



ECOEDGES

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Environmental Park Association of Sheboygan County, Inc.*

Dave Kuckuk is retiring, but leaving a plan for Maywood



Maywood photo

When Dave Kuckuk became Maywood's Director in 1987, he inherited a master site plan that has served as a blueprint for the park's development since 1980. Dave is retiring April 30, but not without helping develop a new master site plan to serve as a guide for Maywood for years to come.

When I was first honored with the title of Maywood Director in 1987, one of the few items in the Director's office was a document entitled, "Master Site Plan – The Ellwood H. May Environmental Park." The plan, created by Leisure Concepts & Designs, was adopted by the City of Sheboygan in 1980 and provided a great road map to Maywood's transformation from farm to environmental park. The plan was a guide that shaped the park's

development, while allowing room to adapt to circumstances, opportunities, and ideas not considered during initial drafts.

A few years ago, at closing time on a Saturday afternoon, there was someone knocking at the front door of the Ecology Center. The man introduced himself as one of the original designers of the existing plan. I invited him and his family in to see the work accomplished since 1980, and let the

man know that I was still using the plan, although his reaction suggested that he didn't believe me. During our building tour and all his reminiscing about rooms and plans, he asked to see his company's plan. We were standing at my office door when he pressed me on the whereabouts of the plan. It was a simple process to pluck the plan from the bookends on my desk and hand it to him. Ultimately, he was amazed at all that was accomplished at Maywood, and probably even more amazed that the plan he was so proud of was actually still in use.

With my pending retirement just around the corner, I am pleased to have been part of the team to create another master plan for Maywood. It too will serve to guide Maywood into the future. However, experience tells me that the plan is a guide and there are always unknowns that require plan adjustments. Regardless, Maywood has an excellent foundation to build upon and a new plan to navigate the future. I have no doubt that when I stop by years from now on a late Saturday afternoon, my knock at the door will produce a sense of delight and pride with the achievements that lay ahead.

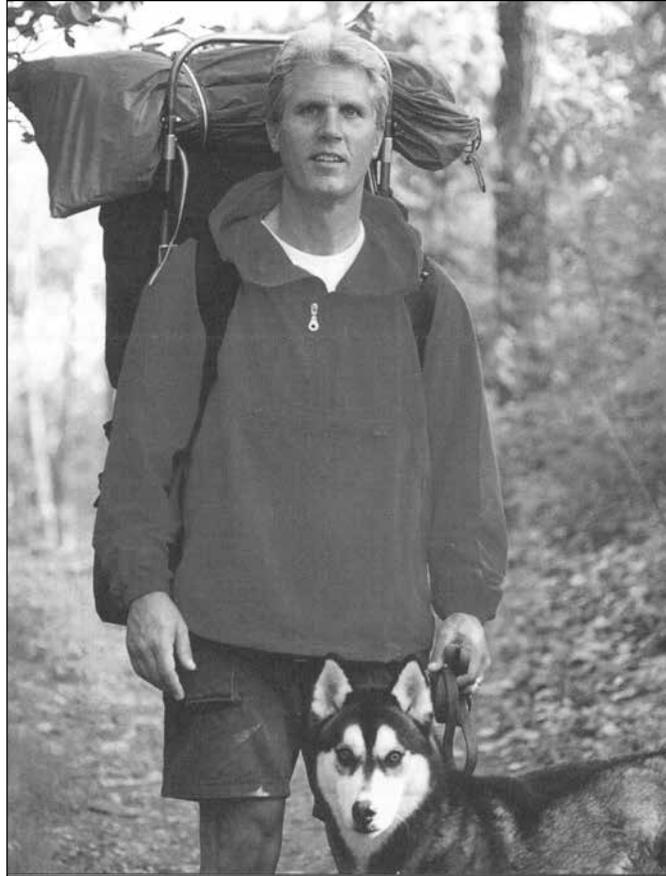
By Dave Kuckuk

Thank you, Dave!

It is safe to say that Dave Kuckuk's heart and soul have been dedicated to Maywood. Few of us are lucky enough to find a vocation that is our passion. Maywood has been blessed to have witnessed and participated with someone who indeed found his sweet spot as our director.

Dave is retiring April 30, 2021 - on Arbor Day; a day that celebrates trees. He was rehired as Maywood's Director by the Trust five years ago, the same time I joined the Advisory Board. I say rehired because Dave's history with Maywood goes back to the late 80's. We can only thank him so much for the job he's done for Maywood and our community.

This article is not the place for Dave's complete curriculum vitae. Dave is the last person in the world who would want to put a spotlight on himself. Any accolade is always directed back on the person giving it. Dave will point to the efforts of others and the results of programs and attendance as team play. He'll say the OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Scholars) program was simply Maywood finding an opportunity, the new maple sugar evaporator was a serendipitous event, the Eagle Scout projects that have enhanced Maywood's property for years just fell into our laps, and planting thousands of trees is just a cool thing to do. "It's all about our mission," he'd say. I could go



Maywood photo

Maywood Director Dave Kuckuk and his dog, Yukon, through-hiked the 1,200 mile Ice Age trail in six weeks, averaging 30 miles a day. Along the way, Dave gave presentations promoting nature and Maywood and raised a major part of the money needed to build the pavilion addition. Dave is retiring April 30.

on and on.

Dave and I recently sat down for his annual review. One of the first things out of his mouth was how cool it is to have himself, the Board President and his wife, Kristin, complete Wisconsin's 1200-mile Ice Age National Scenic Trail (IAT). True we are Thousand-milers, but any comparison ends there. We section hiked (start and stop) over seven years averaging around eight miles a day. Dave, on the other hand, thru-hiked (one continuous hike) with his dog Yukon and completed it in six weeks averaging thirty miles a day. He stopped at schools along the way and did presentations promoting nature and Maywood. His efforts helped raise the major portion of the \$750,000 addition

to Maywood's capitol/endowment campaign. That money went into the construction of Maywood's new addition that included the lab, reception area and pavilion. His efforts were monumental.

One only needs to saunter around Maywood's trails with Dave to discover his passion for nature. He knows all the animal tracks, every tree type and every plant. Most of us see a hawk and say, "There's a hawk." Dave can tell you it's a: Red-Tail, Cooper or a Rough-Legged and that eight types of hawk are indigenous to Wisconsin.

Dave's characterization could fill this page: passionate, kind, listener, nature lover, communicator, enabler, enthusiastic, teacher, humble, handy-man, leader and friend. This type of description runs off him like water off a duck's back.

Maywood started the Outdoor Pre-School three years ago in concert with the YMAC. Dave will proudly tell you this program is at the epicenter of Maywood's mission statement. There's no better way to teach children about nature and its stewardship than to be immersed in it.

Maywood has 18 children this year. Young kids are honest about what they see and they pick up on a person's energy intuitively. When the current class met Dave, they collectively created an honor for him that he can't deflect or explain away. They picked up his vibe, saw his white hair and gave him something he will cherish for the rest of his life. As we say goodbye, thank you, and Godspeed to a wonderful person and an excellent director, the kids have it right, they decided to call him the King of Maywood.

By Ed Abell

Enjoy your retirement!



Dave received an award from the Early Bird Rotary.

Maywood Photos



Dave, left, in the Sugar House.



Dave practicing for retirement?



Dave at Flapjack Day 1995.



Pandemic Dave.

Needed: Project Coordinator

Maywood relies heavily on volunteers for a variety of projects. Here are three projects that will require leadership and coordination. If interested in the projects below, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Barb Sorcic for more information.

Kestrel Nest Boxes

In the fall of 2020, four new kestrel nest boxes were erected atop flagpole-style rigging. These boxes can be raised and lowered, cleaned, and monitored

with greater ease than ever before. A volunteer is needed to coordinate their care, maintenance, and monitoring

Prairie Overlook Murals

Every few years, students from a local school paint two murals for the west and south sides of the Prairie Overlook. Maywood provides narrow panels for students to paint, which they assemble into a much larger mural. A volunteer is needed to coordinate panel preparation, distribution to a school,

and installation upon completion

Sign Painting

Several of our large signs need some TLC to make them look presentable again. A person is needed to coordinate this project, to identify the paint colors needed, place an order for paint and brushes, and find a steady handed individual to paint the signs.

By Dave Kuckuk

From Owlets to OWLS, Maywood serves all ages



Photo by Sarah DeZwarte

Kids in the Nature-Based Preschool class (above) gather around the catalpa tree to start their day each morning.

The OWLS group (right) gathers outside for one of their weekly programs in February.



Photo by Janna Soerens

Maywood is currently bookending its environmental education programs through its young and young at heart learning opportunities brought about by being safer outdoors. The 18 preschool students bundled in snow suits gather each morning near our famous catalpa tree to begin another day of nature investigation. Little do they realize it, but sprinkled among the fun and daily discoveries of outdoor exploration are valuable lessons about numbers, letters, and social interaction to name a few. Each day is an adventure that propels their curiosity, improves their coordination, and sets the stage for a lifetime of learning and appreciating nature.

Someday, these students will return to Maywood as part of a school field trip such as maple sugaring in 4th grade or an ecosystem tour as a high school student. However, they will already be familiar with how trees make food for themselves through photosynthesis, or the many critters and habitats that make Maywood special. Our hope is that their journey of environmental learning and appreciation continues long into adulthood.

The OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Scholars) gather outdoors weekly to also investigate nature. They have a similar level of curiosity about nature to that of the preschool students, but with a longer attention span. In many instances, the OWLS are being exposed to similar discoveries as those of the preschool students, often with a reaction of, “I never knew that.” In many instances, the OWLS are also becoming teachers, sharing their discoveries with spouses, children, or grandchildren demonstrating the intergenerational interest span that nature can have on everyone.

Being a student of nature is rewarding for all ages, and Maywood provides a wonderful location to explore, discover, and experience it. If you’re reading this article, you’re probably too old to enroll as a preschool student, but as our OWLS have realized you’re never too old to enjoy the bounty of enrichment available through nature.

By Dave Kuckuk



Sweet changes in the Sugar House



Maywood Photo

The Sugar House floor has shifted over time making it impossible to seal the blocks and contain the smoke when boiling maple sap. The answer is a new evaporator from Smoky Lake near Chilton, which will be up and running this spring.

Boiling maple sap has been a spring tradition at Maywood since its beginning days. Thousands of 4th graders and citizens have visited our Sugar House to witness the miraculous transformation of clear tasteless sap to the amber sweet treat of maple syrup. Every March, thick clouds of steam waft from the Sugar House doors, windows and roof vents while ghost-like volunteers can barely be seen tending the ravenous wood fire necessary to boil the 100 gallon batch of raw sap.

With each sugaring season, an annual Flapjack Day commemorates nature's gift of maple sap. Each year, hundreds attend the event. In 2008, a young couple named Jim and Angela Schumacher became smitten with the emergence of maple syrup from the heavy fog being carried away with March breezes. Their fascination with the entire process of collecting watery sap, to watching it magically darken and sweeten as it boils, prompted them to tap their maple trees the following weekend in upper Michigan.

Sugaring can get into your blood. For Jim and Angela, they were not going to be just Sugar Farmers, but they were going to help others discover this world of sweet rewards. They quickly began to identify methods and equipment that would expedite and improve the process, efficiency, and syrup quality through their understanding of the science and engineering that takes sugaring to a whole new level. Skilled in metal work and fabrication, Jim quickly got started on manufacturing evaporators. Angela applied her marketing talents to get the word out and create a niche for Smoky Lake, their new maple sugaring business.

Since the early 1980s our syrup pan rested atop cinder blocks and used wood heat to boil the sap. With each freezing and thawing that comes with winter and spring, the cement slab floor in the Sugar House has shifted making it impossible to seal the blocks and contain the smoke. A sugaring volunteer was easily identifiable from his smoky smell and watering eyes. It was obvious a new method was needed.

The result of Jim and Angela Schumacher's Flapjack Day visit in 2008 can be seen in their fabulous showroom in Hilbert, Wisconsin (near Chilton) where their sophisticated evaporators are displayed and demonstrated. They now ship their Smoky Lake evaporators world-wide, and I am very pleased to see one in our Maywood Sugar House as well. This new installation will be up and running this spring. If you happen to be at Maywood in March, stop in to the Sugar House to view and learn about maple sugaring. You just never know how this magical transformation from sap to syrup might sweeten your life too.

By Dave Kuckuk

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Our Mission

To foster environmental stewardship
through educational and outdoor experiences
that connect our community with the natural world.

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
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Sheboygan, WI
Permit No. 48



The Ecology Store is still open!

Thanks to all of those who shopped local at Maywood this past holiday season. It was great seeing so many people stopping in for holiday gift buying and sharing a part of Maywood with family and friends. Our own Maywood Maple Syrup was flying off the shelves.

In March, when the maple sap is running, it's a great time for a bottle or two of Maywood's own Maple Syrup. With a purchase of \$20 or more of any items in the Ecology Store, receive

a free copy of the Maple Weekend Coloring Book or Color on the Land (while supplies last).

Try out a new activity such as animal tracking in the snow or the study of constellations with our fun and educational activity books.

If you enjoy jigsaw puzzles, we have Springbok puzzles for all ages and abilities, including 3-D wooden puzzles for a bigger challenge.

Rough, dried hands? We now carry soaps and lotions from Glacial Drumlin

Goat Farm in Helenville, Wisconsin.

April is time to start watching the sky for migrating birds. During April, get \$2 off our many bird guides from warblers, raptors and water birds to backyard birds and ducks. We have a wide assortment to meet all your birding needs.

Call 920-459-3906, or visit www.GoMaywood.org for current Ecology Center hours.

By Barb Sorcic

