

# SHIRLEY HEINZE LAND TRUST CONNECTS LOCAL BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB WITH NATURE

Shirley Heinze Land Trust staff conducted a guided hike for a group of approximately 20 first and second graders from the Boys and Girls Club of Michigan City recently. Paul Quinlan, stewardship program manager and stewardship assistant and volunteer coordinator, Jim Erdelac, led the guided tour at Barker Woods. A state dedicated nature preserve, Barker Woods is a 30-acre, mature, mixed forest community featuring white pine, red oak, white oak, sugar maple, red maple, witch-hazel, partridge berry, and wintergreen.

The children observed various insects and wildlife, including spiders and squirrels. Jim Erdelac, stewardship assistant, remarked, “our children were absolutely elated to observe a young doe as the hike was ending.” At one point, the children stopped to count nearly 70 rings on a mature oak tree. Several children used the term ‘deciduous’ to refer to an oak tree during the hike. This was a result of a special lesson about trees which took place earlier in the summer. Paul Quinlan, stewardship program manager, remarked, “I was quite impressed by the level of knowledge these first and second graders possessed.” After the hike concluded, the children and student teachers were treated to cookies and fruit juice at Barker House.

Jo Ann Engquist, Assistant Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Michigan City, explains, “our boys and girls had just recently completed a summer program dealing with the outdoors and the environment. For example, the younger children choreographed dances and songs about insects while older students studied water quality and conservation issues on a global scale.”

In addition, a group of fifth and sixth graders generously lent their artistic talent in support of Shirley Heinze’s 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Benefit at International Friendship Gardens in June. Beginning in early June, they decorated nearly 30 birdhouses, which served as unique table centerpieces for the fundraising event at International Friendship Gardens in Michigan City. JoAnn Engquist noted, “Shirley Heinze’s guided nature hike was a wonderful culmination of the conservation education the children received over the course of the summer.”

Shirley Heinze Land Trust is a strong proponent of the burgeoning movement in the Chicago Metropolitan Area termed, “No Child Left Inside.” In this ever increasing digital age of the Internet and iPods, this campaign seeks to reconnect our children with nature through directed outdoor play and self-discovery, thus fostering generations of children who care enough about nature to protect it. These efforts are vital in order to reverse the alarming trend of the weakening connections between our future generations and our precious natural resources. Shirley Heinze Land Trust recognizes the importance of reconnecting our children to the natural world; not only for their own overall well being, but for the role they must play in the future protection and stewardship of our precious lands. Shirley Heinze Land Trust is committed to educating both children and teachers about the natural world in which we live.

Since 1981, Shirley Heinze Land Trust has preserved, protected and restored natural lands in the southern Lake Michigan watershed. It has preserved over 1,000 acres, representing a great variety of landscapes and natural communities: tallgrass prairie and oak savanna, interdunal ponds and woodlands, boreal flatwoods and dune-and-swale, and numerous types of wetlands. Five of the properties it owns and manages are dedicated Indiana State Nature Preserves. To learn more about Shirley Heinze Land Trust properties in LaPorte, Porter and Lake Counties, please visit [www.heinzetrust.org](http://www.heinzetrust.org), contact us at (219) 879-4725 or e-mail [land@heinzetrust.org](mailto:land@heinzetrust.org)

The Boys and Girls Club of Michigan City is a place where youth of all backgrounds, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, have pride of ownership in a fun and safe environment as they develop the qualities needed to become responsible citizens and leaders. The club’s vision is to provide growth and development opportunities for youth to enable them to make positive choices. Boys and Girls Club is open to all children ages 6-18 years of age for both afterschool and summer programs for a nominal fee. Boys and Girls Club relies heavily on grant funding and the generous contributions of individuals in the community. If you would like more about information about programming or how you can help, please phone: (219) 873-2298.

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