

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## Forest Preserve District honors long-time grant consultant Laura Ross Stuart

*District takes home four statewide awards*

GENEVA, IL — On Nov. 12, Geneva resident Laura Ross Stuart was recognized for the second time in two weeks, for grant consulting efforts on behalf of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County and various other local municipalities.

Ross Stuart was recognized in Kane County at the Nov. 12 meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission. The Commission passed a resolution to honor Ross Stuart for many years of service as the District's grant consultant.

Forest Preserve District Executive Director Monica Meyers said Ross Stuart has been involved in nearly every grant the District has received, from Open Space Land Acquisition & Development, to Recreational Trail Programs, Park and Recreational Facility Construction, Museum grants and more.



Photo by Community Affairs Director Laurie Metanchuk

(Left to Right) Forest Preserve Commission President Mike Kenyon, Forest Preserve Commission Mark Davoust, Laura Ross Stuart, and Executive Director Monica Meyers pause for a photo during the Nov. 12 Forest Preserve Commission meeting. Kenyon and Davoust were both honored for receiving 15-year Board Service Anniversary Awards from the Illinois Association of Park Districts, on behalf of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. Ross Stuart was recognized for her grant consulting work for the District, which earned her a statewide award, Nov. 1.

— MORE —

— ADD ONE —

Forest Preserve District honors long-time grant consultant, Laura Ross Stuart  
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“Laura has been the grant writer for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, and nearly 100 other local agencies, for 40 years. While her advocacy work is quiet, steady and behind the scenes, her impact can be felt by nearly every resident of Kane County,” Meyers said.

“She has helped bring hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding to local park and recreation agencies. That money has helped invest in the protection of land for forest preserves and parks; led to newly planted prairies, woodlands and wetlands; created trails; erected shelters; constructed playgrounds; built recreation centers and nature centers; and paid for the exhibits inside them. The impact, not just on the Districts for whom she’s worked and the 600 successful grants she’s helped win, is immeasurable,” Meyers said.

After the resolution was read into the record and voted upon, as Ross Stuart approached the podium, meeting attendees in the County Board Room erupted in applause.

“It has been an honor and a privilege, an exciting and thrilling experience. I can’t believe it’s been 40 years ... My dad would be so proud of this. He used to say to me, ‘If you get every grant you apply for, you are not applying for enough grants.’ So, we just keep at it, and keep trying different ways to do this,” Ross Stuart said.

“I also want to say that Monica has assembled a great team. I go out leaving you with the best grant team I’ve ever worked with — and I previously worked on a grant team with (former Kane County Environmentalist, the late) Dick Young, (former Forest Preserve Superintendent) Jon Duerr, and (former Kane County Development, Resource Management and Transportation Director) Phil Bus. It’s an amazing situation. Thank you, it’s been an honor. I love the Forest Preserve District,” she said.

Meyers also presented Ross Stuart with a plaque that included framed photos of forest preserves in all four seasons, along with an inscription that reads: *The Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County officially honors and recognizes Laura Ross Stuart for her 40+ years of exemplary service to this District and to the citizens of Kane County. Her knowledge, integrity and passion for the protection of open space and creation of recreational amenities truly makes Kane County a better place for all who live here, now and for generations to come. Presented November 12, 2019.*

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— ADD TWO —

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Ross Stuart said she's "making the transition into retirement," though she plans to continue consulting for the Forest Preserve District for the next year. She's down to three final clients: the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, Fox Valley Park District and St. Charles Park District. All were among her original clients when she first began working at Charles Schrader & Associates, a company founded by her father.

"It's really hard walking away from this. I love grants. I love grant applications. It sounds odd but I love the paperwork," she said.

When asked what her proudest accomplishment has been, without hesitation, she cited the Fox River Trail receiving an exemplary service award from the National Park Service. "I don't think they've given it out since. This was back in the 1980s, when we first started establishing the trail. Just think of how far we've come, since then," she said.

On Nov. 1, Ross Stuart received a statewide award, "Best Friend of Illinois Parks," by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD). The Forest Preserve District is a member of IAPD, and nominated Ross Stuart for the annual award. It was presented Nov. 1 in Wheeling, at the IAPD's awards gala.

Throughout the night, as multiple agencies accepted awards for their respective areas, parks or forest preserve projects, Ross Stuart proudly but quietly mentioned to guests at her table, "I wrote the grant for that." In fact, she wrote the initial grant for the Wheeling Park District building that hosted the awards gala.

Ross Stuart wasn't the only Forest Preserve District of Kane County honoree, that night. Fellow Geneva resident Jay Womack took home Volunteer of the Year honors. He was nominated jointly by the Geneva Park District and the Forest Preserve District. Additionally, Forest Preserve President Mike Kenyon of South Elgin and Commissioner Mark Davoust of St. Charles took home 15-year Board Service Anniversary Awards.

For more information about the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, visit [www.kaneforest.com](http://www.kaneforest.com). To find us on social media, search @forestpreserve.

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