Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp Acquired

Partnerships and Grants Make Purchase Possible

Shirley Heinze Land Trust has purchased the former Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp in Porter County’s Liberty Township, north of Valparaiso. We will operate the 74-acre property as a natural area and a center for environmental education and outdoor recreation. Existing structures at the site will house our administrative offices and the stewardship and education programs.

The acquisition came after a year of negotiations with the Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, who retired the facility in 2011 after running it as a camp for fifty years. Our success in closing the deal owes much to the contributions of our many partners. The Girl Scouts, who were anxious to see the land protected from development, offered the property to us at a reasonable sale price. The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley 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 application. It was truly a coming together of forces to benefit the larger community.

“Meadowbrook represents a turning point in our organization’s history,” says Margaret Williford, President of the 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.”

Maria Wynne, CEO of the Girl Scout Council, describes SHLT as “the absolute best new owners for a well-loved property” and hails the transfer of ownership as “a winning outcome for our Council, Shirley Heinze, and for the preservation of this precious natural resource.”

The permanent preservation of Meadowbrook significantly enhances air and water quality in our area. The site hosts a variety of 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.

“We are proud to have worked with the Girl Scouts and our other partners to guarantee that this property will continue to be available to the Northwest Indiana community,” Executive Director Kris Krouse says. “We want to share our happiness with our supporters, and we will host an open house in the spring and a community hike later in the year.”

Information on our new facility and volunteer efforts to prepare it for occupancy can be found on our new website (www.heinzetrust.org).
Committed to Protecting Nature

Tim Ritchie’s commitment to nature preservation in the Great Lakes dates back to his boyhood. Growing up in Minnesota, he spent many happy days exploring the north woods along the shores of Lake Superior, where his grandfather had a log cabin. “I fell in love with nature during that time,” he recalls fondly.

That connection to the natural world remains just as strong today. Tim ultimately became a lawyer and relocated to Chicago, where he quickly fell victim to the allure of another of the Great Lakes and purchased property in the Indiana Dunes. He has maintained homes both in Chicago and in the lakeshore community of Dune Acres, Indiana, for more than forty years.

Tim has devoted much volunteer time to environmentally oriented non-profits working to protect natural areas and wildlife habitat. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of Openlands, a Chicago-based land conservation organization working in northeastern Illinois and adjoining areas of Indiana and Wisconsin. Tim also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

In his own backyard in the Dunes, Tim became a loyal supporter of Shirley Heinze Land Trust. “I first became involved by going on the ‘spring fling’ hikes,” Tim notes. “It was at the urging of Barbara Plampin. They were wonderful outings. We always saw great things.” Barbara, a life board member and fellow Dune Acres resident, has been organizing SHLT’s annual series of guided nature walks for more than a quarter-century.

“The Indiana Dunes is a really unique area. There’s so much biodiversity. I really love living here,” Tim says. “I appreciate the work Shirley Heinze is doing to save so many amazing places. I think they have taken the lead in land conservation efforts in this area, and they are doing a superb job. It’s remarkable how successful they have been in saving places like Ambler Flatwoods and, more recently, the Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp.”

Tim formally retired about ten years ago, but he remains very active in many pursuits. We’re pleased that support of Shirley Heinze Land Trust and participation in its events are still part of his agenda.

Tim Ritchie has also taken another important step to help assure that the natural areas he loves will survive for future generations to enjoy. By including Shirley Heinze Land Trust in his estate plans, he has become a member of the Legacy Circle. We’re delighted to have Tim as part of our family.
ArcelorMittal Foundation Funds Restoration at LaPorte County Preserves

A generous grant from the ArcelorMittal Foundation is supporting restoration work at Barker Woods and Hildebrand Lake Nature Preserves. Staff, volunteers, and interns will continue work on the projects throughout the year.

The focus at Barker Woods will be on the removal of invasive aliens like honeysuckle and burning bush and an overabundant population of green brier. We will also be selectively thinning a portion of the property that is characterized as oak woodland. We will be removing small maple trees to allow more light to reach the ground and encourage the growth of witch hazel, oak sedge, and wintergreen.

At Hildebrand Lake we will also be controlling honeysuckle and burning bush, and we will begin the process of establishing a richer herbaceous plant community in portions of the property that were in agriculture 60 years ago. The area was subsequently reforested through the establishment of pine plantations and the arrival of other trees not native to our area. We will be selectively removing non-native trees to allow the natives to grow faster and increase in abundance. The introduction of an array of wildflowers typical to the moraine forest – trilliums, Jack-in-the-pulpit, etc. – is also planned. The nearly closed canopy of buttonbush in a wetland area will be removed to promote shrub-swamp and sedge meadow habitats.

We will be hosting several volunteer workdays this spring in support of these projects.

New Information Kiosks and Interpretive Trail Markers

New signs have been installed at the three parking areas at Ambler Flatwoods, and new informational kiosks will soon be erected at the trailheads. Interpretive signs will also be placed along the trail system. The colorful new signage was funded by a 2012 grant from the Michigan City Community Enrichment Corporation, which also covered the cost of demolishing some dilapidated structures at Ambler and installing a new parking area and guardrails.

This work is part of a larger effort to encourage public access to our nature preserves and enhance the educational aspect of our trail system. New signs were installed in 2012 at Cressmoor Prairie, and the process of doing so at Bur Oak Woods is also underway. The project will extend to other properties soon.

Gary Vacates Rights-of-Way at Ivanhoe South

The Common Council of the City of Gary adopted an ordinance in September 2012 that vacates unimproved streets and alleyways at our Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve. The action makes it possible for us to undertake major restoration work at the site, including a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project. SHLT owns 30 acres of rare dune-and-swale landscape at Ivanhoe South. We have been acquiring individual platted lots there through donation and tax sale for the past twenty years.

Grant Supports Additional Public Access Improvements at Ambler Flatwoods

The Michigan City Community Enrichment Corporation has awarded a 2013 grant of $10,000 for additional improvements at Ambler Flatwoods. Projects planned for this funding include a 30-foot walk bridge over the stream on the northern parcel, a large sign for the corner of Tryon Road and Highway 212, several more interpretive panels to complete the self-guided trail, and a new trail loop near the Meer Road parking lot. The new bridge will be dedicated in memory of John Newgent; it will be designed by his long-time friend and co-worker, James Kirk.
Come dine and celebrate “Preserving Nature’s Gems in Northwest Indiana,” Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s 10th Annual Spring Benefit. Our party will be held at Sand Creek Country Club in Chesterton, Indiana, on Saturday, June 8, 2013, at 5:30 p.m.

Discover Natural Gems in Our Community’s Backyard – Learn about four significant Shirley Heinze Preserves benefiting communities in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties: Ivanhoe South, Ambler Flatwoods, the Little Calumet project area, and Meadowbrook.

Wine & Dine – The evening will begin with a “Champagne Greeting” followed by an elaborate Hors d’Oeuvres Reception offering hot and cold appetizers, chef-attended carving and pasta stations, dessert with pastry towers and chocolate fountain, beer, wine, and cash bar. This year we are hosting a new style of party. We will have an elegant buffet dinner and plenty of unreserved seating throughout the club. This will make it possible to accommodate more guests who will learn about and support the work of Shirley Heinze.

The Evening’s Attractions – Both silent and live auctions will be featured, including exciting getaway packages to Austin and San Diego. We will be offering again this year the popular “Mystery Dinner,” as well as an Antique Car Tour and Picnic. Our Benefit would not be complete without a program to celebrate our work and Funding the Cause to support exciting developments at four Shirley Heinze preserves.

Reservations – Please make prompt reservations and consider sponsoring our benefit by going online to www.heinzetrust.org or by sending in the form at the bottom of the page. RSVP no later than May 15. Please note on the response form that there are seating accommodations available for guests with special needs. Students and young professionals may contact the office for discounted ticket prices.

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Volunteer news...

Volunteers continue to play a vital role in the Shirley Heinz Land Trust stewardship program. Education & Volunteer Manager Jim Erdelac reports that 108 individuals donated 763 volunteer hours on 14 SHLT properties during 2012. Most participated in our monthly volunteer workdays. Others undertook individual projects, and some performed a variety of tasks while serving as site stewards.

Volunteer of the Year honors were announced at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in December. The award for 2012 went to Pam Thompson and Mike Koscielniak, a retired couple from Duneland Beach. Pam and Mike have been volunteering for SHLT for three years. They are the designated site stewards for a 200-acre portion of Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve. They act as our eyes and ears on the property, walking the trails regularly, doing minor repairs and cleanup, reporting vandalism and other inappropriate human activity. Pam and Mike also monitor frog populations at the site as participants in the annual frog call survey.

Wish List

We are seeking new tools or cash donations to purchase replacements for those lost to theft last year. Please consider helping us acquire the following items:

- 3/8” drive socket set with ratchet adjustable (“crescent”) wrenches
- Allen wrenches (“hex keys”)
- Torx wrenches
- Screwdrivers
- Channel-lock pliers
- Needle-nose pliers
- Regular pliers
- Vise-grip pliers
- Claw hammer
- Drill bits

Contributions to Shirley Heinze Land Trust are tax deductible. Call us at (219) 242-8558

2013 Volunteer Work Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Beverly Shores</td>
<td>Trail Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>Ambler Flatwoods</td>
<td>Arbor Day Tree Planting</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Hildebrand Lake</td>
<td>Planting Native Species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>Ambler Flatwoods</td>
<td>Bridge or other task</td>
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<td>August 10</td>
<td>Meadowbrook</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Ambler Flatwoods</td>
<td>Trail Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Firebreak Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Seidner Dune &amp; Swale</td>
<td>Savanna Restoration</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Beverly Shores</td>
<td>Trail Work</td>
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</table>

Contact Jim at 219-242-8558, or check our website www.heinzetrust.org for details & directions. All event times are from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (CT), unless otherwise stated, and all events are open to any and all volunteers.

Mighty Acorns update...

The Mighty Acorns environmental education program was introduced to elementary school children at the Discovery Charter School for the fall 2012 term. The program, a joint initiative with the Field Museum and the Dunes Learning center, continues its run among fourth- and fifth-graders in the Hobart and Portage Schools. A total of forty-nine classes, totaling 1,301 students, participated during the 2012-13 calendar year. The expansion of the program was funded in part by a $10,000 grant from the Legacy Foundation of Lake County.

A new feature last year was a special veteran teacher workshop conducted by Field Museum entomologist Jim Louderman. His presentation provided teachers with the skills to identify and collect the common insects which make up a majority of the non-plant organisms typically encountered on field study trips.
The Board of Directors has elected a new slate of officers for 2013.

- President – **Margaret Williford**
- Vice President – **Pat McKinlay**
- Secretary – **Anne Walsh**
- Treasurer – **Lance Werner**

We welcome the following new members, who began service on the Board of Directors in January 2013.

- **Jennifer Burkhart** owns a small business and was formerly President of the Field Station Cooperative Pre-school in Porter. She is a resident of Ogden Dunes.
- **Kelly Carmichael** is Director of Environmental Policy and Permitting for NiSource and a founder of the NIPSCO Environmental Action Team. He lives in Crown Point.
- **Jonathan Hildebrand** is a commercial lender for Centier Bank and is active in a wide variety of community activities in Porter County. He resides in Valparaiso.
- **John Swanson** recently retired as Executive Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. He is a resident of Beverly Shores.

We say farewell to the following members, who have completed their terms on the board. We are pleased that all of the retiring directors will remain active with the organization as members of the Advisory Council and various standing committees.

- **Dale Engquist** served two three-year terms. He was President of the Board of Directors, 2010-2012, and served as Vice President, 2008-2009. He was chair of the Land Strategy Committee.
- **Sara Leonard** served from 2007 to 2012. She was a member of the Fundraising, Budget & Finance, Land Strategy, and Board Development Committees.
- **Dan Plath** served two terms on the board. He was Vice President in 2010 and was chair of the Education & Outreach Committee.
- **Ray Szarmach** served two terms on the board. He was a member of the Fundraising Committee and an advisor on legal and legislative issues.

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**Volunteers Help Us Prepare Our New Home**

![Volunteers painting](image1.jpg)

![Volunteers painting](image2.jpg)

![Volunteers painting](image3.jpg)

![Volunteers painting](image4.jpg)

![Volunteers painting](image5.jpg)

![Volunteers painting](image6.jpg)
The Cuban Connection

Peg Mohar, co-chair of Friends of Shirley Heinze (FOSH), spoke to the Cuban Botanic Society in Havana, Cuba, on January 19. She was there on a "people-to-people" tour sponsored by the Pacific Horticulture Society.

Peg's presentation focused on the conservation work of not-for-profit land trusts in the United States. She discussed Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s land acquisition, stewardship, and education programs, illustrating her address with photos from our properties.

“The Cubans were particularly interested in the FOSH native landscaping award program, ‘Bringing Nature Home,’” Peg reports. The initiative recognizes gardeners and landscapers in Northwest Indiana who use native species in their plantings, thereby encouraging the return of natural ecosystems to a damaged landscape.

“The Cubans told us that over 20 percent of Cuba is protected land, but they are also experiencing a lack of awareness about the importance of native plants. Half their native species are threatened, and there is a movement to protect them,” Peg continues. “They requested information about ‘Bringing Nature Home’ to help them create something similar in Cuba.”
It’s good to have friends

Purchasing the retired Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp was a major achievement. It advances all aspects of our mission and fulfills a goal to secure more suitable office and stewardship space for our growing operations. Upon taking ownership on January 25, we set out to transform a vacant house into our new offices by March 1.

There was a lot of work to do, and little time to do it. Upgrading heating and air conditioning. Refurbishing bathrooms and kitchen. New electrical fixtures and computer lines. Insulation and painting. Ceiling and floor repairs. Staff pitched right in, adding construction and renovation to their job descriptions, while still fulfilling day-to-day responsibilities. And they brought their families along, too! The Board of Directors established a Building and Grounds Committee that brought fresh ideas, outside talent, donations, and free labor into the mix. But we still needed more.

Our regular corps of volunteers exchanged their outdoor tools for paintbrushes and rollers. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 531 sent a volunteer team. NIPSCO’s Environmental Action Team and the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association offered enthusiastic workers. The Plath Family – Dan, Vicky, Gene, Dorothea, Jamey – lent their expertise and skills. Doelling Decorating Center and Cosgrove Construction donated free paint. Others brought food to feed the volunteers. Local newspapers sent reporters and photographers; their generous coverage attracted still more volunteers.

Red Stone was one of them. He showed up with a track-mounted Bobcat to spread gravel for the drive and get the floor of the stewardship barn up to grade. He saved us weeks of work! Nearby residents offered their help. Carrie Cool came almost every day for two weeks to paint, clean, and unpack. Mike Nieckula dropped by to tell us how much he has enjoyed walking Meadowbrook over the years. Now he’s here several days a week, offering his terrific handyman skills to tackle odd jobs. Mike’s even made twenty bluebird boxes to be used on the preserve.

That old vacant house is now the Meadowbrook Conservation Center, a new hub for land conservation and stewardship in Northwest Indiana. Wildlife Habitat Council and the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association will also be based here.

I’ve had the pleasure of being a part of some very special achievements over the past eight years. This one was a little surreal at times, but the end result is something that makes us all proud. Thank you for making it happen and for your commitment to Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

Sincerely,

Kris Krouse