



# THE Heron

2024 Edition 2

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**DuPage Environmental Summit**

January 16th

**Winter Membership Luncheon**

February 13th

**DuPage River Sweep**

April 19th

**Earth Day Benefit**

April 24th

**Spring at the Farm**

May 4th

**McDonald Farm Plant Sale**

May 10th

Herrick Lake, DuPage County

We save land. We save rivers.

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*The Conservation Foundation is a 52-year-old private 501(c)3 land and water protection organization working to preserve nature in northeastern Illinois. FEIN #23-7221206*



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## Our Mission STATEMENT

*We improve the health of our communities by preserving and restoring open space and natural lands, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of our environment.*

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# Letter from **The President/CEO**

Back in 1997, when I was just in my second year with The Conservation Foundation, we were asked to help run a campaign to pass an open space referendum for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. The campaign was successful, and voters passed the referendum that raised \$75 million to preserve land. I was absolutely ecstatic, but never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I'd be experiencing that same excitement this year, celebrating the passing of our 15th and 16th successful open space referenda!

We did it. YOU did it. If you are a voter in Kane or DuPage County and you cast your vote in favor of the forest preserve district referendum, you voted YES for open space, voted YES for clean air and water, voted YES for wildlife habitat, and voted YES to preserve and restore more natural lands for future generations. You are part of the decades-long tradition of voting YES for nature and healthy communities in northeastern Illinois.

These properties that the forest preserve districts have acquired over the years, they're not isolated pieces of property. They connect rivers together, they connect communities together, and they connect people together. So the tens of thousands of acres that we have preserved in our area, this green infrastructure

has become part of the culture of our communities.

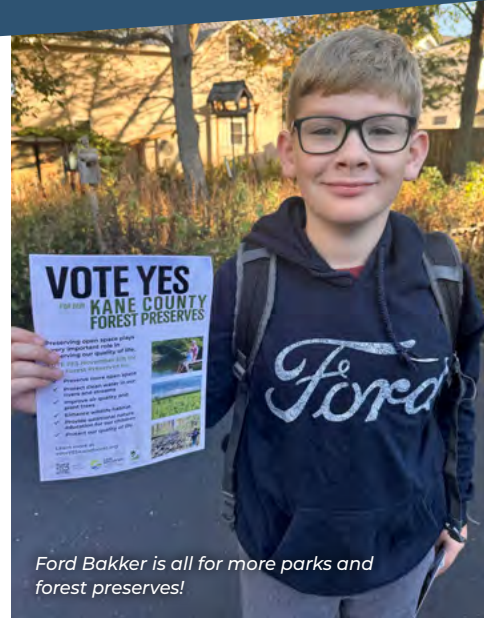
This is big-scale land conservation. Thousands of acres of land are being preserved, thousands of acres of land are being restored. That's a direct hit on our mission. And when the public supports that, it's one of the greatest feelings in the world.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who served tirelessly on the DuPage and Kane County Neighbors for Open Space, Clean Water, and Clean Air committees, all who voted YES and encouraged others to do the same, and the members and supporters of The Conservation Foundation for making it possible for us to work behind the scenes on these open space referenda. This is a huge victory for all of us!!!

I'll think I'll go celebrate in one of our beautiful local forest preserves, and I encourage you to do the same!

*Pause for a moment, and when you hear the leaves rustling on the trees, know that they are applauding you for your support of local nature.*

*By: Brook McDonald  
President/CEO*



*Ford Bakker is all for more parks and forest preserves!*



*Connie Schmidt, Co-Chair of DuPage Neighbors for Open Space, Clean Water, and Clean Air*

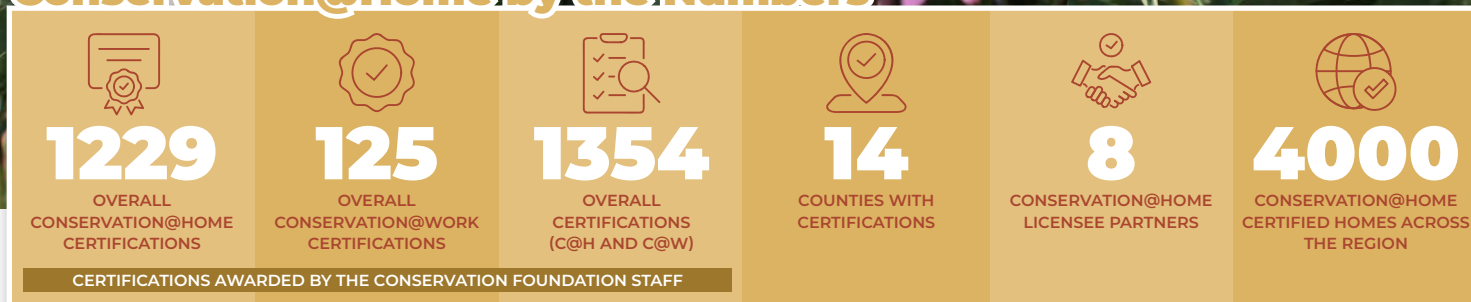


*Danada Forest Preserve*

## Two Decades of Bringing Nature Close Through **Conservation@Home**



### Conservation@Home by the Numbers



Twenty years ago, Jim Kleinwachter was working as Land Protection Specialist for The Conservation Foundation. He was returning to his truck, feeling dejected after the latest of multiple landowner visits in which he had to gently let people know that their property did not qualify for a conservation easement, despite the high quality environmental stewardship they had been doing on their land. It stands to reason that conservation easements are difficult to qualify for – they carry very hefty legal weight, tax incentives and more. But it just didn't sit well with Jim that it should be "easement or bust" for landowners out there voluntarily doing

exemplary conservation work on their own properties.

"Two landowners in particular had amazing properties that they were maintaining meticulously- but they did not qualify for an easement. I could see that we at The Conservation Foundation needed something else that would reward landowners who were already managing their properties with the environment in mind, and motivate others to create habitat on their properties," reflected Jim. "We created the Conservation@Home and Conservation@Work programs to fill a need and engage landowners of any size

into the conservation effort. It is critically important to have people understand that conservation is for everyone, and everyone is needed to make it successful."

Two decades later, Jim is still our Conservation@Home Program Director (pictured to the right certifying homes and businesses; he's the tall one) and has been able to see the program born out of his desire to encourage people's environmentally-minded efforts grow to become one of our pillar programs, expand into a regional initiative carried out by other conservation organizations, and transform the landscapes

of not only residential homes but corporate campuses, schools, municipal buildings and entire developments.

The Conservation@Home and Conservation@Work programs encourage and empower individuals to make meaningful environmental impacts in their own yards and green spaces by meeting them where they are, regardless of experience or knowledge level. From implementing sustainable gardening practices to creating wildlife habitats, we provide the tools, resources, and expertise to transform any outdoor space, even an apartment balcony, into a sanctuary for biodiversity. The hallmark of Conservation@Home is personal attention in the form of individual site visits conducted by our staff, where they can oooh and ahhh over the creative conservation measures landowners have already put in place, and recommend ways to further their efforts and increase habitat, water conservation, beauty, and biodiversity.

By embracing a broader ecosystem and landscape approach to conservation where humans share habitats with wildlife, not only in protected areas but also in areas of everyday life, we create a significant positive impact. Yards and green spaces throughout the Chicagoland region are landscaped with native plants that support wildlife, provide clean water and clean air, and conserve the region's biodiversity. This creates a matrix of healthy natural areas throughout our communities, linking private naturally landscaped areas to larger publicly owned natural areas that help wildlife thrive and increasing our local ecosystems' resilience to climate change through direct and tangible actions. From increasing stormwater absorption at home during major rainfall events to creating a mosaic of microhabitats that can support wildlife migration in the age of climate change, together homeowners are helping the environment while providing healthy and beautiful outdoor spaces for wildlife, people, and pets.

This program is perhaps our most tangible, everyone-can-do-something way to empower and involve local people in conservation, which as Jim said, is critical to the longterm health and happiness of nature and of humanity. Conservation@Home Program Manager Beth Peluse, brought on to help Jim manage the momentum of this program, only sees more impact ahead! "Since its launch, the

Conservation@Home program has been dedicated to promoting the use of native plants, educating our community, and honoring individuals who champion sustainable landscaping practices," she said. "I'm looking forward to building on the legacy of the Conservation@Home program by continuing to add to an interconnected network of native plant gardens. Through these green spaces, whether it be in someone's backyard or at their workplace or school, we're supporting pollinators, nurturing biodiversity, mitigating rainwater issues, and establishing sustainable wildlife corridors throughout the Chicago suburbs. Each garden becomes a critical piece of a larger ecological puzzle, restoring and reconnecting natural systems one yard at a time."

Thank you to everyone who has had their property, however large or small, certified through Conservation@Home or Conservation@Work, and Happy 20th Anniversary! To schedule your Conservation@Home property visit, email [DeepRoots@theconservationfoundation.org](mailto:DeepRoots@theconservationfoundation.org)

By: *Jill Johnson*  
Communications Manager





# Art of the Fox: Where Nature and Art Converge

There is artistry everywhere you look, in the Fox River itself, in the vibrant communities along its banks, and in the majestic woodlands, verdant prairies and fertile farm fields surrounding those communities.

But sometimes when something is a part of your daily comings and goings, you stop seeing it fully. Through our 2019 Art of the Fox program, Artist-in-Residence Joel Sheesley helped us see the river more fully with more than 75 plein air Fox River paintings of both iconic and little-known river views in all seasons. The Conservation Foundation's Art of the Fox program strives to connect people and communities to the beauty, diversity, and importance of the Fox River through art, and Joel's works accomplished that in stunning detail.

We are now turning to public art installations that celebrate this vital waterway. The goal is to create features that are accessible, celebrate diverse local voices, and connect people to place and nature. The public art focus aims to increase accessibility of the art, support community beautification efforts, and be in the heart of where communities gather.

In 2024, the public art initiative of Art of the Fox debuted in Batavia with support from the Hamill Family Foundation and in collaboration with The Conservation Foundation's Inclusion Council, the City of Batavia, and the Batavia Public Art Initiative, a committee of Water Street Studios. Specific consideration was given to explicitly stating the intent of celebrating diverse voices in the 'Call for Artists' language and carefully selecting an array of interpretations during the anonymous art selection process.

From 50 submissions, 10 local muralists were selected to bring a series of nature-inspired murals to the Jeffery D. Schielke Government Center, an historic windmill factory that stretches along the Fox River in downtown Batavia. Now a government building, the grounds are a community gathering space, a public river walk, and a wildflower sanctuary.

The 10 boarded-over window spaces along the east side of the building were revitalized with colorful and unique, yet cohesive murals facing the Batavia Riverwalk and the Fox River.



*You don't have to be an artist to find beauty and inspiration in the Fox River Valley.*

A mural unveiling event was held in October to celebrate the finished murals, the artists that created them, and life in the Fox River Valley in all of its forms. But no invitation is needed – all are welcome to enjoy this public art installation at any time, in keeping with the project's goals of inclusivity and enhancing the human/nature connection. The paved path that runs along the river is accessible to a wide range of mobility needs and is right in the bustling heart of Batavia.

You can even hear insight from each artist at <https://pod.cards/artofthefoxmuralseries> while visiting! We encourage you to visit soon, and watch for future public art installations in other Fox River communities over the next several years as we continue to celebrate the Art of the Fox.

*By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager.*

## “ART OF THE FOX” MURAL ARTISTS

JOHNATHAN BELAIR

CLARA BRUBAKER

SARAH ENGEL

CHERYLYN GNADT

MARTY GNIECH

LISA HOLZL

CJ HUNGERMANN

MYRA MILLER

KAILEY RORER

CATHERINE TILLY

**We'd like to thank the generous donors who sponsored murals:**

Hamill Family Foundation

W.C. 'Buzz' Miller

Nadler Golf

Linda Gray Sonner



## Scratching the Surface: Discovering Native Connections at Belrose Farm

**There's a reason there are so many books and movies about summers as a child. Often the time we spend in the landscapes of our youth shapes who we become, though it may be decades before we realize it.**

Peter John Geraci spent his summers on his aunt and uncle's farm near Sheridan in LaSalle County, attending nearby Camp Tuckabatchee (an incredible place you'll be hearing more about in our next edition of *The Heron*) as a camper and a counselor. They'd go canoeing each week on the Fox River, taking out at Ayers Landing, just across the river from a wild property owned by the Belrose family. Stories of ancient peoples and their use of the area were plentiful, and fascinating to a young Peter.

A few decades later, Peter John Geraci is now a veteran archaeologist carrying soil from Belrose Farm under his fingernails. This bewitching landscape of his youth near Wedron was purchased by The Conservation Foundation in 2021. With 20 years of experience in the field and laboratory with the Illinois State Archaeological Survey and now the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he is the Anthropology Department Administrator,

Peter specializes in stone tool technology, human ecology, cartography, and landscape archaeology. His deepest interest is the Woodland Period, circa 500 B.C. to AD 1000, particularly the Havana Hopewell Cultural Phase that occurred around 2,000 years ago.

When he became a professional in the field of archaeology, Peter did some research into Native American burial mounds on a property adjacent to Belrose Farm, but it took him years to get up the gumption to approach the owners of Belrose to see if they would be open to him conducting some archaeological surveys of the property. As luck would have it, he summoned his bravery at the exact time that The Conservation Foundation purchased the 183-acre Belrose Farm. We wanted to learn as much as we possibly could about the natural and human communities that have walked this incredible property over the eons, so this was a partnership for the ages.

Peter, with the help of about 50 volunteers that assist when they are able, has thus far conducted a field survey of the land around the barn at Belrose, where our Land Stewardship Manager Renae Frigo identified a couple of artifacts, as well as pedestrian surveys of all the

agricultural fields. Based on the results of these surveys as well as a review of private collections, Belrose Farm has been used and occupied by Native American peoples for more than 10,000 years.

The Belrose Farm property has a lot to offer in the form of food and materials, including access to clay for pottery, and vantage points that were important for security as well as for burying their lost ones. It is located at a confluence between Indian Creek and the Fox River and has a backwater creek with unique sandstone bluffs and a box canyon, making it an ideal hunting and fishing location. The fertile and easily tillable soils on the floodplain along the river would have provided the perfect place to plant domesticated plants like goosefoot, sunflower, little barley, squash, and marshelder during the Woodland period, and eventually corn and beans during the Mississippian and Historic periods (post AD 1000).

Why is it so important for us to understand the history of Belrose Farm? Starting from the practical standpoint, the work of Peter and his volunteers is showing us where sensitive archaeological areas are located on the property so that we can protect them from



further destruction as we restore the property and work to make it more accessible to the people of today. Knowing how native peoples used the land can also inform our decisions on the best ways to “re-wild the land,” as Peter puts it. It could potentially tell us what plants are best suited to the landscape, what animals once called it home. Belrose Farm is a rich ecological area even now, and this is due in part to the stewardship of native peoples.

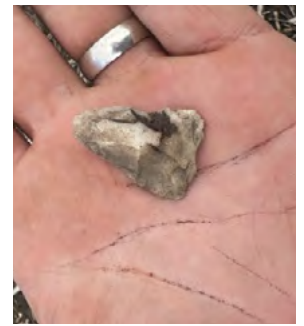
Peter sees value in understanding the past for philosophical reasons as well. “History allows us to explore ourselves through the perspective of time,” he shares. “People are fascinated by the ‘how did we get here’ and ‘why are things the way they are’ questions, and archaeology is the only way to discover those truths where written records are not available. I think it’s so important that people realize Belrose Farm is just one piece of a much larger puzzle that has largely been destroyed by modern development. The fact that it has not been converted into a parking lot or Costco is what allows us to answer these questions.”

While Peter’s work is giving us invaluable insight into the history of Belrose Farm, he also feels it is serving as a wonderful model for his colleagues and is one of the highlights of his career thus far. “The Belrose Archaeological Project has been an absolute joy,” Peter reflects. “Knowing this land that has always interested me is protected in perpetuity and getting to work with such like-minded and genuine people is really a best-case scenario many of my colleagues are envious of. On a very personal note, this project has provided me with an

opportunity and excuse to spend more time with my aunt and uncle, who were like second parents to me and first connected me to this fascinating area.”

With Peter’s uncle battling cancer last year, the time became even more special to Peter. Unfortunately, his uncle passed away in February, but working at Belrose has allowed him to better support his aunt as she copes with the loss, and spending time there by himself helps ground him and provide peace in an otherwise chaotic world. Peter and his team have much more to explore and discover at Belrose Farm, but their work so far has only strengthened our appreciation and connection to this land, and the native peoples it has sheltered all these years.

*By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager*



## With **Respect & Reverence,**

we acknowledge the  
Indigenous people  
that occupied this land  
before us. See our full  
Land Acknowledgment  
Statement here:



*The Conservation Foundation*



# Volunteer Spotlight: It's Our Fox River Day



The spirit of volunteerism was flowing on Saturday, September 21st as hundreds of people showed up to give the Fox River some love, from top to bottom, as part of It's Our Fox River Day, a river-wide celebration organized by Friends of the Fox River.

The Conservation Foundation managed three cleanup sites in St. Charles, Oswego and Yorkville, and the 260 volunteers who joined us, some by land and some paddling on the river, managed to clear an astonishing 107 full bags of trash from the Fox. An oxygen tank made the biggest splash in terms of river finds, but every piece of trash pulled out of the river, regardless of its size, makes a cleaner and healthier Fox for all wildlife and human residents to enjoy.

"The Fox River is the heart of Kane and Kendall Counties, and ties our communities together. Now the Fox has its own day of honor, and cleaning it is a good way to show appreciation," commented Ellen Von Ohlen, Trustee for The Conservation Foundation. "I look forward to this event every year!"

The dedicated staff of our partners provided larger debris transportation, and disposal of aggregated trash gathered by volunteers. The Kendall County Outdoor Education Center provided canoes for a group of volunteers to use at the Yorkville Cleanup, and paddling clubs joined the Oswego and St. Charles cleanups to tackle litter from on the water. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to access some of the hard-to-reach islands and shorelines considered litter hotspots.

"The commitment from the community and our partners to a healthy Fox River is both inspiring and critical," said Jessica Mino, our Kane and Kendall County Program Director. "We are so grateful to everyone who participated and made it another great event this year, experiencing the joy our community gets by coming together to support a healthy, beautiful environment for people and wildlife."

It's Our Fox River Day is held on the third Saturday in September. Join us next year to celebrate and steward our beloved Fox River!

*By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager*



## WeGo Together for Kids

Youth Education is a pillar of The Conservation Foundation's mission, and our new partnership with WeGo Together For Kids, a West Chicago organization seeking to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of students and families is furthering that mission in a big way! This September, more than 140 people came to our McDonald Farm headquarters in Naperville for a WeGo Day at the Farm, where they experienced forest therapy, created nature art, took farm tours, picked fresh, organic vegetables and became garden chefs. We are so excited about this new partnership and the opportunity to get kids out into nature for their mental and physical health, and to increase our impact in the West Chicago community.

By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager



## When the Teacher Becomes the Student

Teachers have the daunting responsibility and awesome opportunity to shape the hearts and minds of our youth, the future stewards of our environment. Research has long linked nature as a beneficial setting and tool for educating our children, and earlier this fall, local K-8 educators joined us for two teacher training and professional development workshops focused on incorporating local nature into their curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom.

*“Some people change the world. And some people change the people who change the world, and that’s you.”*

— Kij Johnson

The first workshop was held at The Conservation Foundation's McDonald Farm headquarters in Naperville, with the second workshop taking place at the DuPage Children's Museum, both in partnership with The Field Museum. Each session offered experiential learning for the teachers in attendance, giving them the tools, know-how and excitement to incorporate more environmentally-themed learning into their classes this school year.

The teachers became the students as they learned about nature and play-based education techniques appropriate to the ages they educate in McDonald Farm's Sensory Garden and Children's Garden, grew their skills in implementing inquiry and exploration techniques with local natural phenomena, and explored our Mighty Acorns® environmental education and stewardship program and how they can implement it in their classrooms.

We want to thank all teachers, and especially those of you who joined us and are open to exploring creative, nature-based ways to refine your

approach to teaching. You are changing the people who will change the world, and lighting a fire within them to enjoy and take care of the people and natural communities around them!

Many thanks to EcoLab, AXA XL, and Bosch for funding these workshops, and to the DuPage Children's Museum and The Field Museum for their partnership in bringing this valuable learning opportunity to our local community of educators!



## “Beeting” Homelessness and Hunger

Hope can be found in many places, but did you ever imagine finding it in a beet salad?

When purchasing their share of the Green Earth Harvest this season, shareholders were invited to pay it forward and donate to our new scholarship farmshare program to give families facing hardships access to fresh, healthy, locally grown organic vegetables.

“Y.” and her family (initials will be used to protect their privacy), who come from Ukraine, are one of the families being nourished this year by the shares funded through contributions to the scholarship program and our partnership with Bridge Communities, a Glen Ellyn organization dedicated to connecting families faced with homelessness to a better future. Y. loves to cook, and having taken some English classes and working to secure her Driver’s License this past year, she is able to bring her daughter A. to McDonald Farm for their vegetable pickups. Together they enjoy gathering the fresh, colorful vegetables grown at the farm by our Green Earth Harvest farm crew, sometimes even picking produce themselves, and then taking the bounty home to create delicious and nutritious meals together.

Home hasn’t always been a given for this family, and being able to have a roof over their heads and a gorgeous beet salad on their table that they themselves created has given a new form of hope.

“Last year I was lucky to share two words with Y. when she came to pick up her veggie delivery,” said Megan DeAngelis, Manager of Family Wellness at Bridge Communities. “They have blossomed so much here since being in the United States, and it’s wonderful to see the positive changes in their lives and comfort level here in Illinois. Thank you for making this happen and helping create so many beautiful memories for our Bridge families. They are absolutely thrilled!”

Your support allows us to carry on partnerships like this one with Bridge Communities, and grow the food that gives Y.’s family and others like them the hope that will carry them to a better future. Thank you!

By: *Jill Johnson*  
Communications Manager



Megan DeAngelis (L) of Bridge Communities and The Conservation Foundation's Jennifer Hammer (R) on a Bridge Communities veggie pickup day

# What's Hopping at Dayton Bluffs Preserve

The wildness of our Dayton Bluffs Preserve in Ottawa is our favorite thing about it, and we know our dedicated volunteers, Friends of the Dayton Bluffs Preserve, feel the same. While they are not trying to tame it, they have worked hard this year to make the Preserve a little safer and more accessible with continued trail improvements and the construction of new stairs along the steeper trails.

They've also been getting to know the non-human visitors to the preserve through several citizen scientist projects and have made some exciting discoveries!

**Frog Calling Survey:** Last year's wetland expansion has already paid off with a lively chorus of frogs! Cricket Frogs, Eastern Gray Tree Frogs, and Chorus Frogs are all in abundance, with American Toads and Green Frogs also adding their voices. And the beloved Jewel Pond continues to be a frog hotspot!

**Dragonfly Watch:** This year we've spotted Willow Skimmers, 12-Spotted Skimmers,

Black Saddlebags, and the seasonal favorites, Halloween Pennants all buzzing around the preserve!

**Bird Counts:** Big news—Dayton Bluffs is now an eBird Hotspot! This year, we've documented a whopping 155 bird species. Our dedicated birding volunteers are making Dayton Bluffs a must-visit for feathered friends and bird watchers alike.

**These additional projects are ongoing with data forthcoming:**

- Butterfly Counts
- Acoustic Bat Survey (Year 3)
- Bluebird Monitoring
- Snake Monitoring

*By: Dr. Dave Manigold  
Friends of the Dayton Bluffs Preserve*



*Dayton Bluffs Rainbow, photo by volunteer Stan Johnson*



# Red Barn Report from The Dickson-Murst Farm

Our Dickson-Murst Farm Partners once again put together three festive celebrations of our rural heritage where visitors to the Dickson-Murst Farm could experience the simple pleasures of gathering with family and friends, petting an animal, and enjoying all there was to see at Spring at the Farm, Day at the Farm, and Beer, Bands and Barns. We are so appreciative of their hard work to keep our historic farm buildings pristine and make the farm such a valuable gathering place for the community through these free events. A small group of volunteers, led by Partner Craig Small and our Kane/Kendall County Director Jessica Mino, started the Dickson-Murst Community Garden Club this summer. This group was tasked with weeding and maintaining the paths and native plant gardens which were recently planted at the farm to bring our mission to life while providing the softness and beauty of a variety of native species, as well as showcasing them to our visitors.

Next summer, we'll be introducing Movies at the Farm, as well as bringing back the wildly popular Farm Camp, so watch your email inbox or our website for more information!

*By: Lisa O'Brien  
Volunteer Coordinator*



*Easton Kempick of the Newark Future Farmers of America (FFA) holds her goat up for Spring at the Farm visitors to pet.*

# A Huge Lift Made Lighter By Interns

Growing healthy vegetables is important to us, but it's not the only thing that is. We talk often about how we care for the soil, for the animals of all shapes and sizes from microbes, to beetles, baby birds, and even deer! What we don't talk about quite as often are the people who are growing here. As we do the work we do, naturally, we are all learning and growing. Just like a bird learns what foods are good for it and what foods to avoid, we learn and grow every day through our mistakes and successes in this Green Earth Harvest operation. We grow as individuals through our own challenges, but we also grow as a group and as a community through our interactions with one another.

In addition to our 6 full-time farm staff members, our farm crew generally consists of 3 part-time crew members, a mechanic, and a wonderful cadre of volunteers, who, by the way, make every day better when they are here! However, we are sometimes also privy to the companionship of interns here at McDonald Farm who don't usually get much recognition. Although the interns here may be less visible to the public than the rest of us, they surely are just as important as all of us are. This growing season we were fortunate enough to have the largest group of interns yet, and I wanted to show our gratitude for their hard work and recognize the difficult decisions that each of them made to sacrifice their personal summer time (we all remember how invaluable summer free time is as a kid!) to come and work and learn with us here on the farm.

Maya and Caden come to us this season from the SMILE program, an internship program through the Unitarian Universalist Church of Naperville. SMILE has been working with us for over a decade, bringing interns out to the farm each summer since the days of Farmer Steve! SMILE provides funding through grants and donations to pay the wages of high school students to intern at local businesses for 4 hours a day, 4 days



Maya



Amanda & Caroline



Yaretzi & Owen



Yaretzi



Caroline

a week, for 4 weeks. Maya and Caden were both a great help here and they had quite the experience for their first jobs! We also had 3 interns through a new-to-us grant program from the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley. Yaretzi and Caroline came to us from Aurora high schools. They wanted to intern at the farm with us because they both had experiences with their families that made them interested in working outside with plants. I can assure you, they had ample time outside with plants! They also made a home on the crew with their sometimes-epic jokes (and sometimes not) and strong work ethics. Finally, we enjoyed the company of Owen, an intern squared! Owen began his journey with us last year, through the SMILE program that brought us Caden and Maya this season. Owen likes working outside and loved learning about how to fix things with his dad. He certainly found his place with us! We are always outside and there is always something to fix!

The great thing about working with Owen is that after his internship last season, he came back to volunteer his time with us, something seemingly rare for folks his age. They say many hands make light work, and with our amazing seasonal crew, awesome interns, versatile volunteers, and coordinated leadership, we have certainly got the hands! Thanks to everyone involved in our program we are able to make a huge lift feel much lighter. Growing food for thousands of people is no small feat. Especially when the goal is to grow that food as responsibly as possible, environmentally, socially, and ethically, it can be difficult to bring it all together. So, thank you to everyone who helps out, whether through farmshare subscriptions, time, donations, or just holding us in your hearts; every piece makes a difference to us so we can make a difference to our community!

*By: Russell Cerocke  
Green Earth Harvest Farm Manager*

## Welcomes and Farewells



### Welcome

We are so fortunate to have **Jennine Kristianson** of Millbrook (Kendall County) join our Board of Trustees! Jennine brings more than 25 years of experience in finance and marketing to the Trustee role, as well as a host of volunteerism and a genuine heart for nature and community. Volunteering and fundraising for organizations that align with her beliefs, including the Fox Valley Wildlife Center, American Cancer

Society, Forest Foundation of Kendall County, her neighborhood's HOA and The Conservation Foundation, has always been what keeps Jennine's blood flowing and makes her feel fulfilled. "It's the same feeling I have when I am standing in the middle of a native prairie, atop a mountain range, in a vast woodland area, or among 20,000 fellow music fans," shares Jennine. "That sense of connection to everything and everyone, and that overwhelming need to make the world a better place. Being a volunteer for The Conservation Foundation continues that feeling for me."

Jennine and her husband Neil, when they're not running their marketing and electronic communications company, love supporting local musicians and artists, traveling and exploring local nature. Hiking, gardening, prairie and woodland restoration and kayaking are some of Jennine's favorite hobbies, and as for quirks, she can't

walk past a majestic tree, screaming Blue Jay, or busy pollinator without saying hello. We are so excited to have Jennine's creativity and energy being applied to our mission!



### Farewell

We'd like to thank retiring trustee **John Binneboese** for his 10 years of outstanding service to our Board of Trustees. John retired last year from Itasca Bank & Trust after a tremendous 45-year career. John's father was actually one of the bank's original employees!

John has had a huge impact on The Conservation Foundation. He served on the board's Finance and Advancement Committees and rarely missed a meeting. He

helped facilitate financing for numerous land acquisitions, including the most recent one in Campton Township, as well as contributed his creativity to building awareness of The Conservation Foundation's mission and helping us to become more well-known throughout the area.

We will miss John's calm and wise presence, firm handshakes, and snazzy ties immensely. Thank you, John, for all you have done for our organization and for conservation throughout northeastern Illinois!

*By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager*

## New Staff



**Emma Lohenry** serves as the Youth Programs Manager at The Conservation Foundation, where she is dedicated to creating memorable, inclusive learning experiences for children and families. She holds a B.S. in Human Development & Family Studies from the University of Missouri and studied Applied Animal Behavior at the University of Washington. Emma is also a Certified

Interpretive Guide through the National Association for Interpretation.

Her background as a zookeeper and zoo/museum educator fuels her passion for developing accessible and engaging learning experiences that inspire the next generation to love science, appreciate wildlife, and safeguard the ecosystems they call home.



**Kathleen Kenny** is the Director of Finance for The Conservation Foundation. Kathleen holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Notre Dame and a masters of business administration from the University of Chicago. She has held various roles in public and nonprofit accounting, while raising 5 children with her husband in Naperville. She grew up in Will County, and as the granddaughter of an Iowa farmer, is loving being on the farm! She enjoys biking and traveling, as well as learning more about her roots through genealogy!

*By: Jill Johnson  
Communications Manager*



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