

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

December, 2020

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President's View

This year, 2020 has been like none other. In my 79 years of living I've never seen anything like it. The despair seems endless; from unrest in our American political system to chaos in our streets, from hurricanes along the Gulf coast to 100 mph winds across Iowa, widespread fires in the west and high river levels depositing sediments at a record pace in our Mississippi River backwater; and of course an uncontrolled virus spreading across the United States linked to deaths of Americans in the hundreds of thousands. How will it end, and just as important, when will it end?

The year 2020 has seen the Friends of Pool 9 attempt many things, but complete few as you'll see in the Year in Review enclosed. On a positive note I did see hundreds of boaters taking to the waters of Pool 9 over the summer at various times. It seemed to be the most popular place on the planet. As a matter of fact, folks at S&S Rentals commented that this was a very good year for houseboat, pontoon, and fishing boat rentals. And the parking lot at Village Creek boat landing was filled to capacity every weekend. Folks just wanted to get away from it all and came to the river in huge numbers, to enjoy nature and be with their families in the safe and protected space of Pool 9.

So all is not lost in the negatives mentioned earlier; and we have a great bunch of people investing lots of time and energy to make Pool 9 one of the best on the river. As in past years some of our beloved members have left us for a better "river in the sky". We will miss them dearly, and thank them for making FOP9 a better group with their presence. And as expected all 1000 raffle tickets were sold, and some of the winners donated their cash winnings right back to FOP9. Many of you responded to our annual end-of-the-year mailing asking for donations and as a result our finances are strong. You are the real "cornerstones" of this organization, and it humbles all of us on the Board. We are strong because of you, the membership. Thank you.

Have a good Holiday Season and if you still need some Christmas gifts why not check out our Friends of Pool 9 facebook page where there's no charge for shipping. And with that we'll see you in the spring.

John Verdon

Friends of Pool Board of Directors Election Results

Of the 562 ballots sent to members, just under 100 ballots were received via US Postal Service, PO Box 455 by Larry Quamme for the six Board of Directors positions. The six positions available on the Board begin in January, 2021 and are for a three year term of office ending in December, 2023. The six candidates receiving the most votes included: Jerry Boardman, Mike Conway, Kevin Quillin, Bruce ReVoir, Blake Schoh, and John Verdon.

Votes were as follows: Jerry Boardman - 82, John Verdon - 82, Blake Schoh - 78,

Kevin Quillin - 73, Bruce ReVoir - 68, Mike Conway - 63, Christa Hall - 41.

Thanks to the Nominating Committee of Sue English, Marty Halverson, and Darus Spingler and the members that agreed to run for a position on the Board of Directors. We thank the Friends of Pool 9 members that took the time to complete and submit a ballot. We also give a special "thank you" to Bob Seeley for having served on the Board for years but decided not to continue. We'll miss his commitment and dedication at our meetings, but know he will continue to be involved in FOP9. We look forward to our Friends of Pool 9 time together on projects and hope for a better 2021 boating season on the Upper Mississippi.

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FOP9 Receives Appreciation Letter For Handicapped Ramp

Friends of Pool 9 donated \$3,000 toward the construction of the handicapped boat loading ramp at Village Creek Landing in 2019. The concrete loading ramp along the south side of the launch area allows handicapped individuals to be placed in the boat while it is still on the boat trailer. The following letter of appreciation was received from the family of a “user” via Iowa DNR Biologist Karen Osterkamp.

“I write to you today to enormously thank you for installing the handicapped boat loading ramp in Lansing. I cannot thank you enough for the joy it gave my Dad to be able to get into a boat and be back on the Mississippi River where he has spent over 65 years fishing.

He’s 87 now and cared for my Mom throughout her Alzheimer’s that took her life in 2017 and then following her death he suffered numerous health issues. For several years he has been unable to get into a boat safely due to poor balance and strength, yet has continued to yearn to fish on the Mississippi again. He frequently pined, “If I could just get in a boat...”

So yesterday my son took his boat and we took my Dad with his 3 tackle boxes and 4 poles to Lansing from Waterloo to try the ramp and it was fabulous. Wonderful!! It was very easy for him to navigate and get in and out of the boat and most importantly safely. The sun was shining, the fish were biting, life was good again.

The ramp was worth every penny plus a million - thank you so much.

*Tina Cooper
Daughter of a Happy
Devoted Fisherman”*

*Dean Dirksen, retired
Captain of the Waterloo
Police Department and former
President of the Blackhawk
County Habitat for Humanity
settles into some serious
fishing on the Mississippi
River at Lansing.*



Friends of Pool 9 Member Turns 100

The oldest member of Friends of Pool 9 turned 100 years of age on November 19, 2020. Mildred (Midge) Lewis is a West Des Moines, Iowa resident and is the Aunt of Phyllis and John Verdon. She was a classmate and friend of long-time Lansing resident Mit Wilde, also an FOP9 member.

Midge was raised as the daughter of a commercial fisherman, (Fred “Spider” Gibbs) in south Lansing. She married Norman Lewis and settled in West Des Moines. But her love affair with the Mississippi River continued and she and her family enjoyed summers camping on the beaches north of town. She was a school secretary and loved working with educators and children. She and Norm had three children, Julie Herman, Jeff Lewis, and Jay Lewis.



Midge Lewis celebrating her 100th birthday in warmer weather (on October 18th) at her West Des Moines home where family members and hundreds of her friends drove past her home with horns tooting and banners waving to help her enjoy an early birthday.

Midge has supported the efforts and programs of FOP9 through her annual donations and shares our successes with her neighbors and friends. When asked why she became a member she replied, “Because I love Lansing and the river, and all of you.” As for her age, she tells her friends that she’s “still on 3rd base just waiting to go home”. Friends of Pool 9 would like to thank Midge for her continued support, her enthusiasm for life, and for being a good member and steward of the river resource.

Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. was formed in 2006 and is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization with 800 members. More information can be found on their website: friendsofpool9.org or on their Facebook page.

2020 Year in Review

The year began as other years with FOP9 volunteers being involved in numerous projects during the winter months. Board members attended a Lansing City Council meeting to discuss the possibility of a “Restricted Wake Zone” along the Lansing waterfront. It was approved by the Iowa DNR this fall and will be implemented in spring, 2021.

Members worked at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery Kids Ice Fishing Day, as well as several days on rebuilding the endangered clam cages, with the help of Annie Gallagher. Members also presented a kid’s ice fishing and trapping event. Ric Zarwell continued to meet with Refuge Manager Sabrina Chandler and Reggie McLeod (Big River Magazine) to plan the 100 Year - Centennial (1924-2024) book for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Many of you were involved in another very successful Ferryville Eagle Day event (co-sponsored by FOP9). And a small group of researchers surveyed the eagle nesting sites in Pool 9. Data collected indicates 224 nests in the 31 mile-long pool, with 164 being classified as active.

Scholarships were awarded to two Eastern Allamakee seniors, Kristi Dibert and Kinley Schobert, and three De Soto High School graduating seniors, Alex Boardman, Hunter Pedretti, and Marcus Connolly. On the river, beach fire rings were cleaned regularly and poison ivy was sprayed to accommodate river campers. We did not organize a Pool-wide river clean up event this year because of the covid 19 virus and our concern for a large number of people gathering at the VFW building, nor

did we place portable toilets at the landings. We had few Board meetings and wore masks and “distanced” from one another when we did meet. And once more, the Pat Sandry Memorial Fishing Tourney was a huge success, and we appreciate their donation to FOP9 in his name.

The collecting of nuts from river corridor trees took place for area nurseries, as well as limited tree restoration on the rebuilt islands at the lower end of Pool 9. The Board did offer a “cash back raffle” this year, as well as an end of year “merchandise sale” of FOP9 shirts and hats on our facebook page. We did not have a combined MRAD event for Lansing and De Soto students as in the past. And there was no Annual Meeting, because of the covid 19 virus. The Board sent out a “mail in” ballot to the membership with candidates willing to serve on the Board of Directors for a three year term and results are in another article in this newsletter. And the Board of Directors did have a “virtual” meeting in November to discuss the USFWS and Friends of Pool 9 Partnership Agreement that expires on 1/11/2022.

The year ended with a total of just over 500 volunteer hours for FOP9 and the Upper Miss Refuge. This is an unusually low number of hours compared to the average of more than 2,000 volunteer hours logged per year. Our total volunteer hours are over 37,000 for the Refuge in our 14 years of existence.

Stay safe everyone and we’ll see you in the spring, 2021. If you would like to be involved in any of our activities listed in the Calendar of Events for 2021 contact any Board member or go to our website at friendsofpool9.org or visit our **Facebook** page.

Friends of Pool 9 Raffle Winners Drawn

Members of the Board of Directors for Friends of Pool 9 met at the Driftless Center on Columbus Drive on Thursday, October 29, 2020. Their goal was to draw winners of the raffle. Erin Cubbon, Allamakee County Conservation Board Office Manager at the Driftless Center was asked to actually draw the winners. Blake Schoh, FOP9 Board member recorded a short video of the event to be displayed on the FOP9 Facebook page.

Winners included: Darus Spingler - \$500, Sherry Quamme - \$300, Cheryl Walsh - \$200, and Marsha Stross - \$200. The raffle added over \$5,000 to the Friends of Pool 9 finances and will be used to support

various activities or events in the coming years. Friends of Pool 9 thanks everyone that supported the fund raising project, as well as all the other events/activities during the past year.

L. to R. John Verdon, President FOP9 and Jerry Boardman, Raffle Chairman for the event, stand behind the FOP9 Raffle Barrel constructed by employees and inmates from the Luster Heights Facility years ago. Erin Cubbon, Driftless Center and ACCB office manager drew the raffle winners from the barrel.





FOP9 Board Increases Number of Scholarships

The Friends of Pool 9 Board of Directors have voted to increase the number of FOP9/Tim Loose Scholarships they would like to give to Lansing and De Soto graduating seniors in 2021. The Board voted to give two 4-Year scholarships in the amount of \$500 each, as well as two \$500 scholarship for a 2-Year program, and one \$250 volunteer award. This amounts to \$2,250 available for each of the two high schools. These scholarships are available for graduating seniors at both Eastern Allamakee and De Soto High Schools.

Graduating seniors in Spring, 2021 should contact the Guidance Counselor at their respective high schools for more information and an application. The lone requirement for the 4 or 2 year scholarships is that a student be entering a science related field of study that focuses on the environment/natural resources and includes fisheries, wildlife, rivers and streams, forestry, ecology, agriculture, biology, chemistry or computer science.

Calendar of Events & Chairman For 2021

Mussel cage repair- Genoa NFH.....	Feb./March TBA
Clean Up - Bob H/Alex/Jerry.....	April 17
Eagle Survey - Jerry B.....	April/May
FOP9/Tim L. Scholar Awards -	May
Gypsy Moth traps - Alex/Mandi.....	April/May/Summer
Tree Planting on Islands - Jerry/Alex.....	Summer TBA
Beach Work - Bob H./Blake/Kevin	Summer TBA
Clean Fire Rings - Kevin/Blake	Monthly by Volunteers
Lansing Fish Days - Bruce/Sue E.	August 7 (DNR Sat. 8/7)
Sturgeon Tagging - GNFH.....	Aug. - Sept. TBA
EACS/De Soto MRAD - Lisa/Mandi	September TBA
FOP9 Annual Mtg. - Larry/Alex/Al	September 25

TBA= To Be Announced

The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. is a grassroots citizen action group, whose sole purpose is the protection, restoration, and preservation of our natural resources. The 800 member organization has no dues requirements, and pays for its activities through donations and grants. It is a 501c3 federally tax exempt organization, all donations are tax deductible. The communities that border Pool 9 are its primary contributors and supporters.