

# Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail & Hoffman Hills Newsletter



Number 59 - Winter 2017

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## Candlelight Ski

Friday, January 27th

**FREE EVENT TRAIL PASS FEE WAIVED**

The annual popular winter event, the Candlelight Ski, will be held on January 27 from 6 - 9 P.M. The Red Cedar State Trail and the Stokke Trail will be lit with luminaries. Also again this year, there is the opportunity to snowshoe on an illuminated trail at neighboring Riverside Park. With some good snow and decent temperatures it should shape up to be a great night to enjoy these winter activities. The Red Cedar State Trail will be open for skiing from the Depot to the illuminated ice wall, about 1.5 miles. Skis are required for the Red Cedar State Trail. We ask walkers to be respectful of the groomed Red Cedar State Trail and refrain from walking on it. For those wishing to ski, it is advisable that you bring your own skis. Limited ski rentals are available from Stout Adventures by calling 232-5625, in advance. The Stokke Trail will be cleared to provide the opportunity for those wishing to take a candlelight walk. For those interested in snowshoeing, either bring your own snowshoes, or free snowshoes will be provided by the Mayo Clinic Health System for everyone in the family to enjoy.

The Depot will be open and staffed with volunteers who can provide information about the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills. Of interest are the many displays in the Depot. Passes will not be required that evening; however, yearly trail passes will be available for sale. Also for sale, will be Red Cedar State Trail merchandise.

After skiing or walking, warm up with a cup of hot chocolate provided by Swiss Miss and join everyone around the glowing bonfire. It is a fun time for the whole family to experience the joys of winter.

Event sponsored by the Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail/Hoffman Hills, Wisconsin DNR, ConAgra/Swiss Miss, and Mayo Clinic Health System. The event is held regardless of snow conditions, with modifications made. Door prizes will be drawn. Come join the fun!

I've never seen rain on Christmas or lightning for that matter, but I can definitely check both of the list this year. Despite the weather swings, ski season has started at both properties. Trails are in ok condition after all the rain and wind but it's still early in the season so they should improve after the beginning of the year. The volunteer groomers have done a great job with what they have to work with, especially the Red Cedar crew who are using the old Alpine snowmobile. Again a big thanks to all the volunteer groomers!

Ski season isn't the only active time on the trail as this fall was the busiest I've seen the properties in the last 5 years. As all fall leaf seasons go, it was there and gone in about 2 weeks. You just couldn't beat the weather though and people took advantage of that. The extended fall season really boosted attendance at numbers at both properties. We estimate that we had close to 60,000 visitors on the Red Cedar and 50,000 at Hoffman Hills respectively for the 2016 calendar year. The economic impacts of these properties together based on these numbers bring in over \$4.8 million! Tourism is such a huge part of our area that Discover Wisconsin is even doing a show to highlight the Red Cedar Trail coming up in early 2017. Barb and Dave Gorman were fantastic in showcasing the trail and I wanted to personally thank them for helping with the upcoming episode. We actually had a hard time figuring out what locations to showcase, because really the trail has so many unique features. I hope you enjoy the episode.

Between doing TV shows we actually did do work on the properties this year. Staff spent a considerable amount of time not only doing routine maintenance but some very important trail improvements and facility repairs. You will probably notice new signage along the Red Cedar and Chippewa River Trails at the road intersections and some parking lots. These signs use symbols to explain what activities are allowed and not allowed. This universal signage is intended to help with language barriers and improve our communication with our visitors. We also put out more intersection signs at Hoffman Hills. This is more of a stop gap measure until we are able to complete our ongoing trail improvement project. Once the trail improvements are completed we expect to install a more formal signage system to incorporate not only the trail map information but all the other signage that clutters up the posts. If you make it out to the tower at Hoffman, you may also notice new railings and stair tread boards. With the help of some our dedicated volunteers from the Friends and the Optimist Club we completed the 2 upper observation decks and are planning to complete the lower deck this coming summer. We have much more planned this coming summer to catch up on our maintenance list so plan to see additional improvements.

Happy New Year and I hope 2016 was a good year for all. I want to start by thanking you for your past support of our two great trails and I hope you can continue to help us whether by membership, volunteering and if possible, both.

The Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills are off to a great start in 2017 as even with the limited snow, cross country skiing is quite good at both trails. This could not be possible without the dollars we raise through memberships/donations combined with the strong group of dedicated volunteer groomers we have. The reality is that support of our trails with state dollars has continued to decrease and organizations like the FRCST/Hoffman Hills are needed more than ever to help maintain these fabulous resources.

As you will see mentioned throughout this newsletter, the Red Cedar Trail and Hoffman Hills have a tremendous economic impact to our county. People love to visit both properties and we constantly hear how impressed they are not only with the natural beauty but also by the overall cleanliness and maintenance of the sites. I was recently talking to a woman at the Red Cedar Trail who had come over from Minneapolis to ski. Her comment was "You must be very proud of your community - it is just a beautiful place. We keep coming back to ski and bike and we bring new people all the time as we know they will love it." What a great thing to hear and I am very proud to be part of this community.

Our focus will be to continue to help make both properties as user friendly as possible. 2016 was a very active year for the group as along with our partner the DNR we helped host the candlelight ski and the National Trails Day gathering - both very successful. In addition our tremendous group of volunteers under the coordination of Ellen Ochs kept the Depot open from Memorial Day to mid fall which adds to the experience of so many people visiting the trail. Visitors get their questions answered, can purchase trail passes and walk away with that personal touch which helps bring them back. We wrote a grant that was funded by the Menomonie Noon Rotary which will allow us to install a couple of bike tire pumps on the trail and another grant that continues to allow us to complete some needed maintenance on the Depot. Local photographer and UW-Stout Professor Jennifer Grant was our guest presenter at our annual meeting held in November and her photographs of eagles and other wildlife from the Red Cedar Trail were just wonderful. You will see throughout this newsletter that Hoffman Hills had many things done as well and it continues to be a destination people from all over the state specifically come to visit.

I will end by asking for your continued support to help us with our mission and I wish you all the best in 2017.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Summer Depot Staffing, Meet Menomonie, Annual Meeting

We had a very successful summer season at the Trail Head, with great volunteers, good trail pass sales, and a fun Volunteer Recognition Picnic in September. We recruit and train volunteers to staff the Depot on weekdays from Memorial Day to Labor Day (The Chamber staffs the weekends). Attention: New volunteers are always welcome! Three hour shifts, only. Also, we are looking for a Volunteer Coordinator for 2017 - please contact me ([ellenbochs@yahoo.com](mailto:ellenbochs@yahoo.com)) or any board member if you are interested in either opportunity.

Once again the Friends had a table at "Meet Menomonie" in September, where board member Sue Foxwell and I got to introduce hundreds of Stout students to the wonders of the Red Cedar Trail and Hoffman Hills! Quite a few agreed to volunteer for some of our projects.

Our Annual Meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup> was exciting, with award-winning photographer and professor Jennifer Grant's program featuring her fabulous wildlife photos taken on the Red Cedar Trail. She gave the back-story for the dramatic eagle photos, and other birds. You can see some of her photos on our website and our FaceBook page.

**Treasurer's Report****Deb Challe**

I'm excited to assume the position of Treasurer for the Friends of the Red Cedar Trail / Hoffman Hills group. I'm even more excited to be able to provide an optimistic financial report. Our individual and family membership receipts this year were \$1430 -- an increase of over 70% from 2015. Corporate memberships, which are split between the Red Cedar Trail and the Hoffman Hills Grooming accounts, totaled \$200. Efforts are underway to bring in more support from local businesses and to provide more convenient payment options for all. In addition to membership dollars, we received \$1159 in donations, \$90 of which was specifically offered for grooming at Hoffman Hills. Trail pass sales were also up, from \$2280 in 2015 to \$3392 this year. Revenue was higher in part because of increases in pass prices, but 2016 also saw a larger number of daily passes sold. This additional activity at the Depot may be part of the reason for the \$430 profit on t-shirt sales. New shirts are on the way, so look for your opportunity to show your support of our organization soon!

As of December 31, 2016 we have a general fund balance of \$3178 and a Hoffman Hills Grooming balance of \$4199, bringing our operating cash total to \$7377. There are also three accounts set up for specific expenditures. The Stewardship Grant Account has a balance of \$440 and an additional \$1250 in grant money available. These dollars are earmarked for much-needed repairs on the Depot door, and we hope to get bids for that project in soon. The \$1664 in the Burr Oak Savanna Account provides for ongoing restoration and tree planting at Hoffman Hills. Our newest account houses the Bike Station Grant, which was funded by the Menomonie Rotary Club. The \$1250 grant amount will cover most of the cost of two high-security outdoor public bike pumps to be installed this spring. The balance of \$133 will be paid from our general fund and the installation will be provided by the DNR and FRCTHH volunteers. One of the pumps will be located at the trailhead of the Red Cedar Trail in Menomonie and the other in the designated Red Cedar Trail parking area in Downsville.

I'd like to close by thanking Nancy Flyen for her years of service in the treasurer's role and for her assistance as I transition into the various responsibilities of this position. I'm looking forward to a great 2017!

Check out the Friends website for more information about two of Dunn County's favorite recreational areas. The website averages 200 to 300 unique visits per month and our Facebook page has 187 "Likes". Previous newsletters are also on the site and a listing of all the new board members.

**Friends website:** [redcedarhoffman.org](http://redcedarhoffman.org)

**Friends Facebook Page:** search for Friends of the Red Cedar Trail and Hoffman Hills and click the "LIKE" button.

**Cross Country Skiing****Barb Gorman**

The Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills are open for cross-country skiing. Once again, both ski areas are being groomed by volunteers. Skiers sincerely appreciate the groomers' time and commitment to doing the best grooming job available. It isn't always easy to groom, given the equipment that is used. The gator continues to be a great addition for grooming at Hoffman Hills. The alpine snowmobile used to pull the grooming equipment on the Red Cedar State Trail is in dire need of being replaced. Both areas have been in fantastic shape, despite the ski trails needing more snow. When more snow arrives, the classic track will get set at both ski areas. You might notice a new addition at both ski areas, the presence of volunteer ski patrols. Several skiers have volunteered to wear the bright yellow vests, identifying he/she as a trail volunteer. It is hoped this addition will help reduce the number of people who damage the groomed ski trails by walking/hiking/running. The volunteer is also available to provide assistance to any skier. It has been a great winter so far, get out and enjoy the skiing. Thank you to Calvin and the groomers!

**Special note**

*It is cross country ski season. This means the Red Cedar State Trail from Menomonie to Downsville is for skiing only. No hiking/walking/running or snowshoeing on this section of the trail. Walking/hiking/running is available on the Stokke Trail and walking/hiking/running and snowshoeing is available south of Downsville. The volunteer trail groomers even pat down the snow south of Downsville for the walkers. Hoffman Hills is also groomed for cross-country skiing. There are SEPARATE trails for walking/hiking/running and snowshoeing. Skiers pay a fee to use the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills. Volunteers groom the two ski areas. There are multiple signs indicating the trails are for skiing only. The walking/hiking/snowshoe trails at Hoffman Hills are not groomed, and are to the west of the parking lot, accessible from the overflow parking lot. Please respect the designated ski trails and do not walk/hike or run on the groomed ski trails.*

The Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail/Hoffman Hills will be conducting its annual membership drive, beginning in January 2017. There has been much discussion about the reorganization of the Wisconsin DNR, and discussions about possible continued changes to the DNR. This makes Friends' groups even more important to the sustaining and improvement of nature areas. Very few places in the State of Wisconsin are as fortunate as the residents of Dunn County to have two beautiful nature areas of the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills. The tourism impact to Dunn County because of these two nature areas is substantial. A recent report about the impact of nature areas was conducted. This report noted, "Outdoor recreation on public lands serves as a key motivator for tourism. Tourists travel to rural regions for much more than great hotels and restaurants. Primary motivations of travel to these regions include unique resources and their recreation areas. The tourism impact of the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills is over 4 million dollars. The two areas average almost 100,00 visitors a year. The report identifies six activities available on various state trails. The Red Cedar State Trail provides five of the six activities; running, hiking, birding, cross-country skiing, and biking. Hoffman Hills provides cross-country skiing, running, hiking, and birding. The Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills are quality of life resources for present and future generations.

Many projects have been completed at the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills as a result of the Friends' group. Some of these include; the repaving and restriping of the parking lot, repair of the observation tower, prairie restoration planting, new trail signage (including a trail named Juba, after Dick Hoffman's pet goat), continuation of the Oak Savanna project, future bike pump station installation on the Red Cedar State Trail this spring, volunteer staffing of the Depot on week days in the summer, remodeling of the depot's window, cross-country ski trail grooming, and the list goes on! Future improvements are in the discussion stage, including lighting of the parking lot and obtaining different grooming equipment for the Red Cedar State Trail.

The perks of becoming a member? You will receive the member newsletter, up-to-date news about the parks and state trails, access to the Friends' web site and Facebook page, occasional emails about special events, and the reward of knowing you are supporting the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills.

It is easy to join or to renew. You can print page 7 of this newsletter and send it to us with a check (old school). You can also sign-up via our website (new school). A link to join is on the Friends' website at [redcedarhoffman.org](http://redcedarhoffman.org). Go to the Membership page and follow the instructions. A secure Square Cash web service is used that accepts debit cards.

**Dues are:** \$25.00 for a family membership, \$20.00 for an individual membership, \$10.00 for a student membership, and \$500.00 for an individual lifetime membership. The Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail/Hoffman Hills is a non-profit 501(3)(c) organization, and the Friends do not sell or distribute its email list.

Thank you for joining (or renewing) the Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail/Hoffman Hills.

**Friends of the  
Red Cedar State Trail & Hoffman Hills**

P.O. Box 628

Menomonie, WI 54751

**Don't forget to get your annual trail pass**



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**Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail & Hoffman Hills**

**Join Today!**

(or renew your membership)

Dues for 2017 (Jan. – Dec.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Check One:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Small Business      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Large Business      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Student    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Sponsoring Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime  |  |

**Special Contribution to the CC Ski Grooming Fund** \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Memberships Include:**

- Membership Card
- Newsletters
- Information on Activities

**Make checks payable to:  
Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail  
P.O. Box 628  
Menomonie, WI 54751**