



# Landline

[www.wrlandconservancy.org](http://www.wrlandconservancy.org)

Fall 2018

## Red Brook Metropark created

At the former Harbor Golf Course in Ashtabula County, the clang of an iron hitting a golf ball has officially faded away from the fairway. Taking its place will be the whistles of Cedar Waxwings, and the drumming of Red-Headed Woodpeckers.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy recently partnered with Ashtabula County Metroparks to acquire and conserve 118 acres of the former golf course in order to create Red Brook Metropark, a new public park.

“This is a great example of how Western Reserve Land Conservancy partners with local communities and leverages our expertise to fund and create public parks and preserves,” explained Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern field operations for the Land Conservancy.

The Land Conservancy acquired the property in late December 2017 and secured critical funds on behalf of Ashtabula County Metroparks for the permanent conservation of the property,

(continued on page 3)



## Elk Run Preserve created in Columbiana County

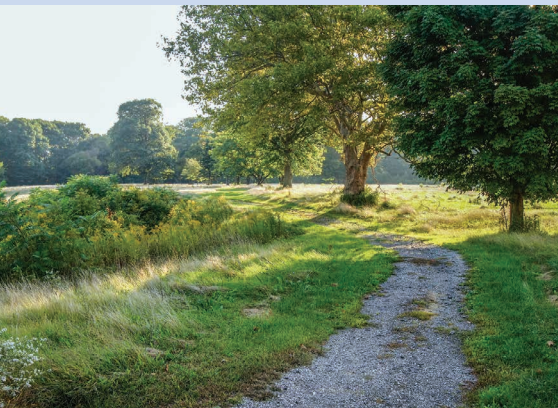
A new 91-acre nature preserve has been created in Fairfield Township thanks to the vision of individual landowners and the work of Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

“The vision for this project began with landowner Arthur Ziegler, who reached out to the Land Conservancy in 2014 to discuss conservation options for this area,” said Kendrick Chittock, project manager for Western Reserve Land Conservancy. “Mr. Ziegler was not content with only conserving his land. He recruited his conservation-minded neighbors, Susi Thompson, the family of the late Alexander Shashaty and the late Belden Ham, to be a part of the project.”

In addition to the 17 acres made available by Ziegler, the Shashaty family added 31.5 acres, Ham added 31.1 acres, and Thompson added 11.3 acres to create the new preserve.

Elk Run Preserve contains several diverse habitat areas including upland forest, old field, wetlands, and floodplains. Elk Run Preserve contains nearly one mile of Elk Run, a tributary of Little Beaver Creek which is a state-designated Wild and Scenic River and a nationally-recognized Scenic River. Notably, the property’s location in the upper Little Beaver Creek Watershed is home to critical habitat

(continued on page 2)





## Elk Run (from page 1)

for several rare species including the endangered Eastern Hellbender, the largest salamander in North America. The creation of Elk Run Preserve helps preserve exceptional water quality in the tributary streams that feed into Little Beaver Creek, protecting Hellbender habitat.

The Land Conservancy secured funding for the project through individual donations as well as a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund grant. The project also includes a \$20,000 restoration of the floodplain area that will remove invasive species, such as reed canary grass, and replace them with native riparian plant species.

The Land Conservancy will manage the property as a passive park and nature preserve, working with the local community to provide nature walks and make Elk Run Preserve available to local schools for study.

“Arthur Ziegler is a champion for our work,” explained Chittock. “We are extremely grateful to work with him and plan to explore additional conservation opportunities in the area.” 🌻



## Picturesque Geauga County property conserved

Scenic vistas. Towering hardwoods. Pristine creek frontage.

These picturesque features have been conserved in perpetuity with the support of Western Reserve Land Conservancy and landowner Neil Johnson. Johnson recently donated a conservation easement on his family’s 91-acre Geauga County property located in Chardon Township.

The property was originally purchased by Johnson’s father in 1947. The property sat idle for more than a decade, unfortunately abandoned during the Great Depression. Johnson’s father, an avid apiarist, purchased the farm in part because of the wildflowers located in the overgrown pasture areas along the floodplain of the Big Creek corridor. The property had great potential for season-long honey production for his bees. In 1990, Johnson inherited 91 acres of the property.

“Like his father, Neil Johnson has respectfully stewarded the land,” said Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern field operations for the Land Conservancy. Today, the property is almost entirely forested except for a 2.3-acre agricultural field which is currently leased as pasture land to New Creation Farm, a family-run producer of locally-raised meat. Johnson utilizes the remainder of the property as a working forest, selectively timbering and ensuring proper forest growth. Rodstrom explained, “The forest was most recently selectively cut in 2016, however because of Mr. Johnson’s attention to detail, it doesn’t bear the scars of normal timbering.”

In addition to its lush flora, the property boasts 1.4 miles of streams including more than a half-mile of frontage on both sides of Big Creek which is a state-designated Warm Water Habitat



*Neil Johnson on his Geauga County property.*

tributary of the Grand River. The property is also adjacent to Geauga Park District’s 216-acre Whitlam Woods and only 900 feet from Geauga Park District’s 650-acre Big Creek Park. 🌻



## Red Brook (from page 1)

including funding from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant, a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund grant, and generous donations from individuals.

The Saybrook Township property sits just 700 feet south of Lake Erie and boasts approximately 1.5 miles of the Red Brook tributary, and is within walking distance of hundreds of homes in the area.

Importantly, Red Brook Metropark will provide walk-in access to nearby-residents and visitors with a much-needed passive recreational space within close proximity to the Lake Erie shoreline. Visitors will be able to partake in fishing, hiking, and cross-country skiing. With existing paved trails, prime steelhead fishing access, and key location along migratory bird routes, the preserve is ready for visitors and poised to become a regional recreational asset.

Rodstrom said that another key aspect of the project is keeping Martinis!, the restaurant on the property, open for the foreseeable future. He said, "We felt it was important to maintain our commitment to the community by keeping a well-established commercial presence on site. The new park will dovetail nicely with the restaurant located in the historic clubhouse." No public funds were used to purchase this portion of the former golf course.

Rodstrom added, "We are excited to take what was formerly a one-season, single-use recreational property and help transform it into a multi-faceted public recreational asset used in all seasons by walkers, runners, anglers, cross country skiers, and birders." 🌻

## Land Conservancy welcomes new Board Chair



Western Reserve Land Conservancy is pleased to have Mitchell C. Schneider as its new Board Chair. As President and Chairman of First Interstate Properties, Ltd., many people know Mitchell Schneider as a visionary developer. From Steelyard Commons to One University Circle, he has made his mark by re-developing poorly utilized land to create innovative buildings and communities that transform the way people shop, eat, and live together in greater Cleveland.

Mitchell is also a committed conservationist. In 2001, he and his wife, Kyla, donated a conservation easement on their Solon property expanding a conservation corridor to protect the North Branch of Sulphur Springs. This very clean, cold, scenic stream is a very popular feature of the adjacent Cleveland Metroparks' South Chagrin Reservation and supports a population of breeding brook trout.

In 2010, Schneider joined the Western Reserve Land Conservancy Board of Trustees. He recently was appointed Chair of the Board. "I am committed to conservation personally and professionally," he explained. "I grew up roaming through the forests and rivers of the Chagrin River watershed, and I have always loved being in nature. It is where I feel most at peace, where I find a spark of the divine. I am also deeply devoted to urban revitalization. The Land Conservancy's work is groundbreaking, and I am grateful to be part of an innovative and effective organization that improves lives from the inner city to the rural countryside. This role as Chairman of the Land Conservancy is the perfect blend of my professional experience and my personal values and passion."

Rich Cochran, president and CEO of the Land Conservancy, believes that Mitchell will have much to contribute to the organization. "Mitchell has tremendous passion for our mission and he leads by example," said Rich. "In addition to his extraordinary real estate acumen, he brings us wisdom, tenacity, and strategic insights that will help the organization soar to new heights. I am very grateful that he has agreed to serve in this role at this pivotal time." 🌻



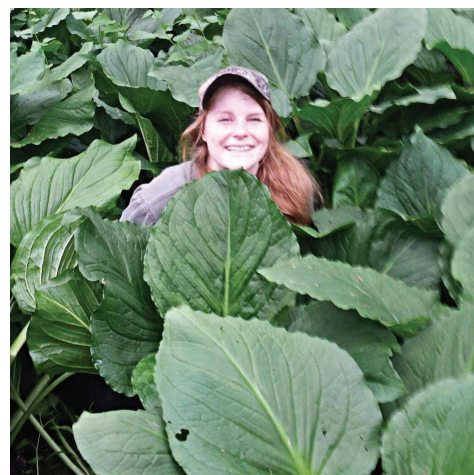
## Staff Spotlight:

# Internships provide opportunities to grow

Each year, the Land Conservancy invests in growing the next generation of conservation leaders by offering a variety of internships.

“Our internship program provides opportunities for growth all around,” explained Bob Kissling, director of human resources for the Land Conservancy. “Interns help advance the mission of the organization through their work. In turn, our internship program has inspired many to pursue full-time study and work in the field of conservation and urban revitalization. In fact, several of our talented employees began as interns!”

Western Reserve Land Conservancy thanks our 2018 intern cohort for their hard work and dedication. We also sincerely thank those donors that have generously supported our internship program, enabling us to provide stipends to our talented interns. If you’re interested in supporting the Land Conservancy’s internship program, please call 440-528-4150 for more information. 🌻



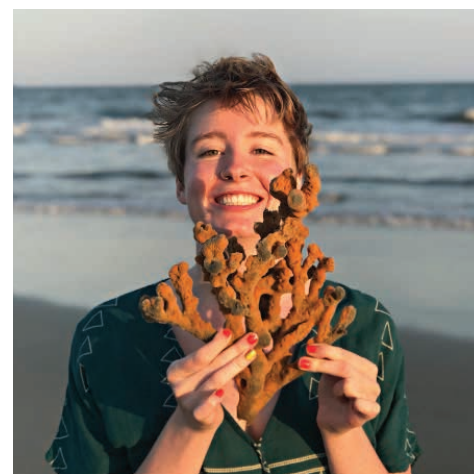
**Caroline Petersen**  
Urban GIS Intern pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in urban science at Cleveland State University



**Yushan Chen**  
Keithley Professional Bridging Intern pursuing a Master’s degree in landscape architecture at Cornell University



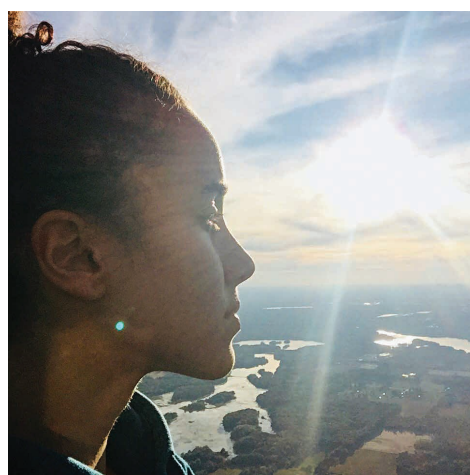
**Kristen Komoroski**  
Urban Forestry Intern pursuing a degree in forestry management at North Carolina State University



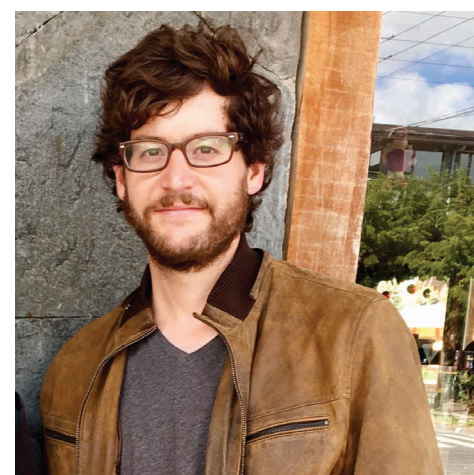
**Lindsey Schneider**  
GIS Intern pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in geography with a minor in GIS at George Washington University



**Emma King**  
Development Intern pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in English at Chapman University



**Zaija Pelligree**  
Land Conservation & Stewardship Intern recently graduated with a Bachelor’s degree with a double major in environmental studies and urban studies from Cleveland State University



**Noah Schumer**  
Keithley Professional Bridging Intern pursuing a Master’s degree in city and regional planning at Cornell University



# New passive park created in Lorain County

Lorain County Metro Parks and Western Reserve Land Conservancy recently worked together to permanently conserve nearly 60 acres of vibrant natural area and critical river habitat in Carlisle Township. The land will become a new passive park with opportunities for hiking and wildlife watching.

“This acquisition was a high priority for Lorain County Metro Parks, and a complex project to undertake,” explained Andy McDowell, vice president of western field operations for the Land Conservancy. “We are pleased to have worked with the park district to make this project a reality for the residents of Lorain County.”

The Land Conservancy and the park district partnered in leveraging a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund grant to acquire and permanently



conserve two separate tracts of land: 33.8-acre portion on the east side of Robson Road, and a 28.5-acre portion

on the west side of Robson Road. Collectively, the properties' meadows, wooded areas, wetlands, and river banks provide habitat to a number of native plants and 27 species of native birds.

More than half a mile of the East Branch of the Black River forms the western border of the western parcel, and nearly a quarter mile of high-quality headwater stream runs through the eastern parcel before it meets the East Branch of the Black River. By protecting these stream channels, forested river banks, and floodplains, this project helps preserve water quality for the Black River watershed and the 180,000 residents that call it home.

Lorain County Metro Parks intends to open the property to the public as a passive recreation park at a later date. 🌿







## Grand River Wildlife Area grows through partnership

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife and Western Reserve Land Conservancy recently worked together to conserve 57.5 acres in Trumbull County.

Located in Farmington Township, this property boasts mature forest and high-quality wetlands. More than a half mile of Center Creek, a tributary to the state-designated Wild and Scenic Grand River, flows through the property.

Importantly, this project builds upon a remarkable corridor of conserved lands including the 7,750-acre Grand River Wildlife Area owned by the ODNR Division of Wildlife as well as 174 acres of privately protected lands. This portion of the Grand River valley is one of the largest areas of semi-wilderness remaining in heavily populated northeast Ohio.

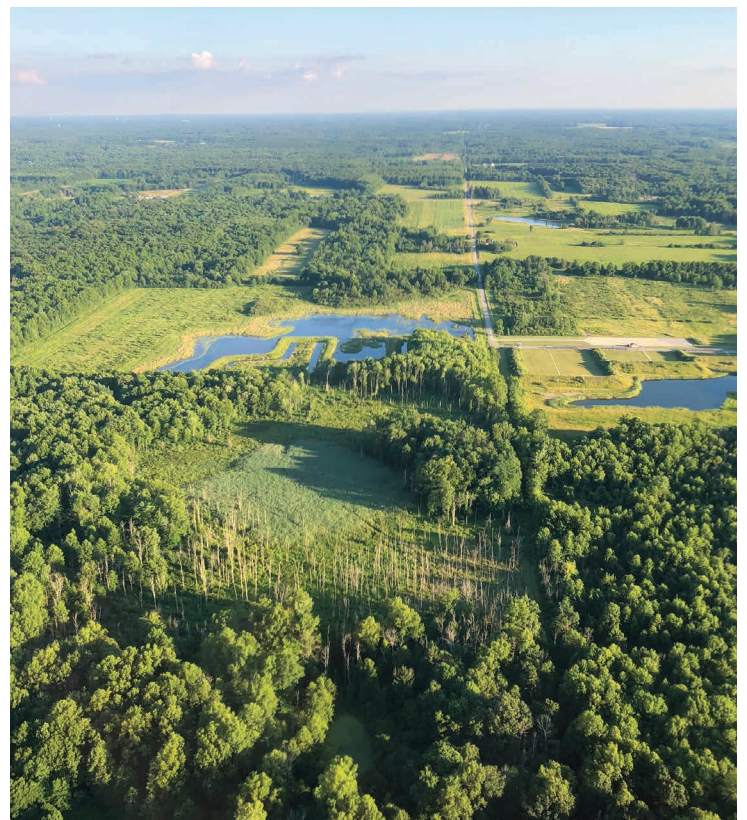
“We are grateful to the Mulac family for their willingness to conserve this key property and to the Division of Wildlife for partnering with us on this project,” said Alex Czayka, Western Reserve Land Conservancy’s senior vice president for conservation transactions. “The Mulac’s property was surrounded on three sides by Division of Wildlife property so it is a key puzzle piece to add to the wildlife area that can be enjoyed by the general public.”

Scott Peters, Ohio Division of Wildlife’s wildlife management supervisor for northeast Ohio, said, “Protecting this significant wetland habitat was a common goal for all three parties. Not only will a multitude of wildlife species benefit from this acquisition, but so will countless visitors of this property in the near future and for generations to come.” 🌿

### Take a tour and share!



Visit the Land Conservancy’s website to take a tour of the Center Creek Wetlands property and share with your networks: [wrlandconservancy.org/news](https://www.wrlandconservancy.org/news)





# Cargill helps to reforest the Forest City

More than 30 trees were recently planted in Cleveland with the support of Cargill, Cleveland Metroparks, and Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

In October, Cargill Road Safety volunteers planted 34 trees along the Cleveland Foundation Centennial Lake Link Trail in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. Native, hardy, and climate resilient trees were planted, including Washington Hawthorn, American Plum, Staghorn Sumac, and Red Oaks.

"It was a wonderful learning experience as well as an enriching experience to partake in something that will better the environment for years to come," said Jean Davis, customer solutions specialist for Cargill.

The planting was funded by the Cargill Cares Council. Cleveland Metroparks provided planting support and will provide ongoing maintenance to ensure tree growth.

Cargill employees around the world contribute millions of dollars and lend more than 100,000 hours of their time and talent to volunteer at activities that have a local impact. Cargill agrees trees have a significant local impact when it comes to sustainability and the environment, so this partnership was an exciting opportunity. These types of local initiatives also give their employees the opportunity to lend a hand and help make their community a cleaner, greener place to live and work. Davis added, "This event aligns with Cargill's commitment to serve value, doing what is best for our customers, each other and our communities. Events like this allow us to give back to our communities and provide a safe environment for future generations." 🌻

## Did you know?

Across the region, trees are a vital piece of our community infrastructure. But in too many places, tree canopies are dwindling and communities are losing out on critical benefits. This is especially true in urban areas like the City of Cleveland.

In 2014, Western Reserve Land Conservancy launched Reforest Our City to reverse this trend. With the help of hundreds of volunteers, we have planted more than 6,000 robust trees in neighborhoods and distributed thousands of tree saplings over the past four years. We continue to work with our Cleveland Tree Coalition partners to maintain existing trees, plant new trees, and engage the community in this important work.

Interested in helping with this important initiative? Visit the Land Conservancy's website to learn more about upcoming Sherwick Tree Steward Trainings and tree plantings!





# Rooted in conservation

There are strong roots to be found at Family Roots Farm.

“Our farm is a labor of love,” explained fourth-generation farmer Jennifer Sharpnack. She and her husband, Rod, purchased their Hinckley farmland from Jennifer’s late grandfather, Duane Root, in 2015. Jennifer shared, “We had been farming the land previous to his passing and we wanted him to take comfort in knowing that we planned to expand the farm and to restore its historical value and ecological practices.”

Family Roots Farm is best known for its organic garlic harvest. The family plants a variety of hardneck and softneck garlic bulbs each year for seed and culinary purposes. They planted 2,000 pounds last year and expect to harvest 10,000 pounds this year.

In addition to their beloved garlic harvest, the Sharpnacks grow heirloom produce throughout the summer to make organic products including kosher dill pickles, bread and butter pickles, pickled green beans, garlic, scapes, garlic butter, hot cauliflower, several salsa varieties, jellies, and pies. In the fall, Family Roots Farm produces apple sauce and cider from their apple and pear orchard. They harvest honey, pumpkins, and corn as well. The Sharpnacks only grow heirloom crop varieties that would have been found on the farm when it originated more than 135 years ago to keep with the historic-nature of the property.

In late 2016, the Sharpnacks donated a conservation easement on their family property to Western Reserve Land Conservancy, ensuring that the land would forever remain farmland.

“It was an absolute pleasure to work with Jennifer, Rod, and their extended family in permanently preserving this historic property,” said Andy McDowell, vice president for western field operations at the Land Conservancy. “It is exciting to see the growth of their farming operation in Medina County.”

Several Western Reserve Land Conservancy supporters had the opportunity to visit Family Roots Farm in August as part of the organization’s Vibrant Places Series.

Planning is underway for the 2019 Vibrant Places Series where donors are invited to experience the Land Conservancy’s work first hand by hiking new trails, connecting with family farmers, and exploring cherished keystone properties. Stay tuned for details! 🌻



*Rod Sharpnack leads a group of supporters on a hike.*



Photo Credits: John Wroblewski





# \$37,500 awarded to Ohio watershed groups to support local water quality improvement efforts

In October, Dominion Energy and Western Reserve Land Conservancy awarded \$37,500 in grant funding to 17 Ohio watershed groups.

“We are extremely grateful to partner with Dominion Energy to support the important and innovative work of watershed groups working to protect and improve land around rivers, lakes, and streams throughout Ohio,” said Rich Cochran, president and CEO of the Land Conservancy. “These groups are critical to protecting the health of our freshwater resources.”

“Dominion Energy is proud to partner with Western Reserve Land Conservancy for our fourth annual Watershed Mini Grants Program,” said Julie Pischulla, general manager of design construction and capital planning for Dominion Energy. “It’s a privilege to support and learn about some of the amazing environmental initiatives that are happening throughout the state of Ohio. We congratulate all of the award winning watershed organizations across our territory and believe it is our duty to recognize such outstanding grassroots efforts through our environmental and community service commitments.”

Belmont Soil and Water Conservation District received the 2018 Spotlight Award and a grant of \$6,500 in support of the Crabapple Creek Restoration Project near St. Clairsville. The project will remove a submarine bridge that has been identified as a source of sediment erosion and habitat degradation. Installation of an alternative stream crossing will ensure protection of the exceptional aquatic life found in the creek, designated as Excellent Warm Water Habitat and Outstanding State Water in Ohio.

A full listing of grant winners can be found on the Land Conservancy’s website.

Dominion Energy and Western Reserve Land Conservancy launched the Watershed Mini Grant Program in 2015 to serve organizations working to protect and improve land around rivers, lakes, and streams throughout Ohio. Since the program’s inception, more than \$142,000 has been awarded to 38 different watershed groups across the state.

In addition to the awards ceremony this year, a Healthy Watershed Summit was held by Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, West Creek Conservancy at the event. The organizations led an effort to win a multi-year grant from the US Endowment for Forestry & Communities for a Healthy Watersheds Consortium. At the Summit, stakeholders discussed a regional approach to protecting healthy watersheds through land preservation, stream corridor enhancements, and local and regional planning, as well as integrating the efforts of watershed organizations and land trusts to accelerate progress towards protection of Lake Erie and the region’s watersheds. 🌿



*Julie Pischulla of Dominion Energy (left) and Land Conservancy Board Chairman Mitchell Schneider (right) congratulate Samantha Hearn of Belmont Soil and Water Conservation District (center).*



*Award winners participated in a Healthy Watershed Summit discussion.*





# OHIO LAND BANK CONFERENCE

From preservation of historic homes to ecological restoration of vacant lots, this year's Ohio Land Bank Conference provided plenty of opportunities to learn about repurposing vacant and abandoned properties and revitalizing neighborhoods.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy hosted the eighth annual event in October. Nearly 300 people, including county land bank professionals, government officials, and nonprofit organizations, traveled to Columbus to attend the event.

"While the roots of the county land bank movement are in Cuyahoga County, there are now 54 land banks operating across Ohio's 88 counties to fight blight and repurpose properties," said Jim Rokakis, vice president of the Land Conservancy and director of the Thriving Communities program. "The progress of many of these land banks is impressive and the Ohio Land Bank Conference gives them a chance to share their stories."

Attendees had the opportunity to attend 24 breakout sessions covering issues such as repurposing of vacant and abandoned properties as well as building community support. On the first day of the conference, attendees participated in a plenary panel discussion with Western Reserve Land Conservancy field staff to learn more about how county land banks can work with land conservation organizations to help communities thrive. On the second day of the conference, attendees heard from Alan Mallach, nationally-acclaimed author of *The Divided City: Poverty and Prosperity in Urban America* and a senior fellow with the Center for Community Progress in Washington D.C.

We are grateful to our many sponsors and speakers for making the eighth annual conference such a success!

## Thanks to our generous conference sponsors:

**PLATINUM:** Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation, NeighborWorks America, NeighborWorks Collaborative of Ohio

**SILVER:** Alban & Alban, Clark County Land Reutilization Corporation, The City of Columbus, Cuyahoga Land Bank, Loveland Technologies, Miles McClellan Construction, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, Ohio Housing Finance Agency, PNC

**BRONZE:** Dynamometrics, HZW Environmental Consultants

**FRIENDS OF LAND BANKS:** BJAAM Environmental, Inc., Bowers & Company CPAs, ePropertyPlus by STR, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST), Portage County Land Bank, Third Federal Savings & Loan



Alan Mallach delivers the keynote address on equity and urban planning.



Conference attendees shared stories and visited conference sponsors (above). They also heard from the Land Conservancy's Jim Rokakis, Brett Rodstrom, and Andy McDowell on ways land banks and land conservancies can work together (below).





# EverGreen EverBlue

**More than 500 EverGreen EverBlue supporters shared their love of the land with us in September!**

We thank our event chairs, Margaux Murphy and Julie Visconsi, for their spectacular work to make this a wildly successful EverGreen EverBlue event. Special thanks to Julie, Dominic, and Olivia Visconsi for opening up their beautiful home in the heart of the Chagrin River Valley for our celebration.

We also are extremely grateful to our tremendous sponsors as well as those who pledged their support for conservation at the event. Together, we raised nearly \$300,000 to advance our mission!

*Thanks to our many generous event sponsors:*

**GOLD:** Dealer Tire, Sarah & Dick Hollington, Huntington Bank, Heather & Tim Ryan

**VALET:** Classic Auto

**BAR:** Ohio Real Title

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Julie, Dominic, & Olivia Visconsi

**EVERAFTER:** Kyla & Mitchell Schneider

**SILVER:** Karen & Larry Bettcher

**TABLE:** Kate & Bob Biggar, Brookes & Henderson Building Company, William H. Childs, Jr. & Associates, Inc., The CJR Group, Inc., Connor Foundation, Ruth S. & Dr. Michael Eppig, Catherine & Nolan Gallagher, Gillmore Security, Heidelberg Distributing, Impullitti Landscaping, KeyBank, McDonald Partners, Laura & Chris McKenna, Margaux & Michael Murphy, Caitlin & Brian Osborne, Resilience Capital Partners, Russell Equipment Company, Samuels & Associates, Marian & Michael Shaughnessy, Sterling Associates, Susan & John Turben Foundation

**BRONZE:** Glenmede, Meg & Oscar Hackett, J.F.D. Landscapes, RPM, Taft/, The Angeletti Group

**FRIENDS:** Amgen, Linda Chittock Studios, Dominion Energy, Christina & Josh Holmer, Lauralee & Nick Howley, Medical Mutual of Ohio, Winnie & Peter Nordell, ParkOhio, Faith Pescatore, Andrew Rayburn, Snaveley Group, Third Federal Savings and Loan, The Triple T Foundation, Danielle & Michael Weiner

Photo Credits: Orville McEachron



*Event Chairs Margaux Murphy and Julie Visconsi welcome the crowd.*



*Bassem Mansour and Dominic Visconsi*



*EverGreen EverBlue guests enjoyed activities in the lounge tent (above) as well as an al fresco dinner with friends (below).*



*Dr. Jennifer Cochran and Michael Murphy*



*Land Conservancy President and CEO Rich Cochran shared his vision with the crowd.*



*At the EverAfter party, guests danced to the sounds of the indie-rock band Castlecomer (bottom left) and the Vindy's (bottom right).*







## Western Reserve Land Conservancy

land • people • community

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## Love the Land

There are many reasons we love the land. It provides healthy food, pure drinking water, and clean air. Land provides places to reflect and recreate. It supports healthy people and thriving communities.

### Why do you love the land?

We want to hear from you. Western Reserve Land Conservancy is launching an initiative to collect stories, photos, and videos about our collective love of the land. We plan to feature different stories periodically – in our publications and online – in an effort to inspire others as we work together to conserve our region's special places and connect people from all walks of life to the land.

To share your story visit: <http://bit.ly/wrlcllovetheland>

## Contact Us

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**Lorain, Erie, Huron, Medina, Wayne, Stark, and Summit counties**

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**Cuyahoga County and urban work across Ohio**  
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Stella Dilik, chief development officer  
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**Firelands**

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440.774.4226

**Medina Marsh Conservation Center**

4266 Fenn Rd, Medina, OH 44256

**Thriving Communities**

2012 W. 25th St, Suite 504, Cleveland, OH 44113  
216.515.8300

**Wayne County**

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