

Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail & Hoffman Hills Newsletter



Number 75 - Winter 2024

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Website:

redcedarhoffman.org



FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024
6 to 9 PM at the Depot

- Ski the Red Cedar Trail and see the ice wall
- Walk the Junction Trail
- Snowshoe at Riverside Park

Ski rentals available in advance from Stout Adventures.
Snowshoes provided free of charge by Mayo Clinic Health System.

After skiing, walking or snowshoeing on candlelit trails, warm up with a cup of Swiss Miss hot chocolate provided by Conagra and cookies provided by Kwik Trip around a glowing bonfire. **It's a fun time for the whole family to experience the joys of winter.**

Event sponsored by the Friends of the Red Cedar Trail and Hoffman Hills, Wisconsin DNR, ConAgra, Landmark Conservancy and Mayo Clinic Health System.

Website: redcedarhoffman.org
or call 715-232-1242

Hello Friends and welcome to a new year!

A couple things I want to highlight in this newsletter is the gazebo renovation, the grooming equipment upgrades, and our many volunteer projects this past year.

Many of our annual accomplishments are the result of volunteers and the Friends Group working together. The gazebo renovation is a great example of both. The Friends were able to secure a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant to replace the



roof and rotted boards.

Volunteers from Xcel Energy helped restrain the entire building after the roof and boards were replaced. Without these repairs the gazebo would not have lasted much longer.

For example, while tearing apart the old roof, Chris Gaetzke (the owner of Steadfast Handyman) found most of the cedar shacks and some of the underlayment to be infested with carpenter ants.

The old structure didn't have much life left but with the new repairs, trail visitors will get to have many years of enjoyment out of our beloved gazebo.

Again, a great example of the Friends and community volunteers helping support and maintain our trail infrastructure.



Another thing we have been fortunate to do is to improve our snow grooming equipment over the years. Last year the Friends Group bought a new snowmobile which I hear was amazing to use compared to the old single ski Alpine. I'm kind of jealous for the groomers because I don't groom as much, but they really deserve having some new equipment after enduring a lot of years using the old machine. This year we were able to buy two new Tidd Tech rollers to replace the old steel ones. A couple of advantages of the new rollers are that they are much lighter, and the snow doesn't stick to them as they are made from plastic pipe. For the folks that have never groomed trails before, imagine trying to move around a heavy steel roller in snow and imagine that same roller turning into a giant snowball when the snow starts sticking to it going up and down those hills at Hoffman. There's been many a times I remember getting stuck out on the trails with a snow packed roller and spending hours chipping it clean to get the trails packed down after a heavy wet snowfall. I have very much appreciated our dedicated volunteer ski groomers that have endured that very real situation many times over the years.



This year we are also working on replacing the older John Deere Gator that is used at Hoffman Hills. That machine has served us well but it's well due for

replacement. If you've been a Friends member for a while you probably remember that it was purchased over 12 years ago. I can hardly believe it's been that long, but it was major improvement to our grooming equipment back then. We were using the old Alpine snowmobile before that time, and we had to use a winch to get it up some of the hills. The new machine will be a Kubota UTV with an upgraded track system, power steering and heated cab! It



should really work well going up and down those steep hills and much more user friendly than our old machine.

Again, we had a lot of groups and individuals donate time and resources to things such as for the gazebo renovation and acquiring new grooming equipment, but we had many other projects that we accomplished as well. We hosted workdays at Hoffman Hills with the Optimist Club and local school groups to repair and replace tree shelters on the oak savanna project. We had groups like Xcel Energy and Andersen Logistics pick up garbage and work on removing invasive species along the Red Cedar Trail. We had a great group of volunteers help in the Depot Visitor Center again with some of them new to the program. We had quite a few folks first learn about volunteering at the visitor center from our Chippewa Valley Learning in Retirement program that Ellen Ochs, Bill Kryshak, and I presented at.

I can't thank the Friends Group and especially the board members enough for what they do for the trail! Volunteering, donations, and memberships all adds up to thousands of hours and thousands of dollars that goes to support these properties. Thank you all for a being a Friend to the trails!

President's Report

Bill Kryshak

I hope the new year is off to a good start for you. I am writing with a bit of snow on the ground and a temperature of 2 so this week feels a bit more like winter. Thank you for all the support you give for the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills Recreation Area. It allows us to continue with the goal of always making the properties more user friendly.

2023 was an exciting year for the Friends and we hope that in 2024 we can continue to work hard to keep improving our trails. Last year started with the purchase of the new snowmobile for grooming, and it was everything we expected. The start of this year's ski season is off to a very slow start, and sadly, we have decided to cancel the Candlelight Ski that was scheduled for the 26th. Our decision was based on a lack of snow and a potential for rain which will ice up the trail and just not make it safe for anyone.

National Trails Day, the first Saturday of June, was well attended last year with a great turnout of families with young children. Mark down June 1st on your calendars for this year's event.

In the summer with the help from a matching grant, the Friends were also able to fund the refurbishing of the gazebo at the trailhead. Steadfast Handyman did a great job replacing the rotting wood, putting on a new roof, and with the help of a group of volunteers from Xcel Energy, it was stained.

Thank you to Neil Koch who presented at our annual meeting in November on the origin of rocks and water in our area, including the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills Recreation Area. It was very educational, and Neil did a great job explaining the impact that developments and rural changes are making on our water table.

Our properties continue to be a tremendous draw for our community and the positive comments we hear from visitors can make our community proud. People not only are impressed with the biking, skiing and hiking, they are so very complimentary of the friendliness they experience from everyone in the community when visiting. A big thanks for this can go to volunteers that staff the Depot during weekdays in the summer and to the DNR employees who are there during the weekend. Thanks to Ellen who coordinates this for the Friends and to Penny who handles things on the DNR side.

Thank you to all who volunteer on both trails as this is what allows us to make the properties a destination point for the community and visitors. A big thanks to Calvin as we could not have a better trail manager for our properties. Stay safe and see you on the trail when winter does arrive.

We had a great Summer 2023 at the Trail Head Depot – six new volunteers! Four to work regular 3-hour shifts and two to be substitutes when needed, so we were able to staff Monday through Thursday. Last year, after a 2- year Covid gap, we could only cover 3 days a week.

The new people were very welcome, and we sold as many passes by early July as we had sold the entire summer of '22, so things are looking up! You know, the Friends get a percentage of passes we sell. We ended the summer with a picnic celebration.

I'll be contacting volunteers in early spring – may need more new people – so if you are interested, let me know! My email is ellenbochs@yahoo.com.

More recently, once again we celebrated **First Day Hike/Ski**, noon to 2pm on January 1st 2024 (except with no snow it was all Hike and no Ski!) with the help of a troop of Girl Scouts to welcome people into the Depot to warm up, serving them



hot chocolate and cookies, after people had greeted the New Year by hiking the trail along the river. Happy New Year!

The Friends of Red Cedar Trail 2023 had a busy year in 2023! Our largest expenditure was the purchase of a brand new grooming snowmobile, but we also used funds for completing repairs on the gazebo, printing a new batch of brochures and t-shirts, and purchasing an ipad to use for electronic sales at the Depot. Our income came from a variety of sources, including state grants, generous donations, and pass sales. One of the most consistent sources of revenue comes from mebership and this year our membership contributions were over \$2500. It's great to see that kind of support, and to see our membership expanding.

Noteworthy contributions:

Community Foundation Grant	\$7,000
State of Wisconsin Grant	\$1,125
Anonymous Donation	\$2,000

Major expenditures:

Snowmobile	\$17,251
Gazebo	\$4,241
Brochures, tshirts, ipad, new insurance	

Account balances as of the end of the year:

Operating Fund	\$18,920
Hoffman Hills/Red Cedar Grooming Account...	\$6,645
Total Funds Available	\$25,565

Don't forget to buy your trail passes through the FRCT! You can do so (as well as renew your membership) via the website: <https://redcedarhoffman.org/>

Thanks to everyone for all the ways you support the Friends of Red Cedar Trail and for another successful year!

Important Dues Reminder for 2024

The Friends of the Red Cedar State Trail & Hoffman Hills is a non-profit support organization dedicated to enhancing the recreational and educational opportunities by sponsoring, promoting and funding many activities as well as participating in projects that help to maintain and improve the Red Cedar State Trail and Hoffman Hills. The Friends group derives its funding from dues paid by individuals and businesses, donations, grants and a percentage of trail pass revenues. These funds provide resources for interpretive programs, volunteer workdays and community events such as the Annual Candlelight Ski and National Trails Day. As a reminder, dues can be paid by using the form on the last page of this newsletter and mailing to the address indicated.

<http://redcedarhoffman.org/membership/>

**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



Join Today!

(or renew your membership)
Dues for 2024 (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**