

Prairie Crossing at Twenty

February 2015: Personal Stories Sampler

By Nathan Aaberg, 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 the history and unique features of our home community in each monthly newsletter. In this edition, we share stories from a variety of residents.

Stuart Feen & Sunny Sonnenschein

Residents since 1995

Sunny: "In the early 1990s, Stuart saw an article in a newspaper about a new farm in Grayslake that was the first phase of a community. He called and asked to be added to the mailing list. In January 1994 we received a postcard saying that the new community was opening for sales. We drove up on opening day to see what was being planned. I was finishing research on a Ph.D., examining the impact of rapid growth on suburban communities, and wanted to find out what was being built. While I asked the sales staff questions about topics related to my dissertation, Stuart looked at the house plans and other materials, becoming more and more intrigued. By the time he got my attention, Stuart had the checkbook out. We were especially impressed by the guiding principles, and after discussing it (for about three minutes) we decided to put the first deposit down for a house here. We love our house and have loved watching Prairie Crossing grow from George and Vicky's vision into what we believe is the best place to live in Lake County."

Olof & Johanna Rylander

Residents since 2013

We needed to move to this area from our home in Stockholm, Sweden, for Olof to work for a company in Pleasant Prairie. We started looking for homes and kept widening our search until one of the owners of the company and a PC resident (Richard Van Derveer) suggested we look here. It was late summer. Kids were playing

at the beach. There were tennis courts, playgrounds, and a farm. We had never seen anything like it. We knew this was the place. A little bit more than a year later, our kids are doing well, and our neighbors are great. What's most impressive is that during the past summer vacation, our family could spend a whole week just enjoying the trails and other outdoor amenities and never get bored. We are very impressed with the planning of PC.

Jill & Chris Kosikowski

Residents since 1999

Jill: "We bought our home here primarily because of the stable and trails as I already had a horse. I remember taking a ride with a neighbor through the tall grasses of the emerging prairies before some of the trails and homes were built. The grasses were so tall we had to pull our feet out of the stirrups and up onto the saddles to reduce the friction the horses had to deal with. We felt like we were experiencing what the early pioneers did! We've enjoyed the wildlife around the stables. A hawk regularly hunts there. And coyotes are a regular presence, consuming rabbits, rodents and the occasional goose. One winter morning as I checked a water trough, a large coyote popped out of a stack of hay he had been sleeping in! He just looked at me, yawned and trotted away. The lake was also a huge draw for us. Chris and my father (who just moved into PC last year) love fishing Lake Aldo Leopold. We love the neighborhood feel – folks on porches, walking the sidewalks, and playing outside – of our village green location.

James & Cynthia Horine

Residents since 1998

We moved into Prairie Crossing on March 27, and less than a month later we were sitting in our kitchen during our early afternoon Easter celebration, when something caught our eyes as we looked eastward across the north bay of Lake Aldo Leopold toward Amos Bennett. There were three large deer running on the that street at breakneck speed straight towards the lake. We thought they'd stop or turn. No. They vaulted high into the air and then landed with a huge splash in the lake and swam across to the western side and continued westward into the still undeveloped area west of Harris Road.

Nature, the trails, and the community have been big parts of our lives. Our daughter Caitlin remembers hiking with friends on summer nights to see amazing firefly displays and learning how to carry out prescribed burns as a teenager (with proper supervision, of course). We have walked the trails so much we know them like the backs of our hands. We have all especially enjoyed the community events, including the early festive farmers markets at Market Square and volunteering with many others in the Prairie Pedal bicycling fundraisers put on by Conserve Lake County. It's a good life.

Frank & Trish Demonte

Residents since 2008

We found ourselves visiting this area often to see our children and five grandchildren. When our son told us that condominiums were being built, we visited in 2007 and put down a deposit shortly thereafter to begin our retired life here. We live in the Bennett Building right over Dalton's Cakes, which makes going out for lunch or dinner really easy. The 10 miles of walking trails have been wonderful for Frank as he tries to manage his diabetes through exercise.

SHARE YOUR STORIES: What stories do you have of living in Prairie Crossing? Please share them at the Prairie Crossing community Facebook today. You'll find other good things there as well. Well worth checking out.
www.facebook.com/prairiecrossingcommunity

We also enjoy the closeness of the Metra trains, even more so now that the trains don't need to blow their horns (Frank played a big role in making that happen along with another condo resident). We go downtown for plays and for fun expeditions with the grandkids, all without needing a car. Prairie Crossing is far more than the bricks and mortar. What we love most about living here is the sense of community.

Linda Wiens

Resident Since 2003

Born in Germany, I moved to Prairie Crossing from northern Ontario, Canada. In 2008, I was part of a group that explored how we might be able to stay in our homes as we age. We listed all the services elderly people might need occasionally and identified volunteers to do the various tasks. Then someone asked, "Why wait? Let's get started with those who need help now." Thus the Prairie Crossing Volunteer Corps (PCVC) was born.

Unexpectedly, I ended up being their first "customer." Around that time I was deemed a candidate for a heart transplant, but one condition was a serious obstacle – I had to prove 'round-the-clock home care for three months after surgery. I live alone and my family, all in Canada, could only come for 2 – 3 weeks. The PCVC met and then made a promise to provide the care I would need. At 3:30 a.m. on October 31, 2009, the volunteers kicked into action by driving me to the hospital because a heart had become available. When I came home, subcommittees with captains were in place to coordinate eight difference services. Wow! My new heart has given me a new life. I remain profoundly grateful to this community and am a happy contributor to the PCVC as one of our many volunteer groups.

NEXT MONTH: Prairie Crossing is a great place to live in part because of the strong sense of community that has taken hold since its creation. In the next issue, learn more about the social events and tradition of Prairie Crossing.