



Friends of the Sangamon Valley

Summer 2026 Newsletter

Welcome fall at an FOSV party!

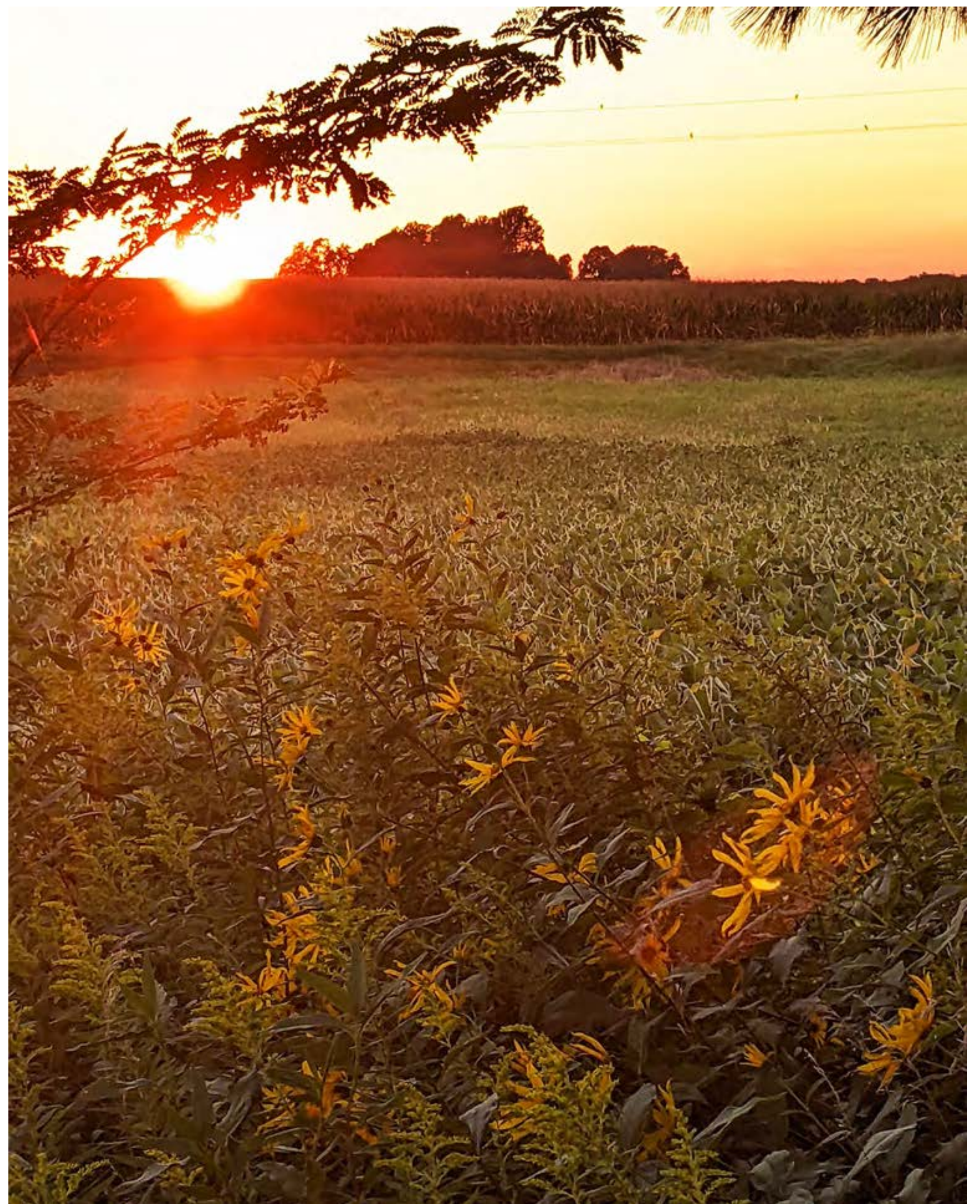
Roots & Rhythms at winery October 18

We hope you'll join us for an afternoon of wine, song and activism on Oct. 18 when we hold our annual social gathering. This year the theme is Roots & Rhythms and we'll meet at Hill Prairie Winery in Oakford.

Celebrate the progress we've made over the past year. Learn about our headquarters site-planning project and help us thank our dedicated volunteers. Discover how you can be part of our efforts to preserve, protect, and restore natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed!

The free event begins at 1:30 p.m. The winery will offer live music from 2-5.

(Continued on page 4)



Measuring mussels

Mussels contribute immensely to the health of Illinois waterways by filtering out silt, chemicals and toxins. They're also sensitive to water conditions, making them a good measure of a river's health. It's important to monitor the mussel population and watch for signs that they might be struggling.

Check out Page 9 to learn more about mussels and FOSV member Kevin Veara's fascination with these bivalves that come in all shapes and sizes.

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Not a member or need to renew?
Visit **FOSV.org/membership**
or
Text **JOINFOSV** to 44321



Who we are

Friends of the Sangamon Valley is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed.

FOSV owns eight properties totaling over 358 acres in Mason, Menard, Christian, Cass and Sangamon Counties and manages an additional 13.8 acres at two sites through conservation easements.

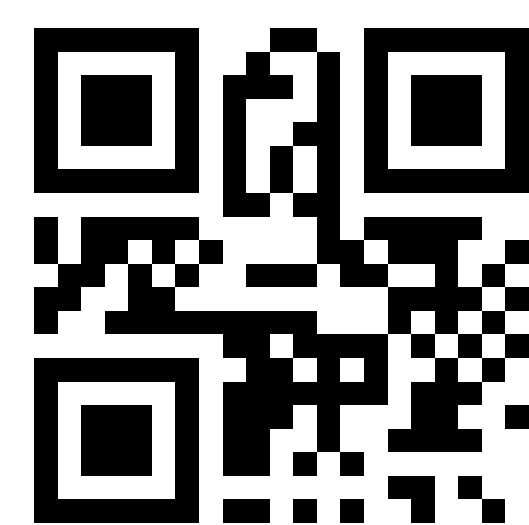
Estate planning

We hope you will consider FOSV in your estate planning. Memorial gifts and bequests are an important way to make a lasting contribution to the preservation, restoration, and acquisition of natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed. Our tax ID number is 37-1390670. Please contact Angela Funk at 217-494-3115.



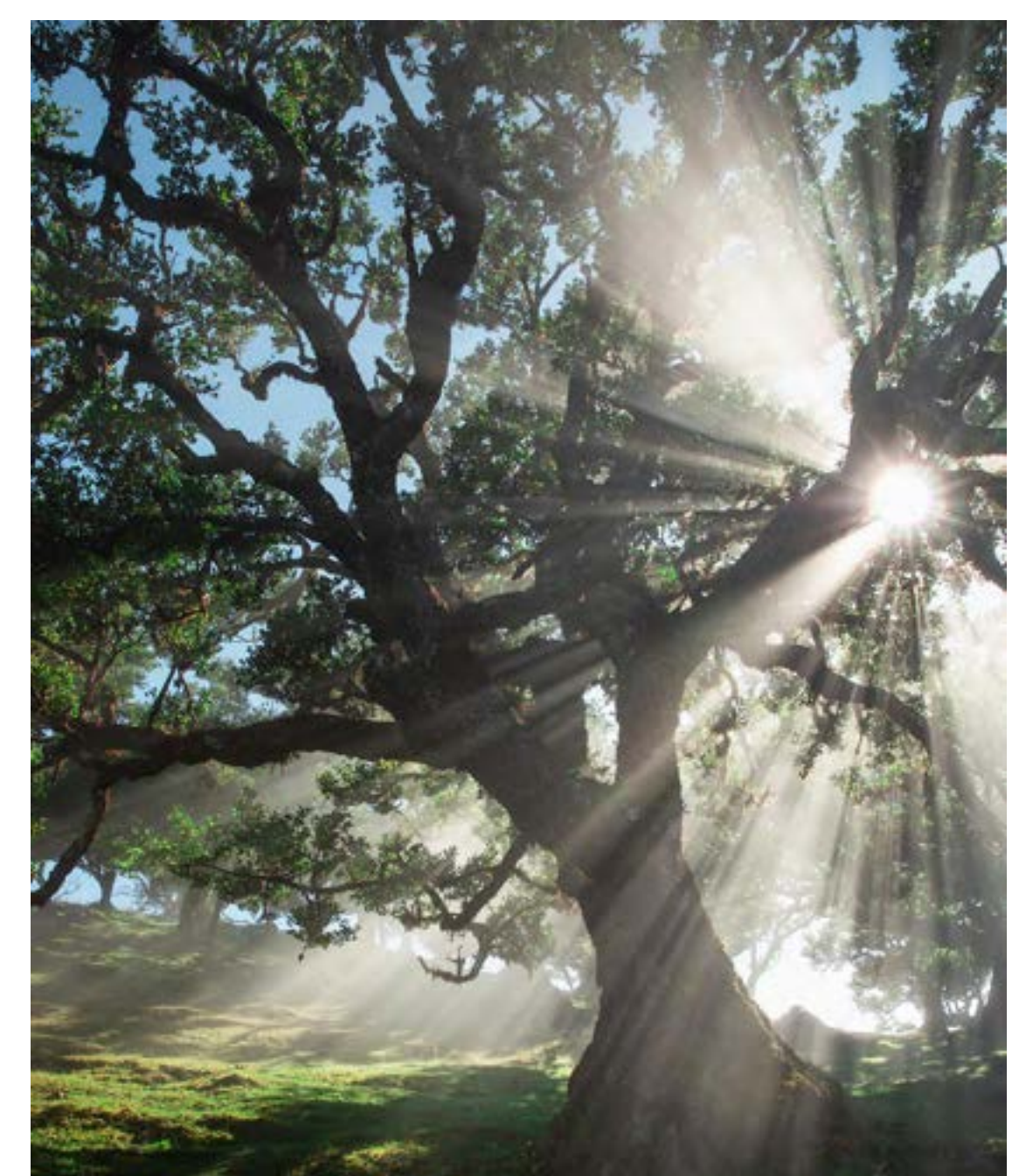
Keep in touch

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- 217-494-3115
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Enduring Oak Society

Please consider joining our Enduring Oak Society by committing to donate an annual recurring gift to the Friends of the Sangamon Valley of \$1000 or more. Contact our executive director, Angela Funk, to learn more.



A note from the **President**

The FOSV wants you!

By Becky Croteau

We are excited to announce that Friends of the Sangamon Valley is seeking passionate and dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors in 2027. We are seeking people who are eager to contribute their unique perspectives and expertise to our organization.

Founded in 1999, Friends of the Sangamon Valley's mission is to preserve, protect, and restore natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed. By joining our board, you would be part of a dedicated group of people committed to ensuring the protection and responsible management of local natural areas.

Additionally, we are seeking individuals with experience, skills, or representation in the following areas:

- Fundraising and Executive-level Nonprofit Leadership
- Grant Procurement
- Ecological Restoration or Land Stewardship
- Nonprofit Governance and Policy



Your skills and perspectives will help us continue to grow as an organization and deepen our impact across the region.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about serving on the Friends of the Sangamon Valley board, please don't hesitate to reach out. I would be happy to meet you at our headquarters to show you around and answer any questions.

For more information about FOSV visit us on-line at www.fosv.org. Send questions to me at becky.croteau@gmail.com.

Feeling board?

Would you like to make an impact on natural areas protection and restoration?

Do you like using your financial skills to keep accounts orderly?

Want to solve problems and use your creativity to do good?

Then consider serving on the board! Talk to a current board member or Executive Director Angela Funk.

Roots & Rhythms on Oct. 18

Continued from Page 1

Our host, Hill Prairie Winery in Oakford, offers award winning wines and rustic elegance in a natural setting. As you look out on the vineyard, you will see restored prairie and the picturesque natural landscape for which the winery's name was chosen.

The impressive, transformed timber-frame barn (built around 1911) that once housed draft horses and work animals is where we will gather to enjoy wines made from grapes grown on-site and a selection of craft beer, cocktails, and non-alcoholic options.

Please plan to arrive by **1:15 p.m.** After a brief special address from our Executive Director and Board of Directors you will be treated to an afternoon of delightful, uplifting tunes from Antone DeRocchi.

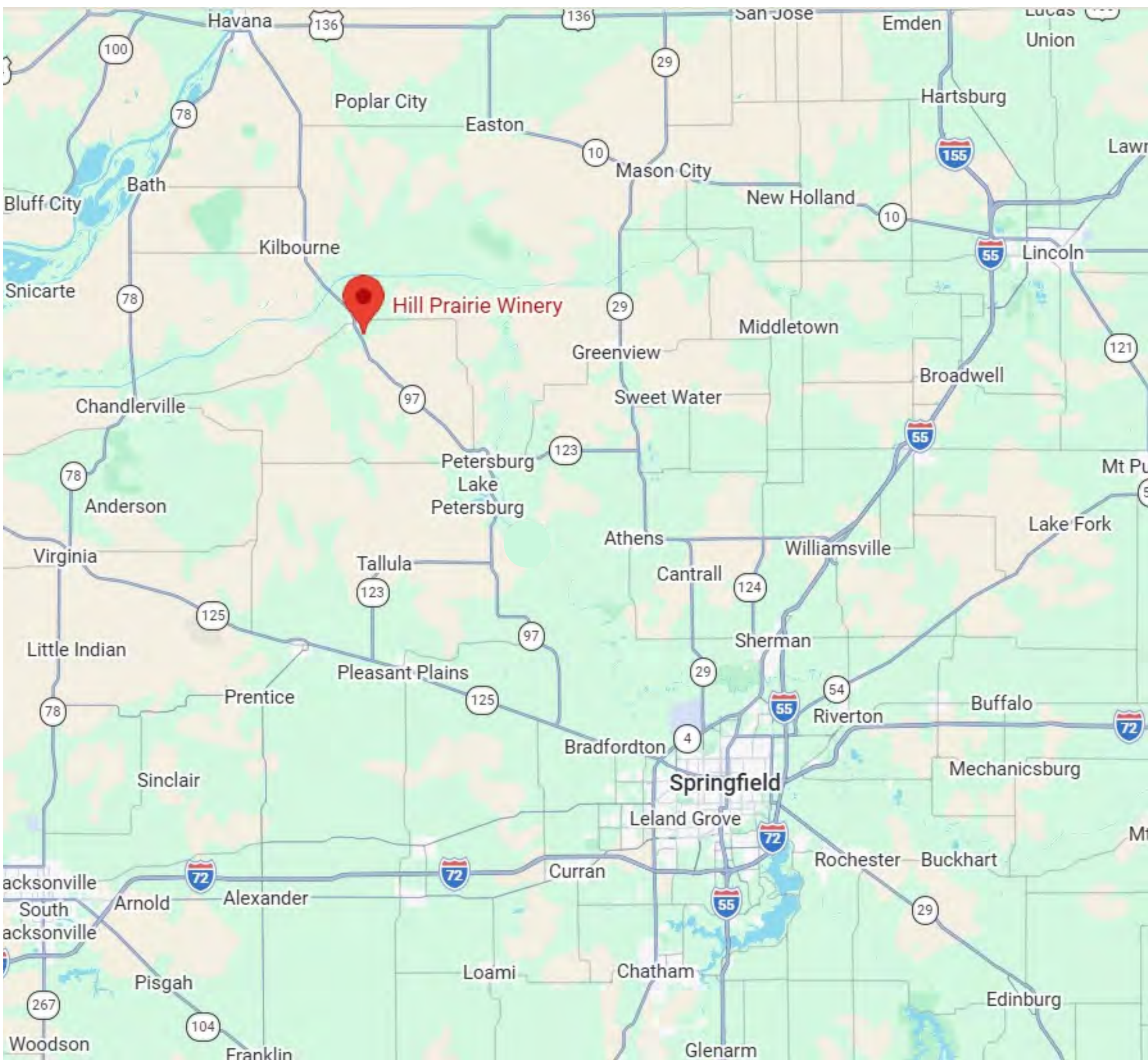
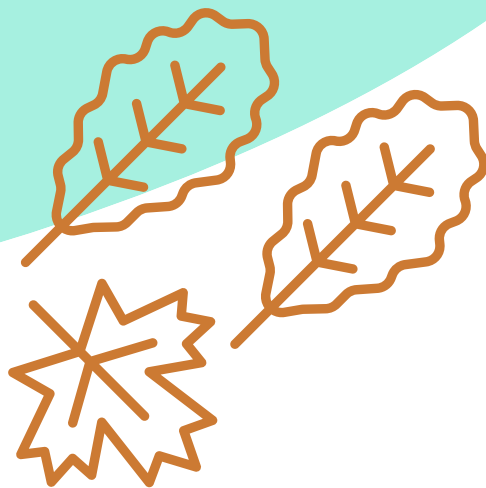
Bring your friends and gather with kindred spirits-in-nature on a beautiful autumn afternoon!

Hill Prairie Winery is located at 23753 Lounsberry Road in Oakford, about 30 miles northwest of Springfield.

If you have any questions, please call or text Angela Funk at 217-494-3115.



- No outside beverages, please.
- The winery opens at noon. Arrive by 1:15
- Leashed, well-mannered dogs are welcome.
- Live music is from 2-5 pm.
- We will provide some munchies. You are also welcome to bring food.



News

Music, fundraising at annual meeting

Our annual meeting earlier this year was a wonderful mix of music, advocacy, and fellowship. Thank you to everyone who attended and gave their support to the FOSV. We raised about \$2,500!

Board members Peggy Goetsch and Mike Kennedy were elected to new terms. At later board meetings, Becky Croteau was elected president, Mary Lou Lael vice president, Bill Bruse treasurer and Chris Wills secretary.



Thank you, Jim

We want to offer both our sincere thanks to board member Jim Struebing for his years of service to the FOSV and our profound condolences on the recent loss of his wife.

Jim stepped down from the board this year. The group benefitted from his broad knowledge of conservation practices and his warmth as a person.

His wonderful wife, Anne, passed away in July at age 79. Our hearts go out to the entire Struebing family.



The highlight of the annual meeting was a performance by **Bed Bedford and Vanessa Lively**. They shared beautiful songs inspired by nature and animated by their wonderful spirit.

Their appearance was made possible by support from Music to Life.



Learning from the Mississippi River Institute



The FOSV arranged a visit to the Mississippi River Institute, a classroom barge operated by Living Lands and Waters, which is based in the Quad Cities. The barge offers work-shops educating people about jobs and economic opportunities along the Mississippi.



Living Lands and Waters conducts large-scale river cleanup sessions. The organization has pulled 14 million pounds of trash out of the river! It also conducts tree plantings, workshops and other conservation activities.

It was founded by Chad Pegracke, who you may remember from a speech he delivered to Springfield conservation groups last year.

A visit to a nursery

Eleven FOSV members took part in a fascinating tour of the Mason State Tree Nursery, the only state-owned and operated tree nursery in Illinois. The 90-minute visit gave us a peek at propagation fields, harvesting equipment, and processing machines. The nursery produces bare-root seedlings, potted trees, wildflowers, and seed packets that the general public can buy,



The *Thank you* Department



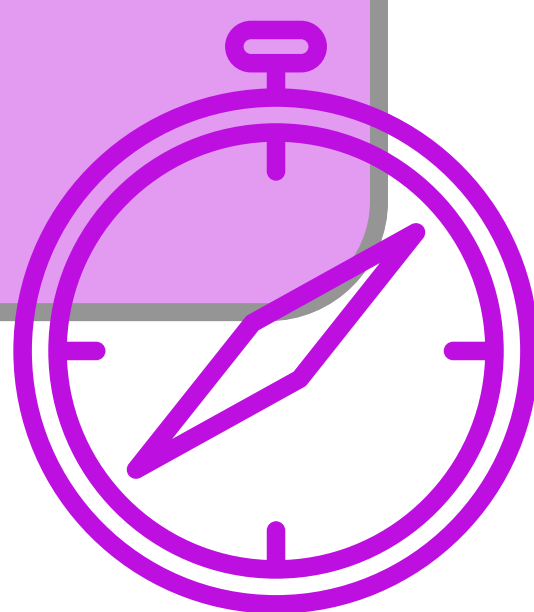
Thanks to neighbors **Jason Fuller and Bill Impsom** for their work to improve the crossing at our Wolf Preserve. This will help our volunteers greatly by providing safe access for mowing and stewardship management!

Trish Quintenz for bird food from Wild Birds Unlimited

Joel Johnson for 10 arrowwood viburnum shrubs to plant at GWS

GIS for FOSV

New volunteer Baylee Thornton has begun using her impressive GIS skills (that stands for geographic information system) to create detailed maps of our properties.



Military Academy Senior Leadership

Five members of the Army National Guard attending this course contacted FOSV about community service hours. On May 13, they cleaned up litter along miles of the Boy Scout Trail near Wolf Preserve sign and moved logs and branches from trails.

Volunteers make the difference!

Our weekly Tuesday workdays at GWS continue. The storms over the past few months resulted in limbs, large branches, and a few trees coming down. The volunteer crew has worked hard to clean them up and keep up with mowing and other tasks.



Mussel Man

Kevin Veara keeps tabs on mussels in local waters

At heart, I am a bird watcher, but when I had the great fortune to discover my current residence on the south fork of the Sangamon River a lot of things opened up to me. One was restoration of my seven acres of land and discovering everything that lived there. That includes the denizens of the river, which I had never had the chance to explore before. When the river is low, we would find shells of mussels, both living and dead, and it really started to make me wonder what these animals were.



Veara doing a Sangamon River mussel survey.

After collecting a few to admire their beauty, I decided to reach out to the Illinois Natural History Survey. First identification led to about a dozen species that live there, and now that I have printed all the maps and bought all the field guides I realized a lot more was going on in central Illinois. So much beauty and complexity right beneath the waves! Most of the research around these amazing creatures has been done in the last 30 years or so.

I am learning new things everyday. I participate in mussel surveys to count and identify species so we better understand the diversity in our own backyard! I find them fascinating and lovely, and they help me appreciate the beauty all around us.



Pond Papershells



Pondhorns



Giant Floater

Learn more about Sangamon River mussels here:

<https://bit.ly/3SOSVXq>

Learn about the history of harvesting mussels in Illinois here:

<https://bit.ly/4qTNPpu>

Explore the Illinois Natural History Survey mollusk collection here:

<https://mollusk.inhs.illinois.edu>

Friends Spotlight

Mike Shelton: helpful neighbor

Mike Shelton grew up along the Sangamon River, near what is now the Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary, and he still lives there today. As a GWS neighbor, he has become a valuable volunteer for the Friends of the Sangamon Valley. He often leads maintenance and conservation work at the sanctuary, and helps the organization in dozens of ways.

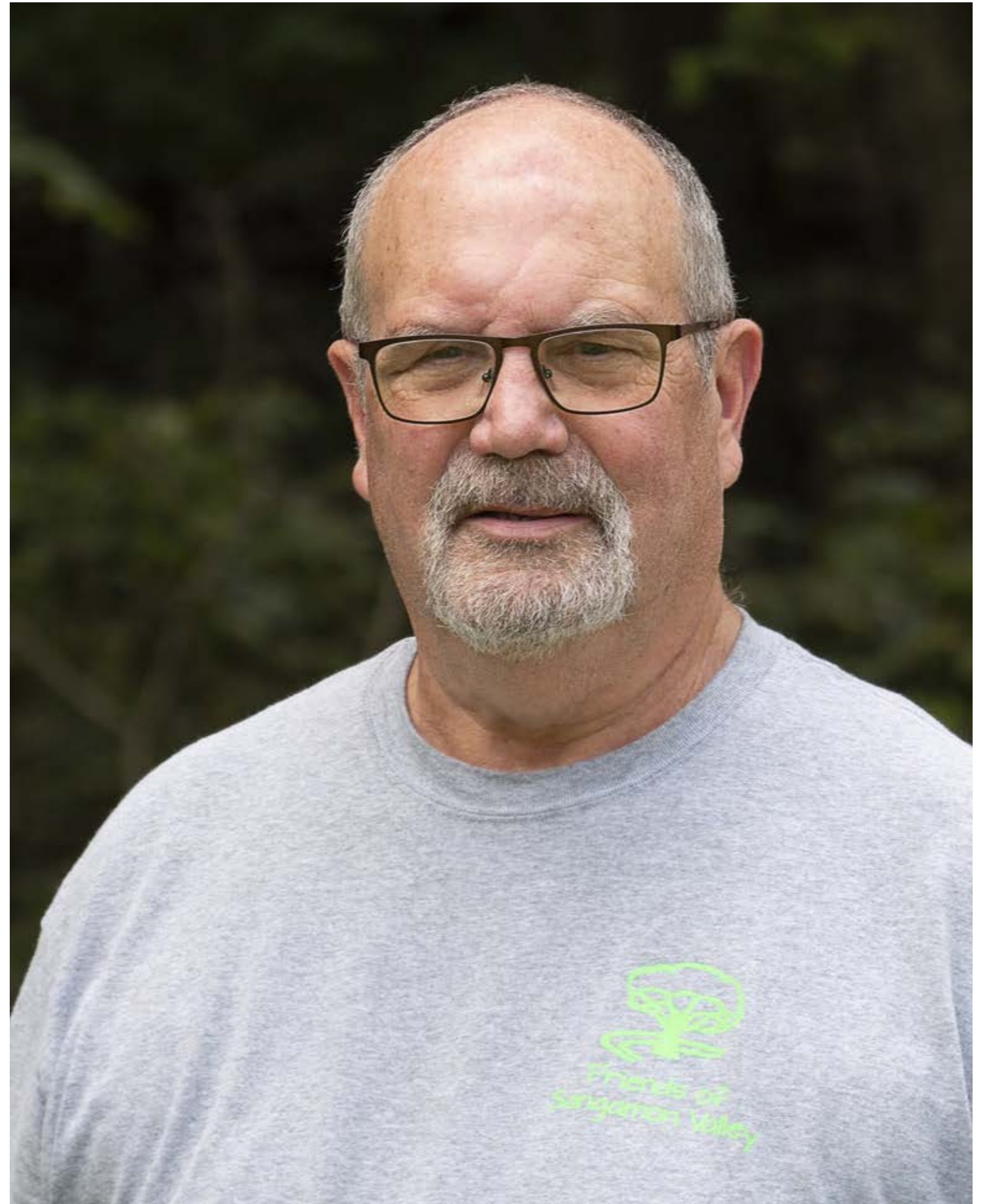
**What is your professional background?
What line of work are you in?**

I worked as a carpenter in the kitchen and commercial cabinet fixtures business for 30 years. Before retiring, I had the privilege of working for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum for four years in the Exhibits Department, building new and repairing existing exhibits.

Have you always had an interest in nature? How do you like to enjoy it?

I have always loved being outdoors. Our family camped and fished often during my childhood. When I was born we lived where I live now. We had permission to roam, fish and hunt most of the neighboring places. So I'm pretty invested in the area.

My family enjoys crappie fishing and deer and turkey hunting. My wife, daughter and I shot competitive archery and competed in tournaments for many years, traveling throughout the Midwest. In later years, my grandchildren shot on archery leagues and hunted deer and turkey.





Above: Shelton surveys GWS in a battery-operated side-by-side.

Left: Shelton points out a pawpaw tree and its fruit.

Below: Shelton's favorite tree, the white oak.



Do you have a favorite place in the Sangamon Valley?

My favorite two places are the river bottoms and ridgeline between our home and the Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary and our family farm in Adams County.

Do you have a favorite animal, tree or plant?

White oak is my favorite tree, but in the fall the sugar maple is beautiful.

Why do you support the FOSV? Why do you think it's worth volunteering to help?

FOSV has been a great learning experience. Mike Kennedy and Jim Struebing have been invaluable mentors. It is very rewarding to see all the improvements at Gudmundson and other sites that I have worked on. The volunteers are a wealth of knowledge and experience. Restoring the natural areas is also very rewarding. It is satisfying to see how they are now in better condition than before.

Tell us about your personal life.

I have been married to my wife Terry for 53 years. We have a daughter, two grandchildren, and a 3-year-old great grandson.

Way down yonder in the pawpaw patch



The pawpaw is found through most of the midwest and southeast. It produces a fruit that is sweet, with a custard-like texture and a flavor somewhat similar to banana or pineapple. It is commonly eaten raw but also can be used to make ice cream and baked desserts. The name probaby derives from the Spanish word "papaya."

Friends of the Sangamon Valley
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