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Bluff Lake volunteer Erika Walker

“Places like Bluff Lake are very rare and very precious.”

By Nancy Burkhart

If you have a love of nature, and want to expand your knowledge as well as educate others, then volunteering at the Bluff Lake Nature Center would be a good choice.

Bluff Lake is a 125-acre urban wildlife refuge on the east edge of Stapleton. It prohibits camping, fishing, boating and swimming, but it offers an opportunity to be with nature in a quiet setting and classes to learn about nature.

Erika Walker is a fourth generation Coloradoan who grew up playing on the prairie in Aurora. “I grew up doing a lot of hiking and camping,” Walker said. “I thought one of the gifts of my childhood was spending unstructured time with nature. I wanted to pass that on to my son and create those opportunities for other children as well.”

Walker and her husband, Don Weinschenker, and their 14-year-old son Stephen had been living in Minneapolis where Walker was a professor at St. Mary’s University in the business management graduate program. When they decided to move back to Denver, Bluff Lake was the reason for their choice to live at Stapleton.

“Bluff Lake plays a very unique and important role in modern life,” Walker said. “When you go there, you listen to the wind blow, you see wildlife. There are nesting owls, coyotes, and beaver that have a dam in Sand Creek.

“When you’re in a nature setting where

people are boating and camping, you’re not going to see nature in the same way that you can in a wildlife refuge. It’s very quiet, very peaceful. Life is so hectic. Places like Bluff Lake are very rare and very precious.”

Experience isn’t necessary for volunteers at Bluff Lake. Volunteers are trained on the job. People are being sought to be volunteer naturalists to introduce school groups to nature.

Walker has been doing work as a volunteer naturalist at Bluff Lake. “One morning a week I help lead school groups,” she said. I’ve served on the education committee and helped them direct their education programs. Bluff Lake is planning to build a nature center there, and I’ve sat in on some of their design meetings for the building.”

Site stewards to help make the nature refuge habitat healthy also are being sought to plant native plants, remove noxious plant species, do trail construction and trash pick-up.

“Bluff Lake has half-day work days where you can help plant grass and other things,” Walker said. “Last fall my son and I went together and volunteered. There’s a prairie section with a beautiful garden, and we helped to plant native plants there.

“My son loved it. I think it’s really important to teach children that value of stewardship. I want my son to know the importance of being in nature,” she added.

Visit www.blufflakenaturecenter.org for more information. To volunteer call Kristin at 303-344-1282 or email klibberton@blufflake.org.

See *Bluff Lake Earth Day activities* on page 17.

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Dedicated Volunteers Make Jazz Concerts Happen

By Nancy Burkhart

Jazz music has been filling City Park with starlit summer vibes for more than 125 years. Today, the non-profit City Park Jazz has a concert schedule that goes from June 7 to August 9 with 10 Sunday night jazz concerts.

"We started about 1984 with a few hundred people," explained Bob Nelson, vice-president of the City Park Jazz Board of Directors. "The early part of the '90s we had money-raising issues and went out of business for a couple of years. Then we reorganized.

"Our mission is to provide free concerts for the neighborhood. We have people coming from all over the state. About 5,000 attend each concert."

People bring blankets to sit on the grass for the 6 p.m. concerts. They bring their children and dogs to partake of picnics or food bought from vendors while they listen to the free concerts.

Costs for each concert total about \$7,000, Nelson said. This includes police protection, the



Bob Nelson, Vice President of the City Park Jazz Board of Directors, and Susan Klann, who serves as secretary, stand at the pavilion where the City Park Jazz bands perform.

bands' performances and trash removal. There are 20 to 30 volunteers who work at each concert for just a T-shirt and a meal, he said.

A "bucket brigade" takes buckets into the audience to collect donations during intermission, and a huge jug at the City Park Jazz booth garners other contributions, according to Nelson.

"One of the key points is, given the economic downturn and a lot of the struggles people are facing, it's free," said Susan Klann, who serves the Board of Directors as secretary. "It's a wonderful social environment to

get you out of the house and enjoying your neighbors. Anything that anyone can give is greatly appreciated.

"A couple of years ago the Rocky Mountain News selected us as one of the movers and shakers in the arts community in Denver. They said that we were really an organization by the people for the people. I think that really sums it up. We do it for the people and we do it for the park."

For information or to volunteer, call 303-777-9560 or

visit www.cityparkjazz.org.

2009 City Park Jazz Schedule, Sundays 6-8pm

- June 7 – Cocktail Revolution
- June 14 – Teresa Carroll & the Big Swing Trio
- June 21 – Jon Romero y Amanecer
- June 28 – The Michael Friedman Jazz Quintet
- July 5 – Purnell Steen and Le Jazz Machine
- July 12 – Buckner Funken Jazz
- July 19 – The Wendy Fopeano Group
- July 26 – Chris Daniels and the Kings
- Aug. 2 – The Otone Brass Band
- Aug. 9 – Funkiphino

Bluff Lake Bird Walk



On Earth Day, April 22nd, Bluff Lake held a bird walk where participants learned how to identify common birds, how to use a bird guide and binoculars, and how to identify nests. Also, a number of businesses in Stapleton and Northfield donated a portion of the day's proceeds to the Bluff Lake Nature Center, including Udi's Bread Cafe, All Things Renewable, Cold Stone Creamery, Amore Fiori, U-Shampooch and An's Lemongrass Grille.

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The Biggest Mistake of Do-It-Yourselfers: Not Getting A Permit

By Sherry Liberato

Working in the The Northeast Satellite Permitting Office of the City and County of Denver I have become aware of a number of homeowners in the area who are having trouble with jobs that were done without a permit. A good rule of thumb is that you need a permit for anything larger than wallpapering and painting [1]. The best advice is to just call the Building Department, which you can reach by calling Denver's helpline at 311, or visit Denvergov.org and choose the link at left for Housing and Property Assistance or the link for Building and Construction. The website contains numerous resources for homeowners and on each of those web pages there is a box at the right that says: Tips for Success. Be sure to have your contractor pull a permit. (The permit holder is legally responsible for compliance with the Denver Building Code.)

I don't understand why someone would finish their basement or build an addition of any kind including a trellis or pergola without checking to see if a permit is required. For some jobs, you may need to provide proof of permit and inspection to your insurance company, or the company won't cover it or may refuse to pay a claim some time later.

Every time I turn on the TV to watch the endless shows on sweat equity, like "This Old House" and many others, they all advise their listeners to contact their local building department and ask what is required before starting any project, and specifically ask if they need a permit. I have heard it over and over. Even Norm from "This Old House" will tell you that. Never assume your pro will "take care of it."

Rick Lopes, of the California Contractors State License Board, warns that especially after natural disasters homeowners need to beware of contractors who advertise with signs taped to lampposts in hard-hit neighborhoods. They offer to do repairs quickly, without the hassle of obtaining building permits. In exchange, they ask for all or most of the money up front. And although they often finish the work, it's generally subpar. These fly-by-nighters may even leave the house in worse shape than they found it, says Lopes.

Don't spend thousands of dollars on a home improvement that does not improve your property. You may end up needing to tear it all down and it will be difficult or impossible to obtain a refund of your money spent

Sherry Liberato works at the Northeast Denver Satellite Permitting office located at 23rd and Oneida.

[1] Top Ten Mistakes of Do-It-Yourselfers by Pat Curry of Bankrate.com, originally posted at realestate.msn.com

Mercy Housing to Build More Affordable Rentals at Stapleton



Mercy Housing is planning to open its second affordable rental housing development at Stapleton, northeast of the planned Eastbridge Town Center, by mid 2011. The artist's conceptual rendering at left shows the 92 apartments that will be located on the parcel bounded by Hanover, Florence Way, Havana and 31st Avenue. Mercy's first affordable rental housing development at Stapleton is the Parkside Apartments, located at 23rd and Syracuse.

Stapleton Welcomes a New Neighbor

By Tom Gleason

When Billy Brown heard that Forest City and Erico Motorsports were sponsoring a referral

program for Stapleton residents who convince friends or family members to purchase a new home at Stapleton, he had just the right person in mind—his longtime friend and former college roommate, Kevin Hansen.

Kevin and Billy had been roommates three times over a period of several years since they graduated from Drake University in the late 90s. The two friends originally met through an earlier "referral" when Kevin's older brother told Billy his younger brother was looking for a roommate after transferring to Drake from the University of Wisconsin. Today, Billy is a medical device representative for Stryker Orthopedics and Kevin is

an accountant with Western Union.

When asked how he persuaded Kevin to move to Stapleton, Billy replied "I just gave him three reasons: the great



Kevin and Melissa Hansen (left), shown standing in front of their new Stapleton home, were referred by Billy and Krista Brown. The Brown's children are Mikayla, 7, and Matthias, 8 months.

homes, family friendly parks—and me!"

In addition to receiving a \$500 cash award within 45 days of a referral home closing for a home purchased before June 30, 2009, people making a successful referral will be entered

into a random drawing for a Vespa LH 150 Scooter and Cyber helmet from Erico Motorsports (a \$4,500 value). See the ad on page 28 for the entry form and the program rules.

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