



The western end of the Flint Creek Dreamway after restoration on Barrington 220 property. Photo courtesy of Bob Lee.

A Watershed Moment of Environmental Stewardship

JOE KELSCH, SR.'S VISION FOR A RESTORED DREAMWAY CORRIDOR COMES TO FRUITION AND WILL BEAR HIS NAME

IN THE 1990s, Flint Creek was identified as one of the most troubled creeks in Lake County. While some streambank stabilization and improvement work was done in the early-to-mid-'90s, more needed to be done. In December 2004, the Barrington Area Development Council—a volunteer organization then led by Joseph Kelsch, Sr.—invited Citizens for Conservation, and two governmental agencies, Barrington Area Council of Governments, and the Village of Barrington, to give presentations about Flint Creek. Impressed by what had already been done to improve the creek, yet learning what improvements were still needed, BADC decided to take on Flint Creek as a project.

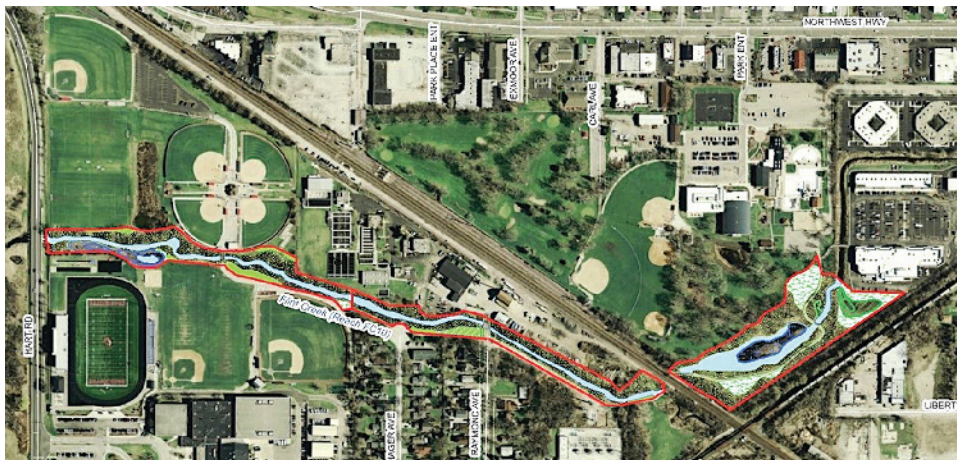
In April 2005, a grant request was submitted for the restoration of Flint Creek to create a Dreamway corridor with a walking and biking path along a restored portion of the creek. Although the grant request was unsuccessful, Joe Kelsch pressed on with his signature enthusiasm and leadership skills. Kelsch maintained his passionate drive to see the Dreamway project completed until his passing in 2017. On June 26, the Dreamway will be renamed in his honor.



The Flint Creek Dreamway before its restoration. Photo by Bob Lee.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESS STORY

In 2007, Citizens for Conservation applied for and received Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Section 319 grant funding to complete the Flint Creek Watershed-Based Plan with subsequent IEPA funding in 2018 to update the plan. The plan identifies the portion of Flint Creek between Langendorf Park and Hart Road as a “critical area” to implement ecological stream and riparian restoration to improve water quality, ecological value, wildlife habitat, flow regime, and amenities for the public using the Dreamway Trail.



The 3,165-foot length of Flint Creek (per side) that has been restored from Langendorf Park (Rte. 59) across the Village of Barrington to behind Barrington High School to Hart Road.




Joseph Kelsch, Sr., was BADC's 1996 Citizen of the Year.

In 2018, the Village of Barrington, along with creek boundary partners Barrington Park District and Barrington 220, applied for an IEPA Section 319 Water Quality Grant to fund design, permitting, construction, and maintenance of a project to improve the stream channel and streambanks and repair the riparian corridor along the Flint Creek Dreamway. The grant application was accepted. Construction was to be completed by the end of 2020, however, with excellent project management and communications with all parties, including residents, the project was completed in September.

Key environmental elements of the restoration plan included the ecological restoration of streambanks and channel, as well as the entire riparian corridor. This was accomplished by regrading banks, adding toe protection where needed, removing invasive species, and replanting with native mesic, wet prairie, and savanna vegetation to improve soil stability and overall green infrastructure.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

It was over 17 years ago that a need was identified to clean up a local waterway and improve it for the health of Flint Creek Watershed, as well as to open up a beautiful pathway for walkers and bikers to get across town. The Dreamway will always serve as a reminder that one person, in this case Joe Kelsch, can persevere and leave a lasting and valuable legacy. The successful completion of the Dreamway project is also evidence of the Barrington area's governmental, nonprofit, school district, park district, and public's ability to work together to achieve great things. 

Ribbon Cutting and Family Walk

SATURDAY, JUNE 26
AT 10 A.M.

This is sure to be a wonderful event in Barrington! Join Village of Barrington President Karen Darch, Barrington Park District Executive Director Terry Jennings, Barrington 220 Superintendent of Schools (Ret.) Brian Harris, Barrington Area Development Council's Bob Lee, and many more for a ribbon cutting ceremony. Gather at Langendorf Park on Sat., June 26 at 10 a.m. for a short presentation and then join others on the Dreamway family walk to Barrington High School (be prepared to walk the trail back to Langendorf Park, or have a car at BHS).

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