

Prairie Crossing at Twenty

April 2015: Healthy Lifestyle

By Erin Cummisford, Prairie Crossing resident & Liberty Prairie Foundation staff member

On December 16, 1994, John and Marianne Conway purchased the first home in Prairie Crossing at 1494 Potawatomi Road. Twenty years later, Prairie Crossing is a thriving community and a nationally renowned example of how conservation principles can be integrated into a suburban neighborhood. Throughout 2015, we will celebrate this 20th anniversary by sharing history and unique features of our home community. Whether you are a new or long-time resident, we hope this will deepen your appreciation of Prairie Crossing.

A Healthy Lifestyle

Prairie Crossing was developed around ten Guiding Principles that provide the framework for a way of life that respects the environment and enables residents to experience a strong connection between community and the land. This month we focus on how Prairie Crossing enables residents to live a healthy lifestyle.

Healthy Food

It's no accident that the Prairie Crossing Farm, a working organic farm, is located in Prairie Crossing. Sustainable agriculture was integrated into the site plan to provide residents with a hyper-local source for healthy organic food.

Residents can also grow their own food at the community gardens, also available to the larger community. Email Linda@libertyprairie.org to get on the waiting list for this season.



Residents purchase plants and shop the pop-up seasonal farm market at the Organic Plant Sale & Farm Open House - 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Sat., May 16.

At the Prairie Crossing Farm, independent farm businesses grow healthy food for customers in Prairie Crossing and the larger Chicago region. **Sandhill Family Farms** is here for the long term while other farm businesses “incubate” through the Farm Business Development Center (FBDC).

Sandhill is a partnership between Peg & Matt Sheaffer and Jen & Jeff Miller. At Prairie Crossing since 2004, they have a second farm location in Brodhead, WI. They raise organic vegetables, pastured hens and sheep, and distribute other farm products - www.sandhillfamilyfarms.com.

Additional farm businesses at the Prairie Crossing Farm are part of the FBDC incubator program for beginning farmers. **Yaw-Ye Farms** raises pastured pork for local CSA customers – find them on Facebook for delicious local pork. Other FBDC farms - Marigold Hill Organics and Sandbox Organics - sell to farmers markets, restaurants, and CSA members in Chicago.

Radical Root Farm, an FBDC alumni, now farms at nearby Casey Farm through a partnership between the Liberty Prairie Foundation, Conserve Lake County, and the Lake County Forest Preserve District - www.radicalrootfarm.com. They have a CSA and Saturday farmstand - 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., May – Dec.

There are many healthy food options for Prairie Crossing residents – grow your own or purchase from multiple farm businesses in the community or just down the road at Casey Farm.

Information about the Prairie Crossing Farm is at www.libertyprairie.org.

Active Living

Prairie Crossing offers year-round outdoor and indoor recreation for residents with an enviable array of amenities.

More than 10 miles of trails are frequented by runners, bikers, walkers, and horseback riders. Trails also connect to the 5,800 acre Liberty Prairie Reserve via the Route 45 underpass and onward to Independence Grove and the Des Plaines River trail.

During the winter, volunteers groom the trails for cross-country skiing. If you encounter two parallel lines in the snow, please walk to the side to preserve the integrity of the tracks for skiers.

Residents of all ages flock to Lake Aldo Leopold's sandy beach in the summer for swimming, and buoys are placed by volunteers for distance swimmers. Non-motorized watercraft including canoes, SUP boards, and paddleboats glide through the lake's gentle waters. Ahhh, summer.

In the winter, the lake is used for ice skating, hockey games, and ice fishing. When fishing, regardless of the season, please catch and release only, except for bluegills/sunfish smaller than 6". ALL other fish must be released.

Fourteen parks and play lots are spread around the community, including those owned by the Prairie Crossing Charter School and Grayslake Park District.

Parks feature sandboxes, swings, climbing equipment, basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball fields, and refurbished tennis courts. Call Premier Residential Management at 847-415-2540 for the tennis court lock combination.

A 24x7 fitness center is located in the lower level of the Byron Colby Barn and features fitness machines, treadmills, free weights, ellipticals, fitness balls, and accessories.

Contact Premier for a key fob (\$10 non-refundable fee on new and replacement key fobs). Bring indoor-only shoes to protect the equipment and return equipment to its proper place. Not everyone is as strong as you!

Healthy Practices

Land management practices in Prairie Crossing are healthy for the land, animals, and residents.

The common and natural areas are stewarded to improve their ecological health and function each year. Not only are the prairies and wetlands beautiful, they are critical for our stormwater treatment, and the maintenance of extremely high water quality in our lakes and ponds.

Pesticides that not immediately used 100% by the intended plant community run off and become a pollutant downstream. Because of Prairie Crossing's emphasis on the entire ecosystem, land is managed differently than a typical development.

All pesticides and herbicides are reviewed by the Environmental Consultant before being used on common areas, are used minimally, and with the health of the entire ecosystem in mind.

203 acres of land are restored prairies and wetlands, which reduces the amount of pesticides needed to manage them.

Emotional Health

National Public Radio refers to "driveway moments" when riveted listeners remain in their cars until the story ends. Prairie Crossing residents experience similar "PC moments."

That deep breath of relaxation when you enter Prairie Crossing is good for your emotional health! Equally important is connecting with neighbors to enjoy our many amenities. Relaxation and meaningful relationships are both important for emotional health.

Need to find some zen? Prairie Sunshine Yoga studio (www.psyoga.com) and Release Massage Therapy (www.releasemassagetherapy.net), both located in Prairie Crossing, can help.

Here's to healthy living in Prairie Crossing!

NEXT MONTH: Prairie Crossing is home to civic leaders, authors, artists, and business leaders engaging on local/regional/national issues. We'll feature some of the interesting people we're proud to call our neighbors.