

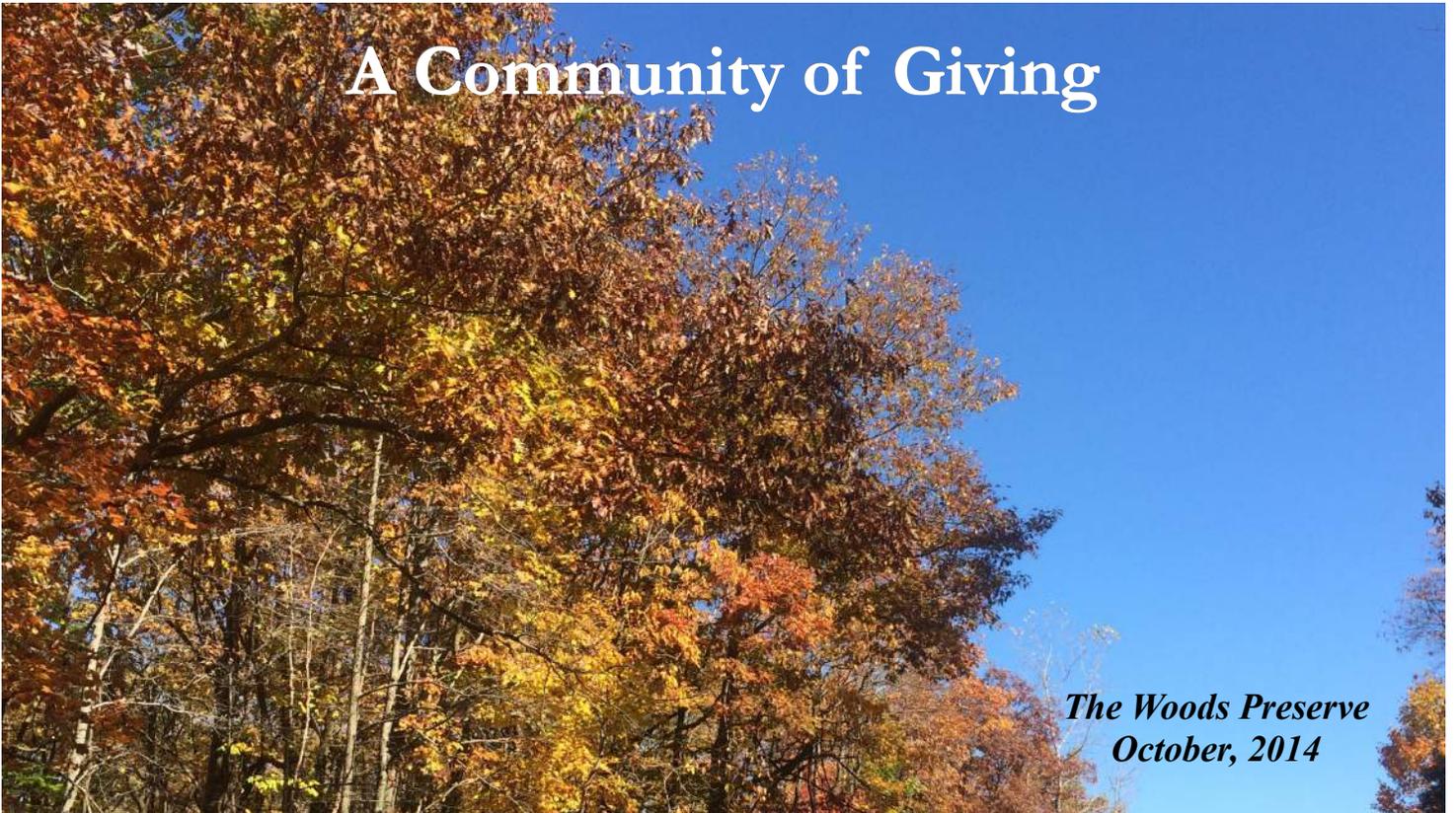


THE CHIKAMING LEGACY

Newsletter of Chikaming Open Lands

Fall 2014

A Community of Giving



*The Woods Preserve
October, 2014*

This has truly been a groundbreaking year for Chikaming Open Lands (COL) in the realm of land protection. At press time, COL had protected 182 acres, with nearly 400 additional acres in the immediate pipeline. That's pretty extraordinary in and of itself.

But it's *how* these projects are being completed that is the really extraordinary thing. COL has now closed on five separate land protection projects that have been funded either entirely or in large part by individuals in the community who have stepped up to ensure that the open spaces they love and appreciate remain natural and undisturbed forever. In some cases, this is the result of a land donation; in others, a significant gift by a single donor; and in still others, a community coming together and pooling resources in a grass-roots effort to preserve a parcel of land.

A wonderful example of this last type of effort was COL's acquisition of additional acreage to extend The Woods Preserve on Harbert Road. This parcel is an

important acquisition, allowing COL to save critical open space and the woodland vistas found along the lakeshore. Moreover, its lakefront location means that it plays a crucial role in maintaining the high water quality of Lake Michigan and the local watershed, and provides habitat for migratory birds. And it was completely subsidized, from the purchase price on down to the funds for the ongoing stewardship of the property, by the neighbors in the surrounding area.

In fact, 80 percent of the neighbors raised \$600,000 in just a few short months to protect the property—a downright inspirational level of participation. “Many of the donors are folks who grew up here, playing in these woods as children,” says Executive Director Chris Thompson. “People form a special connection to the woods, and come to cherish them as a family legacy.”

One of these neighbors, Meg Foster, spearheaded the fundraising effort, after hearing through the grapevine that the property was for sale. “What I knew we had to do was
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Board President Letter

*Chikaming Open Lands
is the local land
conservancy dedicated to
preserving the open
spaces and natural rural
character of southwest
Berrien County.*

We protect and restore native plant and animal habitat in the area, improve water quality in our rivers, streams and in Lake Michigan, and permanently preserve ecologically significant forests, prairies and wetlands, as well as prime farmland and other open spaces in this community.

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Sawyer, MI 49125
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chikamingopenlands.org



Dear Members and Friends of Chikaming Open Lands,

When people ask me what I like about living in our area, one of the things that I mention is that we have a strong sense of community—and a tradition of people pulling together to make something happen, to make something better, to improve our quality of life.

Community is the theme for this newsletter, highlighting examples of how different groups of people in our area have pulled together and partnered with Chikaming Open Lands to improve our community by preserving a particular piece of land in their neighborhood.

One such effort that is currently underway is the Tower Hill Camp project, which is highlighted on page 4. In short, Chikaming Open Lands is partnering with the Deer Creek Open Space Association (DCOSA) to preserve a beautiful 32-acre back dune forest in a highly populated area between Red Arrow Highway and Lake Michigan in Sawyer.

Development is a real threat in that area, and the impact on the quality of life that this easement would provide to our community is tremendous. With our pledge of \$125,000 and other support, DCOSA is more than 75% of the way to reaching the fundraising goal to complete this project.

I hope you will pitch in to make this happen. Let us know how you can help!

Sincerely,

George S. Lucas
President



COL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Join us...

preserve open space

improve water quality

restore native habitat

protect natural landscapes

Have you renewed your support of Chikaming Open Lands yet this year?

We rely on the unrestricted support of our members to continue to do the work in your community that you are reading about in this newsletter: protecting open space, restoring natural landscapes, creating public recreational access to our increasing number of nature preserves, and educating our neighbors about the natural features that make this area so special—and how to help preserve them.

As we near the end of the year and enter into the season of giving, please renew your membership for 2014 if you haven't already. Or, if you are currently a member, please consider making a second gift, and encourage a few of your friends, family members or neighbors who share your values to get to know Chikaming Open Lands and become a member too!

Your support makes all the wonderful projects and programs featured in this newsletter, and many more that we didn't have the space to highlight, possible. And there is a lot more we can do! Help us determine what this corner of Southwest Michigan will look like 100 years from now... make your year-end gift today!



In Memorium: Carl R. Anderson

In late May of this year, the Chikaming Open Lands family was saddened by the passing of a steadfast friend and supporter, Carl Anderson. Carl was born and lived his entire life in Harbert, and spent the majority of his career at Whirlpool Corporation, where he retired as director of transportation.

Carl was an active participant in civic activities in Chikaming Township, serving on the River Valley Board of Education, the Chikaming Township Zoning Board of Appeals, and the ad hoc committee that rewrote the zoning ordinances that still govern the township today. He also served two terms as

the Chikaming Township Supervisor, during which time the Chikaming Township Park and Preserve on Warren Woods Road was established.

Carl was a committed member of Chikaming Open Lands' Land Protection Committee for eight years. In 2012, he and his wife Shirley generously donated to COL a parcel of Lake Michigan dune forest along Harbert Road, which is now Critter Haven Preserve. He will be greatly missed.

Standing Committees

Executive Committee

George Lucas, *President*
Greg Kaiser, *Vice President*
Bill Racine, *Treasurer*
Steve Smith, *Secretary*

Finance Committee

Bill Racine, *Chair*
Ron Farina
Clay Robinson
Steve Smith
Peter Van Nice

Land Protection Committee

Steve Smith, *Chair*
Terry Hanover
Aaron Kaminski
Lauri Lindquist
Joe Margol
Lee Strohl
Peter Van Nice

Stewardship Committee

Bob Tatina, *Chair*
Nancy Baird
Judith Brown
Buffy Dunham
Dave Eblen
Pat Fisher
Diane Fitzgerald
Ellen Frankle
Megan Korte
Peggy McGrath
Don Meckley

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Ann Dudley Goldblatt
Rob Gow
Linda Puvogel
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Jean Smith, *Chair*
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Rob Gow
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Barb Robinson
Jennifer Trout

Protecting the Tower Hill Camp

Saving the Woods, Supporting the Camp



Bob Tatina, a member of the boards of COL and DCOSA, shows Tower Hill campers how to core a tree in the woodland area.

Chikaming Open Lands (COL) is collaborating with the Deer Creek Open Space Association (DCOSA) and Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) to protect 32 acres of high-quality forest that is a part of the Tower Hill Camp in Sawyer. Nestled near the dunes along the lakefront, this beautiful woodland boasts upland forest dominated by red oak, maple and beech trees, and lowland forest featuring tulip poplars and paw paw trees.

DCOSA is working to raise \$530,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the property, which would be held by COL. Upon the launch of the fundraising campaign in July 2013, COL stepped forward as the lead donor on the project, pledging \$125,000 in funding derived from private contributions and The Pokagon Fund. As of now, including the COL pledge, DCOSA has successfully raised more than \$400,000 from 175 individual donors and grants from The Carls Foundation, Upton Foundation, Donnelley Foundation

and Heart of Cook. The Berrien Community Foundation receives and holds all donations during the fundraising period.

“This is a great project and a great opportunity to protect a large wooded parcel near Lake Michigan,” says DCOSA president Bob Beemer. “The community has been very supportive and we appreciate our partnership with COL and SWMLC.... with a conservation easement in place the Tower Hill woods and trails will remain natural and undeveloped forever.”

The property’s location along the Lake Michigan shoreline is also important as a migratory bird habitat. Kip Miller, chief naturalist for the Berrien County Parks and an avid birder says, “The woods are alive with birds from the canopy overhead to the forest floor. The importance of the Tower Hill Natural Area to migrating, nesting and wintering birds is undeniable.”

The Tower Hill Camp is owned by the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. The 60-acre summer camp has been providing nature experiences for youth and families for 90 years. The land on which the camp is located was donated in 1923 by the E.K. Warren estate, whose generosity also created Warren Dunes State Park and Warren Woods State Park. The proposed conservation easement will be placed on the southern 32-acre natural area of the camp.

With just under \$130,000 left to raise, DCOSA and COL hope to close on the project by summer of 2015 with your help. “We are so excited to have this opportunity to hold the conservation easement on such an important back dune woodland,” says COL executive director Chris Thompson. “I hope you will consider helping DCOSA protect it for generations to come by making a gift in support of the Tower Hill Camp Conservation Easement project via the Berrien Community Foundation.”



If you would like to join Chikaming Open Lands in its support of protecting Tower Hill, please visit the DCOSA website at www.deercreekopenspace.org, call (269) 921-1465, or send a donation to:

**Berrien Community Foundation
Tower Hill Camp Conservation Easement
2900 S. State Street, Suite 2E
St. Joseph, MI 49085**



Meg Foster speaks at the dedication ceremony in July.



L-R: David Foster, Steve Mullins, Meg Foster, Chris Thompson, Mary K. Kelly Hines and Christoph Bruns at the dedication. —Photo by Janet Hayes

(continued from page 1)

to... protect these uniquely beautiful and spirit-giving woods from being covered with asphalt, and houses.... and the stuff of people; the stuff of the material world that has a way of taking over and obliterating that spirit world of the woods.”

Meg shares the credit for the successful campaign with Mary K. Kelly Hines, who helped lead the fundraising effort, her brother David Foster, who acted as a consultant, and Steve Mullins, who lent his fundraising expertise to the effort.



The next generation to enjoy The Woods, from left: Natalie Lesch, Nikola Bruns, Phoebe and Bridgid Lesch, and mandolin player Mario Joven, who entertained the neighbors at the dedication. —Photo by Janet Hayes

Meg’s husband Christoph Bruns wasn’t sure it could be done early on. “At the beginning I was quite agnostic about whether it was possible,” he says. Thanks to Meg’s perseverance however, he quickly became a believer and is very pleased with the outcome. “These woods we are protecting now will be here for good. That is something that I have achieved, only through... giving, and I must say... it’s a darn good feeling.”

The Woods Preserve contains nearly 10 acres of undeveloped woodland and seasonal wetlands, with the new extension. It provides habitat for a variety of plants and animals within a relatively developed area of the lakeshore. The Preserve is located on Harbert Road just west of Timber Lane, in close proximity to Lake Michigan.

To see a short video interview with Meg and Christoph about this project visit the video library on our website: chikamingopenlands.org/video. There you can also find a video documenting the dedication ceremony held at the preserve on July 26, 2014.

Ninth Nature Preserve Extends Greenway and Wildlife Corridor



Chikaming Open Lands acquired its ninth nature preserve, a 35-acre parcel of land on East Road on September 18, 2014. Plans for the new preserve include recreational improvements to allow public access and create a natural rest area catering to road cyclists.

The property is directly adjacent to Robinson Woods Preserve, an 80-acre wooded preserve also owned and managed by COL. “This property features a nice mix of woods and wetlands, and it creates a permanent buffer to Robinson Woods,” says COL Executive Director Chris Thompson. “Most important, COL has extended a significant greenway and wildlife corridor in Chikaming Township.”

Also a part of the new land acquisition is the John Morley Drain, which flows into Robinson Woods and eventually empties into Lake Michigan.

The property was acquired with 50 percent of the funding coming from a combination of private contributions and a grant from The Pokagon Fund, and the remaining 50 percent from a single donor, Susan Flynn of Chicago and Harbert. The preserve will be dedicated to the memory of her late husband, Kevin Flynn, who was a cycling enthusiast and enjoyed biking in the area.

The Fifth Annual Barn Benefit



The Mitchells' stunning reclaimed barn

Our Most Successful Barn Benefit EVER!

On September 20, 2014, Chikaming Open Lands held its Fifth Annual Barn Benefit at the beautiful reclaimed barn of Steve and Cindy Mitchell on 30 acres in Buchanan, Michigan. Though the weather looked threatening prior to the event, as guests arrived the rain ceased, and a great time was had by all.

Moreover, this year's Benefit was a huge success, **more than doubling the funds raised from 2013!** We would like to thank everyone who attended and who gave so generously in the live and silent auctions. Thanks also to the donors of our fabulous auction items: Chris Thompson, Floyd Gompf, Hearthwoods, The Shedd Aquarium, Granor Farm, P&E Mullins Local, Ditka's Restaurant, Lost Dunes Golf Club, The Dunes Club, Red Arrow Roadhouse, New Buffalo Sailing Excursions, Bentwood Tavern, Everest, Greenbush Brewery, Peter and Jeanie Van Nice, Mesa Luna and Center of the World Woodshop.

Finally we owe an enormous amount of gratitude to our hosts, Steve and Cindy Mitchell, who were incredibly gracious in welcoming us into their home.

Now, how to top it next year? Stay tuned...

Thank you to the 2014 Barn Benefit Sponsors:



Top to bottom: Michael Grabish, Jon Bokina, David Germaine; Kieran Browne makes a bid, Brian and Dorothy Kern; Steve and Cindy Mitchell accept a gift from Executive Director Chris Thompson; Le Percolateur performs; Eileen and Rich Kochanny, Cathi and Tim Rogers; Beverly and Jerry Kohn; Vickie Kaiser and Jean Joho. —Photos by Ray Gudas

2014 Events



Observing the spring flowers at Fernwood Botanical Garden in April (left).

Conservation Circle members get a horse-drawn tour of the Zeiger conservation easement at June's donor appreciation event (below).
—Photo by Rob Gow



"Stew U" participants get an education in native and invasive plant identification at Robinson Woods in May (above).



In partnership with COL, the Lake Milton Raptor Center brought "Fern", a screech owl, along with several other birds for a show at the Ship & Shore festival in August.



Children test water quality (left) and clean up the beach (above) at a *Nature Explorers!* session held at Berrien Beach in July.



Lisa and Lee Bloom with their new composter after the Sustainable Living Seminar in July.
—Photo by Janet Hayes



The Voyageur Canoe glides down the Galien during August's Marsh Meander.
—Photo by Kip Miller

A Message from the Executive Director

"...When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. ~Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac"



What has truly struck me this year has been getting to know some extraordinary individuals in this community whose appreciation for the land reflects those words by Leopold.

These folks have given generously to save open space they cannot bear to see developed and destroyed. Owning land to them is not about how the land serves them but that the land is an integral part of the community to which we all belong.

Take for example the focus of our lead story, Meg Foster and her family and neighbors who saved the woods on Harbert Road. They were adamant that they would not lose the trees that were part of their childhood memories. Or the Zeiger family, highlighted in our Spring newsletter, who feel they have a calling to care for their land and see it as their family legacy.

Despite working in land preservation for many years, I don't think I fully understood this way of seeing land until I had the opportunity to work with these special people.

In 2014, folks like these have collectively gifted nearly \$1.1 million in donations and land to protect a "community" to which they belong. We are incredibly grateful to them.

As members and supporters of Chikaming Open Lands, you have made an impact on your community as well. I would like to encourage you to continue in that vein and make a year-end gift. Your ongoing support will help ensure that Chikaming Open Lands remains a successful, sustainable organization that will continue to save the special places in this corner of Southwest Michigan.

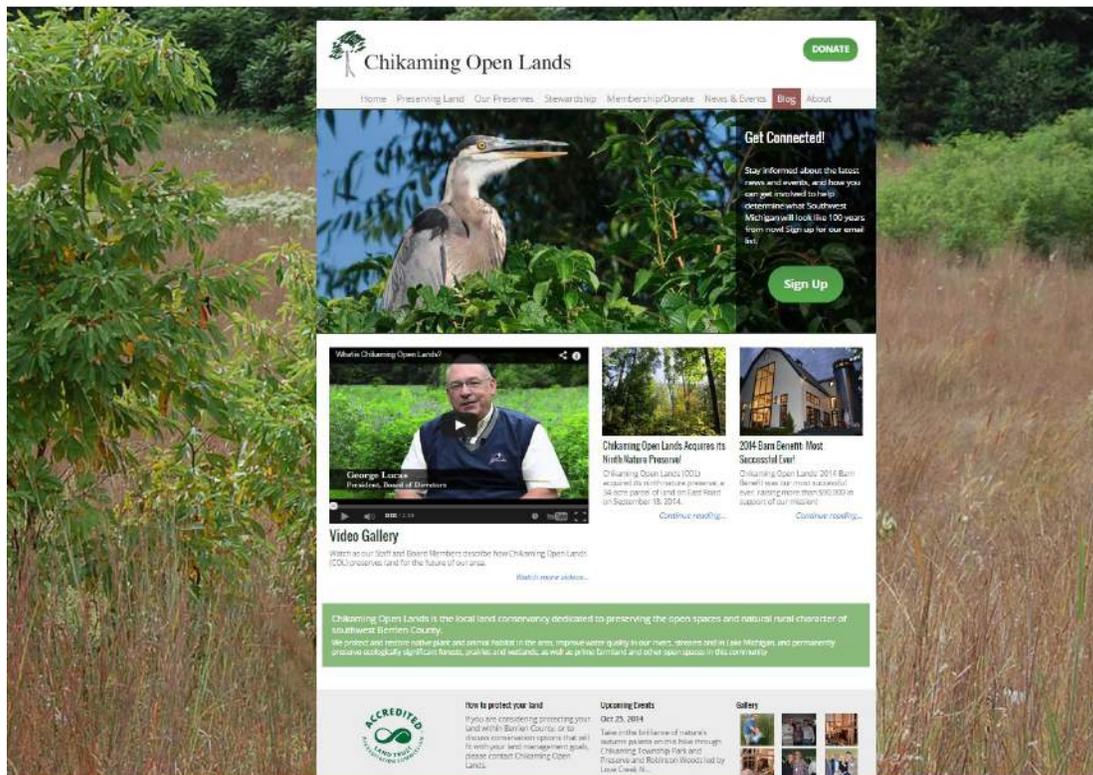
Chris Thompson

—Chris Thompson, Executive Director

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Check out our new website!!

Have you been to our website lately? If not, be sure to check it out, because we did a complete redesign of the COL site this summer! It's got all the bells and whistles, including social media links, the ability to adapt to mobile platforms (like your smart phone or tablet), videos and a new blog.

It's much more user-friendly than before, and pretty easy on the eyes too. And, it's optimized so that today's search engines, like Google and Bing, can easily find it and put it near the top of a search list... which will amp up our online visibility. Take a look!

chikamingopenlands.org