June from Anne Dysbeter, who is now working with the Youth Energy Summit program full time for the next year. My background is in education, having retired from teaching at the Eden Valley - Watkins ISD after 33 years. I had always stressed outdoor education in my science classes at EYW and have had a passion for nature studies and outdoor recreation my entire life. I am the president of the Meeker County chapter of Pheasants Forever and have taught the Firearms Safety course in Eden Valley for many years. Coaching, mentoring, organizing camps, canoe trips, and working with conservation groups have helped prepare me for my new position at PW. I feel it is important to introduce young people to the outdoor life at an early age to capture their interest, promote a sense of place and define their role in the natural world.

I have worked the late spring “school field trip rush” as a part-time for the last two years at PWELC. It is a hectic time for all the staff here at the center. A tight schedule with school groups arriving on campus daily, sometimes several in a single day, keeps us hopping. Cooperation, collaboration, and planning are a must to keep the banded programs running smoothly. It was a little “windy” beginning to step into that world and I am so grateful for all the help that Anne, Ryan, Deb, Teri, Jeff, Ann and Dave provided to help me get started. Thanks, guys!

The summer months are a little more relaxed, but we have been kept busy with Community Ed. programs, summer camps, summer school programs, youth groups, and walk in individuals and families. Canoeing has been the big attraction in my area. The Eco-Voyager “Big Canoe” outreach program as been popular with youngsters and adults alike. We trailer our 34 foot canoe to public accesses and county parks on lakes or rivers in a 60 mile radius to share the adventure of being on the water, along with information on water quality, aquatic communities, and shore line development. The sunset/moon rise sessions in standard canoes have been popular with families. We cruise the PW west from a month longing the full moon phase, watching wildlife, studying the plant communities, and watching the spectacle of sunset and moon rise within minutes of each other.

Come and join us soon. Watch your local Community Ed. bulletin or call PWELC for programming schedules and sign-up information.

The Annual Recycled Outdoor Gear Sale

turned over a lot of good used gear and raised $1200 to support youth programs at Prairie Woods.

A sunfish sailboat donated by Ron Lenz took the prize as the largest donation. Happy buyers walked away with good deals on bike racks, tents, ski packages, golf balls and much more. Thanks everyone for donating items for the gear sale and please keep the sale in mind for next year as you sort through gear that you haven’t used for several years. Please give us a call at any time of year if you have items to donate for the sale.

Prairie Woods recognized by United Way of West Central Minnesota

Prairie Woods was honored to receive recognition from United Way of West Central Minnesota as the Outstanding Partner Agency for 2008. United Way has provided critical funding assistance for Prairie Woods over the years and we are delighted to receive recognition as an outstanding partner.

NEEDS & GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Utility trailer w/ loader (diesel)

Scholarship and Travel Assistance Fund Contributions

Diesel pick-up (3/4 or 1 ton) for plowing snow.

Smaller diesel passenger vehicle 300 gal fuel tank for storing bio-diesel

Help build the sustainability endowment

Meet Gary Dumcomb - Interim Environmental Education Coordinator
Youth Energy Summit to Double Number of Teams

Is your community signed on?

“Use what you need and save what you don’t... Do it for the future!” On stage at New London’s Little Theatre, the New London-Spicer Youth Energy Summit (YES!) team presented their song about energy conservation—complete with lyrics written by the students. The team was part of a planning and fundraising initiative that resulted in dramatically improved insulation and a new roof for a 1930s-vintage theater, home to many NES school productions as well as community events.

The NL-SYES! team was one of ten YES! teams that wrapped up their seasons at the end of the 2008-2009 school year, all with their own exciting projects. Other YES! student projects included engaging students in a carbon footprint educational campaign, building a model digester and energy-generating bike, raising greenhouse produce during the winter months, installing CFL bulbs in homes, and more.

The regional expansion of the Youth Energy Summit (YES!) is getting under way this summer, extending to the southern and western borders of Minnesota. YES! 2009-2010 is welcoming... Dybsetter, YES! Coordinator, at anned@co.kandiyohi.mn.us or 320-354-3521, or visit www.youthenergysummit.com.

Youth Energy Summit Awards, 2009

YES! Awards were given at the Earth Day event on April 18.

Grand Prize: Springfield
2nd place: New London-Spicer
3rd place: Willmar
Energy Conservation Award: Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City Community Engagement Award: New London-Spicer Carbon Footprint Award: Springfield Economic Impact Award: Willmar Long Term Vision Award: Lac qui Parle Valley

For descriptions of these and other YES! team projects, see www.youthenergysummit.com.

Special thanks to award sponsors: University of Minnesota West Central Sustainable Development Partnership, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, Great River Energy, Lake Region Bank, and Ottertail Power Company.

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Home on the Range - Ryan Block

2009 Forkhorn Camp

The summer has been busy with sporting clays league, a women’s shooting sports sampler, archery club and more. As I am writing this we are conducting our first event Forkhorn 1 Camp. The camp is sponsored by the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. It is an opportunity for kids to get their Firearm Safety Certificate while enjoying a camping experience. The curriculum that we have developed for the camp is centered on the Minnesota DNR firearm safety class while using the facilities and equipment at Prairie Woods. We have 17 boys from all over the state and one from Arizona. They are in camp for 4 nights and 5 days staying in tents at our newly developed camp site which is located by the yurt on Kettle Lake. The Forkhorn Campers have experienced camping in the rain, cooking their own food, canoeing, survival training, fire building, rock climbing and the Flying Squirrel in addition to learning about firearms safety, hunting ethics and other outdoor skills for safely enjoying the great outdoors. Next year we hope to offer more Forkhorn I camps as well as the advanced camps Forkhorn II & III. Give us a call if you are interested in camps for next summer.

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The Flying Squirrel—A Prairie Woods favorite

DEB ANDERSON CHALLENGE COURSE COORDINATOR

“Fly on Bailey!” “Fly on Eli!” “Fly on Ashton!” … This call can be heard echoing through the trees on most days here at Prairie Woods and it is a sure sign that there is someone on the Flying Squirrel having a great time!

The Flying Squirrel is a big favorite at Prairie Woods and a great activity for teambuilding, improving communication skills, overcoming fears, lifting self-esteem, and it is also just plain fun.

“What is this Flying Squirrel thing?” is a question we hear a lot. So, to help you visualize, I can explain. The Flying Squirrel is sort of a group (people) powered elevator. We get participants harnessed up and then clipped into one end of a rope that goes 40 feet in the air to a pulley and back to the ground. The rest of the participants clip into the other end of the rope and when given the signal, they take off running (or walking). Of course when they take off with their end of the rope the person clipped to the other end is lifted up and goes soaring through the air. It is an amazing feeling of flying for the flying squirrel and a thrill of accomplishment for the people who helped get them there. The view from way up there is pretty awesome too.

To schedule your group on the Flying Squirrel give Prairie Woods a call and ask for Deb so you too can hear… Fly on (___your name here___)!

Thanks to the efforts of volunteer

JOE GARTNER PRAIRIE WOODS IS ON THE MAPS!

MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) is a project to gather data on songbirds from throughout the Western Hemisphere. Thanks to the efforts of a small band of volunteers Joe was able to establish netting sites this summer and began to train volunteers for an ongoing effort. The project has received support from the Charles and Marjorie Dickman Family as well as Ron Espelting and the family and friends of Dorothy Bakken.

Joe’s report: The PWELC Bird Banding Station successfully completed its first summer season! Birds banded included Red-eyed Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-Warbler, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, American Redstart, Brown Creeper, Baltimore Oriole, and more. … Birds were banded during seven mornings from early June through early August. Ten net sites were established that will be permanently monitored in the upcoming summers. Eventually the data collected will help us to learn about our local bird’s survivorship and productivity. Simply put: how many birds breed here in the summer, how long do they live; how many come back to the same site; and how many young are being produced? The data also becomes part of a national data base maintained by the Institute of Bird Populations for scientific use in determining the status of songbirds.

You are invited to a PWELC Bird Banding Station open house on Saturday, October 3 from 7:30 – 9:30 A.M. Once at the turnoff for the PWELC, watch for signs that will direct you to the specific location. Come see which birds are at the site in autumn! Learn about bird banding. For more information about this project call Joe Gartner at 320-848-6239 (evenings) or email him at jgartner@blh.k12.mn.us.

To schedule your group on the Flying Squirrel give Prairie Woods a call and ask for Deb so you too can hear… Fly on (___your name here___)!

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JOE GARTNER PRAIRIE WOODS IS ON THE MAPS!

MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) is a project to gather data on songbirds from throughout the Western Hemisphere. Thanks to the efforts of a small band of volunteers Joe was able to establish netting sites this summer and began to train volunteers for an ongoing effort. The project has received support from the Charles and Marjorie Dickman Family as well as Ron Espelting and the family and friends of Dorothy Bakken.

Joe’s report: The PWELC Bird Banding Station successfully completed its first summer season! Birds banded included Red-eyed Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-Warbler, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, American Redstart, Brown Creeper, Baltimore Oriole, and more. … Birds were banded during seven mornings from early June through early August. Ten net sites were established that will be permanently monitored in the upcoming summers. Eventually the data collected will help us to learn about our local bird’s survivorship and productivity. Simply put: how many birds breed here in the summer, how long do they live; how many come back to this same site; and how many young are being produced? The data also becomes part of a national data base maintained by the Institute of Bird Populations for scientific use in determining the status of songbirds.

You are invited to a PWELC Bird Banding Station open house on Saturday, October 3 from 7:30 – 9:30 A.M. Once at the turnoff for the PWELC, watch for signs that will direct you to the specific location. Come see which birds are at the site in autumn! Learn about bird banding. For more information about this project call Joe Gartner at 320-848-6239 (evenings) or email him at jgartner@blh.k12.mn.us.