

There's No "I" in "Boardwalk"

The Brillion News

BRILLION – This June, the crew at Smoky Lake Maple Products came together for its Annual Volunteer Day. This year, they were presented with their most monumental Volunteer Day assignment to date.

Naturalist Louie Lecker at the Brillion Nature Center was under the gun to remove 1/4 mile of old boardwalk in preparation for a new boardwalk that is to be installed later this summer. This was an enormous hurdle, and absolutely crucial to the success of the overall project. The only way to keep the project within budget was for the Nature Center to call on volunteers. Needless to say, when Smoky Lake Maple Products stepped up with all the tools and manpower required to get the job done in a single afternoon, it was an incredible sigh of relief for the nonprofit nature center.

Each of the 10-foot sections of boardwalk were dilapidated and many sections were susceptible to crumbling under the weight/stress of heavy machinery. Also, all the boards were fastened to runners made of huge, slippery, waterlogged railroad



ties. It was all extremely heavy, sometimes requiring up to 8 adults at a time to lift a single section.

When Smoky Lake assessed the job in front of them, they knew they

had their work cut out for them. But they also had confidence that if they all worked together, nothing was insurmountable. "There's no 'I' in 'Boardwalk,'" explained one of the

volunteers. This was a job that demanded teamwork.

"It is truly amazing what a group of young, strong, adult volunteers can accomplish in just a few hours. Without the help of the Smoky Lake staff, I would still be scratching my head, trying to figure out how to get the boardwalk moved. Volunteers are vital to non-profits — especially one like Brillion Nature Center that employs only one staff person. I am extremely grateful to the Smoky Lake staff and all of the dedicated volunteers that help keep our nature center moving forward in our mission to provide environmental education and outdoor recreation opportunities for all," Lecker said.

The event was a huge success. The entire 1/4 mile of boardwalk was removed and prepped for the new boardwalk to be installed.

"Every single person put forth 110%. Even after they got tired. Even though it was 90 degrees and humid. We did it. We got 'er done. I feel so lucky to work side by side with everyone on this team. My heart is full," Angela Schumacher, Owner of Smoky Lake Maple Product said.

Many studies have demonstrated

that the personal benefits of volunteerism are wide reaching! Volunteering has been shown to reduce stress, anger, anxiety and depression. Studies also show that volunteers tend to experience an increase in overall happiness, self-confidence, sense of purpose, and physical vitality. It is a great opportunity to learn new job skills and gain additional career experience.

Soon after the Smoky Lake Volunteering Event, the Brillion Nature Center celebrated the completion of their fundraising goals as they secured the \$204,000 requirement to complete the boardwalk project. Installation of the new boardwalk will begin later this summer. If all goes according to schedule, the community will be able to enjoy the renovation by late autumn.

If you would like to experience the many benefits of volunteerism, contact your local nature center or wildlife preserve today! Many volunteer opportunities are waiting for you.