

Growing the Future

2026 is the Year of the Woman Farmer

The United Nations has designated 2026 as the *International Year of the Woman Farmer!* As an organization, TLC has celebrated the invaluable contributions of farm-ers for years, and it's exciting to see this hard work and dedication honored on a global scale.

From ordering seeds and planting crops, to tending to livestock and young farm-hands, to packing up for markets and developing marketing plans, to wrangling equipment and refurbishing aging infrastructure, farm-ers wear many hats and juggle a variety of different responsibilities to ensure the success of their farms. TLC has had the privilege of getting to know these dynamic women through *Learning Circles*, TLC events and other community programs. This year, you are invited to do the same!

There are a number of fun ways to support and highlight the women in our local farming community over the

course of the upcoming year. Some will be worked into existing events, some will be new; the main events include:

- ◆ Community Film Screening with the *Center for Agrarian Learning*
- ◆ Progressive Farm Tour
- ◆ Farm-to-Table Dinner
- ◆ Farm-her exhibit at *Art of the Land*

In addition to these events, we'll also be:

- ◆ Highlighting a farm-her each month on social media & our website to showcase some of the many talented individuals in our farming community.
- ◆ Encouraging folks to visit our local farm-ers at their farm stores or market booths.
- ◆ Partnering with community organizations and businesses to promote events with this *Year of the Woman Farmer* theme.



(Artwork by Spring Bird Studios)

Beyond these outward efforts, TLC will continue supporting women farmers and landowners through *Learning Circles*, site visits, and drafting conservation easements if they're interested in preserving their farmland forever. Stay tuned for *Learning Circles* and community event dates for 2026, and we look forward to meeting more of the integral farm-ers in McHenry County!

Happy Year of the Woman Farmer!



Women gathered at Terra Vitae Farms for a 2024 Learning Circle—gaining hands-on experience, building community and growing opportunities together.



TLC Farm Program Manager Claire Hodge's daughter, Nora, "helping" at Gold Fern Farm.



News and Notes

from Executive Director, *Lisa Haderlein*

Greetings!

Can you feel it? The possibilities seem endless right now! Skunk cabbage is blooming. Stoneflies are checking things out. Cardinals are singing! Before we know it, the chorus frogs will be trilling away!!

TLC has so many opportunities to help you get ready for spring this year! Learn about gardening with native plants. Join a Bioblitz at Irish Oaks. Purchase native plants and shrubs. Attend the Annual Celebration with author Paula Whyman and 200 of your best conservation friends!

Whatever you choose to do this season, find ways to celebrate the natural beauty around you, and lean in to doing what you can—where you are — to make this the best possible place you can. That’s one of the many things I LOVE about the TLC community - so many people who roll up their sleeves, put on their gloves, pull out the shovels, chain saws and pruning shears, and get to work!

Thank you so much for all you do! It really does make a difference.

With great affection, *Lisa*

P.S. Hope to see you soon!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday April 7th, International Beaver Day. We will be hosting a screening of “*Freelance Beaver Detective -Tracking Urban Wildlife,*” with a Q&A session following the film with the *Freelance Beaver Detective* herself, Pamela Adams, and the director of the movie, Kay D. Ray.

Thursday April 9th, we will be screening the PBS documentary *Women’s Work* in the Leucht Auditorium at McHenry County College; following the film there will be a panel discussion with local farmers.

— *Stay tuned for more details on these events!* —

Welcome New Members!

Edith & Tom Auchter | Barrington
Brooke Bowdren | N/A
Marilyn Brda | Wonder Lake
Margie Carhart | Cary
Shannan Chehade | Cary
Kelsey Christensen | Chicago
John Davis | Winthrop Harbor
Kathryn Dawdy | Woodstock
Joe Foellmer | Johnsburg

Cynthia Halloway | Huntley
Betty Hamilton | Woodstock
Kevin & Kathryn Hanzel | Crystal Lake
Michael Marks | Marengo
Thad Marks | Cuba
Randy & America McGuffee | Marengo
Madeline Richmond | Fox River Grove
Julie Schlueter | Deer Park

Are You a Member?

Scan this QR code with your phone to become a member of TLC or renew your membership today. Thank you for preserving land for life in McHenry County!



Welcome

Letitia Dewith-Anderson

to TLC’s Board of Directors!



Letitia is the President and CEO of Anderson Legislative Consulting, Ltd, a lobbying firm in Illinois. Her firm lobbies on various policy issues including but not limited to, energy, environmental and conservation. She is committed to protecting, conserving, restoring the natural environment and ensuring healthy communities thrive.

Letitia has worked in the Illinois General Assembly for over 40 years. She has a Juris Doctorate degree from Loyola University School of Law in Chicago, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Spelman College, and an Associate of Arts degree from Springfield College in Illinois. She is a resident of Woodstock, Illinois.

Welcome, Letitia!



Get ready for spring! Online ordering for TLC’s Spring Native Plant Sale opens April 1.

Pre-orders will be accepted at Store.ConserveMC.org from April 1–26! Reserve your native plants, trees and shrubs for local pickup in May. You can help our local environment and beautify your yard while also helping TLC!

Plant Pickup: May 15–16, 10:00 a.m–4:00 p.m., at the McHenry County Fairgrounds, 11900 Country Club Rd., Woodstock. We will also have our largest-ever selection of native plants, trees and shrubs to buy in-person at the sale!

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

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

ConserveMC.org

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The Land Conservancy of McHenry County's 35th Annual Celebration Fundraiser

Preserving Land For Life in McHenry County

Guest Speaker, Paula Whyman

Paula Whyman is the author of *Bad Naturalist*. Her story is a journey of humor, humility and awe as one woman attempts to restore 200 acres of farmland in the Blue Ridge Mountains.



SUNDAY
APRIL | 12 | 2026

2:00 – 5:00 P.M.

The Reserve at Black Oak
Harvard, IL

Celebrate the people and places that make TLC the vital organization it is, and enjoy an afternoon "high tea" with cash bar. Bid on exciting silent auction items, and connect with friends old and new.

Invite a friend—this is a great opportunity to learn more about how TLC preserves land for life in McHenry County!



Reserve your seat today!

ConserveMC.org/annual-celebration

- \$75 TLC member, \$85 nonmember.
- Sponsor Table of 10 with Wine—\$1,000.

Help support TLC by purchasing a table of 10 for you and your friends! Includes premium table location and admission for 10, two bottles of wine (one red, one white), recognition at the event, half-page ad in the event program and logo on the event webpage.

Become a Sponsor of TLC's 2026 Annual Celebration!

TLC's Annual Celebration is your opportunity to make an impact and have an unforgettable experience by being part of the 2026 fundraising event! Beyond the food, friendship and fun, your support helps preserve land for life in McHenry County! Several levels of sponsorship available.

Visit the website today! ConserveMC.org/annual-celebration



Planting Abundance: TLC's Food Forest Is Rooted in Community

The Apple Creek Food Forest took some big strides last year! With much enthusiasm, and with the help of some amazing volunteers, we kicked off the growing season by creating several new perennial beds to plant multiple varieties of asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, as well as interplanting different herbs and flowers to bring in beneficial pollinators and predatory insects.

Over the summer we built a garden shed onsite, which has been a total game changer for storing tools and equipment. There's still some sorting and organizing to do inside as we continue to gather supplies, but it's made life so much easier!



In the fall we hosted a Food Forest event with Creekside Middle School in Woodstock to unveil the trail and walkway between the school and the food forest. The trail turned out to be a hidden gem, and we're excited students and the community will have access to the gorgeous space. Last year TLC secured a Nicor grant to expand the biodiversity along the trail, which will include adding a wide selection of native forbs, grasses, and sedges, as well as several fruit and nut trees with signage.

To cap off the season, we built a grape trellis surrounding the raised beds. This spring we will create and plant beds below the trellises, including honeyberries, hops, and a variety of natives and perennial herbs!

2025 included nearly 300 volunteer hours logged and roughly just as many plants, trees and shrubs put in the ground. It truly was a team effort! The 2026 growing season is fast approaching and looks to be just as exciting! Regular work days are scheduled for the second and fourth Fridays in the growing season.



The College of Lake County's Sustainable Agriculture Class visited the Food Forest and volunteered their time and energy there in 2025.

In April we'll kick off by starting different seeds and using cuttings to propagate shrubs to be planted; the following months we'll be planting the hundreds of plants, trees and shrubs currently on order!

Mark your calendar for a community open house event on Saturday, May 9. More details to come!

Questions, suggestions, or if you want to join our food forest volunteer list, reach out to gmdsen@conservemc.org.

What Creatures Live on TLC Sites?

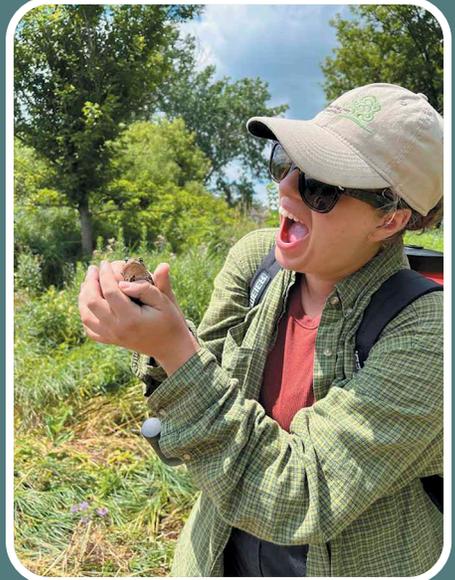
In January, TLC's restoration team and other staff met with Board Member Randy Schietzelt to start planning for wildlife and plant monitoring on TLC properties and easements in 2026. Randy, who is a member of the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board and a former president of Illinois Audubon, is profoundly knowledgeable and an incredible resource!

At the meeting, everyone was really enthusiastic to contribute, learn more about the various groups (taxa) and discuss priorities and monitoring methods. We also plan to include our summer Conservation Leader Internship Program (CLIP) interns in these activities, which will enrich their experience and help us gather valuable information.

It's important to know what is where (ex: what creatures live or spend time at a place, at least sometimes). It's also important, especially with highly vulnerable/declining species (think monarch butterflies), that we want to track them year-to-year in a systematic, scientifically validated method, and contribute meaningfully to other monitoring efforts in the region.

With that in mind, and given TLC staff's size and capacity, this year we hope to collaborate with our interns, other conservation organizations, experts in the field, and volunteers, maybe YOU? to:

- 1 Expand the bumblebee monitoring program at the five properties where the federally endangered rusty-patched bumblebee has been observed and also look for it on other properties where it may be found (hopefully!)
- 2 Look for other vulnerable animals (some which may be "listed," i.e. state or federally endangered/threatened) at our other sites by doing focused bird, bat, odonate (dragonfly/damselfly), lepidoptera (butterfly/moth), fish and mussel surveys.
- 3 Host periodic, public "bioblitz" events at TLC sites, using the iNaturalist app; the first of these will be in late April to coincide with "City Nature Challenge" (check the events below). Through these events, and photos we take and upload to iNaturalist while we're out at the sites, we will gather data on invertebrates (insects) and other fun friends!
- 4 Depending on capacity and interest, consider monitoring or helping volunteers to monitor frogs, snakes, salamanders, turtles and/or other taxa!
- 5 Also, we will continue to work on rare plant monitoring in conjunction with the wonderful *Plants of Concern* program, updating records and plant lists, and taking a special interest in certain groups



Wildlife is abundant on TLC sites – learn how TLC will be monitoring wildlife and how you can help in 2026.

(aquatic plants, sedges, oaks, willows, hawthorns, grasses, etc.).

There is so much to learn about the natural world, and on the flip side there are a ton of ways for ANYONE to learn, engage and contribute to that knowledge! It just starts with some curiosity.

Join us for a workday, a bird or plant hike, or a bioblitz event. Or, check out ways that you can become a Citizen Scientist—coming soon on the TLC website! As always, feedback, questions and memes are welcome—I can be reached at dpohl@conservemc.org.



City Nature Challenge Bioblitz

Are you interested in learning about the different plant and animal life found in McHenry County? Have you wanted to learn how to

use iNaturalist to record your wildlife sightings? This is the event for you! TLC is participating in the City Nature Challenge and we want you to join us on this citizen-science adventure. We will look for every plant, bird, insect, mammal, etc. we can find while helping you identify what we see and show you how to use iNaturalist so you can start contributing your own sightings.

Date/Time: Sunday, April 26, 10–11:30 a.m.
Location: Irish Oaks Savanna, 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.
Fee: Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conservemc.org)



Intro to iNaturalist & Nature Walk

Have you wanted to learn how to use iNaturalist to record your wildlife sightings? We can help! TLC is participating in the *City Nature Challenge* and we want you to join us on this citizen-science adventure. We will be

looking primarily at willows in bloom to find early bumblebees and other insects visiting them. We will help you identify what we see and show you how to use iNaturalist so you can start contributing your own sightings. *City Nature Challenge* is an annual, worldwide citizen science project and competition between cities/regions that utilizes iNaturalist to document life and the natural world. For more info, please visit: <https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>

Date/Time: Friday, April 24, 1–2:30 p.m.
Location: Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St., Woodstock
Fee: Free, please register by April 22 at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conservemc.org)

SPECIAL EVENTS



If you plant it, they will come! Learn how to create a garden that attracts birds in this free webinar.

Creating a Bird-Friendly Garden Webinar

Most birds do not visit bird feeders, but you can still attract them to your yard using native plants. Native plants provide birds with what they need to thrive; food, shelter, and nesting sites and materials. Learn how your yard can be a year-round oasis for birds with tips on what to plant and other bird-friendly landscaping practices to implement in your own yard!

Date/Time: Thursday, March 19,
6:00–7:30 p.m.

Location: Online via Zoom

Fee: Free, please register by March 17 at ConserveMC.org



Learn how to perform a safe, controlled burn that benefits the land in this class.

Learn to Burn

Join TLC to learn how to use fire to manage prairies, wetlands and woodlands safely. The class will be inside and outside, where we will do a prescribed burn if conditions allow, so dress appropriately for the weather and for doing prescribed fire (leather boots and gloves, tie back or braid long hair, jeans, cotton/denim. Please do not wear synthetic clothing that might melt.) Safety equipment is available, but feel free to bring your own equipment if you have it. Please bring lunch and water.

Date/Time: Saturday, March 21,
9:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Location: Hennen Conservation Area,
4622 Dean St., Woodstock,

Fee: \$35/TLC member, \$50/non-member.
Please register by March 19 at ConserveMC.org



Lines of Light: A Forest Bathing Walk with Spring Poetry

Celebrate the spring equinox with forest therapy guide Cathy McCauley. This walk invites participants to slow down and notice the early unfolding of spring, with brief nature poetry readings woven throughout the experience. We'll walk about one mile and close with a small celebration, including light snacks and local tea.

Date/Time: Saturday, March 22, 2–4:15 p.m.

Location: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve,
19017 Lincoln Rd, Harvard

Fee: \$30 per person. Please register at birdsongnatureco.com



Skunk cabbage is one of spring's earliest bloomers. See it in-person at this event.

Skunk Cabbage Walk

One of (if not the) earliest blooming wildflowers in Northern IL, skunk cabbage is weird, beautiful and smelly! Join us for a fairly level and slower-paced walk on a mowed path at beautiful Boloria Meadows Nature Preserve in Bull Valley to see and learn about this interesting native plant!

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 25,
1–2:30 p.m.

Location: Boloria Meadows,
7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.

Fee: Free, please register at ConserveMC.org



Enjoy a springtime hike and see the many forms of life that exist in a McHenry County vernal pool when you sign up for this event.

Vernal Pool Hike

Vernal pools are a little-known but extremely important feature that occurs in our McHenry County oak woods. Come learn why these pools are essential for amphibians and other creatures like fairy shrimp! Dress to get muddy and dirty. Signs will be posted for parking.

Date/Time: Saturday, April 18, (rain date April 25)
10–11:30 a.m.

Location: Harvard. Address will be provided to registered guests.

Fee: \$5 TLC members / \$10 nonmembers.
Please register at ConserveMC.org



See the American Woodcocks perform their unique courtship "dance" at Yonder Prairie in Woodstock.

Dance of the Woodcock

Join us as we watch American Woodcocks performing their amazing courtship flights. These odd shorebirds put on their "sky dance" starting in early spring, where the male woodcocks will make several preent calls before launching themselves into the sky for a fantastic display and then return to the spot they left to start again. As described in a dedicated essay in *A Sand County Almanac* by famous naturalist Aldo Leopold, "The Sky Dance" is a dramatic show not to be missed!

Date/Time: Tuesday, March 24, 7:15–8:15 p.m.
Location: Yonder Prairie, 1143 S. Rose Farm Rd., Woodstock.

Fee: Free, please register by March 22 at ConserveMC.org

SPECIAL EVENTS



Learn how to prep your site and choose the right native plants for your yard in this free program.

Plan Your Native Plant Garden

Planning to start a new native plant garden this spring? Join Sarah Michehl from TLC at the Woodstock Library. She will cover site preparation, favorite plant choices, the pollinator connection, and vital maintenance tips to make any garden a success.

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 22, 6–7:00 p.m.

Location: Woodstock Public Library, 414 W. Judd St., Woodstock.

Fee: Free, please register at WoodstockPublicLibrary.org



Take a hike at beautiful Irish Oaks Nature Preserve and see some of the birds that are returning to the area after a long winter.

Migratory Bird Hike

It's spring migration time! Join us at Irish Oaks Nature Preserve to look for various birds as they migrate back to their summer breeding grounds. We'll look for warblers, vireos, sparrows, raptors, orioles and more!

Date/Time: Sunday, April 26, 7:30–9:30 a.m.

Location: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve, 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.

Fee: Free, please register by April 24 at ConserveMC.org



Spring Wildflower Walk

Join TLC on a spring wildflower identification walk at the Spring Hollow Nature Preserve! We'll meander together through a high-quality woodland, help you learn a little about each wildflower, and provide some identification tips. Registration is required, group size will be limited to 20. Dress for muddy trails!

Date/Time: Saturday, May 2, 10–11:30 a.m.

Fee: \$5 TLC members / \$10 nonmembers, please register at ConserveMC.org

Location: Spring Hollow Nature Preserve, 1314 S. Fleming Rd., Woodstock.

Parking: Park near the house along the gravel driveway, and please be mindful to park on the side to allow other vehicles to get by.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event dates and times are subject to change. If you are new to TLC workdays or it's been a while, please be sure to fill out a volunteer form online at www.conservemc.org/volunteer before you attend so you can receive updates or cancellations.

Mar. 2: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 9707 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.

Mar. 4: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.

Mar. 14: Boloria Meadows restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.

Mar. 16: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 9707 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.

Mar. 18: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.

Mar. 19: *Creating A Bird-Friendly Garden Webinar*
6–7:30 p.m. Free, please register at CaryAreaLibrary.org

Mar. 21: *Learn To Burn*— Woodstock Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St. 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., \$35 TLC member / \$50 nonmember Please register at ConserveMC.org by March 19.

Mar. 21: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.

Mar. 22 *Lines of Light: Forest Bathing Walk with Spring Poetry*
Irish Oaks Nature Preserve, 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard. \$30 / person. Please register at birdsongnatureco.com 2–4:15 p.m.

Mar. 24: *Dance Of The Woodcock*— Woodstock Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve, 1143 S. Rose Farm Rd., 7:15–8:15 p.m., Free, please register at ConserveMC.org.

Mar. 25: *Skunk Cabbage Walk*— Bull Valley Boloria Meadows, 7219 Millburne Ct. 1–2:30 p.m., Free, please register at ConserveMC.org

Apr. 1: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.

Apr. 1-26: *TLC's Spring Native Plant Sale Online Pre-Order*
Pre-order online at Store.ConserveMC.org
Plant Pickup: May 15-16, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., at McHenry County Fairgrounds, 11900 Country Club Rd., Woodstock

Apr. 6: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 9707 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.

Apr. 7: *International Beaver Day.*
TLC is hosting a screening of *Freelance Beaver Detective-Tracking Urban Wildlife*. Stay tuned for details.

Apr. 9: *Screening of PBS documentary "Women's Work"*
Leucht Auditorium at McHenry County College. Stay tuned for details.

Apr. 11: Boloria Meadows restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.

Apr. 12: *TLC's Annual Celebration*— Harvard 2–5:00 p.m., The Reserve at Black Oak, 19517 Lembcke Rd. \$75 TLC member / \$85 nonmember. Please register at ConserveMC.org/annual-celebration

Apr. 15: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.

Apr. 18: *Vernal Pool Hike*— Harvard Address will be emailed to registered participants. \$5 TLC member / \$10 nonmember. 10–11:30 a.m., Please register at ConserveMC.org

Apr. 18: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.

Apr. 19: *Creating A Bird-Friendly Garden Webinar*
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org by April 17, 6–7:30 p.m.

Apr. 20: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 9707 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.

Apr. 22: *Plan Your Native Plant Garden*
6–7:00 p.m., Woodstock Public Library, 414 W. Judd St. Free, please register at WoodstockPublicLibrary.org

Apr. 24: *Intro to iNaturalist*— Woodstock 1–2:30 p.m., Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St. Free, please register at ConserveMC.org

Apr. 26: *Migratory Bird Hike*— Harvard Irish Oaks Nature Preserve, 19017 Lincoln Rd. 7:30–9:30 a.m., Free, please register at ConserveMC.org.

Apr. 26: *City Nature Challenge Bioblitz*— Harvard Irish Oaks Nature Preserve, 19017 Lincoln Rd. 10–11:30 a.m., Free, please register at ConserveMC.org

Apr. 29: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.

May 2: *Spring Wild Flower Walk*— Woodstock Spring Hollow Nature Preserve, 1314 S. Fleming Rd. \$5 TLC member / \$10 nonmember. 10:00–11:30 a.m., Please register at ConserveMC.org

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