



# Eagle River Nature Center News

No. 41 Member Newsletter ~July 2009 ~ Connecting People with Nature

## Planning for the Future of the Nature Center

By Asta Spurgis

Since 1996, the Eagle River Nature Center's programs, staff and volunteers have touched the lives of many people in unique ways. Through school field trips, youth naturalist programs, astronomy programs, hiking trips, special events such as the annual Winter Solstice Lantern Walk, and more, the Nature Center has created meaningful experiences for countless people.

Throughout the years, staff and board members have kept the organization relevant and financially stable, with major assistance from local businesses, foundations and individuals. The Nature Center's vision is *"to provide connections to nature through excellence in education, resource protection, and outdoor opportunities."* To maintain this vision while accommodating growth and changes in programs and audiences is a natural part of the evolution of the organization.




### Growth

From the very early years, it was apparent that the Nature Center's physical facilities were becoming less able to accommodate all the various groups being served. Its aging structure and utilities, plus constricted and inefficient spaces, have been ongoing concerns. Most importantly, the facility has not been able to accommodate the programming needs of recent years.

Two years ago, Friends of Eagle River Nature Center, in partnership with Alaska State Parks, embarked on a project to identify and evaluate the Center's shortcomings and needs. Hundreds of visitor surveys were collected, vehicular and pedestrian counts were collected, and the organization's operations were examined. During brainstorming sessions in the strategic planning process, Nature Center staff and board

*(continued on next page)*

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## Planning for the Future

*(continued from front page)*

members envisioned ways that a renovated and/or expanded building, with adequate parking and trail access, could better serve the thousands of visitors who make use of the facility and trails. This process provided the foundation for Alaska State Park designers to examine site plan options which would address:

- ~ Safe and adequate parking
- ~ Reduction of pedestrian and vehicular traffic conflicts
- ~ Trail access for various user groups (back country hikers, skiers, program participants, school groups, and self-guided visitors)
- ~ Accessible program and trail system (ADA compliant)
- ~ The existing character of the Nature Center
- ~ Current interpretive programming needs and their enhancement
- ~ Lack of space and space conflicts for visitors, volunteers & staff
- ~ Maintenance facilities which are visually and audibly screened

## Public Participation

A series of open houses and presentations by Alaska State Park designers are slated to begin in August 2009. Public input is important to this process so that it addresses the concerns of all our constituents. **Members and neighbors of the Nature Center are invited to attend a presentation and workshop to be held at the Nature Center on Thursday, September 10, 2009 from 6-8pm.**

All comments and inquiries regarding this process should be directed to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation - Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Please visit their website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/> - "Special Notices" for more information and a complete schedule of open houses and presentations.



**2009 FERN Board Members:** Keith Sanders, Patricia Jordan (*Secretary*), Kevin Dee, Bill Barron, Scott Girard, Carl Lundgren (*Chairman*), Susan Spyker, Bob Fisher, Eric Fjelstad, and Dan McDonough. *Missing:* Gail Raymond, Julie Saupe and Al Meiners.



## NEWS & APPRECIATION

**Front row:** Eric Bushnell, Mary Ann Paul, Blake Bushnell, Marcus Gamble, Tonya Gamble, Deborah Mulcahy, Kathy Carrico, Peter Mulcahy, Kate Mucahy, and Alan Mulcahy.

**Back row:** Penny Meiners, Al Meiners, Brad Gamble, Bobby Jefts, Vicki Jefts, Cameron Jefts and Jim Palmer.

Members of the **Eagle River Rotary** and their families volunteered at the Eagle River Nature Center cleaning and beautifying the gardens on Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup>. The Rotary also donated \$500 toward the purchase of plants and soil. The Nature Center thanks **Tonya Gamble** for spearheading the annual project and all the Rotarians for their hard work and community service. Many thanks, too, to **Dale Walberg**, owner of **Mile 5.2 Greenhouse** for providing the flowers and for donating \$250 in matching funds.

We are indebted to **Dean Davidson, Lieut. Edward Wieland (USCG)**, volunteers from the **US Coast Guard** (*photo right*) and our own trail crew members, Michelle Showers and Brian Goodman, for returning to complete the restoration of the Salmon Viewing Deck in May 2009. The Viewing Deck looks brand new thanks to their commitment and community spirit. We are especially grateful for **Lieut. Wieland's** initiative and engineering expertise. We couldn't have done it without him! We are sorry to see him leaving Alaska this year, but wish him all the best in his new home.



Many thanks to our hard working **summer trail crew** regulars: Liz Hanssen, Sarah Wallner, J.D. Batove, Dick Griffith, Al Meiners, Brian Goodman, Dick Griffith, Michelle Shower, Joan Wilson, Drew VandenDries, and Sarah Wallner.

Our appreciation to all of our **new and returning local volunteers** who have helped with nature walks, information services, cleaning, gardening and clerical work: Sandy Skaggs, Elaine Thomas, Milt Cooper, Gil Davis, Sheela Abarr, Katie Carlson, Lisa O'Brien, Diane Erickson, Stephanie Day, Debbie Corral, Penny Meiners, Scooter Bentson, Patricia Jordan, Amy Katz, Tisha Jones, Barbara Stock, Melissa and Dan Lutat, Cara Wardlaw-Bailey and Lee Thomison.



Thank you to **Lara and Andy Bickford** of Eagle River, for donating and installing a bench at the public use cabin; to **Susan Browne** for donating a telescope; and to **Cindee Karns** for donating a printer.

## MANY THANKS TO OUR 2008-09 DICK GRIFFITH CHALLENGE DONORS

Thank you to everyone who responded to our challenge this past year. Thanks to all of you, **Dick Griffith** matched \$5000 of your contributions. Those of you who donated \$500 or more will be recognized on our new Giving Tree near the back entrance of the Nature Center. **Paul Hanis** designed and sculpted the cedar tree and **Dean Davidson** built the backing and installed it. We thank both these gentlemen for their time. The leaves are slated to be installed by mid-August, so please come by and take a look.

### \$500-\$1200

Beth and Mark Doty  
Paul and Beth Laird  
Beth Baker  
Cathy and David Brenner  
Gary Bullock and L. M. Blouin  
Louise H. Colbert  
Brian Goodman  
Jill Johnson  
Shawn Martin  
Diane Pleninger  
Mary Segelhorst  
Rebecca Sorensen *in memory  
of Andy Sorensen*

### \$5-\$50

Olivia and Forest Bommarito  
Russell and Kathr Howell  
Bill and Mary Ann Lloyd  
George Rooney  
Kathie Siikarla  
Lynn Marino and Tom Alberter  
Janet Rigoni  
Erin and Mark McArthur  
The Cederbergs  
Mike Hondel  
Nancy Ouimet  
Anita Spiess

**Doug DeVries**, author of the *Muscles the Moose* books, is back this summer. Doug has volunteered for over 22 years at the front desk. We can't thank you enough Doug! You can catch Doug on most Fridays through August.



### \$100-250

Thomas Austin *in memory of  
Dave Gahm*  
Nora and Lester Buczek  
Sarah and Steve Wright  
Amy Maclean  
Don Poulton  
Dr. & Mrs. Toshio and  
Kathleen Takakuwa  
Sylvia Holloway  
Doug Lamarche  
Lee and Molly Baker  
Marge Brehm and Louise Preyer  
Zona Dahlmann  
Sue and Pete Panarese  
Bill Ritz  
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Janet and John Toenes



*The Nature Center's Giving Tree*

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**James (J.D.) Batove** (our summer trail coordinator) and **Sarah Wallner** take a moment out from working on the trails (June 2009). Thanks to a generous grant received from the **Rasmuson Foundation**, the Nature Center was able to purchase a new ATV and trailer for trail maintenance. After working with old machinery for many years, Sarah and the trail crew are grateful to have an ATV that actually works!

## Summer Programs at the Nature Center

**Doris Ivory** teaches a group of boy scouts, **Sue Panarese**, assisted by Dr. Mike Riddle, releases an eagle, and **Sgt. Marvin Magcale** and **US Marines from Company D** take part in a trail volunteer project and bear safety training.



# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR AUCTION DONORS

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## **THANKS TO ALL OUR AUCTION VOLUNTEERS We couldn't have done it without you!**

Our Board of Directors and Staff  
Jo Baron  
Joseph Baron  
Milt Cooper  
Ann and Bob Fisher  
Michael "Gus" Gustafson  
Patricia Jordan  
David Lee  
Eric and Perry Lundgren  
Melissa and Dan Lutat  
Dani Mazzotta  
Bob Nichols  
Louise Preyer  
Ben Schneider  
Aras Sirvelis  
Michelle Showers  
Sarah and Steve Wright

# THANKS TO ALL OUR AUCTION FRIENDS!



**THANK YOU TO OUR MC & AUCTIONEER CC, MUSICIANS GINA & KEVIN BARNETT  
AND THE STAFF AT CONOCO PHILLIPS  
for sponsoring the event and donating the use of the atrium.**





## FRIENDS OF EAGLE RIVER NATURE CENTER

July 2009 Member Newsletter

32750 Eagle River Road

Eagle River, AK 99577

[www.ernc.org](http://www.ernc.org)

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### July & August Hours:

7 days, 10am-5pm

Daily Nature Walk thru August from 1-2:30pm

### IS MY MEMBERSHIP STILL CURRENT?

Just look at the address label above for your expiration date. You can renew online, by phone or by mail.

**CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE** at [www.ernc.org](http://www.ernc.org)



## 2009 Summer Volunteers Are All Smiles



This summer's volunteers in residence have been terrific. Staff members are appreciative of their dedication and hard work ethic and their enthusiasm for learning. On top of that, they're all smart and beautiful! Many thanks to all of them! *From right to left:* **Eve Klein, Steve Yasukawa, Molly Neel, Ivy Schultz and Matt Brenna.**