



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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OUR MISSION

To engage in protecting and restoring the treasured natural habitats of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and to enhance the outdoor experiences of all communities.

We do this by encouraging and administering private gifts to further the Forest Preserves' mission and goals.



Fulfilling our mission

The Forest Preserve Foundation this year completed a new strategic plan that will provide a blueprint for meeting the conservation and community engagement priorities of the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

“We are proud of completing a strong strategic plan that will propel the Foundation into the future with a clear vision for keeping the Forest Preserves of Cook County a vibrant and inviting natural environment for everyone.”

**—Tom Livingston,
board chair**

Over the last 12 months, we increased our grant awards by 56 percent, raised our largest dollar amount ever at our annual Conservation Cup golf outing and supported more than 120 youth through internships that help enhance the health and beauty of the Preserves. We also engaged many new community members through our fundraisers, stories and social media outreach.

We finish 2018 strongly positioned to fulfill our mission to protect and restore the natural habitats of the Preserves and enhance and keep them enjoyable for everyone.

“We are thrilled by this year’s growth in donor support, which allowed us to increase our investments in youth and community engagement in the Preserves. We are dedicated to ensuring continued and broad access to the Preserves of Cook County.”

—Shelley Davis, president

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Conservation Corps crew member Gabrielle Caldron accepts a group photograph of her crew.

Youth Conservation Corps

The 2018 Chicago Conservation Corps Dan Ryan Woods crew underwritten by the Forest Preserve Foundation accomplished a lot.

“We got through seven turnpikes, a check step and three water bars, a lot of invasive species and did some seed collection,” crew co-leader Kailin Sepp said.

The crew — 11 members, an assistant leader and two co-leaders— were part of the Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps program, a six-week summer service-learning experience.

Crews perform ecological restoration and trail maintenance projects throughout the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

When crews from all over the

county gathered in early August to celebrate, Arnold Randall, general superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, recognized their work. The work they do “means something,” he said, because they’re helping to protect plants and animals as well as adding to the enjoyment of people who visit the Preserves.

Through a grant from Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., the Foundation underwrote the Dan Ryan crew, providing \$50,000.

The funds covered crew and leader wages, supply and training costs, risk management supplies, member transportation, evaluation and assessment, insurance and worker’s compensation.



The 2018 Conservation Corps Dan Ryan crew. A grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation underwrote the crew for the six-week summer program.

Forest Preserve Experience



2018 Forest Preserve Experience graduating class at Wampum Lake Woods in Thornton, Ill.

The Forest Preserve Experience Program is a partnership between the Forest Preserves of Cook County and the Housing Authority of Cook County.

Teens whose families rely upon the services of the Housing Authority are recruited for paid internships to do conservation work in the Preserves.

This year, the Forest Preserve Foundation supported the program with two grants totaling \$125,000.

Teens 14 to 19 worked in teams led by adult leaders and assistant crew leaders at Sauk Trail Woods, Jurgensen Woods, Possum Hollow Woods and Wampum Lake Woods.

Over the five-week program, the

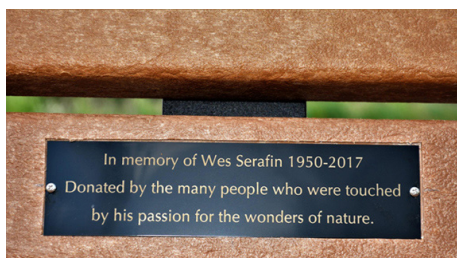
84 participants contributed more than 5,500 hours of on-the-ground ecological restoration work through the management of invasive species, tree care, and litter pick-up.

Participants also learned essential job skills such as teamwork, problem solving and public speaking.

They also heard from conservation professionals who gave them a look at green industry careers. Nature-based education and recreational activities provided an introduction to new experiences and adventures at the Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Bird the Preserves

Through the three-year-old program called Bird the Preserves, which receives funding from the Forest Preserve Foundation, everyone has an open invitation to bird watch.



Memorial bench signage

This year the Foundation managed a memorial gift campaign to honor Wes Serafin (1950-2017), a tireless advocate for nature and the Forest Preserves, as well as an extraordinary birding enthusiast.

More than 40 donors contributed \$3,005 for a memorial bench and signage in the Preserves' Orland Grassland South, where Serafin spent much time birding.

EVENTS

Foundation events bring together dedicated supporters and community leaders to spread awareness about the Preserves' importance to the region.



Forest Preserve Foundation board and Conservation Cup Committee members with General Superintendent Arnold Randall and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

Conservation Cup

The Forest Preserve Foundation hosted its 7th annual Conservation Cup golf outing on Sept. 13 at the George W. Dunne National Golf Course in Oak Forest. More than 150 golfers and guests participated, helping the Foundation raise more than \$210,000 to support programs that further its mission. BMO Harris Bank was the Executive Sponsor, JP Morgan and Billy Casper Golf were Title Sponsors.



"Through Conservation Corps, I gained knowledge and lifelong friends. And I gained a career path. I left the experience having a bigger duty to become a leader for my community."
—Brian Clay
at May fundraiser

Friendraisers

In June, the Foundation hosted "The Transformative Power of Outdoor Experiences" program, drawing people from across Chicago's civic, business, nonprofit and faith communities. The program included a panel moderated by Ernie Wong, president of Site Design Group, Ltd and Foundation donor.



GRANTS

The Forest Preserve Foundation granted a total of \$317,705 during its 2018 spring and fall award cycles. These investments in the Forest Preserves of Cook County represent a 56 percent increase from grants awarded in 2017.

Since the Foundation's inception in 2012, it has awarded nearly \$1.3 million in its core program areas: Conservation Corps, memorial gifts, community programming, Nature Play and public art, family camping and ecological restoration.



The Foundation's financial audit information is accessible on the website: forestpreservefoundation.org.

2018 Grant Awards

Forest Preserve

Experience/Conservation Corps (\$135,000): Summer programs that provide paid employment for young people from underserved populations in Cook County.

Restoration of Cranberry Slough (\$55,000): Support for invasive removal and resprout control in Cranberry Slough Nature Preserve, an ecological priority for the Preserves.

Student Conservation Association (SCA)

(\$50,000): Support for a 2018 Chicago Conservation

Leadership Corps crew in Dan Ryan Woods.

Developing the Next Generation of Outdoor Leaders (\$27,500): Support for teen leaders in nature-based programming in the Preserves.

Dan Ryan Woods Nature Play (\$9,000): Support for teen leaders to develop an ADA compliant nature play curriculum.

Palos Trails System Improvements (\$9,000): Support for the repair of portions of a 22 miles of single track trail for cyclists

and hikers in the Palos Preserves.

Online Volunteer Training

(\$4,500): A collaboration between the Morton Arboretum and the Forest Preserves of Cook County's Volunteer Resource Department that offers online courses to support the Forest Preserves' Path to Stewardship requirements.

Volunteer Recognition Program (\$1,170): This program recognizes volunteers whose time and services enhance the Forest Preserves.

FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

The Foundation relies on support from businesses and individuals who are committed to maintaining the health of the Preserves and keeping them accessible to all.

Kerri Daniels, Board member

Kerri Daniels grew up in Rogers Park and remembers family picnics in the Forest Preserves, “They’re really a hidden jewel that aren’t used as much as they should be,” Daniels says.

In 2017, Kerri Daniels received an invitation from board member Claire Williams to attend a Foundation Friendraiser. Kerri, the director of business development for the Illinois office of DLZ, an architecture and civil engineering firm, had supported the Conservation Cup in the past but saw the Friendraiser as an opportunity to learn more about the Foundation.

A few months after the Friendraiser, Kerri became a Foundation board member herself. She brings a background in fundraising and business development. She quickly joined the board’s Development Committee, where she will put her energies into “growing the Foundation’s funding stream.”



Tom Lancot, Board member

The Forest Preserves of Cook County have long been a backdrop in the life of Thomas Lancot. Growing up in Park Ridge, he lived near a preserve. And for the 30 years he and his family lived in Winnetka, “our house basically backed up to the forest preserves,” he says.

He believes the Preserves “are a gift to all of us in perpetuity and they’re irreplaceable assets. Yet they require TLC, and that’s one of our missions at the Foundation.”

Lancot joined the Foundation’s board of directors in early 2018. He serves on several other boards, including the Chicago Botanic Garden and is a trustee for the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program.

Lancot (pronounced Lang-toe) practiced law for many years and retired at the end of 2017 as managing director and head of debt capital markets for William Blair. A longtime financial supporter of the Conservation Cup, the Foundation’s major fundraiser, Lancot chairs the board’s Nominations and Governance Committee and serves on the Strategic Plan Committee.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our generous donors. This list reflects gifts given or pledged from Nov. 1, 2017 to Oct. 30, 2018.

\$50,000 +

CSX Transportation, Inc.
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Illinois Counties Association
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc.

\$10,000-\$49,000

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Conservation Cup Committee

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Communication Management

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NATURE DOES THE INVITING.
WE JUST BRING THE GUESTS.



At the Forest Preserve Foundation, we support the programs and activities that give everyone access to the natural treasures of Cook County. With your support, these efforts will make life better for us all.

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