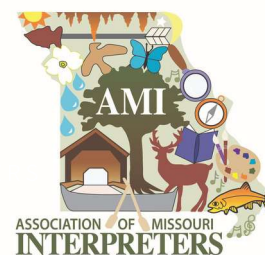


The AMigo



Sam A. Baker State Park Celebrates 100 years!

By: Michelle Soenksen, Park Naturalist, Sam A. Baker State Park

Embark on a journey through time, celebrating a 100-year legacy of history, resilience and discovery!

Sam A. Baker State Park is one of the oldest and most memorable state parks in the Missouri State Park system. Its resources that make Sam A. Baker State Park unforgettable are cultural, as well as natural and recreational.



Sam A. Baker State Park is a place of distinct natural history, beauty and value. Even before becoming a park, the area attracted people because of its grand peaks, clear streams, and forest diversity. During early historic times, the Osage Indians used the St. Francois Mountains and surrounding Ozark region for hunting. Some of the first pioneers to arrive in the area settled and built a homestead where Sam A. Baker State Park is located today.

Sam A. Baker State Park is considered a memorable park because of its strong roots in history and culture. Sam A. Baker State Park was named after Missouri's former Governor, Samuel Aaron Baker, who was born in Patterson, Missouri, located just south of the park. He taught in the rural schools of Wayne County and then served as principal and superintendent for the schools of Joplin, Piedmont, Richmond, and Jefferson City. On January 12, 1925 Baker was sworn into office as Missouri's governor and soon after, encouraged the park's development. The first 4,000 acres cost the state only \$23,000, and in 1926, Sam A. Baker State Park was established.

...continued on page 4

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Editors Corner

In order to have a quality newsletter it is important to have articles, photos, site updates, interpretive tips and more from you as members. Deadline dates for each newsletter cycle are listed below, however you may certainly send submissions at any time. Thank you for allowing me to be your AMIgo editor and I look forward to seeing your future submissions.

Steve Jacobsen, AMIgo Editor
steve.jacobsen@mdc.mo.gov

Newsletter Submission Deadlines:

Summer 2026

July, August, September

Deadline: June 15th, 2026

Fall 2026

October, November, December

Deadline: September 15th, 2026

Winter 2027

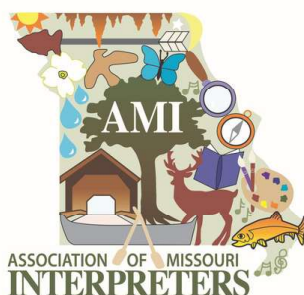
January, February, March

Deadline: December 15th, 2026

Spring 2027

April, May, June

Deadline: March 15th, 2027



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Rediscovering the Wonders Around Us

By: Tim Smith, Office Supervisor,
Shoal Creek Conservation Education Center

When was the last time you paused to admire dew drops clinging to a spider web, sat on the porch listening to barred owls and spring peepers, or traced the intricate carving on a cabin door? If you're anything like me, it's been longer than you'd like to admit. Somewhere between rushing to work, finishing projects, and tackling the endless list of daily tasks, those small wonders slip quietly past us.

Often, it's my kids or a visitor who points out something remarkable—a glistening web, a curious track in the mud, a bird call I've tuned out, the craftsmanship in a historic building. Their excitement makes me pause and see these things with fresh eyes. And really, how long does it take to stop and look? A few seconds. Maybe a minute. Yet those small moments have a way of grounding me, helping me relax, and reminding me why I love my job.

As interpreters, we are immersed in places full of beauty, meaning, and stories. But being surrounded by so many wonders every day can make us numb to them. What once amazed us becomes routine. The extraordinary fades into the background.

So, here's my challenge—to you, and to myself. Slow down. Look closer. Take time to marvel again. Let yourself feel the same curiosity and delight you felt when you first stepped into this field. The wonders haven't gone anywhere. They're still here, waiting for us to notice.

Sam A. Baker State Park Celebrates 100 years!

By: Michelle Soenksen, Park Naturalist, Sam A. Baker State Park

The CCC, known as the Civilian Conservation Corps, played a vital role in the development of the park. The New Deal Era, established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the depression, allowed the first major construction to begin when the park became the site of Civilian Conservation Corps camp #5, set up in June 1933. Many residents of surrounding communities were employed in the camp, company 740, or other CCC units around the area. Both the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration completed several construction projects at the park, including bridges, water fountains, cabins, hiking shelters, and a dining lodge. A total of 31 buildings and a fire observation tower were constructed during this period. Most of the stone buildings were constructed from the native Mudlick Dellenite, also called "blue granite". The Visitor Center is located in an old CCC building which was originally used as a horse stable, office and storage/shop area. Owing to the integrity of the preserved CCC-WPA workmanship, the entire park has been designated the Sam A. Baker State Park Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.



Sam A. Baker State Park is a memorable park, not only because of its culture, but because of its natural resources as well. Today the park is a 5,324 acre showcase of rugged igneous bluffs, shut-in canyons, crystal clear waters, old growth forests, and diverse plant and animal life. For example, this park is one of the few places in Missouri where the Appalachian species, the Yellowwood tree, grows in its natural habitat.

.....continued on page 5

Sam A. Baker State Park Celebrates 100 years!

By: Michelle Soenksen, Park Naturalist, Sam A. Baker State Park

The prominent feature at the park is Mudlick Mountain, an igneous dome covered by old growth oak-hickory forest, glades and talus slopes. Located in the St. Francois Mountain range, it is one of the highest igneous domes in the state at 1,313 feet high. The park contains the Mudlick Mountain Wild Area, which makes up 4,460 acres of the park and is considered one of the largest wilderness preserves in the state park system. Several acres of the Mudlick Wild Area are designated as the Mudlick Natural Area, a pristine and natural part of the park. The 1,370 acres of igneous mountain dome, deep “shut-in” canyon, and talus slopes are quality examples of undisturbed natural landscapes. Mudlick Hollow is a favorite hideaway where the headwaters of Mudlick Creek form shut-ins, pools, rare plants, and small waterfalls. Big Creek, which runs through the park, has been designated an Outstanding Water Resource, allowing the creek additional protection against pollution and other disturbances. Water quality is considered high and previous sampling records show that this stream segment should be recognized for its aquatic community significance. Over 30 species of fish have been recorded living in Big Creek. The threatened Big Creek crayfish and St. Francis River crayfish are known to only live in southeast Missouri and nowhere else.

Sam A. Baker State Park is a memorable park because of the many recreational opportunities. Big Creek and the St. Francis River are two water ways that traverse through the park, providing miles of water fun. These waterways are a great place for swimming, floating and fishing for smallmouth bass, sunfish, and catfish. Floats of all kinds are available through the park store.

Hiking is a great way to get out and explore the great outdoors at Sam A. Baker State Park. The Mudlick Trail is a system of more than 20 miles that has been designated a National Recreation Trail. The trail takes you on a journey into the St. Francois Mountain Region. Hikers can choose to stay overnight in one of the 3 hiking shelters built by the CCC between October and May or rough it in one of the 2 backpack camps located on the trail throughout the year. For those visitors who want to do less hiking, shorter trails are available. Trails are for hikers, backpackers and equestrian users. A 2-mile paved bike trail allows for visitors to travel between campgrounds and the Mudlick Mountain Store and Grill.

Day users can take advantage of our 3 picnic shelters, playground, and the visitor center, which offers information on the natural, cultural and historical aspects of the park. Interpretive programs, including hikes, explorer programs and evening programs are provided for visitors of all ages. Overnight guests have several options, including 212 campsites with basic or electric hookups, an equestrian campground, and 19 rustic cabins.

.....continued on page 6

Sam A. Baker State Park Celebrates 100 years!

By: Michelle Soenksen, Park Naturalist, Sam A. Baker State Park

Because of these natural and cultural resources, as well as recreational opportunities, Sam A. Baker State Park is considered one of the most memorable parks in the Missouri State Park System. So, come join us on June 13 to celebrate 100 years of Sam A. Baker State Park!

This celebration will feature a variety of activities relating to the park's natural and cultural history. There will be old time games, historical exhibits and tours, demonstrators, activities, bluegrass music, self-guided tours of the CCC Lodge, and van rides to the Mudlick Mountain Fire Tower. While you will have a good view of the fire tower, you will not be allowed to enter the tower. The event will go from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with registration for van tours beginning at 8:45 a.m.

All activities will start at shelter 1 behind the park store. Admission to the event is free and open to the public and does not require registration. Special merchandise commemorating the parks 100 years and food will be available for purchase.

More information can be found at mostateparks.com. If you have any questions, you can contact the park naturalist at 573-856-4514.



What Is It??

By: John Miller



Hint: This animal is found worldwide and while it is quick to bite, it has a “soft” side. Answer is on page 17

AMI Organization Updates

AMI Board update

We had a wonderful planning meeting last month, and we're excited about the new and inspiring developments coming this year and beyond. Here are a few things you can expect to see from AMI in the months ahead:

- New partnerships and collaborations** with local museums, zoos, interpretive sites, and even teachers to help bring fresh perspectives and resources to AMI.
- A continually improving website.** If you haven't visited recently, take a look—Sarah has been hard at work enhancing the site and adding new content. Our goal is to make it your go-to hub for all things AMI.
- Regional events hosted by our Members at Large.** To help us plan effectively, we're asking all current members to log into their website accounts and update their region information.
- A stronger social media presence** and more consistent updates across our Facebook pages.
- New promotional materials,** including rack cards and other resources you can share to help spread the word about AMI.
- Continued support for stipends and grant opportunities** available to our members—we encourage you to apply and take advantage of these resources.

We will continue holding quarterly board meetings to ensure we stay on track and aligned with our mission. If you have suggestions, ideas, or feedback about AMI's direction, I would love to hear from you.

We also invite each of you to share how AMI has supported your career, along with any tips or techniques you've learned on your journey to becoming a stronger interpreter. We hope to feature some of these stories in the AMIgo and on our website.

-Tim Smith, AMI President

2026 AMI Election

Spring is finally here in Missouri and most interpretive sites are gearing up for a busy summer season. Right now, it may seem like the September conference is a long way off, however as we all know - time flies. It's the perfect time to start thinking about AMI elections! This year we have two positions opening up - Vice President and Treasurer.

Vice President - The Vice President shall assume the duties of the President in the President's absence. The Vice President also shall oversee the Workshop Committee.

Treasurer - The Treasurer shall receive all dues, workshop fees, auction receipts and other moneys paid to the Association, under direction of the Board of Directors shall disburse all funds of the Association, and shall keep an account of all funds. The Treasurer shall submit to the members at their annual meeting (a) a proposed annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year for consideration by the members and (b) and an annual financial report regarding the previous fiscal year and the current fiscal year up to a date within 45 days of the members' annual meeting.

Serving as part of AMI's board is professionally rewarding - you will become an integral part of an established statewide interpretive organization! It's also filled with interpreters who hold great love for what we do, give encouragement, are always willing to answer questions, and love to see others in the field succeed. Don't let another year go by without putting one of these officer titles under your belt!

If you have any questions, please reach out to me or a current board member. Additionally, keep an eye out for my election emails as we move closer to the conference.

Carrie M. Hammond, M.Ed
Chief Museum Interpreter
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100. S. Jefferson St.
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
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2026 Conference Update!

ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI INTERPRETERS 2026 CONFERENCE



*Join the Adventure!
September 13-16, 2026
(Sunday to Wednesday)*

The 2026 AMI Conference committee invites you to step beyond the edges of the known with this year's theme: Here There Be Dragons – Navigating Unknown Realms of Interpretation. Inspired by the dragon-shaped curves of the Lake of the Ozarks and the legendary phrase that once marked uncharted maps, this year's theme celebrates the courage and curiosity at the heart of interpretation. As explorers who turn mystery into meaning, interpreters help others venture into new worlds with wonder and confidence.

Seeking Guides for the Journey!

It's not too early to start thinking about presenting!

The Setting for Our Quest



Our gathering will take place at the **Camden on the Lake Resort** in Lake Ozark, Missouri. This resort was chosen for its excellent conference facilities, welcoming customer service and access to outdoor spaces. Even better, our hotel block guarantees any room type for \$139/night – and yes, every single room includes a kitchenette! Book early to secure your preferred room type; the deadline for reservations is August 13, 2026.



Interpreters who have ventured into uncharted territory are invited to share their discoveries at the 2026 AMI Conference. If you've experimented, explored, or uncovered insights from the edge of the map, consider leading a breakout session. Your stories, tools, and hard-won wisdom will inspire others to confront dragons, navigate new realms and explore boldly!

Watch the horizon, the call for presenters will be out soon! Start preparing your ideas today!

JOIN US SEPTEMBER 13-16, 2026, AS WE CHART THE UNKNOWN TOGETHER.

Inheriting A Moth Ball

By: Lauren Baker, Naturalist, Powder Valley CNC

In the winter of 2024, I was given a gift from departing naturalist Sam Mendoza, now with the World Bird Sanctuary. I was passed the torch of a wildly popular event she put on called Moth Ball, which is a regency-inspired ball centered on moths! This event went viral online, collecting the attention, registration, and attendance of the young adult audience (ages 18-34). About 160 participants dressed up in moth-inspired costumes, enjoyed host plant mocktails, and spent the evening learning more about these mysterious insects. At the end of the night, a Queen Monarch or best dressed was voted on and crowned. This event became a known success statewide in our agency, and at the time it was picking up notoriety I had the 2nd annual Moth Ball placed in my hands. To put it simply, I was incredibly nervous.

After an intense several months of brainstorming, networking, and anxiety, I am happy to report that Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center hosted its 2nd Annual Moth Ball in September 2025 with similar success! With 165 registered participants, staff eagerly welcomed in the many individuals dressed in costume. Thanks to developing new partnerships, we added on many new activities like a PolliTat Parlour, which was flash tattooing run by local St. Louis tattoo artists. The St. Louis Astronomical Society offered night sky viewing, connecting how some moths are thought to use the night sky as a means of navigation. The Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House not only came back to run the Corner of Curiosities (or live insect viewing), but also a UV Mothing Sheet individuals could visit. We capitalized on this opportunity and offered a bioblitz through iNaturalist, with a good amount of contributions to the project.

While there were many other parts of the event that I'm proud of, my absolute favorite moment was the Queen Monarch crowning. The final two contestants turned toward each other during final judgement, and the crowd feverishly chanted, "Tie! Tie! Tie! Tie!" In the moment, I giggled reflecting on all the nerds like me huddled together in our auditorium wearing antennae and drinking mocktails, passionate over this silly title of Queen Monarch. I happily awarded the pair their new royal titles, both becoming instant friends and taking photos together throughout the night's festivities. That moment made all the anxiety of accepting a Moth Ball from a departing naturalist fade into pride. If you're wondering what's next for the 3rd Annual Moth Ball, I encourage you to come out and see for yourself! Join us at Powder Valley on Friday, September 25th for a twilight revel most rare—the Moth Ball, where elegance alights on silken wings and wonder stirs beneath the stars. Join us under the velvet sky for an evening of enchantment, curiosity, and courtly delight.



Missouri Natural – Birds of a Feather

By Angela E. Wells, Exhibition Curator for the Missouri State Museum

The Missouri State Museum has a unique and valued heritage as a forum for natural history. When walking through the Museum's Resources Hall, one can see remnants of this historical legacy in many of the vintage exhibits still on display for some 40 + years. The Museum's curatorial staff all agreed, a change to the Resources Hall was long overdue.

Today's museums find themselves in an interesting position- as spaces for informal education within society. Interpretation in exhibit content can serve as gateways to inspiration and knowledge and aid in society's advancement and perception of itself. It has never been more important to integrate knowledge of the past and present to better inform actions in the future, and the curatorial team weighed this important notion while planning the Museum's newest exhibition Missouri Natural.

The biggest change to the Museum's Resources Hall in over a generation, Missouri Natural serves as a rotating exhibit space to highlight the diversity of Missouri's natural world. Curated by historians and interpreted through a history of science perspective, the first rotation tells the history of ornithology in Missouri. As well, the design for the exhibit was greatly influenced by the pallets of the natural world, with colors derived from an 18th century geologist's color reference system based on the external properties of minerals.

Through the exhibition, the Missouri State Museum aims to inspire curiosity and appreciation of natural history more widely. By interpreting rich knowledge of nature and its stewards from a historical context, the Museum builds on its unique heritage to work towards a world where nature is understood, valued, and protected.



The Best Weather Has To Offer

By John Miller (from 2015 archives)

Early in my career, I dreaded the weather. I felt that I was at its mercy. Don't get me wrong, I love to go mushroom hunting in the rain, find tracks in the snow, and slog through the mud along a creek. My most memorable childhood campouts were in the rain and snow . . . I remember them like they were yesterday. But getting individuals of my audiences to share these experiences was not all that easy.

At first, I couldn't blame the teachers, parents, or scout leaders for cancelling or rescheduling a program because of rain or snow. What really got me to rethink my effectiveness is when group leaders began to cancel because of the 'hint' of bad weather and insisted on booking "rain dates". What I finally realized was these audience weren't necessarily afraid of the weather, they had simply never had a positive experience with imperfect weather conditions. But how do you get the audience to get out of their comfort zone? My key was firmness and the opportunity for adventure.

One of my first attempts at his new technique came on a wintery February evening at the Busch Conservation Area in St. Charles. An owl prowl was schedule on a Friday evening. As luck would have it there had already been about 2 inches of snow on the ground for three days. The roads were clear so travel was not an issue. Throughout the day, people who signed up a week earlier were asking if we were going to still have the event in the cold dark evening. I answered each call with a reassuring "We sure will! This will be a memorable night, so dress for a cold night hike". To my surprise, 25 of the 28 people showed up. As my fellow Naturalist Michelle and I greeted each family the question still kept being asked, "Will be go outside tonight?" We both confidently said that the outdoor portion was the highlight of the program.

Michelle, who was gifted bird interpreter started the program. While she covered the unusual features and types of owls of the area, I went out to 'prime the pump'. This means that I would go out without the group and try to get the owl(s) worked up so that when we come back, the owls will be more prone to call back. After about 15 minutes of calling, no owls were to be had. As I walked back to the old Busch Lodge an ever so light snowfall began. No wind, just a flat quiet snow. I was slightly disappointed because it was nothing but quiet. I returned at half past the hour, just as Michele was finishing the indoor program portion. She was preparing the families to go outside. She asked me, aside from the group, if we had any calling before went outside. I had to tell her that there had been no response. Ever the professional, she did not let this news dampen her enthusiasm.

...continued on page 15



The Best Weather Has To Offer

By John Miller (from 2015 archives)

As we walked through the picnic area the audience was remarkably hushed and eager to find owls. Reinforcing the need for quiet walking and no flashlights, we started down the Nature Trail. I had made one call in the picnic area and one call upon entering the trail. I no sooner told the group to use all their senses such as looking at the tree line because we may not hear the silent flight of the owl, but we may see it's silhouette against the sky. As if on cue we see a dark bird streaking over the trees. Not only could we see it stop, but we also HEARD it grasp the bark of the tree limb. The sound was exactly like snatching a handful of Rice Crispies from a bowl. A few muted voices whispering "cool" and "awesome" were heard along with the muffling snow floating all around. While we began helping the others in the group to point at the dark owl shape on the tree branch, it graced us with its signature barred owl call. It was magic. It called again and again. Being only 20 feet away from us, I decided to go ahead and put a light on it. The snow and the gray feathers made it look angelic. It was just like a scene out of the movie "Edward Scissorhands" where Johnny Depp's character, Edward, is frantically carving into a large block of ice in the shape of a dancing Winona Ryder (check) who is catching the air-filled shower of snowflakes. It was truly magic. The snow and the owl were truly captivating. To this day, I somehow feel Hollywood stole that idea from our program, but I digress. Despite my flashlight, it continued to call and move from branch to branch to investigate the intruders. For what seemed like 15 minutes we were mesmerized. Then the unexpected happened.

Unnoticed by any of us, a second barred owl erupted with its even louder call. Soon, the tune changed and both were giving their 'monkey call'. Had we not had lights or naturalists the audience would have thought for sure that wild monkeys were in the treetops. The two owls circled us several times and eventually went back into the snowy darkness. All the while the audience was mesmerized with the experience. When we returned to the trail head, they actually gave the owls an ovation in appreciation.

...continued on page 16



The Best Weather Has To Offer

By John Miller (from 2015 archives)

In recounting this story to other staff and volunteers the next week/month, we were not necessarily amazed at the way the owls responded. That particular wildlife area is a prime owl location. What did impress us (and me to this day) was the way that the snow had made the experience so memorable. The success of the night was not due to me or Michelle, it was in small part the owls, but it was in large part due to the weather. It had framed the evening in a way no one could have ever imagined. It led us to focus on the sounds, the night, and the owls. Think about it, we got 25 people to hike in the dark in 25-degree weather and in the falling snow. Despite these usually negative programmatic conditions, everyone stayed, marveled, and deeply experienced the natural night show.

Since then, I have always encouraged groups and families to take the chance to come to programs even if the weather forecast may sound less than optimal. Today, our public programs come with a standard mantra of “we will have the program rain or shine”. Can you get all audiences over their weather-fear hump? Not always, but it is worth the effort to try. Give them the confidence and the reason to try. Like so many childhood experiences the weather made the time more real and more meaningful. Let them know that the tiny risk of going with the flow of the weather is worth a memory that will last a lifetime.

What Is It?

Answer: Softshell Turtle

Article & Photos By John Miller

Unlike most other Missouri native turtles, the Softshell Turtles provide a glimpse of how diverse turtles species can be. These amazing turtles are in the family Trionychidae (“three claws family”). Softshell turtles are found naturally in Africa, Asia, and North America, with the highest diversity in Asia. North American Species (in the genus Apalone) and include the Spiny Softshell, Smooth Softshell, and Florida Softshell.



Unlike typical turtles, softshell turtles lack scales (scutes) on their compressed ‘pancake-like’ shells. The name ‘softshell’ comes from their thick leathery bendable skin. Their pliable compressed (mostly cartilage) shell makes them strong fast swimmers and extremely adept at burying under gravel, sand, and mud where they can ambush prey. Their pointed pig-like snout and long neck are used like a snorkel to stay submerged longer.

These turtles are an important part of our aquatic habitats and pose no threat to game fish species. Because of their size and found throughout much of the state (like the eastern snapping turtle), they are a game species.



Beware when picking them up, while they are called ‘soft’-shelled turtles, they are quick to bite, and their claws can scratch your skin.

You can learn more about softshell turtles at the following websites:

MO Dept. of Conservation; <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/northern-spiny-softshell>
Animal Diversity Website; <https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Trionychidae/>
iNaturalist; <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/39539-Trionychidae>
National Wildlife Federation; <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Reptiles/Spiny-Softshell-Turtle>

AMI Awards

Award Category (check one)

- Interpretive Giant
- Outstanding Service
- Outstanding Professional Interpreter
- Outstanding New Interpreter
- Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer
- Outstanding Interpretive Media
- Outstanding Interpretive Effort

Nominee's Name(s) _____
Telephone _____ Title/agency _____
Email _____
Address _____

*Must be a current member of AMI at the time of submission, except for volunteer and new.
(Check with Rachel Mandi at Rachel.Mandi@mdc.mo.gov or 816-228-3766.)*

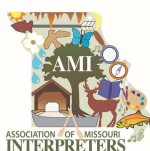
Nominator's Name _____
Telephone _____ Title/agency _____
Email _____
Address _____

*Must be current member of AMI at the time of submission.
(Check with Rachel Mandi at Rachel.Mandi@mdc.mo.gov or 816-228-3766.)*

Please submit nominations and accompanying documents by email if at all possible. Send **seven (7)** copies of printed materials (posters, brochures, etc.) that cannot be scanned to the address below postmarked by July 15th. Faxes will not be accepted.

**Lee Wilbeck, AMI Awards and Scholarship Chair – lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov
Northern Regional Office, PO Box 314, Brookfield, MO 64628**

DEADLINE is July 15th



AMI Awards

AMI Interpretive Giant Award

AMI's highest honor for an individual that has **guided** and/or **changed** the field of interpretation.

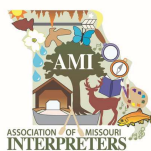
"If I see further than others it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants."

Isaac Newton, 1675, referring to earlier philosophers

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and 3 mandatory letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back or 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation, not lists of information. The score must be 90% or higher to receive the award.

1. **AMI membership required.**
2. **How has this person guided and/or changed the field of interpretation?**
3. **What makes this person a Giant in interpretation?**
4. **Explain how this person inspired, motivated, and mentored you and others.**
5. **Describe any outstanding programs, projects, and/or written material.**
6. **Explain any consulting and teaching activities.**
7. **List any known activities in AMI and other professional organizations. Include offices held, committee work, and workshop involvement. Provide professional certifications, awards, scholarships, recognitions, and/or honors.**



AMI Awards

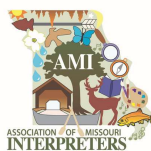
AMI Outstanding Service Award

*An individual, group, or organization that has provided **a single outstanding service** such as a committee chair, conference committee, newsletter editor, collection of auction items, etc. to AMI. This award is open to any AMI member at any stage in their career; it is not a lifetime service award. May be given more than once for a different service.*

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and 2 mandatory and 1 optional letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on a service, such as a board member, officer, newsletter editor, committee project, etc. The score must be 80% or higher to receive the award.

- 1. AMI membership required.**
- 2. Describe the outstanding service to AMI (only a single service needed).**
- 3. Explain how this person, group, or organization has contributed to the growth, improvement and/or stability of AMI through this service.**



AMI Awards

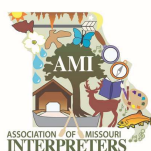
AMI Outstanding Professional Interpreter Award

An **individual** with more than five years of experience as a front-line interpreter that performs outstanding interpretation.

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and 2 mandatory and 1 optional letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation, not lists of information. The score must be 85% or higher to receive the award.

1. **AMI membership required.**
2. **Provide the number of years working in interpretation _____ (must be more than 5 years).**
3. **What makes this person an outstanding front-line interpreter?**
4. **Describe the nominee's involvement in interpretation such as programs, special events, and projects.**
5. **Explain how this person inspired you and others.**
6. **How has this person supported the field of interpretation?**
7. **List any known activities in AMI and other professional organizations. Include offices held, committee work, and workshop involvement. Provide professional certifications, awards, scholarships, recognitions, and/or honors, if known.**



AMI Awards

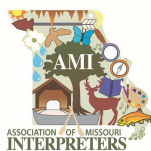
AMI Outstanding New Interpreter Award

*A part-time, full-time, or seasonal **individual** with five years or less in the interpretation profession that demonstrates outstanding potential, skills, and commitment to the field of interpretation.*

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and optional 3 letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation, not lists of information. The score must be 80% or higher.

- 1. AMI membership not required.**
- 2. Provide number of years in interpretation _____ (must be 5 years or less).**
- 3. What makes this person outstanding as a new interpreter?**
- 4. What potential do you see for this person?**
- 5. Describe the nominee's participation and any improvements in the site's interpretation. What initiative has this person demonstrated?**
- 6. How does this person show a passion for interpretation?**
- 7. Explain how this person affected you and others.**
- 8. List any known activities in AMI and other professional organizations. Include offices held, committee work, and workshop involvement. Provide professional certifications, awards, scholarships, recognitions, and/or honors.**



AMI Awards

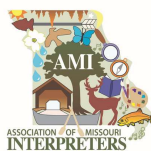
AMI Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer Award

An **unpaid individual** conducting outstanding front-line interpretation.

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and optional 3 letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation, not lists of information. The score must be 80% or higher to receive the award.

- 1. AMI membership not required.**
- 2. Provide location and hours normally worked by volunteer.**
- 3. Describe the volunteer's job duties and services performed to further the site's interpretation.**
- 4. What makes this person an outstanding interpretive volunteer?**
- 5. Describe any outstanding interpretive programs or projects.**
- 6. Explain how this person affected and inspired you and others.**



AMI Awards

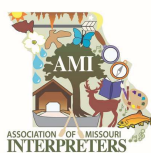
AMI Outstanding Interpretive Media Award

*Any interpretive **media**: article, book, poster, video, display, brochure, song, etc., that is outstanding in its message and effort for an emotional and intellectual connection to a resource.*

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and optional 3 letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation. The score must be 80% or higher to receive the award.

- 1. AMI membership required.**
- 2. What are the medium, the location, target audience, and purpose?**
- 3. What makes this medium unique?**
- 4. Describe how this medium affected and inspired you and others.**
- 5. How does this medium meet the definition of interpretation and demonstrate interpretive principles?**
- 6. What about this medium benefits the field of interpretation?**
- 7. Describe how this medium rates on clarity, accuracy, completeness, and interest. Is it on an important subject? Does it have a focus, consistent theme, or message?**



AMI Awards

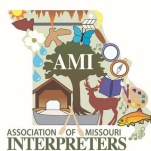
AMI Outstanding Interpretive Effort Award

*An individual, group, organization, company, etc., for a **single effort** such as a special event, outreach program, day camp, etc., or support, financial or otherwise, of a site or program, that is outstanding in interpretation or the support of interpretation*

Change the spacing as needed below. Please limit submission to above cover letter (1 electronic or paper page); this form (2 electronic pages, or front and back on paper); and optional 3 letters of support (6 electronic pages, or front and back for 3 paper copies).

Each nomination will be scored by the criteria below with the emphasis on interpretation. The score must be 80% or higher to receive the award.

- 1. AMI membership required.**
- 2. What is the effort, the location, the target audience, and the purpose?**
- 3. What makes this effort unique?**
- 4. Does it have a focus, consistent theme, or message?**
- 5. Describe how this effort affected and inspired you and others.**
- 6. How does this effort meet the definition of interpretation and demonstrate interpretive principles?**
- 7. What about this effort could benefit the field of interpretation?**





George Kastler

Association of Missouri Interpreter’s Scholarships

George Kastler Graduate Scholarship Aubree Schmid Undergraduate Scholarship



Aubree Schmid

WHO:

The scholarships are open to students in Missouri colleges and universities or permanent Missouri residents attending colleges or universities in another state or country. Applicants must be studying in the field of interpretation (biology, environmental education, parks and recreation, wildlife management, history, etc.). Scholarships will be awarded to undergraduates currently in their junior or senior year and students currently attending graduate school.

WHAT:

The Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) wants to assist and inspire students by offering \$1,000 scholarships and attendance to the AMI Conference. AMI will pay for the conference registration fee (which includes a one year AMI membership), one conference field trip, and lodging (site determined by committee). *Conference attendance is not required, but strongly recommended.*

WHY:

The scholarship provides you with educational funding and allows you to network, learn at the conference, and improve your resume.

WHERE and WHEN:

Lake Of The Ozarks, September 13th - 16th, 2026

HOW:

The attached application and required documents must be emailed or postmarked by **July 15th**.

Do you have QUESTIONS for the Scholarship Committee? Contact any of the members below:

Lee Wilbeck, Chair

lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov

Jalen Holloway, Northwest

jalen.holloway2@mdc.mo.gov

Rebecca Rodriguez, Northeast

Rebecca.Rodriguez@mdc.mo.gov

Michelle Soenksen, Southeast

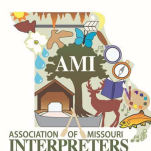
michelle.soenksen@dnr.mo.gov

Cyndi Cogbill, Southwest

cyndi@pawpawpatchproductions.com

John Cunning, Central

cunningjd@hotmail.com



Association of Missouri Interpreter's Scholarships

George Kastler Graduate Scholarship Aubree Schmid Undergraduate Scholarship

Scholarship includes \$1,000, conference registration, one field trip, and lodging during the AMI Conference.

Date _____ (must be emailed or postmarked by July 15th)
Applicant Name _____
Local Address _____
E-Mail Address: _____
Phone (_____) _____ Best Time to Contact: _____
Permanent Address _____
Phone (_____) _____ Best Time to Contact: _____
Name of School Currently Attending _____
Check the appropriate level: Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate Student _____
Major Area of Study _____ Minor Area of Study _____
Cumulative Grade Point Average _____ Name of Academic Advisor _____
Email and phone of advisor _____ (_____) _____

Applicant Requirements:

- must attend a Missouri college or university or be a permanent Missouri resident, and
- must be an undergraduate junior or senior, or graduate student.

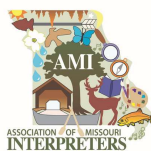
Your application will be scored on the following documents and their appearance. Please submit the following:

- this application,
- current college/university transcript (unofficial is acceptable),
- resume with references,
- an essay (at least 500 and no more than 1000 words) on why you are interested in the field of interpretation, and
- up to three (3) letters of recommendation relating information on your interpretation classes and/or experience.

For an application to be considered, it must be emailed or postmarked by **July 15th.**

Please submit your application, letters of recommendation, and accompanying documents to:

Lee Wilbeck - AMI Awards and Scholarship Committee Chair
PO Box 314
Brookfield, MO 64628
lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov
660-258-4950



Association of Missouri Interpreter's Lou Clairmont Interpretation Grant

WHO:

Members of the Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI)

WHAT:

This is an opportunity for AMI members to apply for funding that would aid in the creation of interpretive programs. The winners will receive funding to offset the cost of goods or services needed for their new or existing programs.

WHY:

This generous donation in honor of Lou Clairmont will assist AMI members in providing interpretive programs highlighting Missouri's natural and cultural resources.

WHEN:

The application must be received via email or postmarked by **July 15th**.

HOW:

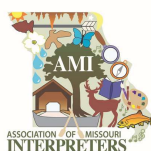
- Submit an Interpretive Outline complete with Theme and Title of Program
- Provide two additional examples of themes you could use while utilizing the purchased goods or services (in addition to the above outline)
- Include material list with specific costs just like you would for a grant
- Explain the need for financial assistance
- Recipient will be required to submit an article to the AMIgo describing the Interpretive Program created from the received grant within one year of receiving the funding

Submit application to:

Northern Regional Office
Lee Wilbeck, AMI Awards and Scholarship Chair
PO Box 314
Brookfield, MO 64628
Email: lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov

Do you have QUESTIONS for the committee? Contact any of the members below:

Lee Wilbeck, Chair	lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov
Jalen Holloway, Northwest	jalen.holloway2@mdc.mo.gov
Rebecca Rodriguez, Northeast	Rebecca.Rodriguez@mdc.mo.gov
Cyndi Cogbill, Southwest	cyndi@pawpawpatchproductions.com
Michelle Soenksen, Southeast	michelle.soenksen@dnr.mo.gov
John Cuning, Central	cunningjd@hotmail.com



Association of Missouri Interpreter's Lou Clairmont Interpretation Grant

AMI members may apply for one Lou Clairmont Interpretation Grant, per year. Grant funding each year will be capped at \$500. Multiple grants can be awarded each year. Applicants must adhere to the requirements listed above. Grant funds will be given to the individual applicant, therefore items cannot be purchased using state office tax exempt qualifications. A detailed purchase list of items is required. Each item will need to be accounted for at exact cost. In addition to purchase price of all items, please include taxes and shipping cost as well.

All applications will be scored using the criteria below by the AMI Awards and Scholarship Committee, and will remain confidential. Applicants must receive a score of 80% or greater to receive grant funding.

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Place of Employment _____

Scoring Criteria:

1. Program Outline including Theme and Title
2. Additional Themes
3. Detailed materials list including cost analysis
4. Explanation of financial need

If any of the four criteria are not met, the application will not be scored.

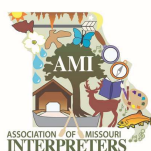
Submit completed application by **July 15th** via e-mail (preferred) or postal mail to:

Northern Regional Office

Lee Wilbeck, AMI Awards and Scholarship Chair

PO Box 314, Brookfield, MO 64628

lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov



Association of Missouri Interpreter's Professional Development Stipend

WHO:

Members of the Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI)

WHAT:

One stipend, per person, per year up to but not exceeding \$500.00.

Funds for stipends will be split into two time periods, January 1 through June 30, and July 1 through December 31 with an adjustable amount of \$1000.00 available. A single stipend will not exceed \$500.00 and only be available when the AMI scholarship fund exceeds \$3,000.00.

WHY:

The stipend will assist members with AMI or NAI conference attendance and professional development to further their knowledge and skills in the field of interpretation.

WHEN:

The application must be received at least 1 month prior to the event.

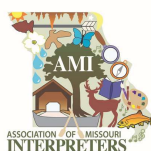
HOW:

Send your application, essay, and letter of support by email (preferred) or postal to:

Northern Regional Office
Lee Wilbeck, AMI Awards and Scholarship Chair
PO Box 314
Brookfield, MO 64628
Email: lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov

Do you have QUESTIONS for the committee? Contact any of the members below:

Lee Wilbeck, Chair	lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov
Jalen Holloway, Northwest	jalen.holloway2@mdc.mo.gov
Rebecca Rodriguez, Northeast	Rebecca.Rodriguez@mdc.mo.gov
Michelle Soenksen, Southeast	michelle.soenksen@dnr.mo.gov
Cyndi Cogbill, Southwest	cyndi@pawpawpatchproductions.com
John Cunning, Central	cunningjd@hotmail.com



Association of Missouri Interpreter's Professional Development Stipend

AMI members may apply for one professional development stipend, per year, to attend an AMI or NAI conference or professional development training. Stipends may be requested up to one month prior to the event. Individual stipends will not exceed \$500.00 and only be available when the AMI scholarship fund exceeds \$3,000.00.

All applications will be scored, using the criteria below, by the Association of Missouri Interpreter's (AMI) Awards and Scholarship Committee, and will remain confidential. Applicants must receive a score of 80% or greater to receive a stipend.

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Park/Site (if applicable) _____

Training/conference _____

Training/conference Date _____ Location _____

Fee for conference or professional development _____

Attach an essay on the following:

1. Why you wish to take this training or attend a conference.
2. A financial breakdown of what the funds will be utilized for.
3. How you would use this event to benefit your site and the field of interpretation.
4. Your interpretive knowledge and experience.
5. Your service to AMI.

Optional: A letter of recommendation from a supervisor or colleague

Applications for financial assistance must be emailed or postmarked no later than 1 month prior to the training/conference.

Submit completed application by e-mail (preferred) or postal mail to:

Northern Regional Office
Lee Wilbeck, AMI Awards and Scholarship Chair
PO Box 314, Brookfield, MO 64628
lee.wilbeck@dnr.mo.gov

