

# WINTER 2026

Vol. 62 No. 1

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## Visit the Garden!

Hours of Operation:

### NATURE CENTER

10 – 4 — Tuesday – Saturday

1 – 4 — Sunday

Closed Monday

### GARDEN

Garden is open every day sunrise to sunset.

**P:** 217-529-1111

**E:** [joel@lincolnmemorialgarden.org](mailto:joel@lincolnmemorialgarden.org)

[www.lincolnmemorialgarden.org](http://www.lincolnmemorialgarden.org)



### STAFF

Executive Director ..... Joel Horwedel

Environmental Educator ... Audra Walters

Board President ..... Megan Styles

Newsletter Team .....

Dick and Helen Adorjan, Polly Danforth,

Joan Freitag, Colleen Germeraad,

Melissa Skinner-Liberman, Megan Styles,

Cathy Slater, Audra Walters and

Kathy Andrews Wright



## Capturing the Beauty within Lincoln Memorial Garden

### Results of the 9th Annual Photo Contest

by Kathy Andrews Wright

As a returning judge for the annual Lincoln Memorial Garden photography contest, Brytton Bjorngaard, Director of Visual Arts at the University of Illinois Springfield and Associate Professor of Graphic Design & Photography, considers it a joy to judge the contest.

"I appreciate the content and find all the unique ways people capture the Garden and its inhabitants inspiring," she explained. "The energy from so many photographers, both young and old, really brings the Garden to life."

Joining Bjorngaard in judging the 2025 competition were Tabitha Bock-Matlock, Photography Teacher at Capital Area Career Center, and Tom Snyder, Multimedia Producer and Writer with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The ninth annual Lincoln Memorial Garden photography contest, "Images of Lincoln Memorial Garden," had the third highest participation rate, with 241 images submitted by 12 youth and 25 adult photographers.

"It was a delight to see so many entrants, and in particular so many talented young people who were willing to share their perspective on the beauty of Lincoln Memorial Gardens," said Snyder. "In divided and chaotic times, nature can remind us of the aesthetics of patience and the intricate elegance of interconnected life. There is solace to be found in choosing the frame through which we see things, and I hope that each photographer, whether they



Left to right: Tabitha Bock-Matlock, Brytton Bjorngaard and Tom Snyder

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## Nature Book Group

Join us Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary at 10 a.m. to discuss *The Garden Against Time* by Olivia Laing.

The Tuesday, May 5, 2026 choice is *Blue Mind* by Wallace J. Nichols. The group will meet at LMG at 10 a.m. ☺



## Director's Message

by Joel Horwedel

Happy New Year!

On behalf of the Garden's board, staff and myself I would like to thank everyone who generously donated to our annual fund campaign. This year's campaign was extremely important and so many of you went above and beyond and completely overwhelmed us with your generosity.

Fall Festival was another huge success! Thanks to all of our many volunteers who help us make this event possible. Thanks to Tom and Cyndee Wilkin for all of their creative ideas and preparation and to the Springfield Civic Garden Club for making our scarecrow factory possible!

More thanks to Tom and Cyndee Wilkin, Kathy and Rick Wright and the grounds crew for all their hard work decorating the Garden for the Holidays! Hundreds of families took advantage of our photo opportunities, and the Garden looked spectacular.

As the end of winter approaches, our annual maple syrup demonstrations kick into full swing, followed by our pancake sausage breakfast and silent auction! We have many exciting programs and activities planned for the spring, and I would like to remind everyone that our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Party will be held on April 8. Please watch our website and Facebook for more details about all our events. Also, don't forget about the LMG 8K Trail Run! Signup is currently underway; for details and signup, please visit the LMG website.

Lastly, I wanted to announce that Head Gardner, Marissa Jones took a job with IDNR in mid-December (see page 13). We wish her the very best in her new career and hope to have a new employee hired sometime this spring. Have a wonderful spring and I hope to see you out in the Garden! ☺

## WANTED

YOUR AWESOME  
SILENT AUCTION  
DONATIONS!

What makes our Silent Auction so popular is the wide variety of valuable, interesting, collectible, beautiful and even edible objects that are available for bidding each year.

### Suggestions to inspire you:

- Tickets to an athletic event, concert or museum
- Vacation condo for a week
- Personal catered dinner party or baked treats
- Certificates: restaurant, salon or round of golf
- High end jewelry, antiques or artwork
- Consulting services
- A nice lawn tractor or snow blower
- A creative themed gift basket, or you provide items and we will put it together in a nice basket

If you have an item you want to donate, please **bring it to the Garden by March 5**. If it is too big or heavy for you to transport, just give Joel a call 217-529-1111 to arrange a pickup. ☺

An advertisement for the Lincoln Memorial Garden pancake and sausage breakfast. It features a stack of pancakes on the left and a girl with freckles peeking from behind a stack of pancakes on the right. A fork is stuck in the stack. In the center, text reads: 'It's MAPLE SYRUP TIME at Lincoln Memorial Garden PANCAKE &amp; SAUSAGE BREAKFAST! MARCH 21-22 &amp; MARCH 28-29 8 A.M. - 12 P.M.' Below this is a pitcher of maple syrup and a small logo for 'LINCOLN MEMORIAL GARDEN'. At the bottom, it says 'RESERVATIONS: lincolnmemorialgarden.org'.

# 2025 Bird Nesting Season Report

by Wade Kammin, owner, Wild Birds Unlimited, Springfield

As we look back on the 2025 bird nesting season at Lincoln Memorial Garden, we want to thank the volunteers who help monitor and maintain the trail of 15 bluebird houses that was established over 13 years ago in the prairies and surround areas. In the spring, Mark Allan and Bill Hunt installed the poles with houses and predator guards that ensure safe habitation, and then removed the sets in early fall before any prairie maintenance began. Mark and Bill, along with Veronica Fesser, Brenda Larison, Bob and Dena Nelson, Cathy Slater, and myself take turns doing weekly checks on the nest building progress and to count eggs and babies. We use Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program to collect data on the species that use the houses.



The summer saw the successful fledging of several broods each of eastern bluebirds, tree swallows and house wrens. Because each species has a distinct preference in habitat they prefer, this year we noticed an uptick in house wrens nesting in the areas that have become brushier than they were years ago. Since the start of the project, the LMG houses have produced the following:

**225+ Tree Swallows    155+ Eastern Bluebirds    110+ House Wrens  
... as well as a few other species**

At Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop, we are happy to support LMG and contribute to the population of birds by donating all the bluebird houses on the trail, as well as the bird feeders and a year-round supply of food used outside of the Nature Center. ☺



## Lincoln Memorial Garden Mission

Lincoln Memorial Garden & Nature Center welcomes everyone to experience the native landscape known to Abraham Lincoln. In an atmosphere of peace and beauty, LMG's landscape, designed by Jens Jensen, is a place to find inspiration in the changing seasons and learn stewardship of the environment through thoughtful nature education.



## New Members

Tracey A. Benn-Cockayne  
Carolynn Benninghoff  
Judith Brady  
Charlotte Lee and Brian Carrihill  
Leanne Collings  
Virginia and William Gillespie  
Trevor and Anne Greig  
Amy Huber  
Jennifer Lancaster  
Claire Manning and Andrzej Bartke  
Tim McDonough  
Dawn Moulton  
Lanny and Diana Odin  
Krista Perkins  
Mark and Mary Petrilli  
Carla Potts  
Sue Swanson Reith  
Natalie Taylor  
Gina Thompson  
Diane K. Townsend  
Richard and Kristin Walbert  
Justin White



## Hummingbirds Arriving Soon!

Wade Kammin, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited and Springfield bird enthusiast, will speak on Thursday, March 12 at 7 p.m. in the Nature Center about the fascinating and entertaining birds we love to feed and watch. ☺

PHOTO CONTEST — *cont'd from page 1*

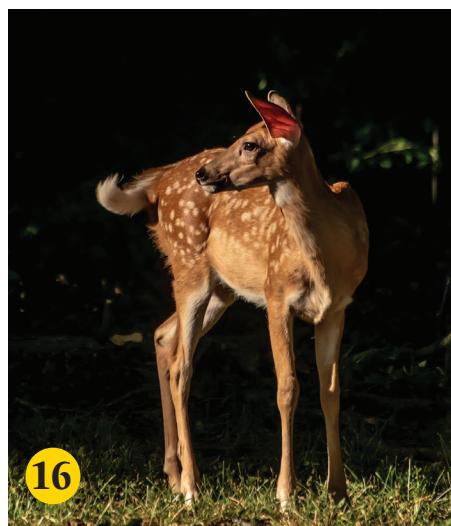
were chosen for individual recognition or not, recognizes their own unique gifts and continues to explore and share their art."

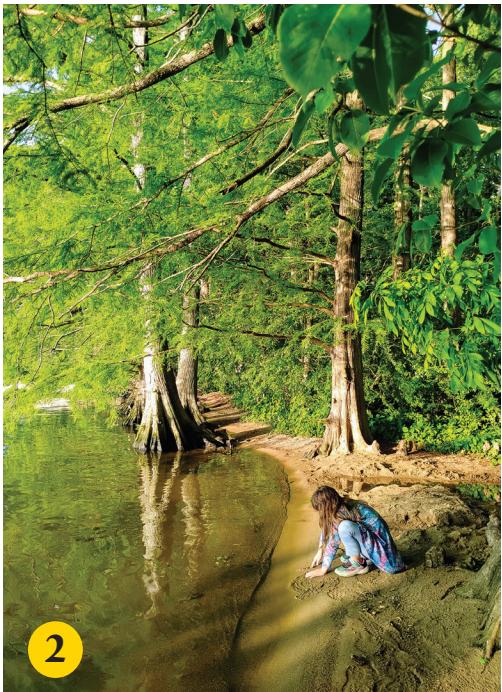
Tabitha Bock-Matlock reiterated the appreciation for participation by people of all ages, saying "It was great to see all the involvement from adults to children who have taken time to see the beauty found within Lincoln Memorial Garden. Each entry had their own unique perspective."

The judges reviewed the photos and identified eight first-place entries in four categories—Living Creatures, Botanicals, Landscapes and Celebrating Life at Lincoln Memorial Garden—and two age groups (15 and under, 16 and older). They also recognized several with an honorable mention.

During the October 11-12, 2025, Fall Harvest Festival, festival goers were invited to vote to determine which of the first-place winners would be recognized with one additional award, that of "People's Choice." After the 886 votes were counted, Lincoln Memorial Garden Executive Director Joel Horwedel recognized Anne Scrivner as the winner of the People's Choice award. Her image of a green heron successfully nabbing a fish was a favorite with viewers of all ages.

We'll be celebrating a decade of recognizing photographers in 2026, so keep your camera or phone handy and be ready to snap that once-in-a-lifetime memory. New discoveries are around every curve of the trail at Lincoln Memorial Garden. Information on the 2026 contest will be posted on the Garden's Facebook page and at [lincolnmemorialgarden.org](http://lincolnmemorialgarden.org) by June 2026. ☺





## FIRST PLACE

### ADULTS

- 1 **Creatures** Anne Scrivner "Green Heron with Fish" **PEOPLE'S CHOICE!**
- 2 **Celebrating** Camilla Broderick "Child at Cypress Beach"
- 3 **Botanicals** Chris Higginbotham "Dayflower"
- 4 **Landscape** Anne Scrivner "The World in a Bubble on the Duck Pond"

### YOUTH

- 5 **Creatures** Jaxon Holdman "Spicebush Swallowtail on Purple Flower"
- 6 **Celebrating** Lydia Batten "Girl on Bridge"
- 7 **Botanicals** Olivia Oldridge "Mom's Favorite Zinnia"
- 8 **Landscape** Jayla McMurray "Snowy Stream"

## HONORABLE MENTION

### ADULTS

- 9 **Creatures** Anne Scrivner "Female Cardinal in Snow"
- 10 **Celebrating** Amanda Castleman "Slowly Moving On (snail on mushroom)"
- 11 **Botanicals** Lindsey Batten "Girl on Log"
- 12 **Landscape** Wayne Huckabee "Twin Leaf (Bloodroot)"
- 13 **Creatures** Chris Higginbotham "Buttonbush Flowers"
- 14 **Landscape** Cindy Harris "Bench"
- 15 **Creatures** Camille Broderick "Icy Shoreline"

### YOUTH

- 16 **Creatures** Jaxon Holdman "Fawn"
- 17 **Creatures** Jaxon Holdman "Algae-covered Turtles"
- 18 **Botanicals** Merrin Germeraad "Flower Friend"
- 19 **Botanicals** Sawyer Day "Where the Wild Berries Dance"
- 20 **Landscape** Daisy Kerr "Prairie"
- 21 **Creatures** Sawyer Day "Sunset Over Lake"

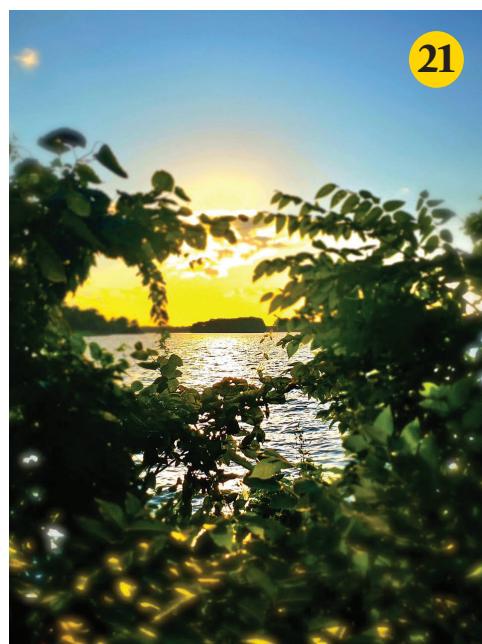
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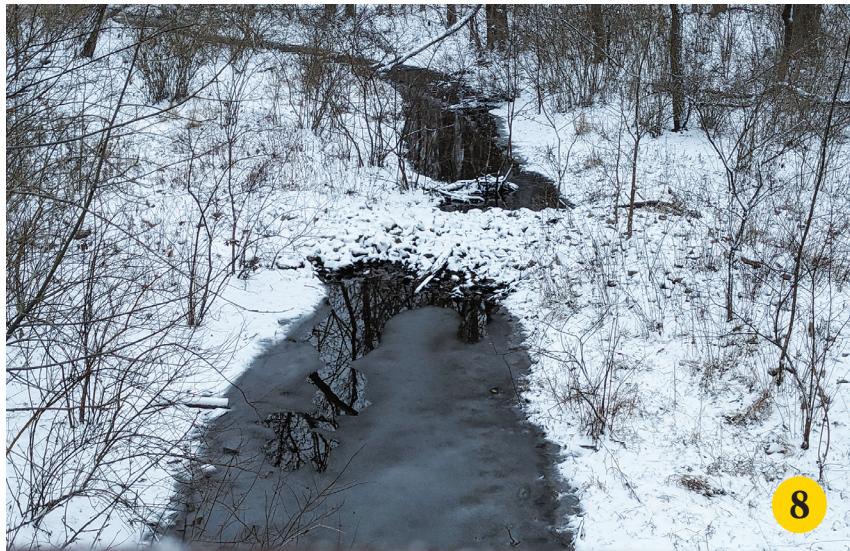
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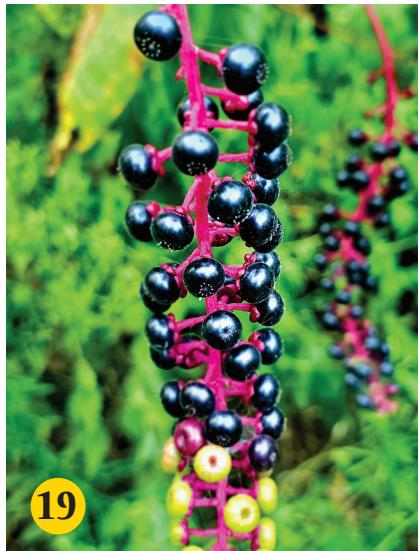
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# Camp Memories Last a Lifetime

by Kathy Andrews Wright

Bird and insect songs are prevalent on summertime visits to Lincoln Memorial Garden. During the week each June and July, you are, however, likely to also hear the energetic voices of youngsters making friends, and discoveries while attending Ecology Summer Camp. In existence for more than four decades, Ecology Summer Camp has become a well-loved tradition for many Springfield area families.

## Developing the Concept of Ecology Summer Camp

In the summer of 1982, Lincoln Memorial Garden offered, for the first time, a nature-oriented day camp program for young naturalists. Attended by 17 children ranging in age from 7 to 11, they investigated topics from microorganisms and insects to spiders, birds, trees and the role of humans in the web-of-life. They also worked on a craft project tied to the topic of the day. Concluding with an evening picnic, the camp was acclaimed an enormous success by children, parents and organizers.

Based on the success of the foundational program, the 1983 camp continued with 30 children attending a week-long camp consisting of half-day programming.

By 1985, the program consisted of two weeks of half-day sessions. The *LMG Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1985-86* reported that

the campers "enjoyed a variety of activities ranging from Native American games to comparing kitchen tools with bird beaks. A morning spent in and around a small pond was a splashing success." The report noted that plans were under way for the 1986 program to be expanded to include a three-day Mom and Tot camp. A wrap-up presentation to the Board of Directors included a pleasant surprise as the program netted a profit of \$855.30 and was proof that a summer camp could be a self-supporting education program.

By 1987 camp sessions quickly filled and people had to be turned away, prompting discussions about increasing the size of the 1988 camp.

Ecology Summer Camp consisted of six weeks of sessions by 2000 and the number of campers topped 200 each year.

Fast forward to 2025. Ecology Summer Camp continues to grow. Today, seven weeks of camp are offered, with specific age groups (from 4 to 15) targeted each week. Camp continues to be a popular summer activity in Springfield, with sessions quickly filling and nearly 250 campers attending each summer.

## The Impact of Ecology Summer Camp

Megan Styles, the current Lincoln Memorial Garden Board President, attended Ecology Camp in 1987 or 1988.

"I remember making a tie-dyed t-shirt (my first!), exploring the trails with the other campers and enjoying the delicious maple syrup suckers they used to sell in the gift shop," she recalled. "I'm looking forward to sharing the magic of Ecology Summer Camp with my daughters in the coming years. I'm glad they will have a chance to continue developing their love of nature in this beautiful place that means so much to my family and our community."

### New Program!

Beat the mid-summer blahs and join us for a week of outdoor activities at the Garden. Spy on a beetle, poke in the soil and search for microscopic life. Learn how to survive in the woods as a person... as a bird. Play eco-games and hand-craft items from materials we find in the woods.

An advertisement for Ecology Summer Camp from the 1980s



Siblings Kate, Matthew and AJ Held, have all participated in Ecology Camp

Kate Held first attended camp in 2006 and has worked as a junior counselor and counselor.

"Every activity was an adventure: part game, part lesson," she explained. "Whether running through the woods playing predator-prey (a food chain game with campers serving in the roles of hawks, foxes, snakes and insects and tasked to work cooperatively and think strategically to find food, water and shelter and to capture their "food" or to avoid being eaten) or laughing with friends as we raced down the water slide beside turtles sunbathing in the pond, Ecology Camp gave me the freedom to explore, get muddy and grow curious about the world around me."

She also credits Ecology Summer Camp for the development of general life skills, as it was at the Garden when she learned that it is helpful to put a golf cart in neutral when having to push it up a hill.

Now a third-year law student, Held appreciates how the spark ignited during her summers at the Garden has inspired a lasting love for nature.

—continued on next page

# LMG Welcomes New Troll to Children's Woodland Garden

by Melissa Skinner-Liberman

## Welcome, Lena!

In partnership with the Springfield Art Association (SAA), LMG is proud to welcome our newest troll, Lena, to the family! Lena, (/LE/NA/) meaning "Sunlight" in Danish, was one of three names selected by our eldest Ecology Camp attendees during Session 7 this past summer. As veteran campers, the group chose three nature-based names that they thought would represent the new, ponytail-clad female troll and compliment her location in the Children's Woodland Garden (CWG) at LMG.

From the initial three name ideas, Lena's name was officially chosen by a poll on the LMG Facebook page and revealed at our annual Fall Harvest Festival on October 11 and 12. True to her name, Lena basks in the sun while she enjoys the giggles and imaginative play of the youngest LMG visitors enjoying the natural playscape of the CWG. New plantings have been planned to adorn the area surrounding her, keeping pollinator-friendly plants and native species in mind.

LMG is grateful to the SAA for their continued partnership in emulating Danish



Photo by Kathy Andrews Wright

artist Thomas Dambo through these reclaimed wood sculptures. Visitors from across the globe have stopped at LMG to embark on a "troll hunt" in search of the three trolls on our property, Sovn, Aco and Lena. We hope you will visit soon to welcome our newest troll and enjoy some time connecting with nature. ~

## ECOLOGY CAMP — *cont'd from page 7*

"That same childlike wonder now guides my professional growth as an advocate for environmental law, reminding me that caring for the world begins with experiencing its wonder," she said.

Charlie Arentzen attended camp in the early 2000s with his sister Claire, noting that Ecology Summer Camp was "always a big highlight of the summer." He appreciates having learned about plants, animals and fish, with a particularly memorable experience the day a counselor netted a pregnant carp then being able to observe it in the Nature Center's fish tank. Curiosity was sparked that day.

Like his sister Kate, AJ Held attended Ecology Summer Camp many times and as a high school freshman participated as a junior counselor in 2025.

"Working with youth at the camp taught me to be patient and really listen to others," he explained. "It also showed me how rewarding it is to help children get excited about nature and learn to care for the world around them."

## LMG Feels Like Home

Memories of camp provide youth with a sense of place.

"The program was pure good in the world, and I definitely came out the other side with a deeper appreciation for nature and the Garden," Charlie Arentzen recalled, noting how the Garden staff became fixtures of his summers.

Matthew Held, who attended camp as a child, served as a counselor in 2025 and is now a freshman in college majoring in engineering, eyes Sovn the troll suspiciously when he has

a chance to visit the Garden, holding Sovn responsible for the mysterious disappearance of a yarn ball during a game.

Kate Held remarked that Lincoln Memorial Garden has always felt like home, a sentiment shared by Megan Styles.

Reminiscing about her camp experience, Styles said: "My family often came to the Garden to hike on weekends, but Ecology Camp made it feel like it was my own special place. The Nature Center still smells the same as it did when I was a kid, and I feel a cozy, familiar feeling when I walk inside, like I'm returning to a childhood clubhouse."

Ecology Summer Camp has provided a sense of place and sparked curiosity for thousands of youngsters. Will your children be among those to experience camp this year? ~



LINCOLN MEMORIAL GARDEN

# fall HARVEST FESTIVAL

2025





## FEBRUARY

- 3 .... Nature Book Club @ Illinois Audubon "Garden Against Time" | 10 a.m.  
7 ..... Bird Drawing for Kids | 1 – 2:30 p.m.  
19 ..... Maple Syrup Time Volunteer Training | 12 – 2 p.m.  
21 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
22 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
28 ..... Junior Naturalists | 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. (Animal Olympics)  
Senior Naturalists | 1 – 3 p.m. (Animal Olympics)  
Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.

## MARCH

- 1 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
4 ..... Tiny Adventurers | 10 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.  
7 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
8 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
10 ..... Member Ecology Camp Registration Opens | 9 a.m.  
12 ..... *Fascinating Hummingbirds* with Wade Kammin | 7 p.m.  
13 ..... General Ecology Camp Registration Opens | 9 a.m.  
14 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
15 ..... Maple Syrup Time Demonstrations | 1 & 2:30 p.m.  
21 .... Pancake and Sausage Breakfast | 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
22 .... Pancake and Sausage Breakfast | 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
28 .... Pancake and Sausage Breakfast | 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
29 .... Pancake and Sausage Breakfast | 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

## APRIL

- 1 ..... Tiny Adventurers | 10 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.  
4 ..... Junior Naturalists | 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. (Nature's Scavengers)  
Senior Naturalists | 1 – 3 p.m. (Nature's Scavengers)  
18 ..... Photography Workshop | 9 – 11 a.m. & 1 – 3 p.m. | Nature Center

## Memorials

To the following individuals who have chosen to honor the memory of a loved one with a gift to Lincoln Memorial Garden, we say thank you.



The following donors gave in memory of **Alva Beckemeyer**:

- ❖ Gail Blankenau
- ❖ John and Sue Endsley
- ❖ Daniel and Carole Strick

The following donors gave in memory of **Mary Lou Davis**:

- ❖ Jim and Sally Craven
- ❖ Samantha Reif

The following donors gave in memory of **Jeff Foust**:

- ❖ Patrick and Nancy Chesley
- ❖ Brenda Larison
- ❖ Joyce Munie
- ❖ Connie Roberts
- ❖ Barbara and Bill Rogers

The following donors gave in memory of **Lucy Fuchs**:

- ❖ Deborah Bergman
- ❖ Donna Cantrall
- ❖ Nancy Fuchs
- ❖ Debi Hays
- ❖ Mary and Steven Kunshek
- ❖ Carrie Levin
- ❖ Carolyn Stevens
- ❖ Doug and Pam Waldeck
- ❖ Christopher and Maggie Weidler

The following donors gave in memory of **Katie Huther**:

- ❖ Judy and Jim Elsass

The following donor gave in memory of **Vernon Maas**:

- ❖ Samantha Reif

The following donor gave in memory of **Ellen Peecher**:

- ❖ Tami Tanner



# Forest Therapy at LMG: An Interview with Cassandra Claman

by Megan Styles

If you feel like a walk in LMG leaves you feeling lighter and happier, you are not alone. Many people come to the garden to relieve stress and engage in peaceful reflection. If you want to deepen your experience in a guided, group setting you may be interested in our Forest Therapy sessions led by Cassandra Claman. I recently spoke with Cassandra to learn more about how forest therapy works, how she began leading these sessions, and why LMG is a perfect space for healing reflection in nature.

Cassandra is a retired physician who has practiced medicine, as an internist and dermatologist, for 42 years. She has always loved nature and was interested in offering healing classes and retreats at her 30-acre property near Pleasant Plains. In 2015 and 2016, she completed the six-month training process to become a certified forest therapist. Looking for ways to share forest therapy with more people, she proposed the idea of offering sessions at LMG to Director Joel Horwedel, who was "very gracious and open to the idea."

According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs, "Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land." It emerged from the Japanese tradition of *Shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, which encourages people to enhance their wellness and happiness by spending time in forests.

Cassandra's LMG forest therapy sessions begin with a short introduction at the Nature Center, followed by a walk to a site that allows for quiet reflection. After a deep breathing exercise to help everyone get comfortable and settle in, Cassandra leads the group through a defined set of "invitations" to slow down, enhance the senses, and deepen the experience of being in nature and being in your body. She starts with an invitation to experience the "pleasures of presence," taking note of all your senses—vision, smell, touch, hearing, and

what she calls "heart sense," the feelings and emotions that sit within you. Members of the group are then invited to share what they have noticed; some simply listen to these reflections. Sharing is optional for those who would rather stay quiet.

The group then goes on a slow 20-minute forest walk. Cassandra encourages them to notice the smallest details and remain open to all their senses. The group gathers again to share what they have noticed and listen to others' reflections. This is followed by 20-minutes of silent reflection in a single "sit spot." The session closes with a tea ceremony. Cassandra invites participants to share anything that would help complete the experience for them and reads a poem. She pours a cup of tea for the forest; wise words expressed during the ceremony enter the tea, which one person from the group pours into the forest as nurturing gift of thanks.

Cassandra feels that LMG is an ideal space for forest therapy, "There are so many sacred, safe areas in the Garden. You really feel hugged by nature out there; it's above us and all around us, and there are so many different ecosystems to experience—the prairie, the

forest, the lake—each of which really offers a different experience, with different sounds and senses." You don't need to wait for warmer weather before you try out one of her sessions. "Winter is the best time, as long as your dressed appropriately, of course!" explains Cassandra. "It really is magical in the cold and the snow. This is really a four-season experience. There is nothing like just sitting there and really opening the senses and experiencing a place in every season."

LMG Forest Therapy Sessions are offered year-round, every two months on Saturdays at 9:30 a.m., and cost \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. All proceeds are donated to LMG. Sessions generally last 90 minutes to two hours and are open to all ages. Cassandra explains that "kids are naturals at this," but very young children must be able to sit quietly and follow simple instructions.

Information on how to register can be found on the LMG website or by inquiring at the Nature Center.

Thank you, Cassandra, for helping visitors experience LMG in new and deeply meaningful ways. ~



# Get a Natural, Sweet Fix During LMG Spring Events

by Kathy Andrews Wright

The art and science of maple sugaring is a time-honored spring tradition. Deeply rooted in the history of the United States, maple syrup is seeing a resurgence today, thanks to the natural foods movement, which uses it as an Earth-friendly replacement for processed cane sugar. Devotees not only drizzle their homemade syrup on pancakes, but incorporate it into everything from cakes to ice cream to stir fry.

Visitors of all ages will enjoy visiting the Garden grounds to learn how to identify barren maple trees in the winter woodland and to witness the centuries-old tradition of tapping trees to collect sap.

Lincoln Memorial Garden celebrates this great North American tradition with two popular activities: syrup-making demonstrations and a Pancake and Sausage Breakfast.

Visitors of all ages will enjoy visiting the Garden grounds to learn how to identify barren maple trees in the winter woodland and to witness the centuries-old tradition of tapping trees to collect sap. From there, you'll move to the evaporation station and see first-hand the process of boiling sap over a wood fire to produce syrup. And, to cap off your experience, taste the sweet reward of this labor-intensive process.

The tapping and syrup-making demonstrations will take place on weekends in February and March and are free to the public. To make your visit truly a fun-filled outdoor family experience, dress accordingly for the weather and site conditions. Trails may be soft and slippery, so appropriate footwear is advised.

Continue your celebration of spring by making plans to attend the Garden's Pancake and Sausage Breakfast and Silent Auction Fundraiser. Taking place over two weekends (March 21 – 22 and March 28 – 29), this cherished annual meal features pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee served from 8 a.m.



Maple syrup demonstrations at Lincoln Memorial Garden are a fun and educational event for the whole family. 2026 demonstrations are scheduled for 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., February 21, 22 and 28, March 1, 7, 8, 14 and 15.

Photo courtesy of Justin Fowler, © SJ-R 2010.

to noon. Tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$5 for youngsters under 12; children under the age of three are admitted free of charge. Reservations (call 217-529-1111) are required to minimize wait time for this popular event.

The annual Silent Auction Fundraiser, happening concurrently with the Pancake and Sausage Breakfast, always includes an exciting assortment of items—everything from art to jewelry to tickets for cultural and sporting events, as well as items for your home and garden. Plan to spend some time before or after your breakfast walking through the Nature Center to check out all the items. Bidding closes at noon on Sunday, March 29, so if there's something you are anxious to possess, stop by again on the last day to check on the status of your bid!

While a walk through the Garden at any time of year is a treat for the eyes, ears, nose and soul, early spring presents a unique opportunity to taste the flavor of this land's majestic maples. We look forward to dining with you at maple sugaring time! ~



Photo by Polly Danforth

# LMG Bids Head Naturalist Marissa Jones a Fond Farewell

by Megan Styles

On December 9, 2025, the LMG staff and volunteers gathered to say farewell to Head Naturalist, Marissa Jones, who recently accepted a job with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). There are unfortunately no photos of the event because everyone was too busy chatting and celebrating Marissa's time as an LMG staff member. Marissa prepared a slide show with images of her many adventures with the Grounds Crew volunteers, and there were many tears as she thanked everyone for a wonderful four and a half years at LMG. "Don't you worry," she said. "This won't be the last you see of me. I will be competing with you for those volunteer slots cooking sausages for the pancake breakfast and parking cars at the Fall Harvest Festival."

LMG Executive Director Joel Horwedel described the small LMG staff as a tight-knit family, and thanked Marissa for all that she did to help everything run smoothly, her incredible work ethic, and the joyful spirit that she brought to her work. "Marissa is an expert naturalist, but she also has a real gift



Marissa Jones

with people. She was always so good with the volunteers, and she always made things enjoyable and fun. We're really going to miss her," said Joel. "We all wish her the best of luck in this next stage of her career." As a parting gift, the staff and Board of Directors presented

Marissa with a box made from the Garden's historic chinkapin oak.

Marissa joined the LMG staff in May 2021, shortly after graduating from with her MS in Environmental Science from the University of Illinois Springfield. She trained as an apprentice with former LMG Head Gardner Larry Miller for a year and then stepped into the lead role when Larry retired in May 2022. In her new position as a Natural Resource Specialist at IDNR, Marissa will be assessing contaminated lands in the state.

The LMG Board has already initiated a search for someone to fill Marissa's position, and we look forward to sharing exciting updates as the search progresses. In the meantime, Larry Miller joked at the LMG Christmas party that the rumors that he will be stepping back into the role are false. Although we will still see his familiar face (and mustache) behind the Nature Center desk. Thanks, Marissa, for your service to LMG! We look forward to following Marissa's adventures at IDNR and welcoming a new employee to the LMG team very soon. ~

## Kids Discover Nature at Ecology Camp

Ecology Camp at Lincoln Memorial Garden offers children ages 4–15 the opportunity to explore the varied ecosystems of Illinois including the prairie, woodlands, wetlands and savanna.

Our camp is designed to cultivate respect and appreciation for the environment and inspire a sense of wonder through direct experiences with the natural world.

Weeklong sessions include nature hikes, outdoor games, hands-on activities, nature crafts, and animal and plant encounters. Our Nature Center provides an indoor area of learning, but the great outdoors will be our place of play and discovery.

Member registration opens March 10, general registration opens March 13. To register, visit [lincolnmemorialgarden.org](http://lincolnmemorialgarden.org). ~

Session	Dates	Time	Ages
1	June 1 – 5	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	6, 7, 8
2	June 8 – 12	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	6, 7, 8
3 AM	June 15 – 18	8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	4, 5, 6
3 PM	June 15 – 18	12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	4, 5, 6
4	June 22 – 26	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	8, 9, 10
5	July 6 – 10	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	9, 10, 11
6	July 13 – 17	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	10, 11, 12
7	July 20 – 24	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	12 – 15



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