

Michael Clagg
is recognized for his
exemplary service
to community



Pictured is Mr. Clagg
with Ballard Nature
Center's co-directors
Patty Gillespie and
Karan Greuel (4/12/10)

Michael Clagg of Altamont, Illinois, received the Governor's Volunteer Service Award during a reception held at the Executive Mansion in Springfield on Monday April 12, 2010. He was accompanied at the reception by his wife, Debra, and the Ballard Nature Center's co-directors Patty Gillespie and Karan Greuel. Speakers at the presentation included Jerry Stermer, Chief of Staff, Office of Governor Pat Quinn, and Merri Dee and Howard Lathan, Serve Illinois Commissioners. "The Governor's Volunteer Service Awards" recognize individual volunteers and volunteer programs throughout the state in order to highlight the importance of volunteerism and community service in the State of Illinois.

Mr. Clagg was nominated for his efforts in the making of Ballard Nature Center into the exceptional outdoor recreational and high-quality educational facility that it is. His volunteer work has also allowed Ballard Nature Center to become a recognized site of habitat restoration and wildlife management. If he were being paid, his title might be "Land Manager" or "Educational Display Designer" or "Idea Guy" or "Maker of the tree cookies" or "Fixer of fishing poles." Simply put, if the services, such as the many provided by Mr. Clagg, were to require payment, Ballard Nature Center which is supported entirely by charitable donations would be unable to meet the needs of the public.

In addition, youth are especially benefiting from Mr. Clagg's commitment to excellence at Ballard Nature Center. Because of Mr. Clagg's willingness to assist parents and educators in their efforts to help children develop a sense of civic-responsibility, young people have been becoming engaged in their communities. Beginning in 2006, when the Regional Office of Education wanted area school children to be able to participate in the Illinois Learn and Serve America Project, Mr. Michael Clagg served as the community partner and youths' adviser to make that possible. Not only does Mr. Clagg supervise and teach the young volunteers, he also works beside them, building bridges with boy scouts, spreading prairie wildflower seeds with girl scouts, tugging and pulling invasive woodland species with local students, digging into the muck with young volunteers as they install wetland plant species, etc.

The bipartisan, Governor-appointed Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service has been working to implement the Illinois State Service Plan and one aspect of the plan was met by the 1st Annual Governor's Volunteer Service Award. At the reception the awards were presented to one youth, one adult and one retiree/senior in each of the Commission's five service regions across the state. Also, special priority

was given to the categories of economic opportunity, education, environmental conservation, health, and veterans affairs, in alignment with the areas as defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service. A panel of judges from the Serve Illinois Commission evaluated over 100 nominations based upon certain criteria; these criteria were evidence that the nominee's volunteer service helped fill a specific need in the community, that he or she was actively involved and took initiative, that he or she used creative methods to solve community problems, and that the activity or service produced positive changes and provided an example to others.

We at Ballard Nature Center speak of Mr. Michael Clagg with much respect and gratitude, but also with much affection: Mike Clagg is the guy! The numeral uno! The one on call! He's the volunteer extraordinaire! He is the volunteer who was there at the inception of Ballard Nature Center and is still going! He fixes broken things; he maintains trails; he builds bridges; he mows and trims; he creates displays; he does what it takes! Significant is the fact that it is not just the accomplishments which makes Mr. Michael Clagg an outstanding volunteer; it is his inspiring quiet enthusiasm. Even though he works unassumingly, he often serves accidentally as our "public relations specialist." When visitors to Ballard Nature Center happen to discover that a certain degree of the excellence they are observing is the result of Mr. Clagg's volunteer work, they are moved to contribute also in whatever way they can and many of those are youth who become volunteers. Mr. Clagg's running plans for the future include continued support of the center, but when he has to hand off the wand, those he has mentored will be there to accept it. Please join us in congratulating Mr. Clagg for receiving the Governor's Volunteer Service Award.

By Patty Gillespie (April 2010)