#### *Summer 2020*

## **Announcing Lincoln's Newest Trail**

When Chris Beutler left the mayor's office last May, he took his dog, Lincoln, for a walk on one of city's trails. Each time they would cover a few miles of a trail, and then a few more, and then more until they reached the end. They started and finished the Rock Island and Boosalis and Billy Wolff, the Jamaica North and Antelope Valley trails. And they kept walking till they covered every mile of the city's 130-mile trail system.

"It's an incredible experience," Beutler told Peter Salter in a recent interview for the Lincoln Journal Star. "In terms of exposure to neighborhoods, exposure to nature, exposure to plants, exposure to fresh air. It's just a great system."

During his 12 years as mayor, a significant portion of the trails system was built or improved during his administration. Soon Lynn met with the GPTN Board of Directors about the idea, the former mayor and his goldendoodle will have another trail because the group would be responsible for raising much of to cross off their list: the Chris Beutler Trail. the trail's \$275,000 cost for construction and easements.

The trail will be on the west side of the planned South Haymarket Park and Plaza near N Street and Arena Drive. It will provide a key connection, joining the Jamaica North to the south with the N Street and Haymarket trails.



### **Chris Beutler Trail**

In the future South Haymarket Park, the Chris Beutler Trail will connect the N Street Protected Bikeway to the Jamaica North Trail at J Street. Estimated cost for the trail and easements is \$275,000. GPTN in partnership with NTF is raising funds to support this critical trail connection. Please consider donating to this exciting project. Thanks!



### Make contributions payable to: **Nebraska Trails Foundation**

Name:
Address:
City, State, Zip:

Designated Project:

Mail to: GPTN P.O. 82902 Lincoln, NE 68501-2902



The idea to name it after Beutler surfaced in late May, said Lynn Johnson, the city's parks director, when a community member and trails advocate - he wouldn't say who approached him. It made sense, Johnson said, and it fit the city's long-standing guidelines for naming parks and facilities.

And of course, the GPTN Board was fully supportive and felt it was a great way to recognize his many contributions.

Continued on page 3



## Great Plains Trails Network

*since* 1988

dedicated to the goal of developing a network of commuter and recreational trails within Lincoln and Lancaster County

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### A Note from the President



Sometimes the easiest questions are so difficult! A recent Facebook Post showed Tierra Williamsburg as a favorite route. It's a beautiful trail, and the post asked, which is your favorite? The responses were delightful. Almost all of the trails were mentioned and some included photos. Shortly before that post, GPTN decided to get nametags to identify as board members at the annual meeting

or other public events. In the interest of sharing something interesting, we were asked to identify our favorite trail for the nametag.

It's tough: MOPAC, Jamaica North-Homestead, Murdock – all lead out of town for a long ride. They are my favorite. We're fortunate to have these so convenient. The section of double track on Murdock between about 84th and 112th Street with the tree canopy and pastoral views is favorite. It's photo worthy. Jamaica-Homestead to Beatrice and Standing Bear on into Kansas. I've been as far as Barneston, it's a stress free, mostly car free ride, scenery and towns for stops along the way. MOPAC is similar, rails-to-trails, stress free, mostly car free, scenery and towns. Favorites, each of them: beauty, countryside views, well maintained trail easy to just ride and ride. Pick one?

Then again, most of my rides are commuting and some recreational in town. You can get long rides in town. Last fall, I carved out a 100 mile route on all paved trails right here in the city. So maybe one of these is my favorite? The fact we can ride every part of the city on a trail is one of my favorite things about our trail system, but which trail? One way home takes me down Rock Island and the section under the Penny Bridge with the tree cover is beautiful all year round. Whether the trees are full of leaves or snow, it's photo worthy. But there are photo worthy sections all around town. If I go home that way, I also take Helen Boosalis, and that is rewarding for a different reason. Seeing cars backed up along highway 2, I'm reminded how fortunate I am that we have this trail system and that my work, health, and family circumstances allow me to commute by bike.

Maybe I don't have A favorite. My personal favorite depends on what I'm doing, where I'm going, if it's a trip with a destination or the ride itself is the destination. The trail I'm on at the moment IS my favorite trail. Which is yours?

Happy Trails!

### **GPTN NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS**

April 16, 2020 to August 15, 2020

ABC Electric, Roger Adams, Janet Anderbery, Dorothy Anderson, Wade Anderson, Dale & Peggy Arp, Donn Atkinson, Pamela Baker, Richard Bartels, Joe Billesbach, Ray Bloomquist, Scott Brown, Dan & Becky Caldwell, Michael Cameron, Jim & Kim Carveth, Jeff Cheuvront, Craig Clark, Paul Claus III, Jim & Judi Cook, Craig & Jody Cook, Jim Craig, Steve Danahy, Judith DeGraff, Terry & Judy Dougherty, Hess & Nancy Dyas, Jerry Easley, Al & Vicki Eastman, Alex Eden, De Edgar, Dean & Maria Eisenhauer, Charles & Mary Ann Erickson, William Farewell, Linda Faris, Jack Flanagan, Steve Fosbender, Jeanen France, Eli Frank, Terry & Barb Genrich, Richard & Ursula Goodban, Bob & Jacqueline Greco, John Green, Karen Griffin, Terri Gross, Greg & Mary Heidrick, Tim Henkel, Stephen Henrichsen, Steve Hensel, Ann Heydt, Dennis & Rosemary Hicks, Marie Hitz, Ginger Hobbs & Bernie Lyons, Doug Holle, Barb Hoppe, Sarah Howell, Steve Hubka, Michael F. James, Allen Jensen, Carol & Michael Jess, Lvnn & Susan Johnson, Kim Keister, Jeff & Heather Kimble, Terry Klein, Al Koontz, Mike Kreikemeier, Sarah Kroenke, Larry Kunc, Doug & Dianne Kuppig, Michael G. Laughlin, Daniel Leger, Louis Lemon, Roger Lempke, Joseph Loudon & Michelle Manning, Mike Malloy & Martha Tanner, Pam Manske, Robert & Kay Marshall, Chris & Erin Masada, Chad McNeese, Irene Meaker, Julie Mever, V.T. & Jovce Miller, Jess Moller, Scott Morrill, Francis Moul, Mike Murphy, Ann & John Neal, Jim & Patty Neid, Mark & Deb Nicholson, Dena Noe, Dennis Nuernberger, Carol & Fred Ochsner, Ron & Susann Ogden, Gerry & Jane Oligmueller, John Oswald, Kim Pickering, Glenda Pierce & Jeff Kirkpatrick, Jesse Poore, Anne Potter, Chris Pro, Katherine Putensen, Robert Rau, Robert & Lisa Rauner, Matt & Mary Reckmeyer, Ann Thompson Reicks & Greg Reicks, Roger Renken, Bryan Rettig, Roy Rivera Barcenas, Bob & Jennifer Robinson, Ruth Rodden, Dalyce Ronnau, Craig Roper & Sydney Lynch, Cindy Rutan & Dean Cole, Kris & Mary Rutford, Susan Samson, Fred & Virginia Schelert, Joyce E. Schiermann, Ron Leslie Schroeder, Brandon Scranton, Dennis & Carla Seeba, Robert Shanahan, Albert Sherman, Jerry & Patty Shorney, David & Sharon Sinkler, Nadine Skupa, Bev & Tyler Sprouse, Mark St. Clair, Jerry & Jo Stanley, Gavle & Mary Starr, Pat Stehly, Steve & Laurie Stromberg, John & Gloria Strope, Ron & Camilla Svoboda, Bill Swearingen, Carey Taylor & Alison Krohn, Dennis & Laura Tegtmeier, Jacob & Crystal Thiessen, Annette Thompson, Cheryl Vajgrt, Shaun Vickers, Michael & Jane Voorhies, Leslie Wehnes, Terry & Mary Werner, Kristin Williams, Mark Wilson, Phil Wolfe, Kevin J. Wright, Kaitlyn Ziola, Joel Zuerlein

## **Trail Updates**

Sanitary sewer and water and stream stability project: Wilderness Park trails on the east and west sides of Salt Creek at Old Cheney Road are rerouted via signs and the Jamaica North Trail. Periodic closures of the Jamaica North Trail will also be necessary. This project will continue into winter.

**South Beltway construction and utility relocation:** The Jamaica North Trail will remain open during construction, but temporary and periodic closures will be required in the area one -half mile south of Saltillo Road. Obey closure barricades when they are in place. This is a multi-year project.

**Tierra/Williamsburg Trail corridor.** Schemmer Associates is working on the design of bank stabilization and some associated trail replacement in the Tierra/Williamsburg trail corridor. Construction of this project is anticipated for fall of 2020

**Beal Slough Trail from 56th to 70th St.** Design work continues on the Beal Slough Trail. This project is shown in the NDOT schedule for construction in 2021/22.



Repaired corner on the MoPac Trail at A Street and 98 Street Picture courtesy of Shelby Robinson

## CAN YOU CATCH THIS GUY?

Wouldn't it be fun to try?

Homestead Trail Oak Creek Trail MoPac East Trail



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district www.lpsnrd.org





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BicycLincoln is a community group that supports and promotes bicycling in the city of Lincoln. Our mission is to provide information and a unified voice for bicycle advocacy in an effort to make cycling in Lincoln more friendly, safe, easy, accepted, and "so that more people bike and bike more often.

Check them out at http://bicyclincoln.org/



### Ride. Share.

That's what the Great Plains Bike Club is all about. We actively promote bicycling with rides for all levels of riders in and around Southeastern Nebraska.

Weekly rides with a leader I Show 'n go rides Ice cream & coffee shop rides I Moon-lit rides Hammering training rides I Trail rides

We sponsor the Spring Fling ride in April and Heatstroke 100 in August. We also promote bicycling safety through community-sponsored events. For more information and an on-line application to join the club, go to **greatplainsbikeclub.org**.





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Bike Walk Nebraska cultivates and supports safe and accessible active transportation across our state by leading sound policy and advocating for best practices. We work across sectors in partnership with elected officials, municipalities, and organizations to ensure that biking and walking - whether for transportation or recreation - works for all Nebraskans.

Become a member at:

https://www.bikewalknebraska.org/

## Announcing Lincoln's Newest Trail Continued from page 1

Some of the trail and active transportation-focused projects that have been started or completed under his administration include:

- Jamaica North Trail
- Protected N Street Bikeway
- Murdock Trail Renovation
- Antelope Valley Trail and Union Plaza
- Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch
- Rock Island and Jamaica North Trail Connector
- BikeLNK bike share program
- Complete Streets policy

And in the mid-1990s, more than a decade before he was mayor, he introduced legislation as a state senator that helped create the Cowboy Trail between Norfolk and northwest Nebraska.

Johnson asked Beutler for permission to move forward, and the former mayor was reluctant at first. Others deserve the honor more, Beutler said later. "It's been a wonderful success story, primarily because of the volunteer system that has built the Lincoln trail system. I don't want to take too much credit away from that because that's been the core of the success."

Last month, the Parks and Recreation Department Advisory Board approved the name and the City Council will decide later this month whether to accept its recommendation. If the name moves forward, it could still be several years before the former mayor and his dog can travel his namesake trail.

The South Haymarket Park and its trail have been approved, and some dirt and utility work is underway. But the city doesn't yet have a timeline for its construction. Work on Lincoln's newest park could begin this fall, officials say.

> Connection with Jamaica North Trail at J St

The former mayor doesn't want to name favorite stretches though he'll mention the Antelope Valley trail near Union Plaza when pressed — because the entire system is important, he said. Now more than ever.

"It's proven its success during the pandemic. The trails have been a solace for many during this confinement."

Adapted from: Salter, Peter. Lincoln's newest trail will have familiar, and fitting, name. Lincoln Journal Star. August 2, 2020.





We're back for our 2nd Annual Hub & Soul music series here in Lincoln, Nebraska! Things will be a bit different this year due to COVID-19, but rest assured everyone will be enjoying Hub & Soul soulfully and socially distanced.

Hub & Soul is a free community event designed for people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate music, local food, and Lincoln's parks. Hub & Soul will be held at the beautiful Union Plaza, home to the the Jayne Snyder Trail Center and Hub Cafe on 21st and Q Streets.

The six-week music series will begin on August 27 and will run through October 1. While the event is free, local food prepared by The Hub Café, as well as local craft beer, hard cider and beverages, will be available for purchase.

This year's presenting sponsor is Cornhusker Bank and we are grateful for their generosity and dedication to making Lincoln such a great place to live. Plus, there are many more sponsors that help make this series happen. Check them out at the Hub and Soul website.

Once again, GPTN is honored to be the 2020 nonprofit partner for this six-week music series. Last year, the event raised over \$5,000 in donations at the door and was matched by a generous gift of \$5,000 by Cornhusker State Bank.

However, you choose to get to Hub & Soul, we will have the right parking options for you. Bikes can be locked up near the entrance and cars can be safely parked in the Assurity garage.

All Hub & Soul events are ADA accessible. We have accessible parking in front of the venue. Please check the Hub and Soul Facebook page for updates regarding inclement weather.

Wonderful evening at the Hub and Soul event in 2019

#### Hub and Soul Schedule

Thursdays, Aug 27, 2020 – Oct 1, 2020 | 5:30 – 8:30 PM At Union Plaza Amphitheatre – 21st and P Streets

For more information and their COVID-19 guidelines, please go to **hubandsoul.com** 

September 17

23rd Vibration

September 24

Edem Soul Music

Kris Lager Band

Will Hutchinson

Ro Hempel

Jarana

**October 1** 

August 27 Emily Bass Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal

September 3 Mesonjixx A Ferocious Jungle Cat

September 10 Lloyd McCarter The Wildwoods Band

## Lincoln Track Club Membership Application

The Lincoln Track Club, Inc. was established in 1975 by an eager group of track enthusiasts. Although our title contains the reference to track, we have become a distance oriented club. Our membership includes some of the nation's finest road racers as well as a great number of fun runners.

In essence, our club is a nonprofit community service organization, established to promote running throughout this area and provide educational assistance for its runners. Our quarterly newsletter has become an informational running publication for local runners. The LTC is a member club of both the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) and USA Track and Field.

The Lincoln Track Club is not just about running. It's also about volunteering. This is the one ingredient that makes LTC work. The whole organization is made up of volunteers and we can always use more.

Please consider joining one of Nebraska's finest volunteer-run organizations. LTC members receive entry forms for all LTC races, FastTimes (our newsletter, which is e-mailed quarterly), an invitation to our annual meeting, and a discount of an entry fee for a single LTC road race. All memberships expire at the end of the calendar year (December 31).

## To join the Lincoln Track Club: www.lincolnrun.org





## **Support Lincoln Trails**

By donating to the Nebraska Trails Foundation through the:



## **New GPTN Trail Maps Now Available**



Mary Jo & Greg Gillespie









The new GPTN Trails maps are available at most bike shops, running and sporting goods stores and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation office. Thanks to our sponsors who supported the printing of the map!

### PLATINUM SPONSORS













## **Pedaling Suffrage: Along the Path of Women Activists**

By Rachelle Hadley

On Saturday, July 25, several cyclist of all levels gathered in front of the Nebraska History Museum on 15th & Centennial Mall to embark on one of four historical tour of homes of Lincoln women involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement which honored their years of hard, relentless work for the right to vote culminating in the 19th Amendment, ratified in August, 1919 in Nebraska. Mary Bryan first home, wife of William Jennings Bryan, one of the first women lawyers to pass the bar exam; and ended on 15th & Sumner. Ed Zimmer provided a wealth of information about these women--many of them held positions such as lawyers, doctors, sociologists, philanthropists and of course all were

Ed Zimmer provided a wealth of information about these doctors, sociologists, philanthropists and of course all were activists. A few things that were incredibly amazing to me Ed Zimmer led the tour which encompassed about 15 were: a) how many important women in history lived in different homes of women in Lincoln who were actively Lincoln, Nebraska, and b) how fortunate we are to have Ed Zimmer available to teach us about them in such a fun and involved in getting the Women's Right to Vote ratified in Nebraska. Mr. Zimmer started the tour at 26 & R, where one interesting way. A big thank you to Sharon from the Nebraska of the suffrage activists lived who was the first sociology History Museum and Ed Zimmer for providing this delightful professor at the University of Nebraska. We travelled from trek back in history. Check out the exhibit about the Women's there to Elliott Elementary School named for Miss Phoebe Suffrage Movement in Nebraska at the Nebraska History Elliott, who was on the Board of Education and continued to Museum AND watch for more of these bike tours GPTN work our way through the Near South neighborhood viewing helps to sponsor throughout the year.



### **Plan Forward 2050**

### Your feedback is needed!

The City of Lincoln has initiated the second Public Event in the Plan Forward 2050 process! The first Public Event was held in February at Pinnacle Bank Arena; due to social distancing, the second Public Event is completely virtual.

The virtual event is meant to simulate a traditional open house, with stations focusing on three growth scenarios out to the year 2050 and a mix of informative and interactive content.

The City has a created a really nice virtual open house which can be found at https://lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/forward/ process.htm. Under the July—August 2020 heading, select the link for "Virtual Event". You can provide feedback at this Virtual Open House website.

As part of the Plan Forward 2050 process, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is being developed. This is where feedback on our transportation system can make a big difference for bike-pedestrian issues. You can visit the transportation plan site at **https://lrtplincolnmpo.com** to learn more about transportation needs in Lincoln and Lancaster County through the year 2050, provide your input on the Idea Wall, or give site specific comments on a Pin Map. These sites work best with Chrome as a browser.



Interactive Pin Map to provide comments on Safety, Bike/Ped, Transit, Road Condition, or Traffic.



## **Lincoln Trail-A-Thon**

The Lincoln Trail-A-Thon (LTA) is still going strong and we are headed into the final quarter of the challenge. The challenge is finishing up the Salt Creek Levee section in August and will be headed toward September on the 70th street Trail, Old Cheney Trail, and Holmes Lake Trail. In October we will hit the Jamaica North Trail. November will be the 84th Street Trail and the final leg with be the MoPac Trail.

The fun thing about LTA is that it is at your own pace and we provide the maps and the mileage for each leg of the challenge. If you haven't signed up it's not too late. The cost is only \$25 and you get a really nice soft cotton t-shirt. I've been wearing mine to run everywhere this summer. It's been through the wash and dry cycle every week since January. It's not ready to give up and neither am I'm I. Come join the fun by visiting gptn.org. See you on the trails.

Dena Noe, LTA Team Member



GPTN Board Members Shelby Robinson and Dena Noe enjoying the 2020 Lincoln Trail-A-Thon.





For the final month of the National Bike Challenge 2020, the organizers are inviting you to take part in **Cycle September** - a global competition with individuals and organizations coming together to help more people realize the benefits of riding a bike.

Individuals and their workplaces will compete worldwide to see which can earn the most points by riding and encouraging others to do the same. Individuals and their workplaces will compete on local, national and global leader boards to see who can earn the most points. Points are earned for every mile and day you ride plus every person you encourage. Points mean prizes! The more points you earn the more entries you gain into the prize draws.

### Learn more and register at lovetoride.net/lincoln

## **Ride Longer with BikeLNK!** by Jes Slavin and Jamie Granquist

The City of Lincoln's bike share program, BikeLNK has recorded over 90,000 trips in just two and a half years, collecting feedback along the way from many of the riders. Based on these suggestions and membership data, BikeLNK has changed up all memberships trip length and also the casual pass structure.

As of June 1, 2020, all pass types include unlimited 1-hour trips. This is an increase from the original 30-minute unlimited trips. Now all trips longer than one hour, regardless of membership pass type, cost \$6 per additional hour. This change is made possible with no additional price increase for the Visiting Voyager, Monthly, or Aluminum Access membership types.

BikeLNK retired the single ride Quick Tripper Membership Pass and replaced it with the Capital Cruiser Membership Pass which includes 24 hours of unlimited 1-hour trips. Meaning no matter what pass is purchased, users now ride an unlimited number of times within that Membership Pass purchase timeframe, as long as each trip is 1 hour or less.

BikeLNK has been trying out five electric pedal-assist bikes since late March. E-bikes are the newest bike sharing technology that have enabled bike share systems across the country to increase ridership and make active transportation just a bit more fun! BikeLNK is excited to have the bikes in the system, to see how the Lincoln community responds. So far, the response has been phenomenal at nearly 4x the number of trips per bike per day on the 5 e-bikes compared to the 105 traditional pedal bikes!

The 5 BCycle Electric bikes assist riders as they pedal, up to 17mph. The limited time demo fleet is being sponsored by Allo, provider of lightning-fast fiber. There is no additional cost to use an E-bike with any BikeLNK Membership Pass. To enable the assist: Turn on the e-bike with the button located above the LCD screen on the left-side of the handlebars. Once pedaling, the electric-assist motor matches the rider's power. E-bikes can be located using the BCycle App found at https://www.bcycle.com/app

More information about all pass types can be found on the BikeLNK Rates Page.

For up to date BikeLNK news & information, follow BikeLNK on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

## Cycle September





For trails users looking for a little more adventure, a new mountain bike trail is coming to Van Dorn Park. For several years, Van Dorn Park has hosted seasonal cyclocross races. Each autumn, race organizers would mow a serpentine route through the park's west side. But the tall grass would return, and they'd have to mow it again. James Krist took over those duties last year. "After seeing how much work it took and how much time we put in, I thought, 'Why can't we do it permanently?" he said. "Krist is 21, an Omaha native majoring in mechanical engineering. He's a longtime racer mountain bikes, cyclocross and road racing - and is president of UNL's cycling club.

But he couldn't just grab a shovel and rake and start scraping the grass away. He needed the city's permission, and that took some time. The Parks and Recreation Department routinely fields requests from groups pitching their own plans for city parks. And it has a history of sharing public space with the private sector, with long-standing agreements with Star City BMX near Oak Lake Park, Community Crops at Peter Pan Park, Lincoln Youth Football at Sherman Field and the Lincoln Flying Disc Club.

But the city has conditions, said Denise Pearce, the department's special projects administrator. A project must be consistent with the department's mission. The group must prove it can maintain what it builds. It also must be a good fit for its proposed location. And in this case, it was - because Van Dorn Park needed a new reason for people to go there.

The park got its start more than 100 years ago, when its first parcel was deeded to the city. It grew to become one of the city's major parks, serving neighborhoods in southwest Lincoln, said J.J. Yost, the department's planning and construction manager. But a new busy intersection at Ninth, 10th and Van Dorn streets — and its connection to Nebraska 2 — became a barrier for families living east and north of the park.

It really doesn't serve the neighborhood as well as it once did," Yost said. Krist's proposal also made sense because the park already had a history with trails, and this was an expansion and improvement of that, Yost said.

Once the plan was approved by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and city lawyers, Krist was free to get to work.

A group called THOR, or 'Trails Have Our Respect', as well as other local volunteers are creating, funding and maintaining the trail. Volunteers have rode and walked potential paths several times, staking out a route with flags, then pulling them up and starting over. The group wanted a loop trail with good flow, and enough quick elevation change - climbs and descents - to keep the ride interesting. The 2mile, one-way loop they charted uses some of the existing cyclocross course but also covers new ground.

Over the past several weekends, 20 to 35 volunteers have showed up with shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows, trimmers and tampers. Altogether, they put in more than 150 hours of trail work. The trail should be ready to ride the first part of September.

Adapted from: Salter, Peter. Mountain bike trail to give new life to one of Lincoln's older parks. Lincoln Journal Star. August 14, 2020.

### **Bridge Update!**

### Fundraising Complete -Opening this Fall!

We did it! Thanks to the generosity of numerous individual donors and foundations, GPTN and its' many partners raised over \$2.2 million to support construction of the Rock Island—Jamaica North Trail Bridge.

Construction was started this spring and has been going very smoothly according to Sara Hartzell, Park Planner II with Lincoln Parks and Recreation. One of the bridge spans has been set in place. Around Sept 4, the main span over the tracks will be set in place and will require the railroad to be shut down during that time period. The placement of the 165 foot span will require a crane that will come to the site via six semi trucks. Yes, it is a very big crane and this span will be one of the largest in Lincoln.

The completion date is set for October. A donor recognition plaza should also be completed by the opening date. Periodic closures of the Jamaica North Trail will occur through fall while the project is under construction. Obey closure barricades when they are in place. The Rock Island Trail will remain open until the final stages of the project.

A virtual and in-person grand opening is being schedule for October. Stay tuned for more information.





Image courtesy of Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department



# Prairie Pines Nature Preserve "*a refuge for all*"! By Sue Kohles, Coordinator Prairie Pines Partners

Many people who visit the Prairie Pines Nature Preserve often comment that they never knew it existed, or had driven by and wondered what it was. Those comments describe its quiet existence for much of the past twenty years. Previously not open to the public, it was minimally used by the University of Nebraska for research, student projects and classes. The Prairie Pines Partners (PPP) nonprofit and its volunteers are working to change that! PPP is responsible for providing nature-based programming and increasing public access to the site.

The Preserve is now open every Saturday from 9 AM - 5 PM. Although the Welcome Center remains closed due to Covid-19 precautions, the many grassed trails are open. Future expanded access is planned.

The Prairie Pines Nature Preserve is a 145-acre natural area on the corner of 112<sup>th</sup> and Adams Streets. It contains diverse woodland, wetland and grassland habitat, and a 10-acre remnant tallgrass prairie. Natural resource interpretive signage can be found along its grassed foot trails. The property was a typical farm of the 1940's when it was purchased by Walt and Virginia Bagley in 1959.

Over time they created the diverse habitat that it is today. The Bagleys were involved in community greening throughout their lives, and were very involved in the formation of Wachiska Audubon, Wilderness Park and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. They pioneered the concept of protecting private land from development when Prairie Pines became the first Conservation Easement in the state. The Preserve was the first home for Raptor Recovery.

It is now home to the threatened long-eared bat and numerous other wildlife species as well as over 125 woody plant species. The property can never be sold or developed, thus will remain green space as Lincoln expands. The Prairie Pines mission is to "Sustain Prairie Pines habitat for all living through conservation, education and experience to promote a lasting connection with the natural world and its resources."

The Bagleys donated Prairie Pines to the University of Nebraska Foundation. It is leased to the University of Nebraska Institute of Natural Resources and physically managed by the Nebraska Forest Service. It is programmed by the Prairie Pines Partners who have been providing opportunities for active nature-based programming and passive nature experience at the Preserve since 2016. Previous to their involvement it was not open to the public. It is also available for use by educational programs, community and nonprofit organizations.

The Preserve represents a successful collaboration of academic, service and nonprofit organizations honoring donor vision that it be "a refuge for all" in its mission to "Sustain habitat for all living through conservation, education and experience to promote a lasting connection with the natural world and its resources".

A trail project to connect Prairie Pines to the existing Murdock Trail, was envisioned over ten years ago by the donor and PPP as a means to provide non-motorized access to Prairie Pines. Due to the Conservation Easement, parking at the Preserve is limited, thus non-motorized access would be a great benefit to providing access.

The Murdock Trail currently dead ends at 112<sup>th</sup> Street one-third mile north of Prairie Pines. The Nebraska Forest Service is now involved in the project and planning work has been done by Olsson Associates as grant and donor funds are pursued. The project endeavors to connect the Murdock "trail to nowhere" to the trail to somewhere unique – the Prairie Pines Nature Preserve. When this and the Haines Branch Trail to Spring Creek Prairie are complete, it will enable a 26 mile "prairie to prairie" connection across Lincoln's trail network.

Prairie Pines is a nature-based makerspace, a place for nature experience that fosters learning, collaboration, health, creativity, inquiry, conservation and environmental ethics. Substantial research comprehensively shows nature experience and "green exercise" to promote multidimensional benefits that mitigate stress, enhance immunity, improve mental and physical health and enrich learning, especially in children. All are invited to share in the experience of Prairie Pines. Learn more at prairiepines.org.