

Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2017 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

How can we achieve our nation's great need for future experts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics?

Put a frog in a child's hands to help her learn about ecology, anatomy, climate and the interdependence of living things.

How can we cultivate stewardship of our precious land?

Educate novice bird-watchers about issues facing our resources and show them how to become active in protecting local habitats.

How can we enhance the health and well-being of our community?

Equip a family with fishing poles in the summer and snowshoes in the winter and watch them engage.

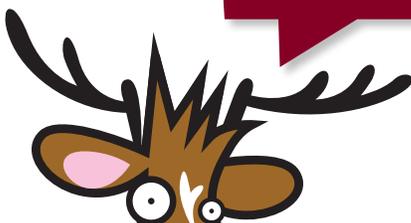
How can we energize our local economy while celebrating our region's beauty, art and nature?

Create a place that attracts tourists, showcases local art and the environment and adds vibrancy and value to our quality of life.

How can you make these and many other activities available to yourself, your loved ones and literally thousands of others in ways not possible today?

Help build the Jester Park Nature Center...

**Don't Pass the Buck
MAKE A GIFT TODAY!**



Gateway to the Outdoors



JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER

Activities that nourish mind, body and soul and enhance our environment will occur for more people, more often, with the creation of the Jester Park Nature Center. This "gateway to the outdoors," to be managed by Polk County Conservation, will benefit people of all ages and backgrounds through education, recreation, community engagement and conservation. We're close to our goal of raising \$10.3 million to construct this 17,000-square-foot facility. Now you have the power to help open its doors and open countless opportunities for all. Make a gift today.

You already know first hand that Jester Park is one of central Iowa's favorite outdoor playgrounds. Now imagine a beautiful hub housing classrooms, environmental exhibits, meeting areas and access to the surrounding park. Approximately half a million people use the park every year; once built, the nature center will draw twice that number with expanded and unique experiences to learn, play, gather and better appreciate our natural environment. It also will give us what every other metropolitan area in the state already has: a nature center.

The Jester Park Nature Center is so much more than a building. It will be a true gateway to positive transformations in our environment, our community and our lives for years to come. On page 2 of this newsletter, please find a pledge & donation form that you can fill out in support of the Jester Park Nature Center. Online giving is also available at www.jesterparknaturecenter.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



ROBERT E. JESTER, *Honorary Co-Chair*



PAT BODDY, *Campaign Co-Chair*



Value Added



After working awhile in administration, you become familiar with the term “value added.” In terms of economics, this phrase is defined as “the amount by which the value of an article is increased at each stage of its production, exclusive of initial costs.” So how does this work in the field of natural resources?

Now, I am certainly not the person who says government must always be run like a business. Many of the things we do contribute to a higher quality of life, public health, an educated youth and public, and other things that are difficult to attach to specific financial benefits. And how do you put a price on the calming effect of a brisk walk down a forested trail in the fall when the leaves are falling around you? Or the connection you feel to friends and family when you pick up a paddle and canoe a calm stretch of water? Priceless, by definition.

And yet, we need to be accountable. We evaluate our process for efficiency and effectiveness. We outsource work that private industry is better able to do. We are transparent and candid with our operations. So, the question remains, how do we add value?

Look at our Jester Park Nature Center project, which is close to being funded. Our naturalists will be able to double the number of public and school programs once we have this facility. Outdoor enthusiasts will be better able to snowshoe and cross-country ski in winter, hike and paddle, and view wildlife and many other things in the summer. Value added.

Look at our volunteer program, using less than 2 full time employees to contribute over 16,000 of work annually to our park system. Besides the wonderful connection to nature and public service this gives to the volunteers involved, it equals over 7 full-time employees work for free. Value added.

Look at the large number of people traveling statewide to bike our trails, camp in our parks, hunt and fish on our natural areas, contributing to our area’s income and tax base, while receiving wonderful benefits and lifelong memories. Value added.

We at Polk County Conservation are proud and honored to serve central Iowa, and we take very seriously our mission to “provide environmental education, outdoor recreation, and preservation of our natural heritage”. We believe and strive to “add value” to our shared and beautiful public parks and natural areas.

Richard Leopold
Polk County Conservation Director

For more information about the Nature Center, please refer to the front page.

Jester Park Nature Center | PLEDGE & DONATION FORM



To make a donation, please fill out form and mail it to PO Box 8071, Des Moines, IA 50301. Or you can also pledge online at JesterParkNatureCenter.com.

Full Name: _____ Spouse/Partner Full Name: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____ Telephone #: _____

I/We would like to make an immediate donation of \$ (check amount below) to this project.

I/We would like to make a pledge of \$ (check amount below) over _____ years. (1, 2, or 3 yrs) Send pledge reminder(s) in the month of: _____

PLEDGE AMOUNT: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$750 \$1,000 \$5,000 \$10,000 Other _____

Please have this gift recognized in publications, Wall of Honor, (etc.) in the following way:

* All donations/pledges over \$100 will be permanently recognized at the facility in order of giving levels. Your gift is tax deductible according to current tax law.

** Gifts of appreciated stock are welcomed.



Polk County Conservation Board Members:

- Diana Baratta, *Ankeny*
- Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
- Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
- Lance Northway, *Runnells*
- Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

Executive Director:
Richard Leopold

Deputy Director:
Douglas Romig

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Hours:
M-F, 8 am - 4:30 pm



The Latest

Regular Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

TRAILS

Mark C. Ackelson Trail

- Final designs on Phase III of the 5-mile Mark C. Ackelson Trail around Easter Lake are nearing completion. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2017.

PARKS

Easter Lake Park

- Following a few minor mechanical and weather-related setbacks in the dredging process, sedimentation removal continues at Easter Lake. Barring early ice, dredging is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2016 and the lake restoration should remain on schedule. Once the process is complete, the lake will be drawn down in preparation for in-lake restoration projects set to begin in 2017 including shoreline stabilization, fish habitat restoration and bridge work.

Fort Des Moines Park

- Park improvements are finishing up at Fort Des Moines Park. The north end of the park including Shelter 1 and the boat ramp opened to the public the first week of November. The outdoor classroom, peninsula and Shelter 3 will be completed by Thanksgiving. Excluding the finishing touches such as grading, seeding, culverts, minor trail work and signage, the overall enhancements at Fort Des Moines Park will be completed by the end of 2016.



New Fort Des Moines Boardwalk Trail

Jester Park

- Nature Center building plans have been completed and construction bid packets hit the street in December. Groundbreaking for the center is scheduled for March of 2017. We are in the final lap of our fundraising campaign and you can help! Please consider making a donation or 3-year pledge towards the project. See pledge form on opposite page. On behalf of the staff and board members from Polk County Conservation and the Great Outdoors Foundation, we would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the many companies, families, and individuals that have supported this project. We have been humbled by your generosity and cannot wait to open the doors to the Jester Park Nature Center in 2018!

Yellow Banks Park

- A tentative plan and budget has been determined for future bond projects at Yellow Banks Park. Upcoming projects include: enhancements to the dam including roadway and parking areas, boat ramp installation, addition of mini shelters and access paths as well as a modern restroom placed near the ballfields, new electric campground sites including Camp Area 2 improvements, enhancements to parking areas, adding a natural play area, renovations of acquired property, water quality improvements, and trail connections and expansions. Some work has begun but look for these improvements to take place from 2017-2018.



Congratulations Brian Herrstrom!

In May 2016, PCC Park Ranger Brian Herrstrom accepted the Izaak Walton League 2016 Outstanding Fish and Game Officer of the Year Award. Brian was recognized for his role in helping coordinate the Polk County Urban Bowhunt as well as serving on the Deer Task Force. Brian is currently stationed at Thomas Mitchell Park and has worked for Polk County Conservation for 39 years.

PCC Advisory Committee Member Applications Now Being Accepted

The Polk County Conservation Advisory Committee was established in 2007. Approximately 25 members serve on the committee with a goal of providing professional feedback to Polk County Conservation staff and board members on various planning and programming issues. The Committee meets 3-4 times per year. Members are asked to offer their ideas and professional expertise on discussion items, gather public perception on various topics, and conduct external research in order to accomplish committee goals.

Polk County Conservation is now accepting membership applications to be a part of this advisory committee. New members will begin their term in January of 2017. If you are interested in serving on the Advisory Committee, please contact Kami Rankin at (515) 323-5363 or kami.rankin@polkcountyiowa.gov.

What is that on the island at Jester Park's Discovery Pond?



PCC staff created an art piece out of the ends of a propane tank. If you look close you can see the outlines of aquatic animals cut into the ball. Thanks to Ferrell Gas for their donation of the decommissioned tank!



Rain Barrels for Sale

Polk County Conservation has 33 gallon pre-constructed plastic rain barrels available for purchase.

Rain barrels are a great way to practice water conservation around the house while getting free water to use for watering plants and gardens. Barrels are \$50 each and come with information about installation, maintenance, rain barrel water usage, and other home water conservation techniques.

To order your barrel, contact the Education Department at 515-323-5339 or pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov. Barrels may be picked up at the Jester Park Administration Building between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Park Packs

Nature Themed Backpacks

Free two week checkout

These backpacks come with a field guide and a variety of activities and fun facts. For more information, contact Lori at (515) 323-5380 or lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov.

Graduate Students Dream Big with Grain Bins at Chichaqua



Polk County Conservation partnered with RDG Planning and Design, October 4-7, to host nine graduate students from across the country to take part in a Design Residency where they were tasked to transform three unused grain bins into new useful spaces at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. These talented students (many traveled to Iowa for the first time) explored not only the site, but the people and culture of the agrarian Midwest as well.

The three bins on the site are among a series of agricultural remnants from a farm which was started in the late-nineteenth century. While the bins themselves are not “special” in terms of architectural interest or rarity, they are a symbol of a small-scale agrarian past which is quickly disappearing. Grain bins are frequently unused now, due to the prevalence of large-scale farming operations.

The students started their exploration by a unique immersion into the site. They canoed the oxbows of the former-Skunk River, then met with staff to discuss ideas and expectations for the site. That night, the students even “camped” at the Longhouse, in an attempt to get more time on the site. The following morning, the Residents met with a naturalist who walked them through a typical educational exercise – water quality testing. The rest of the second day was spent getting a background on the agricultural and natural history of Iowa, as well as an exploration of how grain bins have been repurposed in the past.

The 2016 Design Residency concluded with the unveiling of a new destination: The Bins at Chichaqua. The Residents laid out a vision of a site which would illustrate our connection with the land. With the tagline: “illustrate the past, explore the future,” the proposed site would encourage a frank understanding of our past relationships with the land, as well as provide new spaces to develop innovative solutions to our current challenges.

Underlying the physical improvements to the site, the Residents also proposed a system for future programming: draw, learn, connect, return. This simple motto aims to ensure all new events, structures, and programming attract people to the park, connect people with their surroundings and history, and develop relationships and activities to get the visitors to return. This cycle will hopefully develop new generations of land stewards who not only examine their relationship to the land, but perhaps improve our collective relationship with our environment.



Jester Park Golf Course Awaits Future Improvements

Over the last few months Polk County Conservation staff shared ideas and concepts about future capital improvements needed at the Jester Park Golf Course at a series of public meetings. These improvements will coincide with the award of the next golf course management contract which becomes effective on January 1, 2018.

The following improvements include:

- Replacement of Irrigation System
- Improvements to Hole #11 (shorten or lengthen)
- Remove gravel road between Golf Learning Center and Golf Course
- Install cart path from existing cart path or clubhouse to Golf Learning Center
- Invest in Clubhouse Improvements
- Evaluate signature hole (double pond and brook) on Hole #18
- Install natural screening between Jester Park Nature Center and Golf Learning Center
- Identify opportunities for native plantings on outskirts of Golf Learning Center

These improvements will likely be implemented over the course of several years beginning in 2018. If you have a specific interest in the Golf Course improvement plan, please notify Doug Romig at 515-323-5355 or doug.romig@polkcountyia.gov.



Rental Skis and Snowshoes Available

Interested in trying cross-country skiing or snowshoeing this winter? If so, consider renting a pair from Polk County Conservation. Cross-country skis are sized mainly for adults. Snowshoes are sized for adults and children, with a weight range of 40-250 pounds. Equipment can be reserved in advance by calling (515) 323-5339. Equipment must be picked up and dropped off at Jester Park during normal office hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Cross-country ski rental (skis, boots, poles): **\$10/day**
 Snowshoe rental (snowshoes only): **\$10/day**



Welcome Diana Baratta to the Board!

Diana Baratta was appointed to the Polk County Conservation Board in August 2016 and is looking forward to once again being involved with community parks and conservation programs. Diana has been an Ankeny resident for over 25 years and served on the Ankeny Parks Board for seven years prior to joining the PCCB. She is currently in the marketing area at Principal and has been in financial services marketing for over 35 years.



PCC Receives Partner of the Year Award

Polk County Conservation Environmental Education and Outreach Team was the recipient of the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District's 2016 Partner of the Year Award. We have worked extensively with Polk SWCD in recent years to educate the public about water quality and conservation. As partnering agencies on the Easter Lake Watershed project we have worked together to host multiple public events and engaged over 750 volunteers to remove trash and invasive species across Polk County. Pictured (L to R): Pat Spain, Heidi Anderson, Patrice Petersen-Keys, Lori Foresman-Kirpes.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS & EVENTS:

Woodland Restoration**Saturday, January 14 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.****Jester Park, Shelter #5**

Your help is needed to restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasive species. Meet us at 9:45 a.m. All supplies are provided. Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, and bring a refillable water bottle.

Carney Marsh Restoration**Saturday, February 11 & March 11 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.****Carney Marsh, Ankeny**

Be a part of local ongoing wetland restoration efforts at Carney Marsh. We will be removing undergrowth and invasive species. No experience is necessary, and equipment is provided. Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, and bring a refillable water bottle.

Volunteer Banquet**Sunday, March 26 @ 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.****Jester Park Lodge**

Come join us at the Jester Park Lodge to celebrate your contributions to conservation efforts in Polk County. The evening will consist of dinner and a recognition ceremony as we highlight the projects and events of 2016. Volunteers who have contributed 10 (or more) hours are invited to attend. Please contact Pat Spain at pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov to confirm your hours and RSVP.

Trash Bash**Friday, April 21 @ 12:00 - 4:30 p.m.****Various Des Moines Locations (PCC at Easter Lake)**

Earth Day kicks off with a Bash at noon downtown including sponsor and volunteer recognition, team introductions and educational booths. The rally builds a sense of community and cohesiveness to the day's activities and is an opportunity to recognize the thousands of hours these volunteers will put in this year. After the kick-off bash and lunch, team captains will lead the volunteers out to their project locations for an afternoon giving back to the community.

For more information please call 515-248-6380, or email trashbash@dmgov.org.

To volunteer for any of these events, please contact:

Pat Spain, (515) 323-5280
pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov

*Volunteer Spotlight*

We would like to shine the spotlight on Richard Parkhurst from Grimes. Richard spent much of his free time helping the Parks Maintenance staff last summer at Jester Park. Richard contacted us early spring in 2016, asking if there was anything he could do to volunteer each morning throughout the summer. We gladly got him signed up, went through orientation and then turned him loose in the park with our mowing and maintenance crew. Richard is a jack of all trades with a wide range of talents and skills. Soon he was helping with everything from mowing to trail repairs and park maintenance tasks. By the end of the summer he had put in nearly 170 hours, with the hopes of returning the next year (much to the delight of the mowing/maintenance crew)!

Thank you Richard for being so talented, flexible and willing to help wherever needed!

January - April Calendar

For detailed program descriptions and specific meeting locations, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org or call (515) 323-5339.

JANUARY

3 Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors - Conservation at the Zoo

Come join Angela Tague, Education Specialist from Blank Park Zoo, as she brings to light the impact the Blank Park Zoo is having saving animals in the wild.

Tuesday, 11am-12pm, Jester Park Lodge

Register for lunch only; deadline is December 31. Fee: \$10.

7 Ice Fishing

Learn the basics of ice fishing and get some hands-on experience. Bait and poles will be provided.

Saturday, 1-4pm, Thomas Mitchell Park, Pond

FREE. No registration required. Participants over the age of 16 need a valid fishing license.

14 Snowshoe Hikes

Try snowshoeing out on the trails. Wear warm waterproof boots. Class will be canceled without snow.

Saturday, 10-11:30am, Thomas Mitchell Park, Pond

Saturday, 1-2:30pm, Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #3

Pre-registration required; deadline is January 12. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$10 (includes snowshoes).

21 Cross-Country Ski Basics

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the trails. Class will be canceled without snow.

Saturday, 10am-12pm, Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge

Pre-registration required; deadline is January 18. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots and poles).

26 Book Worms

Join our book club with Naturalist Heidi Anderson to discuss *His for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald.

Thursday, 7-8:30pm, Plot Twist Bookstore, 502 N Ankeny Blvd.

Pre-registration required; deadline is January 23. Fee: \$5.

27 Owl Prowl

Bundle up and join a naturalist for a campfire program to learn about owls.

Friday, 6-7pm, Jester Park, Camp Area 5

FREE. No registration required.

FEBRUARY

5 Cross-Country Ski Basics

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the trails. Class will be canceled without snow.

Sunday, 1-3pm, Chichaqua Longhouse

Pre-registration required; deadline is February 2. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots and poles).

7 Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors - Bluebirds of Iowa

Learn about bluebirds and their important role in the environment. We'll discuss how to attract them by building nest boxes and establish habitat for wildlife.

Tuesday, 11am-12pm, Jester Park Lodge

Register for lunch only; deadline is February 3. Fee: \$10

11 Winter Hike

Join us on a peaceful winter hike as we focus on what animals do to survive winter.

Saturday, 10-11am, Jester Park, Shelter #5

FREE. No registration required.

12 Ice Fishing

Learn the basics of ice fishing and get some hands-on experience. Bait and poles will be provided.

Sunday, 1-4pm, Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1

FREE. No registration required. Participants over the age of 16 need a valid fishing license.

18 Antler Shed Hunt

Learn tips on finding shed antlers and then head outside to find sheds that have been hidden around the park just for you!

Saturday, 1-2:30pm, Thomas Mitchell Park Shop

FREE. No registration required.

Program Information & Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org or (515) 323-5339

FEBRUARY (continued)**23 Book Worms**

Join our book club with Naturalist Heidi Anderson to discuss *Fracture: Essays, Poems, and Stories of Fracking in America*.

Thursday, 7-8:30pm, Plot Twist Bookstore, 502 N Ankeny Blvd.
Pre-registration required; deadline is February 20. Fee: \$5.

25 Indoor Kayaking

Learn the basics of recreational kayaking from a PCC naturalist in the comfort of a heated pool. Participants will practice their skills on the water.

Saturday, 5-7pm, Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 10. Minimum age 14. Fee: \$20.

26 Bald Eagle Watch

Stop by the the Saylorville Visitor's Center to learn about the bald eagle, then venture outside to view them in their natural habitat. Jester Park Lodge will host a live eagle used for education. Hourly programs start at 1 pm.

Sunday, 12-4 pm, Saylorville Lake and Jester Park Lodge
FREE. No registration required.

MARCH**7 Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors - Iowa Phenology**

Phenology is an awareness of the natural rhythms of life. This program will help you take note of when flowering plants, migrating birds, and seasonal changes occur.

Tuesday, 11am-12pm, Jester Park Lodge
Register for lunch only; deadline is March 3. Fee: \$10.

11 Wild Night Life & Hike

Join us for a campfire program about the wild night life in Jester Park. A short hike will follow as we search for some of these nocturnal animals.

Saturday, 6:30-8:30pm, Jester Park, Camp Area 5
Pre-registration required; deadline is March 9. Fee: \$5.

15 Survivor Camp

Spend a day having fun and staying active. We will try archery, geocaching, and fire building! Activities will take place indoors and outdoors.

Thursday, 9am-3pm, Jester Park Equestrian Center
Pre-registration required; deadline is March 10. Ages: 10-12.
Fee: \$30.

15 Indoor Archery

Class will focus on form and safety, giving participants basics that will get them safely shooting and offer a general feel for archery with a compound bow.

Thursday, 6-8pm, Jester Park Equestrian Center
Pre-registration required; deadline is March 10. Ages 12 and up.
Fee: \$5.

17 Iowa Reptiles

Come and learn about Iowa's reptiles. We'll discuss the fears and myths that surround these scaly creatures people love to hate. This program will feature live snakes.

Friday, 1-2pm, Jester Park Lodge
FREE. No registration required.

17 Geocache Leprechaun Hunt

Learn to use a GPS and go search the woods to find the hidden pots of gold, collecting candy and prizes along the way. Keep an eye out for leprechauns along the way!

Friday, 1-3pm, Brown's Woods
Pre-registration required; deadline is March 13. Fee: \$5/child (ages 5-14).

25 Geocaching Basics

Come learn the basics of geocaching and try finding several geocaches hidden just for you in Fort Des Moines Park.

Saturday, 1-2:30pm, Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #3
Pre-registration required; deadline is March 22. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.



MARCH (continued)**28 Rain Barrel Workshop**

Learn how to collect and use runoff water and then make your own 55-gallon rain barrel to take home.

Tuesday, 6:30-7:30pm, Jester Park

Pre-registration required; deadline is March 24. Fee: \$50.

30 Book Worms

Join our book club with Naturalist Heidi Anderson to discuss *River of Doubt* by Candice Millard.

Thursday, 7-8:30 pm, Plot Twist Bookstore, 502 N Ankeny Blvd.

Pre-registration required; deadline is March 27. Fee: \$5.

APRIL**1 Build a Willow Garden Tower**

Participants will build and decorate a free-standing willow garden tower up to seven feet in height. The group will learn the fundamentals of construction and gather willow in the park.

Saturday, 12-4:30pm, Chichaqua Longhouse

Pre-registration required; deadline is March 24. Fee: \$50.

4 Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors - South Georgia Island

Come join us for an educational and stunningly beautiful presentation about South Georgia Island which is nestled half-way between the tips of South America and Africa.

Tuesday, 11am-12pm, Jester Park Lodge

Register for lunch only; deadline is March 29. Fee: \$10.

4 Planting with Natives

Learn how to use native plants to create attractive, natural gardens that have the secondary benefit of providing homes for native wildlife and entertainment for humans.

Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 pm, Jester Park Lodge

Pre-registration required; deadline is March 31. Fee: \$5.

8 Budding Birders

During this program, will discuss the seven "S" of bird watching. We will use our new skills to identify birds at the nearby bird blind and along the trails.

Saturday, 1-2pm, Jester Park, Shelter #6

FREE. No registration required.

21 Wild Night Life & Hike

Join us for a campfire program about the wild night life in Jester Park. A short hike will follow as we search for some of these nocturnal animals.

Friday, 8-10pm, Jester Park, Camp Area 5

Pre-registration required; deadline is April 19. Fee: \$5.

22 Earth Day Geocache Hunt

Learn to use a GPS and go search the woods to find the Lorax and his treasures. Keep an eye out for truffle trees along the way!

Saturday, 1-3pm, Jester Park, Shelter #5

Pre-registration required; deadline is April 17. Fee: \$5/child (ages 5-14).

29 Wildflower Hike

Hike through the woods to view and identify the dazzling display of spring wildflowers.

Saturday, 1-2pm, Thomas Mitchell Park, Pond

FREE. No registration required.

Program Information & Registration:
www.leadingyououtdoors.org or (515) 323-5339

Eco Bus Trips...Going Wild!

Step on board with Polk County Conservation Eco-bus trips as we explore the beauty of Iowa and Iowan hospitality throughout the state. Bring a friend or come on your own and make new friends. Bring a sense of adventure and desire to reconnect with Iowa's natural resources. Eco-bus trips take place from April to October. The trips will be posted on PCC website in February. Eco-bus trip on-line registration opens Saturday, March 25 at 8:00 a.m. For more information contact, Lori Foresman-Kirpes, Eco-trip Group travel planner at (515) 323-5380.

On-line Trip registration will open
on **Saturday, March 25 at 8:00 a.m.**

Current River Kayak Trip

June 8-12

Montauk State Park near Salem, Missouri

Join Polk County Conservation and Story County Conservation naturalists on this five-day paddling adventure on the Current River, in Missouri. The crystal clear Current River moves through stunning Ozark landscapes, and features many caves and large springs along the way. Rated a Class 1 rapid, the Current is an enjoyable and safe for both beginners and experts. We'll paddle three days and camp three nights along the banks of the river. Meals will be prepared for you by the campfire while you relax and take in the scenery. This trip is co-sponsored by Story County Conservation.

- Fee: \$400; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, most equipment, kayak rentals, and all food except two meals while traveling.
- Departure Jester Park at 7:00 a.m.
- Minimum age 21 and must have prior paddling experience and be in good physical condition.
- Participants need to bring a tent, sleeping bag, personal items, cash for souvenirs, and meals while traveling.
- Registration deadline is May 26



New Interpretive Signs at Thomas Mitchell Park!

Four interpretative signs have been installed around the pond at Thomas Mitchell Park. Head out for a hike and learn how the pond was created and what kinds of wildlife are found in the area.

Chichaqua Valley Trail
The Skunk River Valley Route
EST. 1987
www.chichaquavalleytrail.org

30TH ANNIVERSARY



BERWICK • BONDURANT • VALERIA • MINGO • IRA • BAXTER



The Chichaqua Valley Trail celebrates its 30 year anniversary in 2017! Mark your calendars for the Pedaler's Jamboree on August 26-27. More details to come!

Junior Naturalist Camp

June 12 - 15 and June 19 - 22

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 10-11 years

Do you know a child who loves the outdoors? Campers will spend the week fishing, canoeing, hiking, geocaching and more while exploring the outdoors. Campers will also learn how to use a compass, build a fire, and cook a snack over a fire. On the last day of camp, campers will become official Iowa Junior Naturalists and receive a badge and certificate. Daily field trips will take us to various Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$125
- Registration deadline is May 26
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

Water Wonders Camp

June 26 - 29

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 8-9 years

Come and get your feet wet as we discover all we can about water. We'll compare ponds, rivers, lakes, and wetlands plus the animals that live in them. Daily field trips will take us to various Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$125
- Registration deadline is June 5
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Water Wonders Campers playing in Camp Creek



Sometimes we get dirty at camp! This Junior Naturalist camper had fun catching this redbhorse sucker fish with his bare hands!

Discovery Camp

July 10 - 13

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Ages: 6-7 years

This camp is all about animals! Learn about the basic animal groups: insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. There will be plenty of games, live animals, snacks, and more!

- Fee: \$60
- Registration deadline is June 23
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5

Camp Details: These day camps are designed to encourage hands-on learning through outdoor explorations, activities, games, crafts, and more. Camps will be led by naturalists. These camps fill up fast, so register early!

Camp Registration opens on **March 4 at 8:00 a.m.** on www.leadingyououtdoors.org
 You will not be able to register before this date!
 Due to popularity of our camps, your child may only attend each camp one time.

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR: (More events listed on-line)

Winter Sleigh Rides

December thru April, when the snow falls

Sleigh rides for groups up to 6 people. \$10/per person for a 45-minute ride thru the snow-covered trails of the Jester Park. By reservation when the snow lands. Please call 515-999-2818 for more information.

Pleasure Driving Clinic

Saturday, February 4 from 9 am-3 pm

Interested in what horses have to offer in the area of driving? Come out and join us for a beginner-friendly clinic on the basics of pleasure driving. Learn how to properly harness and ground drive, as well as take a spin in our driving cart with experienced instructors. Fee: \$20. Registration required by January 30.

Sweetheart Sleigh Rides

February 10-14, by reservation

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a romantic sleigh ride. \$30/ Couple, up to 4 people per sleigh. Completing the ride is a romantic package with hot chocolate, candy, and a flower for your sweetheart.

Spring Break Camps

March 13, 14, and 16 from 9 am-2pm

Spring Break is Here! Are your kids going stir crazy in the house? Bring them out for some horsey fun over the Spring Break holiday. Camps will include safety training, horsemanship skills, a riding lesson, a wagon ride, and a nature hike. Camps are by reservation and are \$75/session.

JPEC Barn Horse Show

Saturday, April 8 from 10 am-4 pm

JPEC will be hosting a student, boarder, and friends of JPEC barn show. The show will be open to the public for viewing. Classes will be beginner friendly. Trailer-in horses welcome with health certificate. Classes will be \$5/each or \$45 for the day per horse. JPEC students will be assigned JPEC horses per their instructors. This is a great opportunity to learn more about showing, and to demonstrate the skills you have been working on in lessons.

JPEC Novice Driving Clinic

Sunday, April 9 from 9 am to 3 pm

Have an interest in driving horses? Know the basics, but want to learn more? Come out and join us for a second opportunity to learn about driving. This clinic will focus more on the ins and outs of learning to drive. A basic understanding of harnessing, ground driving, and line work is recom-

mended. Clinic will focus on more intensive ground driving work, hitching to carts, and driving single and teams hitched. Fee: \$30. Registration required by April 5th.

Spring Wagon Rides

April 15-May 31, by reservation

Celebrate the changing of the seasons with a horse-drawn wagon ride on Saylorville Lake. Come outdoors and enjoy nature at the Jester Park Equestrian Center this fall. Rides are one hour and \$10/per person for groups up to 35.

"Tiny Tots" Spring Session

April 29-June 4

"Tiny Tots" is designed to prepare riders ages 5 – 8 years of age to transition from those hand-led pony rides to more progressive riding lessons. Over weekly lessons for 6 weeks- riders will develop confidence, hand/eye coordination and balance as they play games on horseback in structured classes taught by patient, experienced instructors. 2:1 instructor ratio and assistants for each student. Registration required. Fee: \$40/class or \$200/full session.

Jester Park Therapeutic Riding Program

Monday- Wednesdays, by appointment

JPEC is pleased to announce openings in our therapeutic riding program. We offer therapy lessons to persons with physical, emotional, and social disabilities, in a safe setting with experienced instructors.

Weekly Riding Lessons

English and Western lessons taught by qualified and experienced instructors, our goal is to provide a positive atmosphere that fosters horsemanship "from the ground up". Lessons are \$35/hour for group lessons and \$45/hour for private lessons. Ages 8 and up.

JPEC Birthday Parties

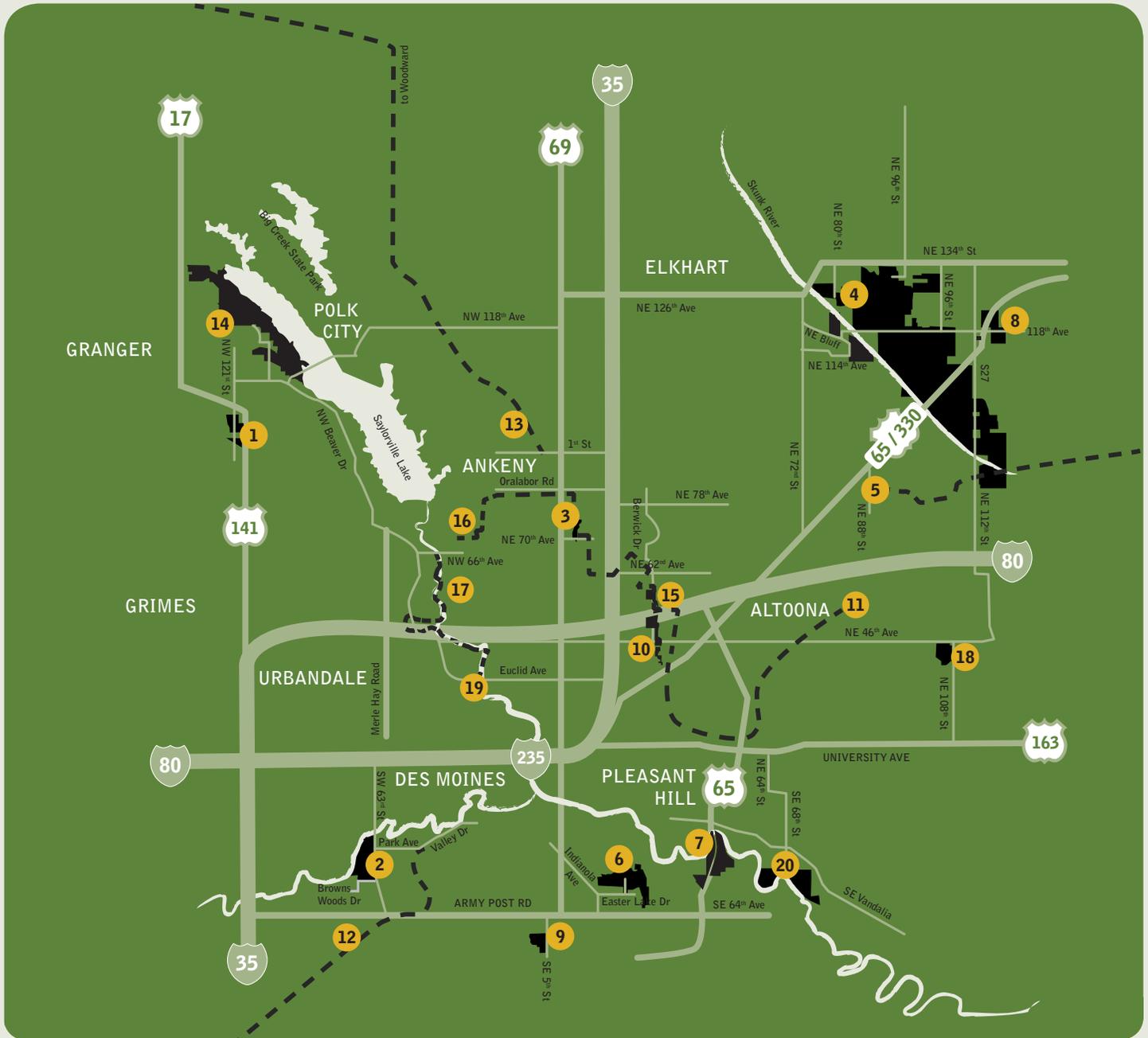
Fridays thru Sundays, by reservation

Come celebrate your special day with the horses and staff at JPEC! We offer multiple package options that include pony rides, room rental, wagon rides, horse grooming sessions, and crafts. We also offer themed party décor and setup. Reservations required.



Jester Park
Equestrian Center
11171 NW 103 Court
Granger, IA 50109
(515) 999-2818

www.jesterparkec.com



1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt
2. Brown's Woods
3. Carney Marsh
4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
5. Chichaqua Valley Trail
6. Easter Lake Park
7. Eagle Roost Wildlife Area
8. Engeldinger Marsh
9. Fort Des Moines Park
10. Four Mile Creek Greenbelt

11. Gay Lea Wilson Trail
12. Great Western Trail
13. High Trestle Trail
14. Jester Park
15. Mally's Weh Weh Neh Kee Park
16. Oralabor Gateway Trail
17. Sycamore Trail
18. Thomas Mitchell Park
19. Trestle to Trestle Trail
20. Yellow Banks Park

BE A FRIEND OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

Pledge your support today for high quality, healthy living for Greater Polk County through expanded open space, restored landscapes, and greater recreation and outdoor education opportunities.

FRIENDS ENJOY:

- Having your name published in the Great Outdoors Foundation Annual Report
- Receiving all current *Great Outdoors Foundation* and *Polk County Conservation* news and information
- Participating in special programs, tours and events designed exclusively for our Friends
- An invitation to the Annual *Friends Celebration* Banquet

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY, ZIP: _____

DAYTIME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

FRIENDS LEVELS:

___ **KIDS:** \$25 *Receive a Birthday Card, Name recognition at our Friends Celebration*

___ **SENIOR CITIZENS:** \$50
(over age 55) *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*

___ **INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY:** \$100 *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS:

___ **BRONZE:** \$500 *2 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*

___ **SILVER:** \$1,000 *4 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*

___ **GOLD:** \$2,500 *6 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*

___ **PLATINUM:** \$5,000 and up *8 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*





Polk County Conservation
11407 NW Jester Park Dr.
Granger, IA 50109

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The Polk County Conservation Board's mission is to provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long term protection of Polk County's natural heritage.



Red Fox, Photo by Eric J. Williamson