

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods

January 22, 2018



A Cultural Center with an Emphasis on Nature

By Jackie Borchew

It is by no accident that we find ourselves waking up surrounded by nature each day. We have consciously chosen to make our homes here in Riverwoods where we have come to enjoy the deer paths, the migrating bird at our feeders, the trillium blooms along Deerfield Road, and even the dark nights at the end of driveways. We truly live in a natural retreat.

For some, Riverwoods may be an escape from the bustle of the city, an attempt at a simpler lifestyle or a more natural one, a desire for more land or for more privacy. Whatever the reason, we are a unique community who genuinely cares about this old oak woodland that we share.

The oak woodland, and all that lives within it and thrives because of it, extends beyond the northwestern border of our Village. And that is where we find Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods. Nestled deep in the tranquil wooded sanctuary of the Ryerson Conservation Area is a little-known treasure in our own backyard. A destination whose very mission embraces and celebrates these woodlands as inspiration for creativity and wellbeing.

Brushwood Center Is a Treasure to be Discovered

Brushwood Center is a cultural center embracing all that is Riverwoods. Through a unique nature-themed perspective, Brushwood offers fine art exhibitions and workshops, explorations in literature, live theatre productions, bilingual children's programs, and veterans workshops. All of these programs are designed to educate with an emphasis on the importance of nature for nurturing personal and community wellbeing, cultivating creativity, and inspiring learning.

History of Ryerson Woods

The backdrop for Brushwood Center, the Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area, is unique and was designated one of the 12 natural wonders of Chicagoland by Chicago Wilderness Magazine. It is nationally recognized for its ecological, historical and architectural significance. The history stretches back to 1928 when the Ryerson family first built a weekend cabin along the banks of the Des Plaines River. Soon their friends would join in building cabins of their own. They would come to realize that the land and the nature was more valuable as a preserve for future generations. In the 1960's the land owners began, under Ryerson's leadership, to donate and sell their land (561 acres) to the newly formed Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD).

"I bought the land from the grandson-in-law of the first permanent settler in Lake County...and I would like it to remain the way it was when the Indians lived there before he came in 1834."

Edward L. Ryerson

Today

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, a nonprofit organization whose mission is exploring the intersection of art and nature, now occupies the Brushwood estate, the summer home that the Ryersons constructed in the 1940's. Using the natural sanctuary of Ryerson Woods as a springboard for education, Brushwood Center is recognized widely for exploring the interplay of art and nature, as well as for offering thought-provoking, interdisciplinary programs.

Programs

The public is invited to enjoy exhibits (the Brushwood gallery presents six nature-themed art exhibitions per year featuring the work of local artists), art workshops, educational nature hikes, lecture series, open air theatre, and other public programming throughout the seasons. Brushwood partners with community organizations to bring out school children, families, and veterans for field trips that may include art classes, nature journaling, and wildlife encounters. For example, the Trail Tales is a popular bilingual nature hike.

A Gathering Place

Brushwood is a natural gathering place. The beauty of Ryerson Woods is a picturesque backdrop for corporate retreats and meetings. Rental of a single room looking out over the garden or the entire historic home may be the perfect venue for a family gathering or celebration.

Smith Nature Symposium

The Smith Symposium is the signature event among numerous workshops and programs relating nature to art, music, books, and film—creating year after year of memorable, educational experiences at Ryerson Woods. This year's Smith event, planned for late spring, will once again honor a high profile individual who has made an impact artistically through nature.

More details of this informative and engaging celebratory weekend will follow soon.

Brushwood Center is excited to join forces with the Village of Riverwoods to promote a better understanding, preservation, and enjoyment of this wonderful place where we all live. Come visit soon.

For more information about all that Brushwood Center has to offer you, visit: www.brushwoodcenter.org. or call 847-602-8508