

# Thorn Creek News

Spring 2018

Forty years ago, June 1978, Thorn Creek Nature Preserve was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

## What is an Illinois Nature Preserve?

A tapestry of nature's treasures is protected in Illinois by the nationally acclaimed Nature Preserves System. Only high quality natural areas qualify for this land protection tool, such as remnants of the original Illinois wilderness, outstanding examples of natural land transformation, or habitat for rare or endangered species of plants or animals.

Dedication is the strongest protection that can be given to land under Illinois law. The nine member Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) determines whether an area is significant enough to warrant this protection, then dedication is approved by the landowner, INPC, Director of the Department of Natural Resources and the Governor.

These last remaining remnants of our state's natural heritage are almost all that is left of the way the state looked in the 1800's. Today, less than 0.1% of the landscape remains as it did when first seen by Illinois' early settlers. Without this protection, many of these exceptional areas would be lost forever.

Nature Preserves thus provide unique opportunities for preservation, public enjoyment, critical scientific study and education.

\*Nature Preserves can be **stand-alone** preserves like Thorn Creek Nature Preserve, where the *entire tract* is a Nature Preserve.

Or, a **portion** of a Forest Preserve or a Park District holding can be a dedicated Nature Preserve.

\*Also, the goals & uses of a Nature Preserve—  
natural area preservation; scientific, educational & esthetic interest; and, hiking and nature study—can also be of importance in Forest Preserves and Park Districts.

### Nature Preserve

Natural area preservation

Scientific, educational  
& esthetic interest

Passive Recreation:  
Hiking & nature study

### Forest Preserve

#### Active & Passive Recreation:

- Picnicing
- Playfields
- Cross country skiing
- Horseback riding
- Fishing & boating
- Hiking & nature study

Natural area preservation

Scientific, educational  
& esthetic interest

### Park District

#### Active & Passive Recreation:

- Organized sports & classes
- Picnicing
- Playfields
- Cross country skiing
- Horseback riding
- Swimming
- Hiking & nature study

Natural area preservation

Scientific, educational  
& esthetic interest

## TRACKS

The yard is pristine white.  
 A good three inches fell on Monday  
 With another dusting last night.  
 I venture outside to get the mail  
 Down off the porch and onto the driveway.  
 What's this?  
 Someone - or something - crossed through our yard last night  
 Then, stepping softly, disappeared silently into the woods,  
 As only deer can do.  
 Further on I spy evidence of smaller visitors  
 The delicate trace of a possum's passing and the triangular track of a  
 raccoon, ready for mischief at a moment's notice.  
 Both seeking sustenance to get through the winter.  
 Leaving the mail on the porch, I head around back  
 to replenish the bird feeders.  
 Mourning doves ascend in a winged flurry of sound as I arrive.  
 The ground shows traces that our resident fox was here,  
 skirting the shells of old sunflower seeds  
 A pungent reminder that a skunk has also passed through floats in the air.  
 So much happening while I was snuggled under the covers!  
 Feeders filled, mail in hand  
 I return to the house  
 Adding my tracks to the others.  
 -Kendra



## Thank You

- Susan Inman - \$100 to the Capital Fund in memory of John Inman
- Theresa Arends Smith - \$100 to the Friends General Purposes in memory of Katie Armstrong
- Jessica Wood - \$50 to the Friends General Purposes in memory of Andrew Hoffer
- Christopher Trojniar - \$20 to the Friends General Purposes in memory of Andrew Jacob Hoffer
- Terry & Roxann Ingraffia - \$50 to the Capital Fund in memory of Andrew J. Hoffer
- Penelope Chamberlain - \$500 to the Friends General Purposes
- Thomas & Carolyn Gann - \$25 to Friends in memory of Katie Armstrong
- Donations to Thorn Creek Nature Center: Anthony Rozic (\$100); Mary Hellings (\$10); Barb Finley (\$10); Garden Club of Park Forest (\$50).
- The Armstrongs- \$100 to Thorn Creek Nature Center in memory of Katie Armstrong
- Blackhawk Primary Center- \$85 to Thorn Creek Nature Center in memory of Andrew Hoffer
- Labb Family—\$50 to Thorn Creek Nature Center in memory of Katie Armstrong
- Many donations of items: Bird educational materials— Sue Zelek; “Birds Year of Observation” - Barb Osuch; bird calendars— Jim Pisani; bird seed—Linda Gattis & Penny Chamberlain; water— Dave Bartlett, Mark Petnuch, Margerite Withers, and Vicki Schmidt; suet & post-its – Carolyn Gann; tools- Penny Chamberlain; cards— April Richards; and a new shop vac from Alice Hanes.

Capital Fund contributions are currently funding painting, repairs and gutters for the nature center and boardwalks in the preserve. This spring and summer, help us to build on this momentum, by asking neighbors or friends to become members. Or give a gift membership to celebrate Earth Day.

Thank you for your support and kindness

## Earth Day at Thorn Creek: Wild Water

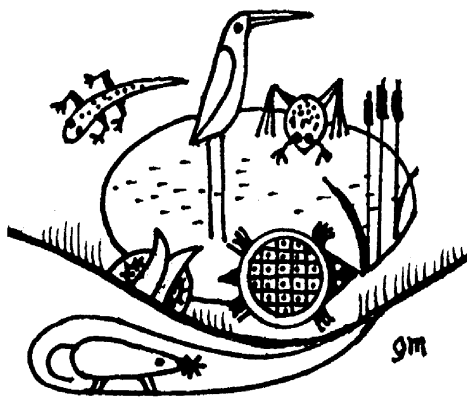
Saturday, April 21 1 - 4 p.m. Free! All ages

Earth Day celebrates the waters of Thorn Creek Woods exploring the creek, marshes and ponds that are home to many amphibians

1 p.m.—Hike to the Creek

All Day:  
Amphibian Slide Show  
Get your Frog Calling Calendar  
Make a Toad House  
Investigate Soil Critters  
and Frog Life Cycles

There will be lots of fun  
for everyone including  
refreshments,  
activities,  
a hike  
and our Spring Raffle.



This event is sponsored by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods  
& the Jim Marzuki Fund for Public Programming



### Helpers for Earth Day needed

- Parking attendants, helpers with refreshments and crafts
- Baked goods for Earth Day, April 21. Call or email to volunteer your baking. You can bring goods Friday, April 20, noon-4 pm or Saturday 11 am- 1 pm.

### NOTE:

**The Historic Farm Walk scheduled for Sunday  
June 3, is cancelled this year.  
Watch for this program again next year.**

## Thorn Creek Woods

247 Monee Rd, Park Forest  
708-747-6320

tcwoods.org

Thorn\_creek@att.net

Nature Center open Friday and  
Sunday, noon to 4 pm

Trails Open Dawn to Dusk

<b>Wednesday Morning Walkers</b>	Wednesdays 9-10:30 am
<b>Follow the Fox</b> Kids under 12	Sunday April 8 1-3 pm
<b>Earth Day: Wild Water</b>	Saturday April 21 1- 4pm
<b>Soils Hike</b> At Park Forest Wetlands Discovery Center. Register: 708-748-2005	April 28 10am-noon Ages 6-10 \$15 fee
<b>Full Moon Hike</b>	Sunday April 29 7-9 p.m.
<b>Wildflower Hike for Kids</b> Kids under 12	Saturday May 12 1-3 p.m.
<b>Flower Moon Hike</b>	Tuesday May 29 7:30-9:30 pm 10 years and older
<b>Volunteers Picnic at Pine Lake</b>	Sunday June 10 11 am-2 p.m.
<b>Hidden Ponds Hike</b>	Saturday June 16 1-4 p.m.
<b>Solstice Hike</b>	Thursday June 21 6-8 pm
<b>Thorn Creek Chamber Players</b>	Sunday June 24 3-5 p.m. \$10/person
<b>Insects Abound for Kids</b> At Park Forest Wetlands Discovery Center. Register: 708-748-2005	Saturday June 30 1-3 pm \$15 ages 6-10

## Friends Membership

Linda and Lisa Bronson, Membership Coordinators

**229**

*Friends of Thorn Creek Woods is 229 members strong.*

**87%**

**87%** reside in Illinois with the other **13%** scattered across America: Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

**103**

In Illinois most Friends—**103**—live in Park Forest, Crete or Homewood.  
And another **96** Friends live in our surrounding communities and, actually,  
all over Illinois from Algonquin to Champaign, to Rock Island, to Springfield.

**156**

As of March 26, 2018 (before our annual memberships are due May 1st)  
we have **156 regular members** with **4** of these being **gifts** (what a great birthday or holiday gift)  
and **14** of them being **complimentary**. When a new person donates to our Capital Fund, we automatically  
include the donor as a Friends member, hoping, of course that they will continue and renew with us.

**5**

**Organizations and businesses** provide us with **5** memberships—  
a category we have publicized in recent years and hope to increase.

**68**

And we have **68 Life** members, an excellent way to support Friends.

**142**

Today **142** members are **Up-to-Date** on their memberships.  
This includes all the Life members and all the other members  
that paid their dues for 2017-18 which were due May 1, 2017.

**87**

We have **87** members that are **not Up-to-Date**.

**Check your mailing label on this newsletter.**  
On the very first line, it shows your renewal date.

**If it says: 5/1/18**

**- you are up-to-date and need to send in your renewal by  
May 1st**

**If it says 5/1/17 or 5/1/16 or 3/15/11 or ....**

**-you are overdue and need to send in your renewal  
by May 1st to remain in good standing.**

*Check your label and renew today.*

**Thank you!**

### New P.O Box for Friends

Friends NEW post office box is  
P.O. Box 32, Richton Park IL 60471.

We apologize for the changes in our  
P.O. Boxes in the last year.

Some of you may have had your mailed items  
returned to you. We are sorry for the  
inconvenience and confusion.

The new P.O. Box 32 was opened  
January 23, 2018 and arrangements were made  
then to have mail forwarded from the old box  
(#113) to the new box.

If you mailed anything to the old boxes before  
January 23, 2018 it was returned to you.

Again, please accept our apologies.

## TC Woods Vernal Vicissitudes: Scattered Notes of a Spring Observer

After a snowy holiday season, a sunny and snowless Groundhog Day revealed a complex network of excavations erupting in our bottomland forest leaf litter. I followed a line of bread-box sized dirt piles stretching across the low terrace past the creek bed, only to reveal a giant fairy-ring of eruptions encircling a grove of black oak, pole-diameter slippery elms, and ash snags. Which burrower created this playground of soil mounds? Did our bottomland woods provide a corridor for a ranging juvenile badger? Or for a timely waking groundhog? Most likely the circle evidenced the handiwork of resident moles, but the massive extent and apparent whimsy of the critter landscaping led to human speculation and wonder.

Watching the burgeoning and velvet-pouf emergence of hickory terminal leaf-buds, which adorn the upward-sweeping branches like an array of fancy millenary hat stands, is an annual spring hike pastime. Right now the hickories still furl their buds in tight fists. Not even the invasive, opportunist early-leafing honeysuckle show their green yet. The remains of last summer's bird nests, abandoned and shredded, cling to barren branches of hickory and honeysuckle alike, empty.

Despite all miserly appearances, spring *is* coming. The first flock of sandhill cranes announced their creaky-door, gargling flight over the nature center the day after February's post-Valentine storm snow-melt, deluge and flooding. Resident Carolina wrens, cardinals, and titmice tune up their droning territorial breeding calls, and even the junco's spring call twitters nervously in the undergrowth before the bird seeks its northern breeding ground. Woodpecker drumming rattles the woods once more. Small flies flit through the air, and even the occasional bold moth emerges or ecloses, and in silent flight accompanies the peenting woodcock. The first chorus frogs and leopard frogs tentatively practice their spring repertoire on sunny afternoons, and, undaunted by Mid-March snowsqualls, skunk cabbages nudge purple-nosed spathes out from patches of ice and frozen mud.



The February flood waters skirted the second step of our bridge across the creek, leaving it muddy and detritus-piled, but intact. The surface waters scoured leaf litter and fallen branches down the terraces, flattening all the mole excavations to a smooth buzz-cut, tipping dead snags and sifting piles of detritus onto the swollen creek banks. In its rush to join the creek bed, the outwash rough combed strands of last year's ground cover and scattered nodding onion bulbs, with the resulting 'do resembling nothing so much as white lice clinging to sparse fur on a wet dog.

The flood licked and spat on TCNC's basement with no lasting damage. The outside doorsill cleared the water line, and, as if someone knocked, I felt compelled to open the door. I eased it open, noting the leaf-clogged puddle around the drain. I felt the hair on the back of my neck prickle, and, looking up, found myself staring on level with two bulging dark eyes. These gorgeous peepers connected to a broad, flat head, a flexible neck, a long smooth back with irregular bands of muddy yellow flanking costal grooves, and a long, laterally flattened tail. I had interrupted the wanderings of a tiger salamander!

(Continued on page 6)

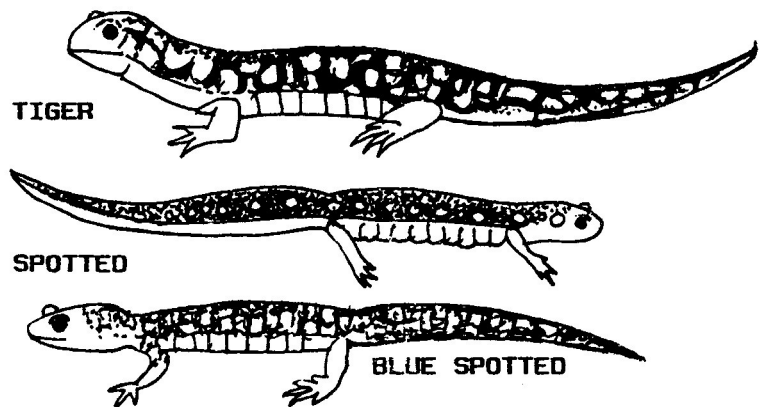


(Continued from page 5)



For an infinitesimal eon we both froze. Then I must have moved, for one second it stood with toes resolutely grabbing the plate of melting ice and snow on the step ledge, and the next it splashed into the safety of the leaf-littered vernal puddle below. (Well, relative safety, since I fished it out and released it to a more promising vernal pool, past our kiosk).

Eastern tiger salamanders are not common in our woods, and for good reason, according to Dave Mauger, our local herp and amphibian expert. “Frogger” Mauger confirmed that tiger salamanders, (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), although part of the same mole salamander family as our woodland vernal-pool-bred species, prefer wet prairies and open marshlands to woodlands. This is good news for our smaller, later-breeding woodland spotted and blue spotted salamanders, considering the voracious and cannibalistic appetite of these pond tigers. The common name suits the critters’ indiscriminate feeding habits as well as describing the orange-yellow-on-black markings!



The interspecies encounter between the salamander and I did not alter either of our immediate goals. I still needed to rid the nature center basement of water--which I did--and the salamander most likely continued to travel towards a more ideal breeding pond than the clogged drain puddle. No lasting niche-threatening occurred.

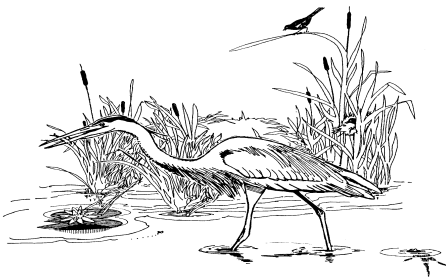
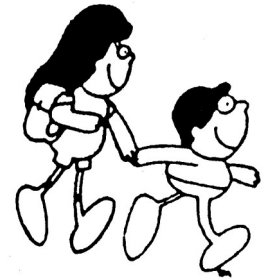
So, while we pull up mildewed carpets, dry out damp basements, and schedule air conditioner inspections in anticipation of summer heat, let’s continue to keep an eyes-and-ears alert to the wanderings of our woodland neighbors.

—Ingrid J. Krizan

## Especially for Kids

### FOLLOW THE FOX

Be the fox, following your daily routine along Thorn Creek trails! Look for signs of active bird and mammal neighbors. Call and listen to find your mate and prey, scout out den sites for spring, sniff and mark logs, cache food, mark your territory, and above all, keep out of the way of the coyotes! This event is sponsored by the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. Sunday, April 8, 1-3 p.m. Free. For children younger than 12. Children younger than 6 years must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required by Friday, April 6.

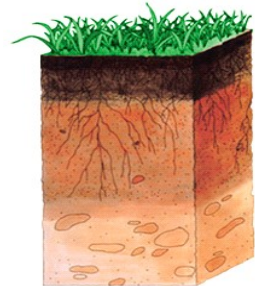


### EARTH DAY AT THORN CREEK: WILD WATER

A family program to celebrate the waters of Thorn Creek Woods. Explore the creek, the marshes and the low-lying ponds that are home to many amphibians. Enjoy a hike, activities, refreshments and our Spring Raffle. Program is sponsored by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods. Saturday, April 21, 1-4 p.m. Free. All ages.

### SOILS HIKE

Is all soil created equal? Do we find different mineral layers in different places? Come see, smell and feel for the answers to these questions. Learn how soil fuels and supports every form of life in the wetlands through a variety of hands on activities. Each participant will also take home posters and their very own plant that they can take care of and watch it grow. This class is led by naturalist April Richards. Saturday, April 28, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. \$15 Fee. Ages 6-10. *Wetlands Discovery Center, 30 N. Orchard, Park Forest.* Registration by April 23 with Park Forest Parks and Recreation Department: 708.748.2005.

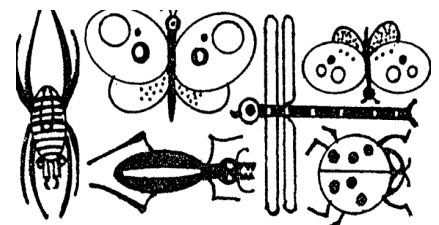


### WILDFLOWER HIKE FOR KIDS

Even in shady Thorn Creek Woods there is a unique bouquet of wildflowers that thrive here. Join us on a hike to discover which species are in bloom, learn their names and examine their physical appearance. Saturday, May 12, 1-3 p.m. Free! Children younger than 12. Children younger than 6 years must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required by Thursday, May 10.

### INSECTS ABOUND FOR KIDS

Join us to observe the wide variety of these fascinating creatures. Discover what makes an insect unique. Explore the differences between insects, spiders, and other kinds of arthropods. On a hike we'll search for insect habitats and gently capture a few arthropods to study and then release. This class is led by naturalist April Richards. Saturday, June 30, 1-3 p.m. \$15 Fee. Ages 6-10. *Wetlands Discovery Center, 30 N. Orchard, Park Forest.* Registration by June 25 with Park Forest Parks and Recreation Department: 708.748.2005.



## So What Can You do?

- **Help staff Open Hours 12-4 p.m. on Fridays & Sundays**
- Be a Trail Watcher. **Trail Watchers** are our eyes & ears on the trails. Use the blue Trail Watchers forms or email nature center with concerns.
- Join our Trail Workdays this spring & summer
- We also have trail & boardwalk building projects for groups like Eagle Scouts
- Bake and/or make soup for our events
- Volunteers to assist at programs & nature hikes
- Donate money for nature preserve projects
- Become a member of Friends.
- Know your local wildflowers? Come identify wildflowers and fungi depicted in our photos.
- Post Thorn Creek events on the Friends Face Book page.
- Share our Nature Education Program Brochure – available on our website & at nature center—with your clubs, home school group, scouts, seniors group, garden club or school.



## Nature Center Needs

### We Need:

- PAPER TOWELS
- Large plastic storage boxes about 1.5 ft. by 3 ft.
- Middle sized plastic storage boxes with lids
- Night scopes
- Portable easels
- Hand clippers and loppers
- Hoes
- Cases of bottled water for our spring-summer events
- Batteries—C and AA

### Always needed:

- Birdseed (mix or black sunflower seed—no corn)
- Stamps you saved for Audubon Society
- 3M Command medium Picture Hanging Strips
- 3M Command Poster Hanging Strips
- 1" x 2 5/8" address labels – ink jet or laser
- 6" x 9" mailing envelopes
- Suet cakes

## Helpers Needed

- **Helpers for Earth Day-** parking attendants, helpers with refreshments and crafts
- **Baked goods for Earth Day,** April 21. Call or email to volunteer your baking. You can bring goods Friday, April 20, noon-4 pm or Sat 11 am-1 pm.
- **Open Hours volunteers** to work Friday or Sunday noon to 4 p.m. to greet visitors, answer phones and work on a whole variety of cleaning, office work, and miscellaneous jobs to keep our nature center open.

## File cabinets needed

We are looking for two metal file cabinets— used—to replace old 3-drawer ones.

We need two 4-drawer metal file cabinets measuring 15" wide x 52" high x 28.5-30" deep  
Note— they do need to be 4-drawer and these dimensions, to fit in our limited space.  
Call April at the nature center.

## Friends of Thorn Creek Woods Board

meets

the 4th Monday of each month  
10:30 a.m. at the nature center.

Come join us.





## Be a FRIEND OF THORN CREEK WOODS

\_\_\_ Membership \$20 \_\_\_ Organization & Business \$50 \_\_\_ Life Membership \$200

☐ New Member \_\_\_ Renewing Member \_\_\_

\_\_\_ I'd like to help as a volunteer at Thorn Creek Nature Center, please call me.

\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the **Thorn Creek Woods Capital Fund**  
for improvements in the Nature Center building & in the Preserve.  
In memory of \_\_\_\_\_ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the **Jim Marzuki Fund** for Thorn Creek  
Public Programming.

\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to **Friends** general purposes.

Total Enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_

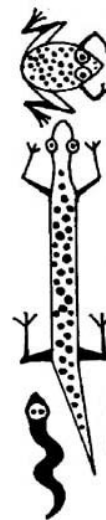
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone & e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

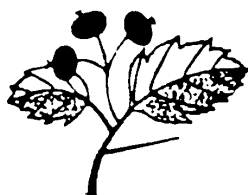
Make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS, Box 32,  
Richton Park, IL 60471



Annual Renewal Date is May 1st  
Send in your dues today!  
Or renew & donate using PayPal  
at tcwoods.org

*The Nature Center  
and the Nature Preserve  
depend on FRIENDS like YOU!*

FRIENDS volunteers support nature center staff in so many ways—staff the nature center on weekends, trail work, displays, leading hikes, special events, cleaning, pruning, artwork, music, research, and on and on.



Join us!

### FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS

- donates funds for the purchase of equipment, supplies and displays for the nature center and preserve.
- operates the Capital Fund for improvements and the Marzuki Fund for programming
- sponsors an annual meeting and Earth Day.
- members receive a usually quarterly newsletter
- FRIENDS is the citizen activist group that preserved the Woods as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

*Dues are for twelve months beginning May 1st.*

## Treasurer's Report for Friends of Thorn Creek Woods

as of  
January 31, 2018  
Treasurer Dan Moore

—**Friends General Operating Funds** = \$7,737.03  
which includes Membership funds, General donations  
and Eugene Schwartz Library Fund

—**Prairie Chapel Print income**  
(Artist Marikay Peter Witlock donated prints which  
Friends sells for \$75 each, and these funds are then  
given over to TC Management Commission annually)  
= \$0

—**Jim Marzuki Fund for Public Programming** =  
\$687.69

—**Capital Fund**  
(for vital improvements to the trails &  
the historic nature center building, and which  
includes funds donated in memory of Larry  
Lubertozzi and of Jon Mendelson) = \$25,864.56

**For a total Friends of TCW = \$34,289.28**

FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS  
is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Friends of Thorn Creek Woods  
Box 32  
Richton Park, IL 60471

Please clip commemorative stamps  
& bring to Nature Center for  
Audubon Stamps  
for Wildlife Habitats



Want to receive  
*Thorn Creek News*  
only via email-  
then email editor  
Judy Dolan  
Mendelson at  
dolanmendel@aol.com  
Thank you-  
it helps save on  
printing & postage

**Renew Now!**

## **SAVE THE DATE**

### **FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS-VOLUNTEER PICNIC** Sunday, June 10      11 a.m-2 p.m.

Pine Lake, University Park  
Free! All ages. Rain or shine.

**Registration required by Friday, June 1:**  
**708.747.6320 or thorn\_creek@att.net**

Friends members and Nature Center volunteers  
and their families  
gather for a fun-filled afternoon  
with a pot luck and a hike at  
University Park's scenic Pine Lake.

**BYOW = Bring Your Own Whatever for a pot luck.**  
We provide the meats, buns, water and ice.  
You bring a dish to share.

Pine Lake has two beautiful lakes with wonderful views.  
Lakes are stocked with channel catfish and large mouth bass  
(fishing permits are required).  
Pine Lake is on the west side of Steger Monee Road  
just south of University Parkway

