Shirley Heinze Land Trust has purchased the former Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp in Liberty Township, north of Valparaiso. The Trust will operate the 74-acre property as a natural area and a center for environmental education and outdoor recreation. Existing structures along County Road 700N will house the organization’s administrative offices and its stewardship and education arms.

“Meadowbrook represents a turning point in our organization’s history,” says Margaret Wilford, President of the Shirley Heinze Land Trust Board of Directors. “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. The hiking trails and outdoor amphitheater at Meadowbrook are perfect for the Mighty Acorns educational program we administer for local elementary school students. After thirty years occupying cramped rental quarters, we are delighted to finally have our own home.”

“The permanent preservation of Meadowbrook significantly enhances air and water quality in our area,” says Shirley Heinze Land Trust Executive Director Kris Krouse. “The site hosts a variety of habitats and natural communities: upland forest, a deep ravine along a stream, mixed-age woodlands reclaiming former crop land, shrub lands, scattered patches of evergreens, and a forested wetland. The property includes portions of three headwater streams which join into an unnamed tributary of Salt Creek, which flows into the East Arm of the Little Calumet River and ultimately empties into Lake Michigan. It provides important wildlife habitat, as well as migratory, nesting, and wintering grounds for numerous bird species.”

“This acquisition comes after a year of negotiations with Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, who retired the facility after completing a two-year, volunteer-led, long-range planning review of all its properties in 2011,” Krouse says. “Our success in closing this deal owes much to the contributions of our many partners. The Girl Scouts agreed to a reasonable price to ensure the property’s environmentally focused future. The Gaylor and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation provided a loan to cover the entire cost of the purchase. The Indiana Bicentennial...
Nature Trust granted $240,000 toward the purchase price. Nearly twenty local non-profit, governmental, and educational entities submitted letters in support of our grant applications. We are very grateful to all our friends for making this possible."

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. Five of its properties — Cressmoor Prairie, Seidner Dune & Swale, John Merle Coulter Preserve, Barker Woods, and Ambler Flatwoods — have been dedicated to the people of Indiana as state nature preserves.

Included in the Heinze Trust’s holdings are examples of the entire spectrum of natural communities in this area: tallgrass prairie, high dune, oak savanna, boreal flatwoods, dune-and-swale, woodlands, marshes, swamps, ponds, fens, and riparian habitat.

The Heinze Trust has also made contributions toward the purchase of natural areas owned by other entities, including the Indiana DNR, The Nature Conservancy, La Porte County Parks, Lake County Parks, and the Portage Parks Department. For more information on the work and programs of Shirley Heinze Land Trust, call 219-879-4725, or visit www.heinzetrust.org.