



This letter – written by Superintendent Joe Giacone in June of 2011 was the letter from which Joanett (Jo) Fleming was nominated IDNR Volunteer of the year.

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It is an honor for me to nominate Joannett (Jo) Fleming for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources 2011 Volunteer of the Year award. The years of service and dedication she has devoted to Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area currently spans over two decades. Her determination and desire to share our rich cultural history is truly awe inspiring as she enters into her twenty-sixth year of volunteer service to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Jo's volunteer career began in 1985 when she joined the Goose Lake Prairie Partners. She has held numerous positions within the organization during her service with the Partners. Through the years, Jo served as the Newsletter Editor, Treasurer, and President. In addition, she enthusiastically served on every committee within the group with pride and perseverance.

Jo's vision and heartfelt desire to share the past with others lead to the creation of the Cabin Festival at Goose Lake Prairie in 1986. She brought together crafters and re-enactors throughout the area to participate in this highly educational and entertaining event. Cabin Festival has continued each year and Jo has been instrumental in its growth and success. Years after the event's inception, Jo's foresight led the group to add a September event into what is now known as Prairie Day. In addition to the rich historical facet of this program, they have incorporated educational components of the vast beautiful prairie located there and the natural aspects of the wildlife and biodiversity of the site.

Jo takes great pride and pleasure educating children and adults of our pioneering past. A fellow volunteer commented that Jo is "the voice of our pioneer ancestors". She enjoys dressing in period dress and enlightening park visitors of a hard and fulfilling life of times gone by. The Goose Lake Prairie Partners donated a loom to the park and Jo has spent countless hours teaching an almost lost craft to other volunteers.

Jo is an inspiration to all whom have had the pleasure of working along side her. Her love and dedication to the preservation and education of our heritage has benefitted thousands of park visitors over the past twenty-six years. At eight-three, Jo can still be found at Goose Lake Prairie watering plants in the butterfly garden, staffing the Visitor Center, planning for upcoming events and sharing her vast knowledge with park guests. Jo has been and continues to be an invaluable asset to Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area. The time, dedication, and knowledge Jo has donated over the years makes her a highly recommended candidate for this most deserving award.

*Site Superintendent Joseph N. Giacone*