



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve

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Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release

For Immediate Release
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Coffeyville Community College Volunteers Provide One- Room School Upkeep at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

Equipped with gallons of paint, paintbrushes and enthusiasm, eleven members of the Eta Gamma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa from Coffeyville Community College volunteered their services in applying a new coat of paint to the trim and doors of the


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historic 1882 Lower Fox Creek one- room limestone schoolhouse at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. In volunteering the 85 man- hours of labor, the academic honors society met its commitment to serve in “America the Beautiful” and their chapter’s international service project with the honor study topic of “Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges, and Consequences.” Phi Theta Kappa Advisor Linda McFate identified that the affluence of the historic Spring Hill Ranch brought to focus the paradox of the wealth it took to build the Spring Hill Ranch with that of the conditions of the schoolhouse under which students learned. McFate recognized that maintenance needs of the historic structures are also a consequence for the development that occurred from the affluence.

The idea to volunteer at the Preserve began last spring with Coffeyville Community College Volunteer Advisor Pam Howe, who had participated in a bus tour from Kansas City that had Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and the communities of Cottonwood Falls and Strong City as tour stops along the trip. As soon as she saw the Preserve and the historic structures, she fell in love with the place. The “Paradox of Affluence” struck her immediately. Upon returning to Coffeyville, KS, she prompted Linda McFate to get the honor students involved. Linda and Pam made a preliminary trip to the ranch in June to review options for volunteering at the Preserve with their group. Once the students were available with the start of the new school year, they selected September 26 as the day to provide their support. They were not aware until they came to the Preserve that President Obama had identified the National Public Lands Day with a special challenge in a call to service through volunteerism and celebration related to the Ken



Burns documentary “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea.” Among the group meeting the challenge to make the National Parks even better were three Phi Theta Kappa alumni – one from Washburn University and two from Emporia State University.

Linda and Chuck McFate donated the \$185.00 worth of paint and supplies needed to conduct work on the 1882 Lower Fox Creek one- room limestone schoolhouse.

Arriving the day before, the Eta Gamma Chapter provided their own version of local economy stimulus staying at the Prairie Fire Inn and Spa in Strong City, touring the historic Cottonwood Falls Courthouse, watching Larry the potter complete his craftwork, and experienced the “Bringing Musicians Together” community jam sessions held on the main street outside of Emma Chase Cafe in Cottonwood Falls. The weekly Friday night event has been selected as an 8 Wonders of Kansas – Customs Finalist entry and is an experience the honor students will not forget. Upon completing their volunteer work for the day, Linda McFate declared they would be back in the future.



Eta Gamma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa members of Coffeyville Community College, pictured left to right: Keri Vannoster, Johannes Muller, Valerie Hathcoat, Sara McClenning, Falecia Mansfield, (NPS VOLUNTEER Judith Haffner), Jacqueline Mosley, Leslee Kesterson, William Fulls, Phillip Hagebusch

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway). For more information or to make group reservations, visit the preserve's website at www.nps.gov/tapr, email tapr_interpretation@nps.gov, or call the preserve at (620) 273- 8494. Superintendent Wendy Lauritzen can be reached at the Cottonwood Falls office headquarters at 620- 273- 6034.

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