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Gary mayor to headline Shirley Heinze Land Trust lunch and awards

SCHERERVILLE | Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson will be the keynote speaker at Shirley Heinze Land Trust's third annual Community Luncheon on Nov. 8 at Briar Ridge Country Club, 123 Country Club Drive. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m., and the luncheon starts at noon.

Tickets are \$30 and the public is welcome.

The program will include an award ceremony for the 2013 winners of the Bringing Nature Home Awards for institutional landscapers. Five organizations will be recognized for incorporating native plants in their landscaping projects in Lake and Porter counties.

The winners are Friends of Robinson Lake in Hobart, Indiana Department of Transportation (LaPorte Region), Lake County MS4 Stormwater District, Valparaiso Parks Department, and Nathan Hale Elementary School in Whiting.

"The annual luncheon affords us an opportunity to engage the business community and representatives of municipalities in areas that we serve. They have become vital partners in our work, and we look forward to keeping them informed," said Margaret Williford, president of Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

"We are delighted that Mayor Freeman-Wilson has agreed to speak this year," Williford added. "She and her administration have been very supportive of our efforts to protect natural land in Gary. It's a good example of how public-private partnerships can benefit the broader community."

Attendees will also hear a report on the land trust's accomplishments over the past year. "This has been a banner year for us," Executive Director Kris Krouse said. "Our acquisition of the former Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp near Valparaiso allowed us to protect an important tract of moraine forest and move our offices to more spacious quarters.

"The Mighty Acorns environmental education program for elementary schoolchildren continues to grow - it's now the largest such project in the Chicago area. There is also progress to report in our efforts to preserve the east arm of the Little Calumet River as a natural area and recreational resource."

Tickets may be purchased individually at www.heinzetrust.org, while sponsorship of a full table is \$500 for 10 seats, and a half table is \$250 for five seats. Call (219) 242-8558 or email kkrouse@heinzetrust.org.