

Aldo Leopold Events from Lodi Reads Leopold

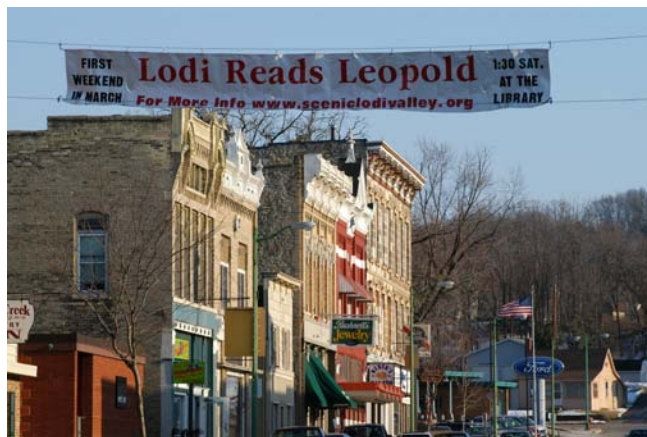
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Name of event:

Lodi Reads Leopold

Date of event: Lodi Reads Leopold has expanded to include the entire month of March, with the “hub weekend” being the first weekend in March. In years past, most of the Lodi Reads Leopold activities were on the first weekend in March. Some years there were evening presentations (speakers) on some of the weeknights leading up the Leopold weekend. In the early years of the event it was a weekend-long event; in the past few years the activities have been focused on the first Saturday in March.

Event content: Different activities that have been part of our event over time: Over the years, Lodi Reads Leopold has grown, shifted, and adapted. During various years, participants have hiked, built Leopold benches, watched movies, visited the Leopold Shack, listened to distinguished speakers, cooked over Dutch ovens, and been part of panel discussions. Student participation has been a constant feature of the event through readings, dramatic presentations, interpretive art, and other means of expression. The involvement of youth has been intentional, reflecting the committee’s belief in the importance of helping youth become familiar with the words of Leopold and introducing them to the idea of a land ethic. During the past three years, the Community Forum has been an important addition, helping all of us go beyond reading the words of Leopold to actually applying the ideas of Leopold to the way we live our lives.



This year (2010) we changed the format in order to reach more “new” people who would typically not come to hear Leopold’s work being read at the Saturday event. We offered to provide opportunities for volunteer Leopold readers from any type of community groups...civic organizations, youth groups, school groups, faith-based groups, etc. An invited reader attended meetings that were happening in the community and read a brief (5- to 7-minute) section from *A Sand County Almanac*. The reader also talked briefly about what Leopold’s idea/words mean in his/her life, why the reader likes the particular reading, or why the volunteer chose to be part of the Lodi Reads Leopold event. Through this outreach, thirty-five volunteers (which included 24 elementary school students) read to 196 people at twelve different community organization meetings.

One aspect that we did keep on the first Saturday in March in 2010 – which we’ve been doing for the past three years – was our Community Forum. The purpose of the Lodi Reads Leopold Community Forum is to help all of us apply Aldo Leopold’s ideas to our modern, Lodi lives. Each year the committee chooses a topic that is relevant to a current issue in the Lodi area and assembles a panel of local people involved in the issue. This panel provides information as the basis for discussion among all who are present. This year’s topic was “Homegrown Meals: How can Lodi eat nutritional and locally-produced food?” Approximately thirty people participated in the Community Forum. In keeping with the topic of locally grown food, the 2010 Lodi Reads Leopold event also included an evening during which Michael Pollan’s book, “In Defense of Food,” was discussed. Staff from the Lodi Woman’s Club Library hosted this discussion.

Partnering to make the event happen: Lodi Reads Leopold is organized under the umbrella of a local organization, the Friends of Scenic Lodi Valley, working cooperatively with the Lodi Woman’s Club

Library. One important partner has been the Lodi School District, especially a core group of teachers at the Elementary School who see the value of the event for their students and put in considerable time and effort to have their students involved. Businesses from the community have donated money and products (coffee, food) in support of the event. The local Masonic Lodge and the local Presbyterian Church have allowed use of their dining room/kitchen space at no charge during the years that meals were part of the event. The Pheasants Forever-Columbia County Chapter has been a sponsor as well.

How many people are involved in planning the event: The Lodi Reads Leopold committee membership has ebbed and flowed since its inception in 2000, with current membership at eight people. Some of these members are involved in all aspects of the event, while others take on responsibility for specific parts. It has worked well to have a committee chair that is able to have the “big picture” and be aware of what’s happening with all aspects of the event in order to make sure everything is coordinated.

Tips from the Lodi Reads Leopold committee:

- Youth are always a big draw; our attendance always goes up when young people read or perform.
- When we were reading on the Leopold weekend Saturday we would recruit volunteer readers and send them a copy of their assigned reading so that they didn’t have to hunt it up. We used the same copy from year to year and had the readers sign and date it after they read. This has made for a nice historical record of who our readers have been over the years.
- In 2011 we will most likely use the same strategy we used in 2010, taking Leopold out into the community by reading to community groups. However, we also learned that some people really look forward to hearing Leopold’s words read during the Leopold Saturday event, so we’ll probably add a few readings before or after the Community Forum.
- Committee members are creative thinkers and will come up with lots of great ideas of things to do to make the event “bigger and better” each year, but it’s important that each new idea must have a “champion” who is going to take the lead in making the new idea happen or else it has to be put in the file for another year. By doing this you make sure that things don’t end up falling to the committee chair, which may put your committee at risk of burning out your chair.



Budget for the event: The expenses for Lodi Reads Leopold have ranged from \$700-\$2000, depending on things like whether we have a meal with the event, if we sponsored any trips for school groups to the Shack or the Leopold Center, or if we paid an honorarium to a guest speaker. Approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of our annual budget is advertising. Through the generosity of our sponsors over the years, we have a running balance so we can operate during years when our sponsors find it necessary to reduce their contributions.

Challenges: The Lodi Reads Leopold committee wants to make sure that the event stays “fresh” and that it goes beyond merely reading the words of Leopold to actually applying those words to local issues. The committee also wants to find ways to reach new audiences to introduce them to the ideas of Leopold and the vision of a land ethic. We will meet these challenges by being willing to try new ideas for the event while also not losing sight of those “traditional” aspects of the event that people in the community value, such as reading Leopold at the library on the Leopold Saturday.

Favorite memory of Lodi Reads Leopold: It’s difficult not to get emotional when you hear young people reading the words of Leopold or talking about their artistic representations of his ideas. It’s a very hopeful experience.

Aldo Leopold Events from Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary

Name: Nikki Nelson, Program Director Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary **Contact:** program@hunthill.org

Name of events:

1. Aldo Leopold Banquet: This was an evening event held on Leopold weekend and featured a program and a 'wild game' meal. The first part of the program featured a local professor giving a short biography on Leopold and then a selection of readings – from the provided pp disc – presented by local High School students.

2. Leopold Benches: This was a morning activity held on Leopold weekend in 2010 and had each participant building their own Leopold Bench. All materials were pre-cut, pre-drilled and put into kits for participants.

3. Leopold's Wild Linner: This event is scheduled for a Sunday afternoon on September 19th and features a dinner of wild game followed by a presentation by Stanley Temple.



How long has your event been established? Each year we've been trying to vary the programming to keep interested people coming back and hopefully drawing in new people with each different program style

How did your event get started? A board member, Tim McRaith, was very interested in Leopold and he started the excitement for Leopold programming about 5-6 years ago. It started out with a small group getting together to share their favorite passages from his writings and has since developed into annual events.

Who did you partner with to make the event happen? **1.** We partnered with a local restaurant, Spooner Market and Grill to do our catering. They are a well-known and strongly supported restaurant specializing in wholesome, local and organic meals. We also partnered with a teacher and a few students from a High school Conservation Club to perform some readings. **2.** A local Americorp work group donated time and some materials to pre-saw all of our lumber for the bench building. We also have a strong volunteer base that helped assemble benches during the program. **3.** We are very happy to welcome Stanley Temple as the presenter for this upcoming program. And of course the Leopold Foundation who has provided us with resources, and the most wonderful PowerPoint presentation of the Almanac chapters.

How many people were involved in making the activities happen on the actual day/days of the event? Anywhere from 5-10 volunteers would help with registration, running the program and cleanup.

Are there any tips you can share with others who are new to planning events about how to ensure success?

- A. Do all the free press you can! Email members, friends, family, schools, colleges, community groups, etc. Do free press releases to the local papers and radio stations. Post it on any website that lists local or environmental events. Distribute flyers locally to businesses, libraries and schools.

- B. Collaborations typically mean more work and time to align all the parts correctly, however, it is usually well worth it as others bring more excitement, more contacts, help spread the costs and offer more variety to participants.
- C. If you are going to do any sort of construction projects, such as benches, pre-cut, pre-drill and pre-group all materials for each registrant. This decreases time and encourages people who may not have a lot of woodworking experience to still come because nothing is too technical.
- D. If you are going to have high school students read, be sure that they've practiced their readings multiple times and have a real understanding of what their reading means.

Describe your favorite memory of a Leopold Weekend Event. Bench building was a great event. It was wonderful to have a wide range of people show up – those with a lot of woodworking experience all the way through elderly women who had never held a drill. Because all the materials were pre-sawn and drilled and we had lots of volunteers to help, everyone, regardless of woodworking skill had a wonderful time. Another fond memory at the same event: We told the story of how Leopold was believed to have sat backwards on 'the bench' and then use the backrest as an elbow rest while watching through his binoculars. Two women took this to heart and we took a really cute picture of their reenactment (see below).



What are your goals for future Leopold Weekend Events? Continue to expose people to Leopold. His message spans across time, communities and ages and its important to continue to connect people to those words and beliefs.

Aldo Leopold Weekend at Retzer Nature Center

Name: Larry Kascht, Naturalist Supervisor, Retzer Nature Center

Name of event:

Aldo Leopold Weekend at Retzer Nature Center

When is the event held?

First Saturday of March (Aldo Leopold Weekend). This is a one-day event, with morning and afternoon components. For the last 3 years, I have also done a guest program at the Muskego Library on the Saturday after our event. The event has been held every year since 2006.

How did your event get started?

Retzer Nature Center has a strong tradition of teaching Leopold—in the past, this included events such as ‘Aldo Leopold Day’, teacher-training in the Leopold Education Project (for which we are facilitators), and infusion of Leopold’s teachings into a host of public and private programming. As we became aware of the Aldo Leopold Weekend, it seemed like a natural fit.

What are the different activities you have incorporated into your events? Which have worked well and which were challenging, and why?

Over the past 5 years, our activities have included: shared readings from *A Sand County Almanac*; an original multi-media presentation (pictures, music, readings) titled “Aldo Leopold—A Prophet For Our Time”; an outdoor program on principles and practices of natural land management (showcasing application of Leopold’s teachings to our land management at Retzer); a program of discovery-based, inductive reading of the landscape (as Leopold does in *A Sand County Almanac*); and programs featuring first-person interpretation of Aldo Leopold (2 different presenters).

Who did you partner with to make the event happen?

We have partnered with the Aldo Leopold Foundation (obviously), with the office of State Senator Neal Kedzie, and with the Wisconsin Humanities Council (through whom we secured one of our first person Leopold interpreters). Apart from this, we have utilized the professional services of Retzer Nature Center staff (Lead Teaching Naturalist, Land Manager, Conservation Biologist, Senior Naturalist Emeritus, Office Manager), and of Waukesha Cty Parks staff (Park Program Specialist/Publicist, Program Desk).

How many people were involved in planning the event?

Anywhere from 4 to 10 people planned the event, depending on the year. Anywhere from 2 to 6 people are present to staff events, depending on the year.

Are there any tips you can share with others who are new to planning events about how to ensure success?

At Retzer we have a strong tradition of teaching Leopold—including teaching about his life, career, writings, and ideas, and implementing his ideas both in our educational programming and in our land management. We have also been involved with the Leopold Education Project as facilitators. All this has created a base of

experience within our staff that we have been able to draw on in putting together programming for Aldo Leopold Weekend. So...I think that getting involved in Leopold-related teaching as an ongoing objective is good general preparation for this special event.

Beyond this, I think that good avenues for new folks to explore could include—

- Partnering with a sporting group such as Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited
- Partnering with a community-based natural landscaping group (such as Wild Ones), a food co-op, an organic farm
- Partnering with groups that can provide speakers and interpreters such as the Wisconsin Humanities Council, Audubon Society chapters, colleges, nature centers
- Pairing a scheduled shared reading of *A Sand County Almanac* with an interpretive hike in a natural area, led by a naturalist—with emphasis on natural themes present in Leopold's writings, discovery-based land learning, and natural land management;
- Working food in some way—hot chocolate and muffins, pizza, whatever brings folks in.

Did you get donations to fund your event? If so, from where?

Mostly, no donations—we have tried to keep our costs low, and have covered costs within our programming budget. We benefited by a donation from the Leopold Foundation this year, and from free publicity some years through Senator Kedzie's office.

What is the average budget for your event annually? Where does this go (ie, 50% advertising, 50% refreshments)

The budget is minimal, with funds needed for an honorarium (~\$100) and local accommodations (~\$100) for an outside guest speaker (if we have one in any given year), and for printing costs for program handouts (~\$50). Promotion is done primarily through free public service announcements to local media, and listing in our program flyer. Since we make primary use of our own staff, the staff time for this event is contained within our existing staffing budget for programming (if we broke this out, it might be about 30 staff hours x an average pay rate of \$20/hour = \$800). So an estimated built-in cost of about \$600-\$800 per year seems about right.

What are some challenges facing your Leopold Weekend Event? How are you looking to address them?

A main challenge is getting Leopold's message to folks other than those who already know and love Leopold. Although our attendance has been pretty good, it tends to be 'true believers'. I feel like we are 'preaching to the choir' (though the choir needs to be re-inspired too).

Describe your favorite memory of a Leopold Weekend Event?

The extraordinary experience of developing my own first-person interpretive program portraying Aldo Leopold.

What are your goals for future Leopold Weekend Events?

To continue to reach out with creative new programming, and to reach new audiences.