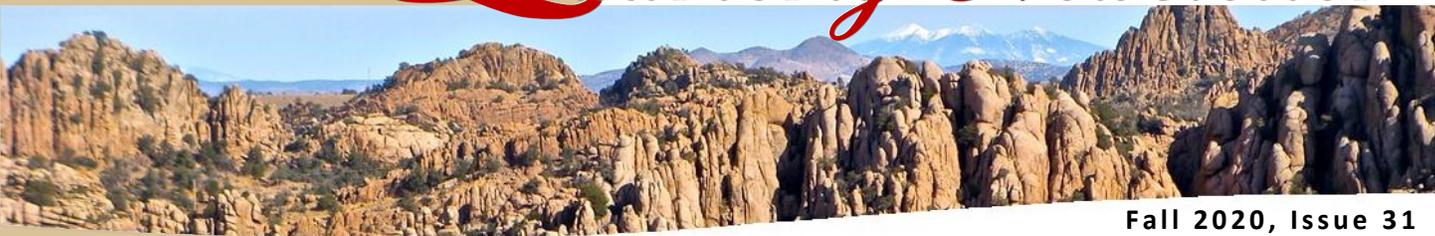


Prescott Recreation Services Department *Quarterly Newsletter*



Fall 2020, Issue 31



(Photos courtesy of the Community Nature Center)

Community Nature Center (CNC) Outdoor Learning

The City of Prescott's Community Nature Center (CNC) is coming full circle. Originally established by the Prescott Unified School District, it offered an outdoor environmental education experience for students from 1974 to 2006 when it was purchased by the City of Prescott as an Open Space Preserve.

With the recent challenges of educating our school children due to COVID-19, alternatives to providing safe spaces for distant learning were considered and the CNC was an obvious option, once again using this

special park for its intended use, education.

Not only does it take into consideration today's problems, it is also forward looking as many educators are realizing the importance and advantages of outdoor learning environments and experiences for children. Today's children spend much less time outdoors which has led to problems such as obesity, myopia, and chronic diseases, as well as a decrease in the mental health of young children. Time outdoors has many academic benefits with improvements in science, math, and language arts. Some of the advantages to learning and exploring outdoors include a reduction of stress in children, an increase in cooperative behaviors, and a reduction of in-school discipline rates.

The Prescott Recreation Services Department is pleased to be working with the Prescott Unified School District in providing this unique learning experience for our school children. *(See page three for more information on the project and people involved.)*

(Contributors: Nancy Nesbit, with information provided by Ellen Bashor)

The new project at the Community Nature Center provides educators with programs and resources for the benefit of all of Prescott's children.



Recreation Services Advisory Board

- Sherrri Hanna*
- Deb Miller*
- Linda Nichols*
- Peg Travers*
- Chris Welborn*

Contents

Community Nature	
Center	Page 2
Partnerships . . .	Page 3
Miscellaneous . . .	Page 4

Joe Baynes
City of Prescott
Recreation Services Director

Natural Parklands - Community Nature Center

Community Nature Center

1980 Williamson Valley Rd., Prescott

Hours: 7:00 a.m. to Sunset

Parking: Free

Websites: www.prescott-az.gov

www.prescottcommunitynaturecenter.org



Consisting of 18 acres, the Community Nature Center was created in 1974 by Prescott Unified School District to enhance outdoor learning for students. It was managed for many years by the Highlands Center for Natural History. In 2006 the City of Prescott purchased the site and it was incorporated into the City's natural parklands as an Open Space Preserve. The preserve is open to the general public.

The preserve consist of indigenous plants and remains a learning center. At the entrance, seasonal guides are available to visitors who wish to take advantage of a self guided tour to learn about the various species in the area. Visitors are encouraged to return the guides for use by others. The Habitat Garden along part of the trail (*see middle photo, page 3*) identifies over 25 species of native plants and lists their common as well as scientific names.

Because of the monsoons, from approximately the middle of June to the middle of September, August and September are the perfect time to see the summer wildflowers. These wildflowers are especially abundant within the Community Nature Center and are a favorite among visitors.

In 2012-2013, the preserve's trails were improved and expanded. With the help of Over The Hill Gang, 0.6 miles of new trail were added bringing the total to 1.5 miles. Although a relatively moderate hike, portions of the trail go up into the outcropping of boulders. This trail systems wanders throughout the preserves 18 acres giving visitors a microcosm of Prescott's outdoor environment.

Also included in the preserve along the trail are a pond and amphitheater, used by various groups for presentations. In the past few years, a flat area was restored with native grasses. A rain garden was also installed next to the cabin. A picnic table is available on the site.

More information, as well as a downloadable trail map, and CNC Plant List and Plant Guide are available online at:

www.prescottcommunitynaturecenter.org



There are 1.9 miles of trail within the 18 acre property (*top photo*). On the portion of trail running parallel to Williamson Valley Road, Prescott's early pioneer history is represented with a pump (*bottom photo*). Three wells were located in this area along what was know as the Hardyville Road, which stretched from Prescott to Bullhead City from 1865 to 1863. (*Photos: Nancy Nesbit*)

Partnerships - Coming Together for Children

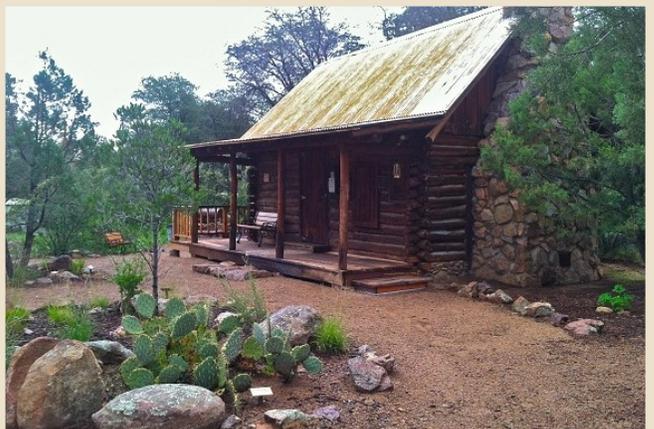
The City of Prescott is an avid outdoor community which has seen a significant increase of use within the parks and trails during the pandemic. But involvement isn't limited to just use, citizens are known for coming together to solve problems and provide new opportunities for all citizens including education. During this time, the education of Prescott's children utilizing safe learning conditions as well as incorporating social distancing and other practices is a concern.

Earlier this year, Ellen Bashor, who recently earned her master's of education degree from Prescott College in Environment Education, approached Recreation Services Department Coordinator Kelly Tolbert with an idea, utilizing the Community Nature Center for safe outdoor education experiences for Prescott's school children. Both Director Joe Baynes and Prescott Unified School District Superintendent Joe Howard were enthusiastic about the project and the plan was immediately put into action. An amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Prescott and the Prescott Unified School District for this project was drafted.

An AmeriCorps volunteer, Taylor White, was also enlisted to help with the project. The City's Fuels Management Division provided tree stumps for the students to sit on. They were placed in several areas throughout the grounds.

Both Education Director Ellen Bashor and Recreation Services Department Coordinator Kelly Tolbert are passionate about the project. Kelly Tolbert is also the projects liaison between Prescott Recreation Services Department and Prescott Unified School District.

(Contributors pages two and three: Nancy Nesbit, with information provided by Kelly Tolbert and Ellen Bashor)



Project Objectives

- Improve student academic engagement & performance.
- Improve social-emotional skills, health & well-being.
- Expand civil engagement & service learning opportunities.
- Expand project-based and STEM learning opportunities.
- Cultivate appreciation of, and investment in local outdoor spaces.
- Augment safe & healthy school learning to increase resilience in a public health crisis.

A learning center, the self guided tour through the Habitat Garden (middle photo) educates visitors on over 25 named species of native plants, with 41 plants identified along the trail. The log cabin (bottom photo) located near the parks entrance was constructed by the Youth Conservation Corps in 1976.

Miscellaneous



The City of Prescott's Commission on Well-Being is a program designed to become the premiere city of well-being in America. It's mission is to engage the citizens who live, learn, work, and play in Prescott in the lifelong pursuit of well-being through communication, motivation, and action. Branches of well-being include: Purpose, Social, Financial, Community, and Physical. The City's website gives information as well as links to organizations involved in this program at:

<http://www.prescott-az.gov/city-management/programs/well-being/>

The City of Prescott would also like to have a better understanding of how the community views well-being through their survey available online at:

<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07eh488s88kapjamns/a02148keyo35fd/greeting>

Friends of JS Acker Park Endowment Fund

Did you know J.S. Acker Memorial Park has its own Endowment Fund? In the fall of 2016, the Friends of JS Acker Park started a special locally based fund with the AZ Community Foundation to support the centrally situated 80 acre open space park located at the end of S. Virginia St. off of E. Gurley. Created in partnership with the City of Prescott Recreational Services Department, annual endowment funds

are available to support the upkeep and improvement of this park. A plan being considered now is the addition of a shade structure at the amphitheater stage area to provide comfortable seating for educational outdoor programs. Would you be interested in helping build up and sustain this endowment to support this goal?

The park has approximately three miles of trails with natural history interpretive information, and has become a favorite nearby place to hike, jog, or walk your dog. We hope you'll check it out if you've never been there to discover what this hidden recreational jewel has to offer. If it's a place you use regularly and wish to show your appreciation and be part of the ongoing citizen involvement history, please consider sending a tax deductible contribution to help towards things like this new project and insure the park's well being and future greater enjoyment for all its visitors! Thank You!

www.azfoundation.org/Give-Where-You-Live/Yavapai-County

Make donation checks payable to:

ACF of Yavapai County
c/o Acker Park Endowment Fund
300 E. Willis #B
Prescott, AZ 86301
(928) 583-7816



Newsletter Sign-up

Signing up to receive the newsletter in your inbox is easy. Just go to:

<http://www.prescott-az.gov/recreation-events/recreation-services/about-recreation-services/>



Recreation Services Department
Grace Sparkes Memorial Activity Center
(Old Armory Building)
824 E. Gurley St., Prescott, AZ 86301
Telephone (928) 777-1122
Visit us on the City website at:
www.prescott-az.gov

Sign up for updates!

Get news from City of Prescott Recreation Services Department in your inbox.

Email

By submitting this form, you are consenting to receive marketing emails from: City of Prescott Recreation Services Department, <http://www.prescott-az.gov>. You can revoke your consent to receive emails at any time by using the [SafeUnsubscribe@](#) link, found at the bottom of every email.  Emails are serviced by Constant Contact.

Sign Up!

On the Recreation Services "About" page, scroll down to the bottom left of the page and enter your email address in the box. Press "Sign Up!" and you're on the list.

This newsletter is a collaborative effort between City of Prescott employees and volunteers. Compilation and graphics provided by Nancy K. Nesbit, Volunteer Park Ranger.
This newsletter is available on line at: www.prescott-az.gov
You can also pick up a copy at our office at the Grace Sparkes Memorial Activity Center.