

Sunday Register Star

Newspaper of the Rock River Valley

Sunday, July 24, 2016

rrstar.com

Volume 161, Number 206 \$3.00

MY VIEW

The importance of investing in nature

I am so grateful that I can step out of my office every day, year-round, and enjoy some of our region's most beautiful prairielands and countless species of plants and animals. Even more exciting is seeing families, children and nature-lovers enjoying the same landscape that I am lucky enough to call my "office."

Preservation, education and recreation are the key focus areas at the Byron Forest Preserve. We strive to educate visitors on the value and importance of our natural areas and our region's history.

We teach and lead preservation efforts, focusing on the inherent benefits of natural land restoration and preservation for our environment and community.

We offer recreational opportunities to provide ways for visitors to interact and enjoy the wonder of nature, all the while reinforcing its benefit to our minds, bodies and environment.

Our organization is committed to promoting the value of preservation of open space and natural resources; offering fun, engaging and interactive educational opportunities; and providing diverse recreational opportunities for our community. We



TODD TUCKER

want to teach and share the history of our prairie, but also talk about the future and how humans influence our natural resources.

It is because of this commitment and appreciation of our region's assets that we have invested in a nearly \$1 million renovation of the Natural History Museum at the Jarrett Prairie Center. New spaces, faces and interactive opportunities are part of the plan for the museum that will shape our visitors' experiences.

The expanded museum space will boast more than 4,000 square feet of new and interactive exhibits with hands-on learning opportunities for visitors of all ages. Just a few of the exciting new exhibits include an immersive indoor theater educating visitors on prairie ecology, a prairie overlook area and a plow exhibit that will allow guests to design their own farm.

Also included in the renovation is a

2,600-square-foot wrap-around outdoor deck to enhance the already unique rental space, ideal for corporate and private events.

The renovations began in June and once completed in October, the new museum will serve as a resource for learning and center for eco-tourism promoting the understanding of the importance of our natural lands in the Rock River region.

The public will be invited to join us to celebrate our grand opening, see the new exhibits and features, and tour the areas available for rental.

This region has amazing indoor and outdoor educational and recreational opportunities that families can enjoy for free or for very little cost. I encourage everyone to keep learning (and having fun) while enjoying the region's natural assets.

The Byron Forest Preserve staff is always available to you as a resource for information, programs and activities. We invite you to visit us this fall to tour the newly renovated museum. For more information, visit byronforestpreserve.com.

—Todd Tucker, executive director, Byron Forest Preserve District.