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Ecology and Grounds Volunteering at Canal Shores

May 21, 2020

Engaging volunteers is an important aspect of the Community prong of Canal Shores' Mission. For more than three years, we have held monthly Saturday sessions when volunteers come to help restore and improve the property. There are numerous other ad hoc volunteer projects, involving neighbors abutting the course, local high schools, a mother/daughter organization, and scout troops. Canal Shores is also designated as a location by Friends of the Chicago River for its volunteer clean up days.

Ecology and Grounds Volunteers focus on three broad areas of work:

- removal of buckthorn and invasive/undesirable species and general reclamation of land from overgrowth of vegetation;
- beautification of strategic areas on the property through planting and restoration of native species; and
- improvements to enhance playing on the golf course.

Removal and Reclamation. Along many fairways (e.g., holes 7, 17 and 18), a group called "Buckthorn Warriors" has led efforts to remove invasive species and other undesirable plants. In addition, on holes 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16, we pushed back the overgrowth extending out from the top of canal embankment and from the side of the fairways to expand usable space for golfers, dog walkers, and birders. In the past year, these efforts have been particularly dramatic on holes 4, 6, 12, and 16. On holes 3, 9, 11, and 16, thinned vegetation improves cross-canal vistas to enhance the experiences of golfers, walkers and bird watchers on the property.

Beautification and Restoration. Along Central Street (hole 12) and just north of the Bahai Temple (hole 6), volunteer labor and donations of

landscape designs, money and plants enabled us to install and maintain plant beds that feature native species and enhance parts of the course frequently seen by passersby as well as persons using the course. This Spring, money raised from neighbors and a grant will support replacing a large and unsightly weedy area just west of the 5th tee boxes with an additional native species garden. Neighbors of the course also maintain gardens along 12th and 17th fairways.

Canal Shores has adopted a Tree Policy to guide the planting of trees on the property and promote greater diversity of species, as seen on holes 3 and 12. Through local scouts projects, bat boxes and barn owl boxes have been placed on the property to attract them to nest in the area. Another volunteer restored a purple martin house north of hole 3.

Golf Course Improvements. By promoting native grass growth in select areas, virtually every hole has been enhanced to give the property more of a native prairie appearance rather than the look of a manicured golf course while also making the golf course more challenging to play. Additionally, through volunteers' design efforts and sweat equity, sand traps have been added or updated on holes 1, 3, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 18. The traps on 12, 15 and 17 are modeled on similar features at noteworthy golf courses around the U.S. and the British Isles. On holes 17 and 18, minor surface depressions have been created to reduce surface water collection and thus improve under-foot conditions for golfers and walkers alike.

If you would like to join others (mainly from Evanston and Wilmette) and contribute to Canal Shores as an Ecology and Grounds Volunteer, please contact us at info@canalshores.org.