Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter

LANDLINE

www.wrlandconservancy.org

Summer 2014

SAVING THE WOODS

How determined residents preserved a doomed forest

In 2011, a group of North Kingsville residents were stunned to learn they were about to lose the forest where their children played, where teens posed for prom photos next to the big tree with the wildly crooked branch, where colorful dragonflies congregated, where a peaceful walk could help sort out a jumbled day.

The new owner of the 26-acre property was going to clear-cut the forest. Most of those who live next to the woods found out about the timbering plan from a letter to the editor written by alarmed neighbors Bill and Kim Tackett. Bill Tackett learned about the logging by talking to the surveyors roaming the property.



A small group of residents made a big difference in North Kingsville.

"NK land to be gutted," read the newspaper headline.

A handful of distraught residents gathered. "We had a dozen folks," said Beverly Santee, one of the residents, "with tears in their eyes."

The neighbors had no idea what to do and little time to deliberate, since the timbering was to start in two weeks. The landowner told the residents he'd sell the property to them – for twice the amount he paid for it. Undaunted, residents passed out fliers inviting people to meet at the Presbyterian Church of North Kingsville to discuss the proposal. "We told them to bring their checkbooks," said neighbor Ron Santee.

For the more than two dozen residents, clear-cutting the forest was unthinkable.

"What would we have if it was gone?" asked neighbor Penny Coxe. Resident Jill Peet added, "We did not want this devastation in our neighborhood."

What happened next was nothing short of amazing. Within a week, the group -- called the North Kingsville Woodland and Wetland Preservation – secured about $65,000 in pledges, enough to make what amounted to a non-refundable down payment on the property. A petition opposing the timbering plan garnered 1,300 signatures.

Over the next three years, the neighborhood organized bake sales, 5-kilometer runs through the woods, 50/50 raffles, rummage sales and other fundraisers. The Santees' own grandson sold lemonade and gave up his $50 vacation spending money for the cause. The girl who won the 50/50 raffle gave the $400 back to the group.

The residents also turned to Brett Rodstrom, the Land Conservancy's vice president of eastern field operations, for help. Rodstrom began a

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Akron property survey is our largest to date

A citywide survey to determine the number of vacant residential structures in Akron and the condition of all properties in the municipality is expected to be completed by the end of summer.

The survey, coordinated by the Land Conservancy's Thriving Communities Institute and conducted by the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation, will cover about 90,000 parcels. It is the largest such survey undertaken to date by Thriving Communities Institute, which has completed similar projects in the cities of Lorain, East Cleveland and Oberlin as well as in the Mount Pleasant and Buckeye neighborhoods of Cleveland.

Thriving Communities is currently working with several other cities that have expressed interest in property surveys. If your community is interested, please contact

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Project will expand Lorain County park

Lorain County Metro Parks will be able to expand its Cassell Reservation by 62 acres after the Land Conservancy worked with the district to acquire the property and put a conservation easement on it.

Cassell Reservation is a 155-acre park about two miles east of Vermilion.

The Land Conservancy acquired the new parkland, located on Parkside Reserve Street, on behalf of Lorain County Metro Parks. The organization secured funding for the purchase of the conservation easement through a grant from the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund. The Land Conservancy thanks its partners at the Ohio Public Works Commission, which provides the Clean Ohio funding, the District 9 Natural Resources Assistance Council of Huron, Lorain and Medina counties.

The parkland has a diverse wildlife habitat, including 50 acres of early to mid-successional stages of maple-oak-sassafras hardwood forest as well as wetland forest, scrub-shrub habitat, old field habitat, emergent marsh and vernal pools. These habitats provide shelter, food, and nesting areas for birds, small and large mammals and other wildlife.

Eight properties with Land Conservancy conservation easements are located within seven miles of Cassell Reservation. The additional property will create a contiguous block of passive-use public parkland that will preserve and foster outdoor recreation and education of the general public. The Land Conservancy congratulates Lorain County Metro Parks on the permanent protection of this property and its continued devotion to conservation and the wise use of natural resources.



The protected property contains a marsh and vernal pools.

Outdoors groups preserve acreage in Ashtabula County



The Ashtabula County Wildlife Conservation League property is adjacent to The Nature Conservancy's Morgan Swamp Preserve.

The Land Conservancy has partnered with two conservation-minded outdoors groups to permanently preserve an additional 236 acres in Ashtabula County.

In separate projects, the Land Conservancy worked with the Ashtabula County Wildlife Conservation League to protect 149 acres in Morgan Township and with the Ashtabula Beagle Club to preserve 87 acres in Sheffield Township. Conservation easements now protect both properties.

On both projects, the Land Conservancy secured federal funding for the purchase of the conservation easements through grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). The Land Conservancy thanks its generous partners at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which provides the NAWCA funding, and its partners at Ducks Unlimited, which administers the NAWCA grants.

The Wildlife Conservation League property, which is adjacent to The Nature Conservancy's 1,400-acre Morgan Swamp Preserve on four sides and is near the Wild and Scenic Grand River, has 105 acres of pristine and biologically diverse wetlands and is home to 18 state-listed species. The Conservation League is a group of 11 conservation clubs and associations in Ashtabula County.

The Beagle Club property, located on Hines Road, contains about 70 acres of high quality wetlands and is currently managed as a hunting club used to train beagles as hunting dogs. The property provides diverse habitat for fish and wildlife and includes nearly one mile of high quality tributaries to Griggs Creek, a major tributary of the Grand River.

The Land Conservancy congratulates both the Ashtabula County Wildlife Conservation League and the Ashtabula Beagle Club for permanently protecting these properties. Such protection provides food, shelter and nesting areas for wildlife, helps control flooding and improves water quality in the Grand River watershed.

Medina County woman makes preservation dream a reality



Neotropical birds, including the scarlet tanager, have been spotted in the area.

Facing a terminal illness, Paula Momchilov chose to focus on her dream of protecting her property as a gift to future generations. In May, she realized that dream by donating a conservation easement on her property to the Land Conservancy.

The property, located in Medina County's Montville Township, includes a mix of forest, open fields and a home site. It also contains more than 1,000 linear feet of Tuscarawas River tributaries. In addition, the land is just north of the Medina County Park District's River Styx Park, which attracts uncommon neotropical nesting birds that fly from the rain forests of Central America to spend their summers in northern Ohio.

"We are grateful to Paula Momchilov for preserving her land for future generation, and we know that completion of this easement has provided her peace of mind," said Bill Jordan, associate field director for the Land Conservancy.

Paula Momchilov is a client of attorney Jeff Holland, a Land Conservancy trustee who brought the land-preservation opportunity to the attention of the organization.

Land bank conference is Sept. 11-12 in Columbus

The fourth annual County Land Bank Conference, a gathering of local, regional and national leaders on the topic of urban land use and revitalization, will take place Sept. 11-12 at The Westin Hotel in Columbus.

The conference is sponsored by the Land Conservancy's Thriving Communities Institute, which works statewide to revitalize Ohio's urban centers. Speakers and panel discussions will cover a range of topics – from land bank strategies, to community engagement, to greening and reforestation projects – with the intention of sharing practices and findings to continue the progress already being made in these areas of our communities. To register and learn about updates on programming and speakers, visit www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org, or contact Kate Hydock at (216) 515-8300 or khydock@wrlandconservancy.org.

The cost for those who register by Aug. 31 is $150 for the full conference and $100 for one day only. After that rates will be $175 and $125.

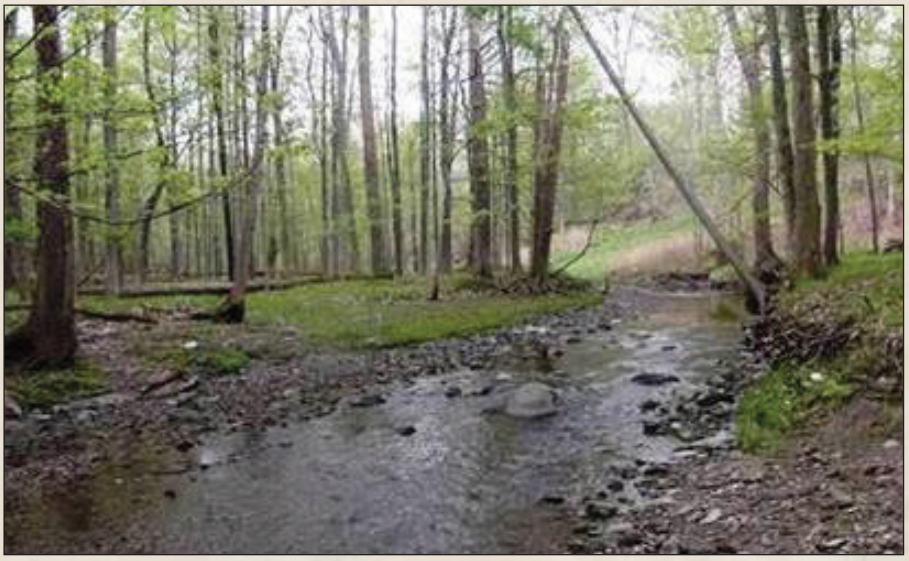
"This conference has grown into a must-attend event for all those who are interested in the future of Ohio cities that were devastated by the foreclosure crisis," said Jim Rokakis, director of Thriving Communities Institute and a nationally recognized expert on vacant and abandoned properties.

The conference is geared toward a wide range of participants, including representatives of community development groups, housing agencies, local governments and urban planning groups.

Since it was founded in 2011, Thriving Communities has helped form county land banks around the state – there are now twenty-two – and has secured more than $232 million in demolition funds for cities devastated by the foreclosure crisis. In addition, Thriving Communities is doing vacancy surveys on behalf of cities and recently kicked off an urban reforestation program in Cleveland.



Maple Heights, Land Conservancy preserve 24-acre parcel near park



The property is in the Tinker's Creek watershed.

The city of Maple Heights and the nonprofit Western Reserve Land Conservancy's Thriving Communities Institute have partnered to create a new 24-acre nature preserve at the Bedford border.

The project was completed at no cost to city taxpayers.

The parcel is off both Granite Road and Pennsylvania Avenue, adjacent to the boundary line with Bedford, and less than half a mile north of the Cleveland Metroparks Bedford Reservation. A stream valley connects the properties and serves as a basis for extending the corridor, and additional phases of this project could include a trail connecting an adjacent industrial park to the Metroparks.

Project funding came from a Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Program grant and a generous bargain sale donation from the seller, Maple Heights Development Corporation. The Land Conservancy applied for the grant, which was approved by Natural Resources Assistance Council District 1 and the Ohio Public Works Commission.

Sarah Ryzner, project director for Thriving Communities Institute, the Land Conservancy's urban revitalization arm, said, "We congratulate Maple Heights for creating a conservation property within its borders, and offer thanks to the generous seller, our partners at Ohio Public Works Commission, NRAC District 1 and the Land Conservancy project team that made this successful project a reality."

Ryzner said this project is a good example of how the Land Conservancy is integrating its traditional land protection work with the urban revitalization mission of Thriving Communities Institute.

The project will protect old field habitat, upland forests, steep ravines and natural areas around streams. The property contains approximately 2,358 linear feet of streams, including a short section of Hemlock Creek (formerly known as Wood Creek) and several of its tributaries. Hemlock Creek is a tributary of Tinker's Creek, the largest tributary feeding into the Cuyahoga River.

Preserving the land along the streams is a strategic goal of both the Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan and the Tinker's Creek Watershed Action Plan. In addition, project officials said the property will offer the potential for future educational opportunities in conjunction with local schools, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and other partner organizations.

"I am pleased to have been a part of this important conservation project," said Brian K. Garson, president of Maple Heights Development Corporation.

As part of the project, the city donated a conservation easement that permanently prevents the property from being developed. The Land Conservancy holds the easement and is charged with enforcing it.

Land Conservancy applauds Great Lakes funding initiative

The Land Conservancy is applauding the introduction of a federal bill allocating $300 million to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in fiscal year 2015.

Land Conservancy President and CEO Rich Cochran said it was "great news for the Great Lakes" that the U.S. House of Representatives has set aside the funding in its first version of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill. The Great Lakes funding – the same amount as last year but more than what President Obama requested in his budget proposal – was allocated by the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, of which Rep. David Joyce is a member.



The Huntley Preserve on Kelleys Island was acquired with GLRI funding.

"We applaud the subcommittee and Dave Joyce for their commitment to restoring one of the greatest freshwater resources on earth," Cochran said. "The health of the Great Lakes is important to all of us. As a region, we count on these amazing lakes for fresh water, recreation, transportation and so much more. The Great Lakes economy and the jobs it generates depend on the continued revitalization of this resource."

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades. In 2010, a task force of eleven federal agencies developed a plan to put the President's historic initiative into action. This plan called for: cleaning up toxics and areas of concern; combating invasive species; promoting nearshore health by protecting watersheds from polluted runoff; restoring wetlands and other habitats; and working with partners on outreach.

Local projects receiving GLRI funding include Lake Erie Bluffs, a joint Lake Metroparks-Land Conservancy project featuring nearly two miles of undeveloped coastline; the Huntley Preserve, a tract on Kelleys Island preserved by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Land Conservancy; and the protection of Mill Creek, a major tributary to the Cuyahoga River.

Survey *continued from page 1*

Sarah Ryzner at (216) 515-8300 or sryzner@wrlandconservancy.org.

The Akron study will provide city officials with information that can be used to prioritize what structures should be demolished with available funds and to determine the need for additional demolition funding. The city will also be able to use the results to help plan for the re-use of vacant land.

Surveyors work in teams of two and gather information while on sidewalks and public rights-of-way.

Project officials said the survey will quantify the current need for demolition in Akron and assist the city in accessing the nearly $60 million in demolition funding available to Summit County through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Hardest Hit Funds. Thriving Communities Institute Director Jim Rokakis said the survey will help Akron "assess all of its properties and secure the funding its neighborhoods deserve."



Our Akron property survey team poses before hitting the road.

EANDC President and CEO Grady Appleton said, "The foreclosure crisis hit Akron hard, but we are a tough city, we survived it and we remain strong. This study is critical to determine our next steps. We are happy to partner with the city of Akron and Thriving Communities Institute to gather this important information."

Saving woods

continued from page 1

series of regular meetings with the group aimed at permanently protecting the land with a conservation easement and taking some of the funding burden from the neighbors.

The Land Conservancy landed a major grant from the Charles Lathrop Pack Forestry Trust and secured federal funding to buy the land through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which is administered by Ducks Unlimited. In June, the Land Conservancy acquired the forest and placed a conservation easement on the property, one that prohibits the land from ever being developed. The organization hopes to eventually transfer ownership of the land, which includes hardwood and hemlock forests, coldwater tributaries that flow directly into Lake Erie and high-quality wetlands, to a conservation partner.

"I can't say enough about the residents of North Kingsville and the passion they demonstrated in preserving this forest," Rodstrom said. "What they did is special. Without their efforts, there is no doubt they would have lost this beautiful property."

Ron Santee said, "We're thankful to Brett and to Western Reserve Land Conservancy for helping us every step of the way."

A Rock Creek woman who heard about the neighbors' efforts repeatedly sent handwritten letters to actor/director Robert Redford, urging him to make a film about the fight to save their forest. While no production crews have descended on North Kingsville, it is clear the story of the woods will have a happy ending.

House votes in favor of conservation tax incentive

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill to make permanent an enhanced tax incentive for conservation of farmland, rangeland, woodlands and other important open spaces.

The bill, which included other charity provisions, passed by a vote of 277-130. U.S. Reps. Dave Joyce, Jim Renacci, Bob Gibbs and Bill Johnson voted for the measure, which now goes to the Senate.

The Land Conservancy and the national Land Trust Alliance have strongly supported making permanent the conservation tax incentive, which has successfully increased the pace, quality and permanence of land conservation. Through this limited tax deduction, landowners are able to place their most prized assets – historical sites, forests, family farms and ranches – in protected easements to ensure a legacy of natural abundance, enjoyment and agricultural production for future generations.

Valuable open spaces or farmland can be protected by an easement for a fraction of the cost of buying it, making easements by far the most cost-effective approach to land conservation. For example, federal acquisition of land costs taxpayers roughly $12,000 an acre compared to just $400 an acre for an easement.

Richfield board eyes future of former Girl Scout camp



Visitors hike the Crowell Hilaka property during an open house last fall.

The village of Richfield and Richfield Township have agreed to form a joint recreation district that could help determine the future of Crowell Hilaka, the 336-acre former Girl Scout camp in Richfield Township.

Crowell Hilaka, which has frontage on both Broadview Road and state Route 303, was one of several camps put up for sale by the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio in 2012. GSNEO has extended a purchase option to the nonprofit Land Conservancy, which has convened a coalition of community leaders, outdoor recreation advocates, the Friends of Crowell Hilaka group, historians, residents and other partners in its continuing search for an owner aligned with its preservation mission.

The joint recreation board, which is exploring whether to place a levy on the ballot to fund the purchase of the property, met for the first time on July 10. The township's board appointees are Bob Lucas, Floyd Ostrowski and Donna Skoda, while the village representatives are Ralph McNerney, Pat Norris and Bill Taylor. A seventh member, Kelly Clark, was chosen by the recreation district board.

A fall open house sparked new interest in preserving the property, which is known for its extraordinary natural resources and historic landmarks, but plans for the former camp remain up in the air. The property is the former estate of inventor James B. Kirby, who sold the land to the Cleveland Girl Scouts in 1937. For more than 70 years, thousands of girls camped at Crowell Hilaka.

In addition to the Friends group, the Land Conservancy and GSNEO, others involved in the informal talks included representatives from Richfield Township, the Village of Richfield, Summit County Council, the Richfield Historical Society and the Buckeye Trail Association, as well as township and village residents.

You make our work possible



Nancy McCann

Dear friend,

Three months ago, I joined the Land Conservancy staff.

I quickly discovered why we have so many loyal supporters. Our organization does its important work – preserving natural areas and farmland, revitalizing our state's urban centers – with energy, skill and genuine passion. You make that possible. Your generosity to the Land Conservancy over the years has not gone unnoticed, and we are genuinely thankful for the support.

As you read this edition of Landline, please remember that none of the highlighted projects – whether it is an Akron property survey, an Ashtabula County conservation easement or a Lorain County park – could be done without your help. Each success story is really a giant hug for our donors and partners.

I graciously ask that you keep us in mind again this year as you think about your giving. If you have already given to us this year – thank you! And if you would like more information about specific programs and services that your donation will support, please let me know. You can reach me at nmccann@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 528-4153.

All the best,

Nancy

Nancy McCann
Chief Development Officer



Workers from Air Enterprises and their families helped out at this spring's cleanup of Haley's and Adam's runs in Akron.

Consider a corporate partnership with the Land Conservancy

The Land Conservancy is changing the way we approach companies for support. We are looking for corporate partners who will be actively involved in our work on everything from stream cleanups to tree planting.

As the largest land trust in Ohio, we believe it is our responsibility to engage our corporate partners first and foremost by actively involving them in our conservation and urban revitalization programs. We believe there should be more to a corporate/nonprofit partnership than tickets to an event and corporate logos on a bulletin board. Northern Ohio is home to some of the best companies in the world with some of the most talented, passionate and dedicated employees. We'd like those employees on our team.

We are looking for companies across the state to support our programs and give their employees the chance to make a difference in the communities where they work and live. The Land Conservancy offers numerous opportunities throughout the year to engage employees in stream cleanups, environmental education programs, invasive species removal efforts and more. In addition, there will be new, exciting opportunities to create green infrastructure as we embark on a massive urban reforestation program.

By supporting the programs of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, your company will play a huge role in protecting the environment and natural resources of northern Ohio, revitalizing urban centers around the state and creating a healthy place for us all to call home. Your company and its employees will be recognized as leaders in the community who are making a positive impact on our neighborhoods and environment.

To find out more about our corporate partnerships, contact Jon Logue at jlogue@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 396-5528.

Scout project adds charm, function to Akron trail



There are now places for the weary to rest at Akron's Haley's Run trail, thanks to the efforts of Eagle Scout candidate Johnathan M. Ferguson, 17, of Uniontown, along with his friends, family and volunteers. They constructed and installed four benches and a picnic table along the greenway.

Johnathan, with help from other members of Springfield Township Troop 282 and their families, built the benches and table after Jean Clites, a manager at Goodyear Chemical, suggested to the Land Conservancy that the pieces would make nice additions to the trail and fulfill the Eagle project requirement. Goodyear Chemical has a facility adjacent to the Haley's Run trail.



Friends and family members helped Eagle Scout candidate Johnathan M. Ferguson build and install benches and a table at Haley's Run.

The Land Conservancy worked with Lockheed Martin and other partners to create the Haley's Run greenway and is continuing to pursue the extension of the adjacent Adam's Run trail north to the Little Cuyahoga River.

On a Saturday morning in June, the Scouts and their parents showed up in a fleet of pickup trucks hauling the four benches, the picnic table, shovels, hoes, rakes, a drum of water, a load of mulch, about 800 pounds of concrete mix and a John Deere garden tractor. Since the holes were dug in advance by Cavanaugh Construction and the benches and table built in advance, the installation was accomplished in three hours.

Medina Associate Field Director Bill Jordan thanked the Scouts, their families, Goodyear Chemical, Cavanaugh Construction, Medina Summit Chapter member Peg Bobel, retired GDP Group staffer Denny Stoiber, who helped with bench locations, and Industrial Realty Group (IRG), the developer involved in the nearby Goodyear World Headquarters project.

The troop meets at Nativity of the Lord Jesus Catholic Church in Springfield Township and is headed by Scoutmaster Richard Reed. Reed's son, Alex, was one of those who helped Johnathan with the project.

Jim Ferguson, Johnathan's father, said the work made an impression on his son, adding, "He has taken a real interest in not only the project, but why the trail exists and who benefits from it."

CONSERVATION CALENDAR

City Club of Cleveland

Noon, Friday, Aug. 15

Land Conservancy Vice President and Thriving Communities Institute Director Jim Rokakis will speak on "Building a New, Better Cleveland in a Post Foreclosure World." Tickets are $18 for City Club members, $30 for non-members.

EverGreen EverBlue

Saturday, Sept. 6

Our popular benefit returns with The Ultimate Block Party, an evening of local food, music, dancing, munchies and lawn games. It will take place at the Cleveland Heights home of Laura and Chris McKenna. The winner of a raffle will choose between three great trips to Costa Rica, Kenya or Kennedy Space Center. Ticket information is available at www.evergreeneverblue.org.

Ohio Land Bank Conference 2014

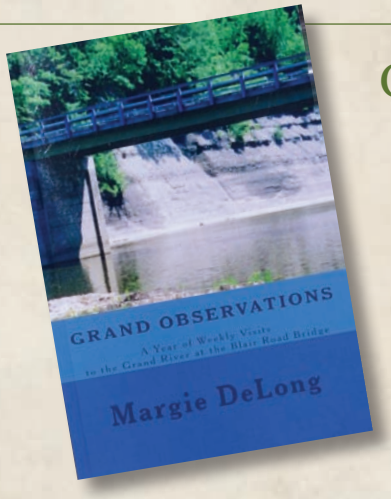
Thursday and Friday, Sept. 11-12

Thriving Communities Institute is sponsoring this fourth annual conference for all those interested in urban land use and revitalization. Conference will be at The Westin Hotel in Columbus. Visit www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org for registration and more information.

Hoot and Harvest Festival

5-8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11

Join our Medina Summit Chapter for an evening of food, music, hayrides and pumpkin-painting, along with a demonstration featuring live birds from the Medina Raptor Center. The event will be at the Hill 'n Dale Club in Medina County's Montville Township.



Grand River book sales benefit Land Conservancy

Retired nurse practitioner and author Margie DeLong of LeRoy Township is generously donating 50 percent of all royalties from her book, "Grand Observations: A Year of Weekly Visits to the Grand River at the Blair Road Bridge," to the Land Conservancy. The book, which documents her weekly visits to the cleanest and most biologically diverse river in the Lake Erie Basin, sells for $10.80 plus shipping and is available through Amazon.com and at book-signings throughout the region.

"For me, writing this book was a wonderful experience, and I want to share it with others who love the river," said DeLong, who spent five years researching and writing the book. The research included driving over all 39 bridges over the river, taking two canoe trips and flying over the Grand's source in a small plane.

The Land Conservancy thanks DeLong for her contribution to conservation. She can be reached at margiedelong@windstream.net.

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Block party, raffle mark return of EverGreenEverBlue on Sept. 6



EverGreen EverBlue, the nonprofit Land Conservancy's popular benefit, will return from a one-year hiatus on Saturday, Sept. 6 with a new look – a casual block party in Cleveland Heights.

EverGreen EverBlue: The Ultimate Block Party, an evening of local food, music, munchies and lawn games, will take place at the Stratford Road home of Laura and Chris McKenna. At the event, the Land Conservancy will also hold a raffle in which the winner will choose from three fabulous trips: An all-inclusive vacation to Costa Rica, a Kenya Bush Safari or a Kennedy Space Center Astronaut Adventure.

Tickets are $250 per person for the event and $500 for those attending a 6 p.m. prelude party that includes a "grill and chill" in the kitchen with the hosts and a chance to prepare a dish with a secret celebrity chef. Raffle tickets are $100 each, and the winner does not have to be present. To purchase all tickets, contact Emily Bacha at ebacha@wrlandconservancy.org or call (440) 528-4178.

Honorary co-chairs for the event are Laura and Chris McKenna, Lainie Hadden and Cari and Bill Ross.

Sponsors include Bettcher Industries Inc., BNY Mellon, Calfee, Halter and Griswold LLP, Chemical Solvents Inc., Davey Tree Expert Company, Fairmount Minerals, Glenmede, Heidelberg Distributing Company, Incentra, Judson at University Circle, KeyBank, Litigation Management Inc., Mansour Gavin LPA, Medical Mutual, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Primus Capital and The CJR Group Inc.

For more event details or to buy tickets online, visit www.evergreeneverblue.org.

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