We had a vision when we moved to the former Meadowbrook Girl Scout Camp in early 2013. This great facility wasn’t going to be just the new headquarters of Shirley Heinze Land Trust. Nor was it just another seventy-four-acre addition to our holdings of natural land. We wanted Meadowbrook to be more than that. We wanted it to be an asset for the communities we serve, for those organizations that share our principles, and for the public in general. Located at the very heart of Northwest Indiana, Meadowbrook seemed ideally suited to serve as a hub for conservation and environmental education activities in our region.

One year into our residency here, we are well on our way to making that dream come true. From the very beginning, we have made rental space available to other non-profits. The Wildlife Habitat Council has located its Chicago Region Headquarters at Meadowbrook. The Northwest Indiana Paddling Association is here, too.

The list of other organizations using the facility for meetings, outings, or training exercises is long: Indiana Land Protection Alliance, Calumet Stewardship Initiative, Porter County 4-H Clubs, Moraine Forest Conservation Planning Project, Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society, Porter County Master Gardeners. The Girl Scouts are back – they’ve performed trail maintenance and restored a butterfly garden. The Friends of Shirley Heinze have installed a native-plant demonstration garden near the front entrance. Meadowbrook has become an outdoor learning laboratory for people of all ages. It’s the administrative headquarters for the Northwest Indiana Mighty Acorns, an educational program for elementary school kids. Students from Valparaiso University conducted water quality sampling here, as part of a Lake Michigan tributary headwaters monitoring project. Others monitored deer browse intensity. A number of college undergrads honed their restoration skills here as paid summer interns under the Great Lakes Innovative Stewardship through Education Network. Ivy Tech students volunteered their time to work on invasive plant species removal.

When the federal government shutdown made the cabins at the Dunes Learning Center inaccessible, we were in a position to make Meadowbrook available as an alternative. Dozens of volunteers, including many furloughed federal workers, descended on Meadowbrook to prepare the former Girl Scout lodging cabins to accept campers. As a result, the students from Munster’s Frank Hammond Elementary School, who had been scheduled to camp at the Learning Center, were not denied their long-awaited nature study experience.

The grounds at Meadowbrook are open every day from dawn to dusk for passive activities like hiking, birding, nature study, and photography. The ravine at Meadowbrook is our proudest natural feature. It hosts a spectacular wildflower display in the spring. Why don’t you come have a look? If your visit coincides with office hours, stop by the headquarters building and pick up a trail map. We want you to enjoy Meadowbrook as much as we do.

Marsh marigolds bloom in April at Meadowbrook.
Nancy Johnson
Promoting A Sense of Community

Nancy Johnson is a good judge of the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. She worked with and for nonprofits for more than thirty years, the last eleven as President of the Legacy Foundation, Lake County’s community foundation. Now retired, the respected philanthropic professional, is lending her expertise to Shirley Heinze Land Trust as a volunteer committee member and an advisor on fundraising issues.

Nancy developed a love for the natural beauty of Northwest Indiana even before she and her husband Allen moved here. “I grew up in Indianapolis,” she recalls, “but we took family vacations on Lake Michigan. When Allen and I were newlyweds, we decided to settle near the lake that I remembered so fondly from my childhood.” The couple raised their two daughters in the lakeshore community of Ogden Dunes, a place they still call home. Another notable resident of the little town was Shirley Heinze, who Nancy knew slightly.

“I’m a former runner and still enjoy hiking, bicycling, and cross country skiing. It’s been great having the National Lakeshore next door. We’ve learned a lot about the biodiversity of this area. The Dunes are a very important part of the lifestyle we’ve chosen.”

Nancy first worked with Shirley Heinze Land Trust when it set up an endowment fund with the Legacy Foundation. The relationship grew when Kris Krouse became executive director nine years ago. “He reached out to Legacy,” she says. “I really enjoyed his vision and his work ethic. It was clear that Shirley Heinze was an organization on the verge of great things.”

“I was pretty inexperienced when I first took this job,” Kris remembers. “I relied on the advice of mentors like Nancy Johnson who generously offered guidance. It’s really great that now, even in retirement, she’s still willing to give her time to help us develop capacity and attain our goals.”

Giving back to the community has always been part of Nancy’s life. Her father was also the director of a charitable foundation, and she’s trying to instill in her grandchildren similar convictions. Last fall she accompanied her granddaughter’s girl scout troop on a hike at Meadowbrook Preserve, an early lesson for the youngster about community service.

“What Shirley Heinze has to offer is all about quality of life,” Nancy says. “It’s about finding a balance between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. It’s about building a community that serves its residents’ needs and attracts others to come here. Shirley Heinze Land Trust, by preserving natural land and educating youth, is making our area a better place to live.”

Join the Legacy Circle

There is no better or more painless way to demonstrate your support for the work of Shirley Heinze Land Trust than by including us in your estate plan.

- Make a charitable bequest in your will. This can be a fixed dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or specific designated property, such as real estate or securities.
- Designate SHLT as beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), or other retirement plan.
- Name SHLT as beneficiary of your insurance policy.

Consult with your financial planner or legal advisor to determine what option works best for you, and join the Legacy Circle now. (You can indicate your intention by checking the Legacy Circle box on the enclosed envelope.)
**News from the Field**

**Good News on the Grand Calumet River**

A multi-year sediment remediation project is now underway on the Grand Calumet River. Work began in 2013 on the portion of the river that borders SHLT’s Seidner Dune & Swale Nature Preserve. The cleanup project is authorized by the Great Lakes Legacy Act and is being jointly managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Contractors completed hydraulic dredging of the river channel during summer 2013 and will spend the next two winters excavating contaminated sediment from the floodplain marsh at Seidner Preserve. The floodplain, which is currently overgrown with hybrid cattail and invasive Phragmites, will ultimately be restored to a complex of emergent marsh and wet prairie with open water and islands that will provide waterfowl habitat.

The soon-to-be-restored area represents nearly half of our 43-acre preserve. The cleanup is a real boon for SHLT; we would never have had the capacity to tackle the massive project on our own. Adjacent infested floodplain owned by other entities is also being restored. Long-term management plans for the river corridor are being developed by several partners, including SHLT, in order to maintain the improvements to the ecological quality that the sediment remediation project will provide.

The Grand Calumet River, which runs through one of the most heavily industrialized areas in the nation, has long been a health hazard and eyesore for our region. For much of the 20th century, it was a virtual open sewer. Its waters were empty of aquatic wildlife. The river’s sediment contains elevated levels of heavy metals, PCBs, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and pesticides such as DDT. Hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of that contaminated sediment have already been removed from the river under this project.

The Grand Calumet cleanup is a real good-news story for Northwest Indiana and the people who live here.

**Joining Forces to Tackle Invasive Plant Species**

Shirley Heinze Land Trust is a partner in the Indiana Coastal Cooperative Weed Management Area (ICCWMA). Formally organized in 2009, the group is a collaboration of state, federal, and local government entities with local non-profit conservation organizations and businesses. Its mission is “to strategically protect biodiversity and natural communities from the threats presented by invasive plants within the Lake Michigan Coastal Zone in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties.”

The cooperation is especially important here, because our natural areas are rich in biodiversity but highly fragmented, making them especially vulnerable to invasives. The ICCWMA allows its partners to share and leverage their resources, and it provides an early detection and rapid response network for new threats as they arise. Partners work together on weed control projects and reach out to engage non-traditional partners and private landowners.

**Ivanhoe South Restoration Project Underway**

Work has begun at Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve on a Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration project authorized by an agreement between SHLT and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the project’s initial phase, debris is being cleared and trees identified for removal. The long-term goal of the project is to restore the structure, function, and dynamic processes of the degraded oak savanna and wetlands ecosystems at this dune-and-swale site.

A key objective is to restore habitat for the Karner blue butterfly (KBB), an insect included on the federal list of endangered species. Populations of wild lupine, the sole host plant for larvae of KBB, will be increased through the installation of plugs and seeds. The diversity of wildflowers that are nectar sources for adult butterflies (sunflowers, blazing star, wild bergamot, coreopsis, goat’s rue, and many others) will also be enhanced. The canopy at the site will be modified to create the mosaic of full–to part-sun areas that is optimal habitat for KBB.

**Monitoring and Sharing Restoration Information**

We are a cooperating partner in the Northwest Indiana Restoration Monitoring Inventory (NIRMI) program initiated by Indiana University Northwest. NIRMI provides long-term monitoring of ecological restorations in the greater Calumet Region of Northwest Indiana, northeast Illinois, and southwest Michigan. The group trains university students to collect data on a variety of parameters, such as plant and fungi abundance and diversity and soil chemistry. The information is then input into a database which is available online to researchers and land managers. NIRMI is currently monitoring nine SHLT nature preserves and expects to add more in the coming years. We look forward to the valuable information this program will provide to our ongoing stewardship efforts.
Come dine and celebrate our *Season for Growing*, Shirley Heinze Land Trust's 11th Annual Spring Benefit. Our event will be held on Saturday, May 31 at 5:30 p.m. at Sand Creek Country Club in Chesterton, Indiana.

Please be a part of this special evening of celebration that will fund our *Season for Growing* through:

**Preservation** - acquisition of acreage at our three main project areas that are considered outstanding, even unique in character: Ambler Flatwoods, Meadowbrook, and the Little Calumet Wetlands

**Restoration** - large-scale reforestation of the moraine forest at Meadowbrook, a property that includes wetlands, ravines, open spaces, and a stream in the Salt Creek Watershed

**Education** – continued growth of the Mighty Acorns program

The evening will begin with a champagne reception, including a variety of hors d'oeuvres, followed by an elegant sit-down dinner. Beer and wine will be served, and a cash bar will be available.

Both live and silent auctions will be featured, including two exciting South African Photo Safari trips for two and our ever-popular "Mystery Dinner." Watch for more details soon!

Prompt reservations are encouraged as tables fill quickly and we have limited seating. Individual tickets and sponsorships may be purchased on our website [www.heinzetrust.org](http://www.heinzetrust.org). Please RSVP no later than May 9, 2014.

We look forward to seeing you there!

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**TICKET OPTIONS**

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**PAYMENT INFORMATION**

Total Amount Enclosed $ ______________

☐ Enclosed is my check payable to Shirley Heinze Land Trust

☐ Please charge my:  ☐ DISC  ☐ VISA  ☐ MC  ☐ AMEX

Card Number ____________________________ Exp. Date ____________________________

Cardholder Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City ____________________________ State _____ Zip ______________

Email ____________________________

Phone No. ____________________________

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**Menu Options**

- **Atlantic Salmon** with spring vegetable couscous and topped with a sweet corn-tomato relish.
- **Filet Mignon** grilled medium and served with mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetables and a woodland mushroom demi-glace.
- **Grilled Vegetable Raviolis** with a roasted red pepper cream sauce and shaved parmesan. (Vegan would have no cheese)

Please contact Bonnie Hawksworth at bhawksworth@heinzetrust.org or 219-242-8558 with guest names and menu choices by April 1, 2014.

**RSVP online at** [www.heinzetrust.org](http://www.heinzetrust.org) **,** or return this form with payment to:

**Shirley Heinze Land Trust**

109 West 700 North

Valparaiso, IN 46385

Please RSVP by May 9, 2014
2013 was a Record Year for Volunteers

Last year was one for the record books! We recorded 1,089 volunteer hours on SHLT nature preserves, far exceeding the previous high.

Volunteers accomplished a tremendous amount of work at our regular monthly workdays. They did canopy thinning and exotics control. They planted native herbaceous plants and trees. They cleared fire breaks, blazed new trails, and installed a bridge.

Our move to Meadowbrook generated a great response from volunteers; they renovated the facilities inside and out. Special thanks to Mike Nieckula, Dan Plath and family, Gene and Dorothea Plath and family, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. SHLT staff members, board members, and their families also went above and beyond the call of duty to get our new home ready for occupancy.

The Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society conducted a plant inventory. Boy Scouts constructed bridges. Girl Scouts maintained a butterfly garden and trails. Friends of Shirley Heinze installed a native plant garden. Cub Scouts picked up trash. Volunteers monitored frogs at several sites. Many thanks to you all!

Want to Become a Volunteer?

If you’d like to get out of the house and do some field work for Shirley Heinze Land Trust, we’d be happy to have your help. A volunteer workday is scheduled one Saturday a month (typically 10am-3pm, CST) at one of our nature preserves. You don’t need any special skills; we’ll provide equipment and training. We can also arrange individual volunteer opportunities to suit your schedule. You’ll receive regular notification of volunteer workdays by email. For information, call 219-242-8558 or visit www.heinzetrust.org.

“Bluebird Man” is 2013 Volunteer of the Year

Soon after we moved to Meadowbrook, we met Mike Nieckula. He asked permission to erect bluebird boxes on the property. We readily agreed, and Mike built and installed a dozen boxes last year. By Mike’s count, seventy-eight bluebird eggs were laid, of which sixty-nine fledged. A few boxes produced as many as three broods over the course of the summer.

Mike’s talents go far beyond his interest in birds. He’s also an extraordinary handyman, and he lent us those skills as well. He painted the exterior of the main building practically by himself. Mike also installed drywall and did interior painting and plumbing. He turned the rundown Deer Meadow Cabin into a facility worthy of hosting outreach events. He helped with sign construction and equipment maintenance.

“Mike Nieckula is a one-in-a-million find,” says Volunteer Manager Jim Erdelac. “Hardly a week goes by when we don’t call on him for some kind of help. His skills are exceeded only by the enthusiasm with which he offers them.”

For all these reasons, Mike Nieckula was named SHLT Volunteer of the Year for 2013. So how is Mike going to top his first year working with us? “I’ve got plans to install three owl boxes this year,” he says. “And some smaller boxes for chickadees and titmice – maybe a new bird feeder station.”

We’re happy to have this dedicated volunteer working with us. Thank you, Mike, for all that you do!

Mighty Acorns Program Continues to Grow

The Mighty Acorns program was developed in 1993 by the Chicago Wilderness consortium. Its aim is to connect urban youth with nature through direct involvement in stewardship activities in local natural areas. The program has been implemented in schools throughout the Chicago region.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust became involved in the program in 2009, in a partnership with Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History and the Dunes Learning Center (DLC). In less than five years, the Northwest Indiana Mighty Acorns program has grown to become the largest in the Chicago area.

During the fall 2013 cycle, more than 1,600 4th- through 6th-graders in the Hobart and Portage public schools and at Discovery Charter School in Porter participated in Mighty Acorns activities. Pilot programs were also initiated at the Charter School of the Dunes in Gary and the East Chicago public schools. To bolster the program, the Legacy Foundation of Lake County generously awarded a 2013 grant to SHLT and DLC.

Students from Charter School of the Dunes enjoy a Mighty Acorns field trip.
Bonnie Hawksworth joined our staff as Development Coordinator in November 2013. She brings a wealth of experience in communications and fundraising, talents that are already being put to good use as we gear up for our annual spring benefit and look forward to upgrading our fundraising program.

Bonnie is a native of the south suburbs of Chicago. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Indiana University with a joint major in communications and psychology. After completing her education, she returned to Chicago and worked for several years at a media production company. It was there that she met her husband Richard. The couple settled in the Lincoln Park section of the city.

The Hawksworths took frequent vacations to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. “We began looking for places where we might settle down and raise our family,” Bonnie recalls. “My grandmother used to live in Dune Acres, and I had fond memories of times spent there.” The quiet beauty of the Indiana Dunes attracted them to the little lakeside town, and they moved there in 2005.

Rich operates a media production company out of their home. He’s also a member of the Dune Acres Town Council. The couple has two sons: Riley, 9, and Kaden, 7.

In addition to helping Rich with the family business, Bonnie volunteered as fundraising chair at the Field Station Cooperative, a nature-based preschool located within the boundaries of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Jeny Burkhart, a member of the SHLT Board of Directors, was also affiliated with the school.

“I’ve been very impressed with how friendly and welcoming everyone here has been to me,” Bonnie says. “Working at Shirley Heinze is a great opportunity for me to employ my professional skills and background to contribute to the community that I now call home.”

Barbara Spies Labus is our new Operations Coordinator. Barb is no stranger to Shirley Heinze Land Trust. We first got to know her in 2011 when we asked her to design an artwork to celebrate our thirtieth anniversary. Her extraordinary work was published as part of the popular South Shore series of posters. For the last two years, Barb has also volunteered her talents on behalf of our annual spring fundraising gala.

Barb was born and raised in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She earned a bachelor’s degree in printmaking from Western Michigan University and a master’s in painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. After completing her formal education, she worked for twenty-two years making lithographic prints by hand at an art studio in Chicago.

Barb met Paul Labus when they were both graduate students at the Art Institute. They married and settled in Chicago, where they produced their only child, a daughter named Annie. A year and a half after Annie’s birth, they moved to Whiting to be near Paul’s family. Barb put aside art to focus on being a mother.

In the meantime, Paul, who had had a longtime interest in the environment, began doing volunteer work for The Nature Conservancy. That soon evolved into a paying job. Paul now has twenty years of service with TNC, currently serving as region director for Northwest Indiana.

Once Annie went off to college (she’s now doing graduate work at Loyola University of Chicago), Barb returned to her art, with an emphasis on illustration and graphic design. She has now produced six South Shore posters and four posters on the ecosystems of Indiana for the DNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program. She’s also worked as an adjunct professor in the Computer Graphics Department at Purdue University Calumet.

“I first learned about Shirley Heinze from my husband, who has worked closely with them on land conservation projects for years,” Barb says. “Living amidst all the industry in Whiting really helps to bring into focus the importance of protecting natural land. I’m really happy to be working for an organization like this.”

Mark your calendars:

- **Sat, Apr 12**: Friends of Indiana Dunes Native Plant Sale at Dunes State Park
- **Sat, Apr 19**: Northwest Indiana Earth Day Celebration at Porter County Expo Center
- **Sat, May 31**: 11th Annual SHLT Spring Benefit at Sand Creek Country Club
- **Sat, Jun 7**: Community Hike at Barker Woods
- **Sat, Jun 21**: DNR Field Days Hike at Ambler Flatwoods
- **Sat, Aug 23**: Bus Tour of SHLT Preserves
- **Sep 18-20**: Land Trust Alliance National Rally at Providence, RI
- **Sat, Sep 27**: DNR Field Days Hike at Seidner Dune & Swale
- **Sat, Oct 4**: Donor Appreciation Hike & Luncheon at Meadowbrook
- **Sat, Oct 18**: Calumet Outdoor Series Hike at Greiner Preserve
- **Sat, Dec 13**: Calumet Outdoor Series Hike at Meadowbrook
2013 Bringing Nature Home Awards

The 3rd annual Bringing Nature Home (BNH) awards were presented last year by the Friends of Shirley Heinze to recognize local gardeners and institutions who incorporate native plants in their landscaping.

The program was inspired by Dr. Douglas Tallamy’s book of the same name. Tallamy’s research shows that native plants are essential for the survival of native insects, which are, in turn, essential for healthy ecosystems. Native oak trees support more than 500 species of moths and butterflies, whereas an exotic ornamental tree is typically shunned by native insects. Caterpillars are an essential food source for native bird species. Wildflowers like asters and goldenrods also host many native insects, and milkweeds are essential to the survival of the monarch butterfly, a species currently in alarming decline.

2013 BNH Award Winners

Individuals
Linda Alessi, Valparaiso
Fred & Leslie Bamesburger, Valparaiso
Lydia Miramontes Loyd, Michigan City
Larry & Joan Murphy, Chesterton
Pat Reynolds, Valparaiso
Carole Stodder, Pines

Organizations
Friends of Robinson Lake, Hobart
Indiana Department of Transportation, LaPorte Region
Lake County MS4 Storm Water District, Crown Point
City of Valparaiso Parks & Recreation Department
Nathan Hale Elementary School, Whiting

Officers & New Directors Named

The Board of Directors has re-elected the following slate of officers for 2014.

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

We welcome the following new members, who began service on the Board of Directors in January 2014.

Peter Bomberger maintained a law practice in Lake County for 45 years and was President of the Indiana State Bar Association. He lives in Dune Acres.
Terence Bonace is an environmental scientist for the EPA and a former SHLT board member (2003-09). He has homes in Chicago and Beverly Shores.
Dale Engquist was Superintendent of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and President of SHLT (2010-12). He resides in Michigan City.
Lance Hodge has held executive positions in government and private enterprise. He teaches environmental science at Indiana University and lives in Valparaiso.
Michael Sawyier is a practicing attorney and a director and general counsel for Frontline Foundations, a substance abuse service center. He lives in Chesterton.
Carl Stimson is a U.S. Air Force veteran and current employee of the EPA in Chicago. He has homes in Chicago and Michigan City.
Suzy Vance is a lawyer, life coach, and core connector. She lives in Beverly Shores.

We say farewell to the following members, who have completed their terms on the board.

Marty Balogh served two three-year terms. He was chair of the Board Development Committee and active on the Fundraising Committee.
Steven Cohen served two three-year terms. He was chair of the Land Strategy and Building & Grounds Committees.
Kathy Dennis served two terms on the board. She was Secretary (2009-11), chair of the Fundraising Committee, and a member of the Communications Committee.
Tim Griffin served two terms on the board. He was Treasurer (2009-11) and chair of the Budget & Finance Committee.
Ralph Lerner served two three-year terms. He was on the Land Strategy, Stewardship, and Education & Outreach Committees.

Gary Mayor Headlines Annual Luncheon

Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson was the keynote speaker at the SHLT annual community luncheon in November 2013. The Mayor, who has been supportive of our efforts to knit together the parcels of land that make up Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve, spoke of the value of the preserve for the people of the City of Gary. “It has been our pleasure to work with Shirley Heinze Land Trust in moving the Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve project forward,” she said. “The transformation of this property will add another element of beauty to our city while preserving the existence of a variety of species and plant life.”
Get Outside and Enjoy!

It’s been an exceptionally brutal winter this year, and we’ve all suffered from cabin fever. My wife Heidi, who’s a teacher, and my kids – Jak, 12, and Abby, 9 – have spent far too many days cooped up in the house due to school closures. With a wind chill at 20 below, it was just too dangerous for any outside activity. I was the lucky one in the family, at least I could escape to the office after the roads had been cleared.

By the time you read this, the weather will have improved. But after what we’ve been through, we’re all ready to get outdoors and enjoy nature this spring. It’s time to put away those electronic devices, lace up your hiking boots, and start exploring the wealth of natural areas we have in our region.

For starters, why not sign up for a Shirley Heinze hike? This is the 30th year we’ve been offering scientist-led nature walks at outstanding natural areas. (See the enclosed brochure.) If you’d rather explore on your own, we have well-marked trail systems with interpretive signage at many of our nature preserves. You can participate in one of our monthly volunteer workdays to learn about restoration, stretch your muscles, and enjoy nature. The DNR Field Day hikes and the Calumet Outdoor Series will also have events in our area this year. Watch your inbox, the SHLT website, and the local press for announcements.

Consider making 2014 the year you finally take full advantage of the natural wonders on our doorstep. Climb “hawk hill” at the west edge of Dunes State Park to watch the migration of raptors in April. Check out the spectacular May wildflower displays at Bluhm County Park or the Heron Rookery. Watch the woodcock courtship ritual on the Calumet Trail, or observe snapping turtles nesting at Cowles Bog. Pull that old Schwinn out of the garage and pedal down an area bike path. Put your kayak into Trail Creek or the Little Cal.

And when you venture out, don’t forget to bring along your children, or your grandchildren, or the kids down the street! The future’s all about them. We need to nurture in them a love and understanding of the natural world. We saw the harsh face of nature this winter, but now it’s time to delight in her gentler side. Let’s show Old Man Winter that he can’t keep us down!

Sincerely,

Kris Krouse