SWMLC
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

Landscapes

Turn Up the Nature!

KL Avenue Nature Preserve Set to Open in Spring 2016

Imagine driving just 15 minutes west of downtown Kalamazoo, getting out of your car, and being greeted by the crisp southwest Michigan air and the scent of fresh fallen leaves.

You lace up your boots or running shoes, and maybe grab your binoculars or your leashed four-legged friend, whose body is wiggling with anticipation. With a firm trail underfoot, you softly pad into the shade of the forest canopy. You descend along the path surrounded by sheltering woods. You stop to contemplate the unusual topography when the quick sweet whistles of a hooded warbler make your ears perk up. As you tune into this woodland soundscape, you realize that the traffic noise has all but subsided. To your delight, your work schedule, afternoon errands, and the lingering irritation from the morning commute have subsided, too. It's as if someone has "turned up the nature" on your radio dial.

Coming around the corner, you kneel to admire an interesting impression in the trail. Three straight toes with little dots at the end, about four inches long — wild turkey! Picking up the pace, you notice the varied types of bark on the trees you pass; white oak, black oak, black cherry, flowering dogwood. The trees begin to thin out and new pockets between them offer windows into an open meadow ablaze with goldenrod. Bumblebees appear as fuzzy black dots dutifully humming between blooming patches. Closing your eyes, the warm rays of the emerging sun bring a soft smile to your face. Glancing up the hill through

continued on page 2

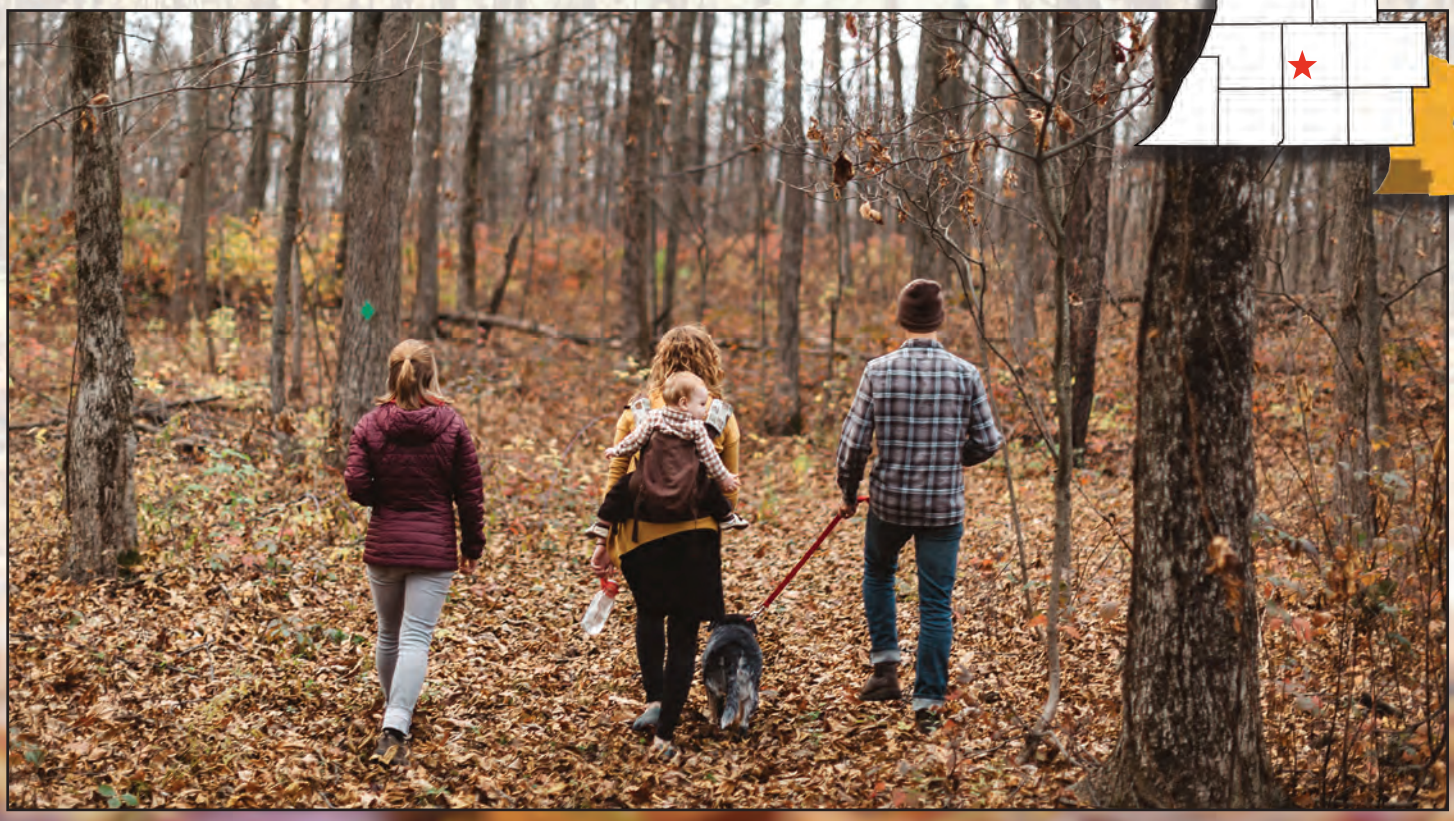


Photo by Brian Wolfe.

Turn Up the Nature, *(continued from front page)*

the prairie, you know your car is there, waiting. Your watch reminds you that you have to leave for work soon, but the woodland with its lovely trails and curiosities beckons. Maybe there's enough time to finish that other loop before work….

Patty and Denny Stelzer hack and chop at invasive plants during Pfizer's Day of Caring, 2014. Photo by Mitch Lettow.

It's our hope that this will soon be the experience of many southwest Michigan residents when the KL Avenue Nature Preserve (to be renamed by YOU, see page 3) — just a mile south of M-43 in Oshtemo Township — opens to the public this spring.

The 70 acres that comprise KL Avenue Nature Preserve was originally purchased in 1980 by long-time Oshtemo Township resident, Richard Malott. Dr. Malott is a Professor of Psychology at Western Michigan University (where he received the Distinguished Teaching Award in 2012) and is the founder of the Kalamazoo Autism Center, which helps young children with autism learn the skills necessary for everyday life.

Dr. Malott has always appreciated the natural features of the area. He describes his drive into campus along the leafy corridor of KL Avenue as one of the most enjoyable parts of his day. His affection for the area was put to the ultimate test when board member Todd Sanford approached him about working with SWMLC to protect his land. If developed for residential or commercial uses, this large property along an iconic tree-lined road in beautiful Oshtemo Township would command a hefty price.

However, Dr. Malott felt that his land, if conserved as a publicly accessible nature preserve, would bestow a value to the community far beyond any financial benefit to himself. Toward this end, in 2011 Dr. Malott generously donated his property to the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy to create this spectacular public natural area on Kalamazoo's west side — a noble action indeed. "What excites me most is that this land will be used and enjoyed by people," Malott says.

Since that pivotal decision, SWMLC has been hard at work planning trails, mapping natural communities, running field trips, and restoring habitat with volunteers, staff, and contractors. The KL Avenue Nature Preserve has been a true community conservation project — garnering support from SWMLC volunteers, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the Hanes Foundation, Pfizer Corporation and PNC Bank employees, the Oshtemo Township and Mattawan Fire Departments, the Michigan Botanical Club, Audubon Society of Kalamazoo, and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, not to mention the steadfast commitment of Dr. Malott.

Through this generous support, we have removed almost 30 acres of invasive autumn olive, planted native grasses and wildflowers, and begun to create essential public access. In addition, we have researched the preserve's seed bank (the plant species that are dormant in the ground), and conducted prescribed burns that will help to restore the rare, valuable, and biodiverse Oshtemo black oak barrens that historically characterized the region.

Four years after receiving this wonderful gift, we are thrilled by the prospect of fulfilling the joint vision of Dr. Malott and SWMLC by making this land available for the community to enjoy.

SWMLC anticipates the grand opening of KL Avenue Nature Preserve, with a parking lot and approximately 1 ¼ miles of trails, on April 16, 2016. Stay tuned for more details about this amazing new preserve.

— Mitch Lettow

What's in a Name?

KL Avenue Nature Preserve Re-Naming Contest!

What do the Grand Canyon, Porcupine Mountains, and Natchez Trace have in common? They are names of incredible pieces of land that are widely recognized by the community nationwide. Their names reflect prominent natural features, communicate local history, land-use, and character. Names can say a lot.

Dr. Richard Malott's 70 acres of rolling land in Oshtemo township has been called "KL Avenue Nature Preserve" since its donation to SWMLC in 2011. This "placeholder name" tells us the location of the property in a gridded road system but it lacks the charisma, information, and flair of a good name. It deserves better!

We would like to give the community a chance to name this beautiful place!

So, take some time to explore the preserve yourselves, experience it, learn about it, love it — and see what comes to the surface. The only restriction is that the name must honor Dr. Malott's request that, beyond describing the natural area, the name should reflect a place where people are part of nature, not separate from it.

> A place where people are part of nature, not separate from it.

The contest will begin in mid-April with a public request for names. Dr. Malott and SWMLC staff will choose the top ten from among those submissions, then the community will pick their three favorites from among that group. The final name will be chosen from those top three submissions.

Stay tuned to SWMLC's website and other social media for contest details and don't forget to mark your calendars for the preserve's grand opening on April 16!

Welcome, Nicole and Amelia!

Stop by the SWMLC office and you're likely to meet two new part-time staff members who were both hired in May 2015.

Database Manager, Nicole Speedy, has extensive database experience and is excited to provide technology support to the organization. Nicole received an undergraduate degree in Logistics from Penn State University and holds several systems certifications. Since growing up in northeastern Pennsylvania and making several career-related cross-country moves, she has proudly called southwest Michigan her home for the last decade. Nicole and her family live in Richland and spend much of their fair-weather time camping across the state. Nicole is eager to absorb as much conservation knowledge from the rest of the expert SWMLC staff as she can!

Kalamazoo native Amelia Hansen worked on past creative projects with SWMLC before being hired as Communications Specialist. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Western Michigan University and has been an independent professional illustrator and designer since 1989, focusing on nature subjects for books, magazines, children's picture books, interpretive exhibits, and murals. Joining SWMLC's staff has provided her with a wonderful avenue for creative outreach within the conservation field. Amelia and her husband live in rural Kalamazoo County with a flock of pet chickens and several lazy cats.

Have you ever wondered what Chipman Preserve sounds like at dawn? And how that compares to the way it sounds at midnight?

Of course you have!

You can hear for yourself by listening to SWMLC Preserves on-line, thanks to Dr. Sharon Gill, Soundscape Ecologist! Visit www.soundcloud.com/sharon-gill-13 or look for the link at www.SWMLC.org.

Allegan County Woods and Waters Protected by the Wray Conservation Easement

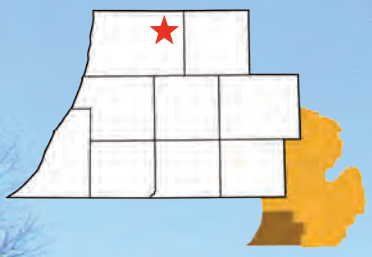
Gerald and Susan Wray. Photo courtesy of Susan Wray.

Gerald and Susan Wray live on 80 acres of beautiful land in Allegan County's Watson Township. The estate has been in Jerry's family for three generations, and he spent his boyhood summers there with his grandmother. Jerry is a luthier, specializing in making guitars, lutes, and other stringed instruments by hand in his workshop at their home. Susan is a landscape painter, and a member of the Plein Air Artists of West Michigan (PAAWM). She learned about the Conservancy when she attended paint-outs on SWMLC easements and preserves. The Wrays have long been interested in protecting the integrity of their homestead, and when they began discussions with SWMLC's Emily Wilke in 2013, they were immediately excited about the idea of preserving the quality of the land and water through a conservation easement. Emily worked hard to find options that would help them accomplish their goal, and came up with a winner. Working in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited, she was able to secure grant money from the Western Michigan Coastal Habitat Project. The Project is funded by the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), and will cover stewardship costs in addition to paying for the property appraisal.

The Island, pastel painting by Susan Wray of "The Island", a copse that marks the original homestead on the Wray CE.

The Wray conservation easement is predominantly high quality woodland made up of beech, maple, and chinquapin oaks. The headwaters of School Section Brook flow from School Section Lake (just to the east), winding through their beautiful beech maple forest, and eventually into the Kalamazoo River. These woods provide valuable habitat for wildlife, and are part of a vein of remaining Allegan County forest that includes a 200-acre conservation property owned by the Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of the Pottawatomi Tribe just two miles to the north. It is also located within 5 miles of the SWMLC Pritschet-Davis Preserve. There are approximately 15 acres of wetland including tamarack swamp/fen between the arms of the creek, and a grassy field that is still farmed for hay. A copse (thicket of trees) in the field marks the site of the original homestead. The Wrays refer to it as "The Island", and enjoy seeing wild turkey, deer, sandhill cranes, and coyotes which use it as a refuge while crossing the field. Susan and Jerry's five children and three (soon to be four!) grandchildren, who make their homes and livelihoods across the country in five different states, are unlikely to be able to "pull up roots" to move back to the homestead in Allegan County. All five fully support their parents' decision to protect the homestead with us. SWMLC is pleased to have been able to help the Wray family protect a precious part of their family heritage and thanks them for their foresight and strong conservation ethics.

— Cindy Mills



Full Steam Ahead at Pilgrim Haven

Batten down the hatches! SWMLC's newest Lake Michigan natural area, Pilgrim Haven, is moving forward after a couple of milestone achievements over the last nine months.

Photo by Riley Hallett.

First, the public-private partnership of SWMLC and South Haven Area Recreation Authority (SHARA) has been awarded a $50,000 Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to be appropriated toward the first phase of improvements on-site. These improvements include a parking area, entrance gate, universally-accessible (UA) walk to the beach, a barrier-free ramp down onto the beach, and UA beach amenities.

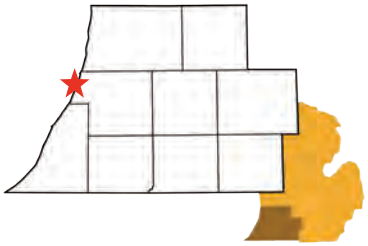
The partnership then garnered support from the township to proceed through approval of the special use permit and site plan. The Phase I improvements are scheduled to commence in the spring of 2016 for completion over the course of the year. SWMLC and SHARA will need all hands on deck to raise additional capital to complete Phase I.

Pilgrim Haven Natural Area is now functionally open to the public through pedestrian accesses at the terminus of 18th Avenue and north of 18th along 77th Street. About one half mile of hiking trails have been blazed to lead hikers through the woodland restoration area, along Dyckman Creek, and out to the lake bluff. Property manager SHARA keeps the historic meadow areas mowed, enforces preserve rules, and maintains a portable bathroom and waste receptacles on-site.

In addition to SHARA accommodating regular day-use, SWMLC continues to host regular events for the enjoyment of the South Haven community and beyond. This past August, SWMLC hosted the 8th Annual Art Walk at Pilgrim Haven, moving the event from Wau-Ke-Na Preserve for a change of scenery, and will repeat this location for the 9th Annual Art Walk in August 2016. SWMLC has also recently hosted several storybook hikes — guided educational hikes that lead children through the preserve while reading posted pages from the book "How the Great Lakes Drained Away" by Charles Ferguson Barker. Finally, over the summer, SWMLC organized a volunteer workday to create a monarch butterfly garden and way-station, which fosters beneficial habitat for local and migratory bird and insect species.

Please support SWMLC's efforts to complete its Phase I lakeshore access project and restore natural communities on this historic camp property by contributing to South Haven Area Community Foundation's "Friends of Pilgrim Haven Fund" (http://www.southhavencf.org/). *Land Ho! We hope to see you there!*

— Geoffrey Cripe



Saturday Workdays Winter/Spring 2016

Anyone is welcome to pitch in to help keep our preserves up to snuff. It's a wonderful way to experience the preserves with the folks who know them best, plus get acquainted with other active people who share the conservation spirit. RSVP's are always nice; just call the office at 269-324-1600 or email Mitch at lettow@swmlc.org. See our website in the week prior to the workday for details and directions.

January 16, 1 - 4 p.m.
Bow in the Clouds Preserve
Wetland restoration: Invasive shrub management

February 27, 1 - 4 p.m.
Chipman Preserve
Save a savanna: Invasive shrub management

March 19, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Chipman Preserve
Spring cleanup: Sweeping, trimming, sprucing up new stewardship barn

April 30, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Pilgrim Haven Natural Area
Weed and seed: Spotted knapweed pulling and wildflower seeding

May 14, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Bow in the Clouds
Weed warriors: Community garlic mustard pull

June 11, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Chipman Preserve
Trail mix: Trail improvement and plant rescue

Photo by Russ Schipper.

First County Record for Prairie Ladies'-Tresses Orchid

The Michigan Botanical Club (MBC) visited Marc's Marsh in Kalamazoo County expecting to enjoy the fringed gentians and other end-of-summer wetland wildflowers. They were not disappointed as there were many beautiful flowers to enjoy, but the surprise came in the form of a small stalk of white flowers tucked into the sedges and rushes.

Prairie ladies'-tresses orchid (Spiranthes magnicamporum) is mostly known from the east side of the state and it's likely that MBC documented the first county record. Dr. Todd Barkman, professor of Biological Sciences at Western Michigan University, will use DNA samples to confirm its identity. Please check our website for updates on his findings.

— Nate Fuller

Decade Long Conservation Effort Bears Impressive Fruit

Dr. Robert Tatina, professor emeritus at Dakota Wesleyan University, is shown demonstrating tree core sampling methods to a group of kids. Dr. Tatina has volunteered countless hours at Tower Hill Camp. Photo by Robert Beemer.

In the small lakeside borough of Sawyer, there is a group of iron-willed, laser-focused conservation champions who value colorful birds and own their urban claustrophobia. Don't mess with them. This group, the Deer Creek Open Space Association (DCOSA), spared themselves and the birds some breathing room by keeping nature near their homesteads.

In a collaborative project with SWMLC, Chikaming Open Lands (COL), Berrien Community Foundation, and a diversity of private funders, DCOSA purchased the development rights on 31.4 acres of sloping, oak-rich backdune on Tower Hill Camp, which touches corners with the ever-popular 1,952 acre Warren Dunes State Park. But wait, this isn't your average NIMBY project.

Tower Hill Camp was a lesser known philanthropic gift from the estate of E.K. Warren, who established Warren Dunes and Warren Woods State Parks. Part of Warren Dunes, and all of Warren Woods, are protected by SWMLC as special trustees. The camp is publicly recognized for its big trees, botanical diversity, birding, and its mission to give inner-city kids from Chicago a place to recreate and learn in nature.

Avid, expert, local birder Kip Miller described a 2007 outing to Tower Hill Camp as "one of the most spectacular concentrations of short distance migrants I have witnessed in 25 years of birding."

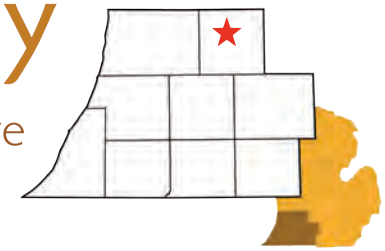
The globally rare and imperiled freshwater dunes that define the site are a landform under constant development pressure across the Lake Michigan shore. This property is not, however, regulated under the Sand Dunes Protection and Management Act, which exacerbated its attraction for development in this fast-growing, utopian suburb of metro-Chicago.

But the birds easily outnumber the residents. They come through in droves and bring this towering woods alive from canopy to forest floor. Avid, expert, local birder Kip Miller described a 2007 outing to Tower Hill Camp as "one of the most spectacular concentrations of short distance migrants I have witnessed in 25 years of birding." Long distance migrants such as scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, vireos, thrushes (Tower Hill enjoys the flute-like tones of all five species found in Michigan), and colorful wood warblers also use the Tower Hill site for nesting.

As with many camps nowadays, Tower Hill fell on hard times beginning in 2005. Neighbors' worst fears were nearly realized when the camp hired a forester to mark some of the merchantable trees to sell to support the camp. It was then, ten years ago, that DCOSA founders Bob Beemer and Clyde Rode reached out to SWMLC and we began to cultivate a long-term partnership with the camp's multiple Chicago-based boards. Once the camp committed to a conservation solution, the partnership never lost momentum. An inspiring grass roots fundraising effort followed, with leadership from DCOSA, COL, and multiple foundations raising $530,000 in less than two years and "Saving the Woods". Equally as important, the deal saved the camp, preserving its integral role of teaching urban kids in a natural classroom. What an unbelievable deal for the birds, the kids, and yeah — the neighbors too!

— Geoffrey Cripe

A Dream Becomes Reality



Ken and Alice Jones' dream of inspiring others to conserve their land has become a reality in Barry County.

Twenty years ago, Ken and Alice Jones decided to conserve their beloved land in southern Barry County —160 acres of beautiful rolling forest and field surrounding their sparkling lake, aptly named Aurohn Lake (pronounced "our own lake"). Ken and Alice's decision to protect their property led them to enter into a relatively new form of land protection – the conservation easement. Ken and Alice became SWMLC's very first conservation easement donors, hoping that not only would their land be protected forever, but that they might influence others to conserve their land as well.

Several years ago Ken and Alice decided that when they passed, they would donate their land outright to the neighboring Pierce Cedar Creek Institute (PCCI). They had hoped to announce the donation of their property to PCCI together but, after Ken passed away earlier this year, Alice moved forward to finalize their donation while securing a reserved life estate for herself and her children. This reserved life estate ensures that Alice and her children will be able to live on the property if they desire, but after that, this remaining parcel will be conveyed outright to PCCI.

Alice Jones on the deck of her Barry County home. Photo courtesy of Pierce Cedar Creek Institute.

"We are honored and grateful for Ken and Alice's generosity, and we will ensure that their land is cared for and shared with others interested in learning about our natural world," stated Michelle Skedgell, executive director of PCCI. "The conservation easement, paired with the donation of the land to PCCI, allows the Jones' spirit and vision to thrive at the property, and ensures that the land will be inhabited by wildlife, its natural beauty will be enjoyed by visitors, and its scientific value will be studied by researchers and students, for generations to come".

Today, especially in Barry County, Ken and Alice's dream of inspiring others to conserve their land has become a reality. People in Barry County regularly contact SWMLC to inquire about conserving their land with conservation easements. Ken and Alice's legacy has helped educate their community about the value of protecting land through conservation easements, not only for families, but also for wildlife, and the rural and pastoral quality of life in Barry County.

Ken and Alice were willing to take the first leap of faith in a young and growing organization that was committed to conserving their family land forever. Twenty years later, SWMLC has completed 86 conservation easements that permanently protect almost 10,000 acres in our nine county service area. And over 4,000 of those acres — almost half — are conserved through conservation easements in Barry County . . . thanks to Ken and Alice Jones.

Ken and Alice's gracious donation expands PCCI holdings to 815 contiguous acres - 700 of which are permanently conserved with SWMLC.

— Emily Wilke

Thank You. We couldn't do it without you!

Welcome and Thank You to Our New Members and Supporters: April 30, 2015 - October 31, 2015

Thanks also to all who renewed their membership, supported us through their United Way program, or contributed to our annual campaign, year-end appeal, and other fund raisers. Our sincere apologies for any omissions.

New Members

Jeanne M. Anderson
Shannon Chase
Richard and Sandra Edwards
Laurel Eppstein
Jennifer and Matt Haywood
Joan M. Hunt
Karen E. Knapp
Jon and Sherri Newpol
Dr. Mark A. Noffsinger
Elaine Ritter Shirk
Troy Spears
Mrs. Melissa Spies
Dee Velkoff
Katie & Mike Zeliger

Matching Gifts

The organizations listed below made matching gifts on behalf of SWMLC members.

Exxon Mobil Foundation

IBM International Foundation

Pfizer Foundation

United Way Agencies

Pfizer Foundation United Way

In-Kind Donations

Jeff Belew, stewardship at Hidden Pond and Heath Road

Brian and Linda DeDoes, mowing, and installing bluebird boxes that were made and donated by Brian's father, Robert DeDoes, at Woodlawn Preserve.

Vernon Miller, mowing at Spirit Springs Sanctuary.

Tom Stolz of Stolz Environmental Solutions, donating environmental site assessments.

Village Market, courtesy of Murk Management, gave store credit for refreshments at Black River Fall Paddle event

Richard and Julie Wyrwa, donated 1995 Dodge Dakota Club Cab truck

Gift Memberships were given to:

Erik and Laura Taylor by
Dr. Larry Robert Peters

Hon. William C. and Leslie Buhl by
Jack and Nanette Keiser

Robert Keiser by
Jack and Nanette Keiser

Donations were made in honor of:

Martha Wilcynski, of Lavender Hills Farms (Niles), for her presentation to the club by **Portage Garden Club**

Evelyn Flynn for her presentation to the club by **Portage Garden Club**

In honor of Pamela Larson by:
Katy Takahashi and Richard Brewer,
"In Honor of Pam Larson for her years of dedicated service to SWMLC and the cause of land conservation."

Kalman and Becky Csia,
"Pamela Larson: the heart and soul of SWMLC."

Susan and Robert Kinde,
"Pamela Larson: it has been a pleasure knowing her."

Ken and Marlena Kirton,
" In Honor of Pam and her service to SWMLC."

Lynn and Mike Steil

In celebration of Woody Boudeman's birthday
by Judi Baldwin

In celebration of the marriage of Shannon Chase and John Floyd by:
Cesar Alaniz

Seraphina Aulie

Kevin Brandt,
"In honor of Shannon and John: congratulations, we wish you the best! Kevin, Glee, Jacob, Viv, and Lily."

Mary Davis

E. Elizabeth Floyd

Michael and Ina Gerdenich

Jacqueline Courteau and Paul Graham,
"To commemorate the wedding of Shannon Chase and John Floyd."

Jillian and Drew Mast

Dorothy Schuller

Kevin Smith

Bill and Robbie Stapleton, and family,
"This gift is to honor Shannon Chase and John Floyd and celebrate their love and marriage."

Su Unger,
"In honor of the marriage of Shannon Chase and John Floyd. Happy days to you both. Sending love your way. The Ungers"

In honor of Amelia Hansen joining the SWMLC staff
by Kalman and Becky Csia

In appreciation of summer field trips led by Nate Fuller and Mitch Lettow to Marc's Marsh and KL Avenue Preserve for the Michigan Botanical Club.
by Kalman and Becky Csia

Memorial Contributions

The following gifts were made in memory or remembrance of:

Betty Atchison by **Philip Willson,**
"In gratitude for giving us Patti."

Douglas Davies by
Richard E. and Raelyn Joyce

Gail Brown Kasdorf by
Woody Boudeman

Melvin D. Goebel by:
Anonymous

John and Lillian Arnold

Robert and Kathryn Boniface

James and Albie Brunner

Deborah and John Dockweiler

Kathy Eckstein

Larry and Noel Hayward

Sally Klawinski

B.L. Van Eck and M. Johnson

Richard W. and Barbara L. Waak

Diane D. Worden

Karin F. Zaleski

James Miyagawa by
Frederick Hubbell

Larry Syndergaard by
Edwin L. Hill

The family of Clayton Holaday

Linda and John Mason

Thomas Henry Seiler

Katy Takahashi and Richard Brewer

Sandra Wachowski,
"A wonderful friend and neighbor who cared very deeply about the natural world."

Gunter Fonken by
Agnes Hughes

Tim C. Murphy
Robin K. Byrn

ACCREDITED™ LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Together with your donation, SWMLC can preserve wild and scenic places for today — and keep them healthy for tomorrow.

Let's Celebrate Our Silver Anniversary!

In 2016, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy will be 25 years old – can you believe it?!! Seems like just yesterday we were learning how to create preserves and conservation easements. And now, in 25 short years, with the steadfast support of our loyal members, SWMLC has protected almost 14,000 acres of the most ecologically important and scenic natural areas in southwest Michigan, and we're still going strong!

Over the past several years, SWMLC has focused on creating public access to our preserves to help ensure that everyone in southwest Michigan has a local place to enjoy nature, now and in the future. And in 2016, we will mark our 25th anniversary by holding 25 special events that highlight our public preserves and offer fun, new activities for the whole family! We hope you will join us in celebrating all that you have made possible! Please stay tuned for our 2016 calendar of events, and visit our website at www.swmlc.org for the most up-to-date event announcements.

See you in 2016!

2016 Painted Sanctuary Calendars ***on sale now!***

$10, pick up • $15, shipped
contact us for larger orders

Your calendar purchase helps to preserve wild and scenic places in SW Michigan for today — and keep them healthy for tomorrow.

Change is Afoot

A word from the president

As we close in on the end of 2015 and we finalize our land deals and stewardship work, we will also undertake substantial organizational changes — some highly visible and others that you will not notice, but all will allow us to become more effective and efficient.

After 16 years at our location on Sprinkle Road in Portage we will move our office to the Chipman House at the Chipman Preserve on East Main in Comstock Township. Having grown from a staff of three in the early days to our current staff of nine, and with responsibility for almost 14,000 protected acres, we are in desperate need of increased space. With several years of analysis and discussion, we decided that the perfect place for us to land would be on the Chipman Preserve, the natural area that has served as both a catalyst and a learning laboratory for so much of our stewardship work.

We also felt that as we go forward and continue to grow in our work and mission, residing in the former family home of John and Patti Chipman — who have had such a tremendous impact on SWMLC and in this community — was the wise path to take. And hopefully some of their magic will rub off on us.

This necessary move will provide us with a substantial increase in office space and allow us to utilize the accompanying pole barn to house all of our stewardship tools and materials. We will also undertake a long-needed upgrade of our Information Technology resources, which will allow us to share and store the voluminous amount of information that we maintain to track and assess all of our work.

Equally significant, and much more visible, is a broad update and improvement to our communications, specifically our digital presence. During the past six months a team of staff, board, and volunteers have been working with a consultant to craft and better communicate our conservation message to the people of southwest Michigan. One result of this work will be a change in our newsletter to a shorter, but more frequent quarterly format, with one issue serving as an annual report.

SWMLC received the National Land Trust Excellence Award in 2010 for its pioneering work in conservation.

Our goal is always to do more conservation work, and to increase the impact of our mission to benefit you. Thank you for all of your support and have a wonderful holiday season!

— Peter D. Ter Luow

SWMLC
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
2016
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Prefer to go paperless? Send us your email address!

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
6851 S. Sprinkle Rd.
Portage, MI 49002-9705

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Kalamazoo, MI
Permit No. 50

Board of Directors

W. Jack Keiser, Chair
Janice Varney, Vice-Chair
Mary Houser, Treasurer
Susan Houseman, Secretary
Larry J. Case
Thom Coder
Dave Coleman
Jennifer Lau
Robert L. O'Boyle
Betty Lee Ongley
Gail Walter

Staff

Peter D. Ter Louw
President and Executive Director

Geoffrey D. Cripe
Director of Land Protection

C. Miko Dargitz
Development Associate

Nate Fuller
Conservation & Stewardship Director

Amelia Hansen
Communications Specialist

Mitch Lettow
Stewardship Specialist

Cindy Mills
Conservation Easement Specialist

Nicole Speedy
Database Manager

Emily E. Wilke
Conservation Projects Manager

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation that conserves ecologically important and scenic landscapes that give our region its natural character — now and for generations to come.

For more information, please contact:
SWMLC, 6851 S. Sprinkle, Rd., Portage, MI 49024
269-324-1600 • Conserveland@swmlc.org • www.swmlc.org