



## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

### NEWSLETTER, AUTUMN 2023

## Exciting News: We've reached our \$12 million Endowment Fundraising Goal - Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

We are thrilled to share that we have successfully reached our ambitious endowment fundraising goal of \$6 million, thanks to the incredible support and dedication of our community, donors, and friends like you! Reaching this momentous goal completes the challenge set for us by a generous anonymous donor who has pledged to match this achievement with an additional \$6 million.

This achievement is a testament to the power of a shared vision and the commitment of those who believe in the importance of preserving and celebrating nature. With this milestone, The Brenton Arboretum is poised to embark on a new era of growth, sustainability, and environmental education.

An endowment fund is the cornerstone of financial stability for any nonprofit organization. It serves as a lasting source of income, enabling us to sustain our mission and preserve the beauty of this natural sanctuary for generations to come. This milestone reflects the dedication of many individuals, including our board members, staff, volunteers, and the passionate advocates who have championed our cause over the years. Your belief in The Brenton Arboretum and its potential has fueled our success.

As we celebrate this achievement, we invite you to visit The Brenton Arboretum and experience the beauty and serenity that your support has helped create. Our commitment to trees, nature, and environmental education is unwavering, and your involvement continues to be instrumental in our success.

In the coming months and years, we look forward to sharing more exciting updates, events, and opportunities for you to engage with The Brenton Arboretum. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact on our environment and inspire future generations to cherish and protect the natural world. Thank you for being a part of what makes The Brenton Arboretum so special.

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#### Brenton Arboretum Board Members

David Mackaman, Chair  
Erna Morain, Vice Chair  
Julie Brenton, Treasurer  
Brenda Stine-Reiher, Secretary  
Ray Bening  
J.C. 'Buz' Brenton  
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## The Everchanging Landscape - Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture

It was a warm fall afternoon and the dust was blowing behind me as I headed west down the gravel road to a destination I had never been to before. I had heard of this place just a week earlier at a Capital Square office in downtown Des Moines. Then I was dressed in a suit and tie but today I was dressed in blue jeans and work boots. I was following a white Ford Taurus wagon with a dog in the back. I followed the white car into the driveway to get my first glimpse of a few very small trees



Arboretum in September of 1996

scattered around the landscape, most not taller than the brome grass they were planted in. There was no sign telling me where I was but the gentlemen in the white car knew. He had probably been here every day over the past two years, planting and watering trees, establishing prairie, mowing grass and seeing his dream of starting an arboretum come to life. Mr. Brenton, Lucky, the dog in the car, and I walked around the arboretum for a few hours that October day back in 1998. Basically, we looked at and talked trees, he showed me what was planted, told me the plans for more tree plantings and shared his thoughts for the future of the arboretum. Every year on warm sunny days in October when the corn leaves are rustling in the wind like they did 25 years ago, I think about the first time I came to the arboretum and start to reminisce.

I think about the first tree I planted which was a shagbark hickory, *Carya ovata*, #1999-001 which was a little over two feet tall, just some roots and a stick Mr. Brenton had dug up at his forest in southern Iowa and brought to the arboretum. This tree is over 35 feet tall now and has been producing hickory nuts for many years. I think about the

three feet tall sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, 2002-114 I planted by the bridge over Lake Homestead where we pull water from the lake to fill the water wagon. For years, I wondered if this tree would ever provide some shade while the water wagon filled. It took some time but eventually, I could walk over and stand under its branches to get relief from the blazing July sun and now this once little tree shades the entire truck and wagon. I planted eight common baldcypress, *Taxodium distichum* my first year and thought would I ever see the "cypress knees"? Baldcypress accession #1999-181 has had knees for ten years now. I reflect on the thousands of trees I've planted over this time, many no longer here but thousands which are growing bigger with every passing year.

Much has changed in the last 25 years since I started at the arboretum especially when it comes to the reason we exist, the trees. Trees which have been nurtured and with time have created an arboretum. Anyone driving west down the gravel road now knows they have arrived at the Brenton Arboretum. So, if its been awhile since you were out for a visit or if it was just last week, come and see for yourself how the trees have grown and the beautiful space they have created.



Arboretum in September of 2021

# A Sneak Peek of our exciting events in 2024!:

## Adult and Family Programs:

- ◆ Exploratory bee keeping (April 2024)
- ◆ Earth Day events (April 21, 2024)
  - \* Tree planting with Director of Horticulture Andy Schmitz
  - \* Kids potting station sponsored by Native Tree Legacy
  - \* Wildflower Factory flowers - hand made craft
- ◆ Plein Air Art Event (May 2024)
- ◆ Plant- Grow-Fly with special guest The Blank Park Zoo (Summer 2024)
- ◆ Outdoor Foraging with Polk County Conservation (June 6, 2024)
- ◆ New Book Club partnership with Waukee library (One Monday a month - book club with a hike after)
- ◆ We're excited to welcome back John Bissell for Birds and Bagels (Spring 2024 and Fall 2024)
- ◆ Outdoor painting with Artist Jill Woodward



For more information or to register for any classes, please visit:

<https://thebrentonarboretum.org/events/>

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## Construction Updates: New Toilets, New Bridge, New Seating, and a Beautiful Gateway-

Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

As one of Iowa's hidden gems, our 148-acre natural oasis has always been dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of trees, and now, with the help of several very generous donors, we're expanding our commitment to visitor comfort. In a stride towards enhancing visitor experiences, we are excited to break ground this autumn on several new projects across our grounds: a new bridge, a seating area, new gateway, and a new toilet facility.

With the generous support of the Eddy family, we are in the process of installing a second arched bridge to complete the loop path through Eddy Woods in the southwest corner of the Arboretum. Additionally, a lovely limestone seating area in Eddy Woods will provide a comfortable and attractive place to sit and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. If you've been to Arboretum recently, you may have noticed two limestone pillars at the entrance to Eddy Woods; these pillars are the first construction step of a grand gateway that will invite guests into this special part of our grounds with a warm welcome.

Near the Pavilion we've broken ground on a new toilet facility to replace the not-so-glamorous portajohn. The new structure will include three individual restrooms with baby-changing tables, running water, and toilets that really flush. We are especially excited about that last part.

While the projects in Eddy Woods should be complete by the end of autumn this year, the toilet is likely to take a bit longer to be open to the public. The building should be complete by the end of the year and the facility should be ready for guests in spring of 2024.

## Summer in the Arboretum - Penny Perkins, Education & Outreach Manager



We've just finished a fantastic summer of youth education. Our first-ever summer camps were held here. An animal rescuer brought baby animals for the younger children during one of our summer camp guest visits, and the Iowa DNR brought some upcycling crafts.

Our Nature Explorer campers built willow tree huts, and the Animal Odyssey campers produced birdhouses and dissected owl pellets.

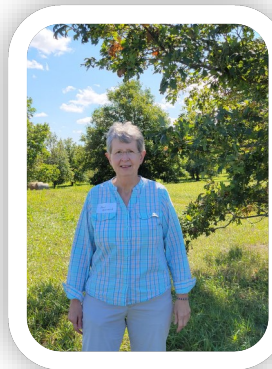
On the first and third Thursdays of each month, bring the kids to Nature Club. We hope to see you this winter for some family-friendly excursions. Check out our website for upcoming events.



## Spotlight on Volunteers - Megan Webster, Membership & Volunteer Manager

We want to thank these generous volunteers, along with our volunteer Board of Directors listed on page 1, for donating more than 300 hours of their time and talents to the Arboretum during the past year:

Derika Andrus	Kim Edsen	Stacy and Marty Hart	Craig Shives
Mary Appleyard	Audrey Ellis	Bob and Karen Henderson	Teresa Wichtendahl
Hannah Attleson	Connie Fischer	Kim Holland	Roger Winterhof
Terry Baker	Ed and Janet Freese	Liza Juhnke	
Maddy Baumann	Brandon Frideres	Rosemary Killmer-Thornley	
Nancy Bechen	John Gilliland	Keri Kinnaird	
John Bissell	Kelly Gisch	Isabella Logan	
Sydney Christensen	Teresa Hall	Barb Nepp	



Keri Kinnaird is a relatively new volunteer who joined us about a year ago last fall. Keri came on board to help maintain our library database in our Vista Room. Since beginning last September, Keri has helped transform our database and cataloged numerous new books that have been generously donated to our library.

Keri has also kindly donated her time helping organize various areas of office storage and volunteered to help with our booth at a few children's events this past year.

We are incredibly grateful to have Keri as a part of our volunteers.

Kim Edsen has volunteered with us to help maintain the Nature Play area and our free little library for the last couple years. Kim has helped weed and clean the Nature Play area beds as well as stock and keep the free little library clean.

Kim has also generously donated her time helping direct traffic for the Holiday Photo Shoot, and decorating for the Halloween drive-through event.

We will forever be thankful for everything Kim has done for us.

We are currently looking for a new volunteer to fill Kim's position with the free little library. Kim is hoping to spend more time with her family this next year and will be done at the end of the year. Duties include stocking and maintaining the little library. If you are interested in this volunteer position or would like more information, please email me at [memberships@thebrentonarboretum.org](mailto:memberships@thebrentonarboretum.org).





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## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

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[www.thebrentonarboratum.org](http://www.thebrentonarboratum.org)

**Return Service Requested**

Don't miss out on these crafty programs as we come to an end of 2023!



Halloween Boo-quet  
Centerpiece with  
Wildflower Factory

Coming  
October 15, 2023



Make and take  
bath salts with  
Prairie Land  
Herbs

Coming  
November 5, 2023

Fall centerpiece  
with Adel Flowers  
and Gifts

Coming  
November 19,  
2023



Winter painting with  
artist Jill Woodward

Coming  
December 3, 2023



Register for our classes at: [www.thebrentonarboratum.org/events](http://www.thebrentonarboratum.org/events)