



JORDAN VALLEY VOICES



FREEDOM FESTIVAL PREVIEW OPEN HOUSE

Friends of the Jordan Watershed Center

Friday and Saturday, June 25 & 26, 5pm to 7pm

Sunday, June 27, 12pm to 6pm

The old Vance building has finally been transformed into an inviting teaching space surrounded by newly created nature trails. All of this was accomplished with the idea of preserving the integrity of the historic landmark structure while changing its former use as a west side grocery store to an educational center. A center that explores the mystery and importance of all the large and small creeks, streams, brooks and other feeder sources of water within the watershed that flow into the Jordan River.

We are so fortunate to have an intimate building tucked into a wooded area bordering on wetlands as use for a “hands on” place to learn about our Natural River and our responsibilities toward its well being. The setting is so peaceful and quiet, one forgets that a few yards away, business as usual is taking place in East Jordan on both sides of the bridge.

We invite you to visit our new “home” and share our excitement about the future plans involving the whole community with special emphasis on working with area school children. Our location is ideal for nature photographers, bird watchers, landscape painters and everyone else interested in a place to observe natural processes. A new connector walkway will be available soon leading from the Sportsman Park to the Watershed Center. Leave your car in the lot and walk over to our building. Take a guided tour of the Nature Trails and get acquainted with our location so that you can return and join our workshops and classes when our season begins.

Remember, this is just a Preview Opening. Our formal Grand Opening will be held later this summer, acknowledging donors, workers and all other noble souls and entities who have believed in our goals and supported our needs.

Peggy Midener

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

East Jordan is celebrating an environmental version of the movie “Field of Dreams” with the welcomed return of nesting Bald Eagles. Although they have nested up river for several years, this spring they chose a site near town.

About 10 years ago, Joel Evans had the vision to construct three platforms mounted on 60 ft. utility poles and placed them near the mouth of the Jordan River. Knowing that the Jordan River Watershed was a natural historical territory for eagles, Joel sensed that the raised platforms would attract these magnificent birds, and they did!

For the first few years the Eagles used them to roost on and fish from and were frequently observed there. In recent years they performed a ritualistic, “practice” nest building on the west platform but did their actual nesting about three miles up-river. This spring, after their massive up-river nest blew down in a storm, they returned to the west platform, completed their nest and have hatched at least one chick.

The Eagles can be easily viewed from Sportsman’s Park or the Jordan River Watershed Center but we must respect their privacy. Eagles need a buffer zone of about 400 yards and we urge everyone to keep their distance at this critical time. Binoculars or a spotting scope will bring them up close without the need to go too near. Boats and canoes should steer clear of the lower Jordan River until the Eaglets have fledged. Hopefully the Eagles will find this nest location acceptable and return year after year. Thanks to Joel Evans for his faith and vision that has provided the rest of us the thrill of this unique experience.

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DTE AWARDS GRANT TO FOJ

At our May board meeting, DTE Corporate and Government Affairs Regional Manager, Steve Rawlings presented FOJ a check for \$4,500. These funds will be used for the ongoing renovations at the Watershed Center. We are pleased to establish this constructive relationship with DTE and look forward to future collaborative endeavors. The evening was further highlighted when Steve and his young daughter were able to view the Eagles tending their nest. FOJ deeply appreciates DTE's generous contribution to this shared vision, collectively making this historic project possible. Special thanks to Adolph Cwik for spearheading this successful grant award.

MARVELOUS MAKEOVER

The cool, wet spring weather has finally yielded to warmer temperatures and the Northern Michigan miracle is in full swing. I'm in constant awe of the incredible transformation that occurs to our landscapes in just a few short weeks. From the grey frozen grip of winter the world awakens to the bountiful explosion of life in spring. The drumbeat of nature's resurgence and the driving pulse of the flowing waters march embraced to a cadence of renewed celebration.

With today's hectic pace filled with "reality TV" and "artificial intelligence" its comforting to know that there are unspoiled places like the Jordan Valley. Here, Nature's symphony resonates in full harmony, reverberating and rejoicing an ancient unbiased truth.

Friends of the Jordan River Watershed, Inc.

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E-mail: foj@freeway.net

OFFICERS

President – John Richter
Vice President – Joe Nerone
Treasurer – Hank Ross
Secretary – Melissa Kendzierski
Exec. at Large – Peggy Midener



Photo L-R, Bob Sayer, Steve Rawlings (DTE), Peggy Midener, John Richter, Franny Bluhm, Melissa Kendzierski, Adolph Cwik, Bill Chase, Joe Nerone

FUNDS AWARDED FOR WATERSHED CENTER

The Charlevoix County Community Foundation's Project Manager, Maureen Radke, recently presented a grant award of \$5,310. to the board of directors of Friends of the Jordan River Watershed. These funds will assist the ongoing renovations at the historic Jordan River Watershed Center. Slated to be finished this summer, Friends of the Jordan are busy transferring East Jordan's oldest commercial building and grounds into an environmental education/nterpretive complex. When complete, the Watershed Center will feature educational programs and environmental information about the Jordan River Watershed. In addition, ecological displays, demonstrations and workshops, theme gardens of native plants and trees, trails and wildlife viewing platforms are planned. Friends of the Jordan thanks the Community Foundation, its board and trustees for their strong continued support for this unique project. According to FOJ president John Richter, "We are blessed to have such a rich natural heritage. With the help of many individuals and organizations, this community has rescued a relic from the past and transformed it to shepherd a new path for future environmental awareness."

FRIENDS OF THE BOYNE RIVER VS. BOYNE CITY

Recently, the Friends of the Boyne River (FOBR) sent letters to their members and some organizations asking for financial support in their "fight to keep sewage effluent out of our river". The following paragraph in their letter outlines what the FOBR are trying to prevent:

We have been trying for a long time to provide the Commissioners of the City of Boyne City with the evidence that the Boyne River is not an appropriate location for discharging effluent from the sewage treatment plant. Regardless of the many voices from the public meeting and our continuing objections, they voted for a river discharge. That note means that they can move on putting the effluent into the river and that is why we had to hire our attorney. We have hired Jim Olsen from Traverse City. He is a respected environmental attorney and won the case for the Friends of the Cedar River Watershed. We feel the effluent discharge pipe into the lake should be used for now with a long term goal with a land discharge.

The Boyne River is another high quality river in our area and deserves the efforts of all of us to maintain its ecological integrity. In recent years, the members of the FOBR along with others have invested considerable money and time to upgrade the river to what it used to be. To allow the discharge of sewage effluent into the river would be major setback.

If this effort is of interest to you, please consider making a donation and send it to:

*Friends of the Boyne River
P.O. Box 186
Boyne City, MI 49712*



SPRING CLEANING

On Saturday, May 1st about 30 hearty volunteers gathered at Graves Crossing for our twice-yearly Jordan River Valley clean-up. Two crews floated down the river, another group collected trash off M-66 Highway, while others policed the public access sites. Afterward Peggy Midener, with help from Howard and Bob, treated us all to a hot delicious lunch at Sportsman's Park. Once again Anne Zukowski won the prestigious Nimble Mink Award for repeatedly demonstrating her prowess in retrieving trash without dumping the boat piloted by Kerry Ovaith or getting either one of them wet! The canoe team of Jim Schumann and Bill Chase provided strong competition but were still no match for the ladies. Thanks to all of you who participated and especially Joe Nerone who organized this worthwhile event.

IN MEMORY

On 3/28/04, a long time supporter and founding board member of FOJ, Marilyn "Jan" Erratt passed away. In honor of her memory the family requested that memorials be directed to FOJ and, if possible, funds be used for a specific project. As a tribute to Jan and the generosity of her friends and family, the board decided that the handicap ramp access and deck at the Jordan River Watershed Center will be dedicated in her name. When complete, a bronze plaque bearing her name will be placed there. FOJ sincerely thanks Jan's family and friends for honoring a lost loved one and a life well lived.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

- The new bridge over Green River on Pinney Bridge Road was recently dedicated. Congratulations to CRA for facilitating the funding and construction of a safe clear span crossing at the gateway to the Jordan Valley.
- As part of the Lake Charlevoix Watershed Management Project, signs will be installed at the public access sites along the Jordan River. These signs will display a map of the river identifying the names and locations of designated launch and take-out sites as well as address proper river etiquette.
- Erosion control devices such as log revetments and brush bundles will be installed at nine locations along the Jordan River this summer.
- MDNR has published the final draft of the Jordan River Assessment. For copies contact; Tom Rozich, Fisheries Biologist Supervisor, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, 8015 Mackinaw Trail, Cadillac, MI 49601
- Two of the four natural gas well permits inside the Jordan Valley Management Area have been resolved and withdrawn. The remaining two are reportedly close to being resolved.

JORDAN RIVER WATERSHED CENTER PROGRESS REPORT

Since our last newsletter we've made remarkable progress remodeling and hope to open the building this summer. We'll plan a Grand Opening and send you an invitation at the appropriate time. If you were around late last summer you may have seen a huge sloppy trench where we brought in sewer and water lines. Then we had six weeks of heavy rains. What a mess. The soils at the site are heavy clay and when disturbed and mixed with all the rain, it created a quagmire that didn't dry out until this spring. But finally we have a new driveway that should serve us for the foreseeable future.

Other notable improvements include, new ceilings of knotty pine, drywall and wainscoting on walls, subfloors and antique hardwood floors (recycled from the Delquist Building), wiring and lighting, roughed in plumbing and heating, and custom crafted trim.

Things are really taking shape and we hope you can tour the progress at our Open House during the Jordan Valley Freedom Festival.

John Richter

THE SOLARIUM

Although the Friends of the Jordan River Watershed headquarters is nearing completion, one important structure still needs to be added. Members of the Board of the FOJ are working with their grant writer, Adolph Cwik, to obtain funds to complete a solarium (sunroom greenhouse). The solarium will be an external addition attached to the south side of the FOJ building.

The solarium shall provide passive solar heating for the FOJ building as well as serve as a greenhouse and an educational medium for students working on various projects related to biology and botany.

The Friends of the Jordan is primarily an educational organization that functions to promote public awareness in environmental matters that may impact on the quality of life in the Jordan River Watershed. FOJ is also actively engaged in mentoring students in the East Jordan Public Schools system. FOJ was instrumental in establishing a water quality testing program in the MST (math, science and technology) program, which now runs year-round testing of the quality of the water in the Jordan River. Baseline data that has been collected since 1996.

FOJ plans to use the solarium as a facility for students in our community to pursue studies in the biological sciences while being mentored by FOJ staff and community members.

As a science teacher or 35 years of experience, I can testify to the importance of mentoring young students who do not know where all the “handles” of experience are located. Sometimes it takes only a few directions and the student is off on his own to perhaps make a great contribution to society. There was such a young student that was in a ninth grade biology class being taught in my high school. This student was fascinated by micropaleontology (the study of microscopic fossils). However, the student lacked good equipment and reading material. This student’s teacher mentored the ninth grader and introduced him to professors at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Campus. The student was provided access to good equipment and a U of M library card. By the time the ninth grader student was a high school senior, he had developed enough skills to carry out a project dealing with microscopic fossils. The student entered his project in the Westinghouse Science Contest and won a \$25,000 all-expense, four-year college education at Cornell University to study, yes, micropaleontology. Again, mentoring does pay off. Any mind is a terrible thing to waste.

FOJ plans to offer enrichment courses in biological and environmental sciences. These courses could include topics such as botany, zoology, chemistry, ornithology, geology, meteorology, etc.

FOJ welcomes your ideas, suggestions and donations to accomplish this most worthy goal to completing an educational facility for both students and adult education.

Robert Sayer, Education Chairman



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FRIENDS OF THE JORDAN RIVER WATERSHED, INC.

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