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The Heartland Sierran

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

The Newsletter of the Thomas Hart Benton Group of the Sierra Club

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April 2015 issue

Outings Leader Training drew Sierra Club members across state lines for leadership training

By Tom Tortorich

What does it take to become an outings leader with the Sierra Club?

That's what the Outings Leadership Training (OLT) courses teach. THB Outings Chair Eileen McManus saw the need to offer an OLT 201 course locally, and entreated THB's own local backpacking guru, Paul Gross, to teach it.

Paul Gross, a 20+ year backpacking veteran, skillfully conducted the OLT 201 training course in February 2015, drawing in Sierra Club members from across the region and across state lines. The hands-on, full-day class covered a wide range of topics and skill sets necessary for leading a group of

Sierra Club hikers on overnight backpacking/camping trips away from vehicles. The class covered topics from leadership styles and group dynamics to hard and soft skills.

What participants learned was applicable not only to leading hikes, but useful on many other life paths as well. Fortune 500 companies pay top dollar for "leadership training courses." Paul's course was of that caliber, and offered at no cost to local, dedicated Sierra Club outdoor enthusiasts who had met the prerequisites. The preliminary OLT 101 class is an online course which prepares leaders to conduct short day hikes. Sierra

OLT, continued on page 3



February 8 tree identification outing in Loose Park

Photo by Dina Claiborne

Downtown KC: Pollution Raises Asthma Rates

By Sara Campbell

March is asthma awareness month. 82,000 adults and 31,000 children in the Kansas City Metro Region are living with asthma and I am one of them.

I, my sister and both of our daughters have asthma which is aggravated by air pollution. As a disabled Army veteran, my severe asthma attacks affect the way I live my life but they also create a large expense for health system. My niece's most recent flare-up forced her into an expensive trip to the emergency room. She was lethargic and her skin turned blue. She now needs to use a nebulizer to help her breathe and we must make choices about how often she can go outside and when. She is only 10 years old.

In downtown Kansas City we face above-average rates of asthma symptoms, particularly in children. Jackson County has significantly higher rates of asthma emergency visits and hospitalizations when compared to the rest of the region. And the Kansas City Region has significantly higher asthma emergency room visits and asthma-related

hospitalizations than the state of Missouri.

We need to be talking about a major cause of asthma symptoms: air pollution. Living in Downtown Kansas City comes with many amenities, but in order to live there with asthma, I keep my apartment windows closed and use air purifiers, expensive medications and breathing treatments. Part of the issue is because I live in an area with high rates of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) caused by the outdated coal-fired plant, Veolia Energy.

Another part of the problem is smog. In January, I testified at one of three EPA hearings on the Proposed Ground Ozone (Smog) Levels about how my family and I struggle with asthma and how important it is to tighten our national smog restrictions. Half of all Missourians live in areas with high ozone pollution, but most people do not know that they are at risk.

Missouri residents deserve clean air, so fourteen Missouri state legislators have submitted letters to the EPA calling for the agency to issue a stronger smog pollution standard in order to protect public health.

Tightening the smog standards

will benefit the economy by creating more jobs as a result of innovation and investment in new technologies. Smog standards would also reduce related healthcare costs, which are the leading cause of bankruptcies in this country.

March is Asthma Awareness month. I urge you to stand strongly against the relentless industry pushback in order to protect our community's health.



The Veolia energy plant just north of downtown KC contributes to dangerously high levels of SO₂. Sierra Club helped raise awareness of the issue in 2014 with several community forums and a petition delivered to the Missouri Air Conservation Commission.

Photo by Gretchen Waddell Barwick

Sierra Club Outings

We are now on Meetup!

Sierra Club Outings

We now have our most recent outings on our Meetup Sierra Club Outings Group. Please visit us there for the most up-to-date information on any outings: Meetup.com/KC-Sierra-Club-Outings



Heartland Sierra Club Friends

We are now listing Sierra Club events and social activities on Meetup. Please join us if you like: Meetup.com/KC-Metro-Sierra-Club

Apr 4 (Sat) Wildflower Identification Part 1, Discovery Center, Kansas City, MO.

Educational Specialist Pat Whelan will explain how to ID wildflowers based on their color, shape, leaf arrangement, time of blooming, habitat and distribution. We will walk the grounds of the Discovery Center woodlands to ID spring ephemerals. Missouri Wildflowers field guide can be purchased in the gift shop for \$14. Eileen McManus, (816) 523-7823, eileen4250@sbcglobal.net

Apr 18 (Sat) Elk River Wind Farm Tour, Beaumont, KS.

Get a closer look at the wind energy in the making! Carpool meet up at 7:30 am at the old Tanger Mall by the East entrance to I-70. The farm is about 2.5 hours away. Options to bring your own lunch or purchase lunch at the Beaumont Hotel. Please dress appropriately for the weather. The space is limited, so please RSVP. Optional \$5 donation. Travis Robinett, (512) 775-4040, travis.robinett@gmail.com

Apr 18-20 (Sat-Mon) 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Piney Creek Wilderness, Shell Knob, MO.

This is one in a series of backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack the 13 miles of trails within the wilderness. \$10 donation requested. Derrick Mahoney, (785) 845-5793, derrickncindy@gmail.com

Apr 25-26 (Sat-Sun) Women's Backpacking Trip on the Pigeon Roost Trail, Rogers, AR.

We'll do an easy, 8.5-mile loop with one backcountry overnight. The PRT is located in the Hobbs State Park Conservation Area in NW Arkansas, about 4 hours from KC. Dogs are welcome, too! \$5 donation requested. Renee Andriani, (913) 488-4445, randri4445@gmail.com

Apr 26 (Sun) Wildflower Identification

Part 2, Eddy-Ballentine Trail, Kansas City, MO. We will walk about two miles through thick woods and along a rock crevice and stream in search of spring ephemerals to identify. \$3 donation requested. Eileen McManus, (816) 523-7823, eileen4250@sbcglobal.net

May 3 (Sun) Serengeti & Wagon Trails, south side of Kansas City, MO. This will be our second of several Sunday afternoon hikes on the trails along the Blue River south of Minor Park in south Kansas City. Once again we will meet in the parking lot just east of the railroad overpass with the softball fields, volleyball court and boat ramp, but this time will hike on the Serengeti and Wagon Trails south of Blue Ridge Boulevard. Bring snacks, water. \$3 donation requested. Steve Hassler, (913) 707-3296, hassler@planetkc.com

May 23-24 (Sat-Sun) Kayak/Kanoe

Kamping on the Kaw, Lawrence, KS. Weather and river conditions permitting, we will put in at Lawrence below the dam, camp overnight on a sandbar, and take out at DeSoto, paddling 20 miles in two days. Previous experience required. Howling at the moon optional. Group limit: 8. BYOB (bring your own boat). \$10 donation requested. Tim Cross, (785) 842-2167, tecross3@gmail.com

May 29-31 (Fri-Sun) 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Irish Wilderness, Doniphan, MO.

This is one in a series of

backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack the 18 mile loop trail within the wilderness. \$10 donation requested. Derrick Mahoney, (785) 845-5793, derrickncindy@gmail.com

May 30 (Sat) Day Hike at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Strong City, KS. It's wildflower season, so bring your field guide if you have one! We'll do an 8-mile loop through the bison pasture and take in some stunning vistas, then reward ourselves with an early dinner at Ad Astra in Strong City. \$3 donation requested, plus \$ for dinner. Renee Andriani, (913) 488-4445, randri4445@gmail.com

Jun 6-8 (Sat-Mon) 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Hercules-Glades Wilderness, Bradleyville, MO. This is one in a series of backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack some of the 18 miles of trails within the wilderness. \$10 donation requested. Cindy Spears, (785) 845-5793,

derrickncindy@gmail.com

Jun 6 (Sat) Bike Ride to Powell Garden, Kingsville, MO. Cycle 25 miles of rolling hills & rural settings from Blue Springs to Powell Gardens. We will lunch at Café Thyme, followed by a hike through the gardens. A trailer for bikes and car rides will be available for our return. \$5 donation requested. Paul Gross, (816) 985-2339, wildwoodp@hotmail.com

Jun 6 (Sat) Bike the Millcreek Streamway Trail, Shawnee, KS. The Mill Creek Streamway Trail runs more than 17 miles from the Kansas River in the north to Olathe in the south. We'll meet at the Barker Road access point north of Shawnee Mission Parkway and pedal south about 8 miles then return. This ride will be leisurely and family friendly. Bring water and snacks. We'll head to lunch afterward for those who are interested. \$5 Sierra Club donation requested. Melissa LeSage, jmfamily76@hotmail.com

Jun 27 (Sat) Hike through Native Prairie Grasses & Wildflowers, Prairie Center, Olathe, KS. Join us on a leisurely hike through the 300-acre Prairie Center to identify wildflowers and prairie grasses in bloom on an early summer morning. We'll also review the current status of the prairie ecosystem. As chiggers and ticks are abundant during this time, please wear long pants with insect repellent. Suggested donation \$3. Limited to 12 participants. Michael Miller, (913) 424-8530, mrmiller1@mindspring.com

The Heartland Sierran

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The Heartland Sierran, the newsletter of the Thomas Hart Benton Group of the Sierra Club, is published on a regular basis for members in western Missouri.

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1000 New EV Charging Stations coming to KC

In January, KCP&L announced plans to build a large network of charging stations for electric vehicles in the region. This “Clean Charge Network” is slated for completion this summer, and will support more than 10,000 electric vehicles. The stations will be free for the first two years through partnerships with companies where stations are located, and able to charge any type of electric vehicle.

Each charging station will have two plugs. A mobile app will help drivers find the nearest charging station. Some of the stations will be rapid-charge, and Nissan, maker of the Leaf, is helping support the cost for those. In addition to KC, there will be stations in St. Joseph, Sedalia, Clinton, and other nearby areas.

This will be the largest installation of EV charging stations so far in the nation. This positive step should help reduce “range anxiety,” the biggest obstacle to wider adoption of all-electric vehicles.

According to Stephen Werts, Sierra Club member, who owns two electric vehicles, “Having a wider charging network will also improve the utility of smaller, less-expensive EVs and plug-in hybrids, which have limited-range batteries and are ideal for use in the city. We all benefit from increased EV usage through improvement in the air quality of Kansas City, with the cars creating zero emissions and the increasingly clean power plants that fuel them being outside the city center.”

Stephen invites any who are interested to attend the Prairie Village Earth Fair at Shawnee Mission East High School on March 28, where the Mid-America Electric Auto Association will be displaying and promoting electric vehicles.



With the addition of 1000 charging stations in KC, we'll soon be seeing more all-electric vehicles like the Nissan Leaf on the road
Photo by Claus Wawrzinek

Beyond Coal: Making Progress in Independence

By Winston Apple

In May of 2014 petitions were signed by members and supporters of The Sierra Club in Independence, Missouri in support of renewable energy. Two months later, City Council member Scott Roberson introduced a resolution calling for the closure of one coal-fired power plant (Missouri City) and an end to “the use of coal as a fuel source at the Blue Valley Power Plant.” (Blue Valley will switch to natural gas by January of 2016.)

The resolution also authorized and directed the City Manager to develop and present to the City Council feasibility studies “to determine the practicality and economics of the use of renewable energy options such as solar, wind and geothermal at City-owned facilities.” These preliminary studies were due November 30th of last year.

When the studies were presented, the results exceeded our expectations. Leon Daggett, the director of Independence Power and Light (IPL), recently announced that IPL has received its last shipment of coal and that IPL is on track to be the “greenest utility in the region.” Plans are in the works for a community solar project that would provide 10 megawatts of power.

The activity on the issue of clean, renewable energy in Independence caught the attention of Mayor Matt Mallinson of Sugar Creek. He set up a meeting with John Delurey, community organizer with the Sierra Club (which I was invited to attend). Plans are in the works for a 10- to 17-megawatt solar farm in Sugar Creek on a once-contaminated oil refinery site and John and I have been working with him to help bring those plans to fruition. It is beginning to look like he may not need much help. Some very exciting news regarding clean, renewable energy should be coming from Mayor Mallinson any day now.

Sierra Club Excom member Anne McGregor (along with John and myself) also met recently with a member of Kansas City Mayor James’ staff regarding possibilities for expanded use of solar energy in Kansas City. The meeting went very well and a follow-up meeting has been scheduled.

The times they are a-changin’. The move to clean, renewable energy is picking

up steam (pun intended) around the USA and the world. It is important to take time to celebrate victories, particularly those in which we have a hand.

Councilman Roberson and Mayor Mallinson are true believers with regard to the need to move to clean energy and these developments might have taken place even without the involvement of The Sierra Club. It is worth noting, however, that Independence City Manager Robert Heacock made reference (with a smile on his face) to the fact that the people of Independence had made it very clear that they wanted IPL to move to renewable energy. And that, my fellow Sierra Club members, was a nod in our direction.

To get involved in further efforts to lessen our use of coal, contact Gretchen at gretchen.waddellbarwick@sierraclub.org. You can also check our new website for the latest information.

“It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message—spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions—telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet. Telling us that we need to evolve.”

— Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

OLT, continued from page 1

Club outings leaders must also have first-aid training to assist when emergency situations arise outdoors.

About a dozen prospective leaders completed the OLT 201 training course, many of whom will be leading their first “provisional” trips this spring. Through this new crop of leaders, look for your local Sierra Club to offer even more hiking opportunities in the coming months and years. That means more opportunities for members to experience the outdoors under the guidance of trained leaders who can help us feel more comfortable away from civilization & cell phones, and allow us all to learn what it truly means to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet.

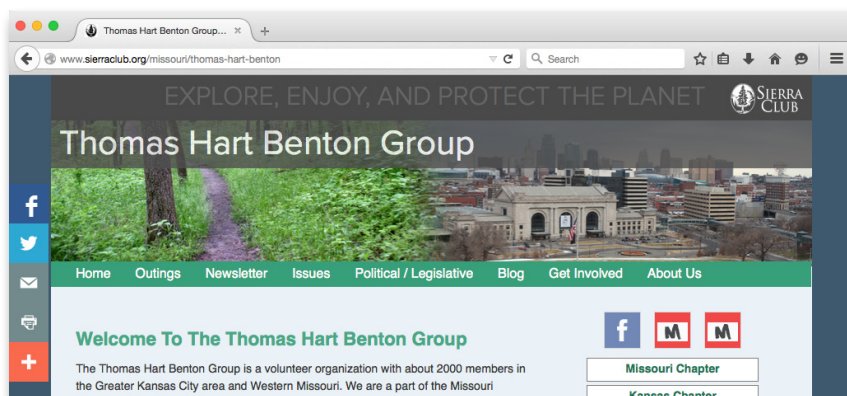
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LED Switch Could Save Resources, Lives

By Anne McGregor

I live in an 18-unit condominium with a lighted parking lot. This parking lot is lit by four, 260-watt wall-mounted metal halide light fixtures that run from dusk to dawn. These light fixtures are impractical and waste energy. Using more efficient light bulbs would not only save money for our building but save our planet's resources. The vast majority of Missouri's energy comes from burning coal, which has dangerous health and environmental side effects. Saving energy literally saves lives.

To replace the metal halide light fixtures with LEDs would cost about \$900. This replacement would yield annual energy savings of \$382. This means we would make our investment back in less than 3 years. Additionally, the LEDs will last a lot longer than the metal halides, saving replacement costs for years to come.

Last summer KCP&L was making \$1000 grants for sustainability projects that could be used to pay for the new LEDs plus their installation. It is helpful to check with your local utility about rebates, programs,

or any other incentive when considering lighting or other energy efficiency upgrades. While my condominium chose to not make the investment this time, I will keep trying!

What energy efficiency improvements have you made to your home? Share them with us by emailing Gretchen at gretchen.waddellbarwick@sierraclub.org.



Metal-Halide lights were developed in the 1960s and were considered efficient at the time, but today's LED efficiency leaves them in the shade

Photo: Anne McGregor

Take a Hike with us!

We now have most of our outings and events on social media. Please look for us there.

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facebook.com/THBSierraClub

Heartland Sierra Club Friends
meetup.com/KC-Metro-Sierra-Club

Kansas City Area Sierra Club Outings
meetup.com/KC-Sierra-Club-Outings

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sierraclub.org/missouri/thomas-hart-benton

