



The Heron

2021 Edition 1

CONSERVATION ONLINE

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President/CEO Brook McDonald leads a hike at our Dayton Bluffs Preserve in Ottawa.

We save land. We save rivers.

Table of Contents

Letter from the President 3

Standing Tall for Regional
Oak Recovery 4

Reservation Woods 4

A Marvel Like No Other 5

Bring Some Adventure to
Your Summer (Safely) 6

Garden Refresh 7

Plants For Your Big Plans 7

The Show Must Go On..... 8

Season's First Sprouts 9

Honoring Kaaren Oldfield 10

New Staff 10

Good Things Come in Threes... 11

The Conservation Foundation is a 49-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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Social Media!

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**

I have learned a lot over the past 25 years here at The Conservation Foundation, and have witnessed a dramatic change for the good. But, how do we know what we are doing is making a difference and what are the “proofs?”

We know people really care about nature and support open space, clean water and clean air. How do we know this? Forget about all the surveys and polling data, which say citizens overwhelmingly support this. Just look at the proof- not one countywide open space and conservation ballot measure has failed over the past 25 years in the Chicago region. In fact, if we count all conservation ballot measures, including the numerous local ones, 38 out of 41 have passed. That's a 92 percent success rate. And they have all passed during both good and bad economic times. This has resulted in an additional 40,000 acres of land preserved for future generations. That's all the proof I need.

Native landscaping is now becoming mainstream. We see it in more yards and even in new developments. People want to be around nature, especially now. Our Conservation@Home (and @Work) program is now 15 years old and we have certified more than 1,200 properties in our service territory as “nature and environmentally friendly.” With the addition of several regional partners, the total properties certified now exceeds 2,000 throughout the Chicago region.

Our parks and forest preserves are packed because people want to be outside. They know that when they are outside in nature, it is good for their mind, body and soul. Spending time in nature is part of a holistic wellness regime, and the science backs it. Nature Rx is our effort to remind people that the more time you, your family and kids spend outside, the healthier and happier you are. Most of us know this intuitively, but now there is so much research and data to prove this, and it's overwhelming.

Over this past year, we understand better just how much we rely on each other and how badly we need thriving, connected communities and healthy environments to get us through our toughest times.



We invite you to join our collective effort and make an impact. By combining your support with our 5,000 members and partners, your values will help shape and transform our communities and make everyone's lives better and more just. This moment calls upon us to lift up our values, explain how our fates are shared, and show how we can work together to build a healthier, greener and more just world.

To quote from an Indigenous prophesy: “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”

By: Brook McDonald
President/CEO

Standing Tall for Regional Oak Recovery

In less than 200 years, the proportion of oaks among our region's tree canopy has declined by 83%. With only a few widely separated oak woodlands left scattered amongst our farms and suburban landscapes, it's difficult for these oak trees to support a rich, diverse ecosystem, and we need them to – oak trees are vital to more than 500 native plant and animal species in this area!

Of the oaks we do have remaining, 70% are located on private property. This fact is what spurred a collaboration between The Conservation Foundation and The Morton Arboretum to improve the health of oak woodlands across northeastern Illinois as part of the Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan.

Our collaboration will advance the regional oak recovery project by helping property owners care for existing oak woodlands, guiding

them to educational opportunities about the importance of oaks in our environment, and increasing the number of oaks planted throughout our core service area.

As pillars of our native natural ecosystems, oaks are key to preserving our natural heritage.

To learn more about the Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan, visit <http://chicagorti.org/OakRecovery>.

The Conservation Foundation is here to help you manage your oak ecosystems! Contact us at gonative@theconservationfoundation.org or 630-428-400, Ext. 132 to let us know what you need!

*By: Jessica Mino
Kane & Kendall County Program Director*

Peace By Piece: Reservation Woods

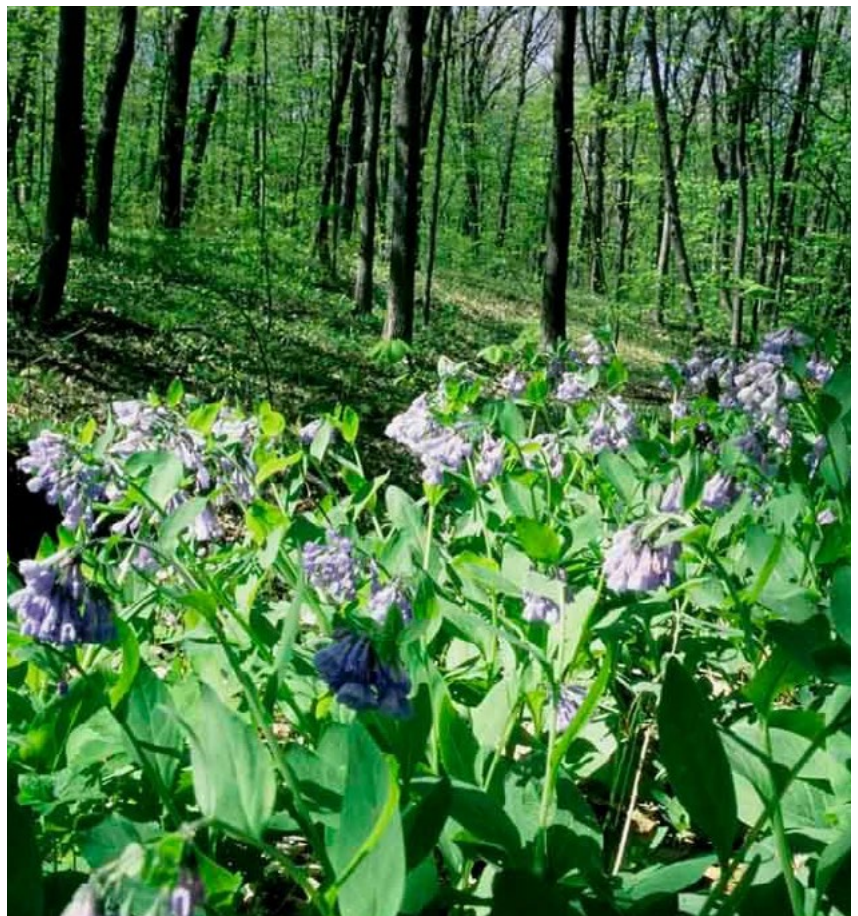
Renowned Illinois ecologist Dick Young felt that Reservation Woods was the highest-quality woods in all of Kendall County. These 100 or so acres have been surrounded by farm fields, broken from the prairie sod, for more than a century, with housing developments creeping up on two sides more recently. They are not choked with honeysuckle and buckthorn or crowded with garlic mustard like so many of our other woodlands are.

Reservation Woods has been divided over the years into small parcels with a variety of owners. Thanks to the generosity and foresight of our members and donors, we have previously helped preserve about 25% of Reservation Woods.

And we are elated to announce that since our last edition of *The Heron*, we have been able to purchase two more pieces totaling 11 acres, leaving us not terribly far from having half of Reservation Woods preserved!

It will happen piece by piece, but longterm, the vision is for all of Reservation Woods to be protected and in the care of the Kendall County Forest Preserve District for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. The 200+ acre Henneberry Woods Forest Preserve is right next to it, and together the two are a substantial tract of wild land, a haven for people and wildlife.

*By: Jill Johnson
Communications Manager*



*In spring, Reservation Woods is a symphony of bluebells with a deafening frog chorus.
Photo by Ray Silva*

A Marvel Like No Other

I've never known anyone with a more fitting name than the one given to the late Marvel Davis, for a marvel is exactly what she was! Marvel lived in the Big Rock area in Kane County her entire life, as did her late husband Harley. John Pierce, one of Harley's ancestors, settled their Big Rock farm in 1836 along the banks of the then-and-still pristine Big Rock Creek, and the property's huge oak trees grew right along with the family.

Devotion to community, family and land were the guiding principles of Marvel's life. She made her career as a schoolteacher, placed all the farmland she owned in Kane County's Farmland Preservation Program, brushed aside the greater fortune being offered to her by developers to sell 155 acres of her land to the Forest Preserve District of Kane County so it would be kept in its natural state and available for public enjoyment, donated a corn crib and nearby family home to the Big Rock Historical Society and the library, stopped the rather lucrative rental of her barns for weddings because she wanted them to be available to local community groups, and a host of other simply astounding generous acts. And as she was widowed early, she was doing this all on her own!

Marvel was a visionary, understanding the importance of clean water and the care of soil in agricultural practices long before these issues were part of the mainstream conservation and food security conversation. She vehemently fought against the Prairie Parkway, and was ever generous with her money, time, and property.

At the suggestion of her attorney, Marvel created a charitable remainder trust with the proceeds from her aforementioned land sale to the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. Charitable remainder trusts are irrevocable structures established by a donor to provide an income stream to the income beneficiary, while the public charity or private foundation receives the remainder value when the trust



Marvel Davis on her beloved Big Rock farm, pictured here and below.

terminates. The trust allowed her to avoid a large tax bill on the sale of the land, and invest the cash for growth. Marvel included The Conservation Foundation in her estate planning, and with her passing last summer, gave a substantial gift through her Charitable Remainder Trust. Marvel's actions in life preserved the natural and historical heritage of the Big Rock area, and her estate gift will allow us to preserve that same heritage throughout our service territory.

The legacy of Marvel and all of the Davis family in Big Rock will carry on as these preserved acres nurture families and help organizations like The Conservation Foundation to carry out our mission for generations to come.

If you are inspired by Marvel's story and interested in learning more about how you can serve your community through estate planning, please call Abby Beck at 630-428-4500, Ext. 135 or email abeck@theconservationfoundation.org.

By: Jill Johnson
Communications Manager



Bring Some Adventure to Your Summer (Safely)

This year, we will maintain small groups, require masks and social distancing, and sanitize shared materials and restrooms regularly at all camps. Our goal is to offer your children a unique outdoor experience in the safest way possible.

Come join us for some safe summer adventures!

As we continue to seek the balance between safety and living our lives a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, we know being outside and in nature is one of the lowest risk activities available to our children. And access to fresh air, sunshine, and connection with nature is so important to our physical and mental health. We've planned unique, adventurous yet safe Summer Camp experiences at both of our locations, and registration is open!

By: Amy Phillips
Youth Programs Manager



Farm Camp at the Dickson-Murst Farm

Children entering grades 3 through 6 this fall will love this full-day camp running from June 21st to 25th at our Dickson-Murst Farm in Montgomery, where they'll learn about historic and modern farming methods, try out some old-fashioned and present-day farm chores, do crafts and celebrate our region's rural heritage.

Camps runs from 9am to 3pm each day! Cost is \$150/per camper

Nature On The Farm Camps at McDonald Farm

Our half-day Nature on the Farm Camps at the McDonald Farm in South Naperville will provide your child the opportunity to enjoy fresh air and sunshine while experiencing a unique oasis of green in the middle of the suburbs. Explore our native prairie, woodland and pond habitats as well as learn to grow healthy, organic food at our Green Earth Harvest organic farm. Enjoy a themed, nut-free healthy snack provided each day. **Our Early Elementary camps for 2021 are already sold out, but there is still room in Late Elementary Camps being held for 4th through 6th graders the weeks of July 12th and July 26th. Members of The Conservation Foundation receive a 10% discount on this camp.**

Register for all camps at www.theconservationfoundation.org/summercamps

Garden Refresh

Are your beds in need of a little spring makeover? Follow along as we spruce up the Clow Education Center gardens for some fresh tips you can use!

It's been quite a few years since we planted the native garden beds around the Clow Education Center at our McDonald Farm headquarters. And as the saying goes, live and learn! We've found that some of our plant selections prospered and grew too big for the space while others died out and left bare spots and openings for weed seeds to sprout. It's time for a Garden Refresh!!!

This spring and summer we're redoing the garden beds on the east and south sides of the Clow Education Center. In those beds, we will be moving things around and planting native flowers and grasses to create a garden that is both beautiful and environmentally friendly. Don't worry – anything we remove will be replanted elsewhere! These revitalized garden beds will serve as a model for homeowners, hopefully inspiring visitors to incorporate native plants into their own gardens.

Throughout the process of revamping the native garden beds, we will document the journey through blog posts, pictures, and videos. You can also view a webinar on the project, as well as many others that will



be of use to you in our own garden refresh efforts, on our YouTube channel. We hope you'll enjoy following this project throughout the summer and into the fall!

By: Nancy Cinatl
Conservation@Home Program Assistant



Plants for your Big Plans!

Got big plans? You'll need the plants to carry them out! Luckily we've got you covered!

McDonald Farm Annual Plant Sale

- Organic Veggie Seedlings, Native Perennials, Trees & Shrubs & Annual Cutting Flower Seedlings
- Pre-orders only: Online Ordering Open to Members & Friends April 30th, Open to the Public May 1st & 2nd

Visit www.theconservationfoundation.org/plantsale

Possibility Place Online Ordering Portal

- Native Plants Delivered Right To Your Door
- 10% Of Your Purchase Supports The Conservation Foundation
- Orders Can Be Placed At Any Time
- Some Shipping Charges Apply

Visit www.possibilityplace.com/order-online?partner=tcf

The Show Must Go On at O'Hara Woods

The explosive show of spring ephemerals (spring-blooming wildflowers) that is about to burst forth is what O'Hara Woods Preserve in Romeoville is known for. The Conservation Foundation's partnership with the landowners of O'Hara Woods, the Village of Romeoville on the east and the Forest Preserve District of Will County on the west, is aimed at maintaining this site as an ecologically diverse woodland that dazzles all year round, as well as increasing access to it for all visitors through projects like the development of bilingual interpretive signage and materials. A grant from CITGO is instrumental in funding this management and accessibility effort. The parcel of O'Hara Woods owned by the Village of Romeoville has been dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve, a status only bestowed upon the highest quality natural areas in the state!

In healthy woodlands, the flush of spring ephemerals is followed by the emergence of other native plant species that take their place come summer. However, this natural succession is currently not happening at O'Hara Woods due to dense canopy cover as a result of decades of fire suppression, which leaves the soil at O'Hara Woods bare after the spring plants die back. Our management work, with the help of our ecological contractor V3 and our enthusiastic volunteers, over the winter has largely focused on selectively thinning sections of the canopy to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor, which will promote the reemergence of native species throughout the year. We're also selectively thinning some of the younger tree/shrub species that are in unnaturally dense numbers to advance the same goal.

Some of our clearing has been done around what we believe to be an ephemeral wetland (just east of Arsenal Road in the middle of the preserve), a unique kind of wetland that holds standing water in the spring and completely dries down the rest of the year. Ephemeral wetlands are the primary breeding habitat for amphibians, so look and listen this spring for salamanders and frogs!

If you'd like to help our efforts to make the show go on at O'Hara Woods and make the site known for its year-round beauty instead of just its showy spring, join us at one of our monthly work days!!! To lend a hand, contact Sam Kilgore at skilgore@theconservationfoundation.org.

And be sure to get out there for a visit in April, May and June, before the spring ephemerals have their curtain call. It's a show you won't want to miss!!

By: Jill Johnson
Communications Manager

Sam Kilgore
Land Stewardship Manager



Enthusiastic volunteers are making miracles happen at O'Hara Woods at monthly work days!



A Trout Lily bursts through the forest floor.



O'Hara Woods rolls out a "Red Carpet" of trillium

Season's First Sprouts

Just as the spring's first organic onion seedlings began sprouting in their cells, we finalized our last Green Earth Harvest share of the 2021 growing season! Yes, that's right, **we are SOLD OUT of shares for this year!!** But there are still several ways you can engage with the farm and savor a bit of our Green Earth Harvest! Start perusing our variety lists and mark your calendar for the McDonald Farm Annual Plant Sale, all online again this year. Ordering will open to Members and Friends of The Conservation Foundation and Green Earth Harvest on April 30th, and the sale will be open to the public May 1st and 2nd. Get all the organic vegetable seedlings, native perennials, trees and shrubs and, new this year, annual cutting flower seedlings for an abundant harvest at home. And keep your eye out for Wednesday Farmstands, Pizza Nights, Farm Tours and more as the season ripens!

*By: Jill Johnson
Communications Manager*



2021 McDonald Farm Plant Sale

Order:
April 30th to May 2nd

Pickup:
Veggies + Herbs: May 7th + 8th
Natives: May 22nd

www.theconservationfoundation.org/plantsale

The banner features the Conservation Foundation logo (a heron) and the Green Earth Harvest logo (a leaf) with the tagline "We grow healthy!". It also includes three images: a cluster of red tomatoes with the text "Order Online!", a close-up of green oak leaves, and a cluster of pink flowers.

Honoring **Kaaren Oldfield**

It is with the utmost gratitude that we recognize our retiring trustee Kaaren Oldfield of Glen Ellyn for more than 13 cumulative years of service to our Board! Kaaren actually served two different terms on our Board of Trustees, from 1998 – 2002 and again from 2012 – 2021, and has had a distinguished career in real estate, most recently with Keller-Williams Properties.

Always bringing her radiant smile and sincere passion for our mission to her work on our Board, Kaaren's contribution to The Conservation Foundation and our local communities through local open space referenda cannot be overstated. Her marketing expertise and campaign strategy have been key to helping us pass all 14 of the open space referenda we have run, raising \$750 million and preserving 35,000 acres of land, most of which is now open to the public as parks and forest preserves.

"What I admire most about Kaaren is that she is always "up", always positive with an energy that uplifts others as well," said our President/

CEO Brook McDonald, who has worked closely with Kaaren on the aforementioned open space referenda. "She is just a deeply good person, she genuinely cares about people, and has been a true marketing genius when it comes to passing these open space campaigns."

Kaaren, we cannot begin to thank you for your loyal and enthusiastic support of The Conservation Foundation over the past three decades! You have always been all-in for our mission, a staunch advocate for our work throughout the region, and have a way of making our staff feel appreciated and



energized. We will sincerely miss you, and wish you many happy, well-earned hours with your family and friends.

By: Jill Johnson
Communications Manager

Welcome **Staff**



Sam Kilgore

Sam Kilgore is the Land Stewardship Manager and Native Plant Specialist for The Conservation Foundation. Sam's background is in hands-on habitat

restoration focusing specifically on native plant reintroductions and invasive species management. At The Conservation Foundation, Sam currently works with Jennifer Hammer on the management of several high quality natural areas in the Chicagoland region, including Dayton Bluffs Preserve and O'Hara Woods Preserve. Sam lives in Oswego with his wife Kailey and his son Miles. In his free time, Sam enjoys cooking, hiking, fishing, and botanizing.

Cass Hatzfeld



Cass Hatzfeld's interest and passion for being outside sprouted at an early age. Cass remembers spending her early days outdoors with family and friends in a small town in New Jersey, and special vacations at the beach. She has over ten

years of experience getting volunteers active and involved in the green spaces around them, and helped develop the robust Volunteer Program of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Cass is energetic about volunteering and committed to nature. She believes a strong volunteer program is a fantastic way to connect people with the environment and their community and can also build a lifelong tie to an organization. As an active mother of three adventurous boys, she gets to witness the power of nature every day.

Abby Beck



Abby Beck is the Senior Advancement Officer for The Conservation Foundation. Abby returned home after graduate school and put her Environmental Science degree to work first as an appointed member

of the Batavia Environmental Commission and now as an elected member of Batavia's City Council. She also brings a background in event planning and corporate communications to The Conservation Foundation.

Abby, a fifth generation Batavian, can often be seen around town on her Dutch-style cargo bike with her husband, Jeff, and their three boys; Logan, Elliott and Theodore.

Good Things Come **in Threes**

We're so pleased to add these three new faces to our Board of Trustees:



Mario Short

Mario Short is an honorably discharged veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a construction industry professional with more than 20 years of experience.

He serves as the President and Chief Executive Officer of SYTE Corporation. Mario's many

other public service contributions include serving and supporting veteran-based organizations such as Leave No Veterans Behind and the Dive Heart Military Wounded Program.

"I'm honored to have been invited to the Board of Trustees of The Conservation Foundation, the Midwest's leader in the protection of our land and water resources," said Mario about becoming part of our leadership.



John Gormley

John Gormley is CEO of the 19,000-member Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS®, headquartered in Downers Grove. John has 33 years' experience in association management, starting with the Louisiana Forestry Association in 1987.

"I'm excited to serve on the The Conservation Foundation's Board of Trustees because the work and impacts are long-term," said John. "The Conservation Foundation's mission, preserving land for the enjoyment of future generations, is critically important."



Dave Gorman

Dave Gorman is a civil engineer, working as the Assistant Director of Public Works for the Village of Lombard. He has led the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup as President since 2012, working closely with staff of The Conservation Foundation to improve our local waterways. An avid bicyclist, Dave's project

"Bikes for Lesotho" has sent over 6,000 bikes to orphans and others in poverty and he also serves as Board Secretary of Working Bikes, a nonprofit in Chicago that has redistributed more than 12,000 used bikes for people in need.

Dave summarizes his environmental ethic as "What we do today has an impact on at least the next seven generations. That's a serious responsibility, and also a great opportunity. The Conservation Foundation is uniquely able to protect local open spaces for us and for them. Rolling up our collective sleeves and getting to work on that is extremely satisfying!" Dave attributes his lifelong passion for nature to a childhood spent in Sauk Trail Woods.



The Strength of **Our Foundation**

Thanks to the support of more than 300 separate donors and the inspiring generosity of the Hamill Family Foundation, we have left an incredibly challenging 2020 and entered 2021 stronger than ever before, poised to be tireless advocates for nature in our region. The outpouring of commitment and passion for our mission raised \$100,000, which has been matched by the Hamill Family Foundation.

We know there will always be more nature in need of our preservation and restoration, but with this momentum behind us, we are energized and ready. Our donors are truly the strength of our Foundation.

Our sincere thanks to the Hamill Family Foundation, and all who contributed to the Strengthening Our Foundation \$100K Challenge.



THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
We save land. We save rivers.

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APRIL 15TH - APRIL 22ND

2021 EARTH DAY BENEFIT
MONTH-LONG FESTIVAL

APRIL 2021

VISIT WWW.THECONSERVATIONFOUNDATION.ORG/BENEFIT AND WATCH YOUR EMAIL INBOX!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- April 7:** Kendall County Earth Day Gathering
Hoover Forest Preserve, Yorkville, In-Person
- April 8:** DuPage County Earth Day Gathering
St. James Farm, Wheaton, In-Person
- April 12:** Kane County Earth Day Gathering
Peck Farm, Geneva, In-Person
- April 13:** Will County Earth Day Gathering
Isle a la Cache, Romeoville, In-Person
- April 18:** Family Adventures on the Farm
McDonald Farm, Naperville, In-Person and Live Streamed
- April 19:** McDonald Farm Tour
McDonald Farm, Naperville, Live Streamed
- April 20:** Earth Day Trivia Night
Live Streamed
- April 21:** Doing Your Part for Earth Day Webinar
Live Streamed
- April 22:** Earth Day Benefit LIVE!
In-Person, Bobak's Signature Events, Woodridge and Live Streamed

☀ ALL IN-PERSON EVENTS WILL BE LIMITED TO 50 PEOPLE AND WILL REQUIRE MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY AND COMFORT. ☀