State parks belong to all of us. These benevolent stewards work for what they already own.

Park and Recreation Volunteers

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Since 1983, the **Friends of Volo Bog** have provided both volunteer and financial assistance to Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside. Members have funded projects such as fence row removal and installation of a wetland water control structure, and helped install a 9,000-gallon garden pond which attracts both visitors and wildlife to an accessible viewing area at the visitors center. In addition, the group removes exotic species, assists with youth programs (drawing approximately 5,000 students annually) and special events.

Bob Vetter, a member of the group, said: "Volunteering at Volo Bog has brought back the pleasure of learning new things, and it has increased my enjoyment of the outdoors."

Members of the **Jersey County Bass Club**, Jerseyville, have volunteered for 12 years at the Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair at Pere Marquette State Park at Grafton. Each year, approximately 15 club volunteers show immeasurable patience helping children catch their first fish.

Scott Isringhausen, site interpreter for Pere Marquette State Park said: "Our fishing fair would not be as successful as it is if it weren't for the club's outstanding dedication toward community events. Their personalities are reflected in the positive comments from other volunteers and participants."

Throughout the years, club members have educated thousands of people about the great sport of fishing, putting happy smiles on children's faces.

With the efforts of the **Friends of Fort Massac**, history comes to life at Fort Massac State Park at Metropolis. Members of the group are dedicated to raising money for various educational and historical projects at the park, and one event, "Feast in the Fort," is an exceptional fund-raiser that provides a delightful evening for attendees.

Friends member Vicki Boren said: "The educational aspect alone is so important to help preserve. Fort Massac volunteers help do that by giving their time, and in return their lives are greatly enriched."

Working with the City of Metropolis, donations are obtained for the Fort Massac Encampment, a three-day event

Jersey County Bass Club members are integral to development of an annual fishing fair at Pere Marquette State Park.

(Photo by Kathy Andrews.)

(Photo by Whitney Sawyer.)

(Photo by Jenny Skufca.)

Building and repairing bluebird boxes are among the projects volunteer Tom James (left) does at Eldon Hazlet State Park. Volunteers at Giant City State Park helped organize a reunion of former CCC members.

with 1,400 grade school and junior high school students attending the Friday program and more than 100,000 visitors enjoying the weekend's festivities. Without the Friends support, the program, and other special events, would not take place.

Sue Barfield, president of the group, said: "The fort and its history have greatly enhanced the quality of life in our community. Helping to organize the group has given me the opportunity to meet people, share new ideas, expand my knowledge and support an organization that has made a difference in our community."

Terry Johnson, park site superintendent, claims the success of the park is from the diversity of groups interested in helping with park activities. Volunteer re-enactor groups—Massiac Marines, Fort de Chartres Marines, Milice de St. Famille, St. Phillippe Milice, Early Arkansas Re-enactor Association, Toulose Marines, Detroit Marines, 17th Illinois Territorial Rangers, Discovery Expedition of St. Charles 29th Illinois Infantry, 25th Indiana Infantry and 31st Illinois Volunteer Infantry—conduct programs throughout the year, and craft demonstrations take place courtesy volunteers from the Southern Illinois Spinners and Weavers group.

Since March 2003, two members of the Starved Rock Historical & Educational Foundation, Inc., retired teachers Louis and Frances Borio, have logged more than 2,975 volunteer hours at **Starved Rock State Park** at Utica and have become valuable volunteers. A former public school teacher, Fran volunteers at the Starved Rock State Park Visitors Center's LeRocher Book Store. Lou, the former head of the Natural Science Department at Illinois Valley Community College at Oglesby, puts his working knowledge of the park's history and geology to good use answering questions from the public.

Another member, avid birder John McKee, began volunteering on bird and butterfly monitoring programs, expanding his volunteer time to the park after his retirement.

"Many people think the joys of nature are free but that is certainly not true," McKee said. "If we do not pay for those joys by giving to and advocating for the natural resources that provide them, they will disappear. Volunteering has provided me with opportunities to pursue a life interest in the biological sciences in a way that gives something back to the resources from which I take so much enjoyment. I can continue to use the management skills I developed in my working career for the benefit of causes I believe in, reach out to the public with natural history and conservation issue information, and connect with other professional and amateur naturalists to increase my knowledge of the natural history and natural areas of Illinois."

To volunteer, contact your local DNR park office, or visit www.dnr.state.il.us/volunteer/index.htm.

(Photo by Adele Hodde.)

Each fall, volunteers at Clinton Lake State Recreation Area assist with organizing hunts for persons with disabilities.