

THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF THE WILD FLOWER GARDEN, INC.

Dear Friends,

Spring is on the way, bringing another wonderful season of beauty and discovery at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary. I believe you will agree that EVERY year is a fine one at the Garden, and we depend on this because whatever else may be troublesome in the world, we do have this sustaining place where we can experience some serenity and peace of mind.

This year is the Garden's 110th anniversary, and it has been 65 years since the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden was established. To commemorate these milestones we are launching Campaign 175 to help raise the funds needed to complete the Garden's Wetland Boardwalk. According to estimates, this project, which composes about two-thirds of the total boardwalk's length, will cost about \$175,000. The design is already covered, so these new funds will be used for materials and installation, including the cutting and heat-treating of wood from ash trees that will be used as surface boards.

As you may know, Phase I of the Wetland Boardwalk has been a complete success, garnering an award from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Association of Landscape Architects and positive feedback from Garden visitors. Phase II will extend the walking surface southward over the swampy area to higher ground where the path turns east. The new portion of the walkway includes an expanded gathering spot with benches where students, birders and others can take time to examine the wetland more closely.

In this issue of the Fringed Gentian, you will find an envelope with information on how to help make Phase II a reality by making a donation to Campaign 175. (Those who receive the Gentian by email can make donations on our website.) We must remember that the wetland is our most precious habitat, and it was treasured by Eloise Butler and all four of the Garden curators who have followed her.

If you have not yet experienced the new Boardwalk, please plan a visit to the Garden this spring where you can walk on the part

that has already been completed. I promise you it will be a delightful stroll, and you'll also see how important it is that we finish this project.

Our other big project for this season is a new and exciting event celebrating the blooming of the Showy Lady's Slippers. On June 10 and 11, we will have guided tours, a small bazaar outside the front gate with refreshments and Garden items, special membership offers and more. Details will be posted on our website (www.friendsofeloisebutler.org), and we hope you will plan to join us and bring along a person or two who are new to the Garden and the Friends.

Finally, I am very pleased that the Friends' Board of Directors has an excellent new presidential candidate preparing to take office as of our annual meeting in May. Her name is Kathy Connelly, and she is a longtime Garden supporter. Kathy will be a skillful leader, guiding us into the future with a strong vision and a deep understanding of our purpose.

As this will be my last letter as board president, I want to make mention of the special team of volunteers who bring us this beautiful newsletter. Thank you Meleah Maynard, our gifted editor, John Toren, our talented designer, and Donna Ahrens, our kind and eagle-eyed copyeditor. Lovely issue after lovely issue, the three of you have made us pleased and proud.

I am also most grateful to our Shelter and FIPAG volunteers, and their leaders, who give generously of their time to care for our Garden and its visitors. Thanks also to the wonderful Garden staff, who have taught me so much. I cannot say enough about the dedication of the Garden Curator, Susan Wilkins, who helps the Friends fulfill our goals in so many ways. I commend the board for their service and support. I especially want to thank my fellow officers, Melissa Hansen, Gary Bebeau and Candy Bartol, for their hard work and dedication. It has been an honor to live in synch with the Garden these past 10 years and to be graced by my connection to a very special group of Friends.

Most sincerely,

J Pam Weinek



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Dear Friends,

Gratitude creates openings in our lives for more of what makes us happy and well. My first letter to *Gentian* readers as President of our organization is about being grateful. I am grateful to Eloise Butler for having the foresight to lobby for the protection of the Garden so that future generations could enjoy it; and for understanding the value of places like the Garden for contemplation, study, connecting with nature and each other. In these times, when we can sometimes feel estranged from our neighbors, I am grateful that we can meet in the Garden to create common ground and common experiences that can allow us to be citizens together, enjoying this beautiful place.

We are grateful to Pam Weiner, who served as President of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden for the past 10 years. During her tenure, the Friends significantly increased support for the Garden, initiated a transportation program to bring grade-school kids to the Garden in the summer and developed a robust invasive species removal program that restored the protective buffer zone around the Garden.

Pam's articulate and insightful letters in the *Gentian* also helped Friends of the Garden keep up with issues of interest and find ways to support the Garden. Her influence has shaped the Friends into a more broadly based and well-regarded advocacy organization. This has led to significant increases in donations, which only happens when donors believe an organization is effective, focused and stable. We are proud and fortunate to have been represented by a person of such vision and devotion to the Garden and to the Friends. And we are grateful that she

will continue to champion the efforts of the Friends, helping to raise funds to complete Phase II of the award-winning boardwalk.

I am also deeply grateful for the wonderful group of people who have agreed to guide the Friends organization with me, particularly the board of directors whose names are listed in this newsletter. I must also say a special thank you to departing board members Anthony Waldera and Phoebe Waugh, both of whom gave tirelessly of their unique gifts for many years.

I am grateful for the volunteers, whose enthusiasm for the Garden is reflected in so many ways—clearing buckthorn, pulling garlic mustard, staffing the shelter, walking the trails, tending legacy plots, producing the *Gentian* and so much more.

Finally, I am grateful for the many people who braved the extreme heat and stormy weather to come to the Garden for the very successful Showy Lady's-Slipper celebration on June 10 and 11. The State's official flowers were spectacular and appropriately showy, as were the yellow iris, blue flag iris and forget-me-nots. Many people signed up as new Friends members and many others renewed their memberships. And we raised over \$3,000 in donations and sales of bike raffle tickets and lady's-slipper-themed merchandise, as well as in-kind donations. Congratulations to all who planned and participated in the weekend! Thanks especially to Mark Addicks, One on One Bikes and Utepils Brewery for their



partnerships with the Friends and generous donations, all of which helped make the weekend such a success.

If you are not familiar with the Garden, or haven't visited it in a while, I encourage you to come this summer—so much has changed! The recently constructed portions of the boardwalk have made the marshy areas of the Garden, which are always beautiful to walk through, much more accessible and appealing. Phase II will extend the walking surface northward and includes an expanded gathering spot with benches. Campaign 175, which we are raising funds for now, aims to raise the remaining funds needed to complete the boardwalk project.

Thanks to Garden Curator Susan Wilkins and her team, who have worked tirelessly to remove buckthorn and other invasives. Many

more native plants, as well as the contours of the Garden itself, can now be easily enjoyed. Today, the Garden is recognized for being a great place to bring kids to explore and learn about nature in many different and fun ways.

I hope you will consider visiting the Garden and supporting it by joining the Friends, making a contribution to the boardwalk fund, volunteering to care for a particular section of the garden or helping to eradicate invasives. More information about how you can help the Garden can be found in this newsletter.

Thank you, in advance, for your support. I hope to see you out on the trails.

Sincerely,

Kathy Connelly