

Land trust buys former Girl Scouts camp in Liberty Township

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The Shirley Heinze Land Trust said Friday that it bought the former Camp Meadowbrook in Liberty Township.

The nonprofit organization will operate the 74-acre property as a natural area and a center for environmental education and outdoor recreation.

Existing structures along County Road 700 North will house the organization's administrative offices and its stewardship and education offices. The organization's office is currently in Michigan City in the same building at the nonprofit environmental conservation organization Save the Dunes.

For about a year, the organization negotiated to buy the property from the Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana. The Girl Scouts retired the facility after completing a two-year, volunteer-led, long-range planning review of all its properties in 2011.

"Meadowbrook represents a turning point in our organization's history," said Margaret Williford, board president of the Shirley Heinze Land Trust. "It's a splendid addition to our holdings of natural land in Northwest Indiana, but it also provides long-needed office and storage facilities to support our growing programs."

Kris Krouse, the land trust's executive director, said the permanent preservation of Meadowbrook "significantly enhances air and water quality in our area."

Meadowbrook has hiking trails, an outdoor amphitheater and hosts a variety of habitats and natural communities. Krouse also said the property provides important wildlife habitat, as well as migratory, nesting and wintering grounds for numerous bird species.

Plans are being developed to host an open house in the spring and a community hike later this year.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust has been protecting natural land in the southern Lake Michigan watershed since 1981. It manages more than 1,300 acres that are permanently protected by the organization.



Camp counselors and supporters of the Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp circled around the flagpole in October 2011 for the final closing flag ceremony.