

# SPRING 2009 NEWSLETTER

**Celebrating  
100  
Years**



**Located  
in  
Lords Park**

## *Learning Through Adventure*

### *From the Director*

2009 is shaping up to be an interesting year, to say the least. We are being faced with huge challenges, a shrinking budget and fewer visitors. I'm looking at the situation as an opportunity to look at what we do, how we do it, and what we can do differently.

For many years education groups from U-46 and surrounding school districts have been a mainstay of our income as we continually do programs to augment their curriculum. Faced with the same sort of financial challenges, U-46 has immediately halted field trips because of the transportation costs. We are now "taking our show on the road." Educators Sara Russell and Marge Fox are making plans to take the programs into the schools. Close by schools can walk to the Museum for programs; however, those that are too far away can still have quality programs through our outreach programs.

We were fortunate to receive of African artifacts on loan from the Illinois State Museum. These beautiful things go along with our new African-American exhibit, "Celebration of Achievement." This exhibit shows 80 pictures of Americans of African descent who have made contributions in music, art, literature, exploration, civil rights, sports, business, and government. The exhibit will run through April.

In late May we will open an exhibit we are leasing from the Field Museum. "A Celebration of Souls: Day of the Dead" is about the celebration of Day of the Dead in Mexico. We will have a lot of programming and demonstrations, so watch for more information.

Summer looks like fun. We are doing a summer solstice family tent campout on the zoo grounds and we will do our third annual member's picnic. We really like the picnic and this year we are doing a hot dog roast and s'mores down by the bison. watch our website for more information.

We have asked before, but I ask again...may we please have your email address? Postage is going up yet again and it will be cost prohibitive to mail post cards about events. We can keep you up to date with email and your email address is safe with us, as we will not let anyone else have access. If we may contact you by email, just send an email to [epm@cityofelgin.org](mailto:epm@cityofelgin.org).

*Hope to see you around the Museum this summer.*

### **Upcoming Events**

**Natural Egg Dyeing**

Saturday, April 11th, 11:30 AM

**Earth Day**

Saturday, April 25th, Noon

**Bubblefest**

Saturday, June 6th, Noon

### **Ongoing and Upcoming Exhibits**

**Through April**

**A Celebration of Achievement**

Acknowledging contributions by Americans of African descent. Supplemented with African artifacts on loan from the Illinois State Museum.

**Mid-May through Mid-August**

**A Celebration of Souls:**

**Day of the Dead in Southern Mexico**

Encounter the colorful traditions of this holiday in 26 stunning photographs and engaging text panels in English and Spanish.

**EPM Hours**

**Labor Day to Memorial Day**

Saturday & Sunday Noon - 4:00 PM

**Memorial Day to Labor Day**

Tuesday to Sunday Noon - 4:00 PM

Closed Mondays

**For additional information or to register in advance for classes and programs.**

**Phone: 847-741-6655**

**Fax: 847-931-6787**

**[www.elginpublicmuseum.org](http://www.elginpublicmuseum.org)**

*OUR PURPOSE*

*To promote an understanding and appreciation of the natural world and other cultures, both past and present; and to increase our awareness of the decisions human cultures have made.*

**EPM STAFF**

**Executive Director:**

Margaret "Peggie" Stromberg

**Museum Coordinator:**

Mike McGrath

**Education Coordinator:**

Sara Russell

**Educator:**

Marge Fox

**Museum Attendants:**

Lychelle Erickson

Will McGuigan

**Collections Supervisor:**

Elizabeth O'Toole

**Board Members**

Martha Yochum

Gilbert Nore

Dwight Armistead

Mark Havemann

Clare Ollayos

Diane Ramsay Shedd

William Barnes

Sal Camacho

Don Quillman

Bruce Dahlquist

# *EPM Support Team*

The Elgin Public Museum is extremely grateful to our new members and those patrons who have renewed their memberships and/or donated to the Museum's Sustaining Campaign these past months. Through your support of this 100-year old cultural institution, you make a statement that you care about the pursuit of an understanding of the world we live in as it gets increasingly more hectic. It also means that you believe this museum is a vital component to a healthy Elgin community. Not only do we here at the Musuem thank you, the future generations, that's all of our children, thank you.

## **New & Renewed Members November through March 2009**

Jerry Turnquist

Joann Jay

Bob & Debbie Sargent

Bob & Carol Malm

Tom & Karen Durkin

Ron & Mary Conley

E.C. & Frances Alft

Michelle Kaczor

Donald Quillman

William Barnes

James Schmidt

Patrick & Carol Gieske

Robin & Cedric Busse

Jack & Marlene Shales

Edward & Artis Whitcomb

## **Donors November through March 2009**

Joann Jay

Donald Quillman

William Barnes

Bob & Carol Malm

John & Marleen Shales

E.C. & Frances Alft

Dr. Clair Ollayos

Vera Vasudevan

DLA (Dahlquist & Lutzow)

NEBA

Wayne & Cheryl Heinmiller

Gary & Dana Vierck

John & Elizabeth O'Toole

Ron & Mary Conley

Orville & Joan Pelletier

JoAnn Armenta

Yvon Fahrenwald

Alan & Peggie Stromberg

# the "Fox" returned

For a third time, the latest being this past February, we were pleased to welcome back Brian "Fox" Ellis to conduct a program here at the museum. Celebrating Lincoln's birthday, Brian delighted our audience, both young and old with stories, humor and song. EVERYONE enjoyed it. The Illinois Humanities Council has organized the Road Scholar Speakers Bureau which allows non-profit organizations the opportunity to offer high-quality, free public humanities programs. We have taken advantage of this 5 times over the past couple of years. They grant us 2 programs a year and we're studying available topics to book our 2nd in 2009. When you get information about the next one, do yourself a favor and take advantage of it. You won't be disappointed.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

We are looking for someone with a green thumb to volunteer maintaining our planters in front of the Museum and maybe plant a few other flowers.

Our annual Bubblefest, on June 6th, could use a couple of high school students to assist the kids at the multiple bubble stations. There is some set up and tear down work and the program is lots of fun.

If you would like to help us, please call Peggie or Mike.

Saturday, April 11th, Noon - 2:00 pm

# NATURAL EGG DYEING

## *A Hit Since 1987*

I can't think of anyone ever saying to me they don't have fond memories of sitting around the kitchen table dyeing Easter eggs this time of year. And remember how our parents guided us: Slowly now, careful, Careful, CAREFUL! The pressure was immense. I think parents are the cause of most of the broken eggs by their children. Dyeing eggs is a tradition that dates back hundreds of years. We here at the Elgin Public Museum conduct an event the day before Easter that takes this tradition back to those pioneer days. Before there were PAAS egg coloring kits at the local supermarket, families produced colorful dyes using ingredients found in nature. We create those same dyes from onion skins, blueberries, beets, turmeric and much more. Wax and rubberbands are used to create your unique designs.

This is a drop in program so no registration is required. A small fee of \$1 will get you 2 hard boiled eggs.



Saturday, April 25th, Noon

# EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

Join us for our annual Earth Day celebration. The Museum and the Lords Park Zoo will be hosting an educational event geared for the entire family. We're paying homage to our native oak and hickory trees. These trees are keystone species to the unique forest ecosystem here in the Fox River Valley. Mosses, lichen, bacteria, beetles and butterflies, toads and salamanders, snakes, warblers and hawks, squirrels, opossums, and deer; the list could go on for pages, all use the environment created by these trees for the

food and shelter necessary for survival. These trees are the literal roots to a web of life. And it's not only plants and animals that thrive in this environment; the health of the physical environment depends on them. Come learn about life in our community, how to estimate the age of an oak and plant some acorns to take home to start your own forest.

Registration Required - Dress for the Weather  
Fee: \$5 adult, \$4 Children, \$20 Family  
EPM members 20% Off



Springtime Traditions



*I'm not a bison, but I'm hungry too.*

## BISON FEEDING AT THE LORDS PARK ZOO

Over the past year this EPM program has become one of our most popular. At sunrise we assist Dwight, our Lords Park zookeeper, in caring for the deer, elk and bison at the Zoo. Many people think that these animals, as we do, would relish a treat of some sort, and do not hesitate to toss them an apple or carrot. Some children even think they might enjoy a Snickers bar. What might be good for us, or not so good, may be down right

harmful to the health of our animals. During the program, not only do you get face to face with these animals but we'll learn the proper diet for a healthy herd. If you would like to partake in this program, the truth is that it's difficult to get a spot unless you register a couple of months in advance. Because of the limited space within the zoo compound and the fact that the bison, elk and deer are not fond of crowds or changes to the daily routine, this program must be limited to 12 people. We had requests from over 30 people to attend our January event. The overflow were on waiting lists for the March date and we accommodated all of them by conducting 2 programs in March. Our next officially scheduled program is July 18th. However, we will gladly schedule one earlier if there is interest. This program is a treat for adults and children.

General Admission \$2 Adults, \$1 Children, \$5 Family, **EPM Members FREE**  
**Registration Required**

### Planned Summer Events

June 20 - 21  
Summer Solstice  
Family Camp-Out

July 18th  
Bison Feeding

June 6th  
Bubblefest

June 5th  
Girl Scout Programs

June 10th  
Members-Only Picnic

July 14-16  
Jr. Farmers & Jr. Explores  
Summer Camps

August 29th  
Boy Scout Programs

## NURTURING FUTURE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Where do we start when discussing an environmental conscience? Does it start with Henry David Thoreau, or John Muir, or Aldo Leopold? Yes, it would be all of these, and one other: Rachel Carson. In 1962 Rachel Carson published **Silent Spring**, the first in depth look at widespread ecological degradation. Shortly before she died in 1964, the "patron saint of the environmental movement", wrote an essay for Woman's Home Companion titled: "Helping Your Child to Wonder". That essay was later turned into a book titled **The Sense of Wonder**.

Here are a couple of quotes from that essay:

*"If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seed must grow. The years of childhood are the time to prepare the soil."*

*"If a child is to keep alive the inborn sense of wonder...they needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with them the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."*

# P.A.W.S. Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary

by Marge Fox, Educator

**B**eginning in 1988, PAWS (Pre-School Awareness World Series) classes continue into 2009. Over the years, the name has changed, staff have come and gone, days and times have shifted, but this special program for the young child keeps on going like the “Energizer Bunny.”



Marge Fox

Meeting at the Elgin Public Museum on the second Saturday of the month, February through December from 11:00 – 12:30, PAWS sessions focus on varied themes and topics for the year and for each month. Lords Park is the place, with its zoo, its lagoons, its creek, its trees, its teaching garden, its woodland trail, its Pavilion and its Museum. And PAWS kids, with their parents, explore it all – from

sun to sunflowers, robins to rocks, dinosaurs to deserts, whales to white tail deer, frogs to fish, bugs to bushes, early people to today’s people. Other surprises and mysteries abound. Everywhere!

Children ages 3 – 7 and their parents are invited to join the museum staff in hands-on activities, music, stories and crafts in search for more information about the chosen topic of study. In the museum, the collections, displays and artifacts are explored. Outside, everything the park has to offer is open for discovery. Many resources and activities are available for parents and their families to extend outdoor education experiences and to enrich the PAWS programs. Parents may wish to:

1. Visit a local library often, as many relevant books for early learners are available for children and their parents to read.
2. Check out “Your Big Backyard” (ages 3-7) and “Ranger Rick” (ages 7

and up) magazines published by The National Wildlife Federation.

3. Find and read a copy of “Last Child in the Woods” by Richard Louv. This book is a must read and one that will inspire parents to become more aware of the world around them and in turn, to encourage their children to appreciate who they are and the world in which they also live. And to care for it.
4. Explore the many Kane County Forest Preserves - any season brings special surprises and new experiences for all to appreciate.

You are invited to participate in the PAWS programs and in the numerous other family opportunities the Elgin Public Museum has to offer during the year. Anytime in Lords Park and in the Elgin Public Museum is time well spent.

**Happy Wondering!**

**Happy Wandering!**

**We plan to see you soon.**

## 2009 P.A.W.S. Schedule

April 4th - In the Antarctica: Penguins

May 9th - In the Woodlands: Spring Wildflowers

June 13th - In the Desert: Cacti

July 11th - In the Prairie: Field Mouse

August 8th - In the Barn Yard: Zoo

September 12 - In the Ocean: Fish Swim



# Coming May 23rd

## *“A Celebration of Souls: Day of the Dead in Southern Mexico”*



On November 1st and 2nd, families in villages across Mexico gather to welcome home the visiting spirits of departed relatives on the *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead)

Many elements of these festivities were practiced in pre-Hispanic times and have become integrated into Christian traditions of Mexico.

These include ritual preparations for the ceremonies and construction of the family altars dedicated to the dead, the ceremonial feast of the dead, and the spiritual communion with the dead at homes and cemeteries.

The story starts with an introduction and then focuses on 4 elements of the festivities:

- *The Spirit of the Family at Home.*
- *Preparation for a Spiritual Journey: The Central Market.*
- *Preparation for a Spiritual Journey: Hot Chocolate.*
- *A Village Comes Together.*



The exhibition is on loan from The Field Museum in Chicago and will be displayed through mid-August. It consists of 26 beautiful color photographs, accompanied by text panels in both Spanish and English explaining the significance of this celebration.

Special events centered around this event are in the planning stages. Watch for more information and visit our website often.

# Of Trees, Habitat Modification, and the EPM Newsletter

by Michael McGrath

**O**n a hot summer day, when families have gathered in Lords Park for an outing, where do you find all the picnic tables? Not in the fields, but in the shade of our majestic oaks and hicko-



Mike McGrath

ries. The relief from the heat, the softness of the light filtering through the green leaves, the birds singing, the fresh smell of the outdoors, the sound of the wind rustling the leaves, all elicit a satisfying feeling and enhance a momentary euphoric experience. We seek out these places of tranquility to reconnect with family and friends or unwind and reflect on our place in this world.

Trees are very unassuming. And because of that, like so many other things in nature, it's easy to take them for granted. Yet a moment's contemplation reveals the many contributions

they make in sustaining life on earth. Trees are active participants in environmental modification. We've all experienced in the heat of mid-summer day, walking from a field into the woods. You immediately will detect a change in temperature. Walking in further you will notice an increase in humidity, and a wind will be calmed. The deciduous forests create both macro and micro environments for tens of thousands of unique species of plants and animals.

Each of these species occupies a distinctive niche in an ecosystem. For many this niche can be quite limiting. A species' continued survival is dependent on particular environmental conditions and the consequence of minuscule changes can be devastating. Any rapid change in habitat, such as when we clear vast areas of virgin forests in a matter of months, can doom innumerable species populations. Remember, biological evolution and the resulting adaptations necessary for survival in a new environment work on a glacial time scale.

I read somewhere that newspapers

are dead trees with information smeared on them. The question arises, are there better ways we can meet our insatiable appetite for information without destroying so many trees? Homo sapiens are by far the dominant species occupying earth. With our supposedly superior knowledge and wisdom, we have developed the means to meet our needs for information without destroying the trees so vital to the other life that sustains us. We therefore must ask ourselves; does a tree serve us better dead or alive? Our health and wellbeing, and the health and wellbeing of so much other life on earth depends on the survival of trees.

We here at the Elgin Public Museum want to do our part in stopping this carnage. The newsletter you are reading can easily be converted to an 8-page pdf file and emailed to our members. We could even add a little color to it.

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**PLEASE** join us in this effort, and email me at [mike\\_epm@cityofelgin.org](mailto:mike_epm@cityofelgin.org).

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## I'd like to leave you with a few quotes about trees and our environment I've run across over the years.

*God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools.* -John Muir

*It is well that you should celebrate your Arbor Day thoughtfully, for within your lifetime the nation's need of trees will become serious. We of an older generation can get along with what we have, though with growing hardship; but in your full manhood and womanhood you will want what nature once so bountifully supplied and man so thoughtlessly destroyed; and because of that want you will reproach us, not for what we have used, but for what we have wasted.* -Theodore Roosevelt, 1907 Arbor Day Message

*Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money.* -Cree Indian Proverb

*A seed hidden in the heart of an apple is an orchard invisible.* -Welsh Proverb

*Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.* -Bill Vaughn



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of Natural History & Anthropology  
225 Grand Blvd.. in Lords Park  
Elgin, IL 60120

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## EDUCATION MOMENTS

by Sara Russell

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Since becoming an educator at the Museum, I have had the opportunity to experience the joys and struggles of sharing the natural world with school children: watching kids capture a moth for the first time and then releasing it into nature, discover the difference between horns and antlers, identify the leaves of Lords Park. One of my favorite moments so far happened during our Owl Pellet Program. In the program children dissect pellets, finding the remains of small birds and rodents that was the owls' lunch. They waded through fur, feathers, hipbones, teeth and skulls . . . at first hesitantly, then with great enthusiasm. "Wow, look at this!" Students play show-and-tell with their findings – never has a 4th grade girl been so excited to flaunt a vole skull!

At the end of the program, their teacher reminded the students to visit the museum on the weekends; there is no entrance fee. But she encouraged the students to make donations, because that money allowed the museum to "get new things." "What do you want for the Museum?" one boy asked me. Why, everything! I want more animals and more exhibits. Very solemnly he looked up at me and nodded. "I can get that for you."

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## PRIVATE TOURS FOR MEMBERS

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Having guests in from out of town this summer? Bring them into the Museum. We will be open every afternoon except Monday beginning Memorial Day. As a member, you could even make special arrangements with Peggie to come in at another time for a guided tour with information about the history of the museum and its collection. Maybe your guests or family would like an item from the Museum store to remind them of their time in Elgin. We also like to recommend the Elgin Area Historical Society Museum on Park Street. They also have a great facility.