

## President's Corner

Nathan Speagle,  
s.p.eagle9981@gmail.com

The fifth annual The Big Event: A Saluki Day of Service was held on Saturday, March 25th. This event has become the largest single-day, student-run service project in Southern Illinois University Carbondale's history and is a tremendous boon to Green Earth and countless other community organizations. We had 50 SIU students sign up to help our organization with the unofficial groundbreaking of our new ADA-friendly trail upgrades at the Pyle's Fork Preserve. This American Recovery Plan Act funded project will create the same wide, hard-surfaced, mobility friendly type of trail found at our Chautauqua Bottoms Preserve. These improvements will also mitigate one of the biggest challenges of building bottomland trails and getting the general public to use them: keeping people's feet dry.

The Salukis that attended our portion of The Big Event learned about these challenges firsthand. Carbondale experienced heavy rains in the days leading up to The Big Event, leaving large swaths of the trail under several

inches of water. These soggy conditions did not deter the rambunctious volunteers, with some marching into the waterlogged trail in their tennis shoes. They cleared leaf litter, vines, brush, fallen trees and large limbs to widen the existing trail so that contractors can access the preserve this summer with machinery



Nathan Speagle at a trail improvement workday at Pyles Fork Preserve

for hauling gravel and supplies for building boardwalks. It was difficult to swing a hand tool without splashing water or slinging mud, so most folks, myself included, ended the morning with mottled clothing. Their sacrifice of dry feet and clean clothes will spare future volunteers and nature-goers the same fate.

Though The Big Event is typically our largest workday of the year and ideal for large-scale trail improvements, it's only one of many workdays, events, and special projects in which the Salukis lead the pack. **While we are fortunate to have many great supporters throughout our community, the constant stream of youthful energy that flows through SIU is the backbone to our volunteer-driven organization.** The students that graciously give us their Saturday mornings and free time improve wild habitats, keep our community clean, build and maintain trails, and ultimately, improve the recreational experience for all who visit our preserves. **Green Earth is very lucky to have the support of a university that values and encourages community service, and a student body that embraces and exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism. Go! Salukis, Go!**

## Thanks To Our Pumpkin Glow Sponsors!

The Pumpkin Glow Nighttime Jack-O-Lantern hike held annually at our Oakland Preserve during the last week of October has become a significant fundraiser for our organization. We'd like to thank our generous local business and community sponsors from this past fall's event which ran for three evenings and boasted over 3,500 visitors!

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