

Bob Prosser—A Volunteer Who Loves the Outdoors and Smiles Big

Bob Prosser still calls himself a “newbie,” though he’s been volunteering at the North Park Village Nature Center for nearly 18 months. He read in a local newspaper that the Nature Center was looking for natural areas volunteers and took the invitation to “come on down!”

Before volunteering, Bob visited the Nature Center with the Boy Scout group he used to lead and was impressed with how much the boys enjoyed their experience. Now, as a volunteer, Bob has greater insight into the plants and animals making this site their home. He recalls one workday sitting near a fallen tree, and a child came over and asked him, “Did you see any elephants today?” Surprised by this question, Bob gathered his thoughts and replied with a big smile, “No, not today.” He explained that the child’s inquiry was so sincere, he thought, “who am I to say anything different?”

Working with fellow volunteers at the Nature Center is another reason Bob enjoys coming here. “You know you’re with a good bunch of people if they volunteer here,” said Bob. Fondly referring

to crewmembers, men and women alike, as “the guys,” he says it’s like getting together with your own friends to do good work and enjoy good conversation. “Everyone works very well together and helps each other out,” he said.

Bob enjoys volunteering at the Nature Center throughout the seasons, describing the site as “not all manicured and kind of wild, with something different to do at every workday.” For example, volunteers devoted springtime to planting more than 2,000 native wildflowers, grasses and trees. The summer was spent watering all those plants. And as a self-declared cold weather person, Bob was amazed at how many seeds were collected last autumn and then processed over the winter. Holding his arm straight out to the side and chuckling, he exclaimed that “the seed pile must have been 3 to 4 feet high!”

Bob grew up in the Jefferson Park neighborhood and now lives with his wife in Schiller Park. He likes to visit as many nature areas as he can and makes it a point to bring his grandchildren to the North Park Village Nature Center. “They make weird scarecrows during the Harvest



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Festival,” he says with a laugh. He has visited Alaska, Hawaii and Mexico, enjoys canoeing and camping, and is an avid angler. His personal goal is “to hit all the state parks.” As you read this, the Prossers may be out on another adventure. With a life like this, who wouldn’t smile big?



Tips for Parents

Adopt a tree in the neighborhood. Identifying the type of tree is not the most important part, but noticing the type of bark, insect holes, and leaves can help guide you. Discovering what you think is interesting about the tree and sharing it with your family will help you uncover things you may have missed. Write a poem or draw your tree and explain why you chose it. Collect leaves and seeds in the fall. Watch it through all the seasons and note the changes.

Explore the night sky. Discovering the natural world doesn’t happen only during the day. Take your child outside at night and look up. Look at the stars that are visible. Do this daily, or at least weekly, for a month and note the many phases of the moon. Draw what you see; make up names for the constellations and then look up the actual names. Draw the phases or “faces” of the moon. Native Americans give the moon a special name each month. The Chippewa moon names are: October “Falling Leaves Moon,” November “Freezing Moon,” and December “Little Spirit Moon.” Make up your own names.

Visit www.kidsoutside.info to learn more about where, when and what to do to enjoy nature with your family.