



## A Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings from Prairie Plains!

The sun has almost set on the year, and I'm eager to see if 2021 arrives with more gentleness and kindness than its predecessor. Regardless, it's safe to say 2020 has presented an opportunity for creativity, optimism and a daily appreciation for every moment we have with our loved ones.

The year has also reinforced, for me, the importance of quiet, wild places. Plans changed and the world shut down, but the prairie provided a perfect place to wander and breathe. So much so that the tangibility of our mission to restore and protect these wild places rang loud through the peaceful landscape. (Or maybe that was just my four-year-old beckoning me to watch him attempt a giant leap off a fallen cottonwood?)

We need these spaces. We need to plant more prairie and we need to care for what we have. And we invite you to our preserves to wander and explore for yourself! You will be so glad you did.

In this most unexpected year, we remained focused on our mission and made some great lemonade. Here is a sampling of our 2020 highlights:

- We are SO CLOSE to completing the Charles L. Whitney Education Center and hope to be done by the end of the winter!
- The staff and board united behind an updated mission statement in order to spread the news about the benefits of prairies in our world.
- We unveiled a new website and introduced a new membership option - The Prairie Acre Club.
- We made some fun promotional videos for GO BIG GIVE and blew our fundraising goal out of the water!
- We cleared trees on the riverfront at Gjerloff Prairie with plans to debut Gjerloff Landing in 2021.
- We enjoyed a plentiful harvest season, collecting 251 local ecotype species totaling 5,366 gallons. That's enough seed to restore 1,000 more acres!

It is our hope to have a grand opening celebration at the Education Center in 2021 when it is safe to do so. This will be a time to celebrate the completion of a huge milestone, say thank you to all of YOU who made it happen and showcase our education plans for the years ahead.

**Would you consider a year-end donation in support of the ongoing work required to continue the important mission of Prairie Plains?** The success of this organization has been a group effort. And the possibilities for future successes are unlimited.

**Thank you** for everything you've done to support Prairie Plains and for considering this request. There are so many of you I look forward to meeting in person, and I hope 2021 gives us that opportunity.

See you on the Prairie!

*Mitchell Lyon*

Executive Director, Prairie Plains Resource Institute





September 26: Prairie Plains staffers Sarah Bailey (pictured above providing planting instructions) and Amy Jones, along with Lincoln Parks & Recreation (LPR) staff and a barrage of volunteers (mostly Master Naturalists) transplanted 600+ prairie violets in the Pioneers Park Prairie in Lincoln. Another 300+ violet seedlings were planted by LPR staff in the Pioneers Park Prairie and nearby properties. The violet seedlings, grown in the Prairie Plains greenhouse, provide a food source for regal fritillary butterfly larvae, and create connectivity between remnant prairies in the area and prairie restoration sites - giving the threatened butterfly species a larger area for successful reproduction.

### There's Seed in the Barn!

It was a big year for the seed collecting crew, as evidenced in the photo below of the over-full seed barn at Gjerloff Prairie. The crew split into two teams for the first time, and it paid off. Two trucks going different directions resulted in 3,566 gallons of forb (wildflower) and minor grass seed collected by hand. In addition, the combine (pictured bottom right and driven by Jared Sullivan) brought in 1,800 gallons of major grass seed. The total haul included 251 species, including 11 species of milkweeds. When the seed is cleaned and mixed, it will be enough to restore 1,000 acres of high-diversity, local-ecotype prairie!



Examples of the hand harvest can be seen lower left - Canada milkvetch (*Astragalus canadensis*) and rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*) are especially rewarding as they fill the buckets quickly.



## PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK

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**Wild places are disappearing. But what can we do about it? It's easy to feel helpless. Prairie Plains restores and protects one of the world's most under-protected ecosystems: grasslands. And we invite you to join us in stewarding and enjoying this remarkable landscape.**

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