

VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL



**KEEP CALM,
WASH YOUR HANDS,
MAINTAIN
YOUR DISTANCE,
&
CARRY ON**

#weareinthistogether

VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

SPRING 2020 • VOLUME 34, ISSUE 1

From Bartlesville and beyond

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- *Honoring Our Seniors*
- *Congrats to George*
- *Thoughts on Earth Day*
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- *And more . . .*



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VISIONS



Newsletter for
NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL
SPRING 2020 • VOLUME 34, ISSUE 1

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Something for Region Vlers to ponder:

*Over the doorway, painted bold
A question begs your pardon —
Is this a place of many souls
Or just one very large one?
Over the bar, another reads —
Are there many songs
Or just one that goes on and on?*

-Peter Mayer,
Molly O'Malley's

The world needs us to whisk them out of the thralldom of fear into childlike wonder and appreciation for all living things (including fellow humans!). It's a time to let colleagues and participants alike know how much we care for them by offering:

- video postcards
- engaging resources & fun activities
- opportunities for input (such as writing or art contests)

While we may not know how long restrictions will last, we can be leaders in changing

the focus of those around us to a place of light, full of joy and expectation. Please share what you're doing to make a difference on my Facebook, A.D. Anderson (author). Thanks!



Photo by Brittani Burns on Unsplash

Thank You To My Generous Region 6

by John Miller, Missouri

I wish to express my gratitude to the members of Region 6 for the generosity of providing financial aid for registration to the Annual Conference. As one of the most recent recipients for financial aid, this was a deeply appreciated service. Being a long-time member who supported and promoted the proceeds for the scholarship auction to assist interpreters with financial aid, I never thought I would need to apply for it. But life happens. Without this financial aid, it would have been difficult to attend another wonderful

conference.

The financial aid allowed me to continue to network as well as sharing how to be a better storyteller. For me, sharing also included photographing the story of our conference, its energy, and comradery. My favorite sharing opportunity was to be able to bring George Kastler to the conference. George loves to be a part of this passionate group. He enjoyed telling stories and being next door to the hotel hospitality room. He and I provided a

hospitality spill-over into our room that often stayed open well after the hospitality room closed. Thanks to your generosity of financial aid, you made two 'old guys' very happy to be connected to his amazing group.

I feel that it is my duty to remind each of you that financial aid is available to any of our Region members. If you have the need, I highly recommend that you apply. If I, a past officer have this need, there is a good possibility that you might have a similar need.

Notches on My Door Jamb

by Amy Orban

Time passes slowly in some instances and rapidly at others.

Time: that mysterious intangible by which we mark our days. We cannot hold it, cannot feel it sliding past our skin. How do we mark its passing? Physical growth or change of some sort denotes that we have moved through time. Notches put onto a door jamb say that we have grown.

From my perspective right now, the redbuds bloom clouds of fuchsia in the blue sky. Here, another way to mark the passing of time -- put another notch in the jamb, for the redbuds are blooming again! How lovely it is in the springtime when everything is a-flower: the earth sprouting flowers, the grass spanned with flowers, the branches streaming flowers. I appreciate the instance that I am here, acknowledging that this time will not last.

Time and memory slide smoothly like liquid at times. I look back upon the fluid days and realize that time has passed, and all I have is a viscous memory of it. Not so long ago now (but time still ticking onwards) I was at the 2020 Region 6 Conference in Bartlesville. Listening, learning, observing, engaging as I could, but I still fret that I could not soak up the whole of the experience. There was so much to absorb. I comfort myself with the thought that to gauge something by one instance is not necessarily the point of the exercise of living.

Rather than lamenting the passing of time and all the moments that go uncollected, thinking of things

as links in a chain rather than distinct moments yields more benefit. For instance, this year I chose to go birding. Winter birding with the pros who could assume a bird's identity with a glance, narrowing down the numerous options, and ascertaining in moments a bird's identity by the markings around the eye, the size, the sound of its call. This was not their first-time birding, nor my own, but they had more notches in the jamb of birding mastery, more links in their chain of experience than I could claim. I watched and listened. I connected the dainty phoebe to the plainly elegant pearl grey-and-white bird -- seen and heard so many times, but that link never connected till now. I learned the unearthly gait of the young bald eagle, so identified by its subdued coloration, the angle of the wing, its size, the way it soars. I learned that if I was not sure if I was seeing a downy or a hairy woodpecker, assume that it was a downy; the hairy is distinct, and you know it when you see it.

I learned by asking questions and added a tiny link to that chain that I could ask questions when I want to know something. I added a link in feeling the world in my own way, to learn by drawing my own conclusions and taking

notes; observe and make your own notches measuring that you have learned. I absorbed the fearsome, archaic sound of the bullroarer, an ancient acquaintance of my ances-



Photo by Jerrel Geisler

tors, and made a link far back into the depths of my human lineage. I marked a notch with methodical grinding, using primitive tools of rock and bone to create a more elaborate tool, the bone needle.

I made links in the chain of my days at the conference this year, and it was a link in a chain of years ahead that I have to learn, to connect, to celebrate.

The redbuds are blooming again, and next year I will have another link in my chain as I await the blooming of the earth again.

Honoring our Seniors

Take a moment and think of those folks you consider to be your interpretive mentors. What do you owe them for their guidance and friendship? Can you ever truly repay them? Are those mentors now retired? What does the word retirement mean to you? Do you feel confident that your last years will indeed be “golden”? Some of us may feel uncomfortable thinking about retirement – considering it as being near “the end” of one’s life. And if you are young you may think of it as too far in the future to worry about. It is wonderful to honor our senior mentors at our conferences with awards, but could we do even more to honor them – something that could make a difference in the quality of their daily lives?

As I thought about this question, I had this crazy idea that perhaps we could honor and help them by creating an interpreter’s retirement village. I believe there is a need for such a facility as quite a few of our

members are retired or nearing retirement, which follows the national trend of a rapidly growing senior population. I wondered if other interpreters, like me, were wrestling with questions about this stage of life. I turned 55 last year and got my first senior discount recently, which I welcomed! I may never truly be able to retire due to finances, nor would I want to if that means just sitting around watching TV. Interpreters

who stay physically and mentally active and engaged in their community, live longer, healthier, and happier lives. 70 is the new 50, right?! I think an interpreter’s retirement village could help them achieve that goal.

Like many other facilities, the village would include living quarters for those that are completely independent and those that need some level of assistance including full-time, skilled nursing care. It would be quite different from

most others facilities in that residents who are willing and able could be involved in leading all sorts of activities, from nature hikes and field trips to classes in arts and crafts, primitive skills, cooking, music, dance, yoga and tai chi. They could also help raise organic food for use on site, and sell the excess in a farmer’s market or in a village store, which could also sell other

products made by residents such as art and crafts.

Intergenerational contact is recognized as being of great value to all people, from the oldest to the youngest, and a school could be located on the site, including a nature preschool, that would also serve the children of village employees. The students would be able to utilize all the natural areas on site and learn from the best. Those seniors who desire to interact with the children and their teachers could become friends and mentors. Older students might even be inspired



are typically passionate folks, who may not be content to “ride off into the sunset”. Fortunately the concept of retirement is changing. It is well established that seniors

Thanks Region 6 (from page 2)

These funds are for students and members in a variety of needs. If this financial aid can help you to attend, then a few minutes of effort can help you to be a part of our annual conference. In the end, the members gain by you adding seeing you in person to our event.

caring organization who supports members when they are in need. For that I want to thank everyone who has ever donated items or bid at an auction. You are the heroes who keep this tapestry called interpretation vibrant, colorful, and cohesive.

I am so fortunate to have such a

Stay Healthy and Safe!

(see *Honoring our Seniors*, page 5)

Honoring our Seniors (from page 4)

to pursue a career in interpretation. The children could “adopt a grandparent” or the residents could “adopt a grandchild”, enriching the quality of life for everyone.

As I look at our members I see quite a few who do not have children, but who’ve dedicated their lives to sharing their passion with young people. As many folks make plans for retirement, most anticipate living close to their children or grandchildren for some level of physical and emotional support, but if you don’t have those relatives to depend upon or they live far away, perhaps you could count on your interpretive family for help. Some of our members are already very good about doing this whenever possible.

The location of this village should include access to nature, which improves the quality of life for seniors, as it does for everyone. Unfortunately, those in a traditional care facility may be shut off from contact with nature and even their pets. Residents could also help maintain native landscaping and possibly help restore damaged ecosystems on site or nearby.

It should also be located near natural and cultural sites where residents could serve as volunteers. They already are masters of interpretive principles and could be valuable assets to these sites. Perhaps these sites might even be able to provide some monetary support to residents as part-time staff, or to the village. Other important factors in deciding on a location would be access to high quality medical care, pub-

lic transportation, educational institutions, cultural activities, as well as a relatively mild climate and lower cost of living. One region which hits these marks is Northwest Arkansas and the Bentonville/Rogers/Fayetteville area, which is considered one of the best places in the country for retirees.

The village could also become a final resting place for those that prefer a natural burial, which is becoming more and more popular and is used to help fund some parks and other sites around the country. Burial costs, even cremation, are becoming exorbitant and many interpreters have no interest in incurring these expenses and prefer an alternative that completes the natural cycle of life and death.

Let’s remember our greatest resource is people and honor those who have paved the way for us by providing a wonderful retirement experience for our seniors while also benefiting others in the communities we serve. Seniors have much they can contribute! Perhaps this retirement village, or other senior services, is something that our professional organization could help support through a portion of our annual membership dues. I can think of no better way to spend my senior years than with my interpretive family. This is why I’m intrigued by the idea of honoring our senior interpreters by helping these members. After all, what is more important than taking care of your family?

Poem for Pam

A Poem about Nothing at All

by Janet Price

I like to write poems. I’m silly that way.
Just give me a job, and I’ll write in a day.
I write about bats and the birds and the bees.
I write about cowboys as quick as you please.
I can write a poem quickly if you’re in a jam,
and I write by request, so this poem’s for Pam.

So, Pam, though I wrote all this on the way home,
this one’s for you, because it’s Pam’s poem.
I sat down and wrote it, all in a day.
This poem’s about Pam though I’ve nothing to say.
It’s a poem about nothing, that I wrote for Pam.
It may just sound crazy, but that’s who I am.
And even though I may have nothing to say,
I can sit here and write about Pam all day.

But wait, one thought ‘fore I say nothing at all...
I do have something to say to y’all.
It’s true Pam looks short leaning against the wall,
but standing among Giants, she is 10 feet tall.
So, Pam will stand tall at the end of the day,
though this poem for Pam has nothing to say.

NAI Region Six Director's Report

March 2020

At my site we just celebrated the works of Aldo Leopold. This event caused me to look back on my short time on this planet and take stock of where I have been and what I've done with my time. Leopold wrote of the "...fierce green fire dying in her eyes..." in the section titled Thinking Like a Mountain, in his classic A Sand County Almanac. This section brings so many thoughts, ideas, regrets and hopes to my mind. As Interpreters we seek to change the thinking of some, touch the hearts of some, inform the visitor of new thoughts and

knowledge and in the end make some small impact on the others that we leave this planet to.

I hope to continue to see toddlers jump up and down in delight with their families at the sight of something new and marvelous as we discover it together on the trail.

May the "green fire" continue to glow in your eyes and the eyes of your visitors.

Do Today Well
Jay



NAI Region Six Director -
Jay Schneider, Arkansas

Listening For Magic

by Donna Horton, Oklahoma

For most of my programs, I must admit that I over-prepare. Some of my worst nightmares are about showing up for a program without whatever is essential for its success. There is no preparation that can guarantee the arrival of Magic, though. All I can do is to watch and listen and hope, and to step aside and be quiet, or to guide softly, if necessary.

Many of us have experienced the presence of Magic at times. We might have been in the audience and felt that we were in a moment outside of time itself. As an audience member we probably considered ourselves to be a contributor to an event greater than ourselves. Rightly so, because the audience is a critical component, maybe even the catalyst. Just as rarely, we might have been the one "in charge" of the program or the event and knew that we

had equal power to quench or to nurture the flame of the peak experience. If you have never found yourself in such a situation, this may be difficult to imagine.

Think of a nature walk that could have been choreographed by the production crew of Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Nature, complete with singing warblers, splashing beavers, and deer emerging from the edge of the woods, all in a technicolor sunset. Picture a character in historical garb catching up the audience in a performance so spell-binding that we, the audience, seem to emerge from a shared dream, a little stunned to find ourselves in the modern world again, and forever after unable to take our daily routines for granted. Savor the moment when a first grader barely able to read suddenly makes the connection between letters and words on a page and

a story burning to be told and realizes that he or she can write a book.

It is much easier to remember the times when things did not go right, no matter how diligently we prepared. Our failures are seared into our memories, but those are the learning experiences that teach us when to wait, how to listen, and what to look for. Those moments show us how to create a space where Magic can happen.

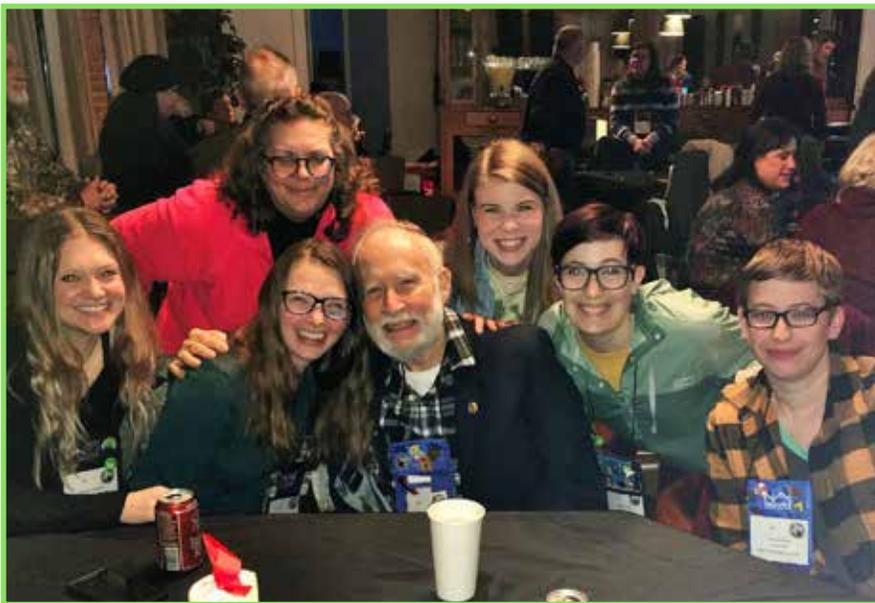
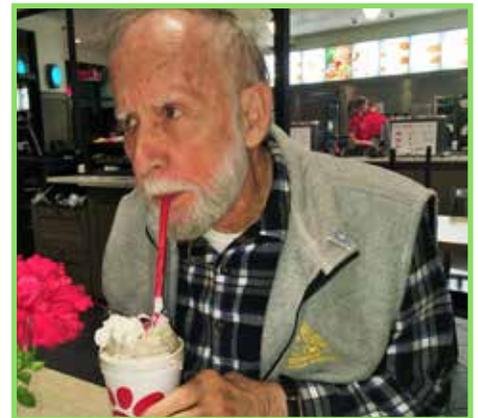
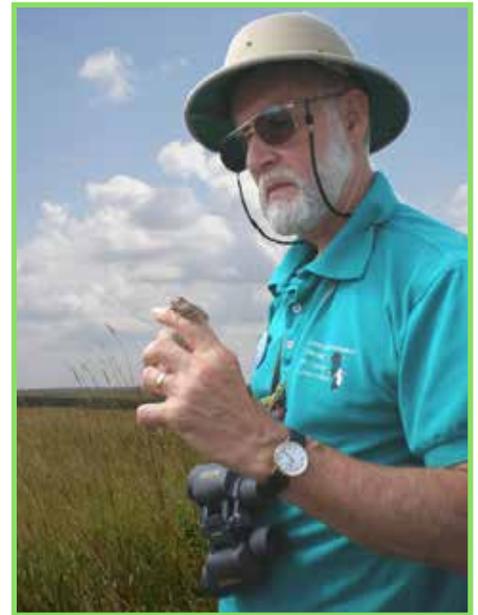
Nowadays, my preparations include a meditative moment beforehand whenever possible. That is when I remind myself that, if I am lucky, Magic will show up. And I hope that if or when it does, I have the sense to do the right thing to allow a life-changing experience to happen.

Congratulations to George Kastler – *Keeper of Interpretation*

By John Miller

Keeper of Interpretation; what better way to describe the life and career of George Kastler. He was truly touched to be able to receive this honor in Bartlesville. George has been a giant of interpretation in Missouri and Region 6 for decades and continues to touch the lives of countless interpreters. He truly enjoys being at these conferences to connect with friends and become energized. For those who did not know, George is a card-carrying member of the Energizer Bunny club. The impact of the award was evident when the typically

talkative George was at a loss for words. George mentioned afterwards that he never dreamed of receiving this touching honor. While “Dancing George” is not able to dance as much as he used to, he really enjoyed the Cody Frost Band. George wishes to thank everyone involved with his award and especially Shirley Pecoraro for submitting his nomination. If you would like to send George a congratulations message, his email is kastler4@embarqmail.com.



Photos clockwise from bottom: George kissing a bison, George with friends at the Bartlesville auction, My favorite picture of George, George and Robert Pecoraro, George with his favorite pastime - ICE CREAM, supporters honor George during awards ceremony.



Photos by John Miller

Thoughts on Earth Day

-Neil DeGrasse Tyson

(on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, March 6, 2020)

“The first Earth Day was 1970. Do you know why it was in 1970? ... We were actively going to and walking on the moon by 1970, with this spacecraft (points to his tie), the Saturn V.

... So then, we go to the moon to explore the moon, (pause) and we turn around, (pause) and we discover Earth for the first time, in its entirety. And there it was alone, in the vacuum dark of space, and you see it not as the social studies classroom globe shows you. There were no color-coded countries on it. All you saw was blue oceans, and dry land, and clouds.

And at that moment, everyone changed. Everybody said ‘Oh my gosh, pollution is not just this river behind my house, or this lake. It is global. We have to think about Earth as a planet.’

And do you know what happened in 1970? Earth Day was founded. The Environmental Protection Agency was voted into existence. (By the way, by

a Republican president.) And what also happened over those years that we were walking on the moon? In 1973, leaded gas was banned. ... The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association was founded to look at the climate on Earth. No one before had thought of connecting the oceans and clouds before, and they’re both in the same title of that agency. The comprehensive Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, all that happened while we were going to the moon.

And people ask, ‘Why are we going to space?’ You know why we go to space? Because a cosmic perspective can descend upon you in such a way that you are re-aligned with your own survival and the survival of others in such a way that maybe you are going to do something about it, and we’re in the 50th Anniversary of that, and we need to keep doing it.”



Exploring Kansas History

by Barrett Young

I am a recent graduate (December 2019) from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas majoring in Communication with an emphasis in broadcasting and a minor in history. My real passion is sharing my love of history with the public through historic interpretation using a variety of communication methods. Last summer and fall I began research and filming in order to produce six “mini-documentary” videos about historical places in Kansas for a broadcasting class I was taking the fall semester of 2019. The series I created was called “Exploring Kansas History...On

the Road with Barrett Young.” The six sites I visited were Fort Hays SHS, Fort Larned NHS, the Santa Fe Trail Center in Larned, the John Brown Museum SHS in Osawatomie, Mine Creek Battlefield SHS near Pleasanton, and Fort Scott NHS. I conducted the interviews myself then filmed and edited all the videos. I did have some postproduction help during the fall semester in order to put the finishing touches on them. Overall, I learned a lot researching these sites and then visiting them in order to do the filming and interviewing. Experiencing these sites in this

fashion made me get a different viewpoint than what a person would normally get by just seeing the sites as a visitor. Today, many people check-out historical sites on-line before they visit sites, or some people are unable to travel therefore visiting sites on-line makes it possible for them to learn and experience sites from their own home. If you need any more information, please feel free to contact me.

Barrett’s series, “Exploring Kansas History” can be found on YouTube [*Exploring Kansas History: On the Road with Barrett Young*](#).



Photo by Tim Umphreys on Unsplash



State reports

Arkansas - Don R. Simons
Louisiana - Rusty Scarborough
Kansas - Amber Myers
Missouri - Michelle Soenksen
Oklahoma - Donna Horton
Texas - Erin Holley

Editor's note: With COVID-19 and changing work conditions, events and training opportunities reported here may have been postponed. Please contact the state facilitator, or the site directly to learn about updates. Some report items also may be lacking.



Kelly Farrell, Arkansas State Parks Chief of Interpretation, reports, “**Julie Lovett** will retire from her full-time interpreter position at Bull Shoals-White River State Park in March. She has several travel adventures planned and looks forward to exploring natural places more.

Petit Jean State Park has a new visitor center under construction, which will include 2500 sf of exhibit gallery space designed to help guests find a personal sense of place and make safe, stewardship-focused decisions about how to explore the park. Opening is expected late fall 2020.

In January, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson announced that Arkansas State Parks will receive a \$20 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation, to complete the Delta Heritage Trail within the next five years.”

Leslie Patrick, Arkansas Natural Heritage Outreach Specialist, reports: Two ANHC land management specialists will be taking the CIG training for the first time in Tulsa in April. These two staff members often host public volunteer events at our natural areas, such as trash pick-up and invasive species removal, and they want to develop interpretive programs for these events. The CIG training and NAI membership will benefit them in this endeavor.

We are excited about **Ken Forman** being nominated and receiving the **Master/Distinguished Interpreter Award**. Congratulations to Ken!

LOUISIANA REPORT

Here in Louisiana we are having another VERY wet spring. Fortunately, the weather has remained cooler so we are not fighting with mosquitos as yet.

Stacy Gray and the Workshop Committee are diligently working on putting together another awesome Workshop in 2021 in Louisiana. It will be in **Shreveport** and the week of February 21-24, 2021. Check out our Louisiana Conference logo attached.



Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park just held their annual Owl Night on February 15th and it was a very successful event with more than 2000 people attending.

Caddo Parish Parks & Recreation has a new leader. **Patrick Wesley** (no relation to the previous Director) came on board in late October and has hit the ground running. He has put us on a mission of having all of our parks Nationally Certified. This process has definitely increased our work load but Patrick has been very supportive and complimentary of the Nature Park and our staff.



More scenes from Bartlesville





Amber Myers has taken on the role of Kansas representative for the Region 6 Board. Look for her e-mails requesting news and happenings from your areas in Kansas. Please e-mail her at myersa78@gmail.com at any time you have something to share with Region 6. The news we share in Region 6 can help spread the word about our sites, our staff and volunteers, and our programs!

Fort Scott National Historic Site has a lot of events planned for this Spring. The 38th Annual Civil War Encampment is April 18 and 19. A specialized training in artillery and small arms will be announced at a later date.

Amy Nickel, Graduate Research Assistant in Park Management & Conservation at Kansas State University went to a private tallgrass prairie in Riley County in mid-February to view prairie chickens at dawn. She says, “No chickens yet... oh yeah...and it’s really cold!” Hang in there, Amy! Amy will be leading Greater Prairie Chicken Booming experiences as an educator with the **Flint Hills Discovery Center** starting in March. If you haven’t experienced prairie chickens dancing, you’re missing out!

Delia Lister, Director of **Pittsburg State University’s Nature Reach** says the program received a \$10,000 grant from Evergy to, in part, fund a pilot Kindergarten Summer Day Camp. In addition, the PSU Natural History Reserve (where the PSU Nature Reach Avian Ambassadors reside) will see a major upgrade. Thanks to some federal funds earmarked for road safety, the Reserve, which is un-reclaimed mined land, will ultimately end up with a new loop trail, wetland with a boardwalk, a strip of native prairie plantings, and new fencing/gates. We hope this will open up some new opportunities for further improving the 78-acre piece of land which, in many places, is near impenetrable thanks to the wonderfully invasive bush honeysuckle! Anyone want to join in the fun of removing it?

The **Great Plains Nature Center** is celebrating their 20th anniversary. On Feb. 29 they celebrated the event with animal ambassadors, tours, refreshments, and founding Director, Bob Gress give the keynote. There are also some exciting staff changes at the nature center. Former GPNC Naturalist, Todd Volkmann has taken a position with the City of Wichita as the caretaker for the Kansas Wildlife Exhibit. We are looking forward to seeing new interpretive programs and interactions with the many visitors to the exhibit. Emily Davis was hired as the new GPNC Naturalist.

Milford Nature Center has welcomed back Naturalist Amber Myers! Amber jumped right in with Kansas Day celebrations across the northern Flint Hills. In her first two weeks, she reached over 1200 Kansas students with Kansas Day symbols programs.

Pat Silovsky is now the Director of the **NAI Nature Center Directors and Administrators** section. The NCD Section is offering two \$800 scholarships for the Interp Roadshow in St. Augustine, Florida this November.

(See Kansas Report continued, page 14)

Applications must be received by April 30. NCDCA Section members are invited to apply for a \$125 scholarship to cover costs for the Certified Interpretive Manager Certification. This course would need to be completed by October, 2020.

The University of Missouri at Saint Louis is looking for sites to host interns for 2-3 week micro-internships. Please contact Theresa Coble at UMSL for more information.

The Flint Hills Discovery Center added an outdoor classroom through a grant from the Caroline Peine Foundation. The classroom features a native limestone seating area built in the traditional dry-stack method by Koch Construction Specialties. Starting this Spring, the classroom will be used for new programs at the Discovery Center including programs for Special Populations, seniors and parents of young children.

The Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home in Abilene opened 25,000 square feet of new museum exhibit space with the most recent innovations in technological components and interactives.



Leah Eden reports that the building renovation/upgrade for the Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery in Branson will start this autumn. During the renovation the Hatchery will be closed to public visitation because there will be no parking and restroom facilities available to hatchery visitors. The picnic area and fishing access will remain open to the public. They are looking forward to finally getting a larger facility to accommodate the thousands of visitors that visit every summer.



Leah Eden reports that the February 29th Vulture Venture was a huge success. Staff from the Wonders of Wildlife Museum in Springfield presented 5 programs about vultures throughout the day. There were 195 people that attended the presentations. The Weather was nice and sunny and there were plenty of vultures around for outdoor viewing.



The Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) will host the 2020 conference at the **Lodge at Port Arrowhead at the Lake of the Ozarks** on September 21-23. *(See Missouri Report continued, page 14)*

The theme is “Look beneath the surface”. In addition to great concurrent sessions and field trips, there will be awards and scholarship presentations. For more details see the AMI website at mointerp.net.

Michelle Soenksen from **Sam A. Baker State Park** reports that the parks Birds over Baker Day will be held on May 30. This event celebrates birds with hikes, activities, crafts, door prizes and World Bird Sanctuary. Volunteers are needed to help with this event. If interested, contact Michelle at michelle.soenksen@dnr.mo.gov.

Dawn Fredrickson announces that **Alison Dubbert** has accepted the statewide **Interpretive Resource Coordinator** Position in the Grants, Recreation and Interpretation Program (GRIP). Alison has worked for DNR for over 17 years, starting as an Architectural Historian at the State Historic Preservation Office in 2002 and then moved to the Resource Management and Interpretation Program in 2007. She managed the Civil War and Lewis and Clark Marker programs and worked with park and site staff to plan and create exhibits. Alison has presented on a wide variety of topics, including geocaching, Civil War history, exhibit development, and architectural history.

Dawn Fredrickson announces **Mike Sutherland** was officially named **Missouri State Parks Director** this February. Before taking over as acting director in November 2019, Mike served as the deputy division director since June 2017. An avid mountain biker, hiker and kayaker, Mike also admits to being a history buff with a strong interest in telling others about Missouri’s fascinating cultural history. He is always looking for ways to practice his interpretive skills, and recently conducted a tour at Missouri’s state capitol. Mike is strongly committed to the idea that everyone can and should be an interpreter, and has advocated for all field staff to receive CIG training. We’re excited for Mike in his new role!

Dairan Elam-Pyles was awarded the **Connie Elpers-Leger Student Scholarship** for the 2020 NAI Region 6 Conference in Bartlesville, OK. She is currently a graduate student at Missouri State University in Springfield and has worked as a seasonal naturalist for Missouri State Parks. We are proud to have her on our interpretive team!

The **Missouri State Parks** is looking to fill seasonal interpreter positions at several sites throughout the state. Some of these sites provide housing. Please check out the www.mostateparks.com website for more information.

The **DNR Spring Interpreters Training School** will be held May 17-20 at Knob Noster State Park. This training provides the opportunity to learn the basics of developing interpretive programs and earn the Certified Interpretive Guide certificate if you choose. Contact Alison Dubbert at Alison.dubbert@dnr.mo.gov to learn more.

Alison Dubbert reports 3 new Certified Interpretive Trainer’s with Missouri State Parks - Carrie Hammond from the Missouri State Museum, Kaylee Holt from Visitor Services and Melissa Blank from Felix Valle State Historic Site.

(See Missouri Report continued, page 15)

The **2022 NAI Regional 6 conference** will be held in Columbia, Missouri in February, dates TBD. Columbia is a secret oasis in the heart of Missouri, home of the University of Missouri, Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, the Katy Trail, Rockbridge Memorial State Park (home to a large cave system), and is known for Midwest rock climbing! It will be a great place to explore history and nature and discover our roots!

There are several exciting statewide initiatives for **MO State Parks**. They will be partnering with the MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create curriculum related to park interpretative topics and create additional interpretive resource trunks. Also working on a multistate (hopefully) commemoration for the 125th anniversary of when the army had a troop of Buffalo Soldiers ride bicycles from Ft. Missoula, Montana to St. Louis, Missouri in 2022. The commemoration will include bike rides, traveling exhibits, on site events and more.

Missouri State Parks will be celebrating the bicentennial in 2021 with partnerships and planning related activities, including a passport program, exhibits, and themed events.

In fact, there will be some confusion in 2020 for anyone who pays close attention to the MO State Seal on the Missouri state flag. While Missouri was 'officially' accepted as a US state in 1821, the Roman Numerals on our flag and seal boldly read **1820**. This is because thanks to the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Missouri was granted statehood on March 6, 1820 but not allowed to become a US State until August 10, 1821 in order to balance the number of free vs slave states. So, Missouri is one of the few states that will be celebrating TWO Bicentennials in two separated years.



Oklahoma's interpreters were pleased to welcome Region 6 members to Bartlesville for the Regional Workshop Feb. 23-26. We hope the conference was a valuable experience for the 110 participants.

Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa will host a Certified Interpretive Host (CIH) workshop on April 17th & 18th, a Friday and a Saturday. There is also still space in their spring Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) workshop, scheduled for April 27th-30th, Monday-Thursday. More information and enrollment may be found at https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Certification_Calendar/nai/_certification/Certification_Calendar.aspx?hkey=35609fbd-8ab3-43c9-9749-93e136a6bc33.

May 2, 2020 will mark the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the sport of geocaching. Look for a

(See Oklahoma Report, page 16)

number of Community Celebration events and special caches! Adventure Lab caches, the latest kind of geocache, requires a smartphone instead of a GPS receiver, and might turn out to be a splendid new form of interpreting your resource. One of Oklahoma's first Adventure Lab caches takes adventurers along Route 66 in the Tulsa area. Another one is being planned the the Gathering Place, also in Tulsa. You can find out more about Adventure Lab caches at <https://www.geocaching.com/blog/2018/12/geocaching-adventure-lab-app-faq/>.

Color Oklahoma, the state organization dedicated to roadside wildlife plantings, is teaming up with Oklahoma State Parks to establish wildflower plantings at ten state parks. Emphasis is on providing resources for local pollinators.

The Oklahoma Native Plant Society hosted a successful Indoor-Outing in Tulsa on February 1st and will be interpreting natural history at two more annual events in 2020. Wonders of Wildflowers will take place May 15th-17th at the University of Central Oklahoma Selman Living Lab in Woodward County. In addition to botany hikes during the day, there will be astronomy on Friday night under the very dark skies of western Oklahoma, and a not-to-be-missed trip* to observe the evening flight of a colony of Mexican free-tailed bats on Saturday at dusk. Looking ahead into the fall, September 25th-27th the group will meet at Robbers Cave State Park for the Annual Meeting. More information can be found on the ONPS's website (www.oknativeplants.org) or very active FB group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/259814325499/>).

*Toward the end of May, registration will open for the public viewings of the Selman bat cave evening flights. It takes more than an hour for the huge breeding colony of Mexican free-tailed bats (Oklahoma's state flying mammal!) to exit the cave each night. The limited viewings take place in July. Demand far outstrips the available spaces, so you must get your application in early. More information may be found at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlife/wildlife-diversity/selman-bat-watch>

The Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Gardens is encouraging visitors to drop off their old/used cellphones at the Guest Services Office for the Zoo's "Cellphone Challenge" initiative. It is part of the "Gorillas on the Line" project in which critical gorilla habitat is spared from mining incursions due to the recycling of the rare mineral component of the old/used cellphones.

Oklahoma's ornate box turtles and three-toed box turtles are cute beyond measure ... and ... are a marketable commodity in the Asian pet trade, where they can fetch upwards of \$1K each. It's something, of course, that is illegal in Oklahoma, but those sorts of profit motives hardly put a damper on things such as this. In January of this year, the state/federal wildlife law enforcement agencies made a major bust here in Oklahoma. The perpetrator was ordered to pay \$350K in both restitution and a fine. Good job, guys!

KUDOS! to Amy Stephens, NAI workshop chair and Director of Edmond, Oklahoma's Historical Society and Museum. The public library in her community closed for remodeling/renovation, and Amy forged a partnership with the library so that the "Tuesday Morning Storytimes" programs could continue at her facility while the library was shuttered.

(See Oklahoma Report, page 17)

Neil Garrison has been retired for 10 years, but no moss grows on a rolling stone. Neil was featured as the “Volunteer of the Month” in the newsletter of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History/ Archaeology Department. In addition to that, Neil volunteers to lead a weekly birding trip for seniors as a program of OKC’s Health and Wellness Center; Neil was designated the “Volunteer of the Month” in the newsletter of that organization. And to top it all off, OKC’s Mayor David Holt recently appointed Neil as an official member of the Board of Trustees for the City’s Post-Employment Benefits Trust (i.e., the municipality’s pension funds and their investments).

“If you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door.” One such “for instance” is the recent discovery of a particular molecule in soil fungi that has been discovered to instantly neutralize the odor of a striped skunk’s noxious odor. The molecule is called pericosine A. Congratulations to the researchers at the University of Oklahoma who made the discovery! Oddly enough, pericosine A is also the antidote to Tylenol poisoning. <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/07/25/what-do-neutralizing-skunk-odor-and-tylenol-poisoning-have-common-14180>

And finally...

Welcome to the 21st century: It was that hot, muggy day in 1925 when lawyers Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan slugged it out in that Tennessee courtroom. The infamous “Scopes Monkey Trial” argued the question of whether (or not) evolution should/could be taught in the public school classroom. Flash forward to the year 2020. On February 28 of this year, the Oklahoma State Department of Education finally stiffened its backbone and put forth a proposal to start mentioning the word “evolution” in public school classrooms. The matter now goes to the Oklahoma legislature for its consideration. After that, the



Tara Humphreys reports that on February 17-20, approximately 75 Texas State Park interpreters attended the annual interpreters’ conference. The theme was “A Warm Welcome for All” and some of the sessions included unveiling of a TX Parks and Wildlife Department Community Engagement Toolkit, ADA Best Practices Panel with members from the ADA community, creating a legacy that is welcoming for all, sustainability learning trunk, Managing Up and Influencing Others, and many concurrent sessions and programmatic skills-based learning.

Lisa Cole reports her position is opening up soon at LLELA. After 14 years, she is moving to the Austin area and have to surrender her position. She loves this place, and if the commute wasn’t so long she’d stay forever. They are implementing a new Interpretive Plan right now, as well as beginning planning for a
(See Texas Report, page 18)

nature center, so this is an exciting time to join Team LLELA. If you're interested, be watching the City of Lewisville jobs site at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/lewisville>. Lisa's last day at LLELA will be May 31, but the position should post sometime in February.

Susan Scott reports Rick Harwell and Susan Scott will offer a Certified Interpretive Guide workshop at Texas A&M, May 4-7, 2020. Participants are invited to join an optional birding outing led by David Scott on May 3. Sign up on the NAI website!

Stephanie Harbert reports in January we completed our AZA inspection and are looking forward to continuing our accreditation. We recently unveiled an additional 4,000 sq. ft. outdoor exhibit for our four Bengal tigers. Our very popular Home School Day event is coming up on February 25th. Families can take advantage of a blocked-out day (no schools!) with discounted admission and extra activities like scavenger hunts, animal encounters, exhibit chats, and fish feedings. The educational programs are sold out! We are in the final stages of becoming a sensory-inclusive destination (hopefully the 1st aquarium in Texas!) through KultureCity.

Jason Ginder reports in January, 2020, **Big Thicket National Preserve** launched a new and exciting way for youth to explore the park. All Southeast Texas youth organizations, clubs and groups are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to build teamwork skills, explore the natural environment around them and give back to the preserve. Through group kayaking programs youth organizations will be invited to explore the Neches River, Village Creek and Pine Island Bayou. During each group kayak experience participants will learn basic water safety skills, explore the ecosystem they are kayaking through and perform a small amount of service work in the park. This program invites youth and young adults to explore the Big Thicket. Local community organizations such as schools, church youth groups, after-school programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4H groups, youth sports leagues and other recreational, academic and social clubs are encouraged to participate in this paddling program as a group. All equipment and basic introductory paddle training is provided as part of this free program. We strive to promote awareness, access, resource stewardship ethics and participatory citizenship values by introducing youth from surrounding communities to the value and importance of federally protected lands through engaging kayaking adventures in the preserve. To sign your group up for this program please call our youth paddle team at 409-951-6826 or email us at bith_paddleprogram@nps.gov for more information. Big Thicket National Preserve is located in Southeast Texas, near the city of Beaumont and 75 miles northeast of Houston. The preserve consists of nine land units and six water corridors encompassing more than 113,000 acres. The Big Thicket, often referred to as a "biological crossroads," is a transition zone between four distinct vegetation types – the moist eastern hardwood forest, the southwestern desert, the southeastern swamp, and the central prairies. Species from all of these different plant types come together in the thicket, exhibiting a variety of vegetation and wildlife that has received global interest. For general information about Big Thicket National Preserve, visit www.nps.gov/bith or call the preserve visitor center at 409-951-6700. Visit us on Facebook www.facebook.com/BigThicketNPS, Twitter www.twitter.com/BigThicketNPS, and Instagram www.instagram.com/BigThicketNPS.

Martha (Mickey) Smith reports they have a full list of programs for Spring Break in March.

(See Texas Report, page 19)

Amy Robinson reports they hosted certification training in Oct 2019 to certify 19 people and again in January 2020 to certify 16 more. No additional training has been added for the upcoming quarter at this time.

Anna Turkett reports the International Crane Foundation will be participating in the Matagorda Bay Birdfest in Palacios, Texas from March 27th through 29th. Dr. Liz Smith will be a guest speaker and Anna Turkett will be participating in the Parade of Birds on Saturday, March 28th. Anna Turkett of the International Crane Foundation will be speaking at the Bexar County Audubon Society meeting on February 26th at Eco Centro in San Antonio, Texas.

Liz VanOrstrand reports ABNC has contracted with Kaser Design to help create a complete Interpretative Plan for our site. Our workshop for the plan will be on March 3 and 4, 2020.

Louisa Torrance reports the Texas State Park Ambassador Program connects conservation-minded young adults with recreational and volunteer opportunities in order to foster the next generation of State Park stewards. Ambassadors commit to volunteering 40 hours over 6 months at a partnered park and in the surrounding community to complete hands on service, community outreach, and social media projects. Ambassadors also attend a five-day leadership training to become certified in Leave No Trace and Growing Up WILD while connecting with park staff, learning about conservation within TPWD, and preparing for their service. This is also a great opportunity for students interested in working in the field of conservation education – 13 former Ambassadors have been hired into the agency – or simply looking for a way to build their outreach, public speaking, and leadership skills. The next application for 2020 Central and West Texas Ambassadors opens March 2 and can be found at: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMEBApupUyfTcSbSjtbc0nuF3EEbc5JwgFiVzVLGsh4OF4eg/closedform>.

Lari Jo Edwards reports that aside from all of our field trips, public outreach, nature story time, home school days, sketch & journaling classes, two of our staff will attend the NAI Region 6 Conference, and our Director will present. She also reports they are holding CIG training March 17 - 20, 2020, and again in August of 2020. Our staff is scheduled to attend BEETLES training at the end of March. We are looking forward to teacher workshops and implementing better conservation structures and practices at our facility this summer.





Scenes from Bartlesville 2020

PICTURES
BY
JOHN MILLER





All American Interpreter Quiz Winners



Excellence in Interpretative Support - Cassie Standley



Master Distinguished Professional Interpreter Ken Forman



Fellow - Lifetime Achievement - Molly Postlewait



Outstanding Interpretative Multi Media Rachel Roth



Outstanding Interpretative Special Event Kansas Wetlands Education Center



Outstanding Interpretive Site Publication Big Spring State Park - Texas



Keeper of Interpretation - George Kastler



Outstanding Interpretive Special Event Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park

Outstanding New Interpreter Jared Shamburger



2020 Best Presentation Steve Cariepy



2020 Scholarship Winners Darian Elam-Pyles & Danielle Bradley



NAI Region 6 Awards 2020

NAI REGION 6 VISIONS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION



Visions Newsletter is the newsletter for Region 6 of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Region 6 includes states of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. For Region 6 information go to www.nairegion6.wordpress.com. The national office for NAI is located in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Their website is www.interpnet.com.

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DEADLINES FOR *VISIONS* ARE:

Spring: March 20 • Summer: June 20 • Fall: September 1 • Winter: December 1