

The Bridge

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (FoRB)

Send your submissions to Jim Gast, editor at FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com.

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Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is a membership supported 501(c)(3) organized to promote understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and preservation of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and the surrounding area.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Melissa Hutchens Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Steve Ferguson, Meredith Donaldson, Board Members.

Ben Nagy Named Park Superintendent

Ben's first day at Rock Bridge will be June 7th. Ben will oversee Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, Jewell Cemetery State Historic Site, Clark's Hill/Norton State Historic Site, and 78-mile Midwest section of Katy Trail State Park.

Ben has been serving as the Statewide Trails Coordinator for Missouri State Parks since 2019. Prior to that, Ben worked for Walt's Bike Shop and Columbia Parks and Recreation. Ben is an avid mountain biker and is a founding member of the Columbia Missouri Trail Association (COMOTA) and has served as the Commissioner for the Missouri Show-Me State Games Mountain Bike races at Rock Bridge for a number of years.

President's Message

Friends, another month has flown by. The trees are fully leafed-out, the orchard is putting on fruit, and the grass is growing fantastically. I am really enjoying sitting on the porch in the evening and just listening to the crickets and the frogs and the night birds.

As I said last month, the one thing that we can count on is change. Luckily the seasonal change slowed down a little and we actually are getting some real late spring type weather. I have just learned that the Missouri State Parks has hired a new Superintendent. His name is Ben Nagy, and he starts June 7th. Ben was previously the Trail Coordinator for Missouri State Parks. Welcome Ben! I look forward to working with you in the near future and seeing you at the upcoming Board meeting. The Board Meeting has been

moved to June 6th at 7:00 p.m. to accommodate the summer travel schedule. See you all at Gilbert shelter.

Other big changes, we are seeking new Board members and have had a great stroke of luck. We have a community leader and educator that has expressed interest in joining us on the Board and she may be the best qualified member that we have ever had. More on this next month after the full board meets her and has a chance to formally welcome her.

Speaking of Board items, it has been determined that it has been too long since the board handbook has been updated. A group of board members is doing that right now and I can't wait to see the results.

Another important community topic is the Pierpont Store. I stopped and visited with Andy Chubb, who manages the enterprise, and learned a lot about the expansion of the site and he expressed the hope that he will be able to come to one of our Board meetings (maybe August) and meet the Board and answer questions. It was great to catch up with him and I look forward to having him at an upcoming Board meeting.

We look forward to a busy summer of Nature Detectives and UPOP to serve the local youth community. Then on to a busy fall in the Park. See you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson



The teacher of this school group sent a Tweet and commented on how much it touched the students to hear Marilyn Toalson read a poem and tell stories about her childhood memories of growing up at what is now the Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. Photo by Ann Alofs. Used by permission.

Marilyn's grandparents, Dennis and Naomi Ingram, owned the land and allowed people to visit for about 40 years before they willingly sold it for it to become part of the park (which opened in 1967). Marilyn sits on a bench her family recently donated and is located where the Devil's Icebox and Sinkhole Trails meet on top of the Rock Bridge. Volunteers who provided interpretive programs this spring include: Marilyn Toalson, Steve Ferguson, Jan Martin, Meredith Donaldson, Michele Woolbright, Jarrett Whistance and Lynne Hooper.

The High Ridge Trail area has been receiving a lot of TLC, first a burn on April 3rd and then some chainsaw cutting and stump treatment of the invasive Bradford pear, bush honeysuckle, autumn olive and other invasives. The remaining plants look very happy, including many spiderworts that have been in bloom.

Nature Detectives Update

Bethany Haid

FoRB hosted four Nature Detectives programs for preschool learners and their caregivers during the last week of May. Twenty eight people

attended "Rocks of Rock Bridge" and investigated the park's most notable feature: the natural bridge.

We found children had a clearer understanding of how the rocks formed by calling the feature a TUNNEL by doing a hands on activity: Geology Yoga. The adults squirmed on the ground like an underground stream while their children lay on top, acting like the limestone that gradually made an arc above the stream. It was both hilarious and educational! Later, we visited the stream under the tunnel to work on the science process skill of sorting rocks based on their attributes. Then each child collected a favorite rock to clean, measure, weigh, and draw. The Rock Wash Station was the most popular, but the return of the rock by plopping it back into the stream was also fun!

Thank you for your support of these programs: the vast majority of all program participants have not visited the park and are learning to feel confident about bringing their young children to explore our natural resources.

Upcoming Programs and Events:

National Trails Day Weekend Event June 5th:
Como Trail Association (COMOTA) is hosting two events on Sunday, June 5th, at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. Both are family-friendly and will consist of working on the Spring Brook Trail as it descends from the upper parking lot. . All tools and lunch and beverages will be provided. The sessions are from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Meet at Billy Gilbert Memorial Shelter. Call Nate Smith at 712-898-6173 if you have any questions.

To sign up for Nature Detective Programs, use the link available on Friends of Rock Bridge

Facebook page, scan the QR code below or click on this link: <https://friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>.

Nature Detectives: Forest Friends: Sunday afternoon June 26th and Tuesday morning June 28th.



Nature Detectives: Stream Features and Creatures: Sunday afternoon July 10th, Thursday morning July 14th, and Friday morning July 15th.

Water Festival

Saturday, July 16th, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Devil's Icebox parking lot area. Registration not needed.

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