

Creating Access for All at Averill Preserve

Your donations making Little Forks' first accessible trail a reality!



Thanks to members like you, Little Forks will break ground on our Averill Access for All project soon!

Little Forks Conservancy will break ground on our first accessible trail as soon as this spring!

Thanks to generous donations by members like you, Little Forks has reached our initial fundraising goal! The final fundraising goal will be determined by the bids for construction.

"The way that our community has rallied around this project is so inspiring," said Board President Jon DeGroot. "I'd especially like to thank Dave & Patti Kepler, who championed this project from the very beginning."

Little Forks announced the Averill Preserve Access for All Project last summer.

Through this project, the decade-old crushed stone at the overlook will be replaced with asphalt. A new concrete viewing area will provide an exceptional view of the Tittabawassee River.

Little Forks' first accessible trail will lead visitors from the overlook into the preserve. Inside the trail loop will be a nature play area.

"The play area will be a place where kids can use nature to feed their imaginations," said

Executive Director Greg Yankee. "We don't want to define how they play."

New directional and interpretive signage will be placed along the trail. Little Forks is also looking at other ways of interpreting the property for all ages and abilities.

"When completed, everyone – from people with wheelchairs to families with strollers – will be able to explore this beautiful property," said Greg. "We can't wait to share this preserve with them."

To learn more about making Averill accessible, visit www.littleforks.org.

Little Forks would like to thank our local foundations for their support of this project:

- Bay Area Community Foundation
- Charles J. Strosacker Foundation
- Consumers Energy Foundation
- The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation
- Midland Area Community Foundation
- MACF's Access to Recreation Fund
- MACF's Dow Corning Donor Advised Fund
- Patricia and Dave Kepler Foundation
- Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation
- Saginaw Bay WIN

The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and preserves natural lands that add to the quality of life in our mid-Michigan community.

Director: Conservation for All

by Greg Yankee,
Executive Director

The Averill Preserve Access for All project is several things: it is a real, physical project with blueprints, engineering reports, and – of course – budgets; it is also a message that we are committed to making our work accessible for more members of the community who want to enjoy time in nature.

Perhaps most importantly, it is a symbol of an ethic that pervades the work of The Little Forks Conservancy: if our work is only valued by our staff, board, and donors, then we will fall well short of our goal that it survives for generation upon generation.

Make no mistake: our work will always have as its backbone the natural resources of mid-Michigan. The rivers, lakes, forests, and fields

that make this a wonderful place to call home are why we all are excited to head into work each day. But these natural resources do not exist in a vacuum.

They have intrinsic ecological value, but they also have tremendous social value. The role that nature can play for the mental development of children and the mental rehabilitation of senior citizens is well established. The health benefits of spending time in nature, regardless of age, is not in question.

What is all too often in question is whether those benefits are available to people, regardless of their physical ability. We are excited for this project to begin an ongoing conversation about how The Little Forks Conservancy can best serve the landscapes, waterways and communities in which we work.

Lunch & Learn Series in Clare

Little Forks and the Pere Marquette District Library are excited to announce that our Lunch & Learn program is back for a second year!

Join us at noon for one or all of these great

topics! Lunch will be provided.

“Conserving Your Land” will be the topic on March 15. We’ll learn “What is a Watershed?” on April 19. Discover “Conservation@Home and Work” on May 25.

Lunch & Learn is free to attend. To register, call (989) 386-7576 or visit www.pmdl.org.

2017 Chippewa Nature Center Programs with Little Forks Conservancy

Traipsing for Trillium at Szok Preserve
Wed., May 17 | 6-7:30 pm

Enjoy a leisurely walk to discover woodland wildflowers, ferns and flowering trees at the Little Forks’

Albert and Virginia Szok Preserve. Mayapples, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Trillium and many others grow in this hilly preserve adjacent to Pine Haven Recreation Area. Meet CNC Interpretive Naturalist Jeanne Henderson at the Szok Preserve sign.



Details at www.chippewanaturecenter.org

Welcome Sara Huetteman!

Little Forks Conservancy is pleased to welcome AmeriCorps member Sara Huetteman to its team. As the Land Steward, Sara will be helping to manage trails, reduce invasive species populations and improve river bank stability within our preserves.

Sara graduated from Central Michigan University in 2014 with a bachelor’s in Biology with a concentration in Natural Resources.

“I look forward to gaining more knowledge



AmeriCorps Member
Sara Huetteman

about conservation and land management,” she said about her service.

Sara is serving through the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program (www.huronpines.org).

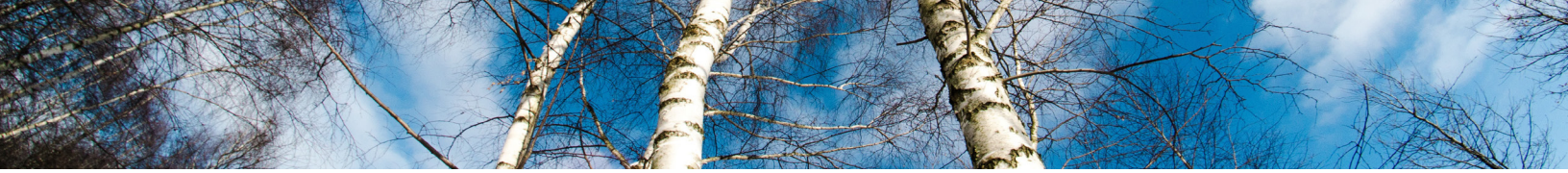
“To get up early, go out, and stand in the river is not something you typically do on a Saturday! I really enjoyed it, because it was so different. I’m not afraid of bugs. I always liked bugs growing up, so it kind of brought me back almost to childhood a bit – just going out collecting bugs.”

- Volunteer Katie Young, talking about the Cedar River Monitoring Project



Read More of Katie’s Story at <http://bit.ly/LFC020617>

wild about
nature



Couple Conserves Treasured Tree Farm

On perhaps the coldest day of December 2016, Sally Hightower rushed out without a jacket to welcome staff members of Little Forks Conservancy to the Twisted Oak Tree Farm. Before going inside the house she shares with her wife, Linda Caldwell, Sally led us to one of her favorite spots – a high ridge overlooking the Tittabawassee River.



Greg Yankee, Linda Caldwell, Sally Hightower, and Elan Lipschitz after the signing a conservation easement.

Sally had made the decision to purchase her 37.5 acre property after standing in almost that exact same spot in 1979.

On that cold December morning, she brought

our staff back to that spot before signing a conservation easement with Little Forks Conservancy to conserve her property forever.

Read more about Sally and Linda's decision to conserve their land with Little Forks Conservancy on our website at <http://bit.ly/LFC011817>.



Memorials and Honoraria

The following donors have made gifts to The Little Forks Conservancy on behalf of friends and family.

In Honor of Tom Misner
David Misner

In Memory of Hugh & Eileen Starks
Libby Starks-Thompson

In Memory of George Lane
Roger Bohl

In Memory of Kathy Bohl
Roger Bohl

Reaching Out to the Next Generation

When Little Forks helps a local family conserve the land they love, we make a pretty big promise to them – that their land will be cared for forever.

How can keep that promise? By inspiring the next generation of conservationists!

Conservation Outreach Coordinator Andrea

Foster has been taking on that challenge.

"I have seen so much interest from kids that probably wouldn't normally look twice," Andrea said. "The seed ball project was great."

This winter, Andrea worked with local middle schools and The ROCK to make over 500 seed

balls that will be given away throughout our community.

But, it's not just about getting their hands dirty. It's about showing them what they can do to help.

She said, "You can see something click in their brain, when they are truly engaged and interested. That spark?"



It's what ignites our next generation's young conservationists."

Read more about our youth outreach at <http://bit.ly/LFC021917>.

Spring Stream Sampling Scheduled!

Join us in continuing our stream monitoring program! Volunteers will be back in the Cedar River on Saturday, May 13 collecting data to determine the water quality of the watershed.

We will meet at the Gladwin Community

Building at 9 a.m. to break into teams and sample 6 sites.

Lunch and snacks will be provided thanks to a donation from Meijer!

Volunteers can also help identify samples on Monday, May 15 at 6 pm at the Little Forks office.



For more details or to sign up, contact Andrea at afoster@littleforks.org.





The Little Forks Conservancy
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Midland, MI 48640

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Your Winter Newsletter



Always wanted to try composting at home? Little Forks Conservancy and Square Roots will show you how in this hands-on workshop!

Thursday, March 16 • 6 - 7:30 p.m.
at Chippewa Nature Center

Local experts will help you discover two great at-home techniques – the Bokashi Method and worm composting! Special guest Stephanie Richardson will be there to discuss the importance of composting, how the City of Midland composts, and how you can, too!

The workshop is free, but registration is required.

To register, call 989.835.4886 or email afoster@littleforks.org.



Help get our preserves in tip-top shape for the season!

Riverview Natural Area
March 20 • 5:30-7 p.m.

Szok Preserve
March 29 • 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Forestview Natural Area
April 13 • 2-4 p.m.

Averill Preserve
April 19 • 5:30-7 p.m.

To sign up, email Andrea at afoster@littleforks.org!