

On behalf of Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area, it is with great pride that I nominate the Goose Lake Prairie Partners (GLPP) for the 2009 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award. Founded in 1983, the GLPP have been providing invaluable services to Goose Lake Prairie for twenty-six years. Their love and commitment for the natural and cultural resources of the prairie has never faltered. The care and determination they display year after year is truly a remarkable credit to their character as individuals and as a group. Their passion for the prairie radiates in all their projects and programming; providing an inspiring and educational experience for park visitors.

The accomplishments of the GLPP in 2008 are beyond impressive. A concise overview of their service and stewardship for the Department of Natural Resources are as follows:

- The GLPP participated in the IDNR's Earth Day In Parks program. They planned, organized and implemented a prairie-planting program for area 4th graders to participate in. The students not only planted the seedlings but also were taught of their importance and history.
- The GLPP held their 24th annual Cabin Festival. Cragg Cabin is a reconstructed cabin at Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area that stands as a testament to our pioneering heritage. Each year, the volunteers re-enact the pioneer lifestyle of the 1830's for park visitors. The volunteers also invite crafters to demonstrate for the public, a way of life that is now mostly found only in history books.
- GLPP researched and obtained a grant from the Exelon Co. to cover the cost of the restoration and raising of a windmill at Goose Lake Prairie. They coordinated with Area Well & Pump to perform the work and received a partial donation of time and labor from them. Once in operation, the windmill will provide ample water to the pond, which in turn will provide improved aquatic habitat and enhanced educational opportunities for years to come.
- GLPP organized and sponsored their 2nd annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit. The public was invited to enter photos in the categories of Best in Show, Best in Color, Black & White, Viewer's Choice and the GLPP Choice Award. Photos were required to be taken in a State Park.
- GLPP held their 12th annual Prairie Day during Illinois Prairie Week. The volunteers secured sponsorship through Midwest Generation for this children's event. Several exhibitors and performers were brought in to teach, entertain and expand the children's understanding and appreciation for the prairie.
- The GLPP actively participated in the Natural Resource Tour sponsored by the Grundy Co. Department of Soil and Water District that was held on site. The volunteers managed two of the educational stations during this event. In addition, they provided tours of the visitor center, museum, and had period dress enactors at the Cragg Cabin sharing period history to approximately 800 Grundy County 5th graders

- GLPP held a Holiday Open House to celebrate a pioneer Christmas. Children learned what Christmas was like for pioneers on the prairie. Guests were treated to homemade cookies, apple cider and children made ornaments for the tree.
- The GLPP are an invaluable resource to the Goose Lake Prairie Visitor Center. In 2008 alone, they logged more than 360 volunteer hours staffing the center. Their service and dedication allowed the Visitor Center to be open to the public on weekends year round. The partners maintain a gift shop in the center and offer a variety of books, t-shirts, visors, hats and sweatshirts to visiting park guests. Handmade pioneer dolls, rag rugs and lace items are also available.
- The GLPP are constantly striving to improve and enhance Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area. This year they added a Ring Neck Pheasant to the Visitor's Center collection by way of donated funds. Likewise, they were the recipients of a 300-book collection they used to begin a library on site. Their donations also included a new canvas for the prairie wagon and a new bird cam for the Visitor's Center. They were the recipients of two memorials to be used toward a stone park bench and educational projects.
- The GLPP publish an outstanding publication entitled "The Tallgrass Journal" on a quarterly basis. They also have an established website at <http://gooselakeprairie.org>

The accomplishments of the Goose Lake Prairie Partners are phenomenal for a volunteer group. They have been active on site for twenty-six years. The activities and programs above, are just an overview of what they did in just this past year. Imagine what the future holds.

I cannot think of anyone more deserving of the Department's Outstanding Volunteer Award than the Goose Lake Prairie Partners. Their passion, commitment, dedication, stewardship and service to the Illinois State Park system demand our most sincere gratitude and appreciation.

Joseph Giacone
Site Superintendent
Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area