

WINGRA WATERSHED NEWS

Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

WINTER 2020 • VOLUME 17 • ISSUE 1

Duck, Duck...Goose!

by Casey Hanson

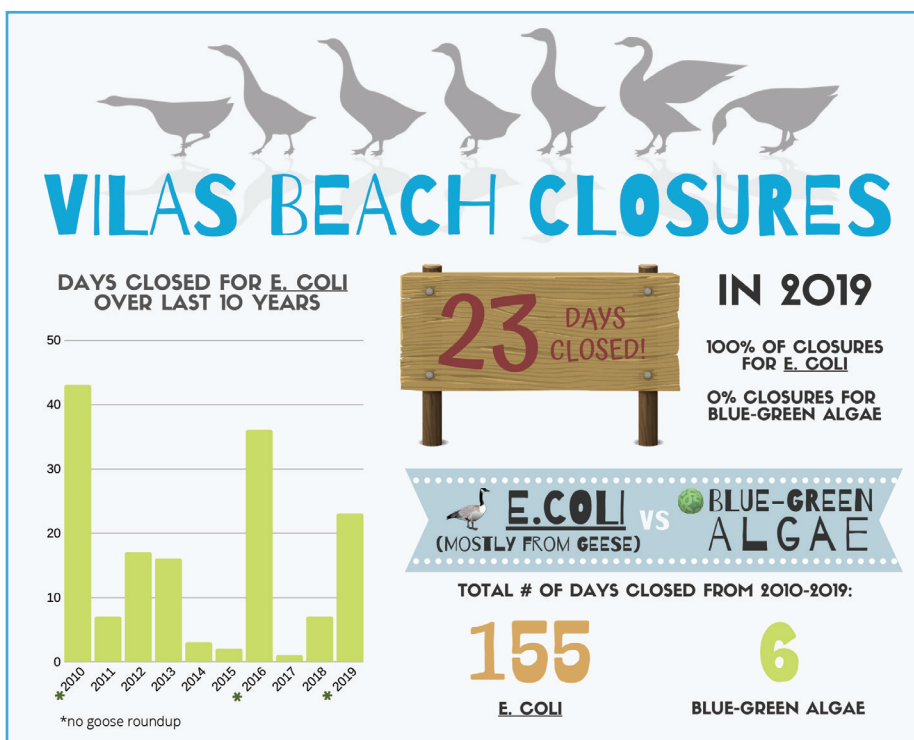
What a bummer! Vilas Beach remained closed almost continuously for the latter part of the summer. A knee-jerk reaction would have most assume that blue-green algae caused it. Wrong! It's the giant Canada goose. Bacteria leached from goose poop closed the beach.

A high resident goose population plagued Vilas Beach and Park this summer, at times surpassing 100

geese. For reference, Friends of Lake Wingra originally set a target for a resident goose population of no more than 20 in our 2009 *A Vision for the Future*. If you've ever seen a NOVA/Planet Earth episode about birds (including penguins, after all it is winter), the imagery of bird droppings in one communal area is not that hard to imagine. If it doesn't end up on the bottom of your flip flop or blanket, it can impact water quality. When it

rains, that goose poop leaches *e. coli* into the surface runoff that enters the lake. Formally, the closures totaled to twenty-three days during the official beach season (see infographic). This does not account for any times people might have used the beach in the off season with potentially high levels of *e. coli* in the water. Assuming it doesn't rain and the water levels aren't high with *e. coli* users still might not have the opportunity to enjoy the beach because of the abundance of geese droppings everywhere.

The explanation for this increase in closures is quite simple and the solution rather complicated. The increase in *e. coli*-caused beach closures this year compared to others relates to the management of geese. This year (2019) the City of Madison used hazing as the sole management approach compared to previous years. Hazing requires volunteers to chase geese away from areas they want to reside in hopes they do not nest there. Hazing was not allowed during molting for several weeks in June and July. The City of Madison has done a tremendous job to learn about the issue, implement plans, and experiment with different techniques to understand what works best.



(continued on pg. 2)

Just like you, keeping Vilas Beach open for our lake-loving community is incredibly important to us. Do not feel disheartened. If anything, the infographic on the cover page illustrates that with proper goose management Vilas Beach can serve as a safe haven for beach go-ers when the rest of Madison lakes are plagued with blue-green algae out-



Goose droppings in Vilas Park.

breaks. We have much to celebrate and advocate for! We want you to know that you have an equal part in helping preserve the water quality at our beach. Here are three things you can do to help:

1. Do not feed the geese. Pick up your food and leave the park cleaner than you found it. A city ordinance prohibits people from feeding the geese. You can get fined.
2. Support projects for planting local vegetation buffers. Vegetation buffers can help deter geese movement from land to water.
3. Let your local officials (especially your alders) know that having an open Vilas Beach and proactively managing the source of water quality issues is important to you.

Any history buff wanting to learn more about the history of geese at Vilas Park will find the supplementary background below enlightening.

What was different about the goose management in 2019?

First, it's important to understand the history leading up to the management techniques and geese's relationship with the watershed. As

our 2009 Vision for a Future states, "While native to our continent, the many geese we see around Lake Wingra are invasive newcomers. Most are the 'giant Canada goose' (*Branta canadensis maxima*), a subspecies thought to be extinct in the first half of the 20th century that has made a dramatic comeback and has successfully adapted as nearly-permanent urban residents."

Starting in 2003, impacts of bacteria produced by geese feces emerged in a health department report. This served as a catalyst for Madison to pass an ordinance prohibiting people from feeding waterfowl on public property. Wanting to understand the extent of the problem, the City of Madison did extensive studies to understand how geese interacted and used the parks. During the study, Parks observed over 100 geese residing at Vilas June through August. Why so many? Suitable nesting plants, typically cattails or reed canary grass, at Vilas contribute to its popularity with geese. After summer, Parks also found that populations can increase. Fall migration can bring additional migratory geese to the park. The same study at the time noted over 400 geese at Vilas from September through October.

This study and supplemental feedback from the community culminated with Madison and Dane County Health Department using a consultant, along with stakeholder input, in 2010 to develop an integrated waterfowl management plan for Vilas Park. Some of the strategies included oiling eggs and rounding up geese for humane euthanizing. Food pantries received the goose meat. With these techniques the beach improved greatly in water quality, although it can still experience high bacteria levels every so often.

What is chloride monitoring?
A form of data collection that determines the amount of chloride in the groundwater when it enters the springs. Testing water samples for chloride levels are expensive, so we take conductivity measurements instead (it's also easier to do). Using the readings, we form a relationship between the two by using a calibration curve.



Above: Jessica Ross taking a reading
Below: UW-Madison Arboretum's Big Spring



Lake Wingra Spring Monitoring Sets New Roots

by Marian Farrior, Restoration Work Party Manager, UW-Madison Arboretum

How do we know the springs' chloride levels at any given time? By monitoring them with a conductivity meter. It's a task that started in 2012 thanks to Roger Bannerman and his wife Jane. They monitored five springs around Lake Wingra for Friends of Lake Wingra. Documenting readings over time would help everyone understand if the springs experience acute or chronic chloride impairments. The original roots of this project formed in 2011 as part of the Urban Road Salt Study, which looked at accumulation of chloride levels in surface and groundwater due to increased road salts used for de-icing streets and roads.

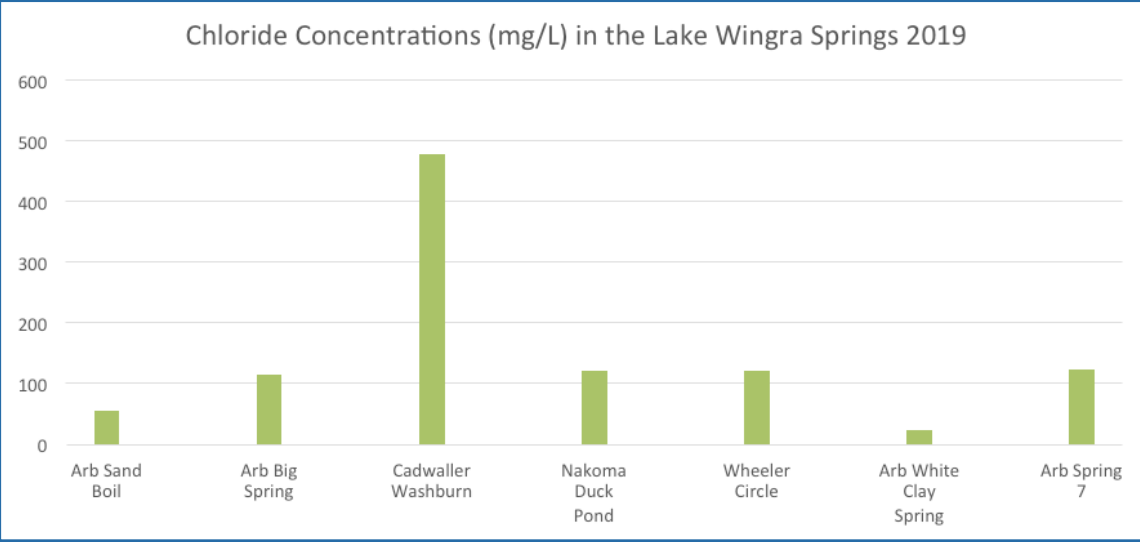
This past year, Roger has passed on the torch, or should I say the conductivity meter, to me. As a Wisconsin Master Naturalist

(WIMN) volunteer and UW-Madison Arboretum employee, the plan is to add a few more springs within the Arboretum to our list and launch a citizen science monitoring program. Roger trained WIMN volunteer Carol Christensen and me, a very informative and fun process. To evolve a project like this requires ironing out a lot of kinks! Creating a volunteer position description; securing volunteer application and waiver forms; getting a research permit from the Arboretum; updating the Wingra Springs Chloride Monitoring manual; procuring a new conductivity meter (we went through two before one actually worked); taking water samples to the State Laboratory of Hygiene to determine the actual amount of chloride in the springs (and tracking down the data); and accessing and uploading the data in the DNR's Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System database (which requires a steep learning

curve). I am still working with Roger on how to use the calibration curve.

As we fine tune, we know it's worth the struggle! We can enjoy the gorgeous springs, no matter the season, and we cleared out some watercress that clogged their flow. Our monitoring will continue to assess long term chloride levels in groundwater at the springs surrounding Lake Wingra. Highly soluble, chloride can have an adverse impact on drinking water, plant life, soils, wildlife, and aquatic life. Increased chloride levels can reduce the number and diversity of macro-invertebrates, which in turn affects the whole food chain, including fish, amphibians, and birds.

Many thanks to Roger Bannerman; we cannot quantify the value of his foresight and persistence in data collection. Thanks to the Arboretum's research ecologist Brad Herrick for funding this project, citizen science coordinator Nancy Sheehan for her input, and citizen science coordinator Jessica Ross for her overall encouragement and support.



Chloride concentrations from water samples taken May 2019.

A History of Speedskating at Vilas Park Lagoon

by Madison Speedskating Club

Madison, Wisconsin has been the home of speedskating since at least 1924, the year in which speedskating became an official Olympic sport. We are humbled by both the rich history of speedskating in the community as well as the Olympians who have called our city home over the years. Madisonian Olympians include Elizabeth DuBois, William Carow, Connie Carpenter, Kay Lunda, Beth Heiden, Eric Heiden, Dan Immerfall, Lori Monk, Peter Mueller, Mary Doctor, Sarah Doctor, Dave Besteman, Anne Hellmuth, Juill Mitchell, Sugar Todd, Casey FitzRandolph, and Tucker Fredricks.

Vilas Park Lagoon was once the home of Madison Speedskating and well known for two major races—the Annual Madison All-City Race and Wisconsin State Speedskating Championship. Casey FitzRandolph, a local Madisonian, and 500m specialist Olympian found speedskating at age 5, while listening to a radio ad for the Madison All-City Speedskating Meet. He signed up, laced up his hockey skates, raced against other children from the area, and won. FitzRandolph recalls the Madison coach at the All-City Meet calling him the “Next Eric Heiden.” Three weeks later, FitzRandolph watched Heiden on the television, dominating the world in the 1980 Winter Olympics. After winning 5 medals, Heiden returned to Madison and became a local hero. FitzRandolph skated at heels of Eric Heiden, becoming a local hero himself.



Clockwise from upper left: Abe; Jack and Mathew; Leah and Louisa; Holiday Classic participants. Photos courtesy of Madison Speedskating Club.

FitzRandolph quickly converted to speedskating, becoming a regular at the Vilas Park Lagoon. Practice was after school so the park would light up the lagoon as the team chased each other around the long track oval. FitzRandolph practiced four days a week, two at Vilas Park and two in Milwaukee. He explained how each oval had its own characteristics. The Milwaukee outdoor 400m oval had so much wind in the corners, skaters would need to add straight away strokes in addition to crossovers in order to skate through the corner. While, at

the Vilas Park Oval, skaters would on occasion have the stench of monkey cages in the wind and one would always have an eye down on the ice watching for pressure cracks. FitzRandolph noted that the dangerous ones glided with you and a blade would often snap off the boot, if not careful. “During warm up you would assess the ice and determine when to jump or double push to avoid the cracks during the workout.” FitzRandolph also shared that the firefighters would occasionally deem the ice unsafe and postpone preparing it



Casey FitzRandolph celebrating and eating breakfast the morning after he won his first state championship in the Tiny Tot Men's division back in 1980. Photos courtesy of Casey FitzRandolph.



for skating due to muskrats making dens in the shoreline banks, causing open water or thin ice. Finally, he recalled a fond memory of the warming house at Vilas Park, where you could get a cup of hot cocoa and sit by the large wood fireplace after skating in the frigid weather.

Today the Vilas Park Lagoon is unfortunately closed due to unpredictable weather and lack of volunteers to clear snow. However, the wooden plaque still stands, with the names of Olympians who use to skate at Vilas Park. The history will always be remembered and inspire anyone who walks by. Though speedskating may no longer be seen outside on the Lagoon, it is far from retired. Speedskating in Madison is still vibrant and alive. The season is from October- Mid-March. Madison is most active in Short Track speedskating, located at Oregon Ice Arena, however there are several Madison Long Track skaters training at the Pettit Olympic Oval, in Milwaukee.

We (MSSC, Inc) have a mission to grow the sport of speedskating in Madison by facilitating educational opportunities to support skater and

social development and competition competency. Our coaches are Level Two (L2) US Speedskating Certified, 2019 USOPC Volunteer Coach of the Year recipient, and provide expertise from years of working with and coaching children and adults alike.

Speedskating brings people of all backgrounds and ages together into community. It is not just an “Olympian thing.” Age groups range from 3 years to 75+ years of age. Additionally, many skaters come into the sport with experience in figure skating, hockey, inline, roller derby, and even cycling. We encourage anyone who enjoys skating to give it a try, no matter your age or experience. Once indoctrinated into speedskating, the love of community, speed and turning left never seem to go away and families often have generations of athletes in the sport.

Check out our website for more information and sign up for a Learn to Speedskate session through our partnership with local park and recreation departments. Madisonspeedskatingclub.org

Mission

We promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

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Hannah Buscemi, Secretary
Matthew Byars, Treasurer
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Become a Friend

To become a Friend of Lake Wingra, send your tax-deductible contribution using our address below.

Please make checks to: “Friends of Lake Wingra”

Or visit our website at: www.lakewingra.org/donate

Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.

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Wingra Watershed News

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Project Updates in the Watershed

Edgewood Master Plan

Over the last several months, concern about pursuing a new, enhanced athletic field at Edgewood has crossed many people’s minds. We realize both parties have valid concerns and we want whatever path forward to have thoughtful consideration on how any development might irrevocably impact the unique gifts and aura Lake Wingra provides. Should development occur, parties should have a clear commitment to mitigating anticipated impacts.

On January 7, the Common Council voted 15-5 to repeal Edgewood’s Master Plan. This means Edgewood can still play games on their practice field and if they want to make improvements to that field (e.g., light and sound), they will need to go through the conditional use permit process. In the simplest sense possible, it means that the owner can use their property in a certain way as long as they follow the standards and conditions laid out in the approved conditional use permit for that particular purpose and property. It would not go to the Common Council for a final decision unless an eligible party appeals the planning commission’s decision. If Edgewood applies for a conditional use permit to build a stadium, the Plan Commission’s public hearing is the chance to share your thoughts.

More about the permit process: www.cityofmadison.com/development-services-center/land-development/private-property/conditional-use

West Wingra Watershed Study

The West Wingra Watershed study will produce flood-reduction solutions, especially for areas hit hard by the extreme rain events hit in 2018. As far as next steps, the City plans to prioritize the different flood-reduction solutions in terms of resiliency, long-term maintenance needs, benefits v. costs, and how these solutions align with other already scheduled projects in the queue (e.g., road repair). This evaluation includes a public meeting and then the completion of the study sometime in the summer of 2020.

One notable area, and a key component of the West Wingra drainage system, is the stone arch culvert under the Southwest Bike Path near Waite Circle. For a couple of years this culvert has faced issues. In late 2019 a project to reconstruct the stone arch culvert under the Southwest Bike Path at Waite Circle kicked off. The reconstruction will help address some of the flooding issues that arose and were highlighted during the Wingra West Watershed Study. Once the study concludes, the City will have a better understanding of the size opening needed to help reduce flooding issues.



Westmorland Rain Garden Candidacy

Last fall, with the help of our Badger Volunteers, we walked a portion of Westmorland to better understand how many front yards have attributes that make them ideal candidates for a rain garden. Ideal attributes include (1) having enough space to infiltrate the volume of water a roof generates; and within that space (2) no large trees and (3) gently sloped lawns. We plan to create an outreach strategy to raise awareness with these property owners and potentially walk them through the steps of installing a rain garden. If this project interests you and you’d like to help out, please contact us at info@lakewingra.org.



photo by David Thompson



photo by Streets Division

Leaf Collection Pilot by Streets Division

This January Streets’ field staff and managers met to reflect on the Greenbush/Vilas leaf pilot of fall 2019 and they felt the pilot went well overall. Field staff involved felt collecting during the parking restrictions aided in their efforts. Field managers were happy with how the work was performed and felt the work load was manageable. Survey respondents, those that participated in the pilot, had positive impressions too.

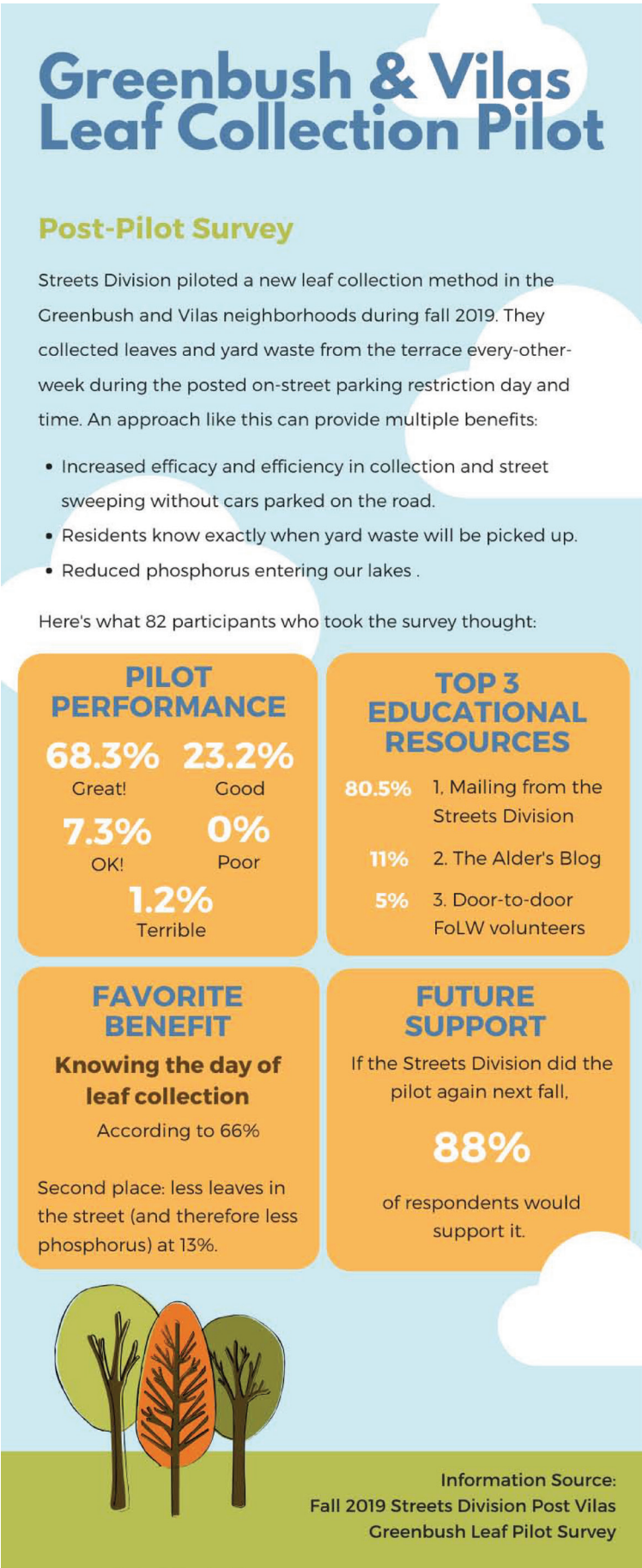
When spring 2020 collection rounds begin, Streets will not run the pilot. They will announce the start of the spring collection period closer to that time. They usually start in early April and tend to wrap up by early May – depending on what the weather lets them do. During the spring 2020 collection window, they will do their best to time collections in the neighborhoods with the parking restrictions, but it won’t be the same coordinated effort like last fall’s pilot (2019).

During the spring 2020 collection, residents may see collections happen during the parking restrictions; they are not guaranteed to receive collection during those times though. Stayed tuned, because this summer Streets will announce plans for the fall 2020 and build from the positive experiences of the fall of 2019!

Vilas Park Master Plan

Throughout the Vilas Park master planning process, which kicked off this summer, we can see some common themes emerging for enhancing the park. The list below, created by MSA and Urban Assets, reflects the input collected from intercept interviews, comment cards, and focus group meetings:

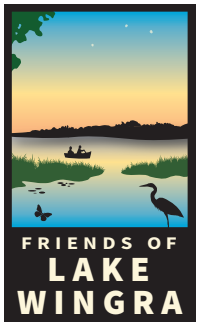
- Pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Mitigate through traffic on Vilas Park Dr.
- Lake & lagoon cleanliness/ecological health
- Playground enhancements
- Maintain amount of green space
- Access for dogs (or dog-friendly area)
- More benches and picnic tables
- More Park Rangers – enforcement of park rules



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Friends of Lake Wingra
PO Box 45071
Madison, WI 53744

Volunteer with

Friends of Lake Wingra

We could really use volunteers to:

- Grow our board of directors
- Plan fundraising events
- Maintain/install rain gardens or native prairies
- Help with web design and redesign old and new posters
- Assist in marketing and social media strategies

Let's chat! We can also discuss other opportunities.
info@lakewingra.org

Friends of Lake Wingra

Board Meetings

When we see a new face at a board meeting, it makes our day! Anyone is welcome to attend at any time. Have something you want to talk about? Email us at least a week in advance so it can get on the agenda.

When: First Thursday of the month from 6:30 – 8:00 (double check website for any changes)

Where: Sequoyia Library

Become a Friends of Lake

Wingra Board Member

We're on the lookout for experience in:

- Nonprofit law
- Accounting & budgeting
- Fundraising
- Youth education
- Marketing/Communications
- Business-nonprofit partnerships
- Information technology
- Grant writing