



ORGANIZATION: Forest Preserve Foundation
POSITION: President & Executive Director
REPORT TO: Board of Directors
LOCATION: Chicago, IL

MISSION

The mission of the Forest Preserve Foundation is to engage in protecting and restoring the treasured natural habitats of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and to enhance the outdoor experiences of all communities.

ABOUT THE FOREST PRESERVE OF COOK COUNTY FOUNDATION

Founded in 2013, the Forest Preserve Foundation (Foundation) is an independent, 501(c)(3) charitable foundation dedicated to raising funds and in-kind resources to support initiatives in the Forest Preserves of Cook County that are new, innovative and not able to be supported through public resources. Since its founding, the Foundation has contributed over \$2M to support programming across several core investment areas.

Youth Conservation Corps

The Foundation provides ongoing support of youth conservation internships that are rooted in a commitment to bring more people of color and low-income young adults into the conservation field. Youth who have meaningful connections to the natural world, especially under the guidance of role models, form strong connections to nature and feel empowered to make a difference as stewards of their environment. They also gain the many benefits of actively playing, exploring and/or working outside. Conservation Corps programs accomplish habitat restoration goals while providing teens with employment experience, science education, and a self-esteem enriching experience. Over the years, the Foundation has underwritten paid summer jobs for more than 400 young people from Chicago and the Cook County suburbs. They are mostly African American and Latinx residents served by the Housing Authority of Cook County, and the summer jobs aim to provide a pathway to green careers and life-long environmental advocacy, creating a more diverse conservation workforce.



The Foundation also supports two summer jobs programs for young people in Cook County: Forest Preserve Experience (FPE) and Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps (CCLC) through grants totaling \$121,200. FPE engages Cook County youth 14-19 years old in hands-on conservation work and education in local ecology. The 2019 FPE program brought 112 youth into the Forest Preserves of Cook County during the five-week program. Eight crews worked at six sites, and all participants resided in Housing Authority of Cook County properties or were HACC voucher holders in south and west suburban Cook County. CCLC engages high school aged youth in hands-on conservation projects such as invasive species removal, trail building, gardening, and construction of nature play areas. The program focuses efforts at five sites: Crabtree Nature Center, Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center, River Trail Nature Center, Sand Ridge Nature Center, and Trailside Nature Museum. In 2019, CCLC crews performed invasive species removal on 8.58 acres.

Ecological Restoration

Keeping the 70,000 acres of the Forest Preserves of Cook County ecologically healthy is a Foundation priority. A healthy ecosystem benefits everyone. The Preserves provide natural habitats of many animals and plants. They aid with stormwater management, and all trees in the Preserves help improve our air quality. To maintain our public lands takes many people—Preserves staff, volunteer stewards, Conservation Corps crews and hired contractors. The Foundation supports this vital work by raising funds to supplement ongoing restoration projects in the Preserves. The Foundation has supported restoration projects in [Cap Sauers Holding Preserves](#), Cranberry Slough, Shoe Factory Road Prairie and Galloping Fen.



Cap Sauers Holding Nature Preserves is a 1,500-acre state dedicated nature preserve located in the Palos Preserves. Recently, the Forest Preserve Foundation awarded a \$250,000 grant to the Forest Preserves of Cook County for restoration of 120 acres in Cap Sauers, thanks to the generosity of a Palos-area resident. The Foundation's work in ecological restoration is a responsible and

necessary way to combat climate change, while simultaneously engaging diversity, equity and inclusion as the core of their approach.

Family Programming

The Foundation seeks to make sure everyone has access to the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Funds from the Foundation support Nature Play areas, public nature-based art, and camp gear libraries. In 2019, a new Nature Play and Treehouse supported with National Recreation Foundation funding opened in Dan Ryan Woods. Memorial tributes allow families and groups to establish a lasting remembrance that honors someone in the Forest Preserves. This year, the Foundation facilitated the installation of 16 benches and the planting of seven trees.

Signature Events

As the signature fundraising event for the Foundation, the **Conservation Cup** golf tournament draws more than 150 golfers and guests and to raises over \$200,000. The Foundation's **Spring Symposium** showcases the breadth of the Forest Preserves—from its recreational amenities to the ways it contributes to the region's environmental health. In 2019, the symposium was attended by nearly 100 guests from across the civic and business communities and highlighted Foundation partnerships with REI and the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. The "**Summer Soiree**" is an intimate event that highlights the connection between the Forest Preserves of Cook County and the Foundation, providing a chance for guests and many civic and business leaders to hear directly from Forest Preserves leadership and young people whose lives have been touched by Foundation support.

Grantmaking

Supporting the Forest Preserves of Cook County is the core of the work at the Foundation. Over the years, the Foundation has provided support to several important projects, including:

- Cap Sauers Holding Preserve Restoration (\$250,000): For restoration work on 120 acres to reconnect critical conservation areas and create new habitat.
- Conservation Corps, Forest Preserve Experience (\$75,000 via Central Indiana Community Foundation): To support a five-week paid summer jobs program for a minimum of 84 high school youth whose families utilize the services of the Housing Authority of Cook County.
- Student Conservation Association/Chicago Conservation Leaders Corps (\$50,000 via the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation): To support 22 students from Chicago to participate in the six-week 2019 summer program.
- Nature as Community Engagement (\$30,000 via CSX): A partnership with the American Indian Center and ENLACE to use nature connections to develop culturally specific programs, recruit and train community-based nature ambassadors.
- Cranberry Slough Restoration (\$25,000): To restore 11 acres to ecological health.
- Career Exploration (\$11,200 via Allstate): To support participants in the Forest Preserve Experience program, the Cook County Housing Authority partnership with the Forest Preserves, to attend 2019 Career Exploration Day.
- Restoration of Palos Trail Slope (\$13,500 via REI): Restoration of six acres on a ravine slope that lies between a new mountain bike trail and a stream, stabilizing soil and conserving rare plant species.
- Restoration of Galloping Hill Fen (\$10,000 via Oberweiler Foundation): Restoration work to remove invasive species.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Forest Preserve Foundation has grown considerably over the past 7 years, enabling the support of many projects and initiatives within the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Since its founding, the Foundation's entrepreneurial efforts have built its capacity, awareness and impact and have laid the groundwork for a new period of growth and engagement in the coming years.

The incoming President, in partnership with a dedicated Board of Directors and colleagues at the Forest Preserves of Cook County, will have the opportunity to chart a new strategy that leverages its growing impact to generate an increased level of philanthropic support for priority projects within the Forest Preserves. Several critical activities will drive this effort, including: the development of a comprehensive strategic plan outlining specific objectives in fund development growth; continued work with the Board of Directors to identify and develop high-profile, philanthropic, business, and conservation leadership to serve within the organization; and continued

organizational development to strengthen the impact of the Foundation's work in partnership with the Forest Preserves.

Further, there is a unique opportunity to align Foundation activities with the priority projects and needs of the Preserves. Specifically, there is the potential for a significant campaign to support important needs within the Forest Preserves related to infrastructure, programming, outreach, and education. The next President will have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy that conceptualizes, plans, and executes a multi-year campaign on behalf of these key initiatives. This effort has the potential to further the Foundation's brand in the community, while also ensuring that core needs at the Forest Preserves are met.

Given the public health challenges we are confronting in the era of COVID-19, the places encompassing the Forest Preserves of Cook County have become even more important to the fabric of the community. As more people utilize the Forest Preserves than ever before, the Foundation has a true opportunity to translate this engagement into broader support, while also advancing the goals of equity and inclusion as core to its mission.

POSITION SUMMARY

The President & Executive Director (President) is the key management leader of Forest Preserve Foundation. The President is responsible for overseeing the administration, programs, and strategic plan of the organization. Key duties include fundraising, marketing, and stakeholder (grantee, partner, Board of Directors, and ally) engagement. This President reports directly to the Board of Directors.

- Board Governance: Works with the Board to fulfill the organization mission. Responsible for leading the Foundation in a manner that supports and guides the organization's mission as defined by the Board of Directors. Responsible for communicating effectively with the Board and providing, in a timely and accurate manner, all information necessary for the Board to function properly and to make informed decisions. Confer regularly with the Board Chair to align objectives and implementation.
- Mission and Strategy: Works with the Board and staff to ensure that the mission is fulfilled through donor development, communication, and program investments. Responsible for implementation of Foundation's grantmaking programs that carry out the organization's mission. Responsible for strategic planning to ensure that Foundation can successfully fulfill its mission into the future. Responsible for the enhancement of Foundation's image by being active and visible in the community and by working closely with other professional, civic and private organizations.
- Financial Performance and Viability: Develops resources sufficient to ensure the financial health of the organization. Responsible for fundraising and developing other revenues necessary to support the Foundation's mission. Responsible for the fiscal integrity of the Foundation, including proposing the annual budget and presenting financial statements. Responsible for fiscal management that generally anticipates operating within the approved

budget, ensures maximum resource utilization, and maintenance of the organization in a positive financial position.

- Operations: Oversees and implements appropriate resources to ensure that the operations of the organization are appropriate. Responsible for the retention of competent, qualified staff, the effective administration of Foundation operations and all agreements, and other instruments made and entered into and on behalf of the organization.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Overview: The Foundation seeks a visionary and entrepreneurial leader with a passion and drive to enhance and expand access to parks and open space. This values-based individual will bring leadership characterized by unwavering integrity, an ability to garner broad community support, and the ability to lead and execute strategic plans that impact the needs and priorities of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Leaders of color and others with extensive experience addressing systemic racism and inequities to promote more just outcomes are encouraged to apply.

Fundraising and Philanthropy. Proven personal success in fundraising is a key requirement. In addition to professional leadership, this could include service as a fundraising volunteer, and should include active solicitation of contributions from individuals, foundations, or corporations. Fundraising experience should be comprehensive and reflect demonstrated success with high level donors, as well as in engaging small dollar, non-traditional donors. Experience working in funding collaborations, including public-private partnerships with other institutional funders would be beneficial. Prior philanthropic relationships with individuals, foundations and corporations is a plus.

Strategic Planning and Financial Acumen. The successful candidate will have well-honed skills in effective business and operations management of a similarly sized or larger organization and will have been a catalyst in expanding an organization's vision. Experience in initiating and implementing strategic plans in pursuit of broad goals is expected. The ideal candidate will demonstrate a proven track record of successfully managing complex budgets and agreements with the municipal, state or federal agencies as well as private funders.

Exceptional Communications and Relational Skills. The successful candidate will possess the highest level of oral, written, mediation, partnership and interpersonal communication skills to effectively work with a broad range of individuals and organizations including Board members, professional colleagues, public officials and community partners, as well as the media. This candidate will build bridges of support for the organization and will have experience working in a collaborative environment with leaders across sectors to envision and implement a thoughtful approach to enhancing the role of the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

Building a Strong Internal Culture. Candidates must demonstrate the ability to build and nurture a positive, equitable culture, both in the Foundation as well with partners at the Forest Preserves of Cook County that is grounded in a shared vision, vibrant in teamwork and supported by mutual respect and an unrelenting pursuit of quality. A

proven ability to hire, coach, lead and inspire employees as an effective team is a must. High integrity, empathy, self-awareness and sound judgment are essential to success in this role. The Foundation seeks a person whose listening skills and strength of character are well demonstrated; and who is open, accessible and supportive of an energetic staff.

Experience in the fields of conservation, environment, and parks is a plus but not required. Demonstrated fundraising success is required. A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university is required.

To apply, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at <https://bit.ly/38sNsfk> (click on the Apply button at the bottom of the page).

For more information about the Forest Preserve Foundation, visit <https://forestpreservefoundation.org/>