

Prairie Crossing at Twenty

March 2015: Social Traditions

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.

Sense of Community

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 the social traditions that have evolved at Prairie Crossing. Some are organized through formal groups while others are led by ad-hoc groups of residents. The common thread is Prairie Crossing residents gathering and building community connections.

Prairie Crossing Social Committee

The Social Committee organizes events throughout the year including the Middle School mixer, Spring Fling egg hunt, 4th of July bike parade, Beach Fest, Fright Fest haunted hay ride, Holiday Sing, and the monthly Ladies Night In. Lots of different events, with fun for all ages!



Tug of war contestants vie for bragging rights on the Village Green during the 4th of July festivities.

Braunschweiger Bunch

The Braunschweiger Bunch is a group of men who gather for monthly bonfires at the Prairie Orchid firepit. They also organize the popular Father's Day pig roast, which kicks off summer at the beach each year. This Prairie Crossing tradition hits the spot with delicious pork sandwiches and homemade sauces with a potluck of tasty side dishes, salads, and desserts.

Matt's Mile and 5K

Matt's Mile and 5K is a race held by the Hupp family and their 12 Oaks Foundation in memory of their son, Matt Hupp, who became a symbol of courage through his fight with cancer. Matt lost his battle at age 13 and in his honor, 12 Oaks Foundation provides grants to help defray the cost of sports and extracurricular activities for children in families suffering financial hardship related to ongoing cancer treatment.

Potluck Dinners/Cooking Contests

A group of Station Village residents organize both the Chili Cook-off and Rib Fest. Both events feature great food and friendly competition. The Rib Fest trophy is a custom-made pottery pig adorned by the bones of each year's winning ribs, created by resident artist Bob Stotts.

The St. Patrick's Day Potluck is organized by Prairie Fogg. This resident band (Paul Suvanich, Sean Murphy, John Wasik, Mark Wilson) not only organizes the potluck, they also provide live Irish music. This year's potluck is coming up soon – 4:30 p.m. Sun. Mar. 7 at the Byron Colby Barn. Sláinte!

Adult-Only Events

The Brew HaHa is always popular with beer enthusiasts, featuring delicious appetizers, a craft beer “potluck”, and homebrew competition.

The Cookie Walk committee reenvisioned their annual fundraiser into the *Making Spirits Bright* dance this December, raising money for the Northern Illinois Food Bank, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and 12 Oaks Foundation. They intend to transition to a Mardi Gras party in 2016. Laissez les bon temps rouler!



Residents danced the night away at the Byron Colby Barn during Making Spirits Bright with music from David Dallison and Friends.

Sports Events

Looking for some active Prairie Crossing events? During the spring, summer, and fall adults and supervised kids meet at John Gage Park for pick-up soccer games on weekends. Email Rick Cummisford at rcummisford@sbcglobal.net to be added to the email list.

The low-key Prairie Crossing Turkey Trot helps residents burn calories with a brisk run/walk around the neighborhood before their Thanksgiving feast, and collects canned goods for the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Gingerbread Decorating

Resident artist Bob Stotts creates custom gingerbread houses each December and organizes a group decorating party at the Byron Colby Barn. Creativity is fueled by candy trading and sampling!

Indian Guides/Princesses

The Prairie Crossing Indian Guides tribe for 5-12 year old boys and their fathers is part of the Lake Prairie Federation. Interested? Email Chief Jeff Miller at jeff@sandhillfamilyfarms.com. There may also be a Princesses tribe at Prairie Crossing for girls, but details are unavailable. Visit www.lakeprairie.org for information.

Farm Events

In addition to homeowner-led events, the Liberty Prairie Foundation organizes events for residents and the larger community, including the Plant Sale & Farm Open House, Fall Festival, and winter film screening. These events help balance the desire for educational events with the farmers’ need to safely conduct farm operations on a real working farm. Sometimes additional events are held, like last year’s Farm Ridge Hike with Sandhill Family Farms.

Early Music Series

The Liberty Prairie Foundation also supports the Early Music Series at the Byron Colby Barn, featuring acclaimed professional musicians performing music from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods. Concerts are affordable (free for children under 16) and close to home – www.libertyprairie.org/earlymusic.

Keep track of Prairie Crossing social events by reading Meadow Mix and visiting the calendar at www.pchoa.com. Instructions for obtaining access are published monthly in Meadow Mix.

Event reminders are often posted on the pchomail email group. Instructions for joining pchomail are published monthly in Meadow Mix.

NEXT MONTH: How Prairie Crossing fosters a healthy lifestyle. Has PC influenced your eating and active living habits? Tell us at www.facebook.com/prairiecrossingcommunity.