

# Making memories at Dane County's Silverwood Park

By Katie Vance-Whitten  
FOSP Vice President

Where does your mind wander to when you think of picnics in the park? Delicious food spread out on a red and white check tablecloth? Children playing tag? Lying in the grass watching the clouds take the shape of friendly farm animals?

The Friends of Silverwood Park volunteers are always dreaming up ways to put the focus on enjoying the outdoors with family and friends at Silverwood Park. What better way to do that than to focus on food?

For several years now, The Friends' tasting garden, known fondly as Grandma's Garden, has been planted expressly for visitors to nibble on...and nibble they do! In 2017, the Friends group began sponsoring Growers Mar-



The Edgerton School District hosted a cross country meet at Silverwood Park last year. (Photo submitted by Katie Vance-Whitten)

kets from May to October on the second Saturday of each month. These featured their Grower Partners who are very en-

thusiastic about growing and selling their fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Also in attendance at the Markets were local ven-

dors selling honey, eggs, garden plants and fresh baked treats.

Children who attended Edgerton School District's

popular summer school program, planted their own small gardens, tending them as the summer progressed. They not only learned about plants and the care they need, but also marketing skills by selling their produce at the Growers Markets.

The Edgerton School District also took advantage of the open spaces at the park for cross country races that brought hundreds of people to the park on a fine September day. And during Freshman Summit, students gave their time to projects aimed at improving the look and comfort of the park. Food is ever present to feed these hungry adolescents, and it is a pleasure to see them enjoying the outdoors without the presence of cell phones!

Silverwood Park's signature events both feature great music. Everyone's

favorite, the Barn Dance, was held last year in early June. Tim Jenkins and the Kettle Creek String Band kept toes tapping and hands clapping on and off the dance floor. The pie and ice cream table was a big hit and a great way to cool off after kicking up your heels.

Closing the summer season, Silverwood's 2017 Fall Fest was a treat for the taste buds and eyes, with the park at its best dressed in the colors of fall. On that day, the Growers Market boasted pumpkins, mums, honey, pickles...a feast of color and taste. Dan Reilly, always a favorite Edgerton entertainer, was on hand to make everyone dance and laugh. He is a local treasure!

We are working hard to make Silverwood Park a special place for your family to visit again and again. Welcome!

## Projects, events abound at Silverwood Park

By Kyle Richmond  
FOSP Board President

Spring is welcoming some changes to Silverwood Park, and programs are beginning to sprout too. Friends of Silverwood Park (FOSP) Board members expect 2018 to be an important year of growth, in more ways than one.

A new lease with the Dane County Parks Division soon will put 54 tillable and forested acres under the management of the Friends. This change will allow FOSP to fundraise, plan and push forward with implementation of the park master plan, while continuing to build FOSP's Grower Partner program.

Silverwood currently has four Grower Partners who rent tillable land. The FOSP Board is recruiting more growers, while continuing to support the conversion to organic agriculture practices across the park. Interested parties may contact park neighbor Katie Whitten, FOSP Board Vice President, for more information about growing at Silverwood.

In addition to organic agriculture, FOSP is moving to support two other educational "content areas" at Silverwood. The first is the Pollinator Education Project, which will educate school children, the general public, and growers/farmers about the importance of pollinators, and how they can support pollinators on their farms or in their backyard gardens.

To that end, FOSP recently received a grant from the Madison Community Foundation (MCF), which will help pay for workshops about encouraging pollinators for farmers and other growers. FOSP also intends to expand opportunities for K-12 students to learn about pollinators at the park as fundraising proceeds.

A "pollinator prairie," funded by Edgerton community supporter William Wartmann, has been installed and is slowly taking root, and a smaller pollinator garden - paid for by the Dane County Environmental Council - will be installed near the park entrance in May.

A perhaps more ambi-

tious project will be installation of a permaculture demonstration area at Silverwood, which is now being planned. Permaculture is just what it sounds like - a more permanent form of agriculture that strives to disturb less soil, provide perennial crops and work with the natural landscape to use less energy while supporting the native ecosystem. FOSP is now soliciting funding - and ideas - for this venture.

In 2017, a donation from Dan Bussey of Seed Savers established a 27-tree heirloom apple orchard at Silverwood. The FOSP Board is determined to continue expanding possibilities for learning about perennial food production as climate change and economic changes challenge us to adapt. The goal is to follow Irene Silverwood's vision for a working farm park which leads visitors to help create a sustainable future.

FOSP Board member (and Town of Albion resident) Cheri Trick established a monthly farmers market at the park in 2017 - a move in line with

the Friends vision to "educate, innovate and produce" at Silverwood. Technical and economic support for growers works hand-in-hand with their commitment, in turn, to assist FOSP with educational activities centered on agricultural practice at the park.

Conservation, recreation and general fun are also a focus for the Friends. Edgerton's Gifts for Kids has recently supported FOSP's project to create an educational nature trail for children in the woods at Silverwood. And events, such as Silverwood's Arbor Day celebration (which was held April 28), will help the public learn about the park's 330-year-old White Oak, which stands proudly next to the stone house (soon to be visitor's center) at the park.

Of course FOSP will continue with two other annual events in 2018 - the Barn Dance in June, and the Silverwood Harvest Fest in October. (See Edgerton calendar of events in this section of the Lakes Edition for more details on events at Silverwood Park.)



Kids grasp the large trunk of an oak tree in Silverwood Park that is believed to be approximately 330 years old. The tree's "birthday" was celebrated during an Arbor Day celebration in the park April 28. (Photo submitted by Katie Vance-Whitten)

The Friends will also continue to support other community groups to use the park, such as the Edgerton Cross Country teams' use of the trails in autumn, and equestrians who wish to ride horses at the park.

For more information about Silverwood, and how your might learn, recreate, or volunteer at the park, visit [www.silverwoodpark.org](http://www.silverwoodpark.org). Your assistance with Silverwood's development is very welcome.

## How old are you?

### Identifying the age of Koshkonong walleyes

By Adam Walton of Pike Pole Fishing Guide Services

Have you ever caught a walleye and wondered how old it is? Well, the answer may be quite surprising. When it comes to fish growth, there are many factors involved such as

available food present (forage), water temperature, and size of the body of water they live in. Although some of these variables can change seasonally and effect year classes of fish differently, the Wisconsin DNR still has ways to get an accu-

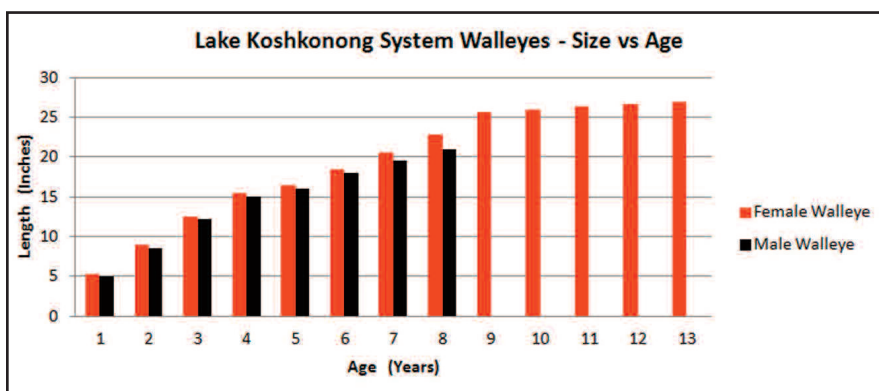
rate idea of a given walleye's age.

Below is data specific to walleyes located in the Lake Koshkonong system. Although the larger walleye population has decreased in recent years, there are still large fish to be found in the sys-

tem, particularly among the female population. A couple of interesting things to note are the male walleye growth rates on the Lake Koshkonong system plateau around 20" and only a couple over 20" have been documented during DNR surveying.

Another interesting fact is female growth rates start to plateau around 25" to 27", however, some have been known to grow to larger sizes and could be more than 15 years old.

So how old is that Lake Koshkonong walleye you caught? Check out this graph, which is based off several years of survey data collected by DNR staff.



Adam Walton with a Lake Koshkonong walleye. (Photo courtesy of Pike Pole Fishing Guide Services)