

July 2019 News Update

Upcoming Events

**Good Bugs and Bad Bugs Talk**

**WHEN:** Saturday, July 20th, 2019 (8:30-9:30 p.m.)

**WHERE:** Pope Farm Conservancy - Meet in the lower parking lot

**SPEAKER:** Phil Pellitteri, UW-Madison Entomologist

Join us for a walk and open discussion with UW-Madison Entomologist Phil Pellitteri as we discover the many types of insects we can find at Pope Farm Conservancy. There are

well over 23,000 species of insects in Wisconsin. Mid-summer is the best time to enjoy the insect world and having diverse plant communities greatly increase the types of insects you will find. Bring sunscreen and bug spray, and wear comfortable walking shoes. We will meet in the lower parking lot by the Old Sauk Road entrance. This talk is free and open to the public – no registration is necessary.



**More Events to Come in August!**

• [Geology Fun for the Whole Family: Stories in Stone](#)

*Speaker: Brooke Norsted, UW Geology Museum*

Saturday, August 17, 2019 @ 10am

• [Late Summer Photography Event](#)

*Presenters: Volunteers from PhotoMidwest*

Saturday, August 24, 2019 @ 7:30am

• [Prairie Restoration and Seed Collection](#)

Saturday, August 24, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Saturday, September 14, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Wednesday, September 25, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Wednesday, October 9, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Check out the full line-up of talks & tours on [our website: www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org)

## Past Events

### **Creating and Maintaining Rain Gardens Talk on June 15th**

Story by Martha Zydowsky, Photo by Vina Yang

On Saturday, June 15, the Friends of Pope Farm sponsored a talk on Creating and Maintaining Rain Gardens. Roger Bannerman, a state expert on rain gardens, reviewed the benefits of rain gardens in controlling urban run-off. He began his presentation with this quote from Aldo Leopold: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise.” He then went on to describe methods of building rain gardens including site selection, soil requirements, and plant recommendations.

During Roger's 40-year career at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, he directed research projects to investigate problems caused by urban run-off. He applied the results of his work not only on a state-wide level but by building rain gardens in his own yard. During the disastrous flooding in our area in 2018, he didn't have a drop of water in his basement and he credits his rain gardens.

At the end of the talk, he provided all of the attendees with handouts and a rain garden manual he wrote.



## What's New at PFC?

### **Friends Upgrade Sign boards at PFC**

Pictured right: Bob Wink stands by one of the refurbished sign boards

Thanks to Bob Wink for volunteering to refurbish the four sign boards at Pope Farm Conservancy. The Town paid for the materials, then Bob replaced the key materials and painted the sign boards to look like new. Thank you, Bob Wink, handyman extraordinaire!



## Tree planted at PFC in Memory of Richard Meister

Pictured below: Kim Patullo and Mike Anderson Planting Memorial Tree



Richard Meister was a Charter Member of Madison West Towne – Middleton Rotary. In 2005, he spearheaded a Rotary Centennial club project for the donation of the white board fence in the front of the Conservancy, and later on for building the original garden shed and the Native American Amphitheater. Dick was very proud of the Rotary Club's involvement at the

Conservancy. The Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy are grateful for his efforts and donated a Burr Oak tree to honor his work and in his memory.

## Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

There is no shortage of ways to get involved with the FOPFC. We welcome everyone to attend the following meetings to observe, offer your viewpoints, or to join our committees if you are interested.

### **Education Team Meeting**

**When:** Tuesday, July 9th, 2019 (6:30 – 8:00 p.m.)

**Where:** West Middleton Lutheran Church, 3763 Pioneer Rd, Verona, WI 53593

**Discussion topics:** The Education Team will work on the “History of the Land” interactive tour project and review initial drafts of those stories. We will also work on suggestions to improve the erosion story and ideas for promotion of our German Immigration video series.

## Other News

### **MCPASD Breaks Ground on Pope Farm Elementary**

The groundbreaking ceremony for Pope Farm Elementary School took place on June 11th. The event was well attended as there is great excitement about the school's opening in the fall of 2020.



Betty Pope, 96 years young, (pictured above) was in attendance to witness the fruition of the educational vision held by her and her late husband, Art.

Mel Pope gave a talk about the history of the land, and the potential interaction between Pope Farm Elementary School, Pope Farm Conservancy, and the Blackhawk Ski Club property. Pope stated that “the students of Pope Farm Elementary School will have access to 200 acres of incredibly diverse learning opportunities”.

### **Sunflower Days 2019**

The Town of Middleton Sunflower Days plans are still moving forward. The Town Board approved a contract with Race Day Events, and the sunflowers have been planted. The Sunflower Days event will be held July 26 – August 4, 2019. The Conservancy will have restricted access during the 10 days of the event, and any person entering the property will need to pay an admission charge of \$4 per adult. NO Parking will be allowed at or near Pope Farm Conservancy, so they are offering off-site parking and shuttle rides to the park.

The event website is now available: <https://sunflowerdays.fun/>

**UPDATE: The Zoerb/Pope Family Concerns about Sunflower Days “Free and Open”**

A dispute has arisen between the Zoerb/Pope family and the Town of Middleton regarding the structure and organization of the proposed 2019 Sunflower Days event. A letter from the Pope family to the Town concerning this issue was included in this publication in April. We believe that as a member, you have a right to know the family’s position and the position of the Friends. Accordingly, we include this update for your review. The position of the Friends is that we have no opinion concerning Sunflower Days, but we are opposed to restricting access to the Conservancy. We have always believed that the Conservancy was intended to be and must be free and open to the public. What the Town Board is doing makes the Conservancy neither free nor open during Sunflower Days.

As many of you know, on March 20, 2019, the Pope/Zoerb family sent a letter to the Town of Middleton Board asking it to review the Town’s Sunflower Days proposed event. In that letter, we documented the specific language from the original purchase agreement and the town ordinances that specifically stated the Conservancy would be free and open to the public, and that retail and commercial activities, as well as organized sport activities, could not be allowed in the Conservancy.

In response, the Town Chair sent a terse email saying our letter was “being referred to their attorney.” We received no further contact, nor any invitation from Town officials nor their attorney to sit down and address our family’s concerns.

In response, the family retained legal counsel who helped develop a compromise that would allow the Town to charge visitors attending the event for the transportation to the site, but leaving access to the Conservancy open and free-of-charge. (The Town plans to restrict access to the public for 10 days during SF Days.) As proposed by the Town’s for-profit event management firm, visitors would be bused to the site from staging areas at Greenway Station and a brew pub in Verona, because there would be no parking at the Conservancy or on surrounding roadways. In fact, our compromise would generate a greater cash flow to the Town by charging a \$5 bus fee with no admission fee to the Conservancy. The compromise would also address the concerns of the family and the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy.

On June 3, our attorney appeared at the Town Board meeting to offer our compromise. There was no interest in even discussing the proposed compromise. Quoting our attorney ... “I was disappointed by the Town Board’s prickliness when it came to this issue. It really was, ‘We’re the Government, and we can do what we want,’ type of stuff.”

The family is very disappointed, but we continue to consider alternatives that will promote and protect Art and Betty Pope’s vision going forward. One of our concerns is the long-term viability of

the Conservancy. We appreciate your support in the past and your continued interest in what happens regarding Pope Farm Conservancy in the future.

Sincerely,

THE POPE/ZOERB FAMILY

(Dave Zoerb, Betty Pope's son and Representative)

## **MTT Letter to the Editor: "Sunflower Days Affects Pollinators"**

Our monthly News Update brings you news about the Conservancy, and in that regard we are sharing a recent letter to the editor to the Middleton Times Tribune...

### Letter to the Editor: Sunflower Days Affects Pollinators

Bees love sunflowers! They move from flower to flower spreading nectar and pollens. At least 30 percent of our food production requires the assistance of bee pollination. Very recently we're learning there's a clear link between bees pollinating sunflowers and bee colony collapse. That link is caused by the insecticides used to coat sunflower seeds. This group of pesticides is called neonicotinoids or systemic plant treatment.

Over the last few years, major studies discovered how neonicotinoid coated sunflower seeds are killing pollinators. The plant takes up the chemical from the seed, and when the bee comes to pollinate the sunflower it carries very small doses of the chemical back to the hive. Exposure to these chemicals can over-stimulate a bee's nervous system, affect navigation, and reduce foraging and homing ability.

In 2018, the European Union banned all outdoor use of neonicotinoids that harm pollinators. States and cities across the US and Canada are trying to address the impact of these pesticides as well. Just last month, the U.S. EPA banned seven neonicotinoids used in coating seeds. In less than two months, the Town of Middleton will sponsor Sunflower Days at Pope Farm Conservancy. The public loves this event and thousands come to see the beauty of this field of yellow, The Town of Middleton will be showing a field of sunflowers from seeds treated with Neonicotinoids.

How can a municipality in good conscience grow "treated" sunflowers next to those prairies in the conservancy, when they will adversely impact the pollinators? It's important that those of us interested in the role of conservancies in protecting habitat and local environments know how pollinators are impacted by human actions. To learn more, just search "bees and neonicotinoids."

- Chris Tyler and Virginia Nelson, Middleton

## **Question of the Month**

### **Question: How much did the Town of Middleton pay for Pope Farm Conservancy?**

**Answer:** In the June 6th edition of the Middleton Times-Tribune, it was reported that the Pope Farm Conservancy was donated by the Pope family to the Town of Middleton. On June 13th, a correction was requested by the Town of Middleton (TOM) stating that the Town paid the Pope family \$1 million for the land. Neither version is correct.

In 1999, the TOM paid the Pope family approximately \$2.3 million for 145 acres which represented approximately 20% of the fair market value at the time. A critical part of the agreement was that the TOM could sell 40 acres on the eastern portion of the property at fair market value (to offset the original purchase price of \$2.3 million).

In 2005-6, the TOM sold those 40 acres to the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD), and the Pope family was party to that agreement. In order to deal with a number of legal issues, the land was deeded back to the Pope family and the Pope family deeded the property back to the TOM with additional restrictive covenants (primarily height restrictions) so that the view to Lake Mendota and the Capitol from the hilltop in the Conservancy would be protected. The 40 acres was sold by the TOM to the MCPASD for \$4 million.

The math for the original purchase of the 145 acres and the subsequent sale of the 40 acres was now on record. The TOM received \$4 million from the MCPASD sale to defray the original cost, which was approximately \$2.4 million (\$2.3 million plus expenses). Thus, the TOM gained the 105-acre Conservancy at no cost—PLUS a \$1.6-million windfall.

The Pope family insisted that since this land was originally intended for green space, that the \$1.6-million windfall be used for TOM parks, trails and conservancies. The parties agreed, and the funds from the windfall were used to create the TOM Park Fund to be held in a special segregated fund for those purposes. The interest earned by or proceeds of investments in the Park Fund would remain in the Park Fund. This fund still exists today.

This math is reflected in an agreement dated September 12th, 2005, between members of the Pope family, the TOM, and the MCPASD. All three parties to the agreement were ecstatic, especially the family. The 105-acre Conservancy could now be enhanced and maintained for decades with no cost to the TOM.

## **Friend of the Month**

### **Thank you, Curt Caslavka!**

Curt Caslavka has been with the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy since its inception. He is on the board of the Friends and is the Chair of the Prairie Restoration Team. As you walk around the Conservancy and take in some of our special prairies, those Prairie Restoration projects would not look the way they do without Curt and his team. He and his group of volunteers have spent countless hours planting, weeding, and collecting seed to make some of these prairies a restoration showpiece for the public. Curt and his wife Arlys developed and maintain the Blue Bird trail at PFC. He was also instrumental in developing a relationship with the Prairie Partner Program with the Conservancy. Not only does his team oversee the work activities of those interns, he teaches them at the same time. Curt, Arlys, and the Prairie Team have made a huge difference at the Conservancy, and we all owe them a very sincere THANK YOU!

Happy Trails to you, Curt.

## **Photos of the Month**

We'd love to see photos from your visit to PFC. Send us your "summer-time" photos, and we'll share them here with our membership. Please email photos to [janie@popefarmconservancy.org](mailto:janie@popefarmconservancy.org).







Photos by Janie Starzewski

**Connect with FOPFC online**

Website: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPopeFarmConservancy>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fopfc-photos>

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**Thank you for supporting the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy!  
Our journey is ongoing, and YOU are part of it!**

