

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains

# PrairieWindow

*cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land*



Spring 2020 Vol. 20 No. 1

## 10 Years of Go Green Leprechaun Run

*by Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator*

On Saturday, March 14, Dyck Arboretum will celebrate its 10th Annual Go Green Leprechaun Run. With this event, we have been able to engage the community in healthy activity, which was an important goal of our founders. Evie Dyck regularly walked our half-mile path to enjoy exercise outdoors in a setting that held her namesake. Evie and Harold dreamed of creating a place for people young and old to congregate, have a recreational outlet, and enjoy native plants in a prairie garden setting. These ideals provided inspiration and guidance for the development of our first ever Go Green Leprechaun Run in 2011.

For the last nine years, this event has been a ritual to shake off the doldrums of winter, get some exercise, and have fun while building multi-generational community. In addition to reminding people to go “green” with wise environmental practices, the Leprechaun Run has included a number of St. Patrick’s Day-themed activities, including dressing up in costume, chasing the leprechaun, planting potatoes, following scavenger hunt clues to find the pot-of-gold, and drinking shamrock shakes.

What started out as a 2-mile fun run expanded to also include a 10K run in 2014, appealing to more serious runners. In 2018, we added the chip-timing services of Timer Guys. The number of runners/walkers always varies due to the weather. We’ve experienced everything from warm and sunny to icy and windy. Participation has been within the range of 103 and 172 runners/walkers from age 4 to 74.

This year’s swag will feature a commemorative lightweight running hat. Sign up today at [dyckarboretum.org](http://dyckarboretum.org) and help us celebrate this milestone event!



*Start of the 2-mile (right) and 10K (above) in 2016. (photos by Dave Osborne)*



## *Earth Challenge 2020 A Citizen Science Initiative*

From [earthchallenge2020.earth-day.org](http://earthchallenge2020.earth-day.org):

*As a global call to action, Earth Challenge 2020 will become a nexus for collecting and harmonizing one billion data points in any research area impacting environmental and human health.*

*Through a crowdsourcing effort, we identified three critical areas to focus on for the launch of the platform in April 2020: plastic pollution, air quality, and insect populations.*

*Each topic features community engagement, education and action opportunities, connecting you to a global community of environmental activists.*

April 22, 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the first celebration of Earth Day, an event that sparked our present-day environmental movement, as 20 million citizens came together to express their concerns about protecting the land.

In the coming months, we look forward to sharing more about how you and your native garden can be involved with Earth Challenge 2020!



# An adaptable community is a healthy community

by Janelle Flory Schrock, Office Manager

Last October, past board member Lorna Harder and I attended a symposium hosted by the American Public Gardens Association at the beautiful Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) in Phoenix, Arizona. The focus of the gathering was volunteer engagement.

The most memorable activity was a tour of the gardens with one of DBG's volunteer docents. We were both blown away by the depth of knowledge, skill and dedication demonstrated by these volunteers, many of whom committed their free time outside of full-time jobs, all for the love of their native desert landscape.

The tours were crafted around the theme of "adaptation". Much like our beloved plants of the prairie, but in fascinatingly distinct ways, the plants of the Sonoran Desert have adapted to survive on very infrequent rainfall.

Each docent at DBG goes through several years of extensive training before leading garden tours. They wear DBG vests and name badges with pride, using the ample pockets to hold various "props", which they use to help demonstrate adaptable qualities of plants along the way.

Just like plants, organizations need to adapt to changing circumstances in order to thrive and grow. To be sure, the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains has seen enormous "above



ground" growth over the past decade. During strategic planning discussions in 2018, the staff and board members decided that in order to adapt to this growth we need to "deepen our roots". One strategic goal was to build a more vibrant volunteer program that engages, educates, and grows our amazing volunteer staff.

In the coming year, we will roll out some improvements that we believe will help us recruit, train, communicate with, and supervise our growing community of dedicated volunteers. We look forward to being on this journey of adaptation with you and invite you to volunteer in 2020!

## From the director's desk...

2020 is off to an exciting start at the Arboretum. Projects including a new parking lot curb and completing the ½ mile walking trail with concrete this spring will improve the safety for Arboretum visitors. These infrastructure improvements are made possible by a grant from The Sunderland Foundation.

Educational programs and events are already underway. I hope you are able to attend some of them.

We are preparing the gardens for spring and busily working to fill the greenhouse for the FloraKansas Native Plant Festival in April. We are delighted to be busy and wouldn't have it any other way.

It is our goal in 2020 to act and think strategically, to provide opportunities for each of you to develop a deeper and more

meaningful relationship with the land. We give a lot of thought to helping you make these connections so they last and impact you in profound ways.

It's hard to believe but we are coming up on our 40th anniversary in October 2021. I could show you pictures of the humble beginnings of this prairie garden; small trees and just a few gardens dot the landscape. Oh, how things have changed. The trees have grown, the display beds have been enhanced and the facilities have been built - and so our impact has also grown. We are so fortunate to have a mission that resonates with so many people.

As always, we are very grateful to all our members, volunteers, and supporters, who strengthen and sustain us and make our important work possible. I look forward to seeing all of you at some of our programs or walking out in the gardens this spring.



# Arachnids will be center stage during FloraKansas

So many of us are fearful of spiders! However, during the FloraKansas Native Plant Festival this April, the Arboretum will host partners from Hesston College and McPherson College to help visitors explore the “softer side” of these beneficial, eight-legged creatures.

The Hesston College Theatre Department will present *Charlotte's Web* on Thursday and Friday, April 23 and 24 at 7 pm, and Saturday and Sunday, April 25 and 26 at 2 pm in the Arboretum's outdoor amphitheater.

“*Charlotte's Web* is such a beloved story, and the Arboretum provides a perfect backdrop for it,” said director and theatre instructor Carla Lahey. “Since most of *Charlotte's Web* actually takes place outside, being surrounded by nature will just make the story's farmyard setting come alive in a new way for both the audience members and our actors.”

In case of inclement weather, performances will take place in the Prairie Pavilion.

“In the theatre program at Hesston College, we strive to provide our students with as many diverse theatrical experiences as possible,” Lahey said. “Performing in an outdoor venue gives our students a chance to exercise their creativity and flexibility as they adapt their skills to such a unique setting.”

Tickets will go on sale in April at Hesston College.

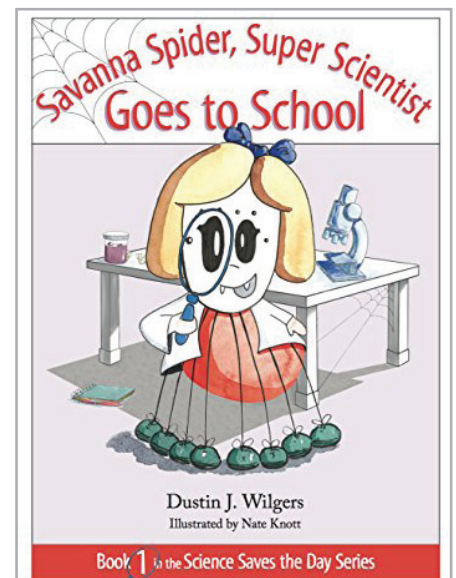
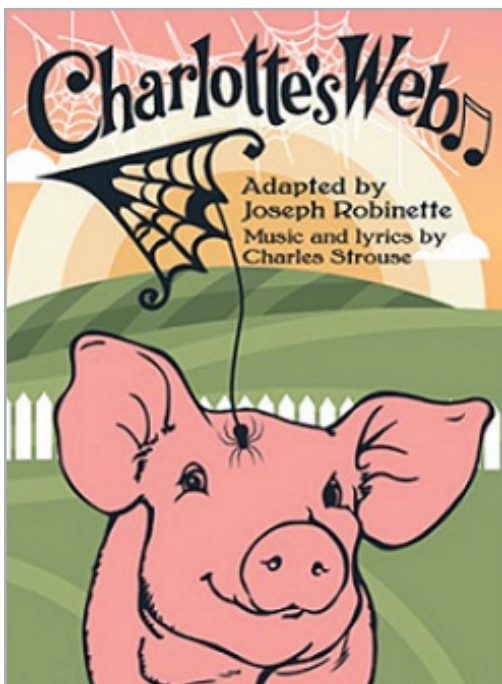
Lifelong advocate for wolf spider conservation and education, and McPherson College Assistant Professor of Biology Dustin Wilgers will lead a spider night walk on Friday, April 24 at approximately 8:15 pm. Families will head out on a night walk with headlamps and flashlights to find, catch and release wolf spiders.

Wilgers is a Wichita native. He earned a bachelor's degree at Southwestern College, a master's degree in Biology at Kansas State University, and a Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying spider behavior.

Wilgers has been working with spiders for over eight years, including research projects on their behavior, physiology, and conservation. His main focus has been on understanding the communication system of wolf spiders by investigating the function of their courtship signals.

He has always been passionate about public outreach and science education for kids of all ages. He strives to increase understanding and appreciation of this largely misunderstood group of organisms through numerous activities and events held at schools and during the summer.

This event is free for Arboretum members and all children and \$5 for non-member adults. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Wilgers' book “*Savanna Spider, Super Scientist Goes to School*” will be available for purchase.



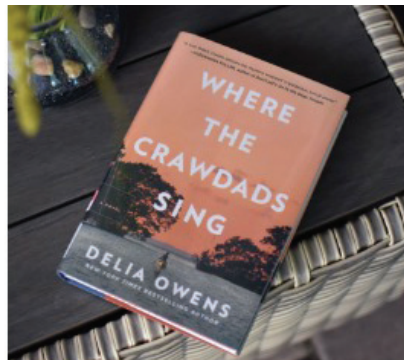
The Hesston College Theatre Department will present *Charlotte's Web* at the Arboretum April 23 to 26. Biology professor, spider expert and children's book author Dustin Wilgers will lead a spider night walk following the show on Friday, April 24.



## Join the Arb/Library on April 6th for Nature Book Club's spring meetup!

We cordially invite you to join the Arboretum and the Hesston Public Library for lively, informative discussions focusing on fiction and non-fiction books about the natural world. Our second meeting will be held at the Arboretum on Monday, April 6, 2020, from 6:45 to 8:00 pm. Spring book selections, now available at the library, include the following titles:

- ***Underland: A Deep Time Journey*** by Robert MacFarlane. A journey into the worlds beneath our feet.
- ***Where the Crawdads Sing*** by Delia Owens. A coming-of-age crime drama about a girl growing up alone in the marshes of North Carolina. #1 on the New York Times Best-Sellers List.



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