

THE WARBLER

A Periodic newsletter of The Friends of the Welty Environmental Center
Volume 16, Issue 2

Our Featured Speaker at the 2016 FWEC Annual Meeting

Neil Diboll, owner of Prairie Nursery, Westfield, WI is shown on the right, with FWEC President Jim VanDeBogart.



Neil discussed the practical issues involved in establishing a successful native plant prairie, under a variety of conditions. We had a lively exchange, enjoyed by all, and packed with valuable information.

*Election results from the Annual Meeting
are described on the inside front cover*

JULY 2016

Board members & Election Results

Chris Luther, a new Board member, and **Jan Knutson**, Board President from 2008-2014, were elected to serve as directors at-large (one-year terms).

Four current directors-at-large whose terms were expiring, were all re-elected: **Brock Spencer**, **John Boardman**, **Mark Spreitzer** and **Holly Nehls** (two-year terms).

Stephanie Dobson, External Secretary, who served on the Board for 7 years in a row, has retired from the Board, as required by the bylaws. **Dave Dobson**, the current vice-president was elected to replace Stephanie for the remainder of her term as external secretary (2-years).

Brenda Plakans, director-at-large, was elected vice-president (3 year term).

Continuing Board members and their remaining terms:

Jim VanDeBogart, President, (1 year);

John Watrous, Internal Secretary, (1 year);

Martin Howe, Treasurer, (2 years);

Heidi Andre, **Lynn Vollbrecht**, and **Pablo Toral**, directors-at-large, (1 year).

President's Message

By Jim VanDeBogart

Since our last Warbler, your Board of Directors has been busy. Following the resignation of Lena Verkuilen, Center Director, our first task was to hire temporary staff to cover May programs already scheduled, then to hire a Summer Program Coordinator to develop details of the Summer Camps and other Summer activities. May programs were taught on very short notice by Dave Bendlin or by Maggie Warren, both experienced, retired teachers. We conducted a quick search and hired Samantha Foster as a temporary Summer Program Coordinator. She is leading the Summer Camps, Welty Wednesdays and Fun Fridays described in this Warbler. (The search is underway for a permanent full-time Program Director, who will develop and teach our Fall 2016 programs.)

The Board also decided to hire a half-time Development Director, to seek grants and contributions to support Welty's educational mission. A search was conducted, and Brenda Plakans, our recently elected Vice President, decided to apply. I'm pleased to announce that she has been hired, and started work on July 5, 2016. She has now resigned, of course, from the Board of Directors.

We discovered a State-funded program, called WISE, where a non-profit, such as FWEC, or a local government department could receive half-time help from a senior citizen at no cost. This was an ideal fit for us, and for the City Department of Parks and Leisure Services, since the Big Hill Center needed to be open to the public every day. Gretchen Ruzack is now our Office Assistant.

My thanks go out to all those who have helped, and who continue to do so through this time of transition at Welty. We couldn't do it alone, but together we will come out fine, with a stronger organization.

Thanks again.

Big Changes to Report

By Dave Dobson, External Secretary

At the beginning of May, Lena Verkuilen, our Center Director, gave FWEC a 2-week notice that she would be leaving to take an environmental teaching position in Rockford, IL. We wish her well in this new adventure.

This news left FWEC's all-volunteer Board with an immediate challenge, to cover programming that was already in the works, and an opportunity to re-think our longer term future. Jan Knutson took on the task of finding qualified teachers to staff programs in the last half of May and also through the Summer of 2016, while we redefined the role of Program Director and searched for a new Director.

She found two retired teachers, who, between them, could cover all the programs that had been scheduled for the remainder of the school year: Dave Bendlin, who had retired as head of the Biology Department at Milton High School, and Maggie Warren, who had retired from the Clinton School system. Neither of these people could continue through the Summer, due to prior commitments, but they saved the day for us in May! *Thank you.*

Given a little more time, Jan located Samantha Foster, a certified science teacher and environmentalist, who is now serving as our Naturalist/Educator throughout the Summer of 2016. (See a brief description of her background in this Warbler)

The position announcement for Program Director has been published in various places, including the Welty website, and applications we have received are currently under review by the personnel committee. We expect to hire a new Program Director in time to have them work with the program committee of the Board to plan our fall 2016 programs. Details of the fall programs will be announced in the next Warbler, to be published in September.

The Board's other task was to redefine the role that Kelly Washburn had played at Welty, and to find the right person to head up our future development efforts. The development committee and the Board worked up a job description for Development Director and conducted a search. We were pleased, and surprised, that our new vice-president of the Board, Brenda Plakans, was interested in applying!

Brenda was deemed to be the strongest candidate, she resigned from the Board and was offered the new half-time position as Development Director. She accepted our offer, gave notice to her employer, Kerry Ingredients, and began working for FWEC on July 5, 2016.

Jan Knutson has been appointed by the Board to serve as Vice-President, replacing Brenda Plakans, until the next Annual Meeting, in 2017, when the position will be filled by nomination and election.

Late last year FWEC hired Maggie Janke, CPA, on an hourly basis to maintain FWEC accounts on Quick Books and make all the required filings and deposits for compliance with the Internal Revenue Service and the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. Other financial duties are shared by the Treasurer, the External Secretary and the finance committee.

We also have a new part-time Receptionist and Office Manager, Gretchen Ruzack, who answers the phone, takes messages and makes sure that the Big Hill Center is open every afternoon.

TRIVIA Tuesday at Welty

Visit Beloit is conducting a summer marketing campaign, highlighting local restaurants and attractions within Beloit and Rock County. Welty Environmental Center has been selected for Trivia on Tuesday, August 30, from 11:00am -1:00pm. Come on out . . . Answer Welty trivia questions . . . spin the prize wheel . . . and celebrate a last BLAST of Summer just before school starts.

2016 Summer Programs

One-day programs during the summer, each with a theme, on the dates specified below:

Welty Wednesdays – 9:00 am to 11:00 am only

For the little explorers, age 6 years and under. (Children under 4 years of age may attend, but only if accompanied by a chaperone throughout the program.)

Cost: \$5.00 per Welty member family child each day, or \$7.00 per non-member child each day.

- June 29th – Tall, Tall Trees!
- July 6th – Awesome Insects!
- July 27th – Cool Reptiles and Amphibians!
- August 10th – Things with Wings! (Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies)



Fun Fridays – a full day program 9:00am to 3:00pm

For all Junior Naturalists, ages 6 years through 12 years. (Be sure to bring a bag lunch and a water bottle.)

Cost: \$15.00 for Welty members each day, \$20.00 for non-members each day.

- July 1st – Who's Home is This?
- July 8th – Wonderful Weather!
- August 12th – A Big Hill Expedition.





2016 Summer Day Camps

These day camps are for kids age 6 years through 12 years. The camps begin each day at 9:00am & conclude at 3:00pm. Campers must be picked up no later than 3:15pm each day! Campers must bring a bag lunch and water bottle every day. (A hat, sunscreen, sneakers and bug spray are also recommended.)

Cost: \$75.00 for Welty members, and \$100.00 for non-members.
Registration is for the entire week (M – F)

July 18th – 22nd : Leave No Trace Camp/Outdoor Living Skills - Navigating by Nature. Learn how to use what nature provides to survive in the wild! Have you ever wondered how you would survive, if you found yourself lost in the wilderness? Join Welty in exploring some of the ways nature often provides just what we need to survive and find our way to safety, if we are ever lost in the woods. Learn how the pioneers used simple tools from nature to make their way through the wilderness. Most importantly, campers will learn what it means to “leave no trace behind” as they explore the natural world around them, keeping the environment clean for generations to come.

August 1st – 5th : Superhero Camp. Did you know that the natural world is filled with many Superheroes? From birds that can fly over 200 miles per hour to small decomposers that help to keep the environment clean, campers will learn about some amazing animal heroes, living right in our own backyard, while getting to dress up as their own superhero.

August 15th – 19th : Arts and Crafts from Nature Camp. Sometimes all you will need is a little inspiration from Mother Nature to bring out the amazing artist in you. This week’s campers will be exploring how to use the gifts from Mother Nature to create beautiful works of art. Each day we will hike through Big Hill Park, looking for items to use in our art projects, or simply being inspired to create art.

As you can see from the descriptions above, the subject matter and goals of each of the three day camps are quite different. If space is available, a camper is invited to sign up for more than one week-long camp, maybe even for all three of them. Register early, as each day camp is limited to the first fifteen registrants.

To parents & guardians: If you have any questions about these programs or camps please call the Welty Center at 608-361-1377.

Introducing Brenda K. Plakans

On July 5, Brenda K. Plakans joined the WEC staff as the new Development Director, after serving on the Board of Directors for the past two years. While on the Development Committee, she helped organize and write the organization's strategic plan and has been working with the board to implement various projects identified in the plan to promote Welty's mission. Once the board redefined the Volunteer coordinator position to focus solely on development, Brenda applied for the job. She said, "I was intrigued by our progress with the strategic plan and wanted play a more permanent role in Welty's evolution. With our new location at the Big Hill Center, we are well-positioned to expand our programming and need solid, strategic fund-raising to support this growth."

Brenda comes to Welty from Kerry, where she worked as a Regulatory Affairs Specialist after completing a Cellular and Molecular Biology degree at Beloit College as a non-traditional student. Before moving to Beloit with her husband Jim Rougvie, a Geology professor at Beloit College, she worked as a Costume Designer in Washington DC and Los Angeles. She has two sons, Eamonn (age 11) and Alec (age 8), who have been long-time participants in many of Welty's camps and programs over the last five years.



Brenda Plakans (left) is shown receiving a generous gift of \$1,000.00 from Mary Ann Carroll, Manager of the Allstate Insurance office. Others in the photo are members of the FWEC Board of Directors.

Introducing Samantha Foster our 2016 Summer Teacher/Naturalist

Welcome Samantha Foster to the Welty Environmental Center. She will be leading most of our Summer camps and one-day programs.

Samantha is a science educator, with certifications in elementary education and secondary science. She has continued to pursue her passion for conservation, by participating in volunteer stream monitoring in the Rock River watershed, and contributing to two Blanding's Turtle research projects. Samantha took part in

community programs aimed at educating the residents about the local turtle population found in the Pheasant Branch watershed. She is an active Board member of the non-profit group Turtles for Tomorrow.

Samantha has become a voice in the much needed efforts of habitat protection and restoration. Through education, she hopes to nurture the next generation of conservationists, eager to protect our natural resources.



Welty Wednesday Kids and their parents look at live Turtles in two tanks at the Big Hill Center.

Introducing Gretchen Ruzack

Hi, my name is Marguerite Ruzack, but everyone calls me Gretchen. In German, Gretchen means "little Margaret", and I'm happy to go by that name.

I'm the new Office Assistant at the Big Hill Center, as of March 7, 2016 and I'm here four hours each day, serving both the Welty Environmental Center and the City of Beloit, Department of Parks & Leisure Services. I greet everyone who comes in with a friendly smile. My duties include answering the phone (608-361-1377), helping the Welty staff or Board with any tasks that need to be done, answering questions, when I can, and showing people around the building, including the spaces which the City rents out to groups for private events. I'm your "Girl Friday", from Monday through Friday.

Previously I worked for Voluntary Action at Grinnell Hall. I was the Beloit Chore Service Coordinator from January 2014 to February 2016. I matched up clients needing housekeeping help with independent contractors. I have a degree in Early Childhood Education, and work as a substitute teacher with Rock/Walworth Head Start in the morning, when they need me. In my spare time, I enjoy knitting, reading and visiting with friends and family. It's my wish that the Welty Center and the City of Beloit have success together in the future.



Wanted – willing, enthusiastic VOLUNTEERS



Are you looking to have a deeper involvement in the Welty Environmental Center? Chances are that we have the perfect volunteer opportunity that you are looking for! You may want to assist with an existing program or help with preparation of materials for programs. You may have special talents or knowledge that you would enjoy sharing by leading an existing or new program. If you are unsure about whether or not you have enough experience, just dive in. On-the-job training is freely available wherever it's needed. Here are some of the areas where we really need your help:

assist with an existing program or help with preparation of materials for programs. You may have special talents or knowledge that you would enjoy sharing by leading an existing or new program. If you are unsure about whether or not you have enough experience, just dive in. On-the-job training is freely available wherever it's needed. Here are some of the areas where we really need your help:

- Station Leaders for the Maple Sugar programs throughout the Month of March (either mornings or afternoons): At one station, you'll be helping school children to experience some specific aspect of the process of tapping maple trees for sap, or turning it into maple syrup or sugar. Sign up for certain days that fit into your schedule.
- Program preparation help: The Program Director, or other teachers, need to get materials prepared or laid out to make programs run smoothly. Call Gretchen, the Office Manager, at 608-361-1377 to let us know when you will be available and what you are interested in doing.
- Program leaders for special programs or special projects: Again, let Gretchen know, and she will pass your information on to the right person.
- Adopt a turtle tank: come to the Big Hill Center about once per week to help clean the tank and care for our turtle ambassadors.
- Teen Volunteers: This is a perfect opportunity for teenagers needing a volunteer project to fulfill school requirements for civic participation. There are lots of possibilities!
- If you don't know what to do, just let us know that you are willing to help out and when you will be available.

Remember that the Welty Environmental Center is mainly a volunteer-driven organization, with just a few paid staff to add continuity and follow-through where it's been found to be most essential.

Search, Shop, and Support the Welty Environmental Center

Did you know that supporting the Welty Environmental Center is as easy as a click of the mouse – and this comes at no cost to you?

Thanks to **GoodSearch**, a product of Yahoo.com, you can donate to the Welty Environmental Center, while you conduct your ordinary normal online searches.

Here's how:

1. Log on to www.goodsearch.com and click on learn more.
2. On their home page, look for a line that offers you a chance to support a non-profit of your choice.
Type in or select: **WELTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER**.
3. Once Welty is selected, GoodSearch will donate a fixed amount to Welty each time you use their search engine.

Thanks to **Amazon**, you can also donate to the Welty Environmental Center while you shop at Amazon. Here's How:

1. Log on to www.smile.amazon.com. To learn more, just click on "About Amazon Smile" at the bottom of the home page. Or click on "Your Account", then click on "Change Your Charity"
2. Search for WELTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER, and when it shows up Select it.
3. Now each time you log on to www.smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase price to Welty, with no added cost to you.

Both sites donate to the Friends of the Welty Environmental Center, Inc. without costing you anything!
Thanks as always for your support – we depend on you
This simple means of modest support from individuals can amount to significant income through the action of many loyal supporters.

Welty Environmental Center Staff and FWEC Board Members

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jim VanDeBogart, President
Jan Knutson, Vice President
Martin Howe, Treasurer
Dave Dobson, External Secretary
John Watrous, Internal Secretary

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Heidi Andre
John Boardman
Chris Luther
Holly Nehls
Brock Spencer
Mark Spreitzer
Pablo Toral
Lynn Vollbrecht

STAFF

Brenda Plakans, Development Director
Samantha Foster, Summer Program Coordinator
Gretchen Ruzack, Office Assistant
Maggie Janke, Bookkeeper

Mission Statement

To provide leadership in environmental and ecological education to students, teachers and individuals of all ages, so that the residents of this region can make informed decisions leading to respect for and the enjoyment, preservation and sustainable use of our natural resources.

Vision Statement

Friends of the Welty Environmental Center Board of Directors approved the following vision statement, which is how we see Welty in five years time:

THE WELTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER WILL BECOME REGIONALLY KNOWN FOR PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS.

THE WELTY CENTER WILL EXEMPLIFY SUSTAINABLE USE OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES.

Please renew your Membership to the Friends of the Welty Environmental Center, Inc.

Help support environmental education and programming in our region. Friends of welty members receive issues of this newsletter and information about programming and events. We have 501(c)(3) tax exempt status and are solely a private, non-profit educational organization. Dues and contributions may be tax-deductible.

Membership Dues for Calendar Year 2016

- Family or Couple\$40
- Individual\$25
- Senior Individual
or Student.....\$20
- Organization.....\$100
- Lifetime.....\$1000

I prefer to receive my Warbler by

U.S. Mail

Internet (email reminder)

Please send me email information about upcoming events.

Yes No

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Total (dues and contributions) _____

Please make checks payable to:
Friends of the Welty Environmental Center, Inc.
P. O. Box 131, Beloit, WI 53512

*Please check your membership status on your address label. Out of date or not a member?
Please join today! Incorrect? Please email dobsond@beloit.edu*