Together for Taft

January–June 2026 | Milestones & Momentum

By Julie Bassett – Founder

Organizational Growth

- February 13, 2026 – Together for Taft officially received federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

Outdoor Education

- Successfully launched five Pre-Taft environmental education programs for children ages 9–14. (2 more classes to follow)
- Curriculum included nature journaling, geocaching, ecological observation, habitat exploration, tree identification, survival skills, art, music and many other place-based learning opportunities.
- Scholarships provided by a local donor so financial barriers would not prevent participation.

Community Outreach

- January 8 – DeCarbon DeKalb Community Meeting (DeKalb Public Library)
- February 20 – Dr. Leroy Mitchell Elementary School (DeKalb)
- March 5 – Malta Elementary School
- March 2026 – Kishwaukee Sunrise Rotary
- April 2 – Muri Briel community presentation
- April 11 – Earth Day community outreach and Taft awareness
- April 15 – Oregon School District presentation
- April 21 – Jefferson Elementary School (DeKalb)

Fundraising Events

- January 17, 2026 – Eagle Watching Luncheon, Maxson Manor, Oregon, Illinois.
- May 3, 2026 – Spring into Taft Jazz Ensemble & Dinner, The Regale, Sycamore, Illinois.

Youth Leadership

- Engaged volunteers ages 15–25 in nonprofit and grassroots building, providing meaningful workforce development and leadership experience.
- Youth supported social media, marketing, communications, outreach, volunteer systems, and graphic design.

Partnerships & Advocacy

- May 2026 – Participated in the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees meeting through public comment.
- Continued engagement regarding the proposed transfer of Lorado Taft to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
- Expanded relationships with schools, conservation organizations, libraries, community colleges, and regional partners.

Media & Public Awareness

- January 2026 – Featured on Under the Rocks on NPR podcast.
- March 2026 – Shaw Local News coverage.
- June 2026 – Third NPR/WNIJ Perspectives feature: "Outdoor Education Is Not Extra—It Is Essential."

January–June 2026 Highlights

- ✓ Federal 501(c)(3) approval
- ✓ Five successful outdoor education programs
- ✓ Scholarship opportunities expanded
- ✓ Youth leadership initiatives launched
- ✓ Community outreach across schools and organizations
- ✓ Regional partnerships strengthened
- ✓ Continued growth in public awareness and support