

THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF THE WILD FLOWER GARDEN, INC.

Dear Friends,

Spring is on the way, bringing another wonderful season of beauty and discovery at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary. I believe you will agree that EVERY year is a fine one at the Garden, and we depend on this because whatever else may be troublesome in the world, we do have this sustaining place where we can experience some serenity and peace of mind.

This year is the Garden's 110th anniversary, and it has been 65 years since the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden was established. To commemorate these milestones we are launching Campaign 175 to help raise the funds needed to complete the Garden's Wetland Boardwalk. According to estimates, this project, which composes about two-thirds of the total boardwalk's length, will cost about \$175,000. The design is already covered, so these new funds will be used for materials and installation, including the cutting and heat-treating of wood from ash trees that will be used as surface boards.

As you may know, Phase I of the Wetland Boardwalk has been a complete success, garnering an award from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Association of Landscape Architects and positive feedback from Garden visitors. Phase II will extend the walking surface southward over the swampy area to higher ground where the path turns east. The new portion of the walkway includes an expanded gathering spot with benches where students, birders and others can take time to examine the wetland more closely.

In this issue of the Fringed Gentian, you will find an envelope with information on how to help make Phase II a reality by making a donation to Campaign 175. (Those who receive the Gentian by email can make donations on our website.) We must remember that the wetland is our most precious habitat, and it was treasured by Eloise Butler and all four of the Garden curators who have followed her.

If you have not yet experienced the new Boardwalk, please plan a visit to the Garden this spring where you can walk on the part

that has already been completed. I promise you it will be a delightful stroll, and you'll also see how important it is that we finish this project.

Our other big project for this season is a new and exciting event celebrating the blooming of the Showy Lady's Slippers. On June 10 and 11, we will have guided tours, a small bazaar outside the front gate with refreshments and Garden items, special membership offers and more. Details will be posted on our website (www.friendsofeloisebutler.org), and we hope you will plan to join us and bring along a person or two who are new to the Garden and the Friends.

Finally, I am very pleased that the Friends' Board of Directors has an excellent new presidential candidate preparing to take office as of our annual meeting in May. Her name is Kathy Connelly, and she is a longtime Garden supporter. Kathy will be a skillful leader, guiding us into the future with a strong vision and a deep understanding of our purpose.

As this will be my last letter as board president, I want to make mention of the special team of volunteers who bring us this beautiful newsletter. Thank you Meleah Maynard, our gifted editor, John Toren, our talented designer, and Donna Ahrens, our kind and eagle-eyed copyeditor. Lovely issue after lovely issue, the three of you have made us pleased and proud.

I am also most grateful to our Shelter and FIPAG volunteers, and their leaders, who give generously of their time to care for our Garden and its visitors. Thanks also to the wonderful Garden staff, who have taught me so much. I cannot say enough about the dedication of the Garden Curator, Susan Wilkins, who helps the Friends fulfill our goals in so many ways. I commend the board for their service and support. I especially want to thank my fellow officers, Melissa Hansen, Gary Bebeau and Candy Bartol, for their hard work and dedication. It has been an honor to live in synch with the Garden these past 10 years and to be graced by my connection to a very special group of Friends.

Most sincerely,

J Pam Weinek

