

Name of Nominee: Bob Lootens
Name of Award: Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year Award
Nominee is an: Individual
Nominating Agency: Forest Preserve District of Kane County
Agency Address: 1996 S. Kirk Rd., Ste. 320, Geneva, IL 60134
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For 23 years, the Forest Preserve District of Kane County has been fortunate enough to count Bob Lootens among its volunteer ranks. Bob has been a volunteer leader for the District and has had an incredible impact on his beloved Fabyan Forest Preserve in Geneva.

On the second Saturday of each month, you will find Bob and his co-Steward Jon Cooper leading a group of excited volunteers, working hard to help remove invasive plant species and make Fabyan a little bit better for everyone. Knowing the woods and prairies of Fabyan like the back of his hand, you will often find Bob eagerly answering questions about plant species, dendrology, or the hydrology of the site. Having worked as a restoration professional at Fermilab in nearby Batavia, Bob is a wealth of knowledge about everything environmental and loves to share it. While some people with Bob's working knowledge might not be interested in continuing education, Bob has shown a voracious appetite for all things forest preserve and restoration. In addition to his being a steward at Fabyan, he is also a licensed herbicide operator, a trained chainsaw volunteer, and a National Wildfire Coordinating Group licensed prescribed-burn volunteer.

With all these important tools to help our natural areas, Bob does not confine his efforts to just Fabyan. You can also see him at any number of workdays at Dick Young, Glenwood Park and Les Arends forest preserves. Bob is also often found out on the front lines with our Natural Resources staff. His depth of professional experience and his friendly demeanor mean that he is a welcome addition to any staff work being done. District employees have a great respect for everything he bring to the table. Often times, his suggestions or stories of past triumphs or mistakes are teaching experiences to younger staff.

As if all the service and expertise he brings is not a enough, Bob is a fantastic cheerleader for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. After attending a large staff project or prescribed burn, he almost always sends in pictures of the work and compliments the staff in an email to the directors here at the District. Many times, he goes out of his way to take pictures of the safety precautions the staff takes and the care they show when working the public. He often will summarize these nice emails with "just like we would have done at Fermi" which is his official stamp of approval. This positive feedback and pat on the back means a lot to all the staff. Additionally, with the safety focus of many of his emails, it is clear he really cares about our staff and makes sure they are safe doing dangerous jobs.

Everything that Bob does here is absolutely astounding but what really sets him apart is his passion for it. You cannot spend time around Bob without hearing phrases like "there go the lumberjacks" or "oh they have the 'prairie fever.'" His personality is ideal to help connect volunteers with the land. His warm smile and personality combined with some hot coffee and doughnuts halfway through the workday have help made his one of the best attended workdays in the County.

The District recently shot a Natural Resources volunteer recruiting video, and of course, Bob had to be included. His passion, his enthusiasm and his love for all things nature have helped to create a lasting legacy of service that has been going strong for 23 years and counting.

We proudly nominate Bob Lootens for the IAPD Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year Award.