



2024 Gratitude Report

The Power of Volunteers



2024 Gratitude Report



2024 was an amazing year in so many ways.

You Volunteered!

Over 200 of you gave more than 5,000 hours of your time, energy and enthusiasm to TLC. This

is why we wanted to highlight “the power of volunteers” in this gratitude report. Whether you were clearing brush at a TLC site, greeting guests at Art of the Land, tagging plants at our Native Plant Sale, or helping out in one of many other ways, your dedication made a real and lasting impact.

These acts help TLC accomplish much more than we could otherwise, allowing us to partner with more people to preserve more places that would be lost to neglect or development.

You will see more stories of our volunteers as you turn the pages.

You Preserved Land for Life!

Thanks to you, we added 16 acres to Boloria Meadows Nature Preserve—creating more space for wildlife and future generations to enjoy. Adding a buffer to a 41-acre nature preserve protects this high-quality habitat from the impact of development, giving the rare and endangered species that live there a home forever. You will read more stories about this and other special places preserved for life in the pages that follow.

Your Gift Made an Impact!

Every gift is important, no matter the size—a gift is an action you have taken. It demonstrates that you value McHenry County’s open spaces—whether it’s a one-acre parcel, or a vast expanse of farmland. It shows that you value

clean air and water, scenic views and the community support for conservation in our area!

In 2024 we received our largest gift of stock (over \$100,000) and our largest gift from an estate (\$136,000).

The surprise stock gift—from a long-time member who decided to share her good fortune when a stock she owned saw a big increase in value—was invested in TLC’s operating reserve to ensure we manage cash flow throughout the year, and also weather economic downturns. The funds provide an important buffer in a dynamic and unpredictable world!

When the \$136,000 gift arrived, it was a total mystery. After a few phone calls, we learned that it was from the estate of Jan and Al Kennedy. Jan was a long-time TLC board member and former Board President who died in 2022. Her devoted husband and long-time TLC member and volunteer, Al, joined her in 2024. The gift was designated for TLC’s investment reserve to provide ongoing sustainable income for TLC’s land conservation operations in perpetuity.

There is a thread that runs through all of these events: TLC’s long-term sustainability.

As you read the stories on these pages, I hope you see yourself in there too! Whether you are a member, volunteer, easement owner, native plant enthusiast, someone restoring your land, or all of the above, you amplify TLC’s partnership with the community to create a sustainable place for humans and nature in McHenry County—our home—today and forever.

Thank you for everything you do. You are the heart of this work.

 Lisa Haderlein,
Executive Director

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

P.O. Box 352, Woodstock, IL 60098
815-337-9502

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: Cheri Magrini’s *Conservation@Home* photo received first place in TLC’s 2024 *Art of the Land* photo contest.

Volunteers Who Made a Difference in 2024



Cheri Magrini—*Spreading kindness and love for native plants.*

Cheri embodies the spirit of giving in everything she does, and the TLC community is stronger because of her generosity. As a volunteer, she shares her time, talent and warmth. As a *Conservation@Home* volunteer, she welcomes new participants with encouraging words and a friendly smile that instantly puts people at ease.

From helping at native plant sales, to inspiring her women's group to host a pollinator presentation, to sharing her stunning nature photography, Cheri finds meaningful ways to connect people to the land.

On her own six acres of oak woods, her care for nature is evident in every detail.

Last fall, when oak saplings sprouted in an inconvenient corner of her yard, Cheri didn't discard them—she dug them up, potted them, and shared them with fellow *Conservation@Home* members who could give them a good home.

Cheri's kindness—to people, to the land, and to the natural world—spreads in lasting ways. Supporters like Cheri remind us that conservation is not just about protecting land, but about building a caring, connected community that sustains it.



Tom Ziomek—*Generous Problem Solver.*

At TLC, when we think of Tom Ziomek, we think of a generous problem solver. Tom doesn't wait to be asked—he sees a need and steps up to make a difference.

When owlets needed rescuing from a dangerous tree, Tom put on his climbing gear and safely moved them. When trails at Yonder Prairie needed mowing, he loaded up his mower in Algonquin and drove to Woodstock to take care of it—no questions asked. From assisting with prescribed burns to removing invasive brush, Tom is there.

His dedication even extends behind the scenes. Tom developed a custom software program that helped volunteers and staff efficiently process plant orders during TLC's Native Plant Sale, saving time and improving the experience.

Tom's commitment doesn't stop in the field. He also stewards his own two-acre *Conservation@Home*—certified oak woods, nurturing the land with the same care he brings to his TLC efforts. In 2024 alone, Tom donated over 250 hours of his time—a remarkable gift that has made a lasting impact on both the land and the people who care for it.

Supporters like Tom show us what's possible when generosity meets action. His contributions strengthen the entire TLC community—and inspire others to do the same.

In 2024, TLC Native Plant Sale shoppers added to the local landscape...

9,653 & **873**
native plants trees & shrubs



Land Preserved for Life in 2024

Strano Farm Conservation Easement

Thanks to the vision and generosity of Karen Strano, a remarkable piece of Bull Valley's natural heritage will now be protected forever. When she and her husband Brian purchased their 81-acre farm in 1987, it was largely covered in row crops. Over the decades, Karen transformed the land—planting thousands of trees, converting fields to hay and pasture, and restoring an eight-acre oak savanna by removing invasive brush to reveal its natural beauty.

In 2024, Karen partnered with TLC to place a conservation easement on the property. Her action ensures this cherished land will never be developed and will remain protected farmland for generations to come—an enduring gift to the community and the planet.



Boloria Meadows Nature Preserve Addition

In Sept. 2024, TLC expanded Boloria Meadows Nature Preserve with the addition of 16 acres of protected land, thanks to the generosity of a longtime Bull Valley family. This beautiful extension—featuring oak woods, wetlands, and a headwater stream—is located along Ridge Road, which will provide easy community access to the preserve.

Plans are underway to create a small parking area and a new trail segment that will connect visitors to the heart of Boloria's 56-acre landscape. This addition not only enhances public access but also ensures that this vital natural area will be preserved forever—a lasting legacy made possible by donors who care about protecting the land we love.





Eckert Cemetery Prairie

A rare and unique piece of Illinois' natural heritage is being protected and restored, thanks to the support of dedicated donors and volunteers. Eckert Cemetery Prairie, located on Queen Anne Road north of Woodstock, is just one acre in size—but it's an extraordinary one.

Never plowed, this site preserves a remnant of Illinois' original tallgrass prairie, a landscape that once covered 21 million acres but now survives on less than 1/100th of 1 percent of that area. Land like this is often only found in places like old cemeteries and railroad rights of way.

Originally set aside in 1853 by the Eckert family for the burials of local German immigrants, the site had fallen into neglect in recent years due to confusion about ownership. Today, TLC has title to the property. Thanks to your generosity, restoration efforts are underway. Volunteers—including descendants of those buried at the site—are now helping to bring this historic prairie back to life.

Your support makes stories like this possible—where history, community and conservation come together to protect the land we treasure.

New Bridge at Gateway Park

Thanks to the generosity of Deborah Church and Pam Schroeder, visitors to Gateway Park in Harvard can now enjoy a beautiful new bridge that provides access to the park's walking trail. Their sponsorship made the construction possible and reflects their connection to the land.

For Deborah, Gateway Park holds special meaning. She and Pam made the first donation to Gateway years ago in memory of her father by sponsoring one of the park's entry signs. By supporting this project, Deborah and Pam are not only honoring her father's legacy—they've created something lasting for the community to enjoy.



Volunteers Help Food Forest Come to Life

The TLC Food Forest is coming to life, thanks to the support of generous donors and dedicated volunteers. Volunteers and staff have begun planting and shaping the landscape—transforming it into a vibrant, living space that will nourish both people and wildlife for years to come. This progress is possible because of community support. Volunteers have shown up to plant, weed, water and care for the land. And as the forest



grows, so does the circle of support. Local groups like 4H and the Pioneer Center have joined in, bringing new energy and fresh faces to the work.

Last fall, students from the Sustainable Agriculture class at the College of Lake County helped install a native buffer along the property's south edge—designed to provide food and shelter for birds, beneficial insects, and other wildlife, while also creating a natural boundary between the forest and the neighboring farmland.

Your support is what fuels this kind of hands-on conservation and community connection. It's more than just planting trees—it's planting the seeds of education, access and ecological health.



Project Quercus Hosted Spring and Fall Oak Plantings

For several years, TLC's Dave Zeiger has led oak plantings each spring and fall—offering individuals and families a way to honor and remember loved ones through the gift of a living tree. In addition to memorial and celebration plantings, Dave also organizes tree planting days for schoolchildren and their families, inviting them to take an active role in restoring our native oak ecosystems.

Whether it's a tribute to someone special, or a hands-on learning experience, planting an oak tree is a joyful and lasting act—one that deepens our bond with the land and with each other.

There are many ways to volunteer with TLC

These are just a few of the many people who share their talents to help TLC preserve land for life. Do you have a special skill that you would like to share? Fill out the volunteer form at ConserveMC.org/volunteer or contact gmaki@conservemc.org. Thank you!

Local realtor and TLC member, Alisha Mowbray, has volunteered her time and real estate expertise in TLC's evaluation of farm properties.



Kevin Yapp is a member with extensive marketing expertise. TLC was fortunate to have him volunteer his time to help formulate an updated strategic plan for 2025, which will help set priorities and resources for the next few years.

Both Alisha and Kevin own *The Blue Farm* in Harvard where they have hosted the *Fall Seed Sharing* event, and they will be hosting a *Learning Circle* there this summer.

Corinne Hardt is a talented graphic communications specialist in print media and photography enthusiast who does the design and layout of the *Field Notes* newsletter and this Gratitude Report. She also helps in the office, along with several others, to mail our newsletters to members.



Caring for the Creek

Meet Derek Kessler and Emily Jones, *Conservation@Home* caretakers of the land AND water! It was a wintery blizzard of a day when they were the only potential buyers able to view their future home on the banks of the Nippersink Creek in Spring Grove. The fates intervened in their favor, and they've been hard at work on their property since April 2024.

"This last year, we were especially focused on removing invasive species to create more space for native plants, helping to restore a balance of flora and fauna on our property," explained Emily and Derek. Invasive species take up space, nutrients, and alter the soil chemistry of our native habitats. By removing invasive brush like buckthorn, honeysuckle, and burning bush, acorns will have the ability to access more sunlight and successfully grow to replace the oldest oaks.

They've also been voluntarily removing trash that has accumulated over the years along the creek. Water continuously flows and carries everything with it, and they hope to leave their land healthier to benefit their downstream neighbors, human and otherwise. For future expansion, they'd also like to create a dedicated space in the sunny upland area of their yard for growing vegetables, blending sustainable food production with their conservation efforts.

As owners of Prairie's Edge Garden, a regenerative farm based in Harvard, they've got the skills and knowledge to make this happen.

Derek and Emily are lucky enough to have some native woodland wildflowers growing in remnant patches, including Virginia bluebells and bloodroot. This is a sign of hope for their soil



conditions, and motivation to continue their restoration work in this neighborhood setting.

"The *Conservation@Home* program's recognition, including the yard sign, felt like a meaningful way to share our efforts and spark conversations within our community. It's going to be a great tool to inspire neighbors and spread awareness about sustainable landscaping, and we hope to encourage as many people as possible to adopt these principles for the benefit of our local ecosystem."

In 2024

TLC staff & volunteers conducted

73
visits

to *Conservation@Home* and
Conservation@Work sites.



Learning Circles Offer Connection for Women Farmland Owners

You can find us under the shade of oak tree; in the bones of an old barn; in the lush green fields full of green beans and tomatoes, dahlias and zinnias; peeking at a mama sow having just given birth; or in the pastures rubbing the soft noses of cattle and clucking back at the chickens.

The women farmers of Arrowleaf Prairie Farm, Gold Fern Farm and Terra Vitae Farms opened up their farms to Learning Circles in 2024. In total, we had 70 women farmers and landowners attend these three events through the summer. We made new friends and deepened relationships with our consistent attendees.

At each Learning Circle we focus on different topics, generally developed around the host-farm's strengths and "growth edges".



Jeanne Janson of IL FarmLink, Marisa Maggio of Starry Nights Farm, and TLC's own Sarah Michehl.

Our circle has been growing with these landowners, and we continue to take the pulse of the group. Where should we grow next? Where can we go deeper? As we watch funding get slashed for the



In 2024, we covered:

- ❖ starting a farm business
- ❖ incorporating native flowers into cut flower bouquets
- ❖ transitioning to no-till, regeneratively grazed livestock
- ❖ whole farm planning, and
- ❖ how to focus on personal and climate resilience.

We welcomed outside perspectives and resource professionals, such as former farmer and yoga instructor, now carpenter, Carina Mae Vowels, as well as Christina Foster of Climate Land Leaders,

"One day you'll tell the story of this season, not as someone who had everything figured out, but as someone who lived courageously right here." —Morgan Harper Nichols

federal conservation practices that we promote, we instead look to what we can do ourselves and in community. What skills can we teach each other? What tools can we share?

This year we're looking forward to creating space for more courageous storytelling and growing a deeper understanding of the beauty and challenges of stewarding land.

Stay tuned for more details at: [Conservemc.org/womenslearningcircle](https://conservemc.org/womenslearningcircle), or reach out to Claire Hodge, our coordinator, for more info: chodge@conservemc.org.

CLIP 2024: A Summer Journey



**TLC has hosted 20 interns since the program's inception in 2021.
The program is on hiatus for 2025, but will be back in 2026!**

The Conservation Leader Internship Program (CLIP) is a paid summer internship that provides students with hand-on professional training in the field of conservation. In 2024, TLC was fortunate to host four interns and one crew leader to learn new skills and assist with restoration efforts.

In the words of the interns:

"CLIP has given us the amazing opportunity to learn an abundance of valuable skills that we otherwise would have likely never learned, and the chance to see what the world of conservation and ecology looks like as we enter the workforce."

We've met so many people along the way who have helped us on this journey and many friends who have used their time to teach us valuable lessons. Thank you to all the wonderful people who have helped us on our summer journey."

Volunteer Hours

Volunteers are part of TLC's success, with **218** people donating a total of **5,305** hours in 2024! That's equivalent to nearly 3 full-time employees!

5,305 VOLUNTEER HOURS

Art of the Land.....	140	2.6%	Maintenance/Mowing.....	31	0.6%
Burns	119	2.2%	Sustainability Sale	486	9.2%
Conservation@Home	151	2.8%	New Years Eve Oak Rescue.....	75	1.4%
Food Forest.....	63	1.2%	Office	268	5.0%
Frog Monitoring	2	0.04%	Planet Palooza.....	14	0.3%
General Restoration Workday	2,916	55.0%	Site Stewards	1,042	19.6%

TOP HOURS DONATED (250+)

735 — Dennis Dreher	300.5 — Ted Thornton
373 — Larry Fetzer	256 — Bernd Alden
321 — Bruce Kessler	250.5 — Tom Ziomek



Art Prizes

First prize: \$250
Two honorable
mentions: \$100
each



Call for Art

Artists, Artisans
and Youth Artists

ArtoftheLand.org

Application deadline:
Sunday, Sept. 7



Juried art show and benefit

Friday, Oct. 24, & Saturday,
Oct. 25, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

The Starline Factory Harvard

Show Your Support for Art and Nature in McHenry County
Become a Sponsor!

Art of the Land would not be possible without the support of our generous sponsors! Nearly 100 artists, artisans and photographers take part in *Art of the Land*, and over 500 people attend the two-day event. Proceeds from the event benefit land preservation in McHenry County.

Sponsorships start at \$250. Go to www.artoftheland.org/#sponsor or use the QR code to learn more.

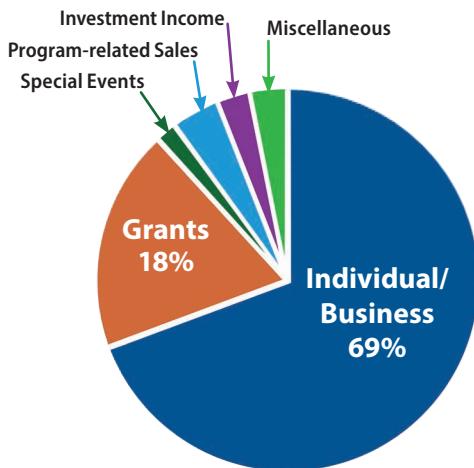


2024 Financial Summary

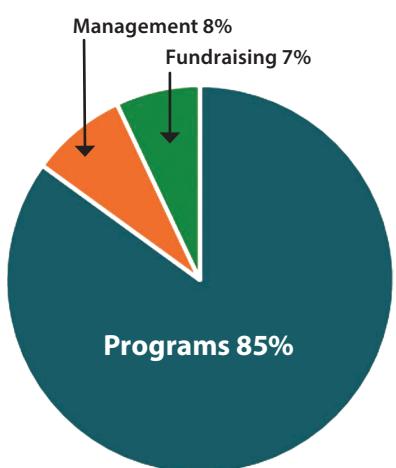
Liabilities and Net Assets as of December 31, 2024

Notes payable	\$ 110,315
Accounts payable/accrued liabilities	\$ 31,881
Funds held for others	\$ 60,936
Total Liabilities	\$ 203,132
Easement Defense Fund	\$ 540,164
Long-term (land) Management Fund	\$ 652,103
Yonder Pipeline Reserve	\$ 207,496
Oak Conservation Fund	\$ 16,466
Operating Reserve	\$ 100,000
Donor restricted funds	\$ 170,316
Land and Equipment (less debt)	\$ 6,300,665
Unrestricted Assets (Cash)	\$ 208,295
Net Assets	\$ 8,195,505
Net Assets and Liabilities	\$ 8,398,637

2024 INCOME



2024 EXPENSES



Community Foundation for McHenry County

TLC has three endowed funds at the Community Foundation for McHenry County that were created to provide long-term management funding for the properties that TLC owns. TLC receives 4% of the balance in each fund averaged over the prior eight quarters. These funds support stewardship of the lands that TLC owns.

TLC Fund	\$ 226,666.78
TLC Endowment Fund	\$ 46,139.61
Boloria NP Endowment Fund	\$ 98,669.63
TOTAL	\$ 371,476.02

2024 Donors

LEGEND

 Apple Creek Community Food Forest Stewardship	 Crowley Oak Woods Stewardship	 Memorial Oaks Stewardship
 Beaver Dams Stewardship	 Easement Endowment Fund	 Monthly Donors
 Boloria Meadows Nature Preserve	 Food Forest	 Thompson Road Preserve
 CLIP	 Irish Oaks Stewardship	 WPPC
	 Long Term Management Fund	



The Wingate Circle includes those members who donated \$1,000 or more.

Margaret & Robert Bailey 

Orrin & Patricia Bangert / Blue Stem Tree Farm

Emily & Gerald Berendt 

Bluestem Ecological Services

James & Elizabeth Bramsen

Kellan Brancato

Shawn M. Cavanaugh

Melissa Cooney

Kathleen & Dwight Dalton

Davey Tree Expert Company

Letitia Dewith-Anderson 

Melodie Feeley / The Broken Bowl

Larry Fetzer

Russell & Sara Foscz

Hugh & Marlene Fribie

Full Circle Foundation

Carol Giamattei  

Ted & Deborah Groat 

Melissa Grycan

Gerry & Bill Cowlin Foundation

GWF Johnsburg LLC 

Lisa Haderlein & Tom Cubr 

Ann Haderlein 

David Hall

Jeffrey Hoffmann

Chris & Angela Hutchins / Four Feathers Nation

John T. James

Eugene & Sasha Jarvis

Steve & June Keibler

Al Kennedy

Shawn Kingzette

Ross & Jean Knutson

Tom & Andrea Krauss 

John & Marilyn Krenger / Sanctuary Farms 

Karen Lavin & Wayne Heimiller

Lichtenheld Family Foundation

Elizabeth Liebman 

Rebecca Liebman 

Thomas Liebman 

Mackie Consultants

Peter & Cheri Magrini

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Michele Mellor & Mike Jenkins

Barbara Oughton

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Marcia Poedtke

Mani & Elaine Ramesh 

Paul & Christine Rechten 

Paul Rice 

Richard & Helen Robbins Family Foundation, Inc.

Sandra & Daniel Scheinfeld / Big Cat Foundation

Chris Schellhaass 

Randy & Nancy Schietzelt 

Ingrid & Wilbert Schulze

Jack & Judy Speer

Judith Stockdale & Jonathan Boyer

Peter Swenson & Lauri Halma Swenson 

Sandie Tepsick

The Nature Conservancy  

Ted Thornton 

Tyler Verba / VISION313

Robert & Molly Walsh

Steve & Caron Wenzel / Blazing Star, Inc.

Terry Willcockson

Willow Springs Charitable Trust

Philip Zack

Meaghan Zeiner / Headwaters Pottery 

Tom Ziomek & Sandra Mattison

2024 Donors

\$500-\$999

Ders & Kathe Anderson
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 Norman & Marilyn Wentland
 Lorna Bauer Wolff
 Nancy Wright
 David & Colleen Zeiger 

\$250-\$499

Fraida & Robert Aland
 Bernd Alden
 Algonquin Garden Club
 Sylvia Asplund
 Catherine Bachand
 Brian Balduf
 Baxter & Woodman Inc.
 Kevin & Ana Blair
 Margo Blair
 Fred Boelter / Boelter Risk Sciences & Engineering LLC
 David & Donna Brandt 
 Scott & Kim Brix / Wildzyme Bioproducts, Inc. 
 Stephen Brown
 Sandra & Dan Bury 
 David & Bette Chwalisz 
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 Brenda Dahlfors
 Zachary Dolezal / Duke's Alehouse & Kitchen
 Dennis Dreher
 Kevin Eldridge 

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 Patricia Honemann
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 Great Kane Wild Ones
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 Danita Witkowski
 Gerald & Pam Witt
 Brad & Kay Wych

\$100-\$249

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 Sarah Avang
 Jay & Nancy Adami
 Jeanne Adams
 James Alwill
 Amanda Anderson
 Sara Arnold
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 Cathy Berlinger-Gustafson
 Beth Bernstein
 Virgil Berry
 Bill & Kathy Betke
 Lorrayne Biermann
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 Robert Bower
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 Greg Burnett
 Tom Burroughs
 Linda Byrne
 Dave & Joyce Byron
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 Carl Edstrom & Carolyn Campbell
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2024 Donors

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 Glenda Owens
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 Kathy Perkowitz
 Maria Peterson
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 Arden Podpora
 Donald Purn
 Tricia Rachford
 Irene Raven
 Preston & Denise Rea
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Vince & Mary Jo Rizzo
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2024 GRATITUDE REPORT

JULY-AUGUST TLC SPECIAL EVENTS



Pre-order your plants during
TLC's Fall Native Plant Sale.

Native Plant, Tree and Shrub Sale: Woodstock Pickup

Pre-order your native plants, trees, and shrubs for pickup in September. Fall is a great time to plant with cooler temperatures and increased rainfall cutting down on care. Help our local environment while also helping TLC. Don't wait to place your pre-order, we expect a large demand!

How: Place your order online at Store.Conservemc.org from July 31-Aug. 20.

Pickup and Shop: Friday, Sept. 12 and Saturday, Sept. 13, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Where: McHenry County Fairgrounds, 11900 Country Club Rd, Woodstock, IL



Sign up for TLC's next Learning Circle for Women Farmers and Farmland Owners in August.

Women's Learning Circle

An event designed for women farmers and farmland owners to join other women to share ideas, stories, and expertise on how to manage the land you love. This Learning Circle will focus on topics such as: no-till market gardening, small farm equipment, WWOOF program and more!

Date/Time: Wednesday, Aug. 6, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Location: Adama Farm, 18311 Garden Valley Rd, Marengo, IL 60152

Fee: \$5. Registration opens in July. Please register at <https://conservemc.org/women-farmland-owners/>

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