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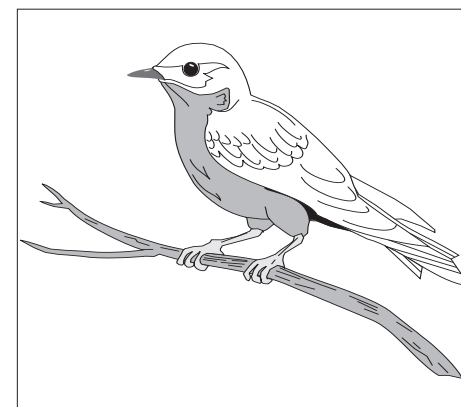
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Thank you for your support!



President's Message

Saving the Family Farm

After our fall/winter newsletter article about preserving the Schmitz family farm, three people called about saving their 100 plus year old family farms. Two are in Rochester and one in Caledonia. All three farms will add significant environmental landscape as well as preserve part of our farm history. The Land Trust looks to conclude an easement on at least one of these farms by the end of 2006.

Some of the main issues with conservation easements on a farm (or any private easement) include what restrictions to place, what additional buildings to allow, how to handle multiple owners, and how to support the easement. The latter is often a major hurdle, given that easement management incurs expenses. An easement is much like the Trust Department at the Bank. The Land Trust is 'hired' to ensure that the current land owners' wishes are carried out in perpetuity. Additionally, the Land Trust must be prepared to handle legal challenges or violations to the easement. It can be a financial strain for some to donate to the Easement Fund at the time of placing an easement on the land. To assist those folks, the Land Trust can work with deferral to an estate plan and accepts donations from the public to support the Easement Fund. The ultimate benefactors are our current and future generations.

Conservation Subdivision Update

About two years after K/RLT accepted its first conservation subdivision easements on Ponds I and II in Caledonia, the Land Trust audited the protected open spaces for easement compliance. Land Trust representatives, Wally Ott, Katrina Wardrip and Lori Artiomow met with the Homeowners Association at their annual meeting, sharing the results of the audit, discussing the status of the stewardship work plan and providing educational information on open space, subdivisions and conservation. Each resident received a folder with details of their open space along with additional information on rain gardens, responsible use of fertilizers, weed killers and how to control invasive species threatening their open space.

New Homeowners often have little understanding of the full value of living in a Conservation Subdivision. The Land Trust is a partner to the Homeowners Association in caring for their open space and in providing information to the individual homeowners regarding their individual land area.

Increasing Organizational Capacity

One key to a strong, sustainable organization is community recognition and support of its mission. Reflecting progress in communicating our land protection message, membership over the past two years has doubled. While we have not yet met our strategic goal, we are encouraged by the number and diverse backgrounds of people joining.

Outreach efforts of Nancy Pierce are also building capacity by making K/RLT better known in the community. Nancy has introduced the Land Trust to many organizations, including UW Parkside, Sustainable Racine, Waterford Waterway Management District, and the Racine Economic Development Committee. The RaCE event, the Janes School Native Garden and the "Dirty Dozen" seminar at the Seno Center. Her efforts have resulted in several joint projects and offer enormous potential to grow the organization.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Katrina Wardrip, K/RLT recently received a \$15,000 grant from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation. The funds will be used to bring our land preservation message to more people in an effort to grow the organization. They will also be used to raise additional funds for preserving sites already identified in the Pleasant Prairie section of the Des Plaines River.

Our past Outreach committee members Julie Tocher and Kay Rostergard have given untold volunteer hours to the Land Trust and we thank them. We also look forward to new volunteers stepping in to help grow and support us. The K/RLT is the one private organization that covers both counties and we look forward to being known as a first stop resource for land environment issues.

To have a strong land trust, you need a strong board of directors. K/RLT has been fortunate to have Glenn Christiansen and Chuck Erven on its board for nine years. Both have recently retired from the Board as their terms reached the limit.

Living on the Des Plaines, Glenn is deeply committed to seeing it preserved and thus will continue serving on the Des Plaines Committee.

Chuck served as president of K/RLT for several years. He led the effort to purchase four acres on the Root River and to donate them to the Root River Parkway in honor of Mary Ellen Helgren Johnson, a preeminent local environmentalist. Even though Chuck works in California, we expect he will continue to attend Land Trust events when in Racine.

Thanks Glenn and Chuck for your many contributions to K/RLT.

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Christine Evens, Emily Miota, and Peter Wardrip joined the board in January.

Dr. Evans is Chairperson for the UW Parkside Geosciences Department. She is already helping Nancy Pierce with a restoration plan for the Mary Ellen Helgren Johnson site and they are working on a couple other projects where K/RLT and UWP will collaborate.

Emily Miota heads the Racine office of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. She keeps us apprised of the many legislative initiatives which could effect environmental protection and significantly strengthens our community networking.

Peter Wardrip is a researcher at Northwestern University. He and his wife, Katrina, served two years in Armenia working for the Peace Corps. During that time they came to appreciate our relatively healthy environment and are dedicated to keeping it that way.

Tom Hall has joined us as our Attorney. Tom is in private practice in Racine. His background is in corporate law, intellectual property, real estate and non-profit law.

Welcome Chris, Emily, Peter and Tom. Let us hear from you. What concerns do you have for our landscapes? How can we work together? Can you volunteer for a work party? Help with infrastructure work? Write? Draw? Photograph our landscape? What is on your mind?