



## *Summer 2013 Newsletter*

### ***Board Member Musings***

It was no surprise to me to see that the July issue of [Make it Better](#) was titled "Unplugged". There is no better and healthier way to spend your free-time and summer days than by getting outside to enjoy nature at our local parks, trails, beaches, water-fed lagoons, and even in our own backyards! The benefits are long and documented; nature stimulates our creativity and sensory development, improves our physical and emotional health, and offers us a direct experience with our environment. In the past few months, BYNC sponsored a number of events that did just that - encouraged people to get outside and learn about local natural areas. The excitement experienced by the children and adults in response to what they saw, did, and learned while being in nature makes BackYard Nature Center feel vital and keeps us motivated. For ideas on how to unplug this summer check out our website: [www.backyardnaturecenter.org](http://www.backyardnaturecenter.org).

Cheers!  
Heidi

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### ***BYNC Welcomes New Board Member and Staff Member***

We are excited to welcome **Gary Morrissey** to our board. Gary brings to the Board a wealth of knowledge and extensive background in "Leave No Child Inside" programming. Gary is a retired Chicago Public Schools Science Teacher, and now a Professional Development Provider for Elementary Science Teachers. We were fortunate to have Gary's involvement at the Camping for Families program last month. His experience with kids in the classroom and as a development provider was truly an asset to the program.

We are also pleased to announce we have hired **Laura Brown** as a part-time staff member to assist with communications and marketing activities. Laura received her master's degree in urban planning and has worked at other nonprofit conservation and arts and culture organizations. She currently holds a full-time position at Biodiversity Project, a Chicago-based communications nonprofit that focuses on environmental projects. Laura is excited to be a part of BYNC to help promote programs that connect children and adults to our region's natural areas.

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### ***BYNC Presentation at Wild Things Conference***

In February, BYNC presented at [Wild Things](#), a Chicago Wilderness conference for People and Nature, hosted at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Our presentation, titled [Science Curricula in Nature: The Model and the Practice](#), highlighted New Trier High School and Glencoe School District's experience with the Science Curricula in Nature program.



We are also pleased to report that more schools throughout New Trier Township have shown an interest in implementing the [Science Curricula in Nature](#) program, as well as our new broader classroom curricular program, [Nature as Teacher \(NaT\)](#). The NaT program emphasizes that there are many school-taught subjects that can take advantage of the natural world and allow Nature to enhance the learning curriculum.

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### ***Skokie Lagoons***



Over the past few years, BYNC has “connected” many individuals and groups to the Skokie Lagoons for service restoration work and educational programs, overseen by the site stewards and in conjunction with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. One of the site stewards - and our Board President - Daniel Kielson, was featured in the *Winnetka Talk*, showcasing his work with groups that come to the Lagoons.

One of the groups that had a significant role in the restoration effort is the Discover Financial Services volunteers. The time these volunteers spent cutting the invasive buckthorn and pulling garlic mustard on the north side of Tower Road has been invaluable in making the Lagoons a healthier habitat. If you get a chance to drive by Tower Road (west of Forest Way Drive) look at the north side to see the amazing changes taking place with the removal of the invasive buckthorn.



*Discover Financial Services volunteers at Skokie Lagoons with Daniel Kielson.*

If you would like to take part in the monthly restoration event on the 2nd Saturday of every month, please contact Dave Kosnik at [skokielagoons@gmail.com](mailto:skokielagoons@gmail.com) to receive reminder emails.

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### ***Sunset Ridge School and the Science Curricula in Nature Program***

On May 6, seventh graders from the Sunset Ridge School in Northfield spent the day at Erickson Woods (Skokie Lagoons) engaged in learning and stewardship activities as part of BYNC’s Science Curricula in Nature Program. Teachers Tiffany Neuhausel

and Rick Walters worked with ecologist Karen Glennemeier to prepare the learning experiences: *Macro Invertebrate Sampling* at Lagoons 1 and *Signs of Living Things* in the Sedge Meadow area. In addition, BYNC Board Members Gary Morrissey and Daniel Kielson led two service stations related to invasive species removal. Many thanks to Shelley Carey, Principal of Sunset Ridge, and the other teachers and parents who were on hand to help out with this highly successful learning in nature experience.

### ***Wilmette Girl Scouts and Keay Nature Park***

On May 7, thirty Girl Scouts and their leaders enjoyed an afternoon planting and touring Keay Nature Park in Wilmette. The girls learned about the history of the park, planted individual plants and helped plant some larger native woodland plants. Highlights of the day included spotting a pair of mallard ducks, digging in the ground and walking on logs! BYNC was thrilled to be a part of the event and excited that Scout Leader Christine Bewley saw Keay Nature Park as a wonderful place to have an outing!

For anyone who wants to learn more about natural parks in the area, please refer to our [resource packets available on our website](#).

### ***Sacred Heart School Restores the Woods Once Again***

For the sixth consecutive year, the fifth grade class at Sacred Heart participated in a restoration project, but this time it was at the Tower Road Park in Winnetka. The day kicked-off with a classroom discussion about invasive species and their impact on natural habitats. After learning the facts, the students had an opportunity to put their knowledge to work, cutting and piling invasive buckthorn. Together with their teachers, the 25 fifth graders cleared an area of invasive buckthorn that was preventing native plants from growing. As a reward, the students had the opportunity to run around in the sand and get their feet wet on the shores of Lake Michigan...probably the best way to finish up a workday!

We are so happy to continue to work with students from Sacred Heart School and it's amazing to think that the first group of fifth grade students who took part in BYNC's service learning program are now seniors in high school!

### ***BYNC at L.L. Bean***

In May, L.L. Bean invited BYNC to have an informational table to talk about our programs and invite people to the Camping for Families outing. If you know of other events or opportunities at which we can promote our programs, please send an email to [bync@backyardnaturecenter.org](mailto:bync@backyardnaturecenter.org). We're always looking to get more people involved in our programs!



*Daniel Kielson at L.L. Bean, Westfield Old Orchard, Skokie.*

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### ***Partnerships Lead to Great Events Like Camping for Families***

On June 22 and 23, Winnetka families got a chance to camp close to home at Crow Island Woods thanks to a new partnership between BYNC and the Winnetka Park District. Our idea was to offer an instructional camping event for families who may or may not have camped before. To make Camping for Families a success, we were fortunate to have the help of three great partner organizations: the [Winnetka Historical Society](#), [The Alliance for Early Childhood](#) and [L.L. Bean](#).

Participants arrived at Crow Island Woods around 4:00 pm to settle into their campsites, after which families could participate in organized activities or just play in nature. Our new Board Member Gary Morrissey led nature hikes, talking to families about plant species and identifying fresh animal tracks. A costumed docent from the Winnetka Historical Society led tours of the historic Schmidt-Burnham Log House and The Alliance for Early Childhood brought natural materials to enhance unstructured, interactive play. There was also the opportunity to learn from experts at L.L. Bean who demonstrated how to use backpacks, tents and kayaks.



Attendees also learned about preparing camp meals! Dinner featured a choice of salmon and vegetables wrapped in foil to cook over coals and hamburgers and hot dogs grilled by the Park District. And to top off the meal, we made baked cinnamon sugar apples and S'mores, an all-time favorite. Before families settled into their tents, there was singing around the campfire and telescopes to view stars and the surprise "super" moon.

We're confident that the Camping for Families program will be an annual event, growing bigger each year. All in all, it was a wonderful evening and we're glad that so many families were able to experience camping in our "backyard" nature!

Read more about the Camping Program on the [BYNC website](#) and visit [register.winnetka.org](http://register.winnetka.org) for additional information about Winnetka Park District outdoor programs.

Get social with  
us!

