



# FRIENDS *of* Retzer

## FRIENDS OF RETZER NATURE CENTER

### WINTER 2019-20 NEWSLETTER

#### Upcoming Winter Events

*Waukesha JanBoree* – Join us at Retzer from 12-4pm on Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup> for an afternoon of hiking, tracking, snowshoeing, and Passport Expedition trekking as part of Waukesha's annual winter celebration. You can check out all of the area's weekend events at [www.janboree.org](http://www.janboree.org).

*Wild Winter Night* – Also mark your 2020 calendar for Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup> (6-9pm), and come and enjoy an evening of wild winter adventure at Retzer. The event will include a candlelight hike, a guided owl prowl, free snowshoe rental, and a warm campfire with s'mores and hot cocoa. Check out the winter sky with telescopes and watch a special planetarium show. Remember that your membership affords you free entrance to this Friends' sponsored event!

#### Membership Survey Summary

Earlier this year, a two-page survey was distributed by the Friends of Retzer Board to roughly 20% of our membership, with the intention of receiving timely and helpful feedback on various issues of interest and importance to our organization. Among other things, we wanted to know how you prefer to receive correspondence about upcoming events, how you prefer to receive the quarterly newsletter, how you prefer to receive membership renewal notices, and what you agree are the most and least important membership benefits. We also sought input on proposed changes in membership fees and various volunteer opportunities. Below is a summary of your preferences and our findings:

1. Re: Correspondence about upcoming events – 81% “most preferred” receiving this news via email; 19% “most preferred” via postal mail; and no respondents preferred receiving event news via our webpage or Facebook page.
2. Re: Receiving the quarterly newsletter – 71% “most preferred” receiving it via email; 28% “most preferred” via postal mail; and 1% preferred accessing it via our webpage.
3. Re: Receiving correspondence about membership fee renewal – 70% “most preferred” via email and 30% “most preferred” via postal mail.
4. Re: Membership benefits – Out of a list of seven, survey respondents identified the following three benefits of “greatest importance”: local field trip opportunities, invites to Friends-only events, and receipt of a quarterly newsletter. Two benefits of “moderate

importance” were free parking and entry into Friends sponsored events, and the opportunity for international natural history tours. Lastly, respondents ranked these two benefits as “least important”: direct input on future projects, and opportunity to volunteer.

5. Re: Volunteer Interest – Half of the members surveyed indicated an interest in volunteering at Retzer, and some mentioned they are already involved in various ways. Of several suggested volunteer opportunities, 68% cited an interest in serving at Friends sponsored special events, 25% indicated interest in serving on the Friends of Retzer Board, 18% indicated interest in serving as a trained Retzer Volunteer Teacher Naturalist (RTN), and 12% indicated interest in serving as a local field trip coordinator. Other volunteer options (e.g. serving as a media coordinator, photographer/videographer, or blog/newsletter writer) received minimal survey interest.
6. Re: Changes in membership levels and renewal fees – An overwhelming 93% of respondents said “yes” to supporting a modest increase in membership fees as endorsed by the Board. Support of ongoing and future projects at Retzer was the key consideration. The few indicating “no” shared that family fees should be kept as low as possible or that a couples category should be established between individual and family fee levels.

When all is said and done, most Friends of Retzer members agree that the primary use of membership fees should be to support such vital nature center initiatives as access trail and signage improvements, indoor animal care and displays, educational programming, special events planning, major bricks-and-mortar projects, and the like. Of course, a secondary reason for paying membership dues is to enjoy some of the aforementioned benefits (e.g. free admission at sponsored events, newsletters, speaker presentation invites, and field trip opportunities).

You will find a comparative list of old and new membership levels at the end of this newsletter. Needless to say, your memberships collectively provide deeply appreciated support for ongoing activities and improvements at Retzer!

### **Recent Fall Activities**

Apple Harvest Festival – Forecasted storms didn’t dampen the fun at this year’s fall rite of passage event. Vendor booths, live music, passport expeditions, crafts, games ... and of course, lots of apple products for sale and consumption, made for a wonderful day. Over 500 visitors enjoyed free hayrides before afternoon rains ended the event, and many supported our silent auction, used book sale, and Reading Corner activities.





Bev Dunk and Lyle Drier oversaw the Friends' silent auction, which netted over \$1100 for future programs.



Lyle and Brooke posed with their free Retzer bags



Marlin Johnson manned the used book sale

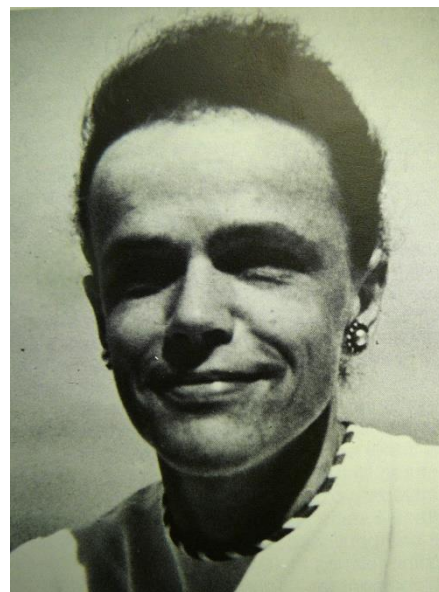
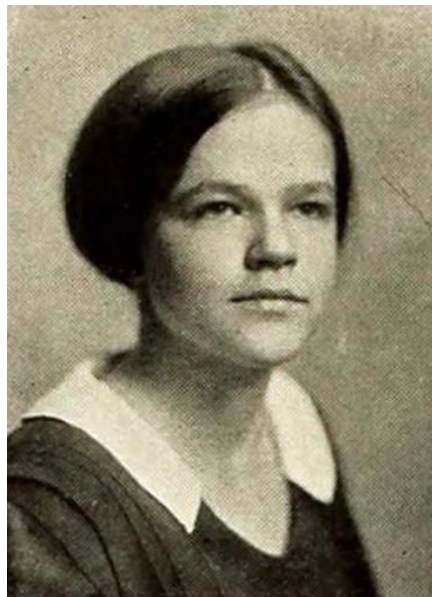
*Retzer History Night* – A wonderful discussion and photo essay presentation on the history of Retzer Nature Center was held on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Attended by over 60 people, it included an evening of personal insights on Florence and John Retzer, led by Board member and moderator Larry Kascht and panelists David Steingraeber (Professor of Ecology at Colorado State



University), Bill Jordan (botanist and restoration ecology journalist), and James Kavemeier (former Waukesha County Parks and Land Use director). Notable topics included Florence's upbringing on a farm in Connecticut, her academic interests in horticulture and marine science, her career as a journalist for *Fortune* magazine, and her professional travels to Mexico, Brazil and the Philippines. Meanwhile, John, a Wisconsin native, had also grown up on a farm, and pursued a career in law for many years before retiring. He purchased the 90-acre farm in Waukesha in the late 1930s, primarily for the solitude it offered. He and Florence eventually met in the 1940s while she was on one of her assignments in Mexico and he was on vacation. They quickly cultivated a mutual interest in art and one another. Once married, they enjoyed years of entertaining friends and school children at their rustic farmhouse and preserved acreage. In the early 1970s, Florence bequeathed the farm to Waukesha County "for passive use by future generations." And the rest, as they say, is history.



left to right: Jim Kavemeier, Bill Jordan, and David Steingraeber share their stories



Francis Horn as a student at Smith College (late 1920s), and as a journalist on assignment in Brazil (early 1940s)

Howl-O-Ween – Over 200 residents attended Retzer Nature Center’s Howl-O-Ween event on October 18<sup>th</sup>, and enjoyed an evening of family friendly activities: guided night hikes, crafts and games for kids, planetarium shows, munchies and beverages, and an outdoor campfire.

Science Fest – Free to Friends’ members, nearly 150 participants experienced “Science by the Numbers” at Retzer on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Organized activities/programs included “Math in Nature”, “Your Watershed by the Numbers”, “Animals by the Numbers” and “Water Quality by the Bugs”



Park Naturalist Chris Kavalauskas presents on “Citizen Science by the Numbers” - with Tank, the tiger salamander



ABOVE: Volunteer Lisa holds Maisy, the corn snake, while Waukesha residents Amilia and Emma enjoy a hands-on look; Emma explores smaller things through a microscope. BELOW: Volunteer Jerry Strom teaches Amilia about tree rings.





## Maintaining Central America Connections

Meet and Greet with Carlos Chavarria – Several Friends’ members showed up on October 29<sup>th</sup> for a meet-and-greet reception with Central American ecotour co-organizer, Carlos Chavarria (second from left in photo). Some shared stories about past trips to Panama and Costa Rica, while others sought new information on Retzer’s upcoming 2020 ventures to Cuba and Ecuador-Galapagos Islands.



Update on 2020 Natural History Tours – Meetings were held in October and November for Friends’ members interested in exploring international travel opportunities for the upcoming 2020 year. The list of viable options included an 11-day trip to Belize/Guatemala (early February), a 10-day trek to Cuba (early April), and a 14-day venture to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands (late May). As of December 20<sup>th</sup>, the status of these trips is as follows:

BELIZE/GUATEMALA (FEB 6-16): the trip is filled  
CUBA (MAR 29-APR 7): six more seats are still available  
ECUADOR/GALAPAGOS (MAY 17-30): six more seats are still available

Please contact trip organizer David Block if you're interested in learning more about remaining trip openings, itineraries, and costs. ([David@FriendsofRetzer.org](mailto:David@FriendsofRetzer.org))

*Costa Rica Summer Adventure* – Co-led by Larry Kascht, The Friends also partnered with Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center on a 12-day jaunt to Costa Rica last August. It was our first summer trip to that country, and afforded participants a rare opportunity to view nesting sea turtles on the Caribbean coast and breeding humpback whales along the Pacific coast. A return to Costa Rica in August/2020 is being planned. For more information, contact Board member Larry Kascht ([Larry@FriendsofRetzer.org](mailto:Larry@FriendsofRetzer.org)) and stay tuned for a spring newsletter update.

### Down the Road: Notable Retzer Spring Events

Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 9am-3pm: Spring Ecology Workshop, sponsored by Johnson Nursery

EARTH WEEK, Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>: Weeklong activities (to be announced) will include a climbing demo, tyke hike, green home presentation, captive bred animal presentation, wildlife photography presentation, candlelight hike and bird hike. The final session on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> (10am-2pm) will include guided hikes and service projects.

### Membership Renewal Reminder – Minor Changes Coming in 2020

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter... Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Board has approved minor membership rate changes and assigned new names to some of the membership levels.

#### OLD Membership Levels:

\$ 20.00 Hummingbird (Individual)  
\$ 25.00 Robin (Family)  
\$ 50.00 Cardinal (Donor)  
\$ 75.00 Owl (Donor)  
\$ 100+ Eagle (Donor)

#### NEW Membership Levels:

**\$ 30.00 “Individual”**  
**\$ 40.00 “Family”**  
**\$ 50.00 “Contributor”**  
**\$ 75.00 “Supporter”**  
**\$ 100.00 “Sustainer”**  
**\$ 250.00 “Benefactor”**  
**\$ \_\_\_\_\_ “other”**

As always, if you need to renew your Friends of Retzer membership, one can do so either by mailing a check to the Nature Center, by stopping at their front desk, or by paying via our website: [www.FriendsofRetzer.org](http://www.FriendsofRetzer.org). Your membership truly helps support vital projects and programs at the Nature Center, and provides discount benefits for all on the membership list. Thanks!

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