

# THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER



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## WEST RIDGE NATURE PRESERVE PAC: PROMOTING URBAN WILDLIFE



Photo credit: www.westridgenaturepreserve.org

**West Ridge Nature Preserve, 5801 N Western.** On September 20, 2015, more than 700 people streamed into the West Ridge Nature Preserve for opening ceremonies and were greeted by a warm, sunny day. According to 40<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Patrick O’Conner, our PAC, “...did an incredible job of making sure there were plenty of activities for all ages to partake in throughout the day.”

Activities such as story walks, I-Spy nature hunts, guided

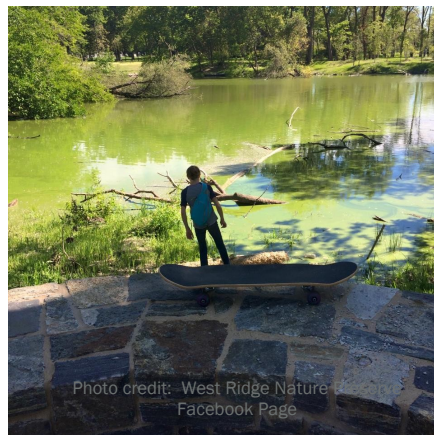


Photo credit: West Ridge Nature Facebook Page

tours, writers workshops and a mammal specimen table served as pilots for inclusion in future events at the preserve and underscored our commitment to environmental education. In the future, we plan to offer programs for school groups and develop a nature play area for young children.

Few knew that this environmental jewel, undeveloped for 200 years, existed close to the busy intersection of Peterson and Western avenues. This neglected bit of wilderness, featuring 20-acres of woodland and a 2-acre pond, could have become a retail area. However, a congressional earmark funded the acquisition of the land from Rosehill Cemetery that, in turn, became part of

the Chicago Park District.

From its beginning in spring of 2013, our PAC has served as a protector of this natural habitat. We strongly advocate for and work toward preserving and enhancing its native biodiversity. At the same time, we embrace the environmentally sensitive use of the preserve by the public.

Our efforts have increased plantings, saved some dead trees as habitat, preserved a stream, reduced the width and number of paths, and kept the preserve dog free. We also supported a number of changes required by the Army Corps of Engineers, including a boardwalk that extends over the wetlands.

Tucked within a bustling city, the preserve now offers wildlife and humans a much-needed refuge.

### Want your PAC featured in the PAC Highlights section?

Please give us a little history about your PAC and the great work your PAC has done. Why did you start? Was there a hurdle that you overcame? Was there a great project you’d like to share? Please include 1-2 pictures and no more than 300 words please. Submit to machucan@fotp.org.

## NOTEWORTHY DATES

**December 2nd:** CPD Public Budget Hearing, 3:30pm

**December 7th:** FOTP's 2016 Seed Grant Applications released on [www.fotp.org/blog](http://www.fotp.org/blog)

**December 8th:** PAC Leadership Alliance meeting, 5:30pm @ FOTP

**December 10th:** FOTP Netsch Lecture, Robert Karr on Project 120

**January 9th:** PAC Leadership Alliance meeting, 10am @ FOTP, details may change

**January 26th:** FOTP's PAC Quarterly Networking Meeting, 5:30pm

**February 4th:** FOTP's Annual Luncheon

**March 5th:** Park Advocacy Conference

## PAC RESOURCES: FIELD MUSEUM

The Field Museum recently had their relaunch of their *Chicago Community Action Toolkit*. The toolkit houses a plethora of resources that are accessible for free and can be used to engage your PAC and your park community.

On the website's "TOOLS" page, you can find instruction guides on various activities on the following topics: Asset Mapping with Youth, Do-It-Yourself Bike Tours, Guide to Green Cleaning, Nature and Wellness Bingo, Sustainability in Bronzeville, Chicago Species Guides, videos and

a LOT more. **Under the "TOOLS" page there are three options:** "Learn" "Get Inspired" and "Do Your Own Project." Under these links you will find the aforementioned resources that can be used as activities for your PAC's events or inspiration to get your PAC's collective brain-wheels turning on how to improve your park and contribute to your community.

The toolkit can be found at:

[climatechicago.fieldmuseum.org](http://climatechicago.fieldmuseum.org)



Image of a various Chicago Park District photo guides. Can be found under TOOLS → LEARN → SPECIES IDENTIFICATION GUIDES

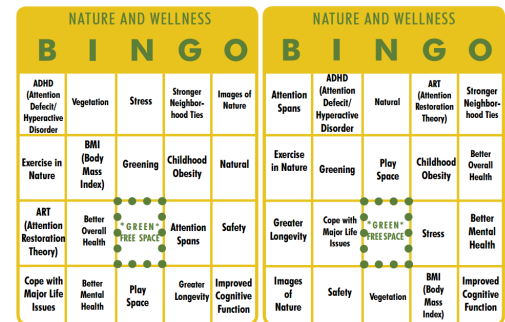


Image of a nature and wellness bingo card. Can be found under TOOLS → LEARN → Nature & Wellness

THE FOTP TREE SAYS...



In the September Edition I, the FOTP Tree, provided you with some food for thought on goal setting, engagement and equity. When your PAC or park partner organization is undergoing the tasks of setting goals and engaging your community, it's all about ideas, ideas, ideas!!! **Here are some challenges you may encounter when brainstorming and their possible solutions:**

**Challenge:** In meetings there may be participants who have ideas, but do not voice them. **Solution:** Ask participants a specific question and have them write 3-5 ideas individually on sticky notes. Post them on a wall and then read and discuss each idea. Sticky notes can be reorganized on the wall by the facilitator, but guided by the group. Perhaps into, "YES" "MAYBE" and "TABLED FOR ANOTHER TIME" columns.

**Challenge:** We can attach our emotions to our ideas and in the process shut down when our ideas are not received positively. **Solution:** Before ideas are shared, tell meeting members that you all will be removing the idea from your brains and putting them (metaphorically or physically) on the table. That way, our ideas are separated from ourselves and when they are critiqued it is the idea that is being critiqued, not the individual -- and don't forget to emphasize this latter point!

**Challenge:** During a think-tank session the conversation begins to go in circles, goes off track, or goes-back-and-forth in an argument. **Solution:** Before a meeting begins explicitly set the goals of conversation. Have them written on a board so they can be referenced back. Moreover, remember that language and words can mean different things to different people. Ask clarification questions. For example, Jaime says, "We need to do outreach around the park." James responds, "I did do that." "No you didn't!" "Yes I did!" What is the disconnect? After a set of clarification questions, it becomes clear that James meant that he reached out to the non-profits around the park and Jose wants to include businesses as well.

**So remember, when sharing ideas and brainstorming with your group, give everyone the OPPORTUNITY to share ideas, SEPARATE emotions from ideas, and CLARIFY objectives, definitions, and possible disconnect.**