



2021 Annual Report

A Letter from Debra Walker Johnson, President & Executive Director



As I look back on 2021, I am reminded that we have much to celebrate. I joined the Forest Preserve Foundation as its new president and executive director during the first quarter. In addition to my taking my new role, we further supplemented our leadership with Jim Beck taking over the reins as Board Chair after four years of valuable board service. We also welcomed three remarkable individuals to our board of directors. I look forward to providing the leadership and vision to move the Foundation to the next level.

The impact of Covid-19 during the past year and a half has highlighted the importance of our work. We saw unprecedented levels of participation in outdoor activities at the Forest Preserves, as visitors sought peace and solace in nature during this time. Not only did existing visitors reinvigorate their engagement, but new visitors discovered that the Forest Preserves provide a place for creating their own adventure right in their backyard.

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19 variants, we stayed focused on our mission, granting \$326,898 in funding to support programs and activities at the Forest Preserves of Cook County in 2021. This funding enabled 166 youth to learn about conservation and earn money through internship opportunities at the Conservation Corps. It also supported the restoration of 293 acres of the Preserves in areas of the highest need, where invasive species threaten sensitive ecosystems and where habitats have been damaged.

We also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Conservation Cup. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and partners, this year's event raised more than \$220,000, breaking the Conservation Cup fundraising record.

I am honored to have been chosen to lead the Foundation in this exciting new phase of growth. As we prepare for the new year, we look forward to working with our partners and supporters to champion new ways to engage outdoor participants. Together we will invest in making the Forest Preserves of Cook County accessible and welcoming to all residents.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Walker Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.



... In 2021 we saw unprecedented levels of participation in outdoor activities at the Forest Preserves, as visitors sought PEACE and SOLACE in nature during this time.



Visits are up

62 million

Typical year estimated visits

100 million

Pandemic estimated annual visits

This growth in use of the Preserves is wonderful news. It also means that the need for financial support to care for the Preserves is growing too.



Trails require maintenance and improvement.

- Trail and other enhancement projects reduce soil erosion as well as improve visitor enjoyment of nature.

Invasive species require removal, so that native species can thrive.

Invasive plant species like buckthorn, honeysuckle and barberry arrive unwanted in forest preserves from residential yards via birds' droppings. Removing these invasives allows native plant species to thrive, providing habitat for native birds, mammals and insects.

Logistical and cultural barriers to equitable access require remediation to benefit everyone.

Environmental, restoration and sustainability communities need and benefit from racial diversity, equity and inclusion. FPCC is addressing barriers so that everyone can enjoy nature.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

... We stayed focused on our mission to support programs and activities at the Forest Preserves of Cook County in 2021.

2021 Grants Awarded **\$326,898**

These investments help ensure the health and vitality of these treasured public lands for everyone.



With your donations and grants, the Foundation provides support for projects at the Forest Preserves of Cook County that restore these vital lands, eliminate barriers to equitable access, nourish cultural engagement and nurture the next generation of environmental advocates.

CONSERVATION CORPS

Forest Preserve Experience

This five-week paid summer program engages high school students in rewarding conservation work and nature education experiences. Youth work in teams to gain job skills to prepare them for the workforce, while also having fun in nature. The Forest Preserve Foundation partners with Friends of the Forest Preserves, The Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the Housing Authority of Cook County.

"We enjoyed canoeing with each other ... helping us trust each other and have patience."
- AJ



"... this summer meant working in uncomfortable environments, friendship, resilience, respect and wildlife."
- Kymonni

"We learned to cut invasive species such as Buckthorn and identify new plant species. We even got used to working around bugs.."
- AJ

*Quotes from
some crew
graduation
presentations*

"This is what I was supposed to do ... Being able to give youth something to look forward to ... and something positive in a world that can be very negative."
- Raven, crew member turned crew leader



Conserve. Educate. Enjoy.

2021 Forest Preserve Experience



Forest Preserve Experience By The Numbers



65%

Believe the Forest Preserves and nature are important to their quality of life



93%

Would recommend the program to a friend



86%

Think we should protect the Forest Preserves and nature for future generations

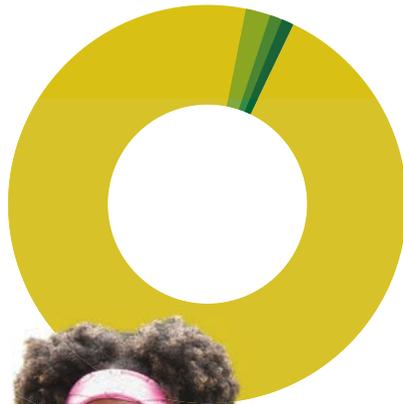
Who we are

African American/ Black
96%

Multi Racial
2%

Hispanic/ Latino
1%

No Answer
1%



127 youth
35 adult leaders



58%

First Job



95%

Retention Rate



Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

This program is a paid five-week service-learning experience for high school students who work in teams throughout the Forest Preserves of Cook County. It teaches basic job skills while benefiting nature through hands-on service projects. We nurture and inspire the next generation to become lifelong advocates for nature. The Forest Preserve Foundation partners with Friends of the Forest Preserves, The Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the Student Conservation Association.

"Being surrounded by nature and like-minded people allowed for my mind to be engaged in all the work that we did." - Lorin



"... I've never done anything like this before and it was so hard and so fun. I would most definitely recommend this program to a friend, and I would join again. CCLC created a great environment for everyone to feel comfortable and eager to learn new things. I am forever grateful for my time with the CCLC." - Saliyah

"... I think this job makes a future job in the green field seem more realistic and attainable. I'm excited to take all that I've learned with this work to other parts of my life. I'm starting a pollinator and vegetable garden in my backyard, actively composting, and starting a nature conservation club at my school." - Wilbur



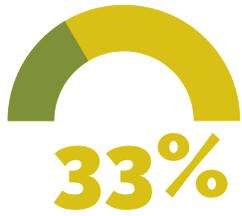
Conserve. Educate. Enjoy.

2021 Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

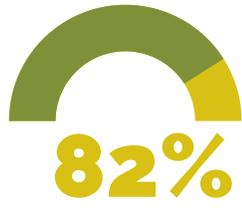


Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

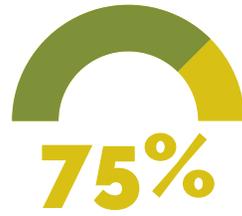
By The Numbers



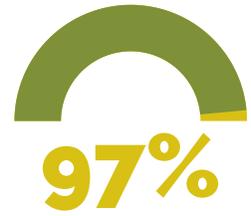
Plan to pursue a career in a green field



Want to stay in contact with program partners about green jobs and alumni events



Would volunteer in the Forest Preserves on their own time



Believe nature is important to protect for future generations

Who we are

African American/Black
37%

White Non-Hispanic
31%

Hispanic/Latino
13%

Asian
6%

Multi Racial
6%

No Answer
7%



39 youth
13 adult leaders

58%
from Chicago

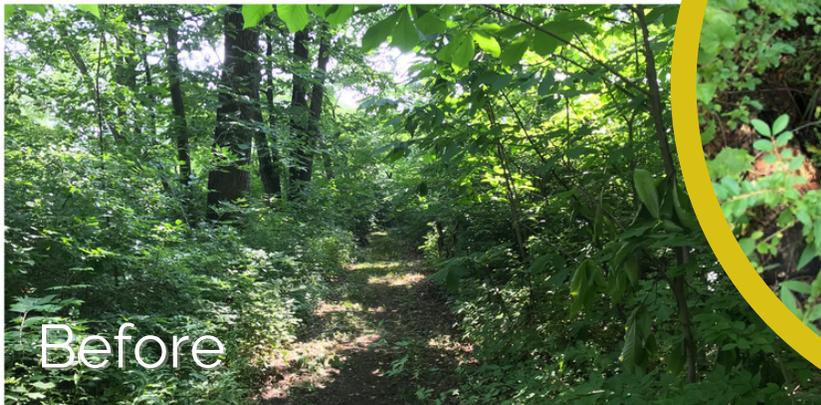
42%
Suburban

RESTORATION

... Funding supported the restoration of 293 acres of the Preserves in areas of the highest need, where invasive species threaten sensitive ecosystems and where habitats have been damaged.

Ecological restoration is the process of returning landscapes to health using scientific knowledge and recognized techniques to create an ecosystem filled with a diversity of native plants and animals.

Before and after removing invasive species.



acres
restored
in 2021
293

GRANTS AWARDED

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY



Sweet Woods \$136,923

This grant funded invasive species removal and re-growth treatment on 176 acres of woodland and 80 acres of wetland in Sweet Woods. This work is part of the ongoing restoration of Sweet Woods, the largest-scale restoration project in the Foundation's history.

Restoration of Cranberry Slough \$35,700

Phase IV saw over 25 acres of tree and foliage thinning in Cranberry Slough, increasing sunlight and promoting native species growth on the forest floor. The Foundation has funded 350 acres of restoration at the 550-acre preserve.





Restoration of Schubert Woods

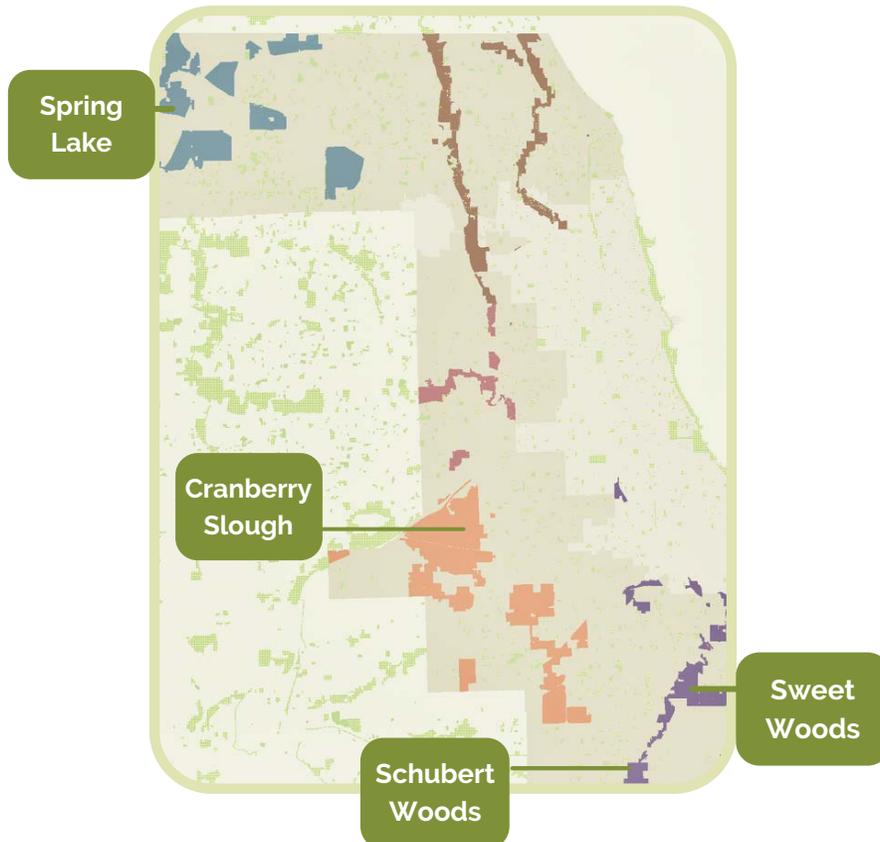
\$9,000

This grant provided for the restoration of 5.4 acres of oak woodland in Schubert Woods; more than double the project's original 2-acre scope. The site is a remnant of pre-settlement woodland ecology and a Forest Preserves priority restoration area.

Spring Lake

\$13,500

This grant provided 3.8 acres of invasive species removal along the Spring Creek headwater, restoring the Creek's riparian buffer and the adjacent wetland meadow. These improvements promote biodiversity and hydrological health at the headwater and further downstream.





FRIENDS OF THE FOREST PRESERVES

Forest Preserve Experience

\$51,000

This grant supported an introductory five-week paid summer jobs program, Forest Preserve Experience, for 127 youth served by the Housing Authority of Cook County.

STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

\$54,000

This grant supported a five-week paid summer jobs program, Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps, for 39 youth conservationists from Chicago and suburban Cook County.

GREENCORPS CHICAGO

Restoration of Sweet Woods

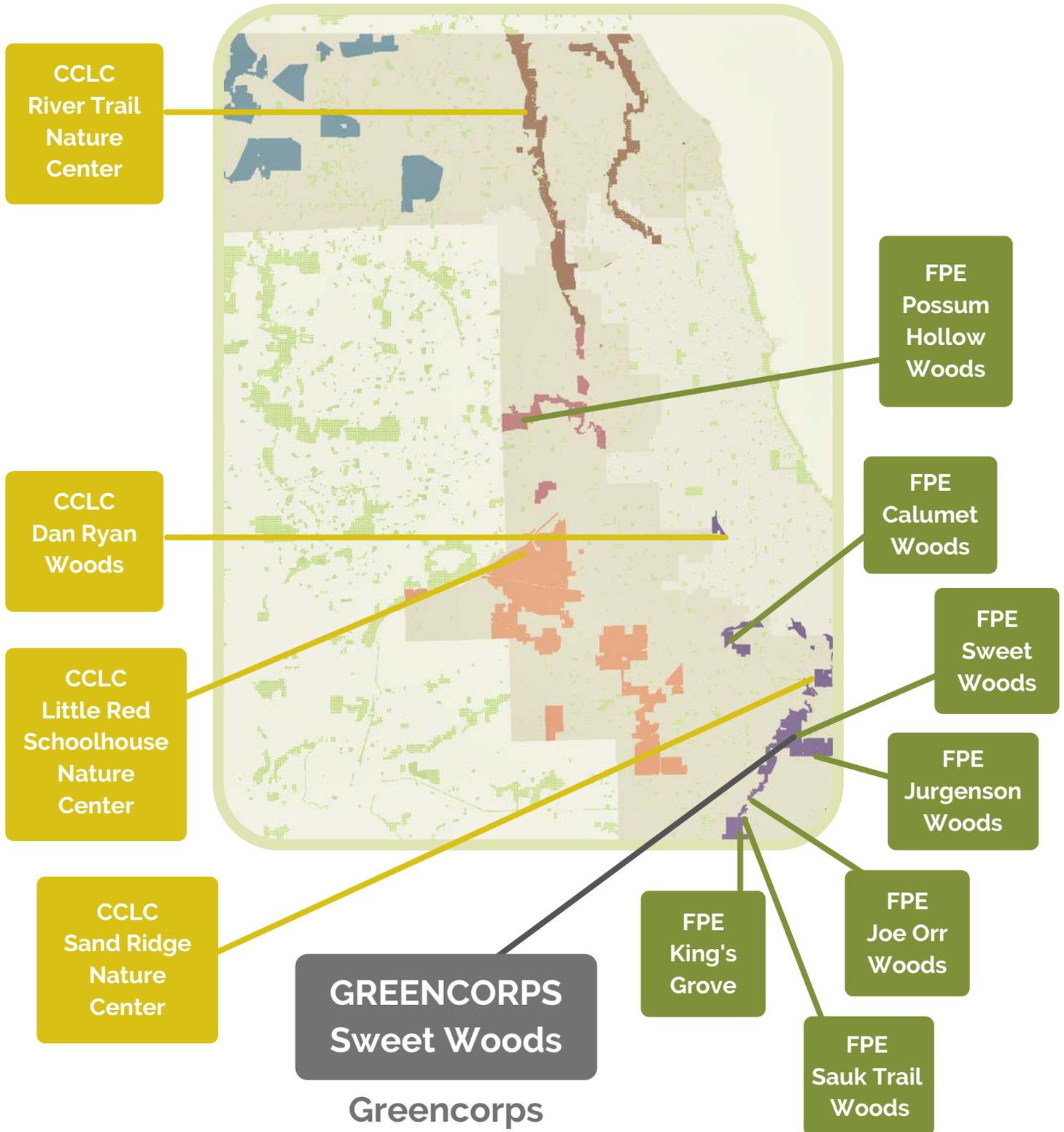
\$24,975

Part of the larger Restoration of Sweet Woods, this grant funded an eight-person restoration crew from Greencorps, a hands-on conservation and jobs training program for adults who face barriers to employment. The crew removed invasives by-hand in areas inaccessible with heavy equipment.

CREW LOCATIONS FOR FPE, CCLC, AND GREENCORPS

Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps (CCLC)

Forest Preserve Experience (FPE)



10TH ANNIVERSARY CONSERVATION CUP

George Dunne International Golf Course
September 9, 2021

... Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and partners, this year's event raised \$223,000, breaking the Conservation Cup fundraising record.



Fundraising & Raising Fun

On Thursday, September 9, 2021, nearly 100 golfers joined the Forest Preserve Foundation for its 10th Annual Conservation Cup. The weather could not have been better, with bright blue skies embracing the lush green of the beautiful George Dunne International Golf Course. Following the challenges of the past two years, it was wonderful to see golfers, along with some non-golfers, relax, have fun and connect in this Forest Preserve gem.

This year's Conservation Cup Committee, chaired by Rana Lee, Courtney Shea and Eric Rockhold, created an event that succeeded in both fundraising and raising fun.



"We want everyone to laugh heartily and leave with fond memories ... and of course, come back next year!"
- Rana Lee, Co-chair

After the on-course games ended, a DJ was on hand to set the party mood as people gathered under the tent for drinks and dinner. Old friends and new connected and kicked back. As the sun set over this gorgeous course, remaining guests gathered by the fire pit on this pleasant evening.



Save the Date! Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022

For the full story of the day and photo gallery visit our [website](#).

FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP

... We are reminded that we have much to celebrate. We started the year welcoming new leadership.

Debra Walker Johnson began her tenure as the new President/Executive director, Jim Beck took the reins as Board Chair, and the Foundation welcomed three new board members.



This past March, the Forest Preserve Foundation welcomed Debra Walker Johnson as its new president. With more than 20 years of nonprofit executive management experience, Debra has dedicated the bulk of her career to connecting individuals with resources and services that enable them to participate in society fully. Her extensive background includes fund development, marketing and communications, advocacy, and government relations. We look forward to her leadership as she charts the next era of growth and impact at the Foundation.



Jim Beck is serving his first term as Forest Preserve Foundation Board Chair. Jim's involvement with the Foundation began with his support of the Conservation Cup. He began serving on the board in 2018. Jim was instrumental in adding new board members and is committed to further expanding the size, diversity and engagement of the board.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

“We are excited to have Claudette, Rana and Eric join our expanding board of directors. Each of them has extensive experience in their respective industries. We value the energy and skills they bring to the board and to the mission of the Forest Preserve Foundation.”

– Jim Beck, Board Chair



The Forest Preserve Foundation added three new members to its board of directors.



Claudette Grant

Vice President, Relationship Manager
Institutional Investment Services
Capital Group



Rana Lee

Principal and Business Development Director
SmithGroup



Eric Rockhold

Managing Director, Co-Head Central Region
Bank of America Merrill Lynch

In Memorium - Albert Pritchett Jr.

The Forest Preserve Foundation board and staff honor the memory of longtime Forest Preserve Foundation board member and Chair Emeritus, Al Pritchett Jr. who passed away this year. Mr. Pritchett was a founding board member of the Foundation who was instrumental in its establishment in 2006.

Mr. Pritchett was a staunch supporter of the Forest Preserve Foundation's mission. He gave generously to the Foundation and encouraged many to do the same. He served with Vision and Passion! His absence from the board will be deeply missed and his legacy and impact will live on.



“Mr. Pritchett was a Renaissance man with a commanding presence. He served in the Navy, was an accomplished multi-sport athlete, and had an incredible public service career. To me he was a great mentor and a loyal friend. Mr. Pritchett had an unlimited deposit in my goodwill bank, so when he called and asked me to join the Foundation Board, it was impossible to say no. He was just a wonderful man.”

- Board Member, Tom Lanctot

“Mr. Pritchett was a dynamic man. He was a leader and a giant who set the tone and mentored people. I was happy to be mentored by him. People who work for us now and who were here at the time he stepped in as Interim Superintendent, are extremely complimentary of Mr. Pritchett and how he handled things to stabilize the ship. He had a demeanor that made you not want to let him down. He will be missed.”

- Superintendent Arnold Randall

FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Beck, Chair

Program Director
Nationwide Retirement Solutions

Tom Lanctot, Vice Chair

CEO
Catholic Investment Services

Mark Lester, Treasurer

Senior Vice President, Government &
Institutional Banking Group
Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

Jeffrey Gray, Secretary

Partner
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Law Offices of Stuart A. Cohn

Stephen Friedman

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Claudette Grant

Vice President, Relationship Manager
Institutional Investment Services
Capital Group

Howard Learner

Executive Director
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Rana Lee

Principal and Business Development Director
SmithGroup

Tom Livingston

Regional Vice President
CSX Transportation

Albert Pritchett

Retired Chief Administrative Officer
for Cook County Board

Arnold Randall

General Superintendent
Forest Preserves of Cook County

Eric Rockhold

Managing Director, Co-Head Central Region
Bank of America Merrill Lynch

Theresa Salus

Regional Experience Manager
REI Co-op

Dr. Stuart Strahl

President/CEO
Chicago Zoological Society

LeeAnn Tomas-Foster

Chicago City Executive
Arcadis U.S., Inc.

Ewa Weir

Senior Vice President
Jones Lang LaSalle

FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION STAFF

Debra Walker Johnson

President & Executive Director

Susanne Fairfax

Communications Manager
(August 2021 - Present)

Samuel Davis

Development Associate

Cassandra West

Communications Director
(January – June 2021)

In Gratitude

\$100,000 +

Forest Preserves of Cook County
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

\$20,000 - \$99,999

Central Indiana Community Foundation
CSX Transportation, Inc.
Indigo Golf Partners
REI

\$5,000 - \$19,999

Anonymous
Bank of America
Barnes & Thornburg
d'Escoto, Inc.
Enbridge
Thomas Lanctot
Lumpkin Family Foundation
Nationwide Solutions
Network For Good
Nixon Peabody
Pizzo & Associates
Dr. Stuart D. Strahl
Walder Foundation

\$2,500 - \$4,999

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Brown & Brown Insurance
BurgherGray LLP
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Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.
F. H. Paschen, S. N. Nielsen
Stephen Friedman
Levin Schreder Carey
Reyes Kurson Ltd.
S.B. Friedman Development Advisors
Siebert Williams Shank & Co.
SmithGroup JJR
Sycamore Advisors, LLC
Tallgrass Restoration
Wells Fargo Securities

\$1,000 - \$2,499

American Veterans Group, PBC
Christy Webber Landscapes
Civiltech Engineering, Inc.
Stuart and Vivian A. Cohn
Columbia Capital Management, LLC
DeVore Radunsky Miller Berger LLC
DLZ
FGM Architects
Good Heart Work Smart Foundation
Jeff Gray
Greenberg Traurig, LLP
Eleanor Grumman
Howard Learner
Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone P.L.C
Morgan Stanley
NuStar Foundation
Schwab Charitable
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
Daryl Wilson

\$100 - \$999

Arlington Heights Garden Club
Judith Arnold
Lucy Ascoli
BAC Administrative District Council 1 of Illinois
Katie Balogh
David Brint
Tim Burge
Michelle Burge
Barbara Cali
The Children's School
Susan Dalton
Shelley A. Davis
Charles Diewald
Ana and Jim Doyle
Lee Edwards
Margaret Fahrenbach
Michael Farrell
Stuart A. Feldman
Laura Ferrell
Janet Foutty
Deborah Franczek
Deborah Gaebler-Spira
Garden Club of Morgan Park Beverly Hills
Dianne M. Ghaster
Bob Glaves

continued ...

\$100 - \$999 continued

Claudette Grant
David Grumman
Cornelia Grumman
Angela Hamilton
Alexis Hubbard
Patricia L. Kammeyer
Mary K. Krigbaum
Rana Lee
David Levinson
Laura Linger
Mary Rita Luecke
Marc S. Martinez
Emily Meyer
James F. Monhart
Ann Petric
Arnold Randall
Jessica Rauch
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Theresa Salus
Serge and Elena Shevlyagin
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Steven Sondheimer
Ben Spencer
Barbara Stoldt
Lawrence Suffredin
Monica Thuet
LeeAnn Tomas-Foster
Sara Urizar
Ewa Weir
Cassandra West
David and Emily Wiegand
Carolyn Williams Meza
Paula Wolff

Below \$99

Blackbaud Giving Fund
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Dana Cortez
Sharon Creamean
Joan Crist
Matthew Davies
Frontstream
Kate Hana
Kevin Hooper
Mary Hutchinson
Lisa Keplinger
Jamie King
Robert Liningier
Matthew O'Rourke
Chris Osorio
Patricia A. Palmer
Donna Patitucci
Elizabeth A. Patterson
Joe Pedziwiatr
Alan Pilgrim
Kayla Reda
Steven Sherman
Dr. Max Slager
Rebekah Snyder
Constance Stelmaszczyk
Julie Stone
Wendy Wilder

Memorial/Tribute Gifts

Michael Bartlett
Jeannette Casey
David Curry
Brad Feldman
Lindsay Foreman
Ana Garcia-Doyle
Karen Gray-Keeler
The Hajdu Group
Trees and Words Book Group
Barbara A. Koch
Pat Kritzman
Layne Lebahn
Dorothea Nawara
Douglas Rothkopf
Ryan Schirmang
Stephen W. Schwab
Eli Shearn
David Simmons
Catherine Villinski
Jay Zimble



Acknowledgements

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Conservation Cup Committee

Rana Lee (co-chair)
Eric R. Rockhold (co-chair)
Courtney Shea (co-chair)
Jim Beck
Jason E. DeVore
Carleen Schreder
LeeAnn Tomas-Foster
Ewa Weir
Claire Williams
Jered Wieland
Justin Erkfritz-Gay
Josh Geppi
Larry Richey
Anngie Richter
Michael Witte

Conservation Cup Event Management

Indigo Golf
Tailored Events
Fab Photo

Conservation Cup Volunteers

Cheryl Lawrence
Wanda Llorens
Jim Medd
Anngie Richter
Julia Speller
Audrey Tolliver

In-kind

Brookfield Zoo
Indigo Golf
Wines for Humanity

Office of the Cook County Board President

Toni Preckwinkle, President
Pamela Cummings
Nick Mathiowdis

Forest Preserves of Cook County

General Superintendent
Arnold Randall
Deputy Superintendent Eileen Figel
Office of the General Superintendent
Office of the Deputy Superintendent
Department of Resource Management
Department of Conservation and
Experiential Programming
Department of Permits, Concessions
and Volunteer Resources
Department of Communications

Editorial, Design, Video and Photo Credits

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Susanne Fairfax Media
Student Conservation Association
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Daemicke, Songju Ma Daemicke, Sophia
Desai, Varsha Hemmady-Wright, Nadine
Naber, Jestine Alissa Ware

LIFETIME INVESTMENT

\$2.8 million

lifetime investment in our mission

537

next generation environmental leaders supported

1,159

acres restored via ecological restoration

“ We believe nature is a vital resource for everyone's enjoyment, experience, and existence. ”

Thank you for your support!
The Forest Preserve Foundation

