

Cedar Lake Park

UPDATE

Fall/Winter 2004

Prairie Edition

Volume 16, No. 2

Cedar Lake Park Prairies Grow

BY JOE SCHMITZ

Since the arrival of European settlers in the early 1800's, the land now known as Minnesota has lost almost all of its native prairies. Less than two percent remain in a natural state!

Human communities, industry, and agriculture have altered the landscape in ways that, in most cases, cannot be undone.

Under ideal and natural circumstances, prairie communities develop and change over a geological time frame: not simply in a matter of years or decades.

Some ecologists predict a prairie reclamation project like the one undertaken in Cedar Lake Park may take a hundred years to become truly established as a sustainable natural community. That this project is focused on such an outcome speaks highly of its participant's foresight and planning for what I would characterize as a "natural legacy" for future generations.

Walking through the prairie over the last three years, I have noted many positive developments directly related to CLPA efforts. Healthy prairie communities are typically characterized by an 80% grasses and 20% forbs or wildflowers ratio.

The abundance of big blue stem, Indian, little blue stem, switch, Canada wild rye, and blue grama grass species highlight a developing prairie community remarkable for the circumstances of its origin on highly disturbed soils of questionable quality. Many of the wildflower species planted over the past six years have begun to establish their presence as well (see list).

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board's and CLPA's prairie reclamation project highlights the commitment of both individuals and organizations attempting to reclaim a site disturbed by past human activities. Their efforts have set aside a place for natural communities to thrive, and in doing so have improved our quality of life and foster the renewal of an eons-old relationship between humans and the natural environment.



Looking east to the parkway bridge and downtown Minneapolis: Developing native prairie now contains the Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

Native wildflower species observed 2002-2004

Lead Plant	Heath Aster	Dotted Blazing Star
Partridge Pea	Cinquefoil	Stiff Goldenrod
Butterfly Milkweed	Whorled Milkweed	Evening Primrose
Prairie Smoke	Black-eyed Susan	Hoary Vervain
Silky Aster	Prairie Sage	Pale Purple Coneflower
Calico Aster	Canada Goldenrod	Rough Blazing Star
Azure Aster	Gray-headed Coneflower	Wild Bergamont
Round-headed Bush Clover	Purple Prairie Clover	Joe Pye Weed

Joe Schmitz is an instructor of Environmental Studies and Minnesota Natural History. He volunteers his time to Minnesota State Parks and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge as an interpretive naturalist, and leads wildflower, birding and nature hikes for groups interested in shared learning experiences in local and regional parks. Questions can be addressed to schm0652@tc.umn.edu.



On the Horizon

BY KEITH PRUSSING, CLPA PRESIDENT

Access to the park and trail in the area of the Cedar Lake Parkway Bridge is changing. The trails along the west side of the lake have been repaved at a wider 10 feet. The dirt path entrance to the park just east of the bridge has been paved. There is a non-motorized section on the west side of the new bridge, providing a safe north/south crossing. There will be a cantilevered path on Cedar Lake Road, connecting to the Ewing Ave. entrance. The non-motorized pavement will continue west on Ewing, and then on France Ave. in Saint Louis Park. Expect to see more people using the park.

Look for the new sculpture bench in the memorial Cedar Grove. This installation honors a commitment made ten years ago. The bench is made of Kasota limestone quarried by the Vetter family in Mankato. The top cut of the formation, it is an interestingly irregular surface. The color is a brown-tan-orange-yellow. It weighs over 1,200 pounds, and is 6 feet long and 9 inches thick. The two legs are 18 inches high, and each weighs 550 pounds. The inscription along the side reads "CEDAR LAKE PARK MEMORIAL GROVE 1996." It is curved in an arc that is harmonious with the two spirals of the grove. The setting features a clear view of the prairie and trail, yet is protected and intimate.

There is a grand vision emerging of a connected buckthorn- and exotic-free area consisting of southern Wirth Park, Anwatin Woods, Bassett's Creek, Brownie Lake, Cedar Lake and the Cedar Lake-Kenilworth Trail corridor. It would include the private property within these bounds. Neighborhoods including CIDNA, Bryn Mawr, Anwatin Woods (www.anwatinwoods.org), Kenwood, Forest Lake, Cedarhurst, and South Tyrol Hills are talking with Hennepin County and the cities of Minneapolis, Saint Louis Park and Golden Valley. MPRB has taken a lead role in coordinating this process, as has this Association. Federal grant applications, requiring matching funds, are being prepared.

Happy Holidays!

If you would like an electronic version of this newsletter, let us know.



Gifts

BY STEVE DURRANT, TREASURER

Cedar Lake Park Association gratefully acknowledges recent contributions in the form of money, stocks, materials, volunteer time and in-kind services, memorials and gifts. Since the last *Update*, contributions have been received from:

Ted and Ruth Arneson
Brendan Barrow
Robin Brown/Beth Slocum
Susan Czapiewski and
Kevin Sundquist
Dan Dailey
Evan Ellison
Bill Gilbreath
Chuck Hall
Bob Harding and
Allan Valgermae
Michael and Michelle Hu
Stephen Huey

Bruce and Anniko Jones
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Barb and Phil Lindblad
Barbara S. Longfellow
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Kristine Smith
Jerry and Kathleen Sovell
Neil Trembley
Karen Viskochil
Gilbert and Natalie Westreich
Joseph and Elizabeth Zetah

Give online at www.cedarlakepark.org/support.html

Thanks to Volunteers

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Fay Atchison
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Nona Davis
Rainer Dornemann
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Steve Durrant
Ned Foster
Bill Gilbreath
Jan Heasley

Beth Henty
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Lorrie Insiengmay
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Bruce Jones
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John Richter
Joe Schmitz
Dorene Scriven
Kelly Sim
LeAnn Simonson
Jim and Barb Smith
Emily Sohn
Dan Steinberg
Paisley Svensson
Joel and Lisa Swanstrom
D'Ann Topuluk
Neil Trembley

What's on the CLPA Website?



Park issues and news



Color versions of the CLPA Update



Maps of trails and other park attractions



Links to related sites and resources

Anwatin photo to come

Stewards of the Park

John Richter



John and Martha Richter on the stone bench in the Memorial Cedar Grove.

BY JIM MCPHERSON

John Richter has been involved with the Cedar Lake Park Association since before its founding in 1989. In fact, he was one of the first people who started our organization. Here's how it happened:

Upon returning from a trip to Africa, John learned that developers were planning to build houses around Cedar Lake. A member of the board of the Minnesota Parks and Trails Association suggested that John meet Dan Dailey, who was also interested in preserving the land at Cedar Lake.

"John Richter's support was critical to making the Park a reality. John and Martha were the first people I met who believed that money could be raised to save the land," Dan said. "It

was so encouraging—and just in time—because just about everyone else I had talked to before John thought the idea was too big, and just plain crazy."

After first exploring the idea of raising money through the Parks and Trails Foundation, John determined that it would be preferable for the Cedar Lake

Park Association (then known as "Save Cedar Lake Park") to raise the money itself to purchase the property and preserve the park.

John then began tapping his considerable number of contacts and was instrumental in raising a third of a million dollars to build the Cedar Lake Trail (see photo below). He proudly carries with him a plaque from the U.S. Department of Transportation declaring it as "the #1 urban bicycle trail in the U.S."

Another of John's extraordinary fundraising efforts for parks and trails are the statues of early Minneapolis park superintendent Theodore Wirth, surrounded by children, recently dedicated at the chalet in Wirth Park.

Moreover, John liked the memorial bench so much that he funded it personally. As to his

legacy, "We started from nothing," John reflected, "otherwise, there would just be houses on private lake front. In the City of Lakes, the people ought to be able to enjoy their lakes."

Thanks to John Richter and others, we continue to do so.



This beautiful rock honors private donors to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. It is located in the park near the bench and water pump on the north end of Cedar Lake.

CLPA Volunteer Tasks & Guidelines

BY RUTH JONES

The Cedar Lake Park Association (CLPA) welcomes volunteer efforts to improve park areas around Cedar Lake. In fact, the majority of work around Cedar Lake—either by individuals or groups—is done by a cadre of dedicated volunteers. It is our hope that volunteers will welcome the opportunity to learn about the Cedar Lake Park Association's work in restoring the land around Cedar Lake—with emphasis on removing invasives that are choking the native species found on site, and replacing them with native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants and grasses. We've planted more than 500 native trees and shrubs in our wooded areas and virtually thousands of prairie wild flowers on the prairie abutting the Cedar Lake Trail.

Volunteers carry out a variety of tasks in all but deepest winter. Tasks might include but are not limited to:

- Trash pickup in park land
- Spreading of mulch on trails in various parts of the park
- Plantings: Native trees and shrubs; Native herbaceous (non-woody) plants and grasses
- Possible watering of fragile new plants, especially if we're in a drought situation, using water from the lake.
- Removal of invasive woody plants and shrubs: Hand pulling of buckthorn seedlings
- Removal of non-native herbaceous invasive plants

Hoped for outcomes: We see success in terms of both accomplishing goals and having fun, especially when working with youth groups.

Other volunteer opportunities: Community service in providing volunteer support for community events around Cedar Lake, including but not limited to Jones Harrison's annual Stroll and Roll, the Loppet and events of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

Scheduling a Volunteer Event: Call or e-mail Ruth Jones at 612-926-1377 or email ruthjones@prodigy.net Ruth will arrange for Cedar Lake Park volunteers and sometimes a professional forestry consultant to direct volunteer activities and teach, as appropriate, on a date convenient to your group.

Please see our website, www.cedarlakepark.org, for details on volunteer tasks and guidelines.

There has been an abundance of **buckthorn removed in the park and neighboring areas**. Harrison Neighborhood volunteers have been active in the lower Bassett's Creek area, near Glenwood Ave N. where the creek flows through the industrial area. Check it out if you have never been there; the creek goes underground here to travel the final three miles under downtown to the Mississippi River.

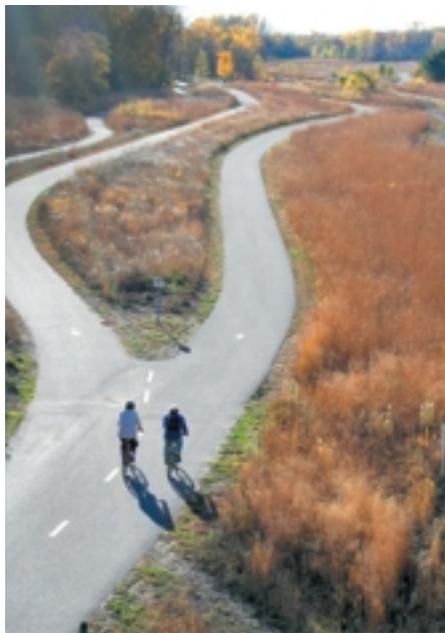
Further upstream, Bryn Mawr volunteers continue to **clear and replant** their section of the creek, in the area of the old Fruen Mill. The corridor is now called Bassett's Creek Park, and it is beautiful. In Cedar Lake Park, the area just east of the Brownie tunnel on the northwest lakeshore has been recleared, and native plantings installed several years ago are much happier. There has been removal in the area of the mound, as well as in the memorial Cedar Grove.

At Brownie Lake, the eastern shore between the frontage road and the new bridge, a series of buckthorn removal events have been taking place. On the west side of Brownie, the buckthorn hides an extensive illegal biking area that has been developed up the hillside. Volunteer "buckthorn busters" have been hand-pulling sprouts and small shrubs throughout the park. MPRB has been active in doing chemical treatment. We are making a difference, slowly but surely. Contact us if you want to help in this important work to restore native landscapes.

Excel Energy plans in the near future to replace electrical wires on the south side of the Cedar Lake Trail corridor between the Cedar Lake Parkway Bridge and Highway #100. There is a thick buckthorn forest along this right of way—some of which Excel will have to remove in order to access their lines. Excel's Vegetation Management Manager for Transmission North has specifically complained about the thickness of the undergrowth in this area. Therefore, we will be alert to the progress of this project, in order to maximize the benefits to the park,

save native vegetation, and protect the overall environment

The **Hidden Beach area** of the park continues to return to a more natural state, without all the buckthorn. However, the seed bank continues to pop up new shoots, and we continue to pull them. With diligence, this landscape will become rich and diverse; otherwise, the buckthorn will grow back. Plantings have been done, and burdock has been removed. The work is ongoing.



Riding west at the junction of the Kenilworth and Cedar Lake Trails.

A new, more **usable sidewalk** has been laid by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board at 21st Ave/Upton Ave S., and the brush has been cut back. They were prodded to act by a CLPA board member who lives nearby. Woodchips have been delivered for trail work and mulching. The summer season saw heightened beach use, though not at pre-intervention levels. It was a mellow scene, and the mudbaths were up and running, with over one thousand visitors.

Nearby, the 21st/W Thomas Ave **Prairie/Woodland restoration contin-**

ues to develop neighborhood support. Due to the tremendous amount of Dutch Elm disease this year, Hennepin County foresters have been unable to clear the site of exotic trees to date, and they will as soon as they can. Across the street, the innovative "flat pack" residence has been largely completed. The owner wants to be a good neighbor of the park and the Kenilworth Trail, which the property directly abuts.

The **water quality in Cedar Lake** was wonderful for clarity, and awful for Eurasian milfoil. This exotic weed continues to spread, and though it provides habitat for fish, it crowds out native vegetation, and hinders recreational use by swimmers, canoes, and kayaks. Purple loosestrife persists along areas of the lakeshore. The Cedar Meadows wetlands on the west side grows more established with replanted native vegetation, and serves to filter stormwater coming from the areas upstream areas such as Forest Lake and the Twin Lakes area in St Louis Park.

Volunteers have working hard throughout the summer on the **development of a new database**. When it is completed, it will be much more supple than our existing format, and will allow us to do our fulfill our mission (see pg.8) in a much more efficient way.

The **completion of the CLRT to the river** continues to be stalled at the federal level, and it is likely that no action will be taken on the omnibus transportation bill until after the presidential election. We are confident that the funding allocation is a question of when, not if. The on-the-surface, neighborhood trail from Washington Ave to the river is fully funded, and construction will begin in 2005. This will include the unfinished off road section from 12th Ave/Royalston (behind the Target Center) east to Washington Ave.

Also, further west, by the end of the 2004 **construction season** all of the potholes, dirt shoulders, and new sidewalks should be completed along France Ave, Ewing Ave, and S. Cedar Lake Road.

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A Historical Sketch of the Cedar Lake Park Area

In order to tear down a heritage structure, such as the Cedar Lake Parkway (or Brownie) Bridge, historical elements were required to be incorporated into the new bridge. A small group from the Bridge Citizens' Advisory Committee, made up of Bekah Padilla, Dan Christianson and Neil Trembley, were charged with the task of composing the area history.

BY NEIL TREMBLEY

Since the beginning of European settlement, the area between Cedar Lake and Brownie Lake has been a vital transportation and communications corridor, linking Minneapolis to the western communities. In the 1860s, before the advent of the railroad, the Cedar Lake Road came out of the city and followed the glacial ridge south between Cedar and Brownie Lakes before turning west towards its ultimate destination: the communities on the shores of Lake Minnetonka.

Because of the 1918 bridge's designation, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) required restitution for the (admittedly necessary) destruction of this historic structure. The city's bridge department and the construction company contacted Dan and Bekah for suggestions. They recommended a series of plaques with historical commentary. Subsequently the pair enlisted local historian Neil Trembley (that's me folks) to provide the text. Dan and Bekah worked on the installation specifications (font size, location, area, etc.) as well as textual changes relating to the available space. After the text was written, staff from SHPO made suggestions and approved the final design and text.



Looking southeast over Brownie Lake, the original Cedar Lake Parkway Bridge is over the rail corridor (marked by an *). Cedar Lake is in the background. In 1886, rail baron James J. Hill created an elevated railroad causeway across the north end of Cedar Lake and south of Brownie Lake through the ridge.

The initial historical segments were cast last year in conjunction with the laying of the first set of bridge abutments. With the main abutments completed this year, the final series of text were finally unveiled. (The plaques will be installed at a later date.) Once construction is completed, pedestrians will be able to descend from the bridge via stairways to a platform to

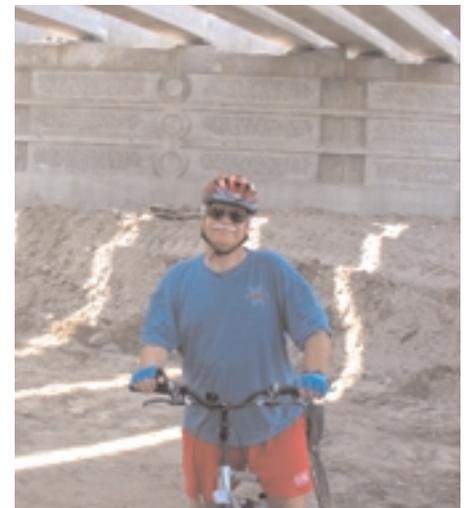
view the installation before proceeding down to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. Bicyclists and others using the new trail connection from the west side of Cedar Lake, down to the trail, as well as enthusiasts using the trail itself, will be able to pause and reflect on the history of this vital link in our city's life.



Cedar Lake area historical information is etched in the concrete of the new bridge abutments.



Finish work proceeds on the new bridge. A stairway on the east and a new entrance on the west provide access to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail.



One of the principal text writers, Neil Trembley, bikes beneath the new bridge.

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In late August, CLPA conducted a well-attended walk in the park for the **Minnesota Native Plant Society**, highlighting all of the restoration effort that have taken place over the years. This was the first of what will be an annual event. It really is quite impressive. The Sierra Club has expressed interest in a tour for their members. We like doing these walks, so if your group would like to come to the park, let us know.

MPRB has developed a **new plan for Bryn Mawr Meadows** that will involve more intensive, and changed usage patterns. Apparently the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association was not consulted, and this planning has generated controversy. It goes against some aspects of the Upper Bassett's Creek Valley master plan guidelines, which was developed over several years. More to come on this. The planned Van White Parkway connection over the rail corridor may be done in 2005. This new parkway, in the vicinity of N. Girard Ave, will connect north and south Minneapolis in the vicinity Dunwoody Institute. The city of Minneapolis continues to sort out their future plans for the land that now contains Public Works operations and the Impound lot.

The improvements to the **Totlot at W.25th and Drew Ave S.** are largely completed, thanks to a committed group of neighbors working with MPRB. It will soon have a new name, perhaps something like Cedar Lake Pocket Park. Way to go!!!

Once again CLPA volunteers assisted with the annual **Jones-Harrison Stroll and Roll** that took place in mid September. This year a longer run was added which can be used as part of a runner's preparation for the Twin Cities Marathon

new photo to come

Park Restoration Projects



Prairie Savannah along Upton Ave. So. Near Hidden Beach.



The woodland and prairie restoration in the Kenilworth corridor near West 21st Street and Thomas Ave. So.

St. Louis Park News

BY DAN STEINBERG

This past summer, the city of St. Louis Park studied access from the end of Cedar Lake Road to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. This handicapped accessible route will be in the area of the pedestrian bridge, south of the trail corridor. In early October, St. Louis Park engineering consultants presented four different access options at a public meeting, and invited citizen input. One option was discarded by MNDOT. Two of them involved dropping off the middle of the bridge, and the third, cheapest option was a 500 foot ramp running to the west. The ramp option is the least expensive, and will not intrude on the long views of the prairie corridor. Next stop in the city council, who will choose the best option. Then, the approval of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board must be obtained, as they are the landowner. Construction is tentatively scheduled for 2005.

The Cedar Trails condos are under new property management at this time. The Cedar Trails West town homes are working with the City of St. Louis Park on buckthorn removal along the trail, north of the rail.

Loppet Comes to Cedar Lake Park



The City of Lakes Loppet ski race will take place February 5-6, 2005. The long course will cross Cedar lake, en route from Wirth Park to Lake Calhoun. CLPA will again manage a refreshment station, staffed by volunteers. Call if you are interested!

The 3rd annual City of Lakes Loppet (www.cityoflakesloppet.com) will take place during the weekend of Feb 5-6, 2005. This urban cross country ski race is the largest in America. It has something for everyone, such as children's activities, sprints, a shorter 10K, and the full 35K. There are several new additions and modifications this year, such as 1.5 kilometers of new trails through the hills and woods adjacent to the Wirth Lake Picnic Pavilion.

A new hill section at "Gronquist Hill" that skirts the Wildflower Garden and eliminates the bottleneck at "Xerxes Hill", and 2+ kilometers of new trail through school grounds near Anwatin Middle School and Bryn Mawr Elementary School. This addition bypasses another bottleneck, includes some new hills and, best of all, allows the Park Board to groom trails into the Bryn Mawr neighborhood and right past the schools. Finally, there will be 1.5 kilometers in the Cedar Lake Park area. This section of new trail comes off the

lake on the northwest shore, travels through woods and native prairie and includes breathtaking views of Downtown Minneapolis. It will then loop back and run south to return to Cedar Lake at Hidden Beach. All of these trails will be groomed throughout the season, just not for the race. It has long been a goal of this association to enhance winter recreational opportunities in the park. CLPA volunteers proposed a route to the City of Lakes Loppet folks, and with minor modifications took it to MPRB staff. It was approved, and has been developed throughout the fall. We have used it as an opportunity to remove buckthorn and other exotics, such as leafy spurge and poison ivy.

We will be the section chief for Brownie and Cedar Lake for preparations leading up to race day in February. There will be a need for many volunteers. Please contact CLPA if you would like to help in this exciting event.

Wildlife News

BY MARY MCGEE

Cedar Lake Park continues to be one of the best birding areas. All through the summer loons were heard calling around Cedar and Calhoun Lakes, but no nesting reported.

Wood Ducks did nest successfully. In early September two piliated woodpeckers were seen and heard in the Burnham Woods area, showing up for a drink at McGees' birdbath.

The Fall bird migration was very spotty due to unusual weather in September and October. Red foxes have been seen off and on. With the arrival of waterfowl on the lakes, the dark-eyed juncos under birdfeeders and the heavy cover of falling leaves on the trails, we can look forward to the change to the white of winter.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A "Little Mouse on the Prairie" reminds us that a variety of tiny creatures go unnoticed by us in the park, but support larger creatures like foxes and minks, hawks and owls and others.



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Cedar Lake Park Update is published seasonally by the Cedar Lake Park Association (CLPA).

Since 1989, CLPA has worked with individuals, neighborhoods, corporations, foundations, churches and schools, as well as with state, regional and federal agencies.

We have successful partnerships with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and other city, county, regional, state and federal agencies.

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If you're seeing this CLPA Update for the first time, contact us if you want to be added to our mailing list.

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CALENDAR

CLPA Steering Committee

Second Monday of each month, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Kenwood Recreation Center. You're invited to participate. Board of Directors nominations close Dec. 1.

Christmas Bird Count Dec. 20–31

Winter Solstice December 21

Annual Meeting

January 26, 6:30–9:00 p.m.,
Jones-Harrison Residence

City of Lakes Loppet

Friday–Saturday, February 5 and 6, 2005
www.cityoflakesloppet.org

Your support is important—

All donations are tax-deductible.*

Come to the park, enjoy its beauty, become a steward. Other ways to help:

- Volunteer your time and talents
- Donate goods or services
- Coordinate a group or sponsor an event
- Donate financial resources, such as cash, stocks, or bonds
- Leave a legacy by including a bequest in your estate planning, or purchase a memorial or honorarium for a loved one

Donate online (www.cedarlakepark.org)

* To the extent allowed by law.



Cedar Lake Park Association Mission

- 1. Create and nurture a park at Cedar Lake with a thriving nature preserve and connecting trails and greenways.**
- 2. Provide opportunities for people to learn to live in community with nature and one another.**
- 3. Continue to foster citizen leadership and private involvement in the development and management of the park and trails.**
- 4. Support similar efforts throughout the metro area and beyond.**