From The President: Donna Johnson

Happy New Year!

2015 has been a wonderfully productive year. With your help, Nature Club has had great success with all of its fund raisers and volunteer events. I want to thank all of our members and friends who have come to our educational and entertaining monthly meetings and we have enjoyed the fascinating topics covered by wonderful speakers, who have donated their time and efforts. I want to thank all of the members who have had input as to programming and have volunteered to work at our fundraisers. We have been fortunate to raise money for various events for the visitors to Spring Valley. We have sponsored field trips for area schools and teachers, paid for educational volunteer programs and have increased the Spring Valley Library’s book catalogue, and are looking forward to donating $10,000 to Spring Valley for the Bison’s Bluff Children’s Play Area. Your donations, dues and participation in events has made this possible. For all our supporters have done, I want to say, Thank You

Spring Valley Nature Club Members Annual Meeting Notice Wednesday January 6, 2016 6:00 pm.
This meeting will be held at the Spring Valley Nature Center for the purpose of:

1. Election of Officers and Directors for the year 2016 beginning February 1st.
2. Proposal to contribute funds for the Bison’s Bluff childrens nature play area at Spring Valley.
3. Any other matters pertinent to the operation of the Spring Valley Nature Club.

Bison’s Bluff Nature Play Area
Bison’s Bluff is a new attraction to be built at Spring Valley during the coming year. It is designed to engage kids in both active and passive play in a natural setting. Play features will be designed to use natural materials (logs, boulders, sand, etc.) as well as manufactured items that mimic natural features (such as a climbing area designed to look like a natural rock outcropping or a flowing stream).

The goal is to encourage active, open-ended, creative forms of play such as changing the flow of a stream, building shelters/forts with loose branches, creating with mud and sand, music/sound with wood and metal percussion instruments. The play area will also encourage direct contact with nature and learning about animals. There will be crawl through logs, a beaver lodge and a recirculating shallow wetland area where kids can search for tadpoles.

This will sit on about 1 acre and will be located just west of the nature center parking lot, near to the main building.

The nature center parking lot will be expanded and redesigned at the same time.

Construction anticipated to begin spring of 2016. Completion will most likely take place in fall of 2016.

All our members; please, plan on attending this meeting. We need your vote on this funding project!
Winter Happenings at Spring Valley

Spring Valley Winter Fest!
Spring Valley’s 2nd annual midwinter celebration will take place on Saturday and Sunday, January 16 & 17 from 12-3 p.m. Come enjoy crafts, games and more inside the nature center or venture outside to give snowshoeing a try, watch a dogsled team in action, or warm up by a bonfire. Horse-drawn wagon rides, food and beverage will also be available during both days. *Admission is $3/person or $12/family, with kids 3 and under admitted free.

Winter Full Moon Hike – Friday, January 22, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Bundle up the family for a naturalist-led walk through the moonlit woods and prairies. There is a likelihood of hearing or seeing owls, deer and other creatures active during our winter nights. The walk will conclude with hot cocoa at the Nature Center. Pre-registration required, and fee is *$12/resident family or $18/non-resident family.

Winter Campfire in the Cabin – Saturday, February 6, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
There is no place more cozy than sitting by the Merkle Cabin hearth on a winter evening, listening to the crackle of the fire and a well-told story while sipping a cup of hot cocoa. Bundle up the family for a short hike through the woods and down to the Cabin for cocoa, stories, songs, and learning a few pioneer skills. Pre-registration required, and fee is *$10/resident family or $15/non-resident family.

Farm to Table Cooking Series
During February and March, Spring Valley’s Heritage Farm will be offering a series of programs designed to teach you simple ways to use farm fresh ingredients to create wholesome, delicious foods at home. The series includes the following, which you may select from (note: pre-registration and fees are required for all programs):
- Cheese Possibilities – Saturday, February 20
- Infused Cooking Oils & Vinegars – Sunday, February 28
- Farm Fresh Eggs – Saturday, March 19

Snowshoe Rentals at Spring Valley
Spring Valley invites you to experience the beauty of the winter landscape in a unique and healthy way! Snowshoes can be rented at the Nature Center on any day on which there is 4 or more inches of snow on the ground. Rentals are available between 9am and 3pm. There are sizes available for children and adults. Renters need to be wearing warm snow boots. A short video may be viewed by novices prior to setting out. *Rental rate is $4 per pair for a maximum of three hours of use. Contact the nature center for more information or to check on current conditions.

Wednesday, February 3, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Spring Valley Volunteer & Nature Club Pot Luck
Join Spring Valley staff and volunteers and Nature Club Members for a pot-luck meal (feel welcome to bring your favorite winter comfort food to share) and meeting to review upcoming spring events and projects. This is a great opportunity to re-connect with old friends, meet someone new, or just get out to shake that cabin fever!

*Spring Valley Family Pass & Nature Club Family Fun Membership receive 15% discount.
Spring Valley
Winter Fest

Saturday and Sunday
Jan. 16 & 17
Noon - 3 p.m.

Bundle up and join in some winter fun!

- Free snowshoe walks through the prairie
- Free horse-drawn wagon rides
- Winter snacks
- Crafts and games inside the Nature Center

Admission: $3/person or $12/family, children 3 and younger are free.

Event and parking are at the Nature Center,
1111 E. Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg.

847/985-2100 or visit www.parkfun.com.
**Nature**

The squirrels came bounding across the frozen yard, leaping to the trunk of the apple tree, chasing tails and frolicking in the bright January sun. Two are gray and two are cinnamon with fur barely tipped with silver. Their circular race up and down the trees, and their occasional posing on my neighbor's fence post, jauntily flicking their tails, are animated reminders that even now, in the depth of winter, life in the outdoors goes on.

The great squirrel chase through the trees and across my rear lawn is a prelude to squirrels' more active courtship. Males react more aggressively to each other now and pursuing females from branch to branch is part of the mating ritual. January's race leads to March's litter.

Red foxes, solitary animals until pairing off with a mate in December, begin breeding in January and then spend considerable time exploring every possible den site in the area. They may even enlarge and clean out several before selecting a suitable home for their four to five kits born in late March or early April.

The Virginia opossum, an immigrant from the south, also selects January as the month to mate. Thirteen days after fertilization, honeybee-small young pull themselves upward across their mother's furry abdomen to the incubator safety of her pouch.

January also begins the breeding season for the short-tailed shrew. After twenty-one to twenty-two days, five to seven blind, naked babies are born.

While a number of wildlife species are ensuring future generations, the contest between prey and predator continues. The mink's prime hunting habitat is near water, where in the winter it searches through holes in the ice for hibernating frogs and crayfish buried in the mud. Its major prey, the muskrat, huddles in its lodge of cattails, water plants and mud, projecting up from the frozen marsh. Where a lake or stream is the habitat, a den is tunneled under the bank. These are sometimes taken over by the mink. Muskrats will forage in winter. Mink know this and hunt accordingly.

Romping squirrels and marauding minks. A beginning of the year; a beginning of life. An age old struggle to survive.

The last of the squirrels chatters into the woods. The yard is still. Somber January returns and winter presses in

Al Larson
1974 And Beyond

Spring Valley began as a dream by one of the founders of the Village of Schaumburg, Ellsworth Meineke. Early on he referred to it as “The Spring Valley Dream.” It was he who convinced the Schaumburg Park District and the Village of Schaumburg to work together to acquire and preserve land for Spring Valley. Ellsworth founded the Spring Valley Nature Club in 1974 as a not-for-profit service organization which provides volunteer and financial support for Spring Valley and promotes conservation, nature and environmental education. The Club sponsors nature programs and teacher field trips, and members volunteer at festivals and fund raisers. We have been working hard since 1974. Won’t you join us?

These words reflect the dedication that the founders felt for the purpose of the Club and the love of the natural world around us. Since the Schaumburg Park District assumed the responsibility of recruiting volunteers, Nature Club’s purpose has evolved to share its love of Spring Valley by offering timely programs that reinforce a more wholesome lifestyle. We have initiated monthly educational programs that instill a comprehension of our ability to lessen our carbon footprint by reducing waste, recycling and reusing our valuable resources. Our monthly programs enlighten us to appreciate our environment and respect its fragile beauty.

We have lessened our impact on landfill waste by eliminating the mailing of our bimonthly News Leaf. We are encouraging members to attend educational programs which teach us the importance of the wildlife around us, the art of using our natural resources wisely and being more self-reliant by advising how to live a more wholesome lifestyle, grow and live more organically and become more self-sufficient.

With the kind donations and assistance from local merchants and organizations, we can exist more ecologically by shopping locally. Some of the wonderful supporters and contributors to the club have been, Roselle Ace Hardware for their support in offering a discount coupon for purchases at their location; Schaumburg Park District for the 1-day Fitness Pass; Platt Hill Nursery for their support by offering the “Blooms for Bucks” program where members buy a gift certificate for redemption at either of their garden centers; Holistic Art Studio for their discount coupon and their donation of a speaker for our club meeting to advise a healthful approach to healthy living; Bon Ton Stores for their coupon book for discounts throughout the store. The Bon Ton coupon books are valid for their other stores that are located throughout the US. A listing of their stores is on the membership dues page.

Our wonderful supporters have given us a way to lessen our footsteps by offering valued products and services at discounted prices while saving our energy dollars by reducing the amount of miles we travel. Please support our supporters. With their help we have been successful in raising additional funds to sponsor educational programming for our Club members, Spring Valley Volunteers, and school children and teachers from our community. We have supplied funds for books for Spring Valley’s Library and have sponsored various free to the public programs and events that the Center has offered.

Thanks to you all, and especially our valued Members and Supporters of Spring Valley Nature Club!

Please take time to review all of the wonderful benefits we are offering to our members with their Nature Club membership. Won’t you join us?

Spring Valley Nature Club is a 501(c3) organization and contributions may be tax deductible. Check with your tax advisor.
Spring Valley Nature Club 2016 Membership Rates
To show our appreciation for our members’ loyalty, we have come up with special benefits for all members.

Discount Coupon Packet: This packet will include certificates and coupons for various merchants, i.e. Holistic Health Studio (massage discount), Schaumburg Park District (1 day Fitness Pass), Roselle Ace Hardware (discount on purchase), Platt Hill Nursery (discount on purchase), Chick-Fil-A (Free Sandwich - Schaumburg Stores only), Back In Line Chiropractic (Discount on Services) Bon-Ton Stores Seasonal Discount Coupon Book (Carson’s, Younkers, Herberger’s, Bergner’s, Elder-Beerman, Boston Store, etc., estimated value up to $500.00. A Spring and Fall benefit for members. A special benefit is an invitation to the Spring Valley Volunteer/Meineke Award Picnic on the first Friday in August. A postcard will be sent to current members in good standing by mid-July asking for an RSVP.

Free Entry to the Nature Club Programs: Allows you to attend any or all of the ten Spring Valley Nature Club monthly meetings and educational programs from February through November where you can enjoy some refreshments and camaraderie with fellow supporters of the Nature Club and the Spring Valley Volunteers.

Membership Card: Identifies you as a supporter of the Nature Club’s efforts.

**All current Life Members are eligible to receive the New Discount Coupon Pack for just $10.00 a year

Life Membership: In addition to the above items, this membership includes a Nature Club Commemorative Fleece Throw ($35.00 value); this fleece throw is for New Life Memberships Only.

Family Fun Membership: In addition to all of the standard items above, this membership category includes a Spring Valley Annual Family Pass ($120.00 value) to be used for a 15% discount on most Spring Valley Programs; 10% Discount on Summer Camps and Birthday Parties; 15% discount on Honey & Gift Shop purchases at Spring Valley and free admission to all Spring Valley events including the Pancake Breakfast. (The discounts do not apply to the Solstice Hop & Vine or the Haunting in the Valley.)

Your Membership Packet needs to be picked up in person at the Spring Valley Nature Center 9:00 – 5:00 daily.

Yearly Memberships begin February 1st through January 31st

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Checks should be made payable to and mailed to:
Spring Valley Nature Club - 1111 East Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg, IL 60194