Whatever the season, whatever the weather, adventures await outdoors. Starting this January, one Saturday each season, newcomers and longtime Minnesotans will come together to play with purpose. 4Play will help newcomers learn how to savor each season, Minnesota style.

4Play is a new effort organized by Greater MSP and Mississippi Park Connection. The inaugural 4Play kicks off January 9, 2016, with cool adventures from snowshoeing and ice skating to ice fishing, cross country skiing and quinzhee building. So you don’t know what a quinzhee is? You’ll find all about quinzzhees, which are snow caves, at Fort Snelling State Park, where you can play with outdoor adventure experts—rangers from the National Park Service and the Department of Natural Resources, along with staffers from REI.

So bundle up and grab your friends as we celebrate the best of Minnesota winter during this regional day of play. We’ve got the ice, snow, and cold: they’re the perfect ingredients for outdoor play. So come outside and join the fun. 4Play means 4 seasons of fun 4 all.

The National Park Service turns 100 in 2016, marking a major milestone in the preservation of America’s wild, pristine spaces. National Park Service rangers and Park Service Ambassadors will hit the road this January and February, traveling the country with the “National Parks Adventure” an IMAX® film by MacGillivray Freeman Films in partnership with the National Park Service, offering an upclose and unfiltered look at America’s natural landscapes and wildlife. For details visit nationalparksadventure.com.

Friends of the park will have the opportunity to attend a sneak preview during a Centennial fundraising event on February 24, 2016. Save the date to celebrate our national parks, including the one in our backyard.

By Jodi Petrich, Centennial Coordinator

Coming Attraction: National Parks IMAX Debuts

By Kate Havelin, Mississippi Park Connection Communications Coordinator

Photo by Leon Kosek
Support your national park and receive benefits year round—become a member of Mississippi Park Connection! Discounted registration and member events are just a few of the perks. Join today at parkconnection.org.

MISSISSIPPI PARK CONNECTION

Discover your river

WELCOME

FALL 2015–WINTER 2016

National Park Service Centennial
By John Anfinson, Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

The National Park Service will celebrate its 100th birthday on August 25, 2016, and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is in the spotlight.

The Centennial goal is “To connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, stewards, and advocates.” The NPS knows that America has changed dramatically since 1916. Today, over 80% of Americans live in urban areas. If the NPS wants to reach its goal, it has to engage people in cities.

November 12, show your love for the park on Give to the Max Day. Of course, you can donate to the park any day of the year, but Give to the Max Day makes donating a special event, with prizes, special matching grants and more.

For ten years we have operated as the Mississippi River Fund. We began as a local fund of the National Park Foundation, developed into an independent charity and worked very effectively with our most important partner, the National Park Service. Over the past several months the board and the staff have been engaged in a discussion about our identity. Do we have the right name? Does it reflect our mission of connecting people to the river and the national park?

Our staff and board have spent the last several months with Studio Mpls, a terrific local design firm made up of talented people who love the river as much as we do. I am happy to share our new identity with you. This fall, the Mississippi River Fund will become Mississippi Park Connection.

Mississippi Park Connection better reflects our mission to strengthen the connection between people and the Mississippi River. Stretching over 72 miles, our national park presents an infinite number of ways to connect with the river. And in each experience, Mississippi Park Connection offers opportunity—in education, recreation, science, the arts, community engagement and more. Strengthening connections is our mission for a park that’s a national treasure and a river of global acclaim. Ever flowing, always changing, the Great River offers endless promise. Discover your river.

Three Easy Ways to Help
By Anna Waugh, Mississippi Park Connection Development Coordinator

Leaf peeping, fishing, walking, biking, paddling, birding, and snowshoeing. There are so many to explore our park. And if you want to support our park, here are three easy ways to make a difference:

1. Become a member of Mississippi Park Connection. When you become a member or make a donation, you are showing your support for our park. So what happens to your gifts? Your donations help restore prairies and woodlands. Your donations help thousands of kids connect to the river. (To see kids’ perspectives on our park, check out the newest Big River Art winners in this issue.)

2. Give to the Max. On Thursday, November 12, show your love for the park on Give to the Max Day. Of course, you can donate to the park any day of the year, but Give to the Max Day makes donating a special event, with prizes, special matching grants and more.

3. Boost your donation with an employer matching program. Many companies offer matching gift programs that provide financial support to nonprofits when their employees or former employees donate or volunteer. Find out if your company participates and then direct your gift to Mississippi Park Connection.

No matter how you choose to give, your support matters!

New Name for Our Organization
By Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection

Discover your river.

For this reason, our Washington and Midwest Region offices have high expectations for this park. They expect us to double or even triple our volunteer numbers, and they are looking to us to reach more youth in our programming.

To me, the Centennial represents an opportunity to put this park on the map, inside NPS and outside. I hope people see the Centennial as an opportunity to find new ways to experience the river. Make 2016 the year to find your park.

Manomin County Park
By Brian Valentine, National Park Service Ranger

Manomin County Park encompasses the confluence of Rice Creek and the Mississippi River in Anoka County. Manomin is the Anishinabe (Ojibwe) word for wild rice, which reportedly grew in the creek many years ago. The park is located in Fridley, about one and a half miles north of Interstate 694. From I-694, take East River Road to reach the park.

In fall, the trees become a colorful canopy that accentuates the park’s period-style gazebo overlooking the river. The falling leaves turn the creek into a speckled stream of orange and yellow, a visual memo that winter is coming. In winter, Manomin feels more like a primitive, snowy island. Its wintry surface becomes a visual log book of charismatic animal life along the river.

Manomin Park is also home to the Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts. This former tavern and farm house is now a community center that encourages and showcases the work of local artists. Banfill-Locke is a great place to stop in and see what’s on the minds of your local arts community.

Nearby, the Mississippi River Regional Trail will take you nine miles upstream, into the city of Anoka, or five miles downstream to Minneapolis. Manomin County Park’s address is 6666 East River Road, Fridley.
When Mississippi Park Connection realized that Ranger on Call, the free audio guide to exploring the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, was suffering from lack of awareness due to the mass amount of signage along the metro area Mississippi corridor, they reached out to Ultra Creative for help.

Since the Ultra Creative offices are located right on the banks of the Mississippi, the nature lovers in our agency were thrilled with the opportunity to share our fondness for one of our state’s most iconic treasures.

We created a completely new graphic identity for Ranger on Call that sets the program apart from the other signage along the river to better engage onsite visitors. This new modern design and iconography takes historical education from stodgy and ignorable to fun and engaging for all generations.

Since the new signage went up, use of the Ranger on Call service has increased by nearly 300%.

To register your volunteer group, contact Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship and Volunteer Manager: 651-291-9119, mhammes@parkconnection.org.
To register as an individual volunteer, contact Kathy Swenson, National Park Ranger & Volunteer Coordinator: 651-293-8424, kathleen_swenson@nps.gov.
Junior Rangers

“Explore, Learn, and Protect!” That is the National Park Service’s junior ranger promise made by youth around the country. Explore our storied American river and earn your junior ranger badge at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, Mill City Museum, Coon Rapids Regional Dam Park, and the Great River Road Visitor Learning Center.

Become a Junior Ranger!

Junior rangers are young people who promise to learn about, explore, and protect our national parks. Earn your junior ranger badge at our Mississippi River Visitor Center.

Learn how at nps.gov/missforkids


Big River Art Grand Prize (below): David Carlson, 4th grade, The Blake School

Winners Check out the four grand winners from across the United States.

October 7 Mississippi Park Connection Member Pontoon Ride
October 10 Second Saturdays @ Coldwater Spring Second Sats are free family fun!
October 17 Bike with a Ranger—Fall Colors Tour @ Harriet Island
October 17 Big Sit Birding @ Coldwater Spring How many birds can we see from one spot?
October 21 Mississippi Park Connection Member Pontoon Ride
December 12 Duck Watch @ Point Douglas
December 19 Winter Hike/Snowshoe @ Coldwater Spring
December 31 Candlelight Walk @ Fort Snelling
January 9 Winter Trails Day/4Play @ Fort Snelling
January 16 Take a Kid Ice Fishing
January 23 Snowshoe RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event—@ Ormoy
February 11 Evening Hike/Snowshoe @ Coldwater Spring
February 24 NPS IMAX sneak preview @ Science Museum
February 27 Snowshoe RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event—@ Coldwater Spring
March 4 NPS IMAX movie premiere @ Science Museum
March 24 Volunteer Recruitment Fair
April 16-24 National Park Week
April 21 Bike RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event
April 23 Junior Ranger Day @ Mississippi River Visitor Center

Members receive free or discounted registration for most programs, including invitations to members-only events. Join today at parkconnection.org/join

All events are subject to change.

Big River Art Winners

Each year, nearly 6,000 school kids head to the river for Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls field trips in Saint Paul. And each year, hundreds of those students submit their artwork to our Big River Art Contest. The National Park Service welcomes entries from across the United States. Check out the four grand prize winners’ art here, and stop by the Mississippi River Visitor Center to see all sixteen winning artworks.

Big River Art Grand Prize (below): Samuel Canick, 4th grade, Capitol Hill Magnet
Journey to the Falls Grand Prize (right): Juliet Ali-Caccamo, 6th grade, Friends School
Mighty Mississippi Grand Prize (bottom right): James Corley Sanders, 5th grade, Home Art Lessons

CALANDER OF EVENTS

Visit parkconnection.org/events for event details and registration information.

October 7 Mississippi Park Connection Member Pontoon Ride
October 10 Second Saturdays @ Coldwater Spring Second Sats are free family fun!
October 17 Bike with a Ranger—Fall Colors Tour @ Harriet Island
October 17 Big Sit Birding @ Coldwater Spring How many birds can we see from one spot?
October 21 Mississippi Park Connection Member Pontoon Ride
December 12 Duck Watch @ Point Douglas
December 19 Winter Hike/Snowshoe @ Coldwater Spring
December 31 Candlelight Walk @ Fort Snelling
January 9 Winter Trails Day/4Play @ Fort Snelling
January 16 Take a Kid Ice Fishing
January 23 Snowshoe RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event—@ Ormoy
February 11 Evening Hike/Snowshoe @ Coldwater Spring
February 24 NPS IMAX sneak preview @ Science Museum
February 27 Snowshoe RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event—@ Coldwater Spring
March 4 NPS IMAX movie premiere @ Science Museum
March 24 Volunteer Recruitment Fair
April 16-24 National Park Week
April 21 Bike RAVE—River Action Volunteer Event
April 23 Junior Ranger Day @ Mississippi River Visitor Center

Members receive free or discounted registration for most programs, including invitations to members-only events. Join today at parkconnection.org/join

All events are subject to change.

Junior Rangers are young people who promise to learn about, explore, and protect our national parks. Earn your junior ranger badge at our Mississippi River Visitor Center.

Learn how at nps.gov/missforkids

Big River Art Grand Prize (below): David Carlson, 4th grade, The Blake School

Want this bi-annual newsletter mailed to you? Contact info@parkconnection.org or call 651-291-8164.