

The Post Tribune
Monday, August 22, 2011

Shirley Heinze Land Trust celebrates 30th anniversary

By Amy Lavalley Post-Tribune correspondent August 21, 2011



Shirley Heinze Land Trust Executive Director Kris Krouse, left, talks with member Peter Wilkin of Valparaiso during the opening of a new exhibit celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Shirley Heinze Land Trust at the Westchester Township History Museum Sunday, Aug. 21, 2011, in Chesterton, Ind. | Scott M. Bort-Sun-Times Media

CHESTERTON — Indiana dunes advocate Shirley Heinze died in 1978, three years before friends of hers donated \$30,000 to establish the Shirley Heinze Environmental Fund in her name.

“She knew nothing about this organization,” said Ron Trigg, a board member, volunteer and past executive director of the Shirley Heinze Land Trust, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary and preserves 1,200 acres of land throughout Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. “She would be astonished to know this.”

Trigg served as curator for “Shirley Heinze Land Trust: Celebrating 30 Years,” which opened Sunday at the Westchester Township History Museum. The exhibit includes a time line of the trust’s history; a South Shore poster honoring the trust by artist Barbara Spies Labus; and photos of the trust’s properties, taken by Trigg.

“The most important thing is the land and the various nature preserves we’ve acquired over the years,” he said.

The trust started with individual lots in Gary, purchased in the early 1980s. The lots, now known as the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve, were from a subdivision that was never developed, said Kris Krouse, the trust’s executive director. The trust has 15 preserves in the region.

The trust works to preserve and restore the land for present and future generations, and to educate the public, including young people, about what the region has, Krouse said.

The trust rolled out a new strategic plan last year, and is considering geographic expansion, among other matters. “In the next few years, we’re going to be focused on the sustainability of the organization,” Krouse said.

Having temporary exhibits offers the opportunity to provide more information than the museum can within its permanent exhibits, said museum curator Jane Walsh-Brown.

The exhibit on the trust is a good fit for the museum.

“It seemed like a natural thing that we would help in any way we could,” she said. “We would want to promote the great work the Shirley Heinze Land Trust has done over the last 30 years to preserve the natural areas of Northwest Indiana.”

IF YOU GO

What: “Shirley Heinze Land Trust: Celebrating 30 Years”

When: Through Sept. 30

Where: Westchester Township History Museum, 700 W. Porter Ave., Chesterton

More information: Call 983-9715.

Worth noting: The trust will sponsor hikes from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday at the Little Calumet Wetlands Project Area in Chesterton. The access point is slightly south of the parking lot for Brummitt Elementary School, 2500 Indian Boundary Road. The event includes a ribbon-cutting for a recently installed nature trail. For more information, visit www.heinzetrust.org or call 879-4725.