



Tree-care workshops taking root

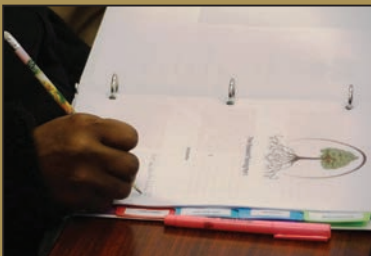
Landscaping company owner James Boyd has a vision.

Boyd, who runs Heavenly Grounds, wants to help his community by incorporating a "Tree of Life" program into his work – growing apples, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries "and whatever edible fruits we can grow in Ohio" on vacant lots. He attended a recent Tree Stewardship Training session at Union Miles Development Corporation in order to learn more about reforesting Cleveland.

"It would be a very, very good thing if we could add more trees to the inner city," he said.

Fellow attendee Charles Conner said he believes planting more trees will make the city a better place to live, work and play. "I want to help out the neighborhood, help out the community," he said.

The Union-Miles training session, which attracted
see Workshop page 7



Preserving a way of life

Rich Smith ensures his land will be farmed for generations



The Smith family farmers are, from left, (top row) Jeremy, Rich and Brian and (bottom row) Kyle and Brandon.

Rich Smith's zest for farming is contagious.

In an era when the children of some farmers do not see a future in working the land, Smith, a lifelong Huron County resident, has inspired sons Jeremy, 40, and Brian, 36, to partner with him on their grain farm operation. Jeremy's son Kyle, 10, and Brian's son Brandon, 9, both appear headed on the same path.

"They both know their way around the farm, that's for sure," Rich Smith says with a laugh.

Smith has made sure his farmland will never be developed. Smith, a former president of the Huron County Farm Bureau, has donated a conservation easement to Western Reserve Land Conservancy that permanently preserves 332 acres of prime agricultural land along New State

Road in Bronson Township. Smith says that since the easement permanently restricts use of the land, he did not make the decision in haste.

"It took me quite a while to decide – forever is a long time," he says. "But we've been farming for generations, and I think there will always be someone here who wants to farm."

Smith, who grew up in a farming family in nearby Greenfield Township, purchased the first tract of land for the central Huron County farm in 1980 and added acreage over the years. The property produces corn, soybeans and wheat; it also contains three woodlots and nearly a half-mile of tributaries to the Huron River.

"Rich Smith is one of those individuals that everyone knows and

see Preserving page 7

Land bank conference is Sept. 21-23 in Cleveland

The fifth annual Ohio Land Bank Conference, hosted by Western Reserve Land Conservancy's Thriving Communities Institute, is returning to Cleveland after a two-year run in Columbus. The 2015 conference will take place Sept. 21-23 at the downtown Wyndham Cleveland at Playhouse Square.

The conference has become a must-attend event for those in the public and private sectors who are interested in addressing the issue of blight in their communities. Attendees typically include county land bank professionals, government officials, nonprofit organizations and citizens.

More than 200 people are expected to attend this year's event.

The conference will feature 15-18 sessions covering issues such as repurposing of vacant and abandoned properties, building community support and methods of acquiring properties and then getting them into the hands of responsible owners, according to Robin Darden Thomas, land bank program director for Thriving Communities Institute. A first-day session will focus on the basics of land banking. There will also be mobile workshops to view actual projects rejuvenating blighted properties.

For additional information on the conference, contact Thomas at (216) 515-8300 or rthomas@wrlandconservancy.org or Kate Hydock at (216) 515-8300 or khydock@wrlandconservancy.org.

Protecting the lowlands

Grant to help preserve property along Grand River

Another 1,000 acres in the Grand River Lowlands in Ashtabula and Trumbull counties will be permanently preserved thanks to federal funding secured by Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

The Land Conservancy has been awarded a \$750,000 federal

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to purchase conservation easements from landowners along the Grand River over the next two years. The organization will provide an additional \$250,000 for the project. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values while the owner retains title.

A conservation easement runs with the land – it remains in place even when ownership changes.

The Grand River funding was one of 14 GLRI grants totaling more than \$17 million to fund projects that will improve Great Lakes water quality by preventing phosphorus runoff and soil erosion that contribute to algal blooms and by reducing suspended sediments in Great Lakes tributaries.

Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern field operations for the Land Conservancy, said preference in the conservation easement purchases will be given to landowners in the Grand River Lowlands whose properties also have rare, threatened or endangered species such as the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake. The Land Conservancy will be focusing conservation efforts stemming from this grant on



Herpetologist Greg Lipps searches for rattlesnakes in the Grand River Lowlands.

properties with stream and river frontage, as well as those with wetlands.

"It's not often we are able to allocate funding for the purchase of conservation easements on private land – these dollars simply do not come around that

often," Rodstrom says. "I don't expect these funds will last long, so we will do everything we can to leverage them with other grants to accommodate as many landowners as possible."

Landowners with questions about the program can contact Rodstrom at (440) 867-6659 or brodstrom@wrlandconservancy.org.

The conservation easements will preserve an estimated five miles of streams and 400 acres of wetland, thereby reducing nutrient runoff and soil erosion that impacts Lake Erie.

The project runs through the end of 2016. Funds will be spent on a first-come, first-served basis. Easements will allow for home sites, timbering, subsurface oil and gas exploration, hunting, fishing and trapping.

The Grand River Lowlands are located in northern Trumbull County and southern Ashtabula County. The region's rich natural resources have made it a conservation priority for groups like the Land Conservancy.

So far in 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded GLRI grants totaling more than \$25 million to fund 29 projects to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Since 2010, EPA has funded more than 700 Great Lakes restoration and protection projects totaling over \$570 million.



Rock outcroppings are one of the interesting natural features of Liberty Park.

Tinker's Creek corridor gets additional protection

Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Summit Metro Parks have partnered to create a 25-acre nature preserve in Twinsburg Township and expand a greenway along Tinker's Creek, the largest tributary to the Cuyahoga River.

The greenway now includes more than 3,000 acres of protected land in Summit and Portage counties, including the 1,908-acre Liberty Park, which is operated by Summit Metro Parks and the city of Twinsburg, the 786-acre Tinker's Creek State Nature Preserve and the 366-acre Aurora Wetlands property, which is owned by the city of Aurora and preserved with a Land Conservancy conservation easement.

The 25-acre nature preserve is composed of three parcels on Ravenna Road, adjacent to Liberty Park and Summit Metro Parks' Twinsburg Bog. It includes 988 linear feet of Tinker's Creek frontage as well as a flood

plain and more than two acres of wetland that will be protected as a result of the property's preservation.

"It is truly a privilege to work with Summit Metro Parks on the preservation of the Tinker's Creek corridor and we look forward to working with the Metro Parks in the future," says Keith McClintock, vice president of conservation for the Land Conservancy.

The Land Conservancy secured funding for the project through the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program. Summit County Metro Parks intends to operate the property as a nature preserve.

The Land Conservancy has now permanently preserved 1,032 acres in Summit County and 2,523 acres in Portage County. The figures include conservation easements on private property as well as land-acquisition projects in partnership with Summit Metro Parks, Portage Parks and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Land Conservancy opposes Lake Erie dredge spoils plan

Keith McClintock, vice president of conservation for Western Reserve Land Conservancy, testified against a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposal to dump contaminated dredge spoils from Cleveland Harbor into Lake Erie.

McClintock spoke at a public hearing at Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport.



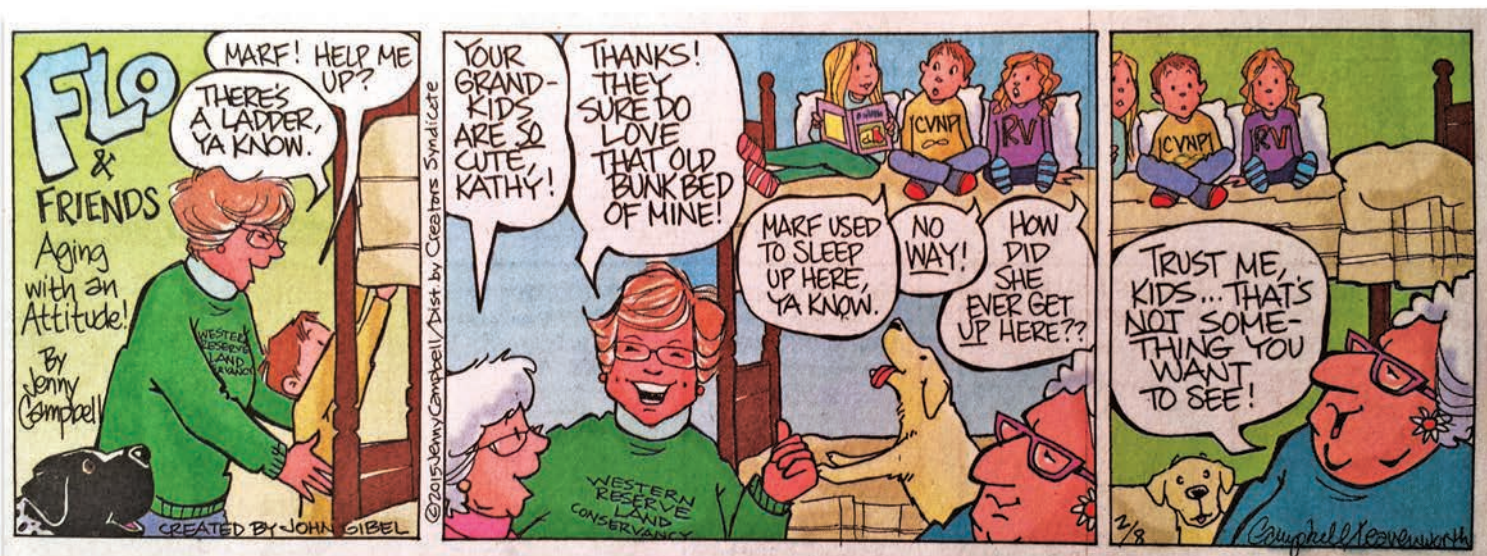
Keith McClintock

"Jeopardizing the health of Lake Erie and its fish and wildlife, as well as Northeastern Ohioans, undermines the Land Conservancy's mission to provide healthy communities," McClintock said. "I encourage the Corps of Engineers and the state of Ohio to continue to negotiate to find a solution that allows the contaminated dredge spoils to be dumped into a combined disposal facility (CDF)."

He added, "The Port of Cleveland is an economic driver for the region so the Cuyahoga River must be maintained for commercial navigation. But the contaminated dredge spoils should not be dumped back into Lake Erie at a time when millions of federal dollars are being spent on Great Lakes restoration initiatives."

McClintock said the Land Conservancy's conservation efforts minimize the amount of sediment and contamination entering the Cuyahoga River. In addition, he said the Land Conservancy recommends additional resources be used for the beneficial reuse of clean dredge materials.

"Cuyahoga County is demolishing vacant and abandoned homes that lower property values and are a hotbed of criminal activity. Fill dirt for these sites is always in demand," McClintock said.



Reprinted with permission from Jenny Campbell/Creators Syndicate

Yes, that really was us in the Sunday comics

Western Reserve Land Conservancy received attention when Chagrin Falls artist Jenny Campbell depicted Trustee Kathy Leavenworth – wearing a Land Conservancy sweatshirt, no less – in her syndicated comic strip, “Flo & Friends.”

The strip is a play on a real-life situation in which Leavenworth was putting up bunk beds for her visiting grandchildren. And while Leavenworth knew the comic strip was going to be published – she had won the opportunity to be featured

in the Campbell series in a charity fundraiser – she still got a kick out of seeing it.

“I was still laughing while I was sending off copies to my family,” she says, adding that the strip was published in *The Plain Dealer* on her birthday, Feb. 8.

Leavenworth says she discussed with Campbell possible ideas for the strip, but it was the artist who ultimately chose which of Leavenworth’s many nonprofit causes would be highlighted. Sweatshirts in the comic strip give

shout-outs to the Land Conservancy, Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Rescue Village.

Campbell, whose work appears in newspapers from Hawaii to New Jersey, says she makes a point of recognizing local organizations and places of interest in the communities where the comic strip is read. “I’ve always been really grateful to the papers and communities that print the strip – I get such wonderful feedback,” she says. “I just love doing it. It is a way of giving back to those communities.”

Land Conservancy launches new photography club

A new Land Conservancy program is all about image – or, more specifically, images.

The Viewfinders Photography Club was launched in February. This new membership program provides photographers of all age, experience and skill levels the opportunity to meet once a month for instructional sessions and friendly critiques, as well as monthly photography field trips through the Land Conservancy’s service area.

All camera types are welcome – including smart phone cameras.

The club meets from 6:30-8 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month at the Land Conservancy’s Conservation Center, 3850 Chagrin River Road in Moreland Hills. Past club meeting topics have included how to capture wildflower images and how to photograph people.



For more information on the club, contact Emily Bacha at ebacha@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 528-4178.

Conservation Calendar

* Medina Marsh Open House

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday, May 2
Medina Marsh Conservation Center
4266 Fenn Road, Medina Township
Join us for a hike, a view of a heron rookery, hands-on activities and more. This is a free family event.

* 16th Annual Grand River cleanup

9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday, May 16
Hidden Valley MetroPark
4902 Klasen Road, Madison
Help us clean up one of Ohio's Wild and Scenic Rivers.

* South Akron Greenway 5th Anniversary Celebration

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday, July 11
Adam's and Haley's Runs
1452 Archwood Ave., Akron
Join us for a biodiversity-themed bash celebrating the fifth anniversary of our restoration efforts.

* Gold panning

1-2:30 p.m. Sunday, July 12
Mill Hollow area of Lorain County
Metro Parks Vermilion River Reservation
There is gold in the Vermilion River. See if you can find some.

* KIDS IN! the Creek

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday, July 25
West Geauga Commons
14070 Chillicothe Road, Novelty
A family favorite, catch critters and learn about water quality in the Chagrin River.

* EverGreen EverBlue

Saturday Aug. 29
Rustbelt Reclamation, Cleveland
Our annual gala takes place at a business that literally draws on the past to build anew.

For more information, contact Emily Bacha at ebacha@wrlandconservancy.org.



Kids in the Snow

Children, parents and grandparents made nesting boxes for the colorful Prothonotary Warbler with the help of Geauga Park District naturalist Dan Best. They also learned about animal tracks and used snowshoes to hike the adjacent Forest Ridge Preserve.



Urban hike

The Land Conservancy's Young Professionals Group trekked through Cleveland's Flats during the heart of winter, revealing some rarely seen parts of the urban landscape. The hike was led by Thriving Communities Institute's Sarah Ryzner.



Ralph Regula appearance

We were honored to have retired U.S. Rep. Ralph Regula, one of the founders of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, as one of the panelists in a discussion about CVNP at our Conservation Center. Other panelists were John Debo, a former CVNP superintendent, and current superintendent Craig Kenkel.

GIVING

We are grateful for your support

By Nancy McCann

We thank you for your continued support of Western Reserve Land Conservancy and hope you enjoy this edition of *Landline*, our quarterly newsletter.

These are exciting times at the Land Conservancy. We



Nancy McCann

just finished a year in which we permanently protected another 3,800 acres, bringing our preserved acreage total

to nearly 42,000. The launch of Reforest Our City – an initiative to plant thousands of trees in Cleveland – is generating considerable attention. We've even added two membership groups, the Viewfinders Photography Club and the Sporting Circle.

We are passionate about our work and the good it does for our region. We hope you are, too. Please keep us in mind whenever a giving opportunity arises. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (440) 528.4153 or nmccann@wrlandconservancy.org.

Thank you.



Nancy

McCann is the Chief Development Officer for the Land Conservancy.

Enhancing your retirement income with charitable gift annuities

A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is often the gift of choice because it is a simple, one-page agreement between you and Western Reserve Land Conservancy. You make a gift to the Land Conservancy and in return you are guaranteed a fixed annual income for your lifetime, or the lifetimes of you and a loved one.

The income you would receive is based on a payout rate specific to your age. Older beneficiaries will enjoy a greater percentage than younger ones. For example, an 80 year old person would receive a payout rate of 6.8 percent and a 70 year old would receive 5.1 percent. Either way, the payout is most likely much higher than other popular income-producing investments like CDs, money market funds, or bank savings accounts.

In addition to your lifetime income, you would receive an immediate charitable federal income-tax deduction in the year your contribution is made.

Funding a gift annuity

Gift annuities are simple, yet versatile. Western Reserve Land Conservancy has set the minimum amount required to establish a gift annuity at \$5,000. Some people start with a small gift annuity and, as their circumstances permit, they fund additional gift annuities. With each additional annuity established, you will receive an additional fixed lifetime income. In this way, a gift annuity may allow you to maintain your standard of living in your retirement years by increasing your cash flow.

Your contribution establishing a gift annuity is treated for tax purposes as two transactions: a portion is a gift to the Land

Conservancy and the rest is an investment in an annuity. The additional tax advantage is that a portion of your lifetime income will be tax-free for your expected lifetime.

Use stock to fund a charitable gift annuity

Like a charitable remainder trust, you can use appreciated publicly traded stock to fund a gift annuity. If you fund the gift annuity with stock held for longer than one year it is considered long-term, and you will avoid long-term capital gains tax on some of your paper gain. The gain you do recognize will be spread out over the balance of your life-expectancy. In these cases, the long-term capital gain reduces what would otherwise be a tax-free return of your investment.

You also can fund a gift annuity with other appreciated assets, such as property or a fully paid life insurance policy, and enjoy added tax benefits similar to those with gifts of appreciated stock.

Deferred CGA

As Americans continue to live longer, they will look for additional ways to enhance their retirement funds. Retirement plan investment return fluctuations have made it more difficult than ever to predict exact levels of retirement income. A deferred payment gift annuity is a creative strategy that allows you to fulfill your philanthropic goals, lock in a fixed annuity for retirement now, and enjoy tax benefits, as well. Here is an example:

Caroline is only 55 years old and wants her payments to begin when she retires at age 65. Her choice of planning for a gift, while also planning for her future, is a

Consider donating used equipment

Do you have outdoor equipment you no longer use?

Consider donating it to Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Since we are a nonprofit organization, your donation may be tax-deductible. We are currently looking for:

- * golf cart
- * utility trailer
- * utility tractor
- * pickup truck
- * four-wheel all-terrain vehicle (Gator style)
- * landscape rake (York rake) plus other lawn tools and equipment

If you are interested in making a donation or need more information, contact Keith McClintock at (440) 528-4150 or kmclintock@wrlandconservancy.org.

Preserving continued

respects, a testament to his leadership in the agricultural community in Huron County,” says Andy McDowell, vice president of western field operations for the Land Conservancy. “Working together with his two sons to preserve their valuable farmland reflects his desire to instill this leadership role for generations to come.”

Smith and his wife, Doris, discussed the conservation easement decision with their family before moving ahead. Smith says that at the end of the day, “I wanted my sons and grandsons to always be able to farm.”

Smith, 63, still enjoys farming, although he admits he would like to dial things down a bit.

“I was hoping to slow down,” he says, “but I haven’t yet figured out how.”

deferred payment gift annuity. She transfers appreciated stock valued at \$15,000 with an original cost basis of \$5,000 to Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Using appreciated stock to fund the gift offers an additional benefit of avoiding some of the capital gains tax. If she were to liquidate the stock without donating it to Western Reserve Land Conservancy, she would owe capital gains tax on the \$10,000 increase in value.

Without deferring the income, Caroline’s gift annuity rate would be 4 percent. Because she will not begin receiving payments until she retires, her annuity rate will be 6.4 percent. Beginning at age 65, she will receive an annual income of \$960 for the rest of her life. Her charitable deduction of \$5,169.15 will reduce her taxes this year by \$1,447 in her 28 percent tax bracket. She is happy that she locked in a high rate of return that is guaranteed to be paid to her for life.

Additional options for a deferred gift annuity are a **Flexible Deferred Charitable Gift Annuity** or a **Commuted Charitable Gift Annuity**. With the flexible option, you can *choose at a later date* when you would like to turn on the income stream, for example, if you haven’t made a decision about the date of your retirement. A commuted charitable gift annuity must be deferred for at least one year, and then the payments are *condensed into a specified timeframe*. This type of gift is often used by grandparents to plan for a grandchild’s college education.

Workshop continued

25 residents, was one of several done by Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Holden Arboretum so far this year as part of the Land Conservancy’s Reforest Our City initiative. To date, free workshops on tree planting and care have been held in Cleveland’s Ohio City, Old Brooklyn, Union-Miles, Slavic Village and Central neighborhoods as well as at Holden and the Watershed Stewardship Center in Parma.

The Land Conservancy’s Thriving Communities Institute has also launched a grant program in which groups that receive the training can receive funding for tree-planting projects in the city of Cleveland.

The Tree Steward Training sessions, which are given in four parts, are led by Colby Sattler, the Land Conservancy’s urban forestry and natural resources project manager, and Chad Clink, Holden’s community forester.

Sattler said he has been encouraged by the response to date – “People are remembering the classroom information and leading the field portion as a result” – and hopes those attending the training sessions will become ambassadors for reforesting Cleveland. “Be the next teacher,” he told workshop attendees. “We need champions.”





Western Reserve Land Conservancy

OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

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Western Reserve Land Conservancy



**Staff
Art Show
2015**



Emily Bacha
David Liam Kyle
Elizabeth Mather



The McCanns
Joanie O'Brien
Kate Pilacky
Sheila Randel



Brett Rodstrom
Ken Wood
Shane Wohlken



**April
through
June**

Opening Reception: May 4th, 6:00-8:30PM
RSVP to Emily Bacha: ebacha@wrlandconservancy.org

* * *

Open Monday - Friday 8:30AM - 5:00PM
3850 Chagrin River Road, Moreland Hills, OH 44022

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