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West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Receives Interpretive Project Grant from the National Association for Interpretation - Region 4

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Region 4 recently announced its Interpretive Project Grant Award Winners, and is pleased to report West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation project is among the 2014 recipients.

The Interpretive Project Grants (IPG) program is designed to provide a source of funding for small projects by Association members within the Great Lakes region including Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Ontario. Projects may include exhibitry, signage, programs, or other ideas that enhance visitors' interpretive experience. Applications are submitted annually, and reviewed by the IPG Committee consisting of members of NAI Region 4 who guide the grant process and make recommendations to the Region 4 Board of Directors.

West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Nature Nook's project – *Curious Coyote's Natural Play Area and Outdoor Classroom* – will bring an outdoor learning space where children will be able to explore, play, and manipulate natural objects at different learning stations to build, plant, and even create natural art. Adults will benefit as well, learning sustainable gardening methods to apply back home such as installing rain barrels and composting. According to grant applicant Lauren Azoury, Park Naturalist at the Nature Nook, "the main goals for this outdoor classroom space are to facilitate child initiated learning, encourage curiosity and discovery, promote learning about nature through play and help children and their parents become confident in the outdoors."

IPG funds from NAI Region 4 will add financial support for the project, acquiring equipment such as a rain barrel and compost bin as well as plants and fencing for the new sensory garden.

"It is always interesting and enlightening for the Committee to see all of the wonderful projects underway in Region 4 - we have very passionate and creative members in our region," said Jennifer McDowell, Chair of the Interpretive Project Grants Committee. "Congratulations to West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation on their work to educate visitors on the importance of bringing children back to nature through engaging outdoor play and multi-sensory experiences."

Applicants receiving funding this year along with West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation include Grass River Natural Area (MI) and Michigan State University's Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (MI).

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to advancing the profession of heritage interpretation, currently serving about 5,000 members in the United States, Canada, and over thirty other nations. Individual members include those who work at parks, museums, nature centers, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, historical and cultural sites, commercial tour companies, and theme parks. Commercial and institutional members include those who provide services to the heritage interpretation industry.

The Association is divided into ten geographical regions to help members network with others who work near them through periodical newsletters and activities. Region 4, the Great Lakes Region, includes Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario.

NAI's Mission is to inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession.
