

Ahead Of Earth Day, NPF And City Eye New Opportunities At The Watershed, Other Green Space Sites

by Cathy A. Hensley
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EDWARDSVILLE - The nonprofit Nature Preserve Foundation and the City of Edwardsville are carrying out the Earth Day 2023 mission to “act, innovate and implement” by partnering in more ways and places than ever before.

The City owns the Watershed Nature Center, a 43-acre haven of biodiversity, which had long been led and managed by the Nature Preserve Foundation. Since September, the City has taken over the caretaking of the Watershed Nature Center, freeing up the

Nature Preserve Foundation to fully dedicate itself to fundraising, leading volunteer activities and organizing discovery days, educational programming and events not just for the Watershed, but other green space sites, too.

The Foundation's first big event of 2023 is, appropriately, Earth Day. The Foundation is partnering with numerous businesses and organizations for this year's celebration, which will take place on Saturday, April 22, at the Watershed Nature Center. BJC, Cork Tree Creative, Whole Body Yoga, Partners for Pets, Massage LuXe, NFuz are among groups that are supporting and/or participating in the event.

Events include a 5K run for adults, a 1-mile fun run for kids, a native plant sale, tree giveaway, discovery day activities and a bird walk. Other featured activities include education booths, yoga, massages, food trucks and music.

"The Nature Preserve Foundation is very excited for Earth Day 2023," said Jeff Bash, the president of the Nature Preserve Foundation. "We anticipate over 300 people enjoying the beautiful grounds at the Watershed Nature Center. You won't want to miss this!"

In recent months, the City has repaved the trail surfaces at Watershed to make them more accessible for strollers and wheelchairs. The deck of the Welcome Center also has been refinished.

"The City recognizes what a wonderful and valued resource the Watershed Nature Center is for the community," Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Director Nate Tingley said. "We are happy to grow our partnership with the Nature Preserve Foundation so the Watershed and other green space areas will flourish.

The Nature Preserve Foundation supported the City this month with a restoration day at the 35-acre Richards Woods property, a more recent green space acquisition for Edwardsville.

"Our new agreement with Edwardsville is allowing the City to do what it does best and the Nature Preserve Foundation to do what we do best," said Bash, emphasizing the Foundation's threefold mission: to reconnect people with nature, protect ecology and promote an active lifestyle.

The Foundation recently launched a new website, www.naturepreservefoundation.org, to promote its expanded roster of activities and events. For more information about the group's efforts and a schedule of Earth Day activities, visit the site or email

info@naturepreservefoundation.org. For information about the Watershed Nature Center, other green space properties and parks owned and operated by the City, visit cityofedwardsville.com/267/Parks-Information.