



Friends of Blue Thumb

P.O. Box 58103

Oklahoma City OK 73112

www.facebook.com/bluethumbfriends

friendsofbluethumb@gmail.com

Help Your Stream ~ Help Your Community

Friends of Blue Thumb keeps the Giving Going!

Friends of Blue Thumb (FBT) is a small nonprofit that cares about Oklahoma's environment. We support:

- ◆ Blue Thumb volunteers who monitor streams and educate the public about protecting rivers, streams, and lakes; and
- ◆ Our member conservation districts that educate citizens at a very local level.

You can be part of this good work by making a contribution to FBT. Information about how to do this is below. You can also contact us about how YOU can make changes, starting in your own yard.



Students from Riverfield Country Day School in Tulsa join Blue Thumb staff for a stream ecology lesson in the Mooser Creek watershed. Friends of Blue Thumb supports activities that bring people outside—right to the banks of the stream and even into the water. These children will understand that this small stream, which is clean and filled with interesting creatures, will flow into a larger stream and eventually into a lake that is used for drinking water.

Your Gift can mean an Amazing Project finds a Starting Place!

Local is the name of the game with Friends of Blue Thumb! Your gift can help educate communities about protecting streams and rivers. Your gift can help provide high school students with needed water quality monitoring supplies. Your gift can install a native plant garden that slows and filters water before it reaches a neighborhood stream.

Send this form in with your check made out to FBT. Mail to FBT, P.O. Box 58103, Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Name: _____ email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Please circle one of these four and make out check accordingly:

- ◆ I want to be a lifetime member of Friends of Blue Thumb (\$150)
- ◆ I represent a business, corporation, or foundation and want to sponsor FBT! (\$250)
- ◆ I want to support FBT with an annual membership of \$10
- ◆ I love what you are doing! (any amount you can manage)

Friends of Blue Thumb is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

Friends of Blue Thumb—Who we Are!



We are an established small nonprofit who helps themselves! Pictured are Jim Leach, left, board member, and Kurtis Koll, board vice-chairman. Friends of Blue Thumb Market Day was held as a holiday season fund-raiser for FBT in Lawton. Kurtis was the primary organizer, with Jim helping to make everything fall into place!



Craft items, clothes, and food, were part of the inventory to be purchased, and photo opportunities were everywhere. Water quality information and how to get involved in Friends of Blue Thumb was also shared.

Friends of Blue Thumb has a board of nine people, although one slot is currently unfilled. Our board is:

Dennis Wilson, Chairman (Idabel)

Kurtis Koll, Vice-chairman (Lawton)

John Harrington, Treasurer (Piedmont)

Beth Landon, Secretary (Oklahoma City)

Joyce Varner, Member (Tahlequah)

Jim Leach, Member (Edmond)

Terrie Becerra, Member (Ada)

Cheryl Cheadle, Member (Glenpool)

Friends of Blue Thumb meets six times annually with a call-in meeting (since Covid). FBT has no paid staff. We are a team of committed people who believe in protecting the streams, rivers and lakes in Oklahoma primarily through support of Blue Thumb Water Quality Program volunteers. Learn more about these volunteers and the other good work happening as a result of the Blue Thumb Program at:

<http://bluethumbok.com>

In addition to FBT's own fundraisers and membership gifts, FBT asks you to patronize these two businesses whose great generosity made a difference for us in 2021 and will spill over into 2022.



1501 North Elm Place

Broken Arrow, OK 74012

ALTAR'D STATE
stand out. for good.

Every Monday, you have the opportunity to give back to those who need it most. 10% of net proceeds on Mondays go directly to local charities across the country !

Altar'd States—Woodland Hills Mall Tulsa OK

7021 S Memorial Dr #126a, Tulsa, OK 74133



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Several recent projects we have supported are featured here!

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Friends of Blue Thumb Joins Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts for Statewide Effort



Caroline Jones, Tulsa, accepts her Yard by Yard sign with great pride! The sign not only recognizes her awesome yard, it encourages others to have nature friendly lawns.

The Oklahoma County Conservation District started the Yard by Yard Community Resiliency Project in 2020—and the idea was too good not to spread. Created by urban soils specialist Kevin Mink, Kevin invited other conservation professionals to help him put the fine points on the project, and one month after Oklahoma County started, the Tulsa County Conservation District moved forward as well.

Friends of Blue Thumb and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (with help from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission’s Blue Thumb Project and Soil Health Team) partnered to take the project statewide. Ten new conservation districts came aboard for 2021, and now another ten conservation districts are invited to join for 2022.

Why did Friends of Blue Thumb see Yard by Yard as the “go to” project for our member districts? Yard by Yard participants have the power to: 1) create healthy soil; 2) reduce flooding; 3) better withstand drought; 4) remove pollutants from runoff; and 5) feed our very important pollinators—the butterflies and bees that need a helping hand. Conservation districts offering Yard by Yard to their citizens

throughout all of Oklahoma can make important, lasting, healthy changes for the betterment of our state.



Yard by Yard in the Cotton County Conservation District! Even before spring of 2021 Cotton County’s Mari’a Simpson (right) asked to become a Yard by Yard participating district. With Mari’a from left is Kevin Mink (OK County CD), Cheryl Cheadle (Blue Thumb and Friends of Blue Thumb) and Blue Thumb volunteer Kurtis Koll.



A very important Yard by Yard practice is the establishment of native plants. Build healthy soil ~ encourage infiltration ~ create beauty ~ feed our pollinators and birds...simply by letting your yard be home to native wildflowers and grasses. Yard by Yard practices (once installed) will certainly save time and money!!



Growing vegetables in your own yard insures healthy and fresh food! Make excellent use of the room you have outside and devote a portion of it to food for the family and neighbors. Yard by Yard encourages growing vegetables, fruits, and berries—food for people while the wildflowers make food for pollinators.

Students from Riverfield Country Day School in Tulsa County. On a tributary to Mooser Creek, these students get the chance to study the life in the stream. Yard by Yard practices contribute to clean water—exactly what FBT will always support.



We all need our community—Yard by Yard brings us full circle! Gabrielae Parker (Tulsa County Conservation District) with Yard by Yard participants Ali (center) and Nora just after their yard has been certified. Their yard is a haven for birds and other little creatures. They grow food for themselves and others. They apply no chemicals thus keeping streams clean and pets and children safe.



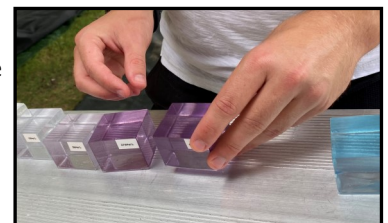
www.okconservation.org/yardbyyard

FBT Grant leads to Fertilizer Education in Oklahoma’s Choctaw Nation



Blue Thumb volunteer and Choctaw Nation employee Anthony Mastracci (right) educates a Durant citizen about how misuse of fertilizers can contribute to stream degradation.

Blue Thumb volunteer Anthony Mastracci with the Choctaw Tribe used a Friends of Blue Thumb grant to create materials for an exhibit that helps educate Choctaw Tribal members, tribe employees, and the general public about the proper use of fertilizers. Anthony (and additional tribal members and fellow Blue Thumb volunteers) can use the exhibit to relay the negative impacts of over-fertilization. The colorful blocks are not just colorful blocks – they indicate levels of fertilizer, and more importantly, show the caution zones when fertilizer application is too heavy.



Partnership makes Educational Signage a Reality!

Cleveland County Blue Thumb volunteers Karen Chapman and Dan Mains both monitor Bishop Creek in Norman. Discussion about creating a “no mow” zone along the stream started years ago, even before Karen trained in 2012. Karen, along with Blue Thumb volunteer Alice Anderton, became advocates for Bishop Creek, and they began discussions with the City of Norman Parks and Recreation Department regarding the creation of a **No-Mow zone** along Bishop Creek where it flows through Eastwood Park.

Subsequently, in 2014 a no-mow zone was created in this area. As a result, the City changed their mowing procedure where the stream flows through Eastwood Park to leave a wide, vegetated buffer along the stream. This has stabilized the banks, reduced sedimentation, and even created habitat for creatures like birds, bees, butterflies, and dragonflies.

Why a "No Mow" zone along Bishop Creek?

Bishop Creek is monitored by Blue Thumb volunteers — citizen scientists who want the stream to be healthy and an asset to the community. Stream monitoring over the last ten years have found:



Stream Life
There is low diversity of fish and aquatic insects. Only pollution tolerant animals are found.



Habitat
Stream habitat has been poor but is improving due to less erosion, the slowing of storm water, and more shade on the water, thanks to the “no mow” zone.

Chemistry
Blue Thumb volunteer data shows a trend toward salts and phosphates increasing, indicating that urban pollutants are entering the water from the streets, parking lots, businesses, and lawns.



Some kind of Odonata

Monarch Butterfly

Sunfish




Great Blue Heron

Red Eared Slider and juvenile



Allowing Bishop Creek to keep its “no mow” zone means that the stream is healthier and Eastwood Park can be home to a greater variety of animals. Many of the people who stroll through the park are here to see the animals with whom they share the neighborhood.

Because not all city residents who use the park understand the value of a “No Mow” zone, Karen and Dan partnered with both the City of Norman Parks and Recreation Department and the small nonprofit Friends of Blue Thumb (it takes a village) to create a beautiful and educational sign championing the vegetated buffer that now exists along the stream. Not only will the sign enlighten Norman citizens, this concept is being used by Friends of Blue Thumb to encourage on-site educational signage elsewhere!

BlueSTEM Students Increase Monitoring!

The BlueSTEM AgriLearning Center came to life in 2014 as a collaborative effort among the USDA Grazingland Research Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, and Historic Fort Reno, all co-located a few miles west of the city of El Reno.

Local school districts were seeking “hands on” research projects for their students. BlueSTEM quickly became the Fort Reno facility’s outreach and education arm and together with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission’s Blue Thumb Water Quality Education Program, “citizen science” focused on stream monitoring has been embraced by BlueSTEM staff, local educators, and especially the student volunteers.

With BlueSTEM oversight, 32 high school students from three public schools monitor Target Creek and Four Mile Creek, both in Canadian County. **With the help of a \$500 Friends of Blue Thumb grant, these students are researching a third stream to include in their monitoring efforts, as well as added training, support, and supplies.**

CAPTIONS: *Left—Yukon HS Senior Delaney with her “fixed” dissolved oxygen sample.*

Center—Yukon HS Senior Dominick checks out for himself the habitat of a reach of Target Creek. Without BlueSTEM and Blue Thumb to provide on-site support, students like Dominick might not get to personally explore and collect data on an Oklahoma stream.

Right—USDA Research Scientist Dr. Amanda Nelson reviews stream data sheets completed by Lauren and Chloe (El Reno HS Seniors) and Kyra (El Reno HS Junior). Their stream monitoring activities in conjunction with BlueSTEM not only strengthens the students’s science abilities, it also gives them access to local professionals who conduct research with the USDA.