

Greenbelt Forest Preserve 10 Year Celebration Kick Off A Winter Woods Walk

Saturday, January 26, 2013

Opening Remarks by Paul Downs

About 76 years ago a community sprung up out of the land that would be seen as a New Deal for those who could benefit from affordable housing. It was a New Deal for those who wanted to live in a town where aesthetic beauty was a priority. Here, in this new community called Greenbelt, one could walk to school, grocery shop or worship without having to cross the street. The people whose idea this was seemed to understand that life should not be just about functionality or profit but that life is about the Art of Living. The core of Greenbelt was its town center: the movie theater, the school, and the shops; the next concentric circle contained the homes and the houses; the next ring was the Green Belt Forest. We are still enjoying to this very day, the fruits of an idea from seeds planted over 75 years ago.

Back then, there seemed to have been a clear understanding of how important a connection to the natural world is. Yet these trees, and the wildlife which envelops our town, would be gone if it were not for citizen intervention. Many saw the forest land of Greenbelt as surplus land to be developed. Yet, when battles were fought over its future, the prevailing outcome after many decades of fighting was that the forest would remain standing in all its majestic grandeur.

The Committee to Save the Green Belt gave many, many Saturday morning walks in the woods to show people the natural beauty they had in their very midst. When we were giving these nature walks we never knew if it would work. There was always the painful image of laying down in front of bulldozers in the back of our minds. But, here on this invigorating winter morning, the trees still stand, the wildlife still leave tracks in the winter snow, owls still call at night, and the sounds of children playing by the creek still echo through the woods. It wasn't just a new deal, it was a GREAT deal! So let's have our celebratory hike and be happy for ourselves and the woods.