

PARKVIEWS

A Publication of The Friends of Donald Park, Inc.

Fall/Winter 2020

FALL AND WINTER AT DONALD PARK

Bob Dettwiler (Semi)Retires As Natural Areas Volunteers Leader

On October 13th, Dane County Parks (DCP) staff, Tuesday volunteers and FoDP board members gathered at Pop's Knoll to honor Bob Dettwiler's leadership of the natural areas volunteers. Parks director Darren Marsh warmly thanked everyone for all they do to make Donald Park so attractive and accessible and commended Bob's dedicated work. Bob then shared how he became involved at the park and what it's been like for him to work here. He has put some of his comments into writing for the newsletter (see p. 2).

Bob's many contributions include planning and installing trail junction maps; taking initiative to monitor the park throughout the year, especially following major storm events; devising ways to address on-going issues such as trail erosion; and enabling FoDP to acquire equipment by identifying and helping write grant proposals. Bob regularly attended FoDP board meetings, and was also in regular communication with DCP staff.

Reflecting on all Bob has done, Barb Hartman, Friends volunteer coordinator, comments, "It has been a pleasure assisting Bob with coordinating the Tuesday volunteers work plan each week. Bob was always looking out for the welfare and safety of the Tuesday volunteers as he planned the tasks they would do each week. Even though in Bob's words "we're not getting any younger", they accomplished so much each time they set out to work.

"Bob made it fun to work, always making sure there was a break with what Bob described as "low-calorie treats and time to shoot the breeze." Everybody was welcome to join the group; during the summer young folks off school for the summer were welcomed by all. Bob was also involved when we needed to prepare for an upcoming event--gathering volunteers to build the fire pit and gather wood and transport the sap for the Maple Syrup Event; seeing that the trails were

in good condition to make the Donald Dash trail run go smoothly. Bob's constant dedication to the park and the volunteers are numerous. We are happy Bob plans to still be a part of the group!"



In conclusion, Rhea Stangel-Maier, DCP volunteer coordinator, sends this note:

Dane County Parks would like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Bob Dettwiler for his volunteerism to Donald County Park. There's no greater gift you can donate than your time. We want to thank you for everything you've done for the park, it's users, us as staff, and the dedicated volunteers you've helped lead for the past 14 years! It truly demonstrates your dedication to the cause.

WE THANK YOU!

On Volunteering At Donald Park

By Bob Dettwiler

Early Involvement

I got started at Donald Park when my wife Judy and I were living on ten acres that bordered the park. Judy was walking in the park one day when she ran into a group of volunteers that were working. Pat Hitchcock, park co-founder and volunteer coordinator, was one of them and she invited Judy to join them. After a few weeks Judy asked me if I wanted to join them, which was in the fall of 2006.



After doing this almost every Tuesday morning since then for 14 years, I'm still here.

I worked with Pat for about three years before she died. She was an amazing lady from whom I learned a lot about the history of the park and what the future plans were. After Pat died in 2009, Jay Gullickson and I shared leadership of the natural areas volunteers. After a few months Jay got another job and couldn't work with us anymore.

My Background

I was born and raised on a dairy farm. After college I worked as a high school Technology

Education Teacher and football coach (12 years as a head coach) for a little over 30 years. At Donald Park, I learned quite early that it was much less stressful to work with these volunteers than it was with teenagers.

None of the volunteers ever complained about their wages. At Christmas time a few years ago I told them we were going to double their pay.

Challenges And Rewards

The one of the biggest challenges is weather, especially heavy rain that makes it hard to keep our trails open, and really cold temperatures in winter.

The volunteers are very dedicated, ambitious, and very easy and enjoyable to work with. They have a variety of different backgrounds and lots of expertise, especially in the area of repairing and maintaining all of our equipment. We always try to take a coffee break around 10:30 each Tuesday and everyone brings treats to share (always low-cal).

I've always enjoyed working with the people at the Dane County Parks in Madison and also going to the meetings of the FODP Board. Both these groups have been very helpful and we are always getting positive feedback from them.

Doing work like this is quite rewarding because at the end of the day you can always look back and see what you've accomplished. It's also been very nice seeing all the people using the park the last seven months.

Looking To The Future

Finally, saying I'm retiring probably isn't the correct term. This has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done and I still enjoy it very much. I am planning on sharing the responsibilities of decision making on what we plan to do each week.

MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of Donald Park, Inc. promotes and supports the development and passive use of Donald County Park through programs and activities that provide education, restoration and preservation of cultural, natural and historical resources representing Dane County's rural heritage for present and future generations.



A new look for the FoDP board - socially-distanced and all wearing masks for the August meeting!



Riders and drivers alike frequently visited, from May through early November. A number of area equestrians who were unable to travel to distant riding venues discovered Donald Park's excellent equestrian trails for the first time this year.

Trail Runners Support Donald Park Despite A Disappointing Racing Season

“ So bummed we won't be able to race this year but I'm glad I can still help support the park!

”

Restrictions on gatherings as a result of the pandemic necessitated postponing the popular Donald Dash trail run from May to September, and finally cancelling the run altogether when it became clear that infection rates were not abating. Cancelling was disappointing for several reasons---organizer Greg Wiegand had put in many hours of preparatory work; runners were deprived of participating a popular, rewarding event; and the Friends lost a major fundraising opportunity.

However, 130 of the registered trail runners stepped forward to generously donate their race fees to the Friends, which netted our organization \$3,900 for trail maintenance.

Many runners included appreciative comments with their donation: “It is a great park. Looking forward to next year. Stay healthy!” and “So bummed we won't be able to race this year but I'm glad I can still help support the park!” Many runners still took to the trails to stay in shape and as one noted, “I just ran at Donald on Sunday AM and it was awesome! Looking forward to next spring and hopefully racing again.”

We are so appreciative for the generous, caring support of organizer Greg Wiegand and all the runners. We look forward to seeing everyone on the trails in 2021!

Jill Stevenson, with Finn Rotherburg and Koen Mattison, installed a new kestrel nest box in fall near the Sutter Drive entrance, part of a citizen science project through Madison Audubon that has been on-going for 30 years. Beginning in spring, Finn will monitor the box for a 4th grade science independent study project. An in-depth article about this project and these amazing birds will appear in our spring newsletter.



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<http://donaldpark.org/>
Trail Maps & Directions
Support our club



Lars Higdon, DCP naturalist, led two seed collecting outings at Donald Park in fall. Seed collecting is a huge County-wide effort each fall. This year, volunteers spent more than 1,000 hours collecting and cleaning 1,747 pounds of seeds, representing 220 species and valued at more than \$500,000!

“There is strength in the hills and peace in the valleys.”

Delma Donald Woodburn, Donald County Park Co-Founder

Friends of Donald Park

Partners with the Dane County Adult Conservation Team



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friends Programs and Events: Please check the Friends website at donaldpark.org, our Facebook page, and your emails for updates on whether the Friends will be able to hold our annual meeting, volunteer dinner and maple syrup event, all traditionally held within the first three months of each year.

Natural Areas/Trails Volunteer Workdays: Postponed until at least March. Please let Barb know if you'd like to be added to this list: 608-437-5210 or contact@donaldpark.org

Horse trail workdays: Beginning again in spring. Call Roger, 608-832-4410, to put your name on a call list.

Donald Dash Trail Run: May - For updates and registration, go to: donaldparktrailruns.com