



## Kauffman Foundation Sends Scholars to K-State

By Valerie Wright,

Kauffman Scholars came to Konza Prairie on July 21 - 22, 2009, with the overall theme of "Critical and Creative Thinking." During their stay at KSU, scholars had the chance to experience real college life by living in the residence halls. Their two days with us were filled with prairie activities on the Nature Trail and Bison Loop and collecting data in Kings Creek.

KEEP staff designed a pre- and post-assessment of the scholars to find changes in their factual knowledge and attitudes about the prairie. All nineteen high school students were from inner city schools and had little or no experience with open grasslands. Among the words they used to describe the prairie before their trail hike were these with possible negative connotations: ugh, wet, dry, muddy, icky, gross, bugs, hot. The negative words applied to the same question after their full experience were only two: weird and different. The positive descriptors "before" were: adventure, beautiful, green, natural, fun, interesting. After their experience, the positive words were: adventure, big, educational, enjoyable, huge, serene, variety, amazing, hills, important, peaceful, beautiful, cool, green, fun, interesting.



Kauffman scholars at Kings Creek

The factual knowledge changes were considerable. Overall there was a 96.8% change in correct responses on the assessment. The true/false questions improved by more than 75% and the multiple choice responses improved by 145%. The T/F question that had the greatest increase in correct responses was: "Fire stimulates the growth of grasses." Five got it right in the pre-test but 10 called it false. Seventeen of 19 said "true" in the post-test. The multiple choice question that had the greatest increase in correct responses was: "Konza Prairie is located in which region of Kansas? a. Flint Hills b. High Plains c. Smoky Hills d. I don't know/can't remember." Three of 19 got it right the first time and 16 got it right after, while two said they couldn't remember. **This is a great statement on the quality of our docents, who have such positive impact on students during trail hikes and bison tours.**

The scholars engaged in a variety of creative thinking activities by writing poetry after their hike through the tallgrass. They photographed the landscape and used their senses to analyze their time on the prairie. They also acted as geomorphologists to discover how research can document changes in Kings Creek. They collected macro-invertebrates and learned what a prairie stream is like.

Their other days were filled with activities in the various colleges. In Architecture, scholars used their creative skills to design an urban expansion project, and in Human Ecology they learned about apparel and textile design. In Engineering sessions they worked in teams to design boats that will then be tested by K-State students, while Business sessions focused on financial decision-making and creative methods of saving and investing money. Scholars also visited the Beach Art Museum, concentrating on the tornado exhibit. They also learned how the research and development of value-added bioproducts from agricultural resources will meet future environmental needs. The week concluded with a banquet for the scholars, youth leaders, instructors and parents. **TGG**

## Konza Kits

Last year the Manhattan Community Foundation granted us funds to create Konza Kits for all the 13 USD 383 school libraries and for the Manhattan Public Library. Kit materials include several books on the prairie, field guides, units for class use, plant identification booklet for field hikes, artifacts of the prairie and the list goes on.

These kits should be at the schools this fall, but we are behind schedule. We could use your help in putting the kits together. You could come for an hour or two anytime or stay after a regular school activity for which you have volunteered. If you don't come out for hikes or student science activities, this is an opportunity for you to help KEEP by pasting labels in books, making the small plant id cards or just sharpening the new pencils we have with the KEEP name embossed on the side. Give us a call (587-0381) before you come out to make sure one of us is in the office. Thanks, Valerie & Annie

## Stay Connected to Konza Prairie's Research Program

Konza Prairie Biological Station and the Division of Biology update their websites regularly with, Current News, Upcoming Events, and a Research Focus summary. Attendance at Biology & EEB Seminars is considered in-service credit.

- ▶ Konza Prairie, <http://kpbs.konza.ksu.edu/>
- ▶ Division of Biology Seminars, <http://www.ksu.edu/biology/news.html>
- ▶ Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Seminars, <http://kpbs.konza.ksu.edu/seminar/EEB%20Seminars.htm>

## New Konza Trail Signs

There are some new bright red signs at appropriate spots on the hiking trails. These are meant to warn hikers when they have missed a turn or walked beyond the public trail. Several times a year people find themselves in areas other than the trail system. Some become "lost" or walk a long way to return to the parking area. Hopefully these signs will lessen the probability of hikers losing their way.



## Konza Docents Save the Day

New Flash from Jeff Hansen, Jim Mayhew, Diane Barker and Nancy Goulden of the Kansas Native Plant Society: There were 109 attendees at the Wabaunsee/Pottawattamie County wildflower tour (09/01/09). This was sponsored by both counties conservation districts.

They did a phenomenal job of publicizing this. Thirty people were expected (ran out of refreshments). We only had three tour leaders lined up but luckily a bunch of the Konza docents showed up....and stepped up to help. The Konza docents saved the day!!!! They helped make this tour a total success. With their help we had a manageable 15 to 20 people in each group doing tours of Mt Mitchell. The evening was beautiful; many local folks stayed and socialized until dark. "Your docents are special!" says, Jim Mayhew.

These docents were at the KNPS tour: Diane Barker, Jim Mayhew, Nancy Goulden, Nancy Calhoun, Joc Baker, Karen Hummel, Cindy Quinlan, Charlie Given, Ann Feyerharm, Phoebe Samelson, Susie Johnson. **TGG**

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## Docent Recognition for 2009

By Annie Baker

This year three docents are being recognized for Docent of the Year: **Carol Gadbury, Karen Hummel** and **Larry Loomis**. Upon graduation from the Docent Program, each were recognized as Docent Trainee of the Year, and each has continued outstanding volunteer service by guiding 10 or more groups annually. In addition, Larry went on to serve as Friends of Konza Prairie president, while Karen and Carol serve on committees for Friends of Konza Prairie and the Docent Committee, respectively.



Chosen as Docent Trainee of the Year are **Jerry Freeze** and **Jim Mayhew**. Each consistently attended Saturday training and stayed involved throughout the summer. Jerry is active despite a commute from Wamego and a full-time job. He regularly hikes with family and friends and attends Konza Quest on Friday afternoons. Jim, who commutes from Abilene, is also a regular participant in Konza Quest and spends numerous hours photographing Konza Prairie's plants and animals (for identification). Jim, drawing on his background with Scouts, has already begun guiding tours solo, over 15 groups and counting!



**Ann Murphy** is being recognized for Leadership in coordinating Hospitality during Friends of Konza Prairie and Docent events. Not long after graduating from the Docent Program in 2005, Ann began helping Jean Craig with barbeques, programs, and other socials. Big shoes to fill, Ann has done an outstanding job taking over the grocery shopping and organization of food. She officially joined the FOKP Board in 2007, and has chaired the Programs and Hospitality Committee since 2008.



For excellence in Science, **Earl Allen** and **Nancy Goulden** are being recognized. Since graduating from the Docent Program in 2001, they have become experts on the Konza Prairie plant community, their contributions acknowledged not only by KEEP, but also the ecologists and site management. Walking the Nature Trails weekly year-round, Earl and Nancy report the first bloom of plants for the Phenology list, and use GPS to mark uncommon species. They've identified invasives for eradication, and added several new species to Konza Prairie's plant list. Nancy initiated the creation of a Konza Prairie wildflower guide, and in 2006, Earl and Nancy earned the Leadership award for mentoring docents during their weekly plant walks.



The "Techie" award goes to **Nancy Calhoun** for her contribution as a computer programming consultant to KEEP. Upon retiring from a 17-year career at K-State's Information Technology Assistance Center (iTAC) in 2005, Nancy offered her expertise. Over the last three years, she has spent innumerable hours, first overhauling the KEEP website (Fall 2007), then creating a protected section For Docents Only (Spring 2008), and most recently setting up an on-line volunteer sign up (Spring 2009). Currently, Nancy continues to adapt a data management system to fit the KEEP's statistical needs. **TGG**





# Tallgrass Gazette

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**Konza Book Review by Jim Mayhew:** (Book is available in the Hulbert Center Library.)

***Buffalo for the Broken Heart - Restoring Life to a Black Hills Ranch***

A Random House book by Dan O'Brien, an endangered species biologist, is a rancher and the author of eight books. When Dan O'Brien stumbled over a reclining buffalo in the middle of millions of acres of open country was this to be an omen of change?

After twenty years, the cattle ranch was going the same way as his failed marriage. A request for help from a neighbor, the owner of a successful buffalo ranch, and an offer to help him convert to raising buffalo instead of cattle sets the stage. This is Dan O'Brien's own story -everything doesn't go as you hope it will, but this is an exciting journey as you learn more about the lives of buffalo, making a living on the Great Plains, and the effect of neighbors and hired hands on your life. The Great Plains and the buffalo co-existed for thousands of years. The question is, can they co-exist again, in a profit and loss world?

Enjoy the journey!! Dan's website is [www.wildideabuffalo.com](http://www.wildideabuffalo.com)