



# The Maple Leaf

Fall 2020

**Friends of Maplewood State Park    Box 259    Pelican Rapids, MN 56572**

Maplewood State Park  
39721 Park Entrance Rd  
Pelican Rapids, MN 56572  
218-863-8383

Don Del Greco, Park Manager

## **Upcoming Events:**

Feb. 20 – Candlelight Ski  
April TBA – Maple Syrup Day

## **Advisory Committee**

Denise Laymon, **chairperson**  
Richard Smestad, **chairperson elect**  
Alma Ronningen, **secretary**  
Penny Brynildson, **treasurer**  
Kay & Denny Albright  
Lynn Carlson, **membership**  
Don & Bonnie Del Greco  
Carol & Sanford Emery  
Judith Engebretson  
Jeff Fjestad  
Bob & Kathy Hanson  
Terry Heller  
Ruth & Van Holmgren  
Ruth Holt  
Wendy Koski, **membership**  
Diane & Dave Knopf  
Phyllis & Cliff Knutson  
Bob & Karen Kreiser  
Brian Laymon  
Bonnie & John Nordstrom  
Larry & Judy Olson  
Stu Peterson  
Wayne Runningen  
Mary & Chuck Sorum  
Scott & Stephanie Stenshoel  
Becky Thompson

The **MISSION** of the Friends of Maplewood State Park is to support and encourage the Park's recreational, interpretive, educational and environmental activities through leadership, volunteerism, program development, and fund raising.

## **COVID 19**

The pandemic has left the Friends of Maplewood unable to do anything at our State Park. Maplewood is open, but none of the buildings are open.

The Friends of Maplewood has not been able to work on any existing projects at Maplewood or provide the classes and events that give visitors many different opportunities. Our annual event, Leaf Days, of course is also cancelled. Large groups of people are prohibited and Leaf Days bring in large groups of people. It is important for people to be able to get out, but also important for us to follow the rules and keep people safe.

We don't know when things will change, but we hope to have our annual Candlelight Ski Night, although that does put large groups of people into a very small space. Creativity will probably have to be in motion if we are able to proceed. Hopefully in 2021, we will also be back to being able to produce Maple Syrup and teach students and others all about the process. Stay tuned. We'll let you know.

Friends of Maplewood WEBSITE  
**friendsofmaplewood.org**

## HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS OF MAPLEWOOD

With nothing going on this past summer at Maplewood that we have to report, I thought I'd take some time to give a little history lesson on our organization.

In October of 1996, the BY-LAWS of the Maplewood State Park Advisory Committee were signed by James McDonald, President and Brent Frazier, secretary, marking the beginning of the Friends of Maplewood. James McDonald was the Mayor of Pelican Rapids and he was very interested in getting a bike trail from Pelican Rapids to Maplewood State Park. Starting this organization was one way of getting support for the bike trail.

The bike trail ran into some opposition and the money that Pelican Rapids had received to build the trail had to be used or given back. It was given back.

In the fall of 2000, I noticed an article in the Pelican Press about an Annual Meeting for the Friends of Maplewood. I'm not sure if this was the first Annual Meeting or just the first one I noticed. I talked my friend Jeff into going with me and at the meeting they asked for volunteers to serve on the Advisory Committee. Again I talked Jeff into joining me on the committee. We had been Boy Scout leaders for many years and camped many times with the boys at Maplewood so we did have an interest.

The first meeting was September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2000 and we met in the Upper Room of City Hall, above the Jail. Those in attendance were Char Berger, Jim Christianson, Arlen Erickson, Jeff Grunewald, Bob Hanson, Jeff Johnson, John Nordstrom, Wayne Runnigen, Cooper Steward, Cyndy Stotesbery, and Tom Voigt.

At our second meeting we decided we needed a chairperson and Tom Voigt was selected as he was absent from the meeting. Our Friends of Maplewood flyer focused around the bike trail from Pelican to Maplewood and being it was not well received we decided to remove that from our flyer. Local people were saying things like, "If you build the bike trail, we'll never shop in Pelican again." Jeff Johnson, who was on our committee and owner of Johnson's Furniture Store, was told that many times.

That was our humble beginning in the year 2000. The Advisory Committee decided we needed a newsletter and the one written in May of 2001 was 2 pages. It highlighted our 1<sup>st</sup> Candlelight Ski in February which was attended by 30 people and the new entrance sign to Maplewood State Park which was also the first one in the State to be lighted.

We have come a long way in the past 20 years and here are a list of some of the projects that we have helped to accomplish. The projects are great, but I think our best quality is the fun and exciting things we provide for all the visitors to Maplewood, supervised and assisted by our Friends of Maplewood volunteers.. I'll include a list of those also.



## PROJECTS

2001	Maplewood Entrance Sign
2002	State Highway and County Signage
2002	Leaf Days celebration started
2004	Baker Cabin
2005	Trail Center Building moved in & remodel
2006	begin Picnic Shelter project
2007	Interstate Signage put up
2008	Trail Center deck, stain walls
2008	Picnic Shelter completed Stain logs
2009	Serving table for Picnic Shelter
2009	Trail Center landscape, trees, benches inside
2009	Hallaway Hill signs
2010	Maple Syrup demonstration – built Maple Syrup arch
2011	Install BBQ grills
2011	Refinish Picnic Shelter
2011	Recycle Bins (Eagle project) Friends financial support
2012	Horse railings by outhouses
2012	Storage Shed built
2013	Horse railing by Trail Center
2013	2 more History signs Emery – 1 <sup>st</sup> white child born Maplewood
2013	Kitchen door at Picnic Shelter
2014	Weed at Picnic Shelter, trim trees, mulch trees, plant trees
2014	Little Free Library at Campground
2017	Maple Syrup Sugar Shack
2018	Tree Planting grant
2018	Money donation to Hallaway Hill Trail project
2018	Paddle Board storage at Campground
2019	Shelving at Sugar Shack
2019	Purchased benches for the new Hallaway Hill Trail
2019	Provided money for reroute of North Country Trail at Maplewood
2020	Rebuilt Maple Syrup Arch for demonstration day



## ACTIVITIES

Candlelight Ski	Photography Classes
Mary Knutson's kids summer classes	Water Color classes
Maple Syrup school groups	Meditation class
Maple Syrup Demonstration Day	Fly Fishing & Casting
Music at Maplewood	Wild Edible Foray
Drawing Maplewood Landscapes	Geocaching—Using a GPS
Scavenger Hunt	
Leaf Days – multiple events like: buttermaking, apple press, woodworking, crafts, homemade ice cream, corn shelling & grinding, ropemaking, doll making, & lots of demonstrations	



## CANDLELIGHT SKI 2019

**Thanks to Greg Stetz for all the photos on this page.**

There is nothing like great weather to find many hardy Minnesotans venturing out to our great State Park for some fun. We have been riding the wave of good Candlelight Ski weekend weather for the past 3 years and this year was the best. A total of 325 cars entered Maplewood that Saturday for what we figure to be roughly 800 people. Our Friends group is getting better at handling the influx of people, but we might be maxed out.

Parking is getting difficult, but the crowd is very understanding and just seem to have fun. Our volunteers are improving the parking every year.

“So beautiful. Trails were amazing. Will be back!” “Annual event for us. Love it!”

“We are so happy to be here! What a great event. How generous of the Friends of Maplewood to pay for our snowshoes! We came this weekend for this event. Thanks everyone.” This quote from a group from Jupiter, Florida



And a group of students who study at NDSU and come from Nepal. “Awesome event! Thanks to all the organizers for doing this. We love Minnesota. Uffda!” Anuj “We are really pleased to be here and enjoy the hospitable ambience. Thank you so much.” Binu Rana

Thanks are especially handed out to all those Friends of Maplewood who spend their evening working so that others can have a great time at Maplewood. I know many of them would enjoy just being a visitor that evening so thanks for sharing your time. We also need to

thank all the visitors who share the trails with skiers, snowshoers, and hikers. Sometimes it might be difficult, but it is so great to see all the people having a great time on the trail.



# MEMBERSHIP DRIVE for 2021

**Friends of Maplewood membership drive for 2021 starts NOW.** Included in this newsletter is a membership sheet. Fill it out and sent to Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572. If you are a renewal, we only need your name and any changes of address or email. If you are a Snowbird, give us your winter address so we can send you our winter newsletter.

The money you pay in dues each year is what allows the Friends of Maplewood to provide the Candlelight Ski, Maple Syrup Demonstration Day, Maple Syrup School visits, and Leaf Days.

**Each year we get about 300 paying members. Some of them, when they pay their dues, add some extra money as a donation. These donations are greatly appreciated and it is all used to support Maplewood State Park.**

Another great year in 2020. We had a total of 314 paid memberships. Remember your dues are used entirely to support Maplewood State Park. Thanks for supporting Maplewood State Park by joining the Friends of Maplewood. Further your support by getting a friend to join. Thanks.

## COVID 19 CARES ACT

Here is an interesting fact about the CARES ACT passed by Congress.

To encourage more charitable giving in 2020, the recently enacted government stimulus bill (the "CARES Act") provides some additional tax relief for donors.

If you take the standard deduction on your 2020 tax return (the one that you'll file in 2021), you can claim a brand new deduction of up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 for a married couple). You don't need to itemize to get this donation as there will be a place to reduce your income besides getting the standard deduction. This donation will reduce a donor's adjusted gross income (AGI), and thereby reduce taxable income.

We mention this because maybe you'd like to make an additional monetary donation to the Friends of Maplewood at this time. If so, please make out your check to "Parks and Trails Council of MN" and write Friends of Maplewood in the Memo line. Parks and Trails places the money in our account and the money qualifies for a 501c3 donation as we piggy back on their account. They receive none of the donation for helping us and we use the money whenever it is needed.

So think about an additional donation to the Friends of Maplewood. Thanks in advance.

# NOTES

## MEMORIALS

Remember the Friends of Maplewood when you are giving a memorial. All donations are used to improve Maplewood State Park. Mail them to the Friends group and a thank you receipt will be sent to you.

### IN MEMORY OF

Elroy Backstrom  
Elroy Backstrom  
Elroy Backstrom  
Elroy Backstrom  
Elroy Backstrom  
Connie Michealson  
Herb & Eileen Kohler  
Marlan Evenson  
Velma Lund  
Velma Lund  
Velma Lund  
Dr. Richard Baker  
Dr. Richard Baker  
Dr. Richard Baker  
Matthew Zeini  
Evelyn Priebe

### GIVEN BY

Teresa & David Lisko  
Ruth & Van Holmgren  
Bonnie & John Nordstrom  
Milo & Marjorie Larson  
Ed & Sharon Fjestad  
Paul & Connie Miller  
Sue Kohler  
Bonnie & John Nordstrom  
Bonnie & John Nordstrom  
Mark & Jackie Scott  
Teresa & Dave Lisko  
Cliff & Phyllis Knutson  
Dr. & Mrs. C. John Hodgson  
Dr. & Mrs. Stephen Hodgson  
Mary Jane Zeini  
Lyndon & Kimberly Johnson

## THRIVENT

Friends of Maplewood is now enrolled as a participating organization in Thrivent Choice. If you are a member of Thrivent, you can direct your Choice dollars to the Friends of Maplewood State Park. We appreciate your donation. We received \$181

Donovan B. Folden  
Mary Lilane Brinkman

## DONATIONS

Underwood Lions—\$\$  
Marlene Evenson—\$\$



## LIFETIME MEMBERS

We have 65 Lifetime members.  
We are happy to announce our newest.

Jeff & Dawn Peter  
Pat & Norma Martin  
Suzanne Smemo

## **Follow us on FACEBOOK**

**“Friends of Maplewood State Park”.**

**We always post events and happenings at Maplewood State Park. When you share the Facebook entry it helps us spread the word about our events to many more people. Thanks.**

## **THINGS WE NEED**

Large buttons  
Feathers  
Gallon Apple Cider jugs

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

48,962.81 in our checking account  
\$2747.03 in our Parks & Trail account

## **WINTER NEWSLETTER**

### **SNOWBIRDS**

Do you head south for the winter? The postal service does not forward our newsletter. If you want to receive the winter copy of The Maple Leaf, please send your winter address to:

nordlake7@hotmail.com or call 218-334-6567

Or send it to Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572

If you have already done so, we have a record of it, so only necessary if new or changes.

## JEFF FJESTAD—New Job

When you think about Maplewood, you have to think about Jeff Fjestad. When he graduated from high school in Pelican Rapids in 1995, he started working at Maplewood the next day. So for 25 years he has worked at Maplewood with his last position as Assistant Park Manager. Yes I said last position because he doesn't work there any more. As of March 25th he started a new position with the Parks and Trails of Minnesota. His new position is Area 1B Supervisor and his office is in Fergus Falls.

This opportunity was a good fit for Jeff because it allowed him to become a Full Time employee for the first time and he did not have to relocate. He supervises a staff of 8 that maintains 250+ public water accesses in 7 counties as well as 14 fishing piers. They also maintain 55 miles of the State Bike Trail from Fergus Falls to Osakis, and three State Water Trails: Long Prairie water trail, Red River water trail, and the Otter Tail water trail.

When he started in Fergus Falls at the Parks and Trails Office he only got to put in 2 days and because of Covid 19 was sent off to work from home. He enjoys the challenges of a new job, but does miss many things about working at Maplewood. Oh don't worry Jeff, you'll have many days at Maplewood volunteering with the Friends of Maplewood.

Working from home was good as his wife Tracy was due to have a baby and they had to be careful. On June 19, Hope Sydney Fjestad was born. They now have 2 girls, Harper and Hope. Congratulations to the Fjestads on their new baby and Jeff's new job. We wish them the best.

## Friends of Maplewood

**Good Friends groups do make a difference at State Parks.** The Friends of Maplewood is one of those groups. We have a solid base of members and a good group of volunteers to help at our projects. It is good to know that when we call for help there are many who will give of their time.

During this Covid 19 lull we hope that our members and volunteers don't find themselves forgetting about Maplewood State Park. I write this because I feel it in myself and I want to remind me and others that eventually we'll have to step up again and give of our time. So keep the Friends of Maplewood on your list.

Speaking of volunteers, we find ourselves, as with many groups, depending on people who are aging to help out. (Again I can write this because I'm one of the aging ones.) So if you feel strongly about Maplewood and haven't ever given of your time, put that on your list to do in the future when we are able to reopen our assistance to Maplewood State Park.

## 2020 Maplewood State Park

Celebrating the Seasons, High Attendance & Safety Success in the Year of the 2020 Pandemic

### Celebrating Seasons:

Maplewood State Park's remarkable natural beauty and abundant natural resources attract, on average, 144,000 guests each year. Maplewood's ever changing seasons welcome many new and returning park guests seeking wonder-filled outdoor experiences. Summer guests come to enjoy the cool, clear lakes and to camp amongst the lush forests and colorful prairies during the sunny warmth of long **summer** days. Leaf-lookers flock to the park to experience the breathtaking color-filled days of **autumn**. Winter adventurers seek to ponder the **winter** wonderland solitude that draws hearty ski, snowshoe, & snowmobile enthusiasts. Spring visitors arrive in anticipation of the promise of **spring** woodlands filled with wildflowers and the laughter of children experiencing the joy of maple sugaring. Each year we are so very privileged to be lavished with the gifts of Nature.

The wonder and beauty of Maplewood has captivated people for generations. Ancient peoples who called this place the 'land of the rustling leaves' and newcomers alike have sought refuge and refreshment in the park's abundant resources and natural beauty.

Celebrating high numbers of Park attendance/day-use guests:

This year of 2020, during the challenging times of a global pandemic, Maplewood has welcomed thousands of new and returning guests seeking that refreshment and 'fresh air' of nature. **Visitation has surged** as young and old, families and adventurers; the tired and weary have discovered anew the healing balm of experiencing the great outdoors. Let us look forward together to new days of refreshment and wonder in the hills and valleys, lakes and prairies of Maplewood throughout the seasons of life.

### Minnesota State Park's Mission:

**'Our vision is to create unforgettable park, trail and water recreation experiences that inspire people to pass along the love for the outdoors to current and future generations.'**

**Purchase a vehicle permit today and get a year of unlimited visits to all of Minnesota's state parks & recreation areas.**

**Quote from a family during the pandemic: 'We have lived in the area all our lives and we needed a place to go this spring during the pandemic and we found Maplewood. It is now our favorite refuge to come as a family.'**

Celebrating Safety Success: Safety improvements in Minnesota State Parks & Trails

In 2019-2020 all of Minnesota's State Parks started a new (4DX) safety initiative to help promote an enhanced safety program for all park employees. Many good things have happened from implementing this program and we are pleased to share that the Maplewood State Park staff teamed together to successfully reduce our incidents and provide for a safer and healthier environment for all Parks & Trails staff. The new program focuses on, intentional **daily communication** around safety, **shared learning** of best practices with a team approach and best of all, a **reduction in injuries** with a **healthier Parks & Trails staff!** Please ask one of Maplewood's employees to talk with you about our safety program.

Hallaway Hill Trail visitor comments/quotes:

Handwritten note from an elderly couple regarding their recent hike on the new Hallaway Hill Trail: 'The Trail is wonderful, thanks for making it possible for 79 year old Hazel and 82 year old George to climb it.' (August 15, 2019)



**Parks Worker Retirement:**

Please note that we are pleased to announce the retirement on June 1, 2020 of long-time Park Worker, & campground host, Charlotte Rund. Char has served exclusively and faithfully for over 18 years, thousands of park guests with hospitality and passion. Char has also served for over 24 years as the 'Legendary' Campground Host of Maplewood. She and her dear family could 'write-a-book' sharing their treasured memories and experiences serving others and caring for Maplewood State Park. Her longtime commitment to serving park guests with care, compassion and hospitality will be a banner of her legacy at Maplewood State Park. **Thanks Char!**

**Promotions:**

In April, Assistant Park Manager, Jeff Fjestad, accepted the Area Parks & Trails Supervisor position for this district working out of Fergus Falls, MN. Jeff and his crew administer and maintain over 200 public water access sites throughout west-central Minnesota along with the grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system, and the District area trails including the Central Lakes State Trail. We heartily congratulate Jeff and look forward to continuing working with him in his new role.

**Park Staff:**

A sincere thank you to Maplewood's new blended team of talented employees which included members from Maplewood, Area staff and several other parks' staff. Together they have provided excellent public service this year and shown remarkable resiliency and creativity in caring for the park, each other and thousands of visitors during a challenging work environment throughout the 2020 pandemic.

Maplewood Staff: Becca Lhotak, Alex Abarca, Dale Westley, Gail Kaplan, & Ron Peterson

Resource Program staff: Jared Lund

Parks & Trail District Office: Maria Grunewald

Buffalo River State Park: Paula Comeau

Lake Carlos State Park: Ben Eckhoff

Thank you for your kind, gracious and faithful support of Maplewood State Park throughout the seasons and in future years to come. We welcome the opportunity to see you again and look forward to gathering together once again to enjoy the wonder of Maplewood.

**Don Del Greco, Park Manager    Maplewood State Park**

**Elroy Backstrom**

Elroy Backstrom died on February 9th. Elroy who farmed in what is now Maplewood State Park became the first park ranger for Maplewood State Park around 1968. He served as the park ranger for about 10 years, retiring in 1978. During those 10 years Elroy worked at developing many of the roads, hiking and horseback trails, and campsites that we still use today at Maplewood. He got Maplewood State Park off to a good solid beginning.

**Richard Baker**

Richard Baker died on April 9th. Richard's connection to Maplewood was his dad, Dr. Norman Baker. Norman was the person who was the drive to start a State Park in this part of Minnesota and became the leader to the beginnings of Maplewood. Richard continued his dad's love of Maplewood and offered support to the Friends of Maplewood often attending events and participating at our Annual Meeting.



Friends of Maplewood  
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# ANNUAL MEETING

## FRIENDS OF MAPLEWOOD

**You have probably realized that there wasn't and will be no Annual Meeting this Fall. We feel that it is not necessary to put people at risk when there is so much uncertainty in the world with Covid 19.**

**The Friends of Maplewood have plans to move forward with our programming as soon as it is possible. We also have a few projects that are on the drawing board. With that in mind we will begin our 2021 Membership Drive. We encourage you to continue support by filling out the membership sheet enclosed and sending it to our post office box in Pelican Rapids. Thank you in advance.**