



## PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Nancy Nabak, [nancyn@woodlanddunes.org](mailto:nancyn@woodlanddunes.org), 920-793-4007

### **Executive Director of Woodland Dunes Retiring**

Woodland Dunes Nature Center and Preserve, Inc. announces the forthcoming retirement of their Executive Director, Jim Knickelbine. The organization plans to transition into new leadership early in the 2024 calendar year. Knickelbine, the executive director for 19 years, is only the second person to hold this position in the organization, and will be missed greatly by all who have worked with him.

Board President, Tom Kocourek, has this to say about Knickelbine, "I have been privileged to work with Jim, and I find it hard to believe anyone could be more dedicated to the mission of Woodland Dunes or more passionate about natural resource conservation and education. Every time I think of Woodland Dunes, I will always see this 'woody' naturalist character in a flannel shirt, white beard, and spectacles releasing one of the many birds he's banded. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with Jim in growing Woodland Dunes to the outstanding Nature Center it is today."

Knickelbine's career years have been spent living out his passion and managing Woodland Dunes' mission: conservation of natural resources and educating the public about the value of nature. In his tenure, the preserve has grown to more than 1,500 acres, and over 15,000 trees have been planted to mitigate the damaging effects of the emerald ash borer. In 2020, a beautiful meeting room and natural history exhibit area were added to the nature center. Knickelbine has continued to emphasize the value of grade school education. To date, over 170,000 children have been part of Woodland Dunes' instruction.

"I've been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work at Woodland Dunes for so long," says Knickelbine. "Helping to protect wildlife has always been a dream for me, and building on the work that Bernie Brouchoud began here has been very rewarding. I believe in our mission, and it's a joy to share that with our visitors."

Reflecting on the past, Knickelbine relates that he met Brouchoud, the founder and first Executive Director, in 1990 after seeing a pelican on the West Twin River. He knew there was a little nature center across the river and stopped in to ask if there were usually pelicans found here. While discussing this topic, Brouchoud took him to the bird feeder to show him a rare visitor, a Harris' sparrow. Knickelbine says that Brouchoud's enthusiasm got him hooked on Woodland Dunes. It wasn't long before he started volunteering and then joined the staff. Knickelbine became Assistant Director in 2003 and Executive Director the following year.

Typical of his positive outlook, Knickelbine thanks his co-workers, the Board of Directors, the members, and volunteers, stating they're the reason so much has been accomplished at the Dunes. In coming years, he hopes to spend time at the preserve at his own pace.

We know you will join us in wishing Jim Knickelbine well as he starts a new chapter in his life.

###