

Past, Present and Future Meet for Friends of Sangamon Valley

Future plans for preserving the past have begun in the present.

The Friends of Sangamon Valley (FSV) focuses on restoring natural areas and preserving native Illinois prairie and returning some areas to the original plants that occupied the ground. In an effort to secure future endeavors, the club has recently established the **Friends of Sangamon Valley Natural Areas Fund** through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“We’re looking at natural areas and ecological areas that we can restore,” Friends of Sangamon Valley President Vern LaGessee said. “We’re looking at natural heritage. Our best soils in Illinois were derived from 1,000 years of prairie grass. ... Illinois wasn’t just beans and corn.”

The organization spends 20-25 workdays on weekends throughout the year working the land at various sites in Sangamon, Menard, Cass and Mason Counties. It currently owns 78 acres and works the easements on another 18 acres. FSV is also active at Carpenter Park and Washington Park in Springfield and the Revis Hill Prairie Nature Preserve in Mason County.

“We’re giving the public a hands-on experience in restoration and land use,” LaGessee said. “We want people to get hands on experience and get dirty. We’re trying to educate the public and we work to have the opportunity to educate landowners about what prospects they might have.”

The establishment of the fund was another step in integrating the public into FSV’s work. It also allows the organization to utilize a neutral party for investment decisions.

“We want to use as many community players as we can,” LaGessee said. “We felt there was great community synergy by working with the Foundation. We couldn’t do it on our own.”

The organization hopes to allow the fund to grow during the next several years in preparation for future land purchases and other restoration needs.



Friends of Sangamon Valley Volunteers clear invasive Garlic Mustard at Carpenter Park



Volunteers use canoes to clear trash