

Rotarians Turn Over Rotary Nature Center to City of O'Fallon, Illinois

O'FALLON—The time, talent and efforts of more than 130 O'Fallon Rotarians who constructed the Rotary Nature Center at Rock Springs Park was celebrated in a dedication ceremony on May 12. Members of the two Rotary Clubs of O'Fallon, officials from the City of O'Fallon, Robert Stuart, Jr., Rotary International Director Designate, 2005-2007, and Jack Langowski, Centennial Governor of District 6510, were on hand.



Participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony were **Geno Redmon, Rotary Club of O'Fallon--Sunrise; Ken Diel; the Honorable Gary Graham, Mayor of O'Fallon; David Snyder, the Rotary Club of O'Fallon President; Mark Fulford and Steve Ellerbrake, O'Fallon Rotarians and Leaders of the project.**

Work on the \$120,000-project began last October, and Rotarians from the two O'Fallon Rotary Clubs volunteered over 3,200 hours to complete the building. “The Nature Center is a remarkable symbol of the combined skill and commitment of O'Fallon Rotarians and will now be a tremendous asset to the city,” said Mayor Gary Graham, who is also an O'Fallon Rotary member. Accepting the keys to the building from the two O'Fallon Club presidents, Mayor Graham said, “This center will fulfill the need for a nature learning center that will service surrounding schools and communities for a long time to come.”



Rock Springs Park Nature Center

To celebrate Rotary International's centennial in 2005, Rotary clubs were invited to join in a global effort to demonstrate the remarkable scope and power of Rotary service by showcasing its service projects in over 30,000 communities worldwide. The two Rotary Clubs of O'Fallon, in

cooperation with the city's Parks and Recreation Department, developed a proposal to build a nature center in O'Fallon's Rock Springs Nature Park.

The Rotary Nature Center is a log cabin type structure of approximately 1,300-square feet and is designed to fit into the natural environment of the Park. The building has a wide porch on all sides for use as outdoor classroom and viewing areas with tables and benches. The interior will be an open room that can be configurable for any number of uses. The building is located in a 100- acre park containing a surprising diversity of natural habitats, including several different forested areas, a newly established tall grass native prairie, meadows, woodland-meadow interface zones, an intermittently flowing creek, and an amphibian pond. The Rotary Nature Center will support natural sciences, ecology and environmental



The openness of the interior makes the Nature Center ideal for multiple functions.



Rotarians, families and guests enjoying the spacious log cabin decorate, ideally suited for the park preserve.

sciences and outdoor education opportunities for city school students, as well as providing a venue for a wide array of gardening, nature study, nature crafts, bird watching and other related year-round activities and programs for children and adults of all ages. This city-operated facility will be available to the citizens of O'Fallon as an ideal "urban nature center" and will serve as a nature focal point for the entire community.

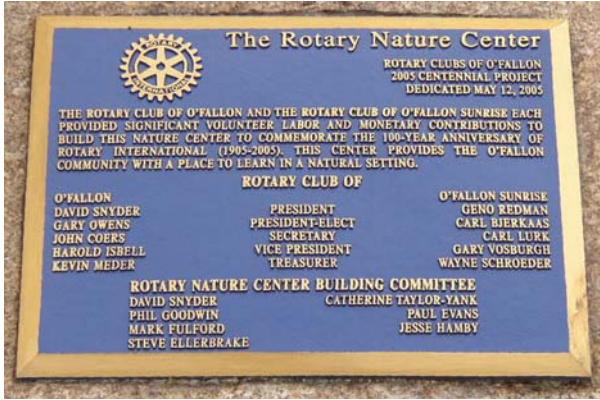
“The Nature Center project fulfilled a very clear need for the community,” said O'Fallon Rotary Club president David Snyder. “We're very proud of the active participation of Rotary members who helped create a venue for environmental studies. Our members are sincerely committed to the betterment of O'Fallon.”

“The completion of this significant project adds meaningfully to the educational environment for the future generations of youth in O'Fallon,” said Rotary District 6510 Governor Jack Langowski.

“Moreover it displays the commitment of the Rotary Clubs of O'Fallon to their community and their desire to do good works locally through their consistent service.”



The two prominent rocks on either side of the walkway have attached plaques commemorating the achievement of both the city and the O'Fallon Rotary Clubs cooperative venture.



Rotarian Commemorative Plaque

During the ceremony, David Snyder highlighted the particular dedication of two Rotarians. “O’Fallon Rotary Club members Mark Fulford and Steve Ellerbrake went beyond the call of duty in providing essential construction expertise,” Snyder commented. “It simply could not have not have been done without their leadership and their power tools.” Both were awarded Paul Harris Fellowships for their contributions.

“The Center will be an anchor for a wide variety of nature studies year-round for children and adults,” said Geno Redmon, president of the O’Fallon Sunrise Rotary Club. “Our club was pleased to have contributed in this cooperative effort.”

The Center will serve as a research site for O’Fallon’s secondary school natural sciences students. It will also support similar research projects for O’Fallon students at nearby colleges and universities.



Steve Ellerbrake and Mark Fulford after receiving their Paul Harris Fellowships.



Rotary Clubs of O’Fallon

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