

# Investment in Jane will reap benefits for area

Last week our dream of building a new home for Jane got a huge shot in the arm with U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo's announcement of a \$1 million grant for the Burpee Museum of Natural History. The money also will be used to develop collaborative research and education programs at the Burpee with faculty and students from Northern Illinois University.

We thank our hard-working congressman for recognizing that investments in museums and cultural institutions can create jobs, enhance economic growth and contribute to community pride.

Manzullo's vision in securing this funding in a two-for-one package is nothing less than awesome. First, with significant federal funding in hand we are free to move forward with an ambitious plan to expand our growing museum and inject new life into the museum campus project. Someone has to go first — and Jane is willing to go where no dinosaur has gone before.

Next, these funds strengthen the Burpee Museum as a significant educational resource for students from NIU and the Rock River Valley. We will use these monies to develop a permanent relationship between the Burpee and NIU while also developing closer ties to Rock Valley College and Rockford College.

Our goal — shared collectively with Rockford's other fine museums, and its public and private schools, libraries and

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neighborhood centers — is to establish interconnected "learning communities" enabling our region to move beyond its present low educational achievement profile and onto a level playing field in our challenging 21st century economy.

And while we are at it, we also wish to thank two other community leaders — Wendy Fisher and Webbs Norman — for their unwavering support for Jane and for our mission.

From the beginning, Fisher and her staff at the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau have promoted Jane with unmatched verve and enthusiasm. Tourism creates jobs, and the RACVB's hard work has brought additional funds to market our dinosaur — and the city that has become her new home — to people with money living outside our region.

The Rockford Park District has made — in ways both great and small — every possible accommodation to support its constituent museums. Norman challenged Rockford's museums to make more meaningful contributions to our community's recreation and education programs. Jane's discovery — and the journey back to her new home at the Burpee — is but one result of that challenge. We are proud to be a museum in Rockford's parks.

— **Lew Crampton,**  
president, Burpee Museum  
of Natural History