



FRIENDS *of Retzer*

Spring 2026 | Newsletter

Upcoming Events

Earth Week Celebration

April 20-25, 2026
Retzer Nature Center

Earth Week is right around the corner, and we've got a lineup of activities ready so you can celebrate all week long!

All sessions, aside from Sunset Meditation and Recycle Raccoons Adventure Hike, are free to attend, with no registration required!

Visit wauk.co/program to learn more about each event or to register for Sunset Meditation and Adventure Hike.



Friends of Retzer Nature Center's
Earth Week Celebration

April 20-25, 2026

 **Retzer Nature Center**
S14W28167 Madison St,
Waukesha, WI 53188

 

PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- Spring Story Hikes
- Spring Ephemeral Hike
- Sunset Meditation & Hike
- Recycle Raccoons Adventure Hike
- A Mindful Walk in Nature
- Earth Day Celebration

  



Annual Meeting - Please Register

Saturday, May 2, 2026 | 8:30am - 12PM

Join us for the Friends of Retzer Annual Meeting!

Start your morning with a guided bird hike from 8:30–10:00 AM, led by the Ben Goss Bird Club—perfect for nature lovers of all levels.

At 10:00 AM, we'll gather for a continental breakfast followed by a special presentation from one of our incredible naturalists.

We'll also hear a Nature Center report, along with a Friends of Retzer update including financials, membership, and highlights from the past year.

Come connect, learn, and celebrate the impact of our community together. We hope to see you there!

To register, please email admin@friendsofretzer.org and let us know if you will be attending the bird hike, annual meeting, or both.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Join
US!

Happy Retirement, Janet!

On March 26, 2026, Janet Barthel, our Retzer Nature Center Supervisor will be retiring. Janet has been a wonderful partner to the Friends. Her wisdom and collegial spirit has allowed our organization to flourish.

During her tenure, the Friends have supported projects such as the Discovery Trail, Discovery Lab and the soon to be completed Retzer Garden. Janet was instrumental in making these projects happen.

Janet will leave an indelible mark on the people and place that we call Retzer Nature Center. And to us, she will always be considered a Friend.



Welcome Stacy Yearling!

We're pleased to welcome Stacy Yearling as the new Retzer Nature Center Supervisor, joining the Waukesha County Park System on April 20, 2026. Stacy brings over 20 years of experience in education, along with a strong background in leadership, community connection, and program development. Her passion for creating inclusive, engaging environments and her love of nature make her a wonderful fit for Retzer. We're excited for the energy and perspective she will bring to this next chapter!

Welcome

Board Member Openings

The Friends of Retzer Nature Center are looking for passionate individuals to join our Board of Directors in 2026!

If you care about nature, environmental education, and supporting programs at Retzer, we'd love to hear from you. Experience with boards is welcome but not required.

We're especially interested in people with backgrounds in:

- Communications/Marketing
- Fundraising
- Community Partnerships
- Legal Expertise

Interested or know someone who would be a great fit? Email admin@friendsofretzer.org and ask for a link to the form to fill out.

FRIENDS of Retzer
Board Member Openings
Join Us in 2026

We're seeking individuals passionate about:
Nature · Education · Community

Helpful experience:
Communications | Fundraising
Community Partnerships | Legal

The Retzer Garden

Progress continues on The Retzer Garden, with exciting developments underway. We anticipate adding new plants in mid-May and look forward to completing the project by June 2026.

Thank you to everyone whose generous support has helped make this project possible!



WaterStone Bank's Charitable Checking program

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY



The Friends of Retzer Nature Center are excited to partner with WaterStone Bank's Charitable Checking program—an easy and impactful way to support our mission. By opening a Charitable Checking account and selecting the Friends of Retzer Nature Center as your designated charity, you can help generate ongoing support for the nature center. Here's how it works:

1. Open a checking account with WaterStone Bank
2. Choose the Friends of Retzer Nature Center as your charity

That's it! Simply use your account as you normally would and enjoy no-fee features like digital banking, overdraft protection, and a rewards debit card.

The best part? The more accounts opened in support of Friends of Retzer, the more funding we receive to support programs, education, and conservation efforts at Retzer Nature Center.

Visit www.wsbonline.com or stop by a WaterStone Bank branch near you to open your account today.

If you have any questions, please contact us or the WaterStone Bank Customer Support Center at 414-761-1000. Thank you for your continued support!

Recent Events

Spring Seminar

Our Spring Seminar was a wonderful success, with a strong turnout from the community. Guests enjoyed engaging and informative presentations from local experts, Emily Helm, who spoke about invasive species, and Danielle Bell, who shared insights on native species.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this educational and inspiring event!

Wild Winter Night



We are so grateful to everyone who joined us for Wild Winter Night! It was a magical evening filled with myth busting, discovering fascinating facts about animals, and learning something new together.

From the Planetarium show and inspiring guest speaker to the cozy campfire, candlelit hike, and treats from Mama D's Coffee, the night was full of wonder both indoors and out.

Thank you making it such a special evening. We loved sharing it with you and hope you left feeling inspired by the magic of a winter night.



Friends of Retzer Nature Center Board Member Spotlight

Kathy Strazishar

I'm a retired faculty member in Early Childhood Education at MATC. I became an RTN volunteer in 2006 because sharing the gift of nature with young children is a true passion. I was drawn in after hearing the history of John and Florence Retzer. When asked to join the Friends Board a few years later I wanted to be a part of this tradition that started here 50 years ago. I love to see the joy that the nature center brings to everyone that visits -- very young children, school groups, families of every age and individuals falling in love with nature. As the landscape and educational programs continue to change, grow and develop, I want to do what I can to make that happen.

I was happy to have my husband Joe join the Board this spring. It will be great to work together.

After Retzer, I enjoy baking, biking, reading and book clubs, gardening, paddle boating, traveling and babysitting our grandchildren.



Joe Strazishar

Meet Joe Strazishar — “gainfully retired” after 20 years as a church administrator, where he oversaw business and personnel operations. A longtime supporter of the Friends of Retzer Nature Center, Joe is now proud to serve on the Board alongside his wife Kathy.

Joe sees his work with Retzer as a way to live out his calling to be a responsible caretaker of God’s creation — contributing to the preservation, enhancement, and awareness of Retzer’s natural amenities.

Outside of board work, you’ll find Joe kayaking, biking, bowling, photographing the world, or traveling to new countries with Kathy.

Fun Fact: Joe has umpired over 1,500 baseball games—and proudly claims he’s never personally lost one!

2026 Friends of Retzer Board of Directors

Board Officers

- 🍃 Kathy Arts
President
- 🍃 Andi Kornowski
Vice President
- 🍃 Almuth Soffee
Treasurer
- 🍃 Jenny Carter
Recording Secretary

Board Members

- 🍃 Mary Kay Kelly
- 🍃 David Block
- 🍃 Kathy Strazishar
- 🍃 Cathy Ward
- 🍃 Susan Bosman
- 🍃 Meg Shad
- 🍃 Helen Holtz
- 🍃 Amy White
- 🍃 Joe Strazishar

Membership Renewal

As always, if you need to renew your Friends of Retzer membership, you may do so as follows:

- Mail your check to Retzer Nature Center attention: Friends of Retzer Nature Center.
- Pay online via our website using a credit card or PayPal.
- Stop at the nature center's front desk with check payment .

Thank you for your continued support! Your membership supports vital projects and programs at Retzer Nature Center.

Mission Statement of The Friends of Retzer

The mission of the Friends of Retzer Nature Center shall be to promote and support activities and initiatives which enhance the goals of natural resource conservation and environmental education and involve the community, through financial support and volunteer work, in the growth and improvement of programs and facilities at Retzer Nature Center.

Your general donation supports over 450 acres of natural habitat and educational facilities at Retzer Nature Center. All donations are tax-deductible – and any amount is always welcome.