

A Legacy of Life and Land Preserved

Libbie Aavang ensures family farm and natural fen will remain for generations.



Barber Farmstead, circa 1915

Libbie B. Aavang was born in 1933, and has lived in Greenwood Township her whole life. Her family farm was founded by her great-grandfather, John Barber, in 1849, and Libbie is the fifth generation to live on it. She and her husband, Rodney, moved onto the farm in 2007 upon the death of Libbie's mother. While growing up on the farm, Libbie and her sister helped their dad milk cows, tend the horses and chickens, and when time allowed, took the neighborhood kids on horse-and-buggy rides.

Libbie recalls the construction process and purpose for each of the numerous farm buildings, including how one barn, formerly a blacksmith shop, was moved to the property from Greenwood Road. She eventually restored these barns with classic red siding, but to step into them is to step back in time. The milk house, the horse stalls, and the old mill, all contain their original tools and trappings.

In 1990, Libbie preserved 17 acres along the Nippersink Creek, initiating the protection of Barber Fen Nature Preserve. McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) dedicated another 69 acres to the preserve in 2013. Earlier this year, Libbie along with her daughter, Sarah Aavang, approached TLC and John Nelson of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) with a beautiful idea for preserving more of their land,



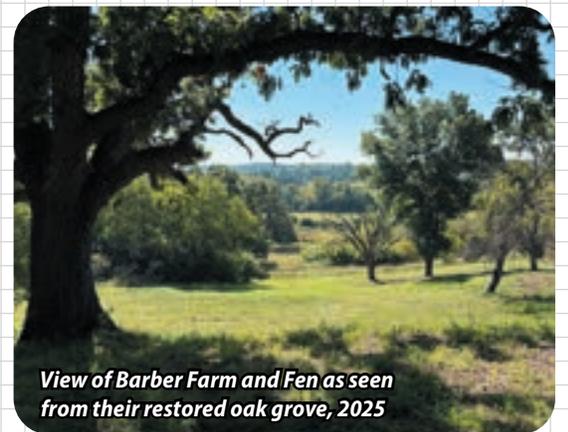
Bob Lukes, Sarah's husband; Libbie Aavang, and Sarah Aavang in front of Libbie's house, Sept. 2025

an additional 123 acres, while staying true to the mosaic of the property. After completing these preservation projects, Libbie says she's pleased that the farm will remain in agriculture, thanks to the easement with TLC.

Libbie wanted to preserve the rural character of her place, maintaining the historic farmstead and ensuring that her prime agricultural soils could be farmed in the future (and not developed).

Intertwined with the vision of preserving a viable farm, is also the deep ethic of care for the natural beauty that surrounds their

farm. Viewing this landscape as a piece of an interconnected puzzle, TLC worked with Libbie to draft an agricultural conservation easement on the crop and hayfields, as well as the farmstead, totaling 80 acres. Meanwhile, INPC accepted another 19 acres as protected and buffer lands to the Barber Fen Nature Preserve. The management plan for the easement reflects the nature of its connectedness with the neighboring protected Barber Fen, recognizing the importance of soil and water conservation. The family, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and TLC worked together to bring this dream to fruition, preserving land for life.



View of Barber Farm and Fen as seen from their restored oak grove, 2025

Interested in Greenwood Township farms and Greenwood Village history? Libbie and her friend, Norine Mathey, wrote two books about the area: *Old Homes Across Our Prairie* and *The Greenwood Book*, which are available through McHenry Historical Society.



News and Notes

from our Executive Director, *Lisa Haderlein*

Hello my dear TLC friends!

I know some folks really love the heat of summer, but I think these cool, sunny, breezy fall days with colored leaves blowing around and crackling underfoot are my favorites.

A quick reminder for those who are at least 70-1/2 years of age with an Individual Retirement Account:

(IRA). For 2025, the maximum Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is \$108,000 per person, which can be used to satisfy all or part of a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) for IRA owners aged 70-1/2 and older. To be a valid QCD, the money must be transferred directly from the IRA to a qualified charity and you cannot receive any benefit in return for the donation.

This can be a significant income tax savings. The funds that are gifted directly to charity do not count as income, but do count toward your RMD!

Ted Thornton, TLC member, volunteer, and all around great human-being gave TLC the full \$108,000 from his IRA this year, saving himself significant income taxes, while also making an unrestricted gift to an organization that means a lot to him.

If you have not taken your full RMD for 2025, please consider making a gift to TLC directly from your IRA account. Every amount helps, especially as we come into the end of the year.

Thank you all so much for everything you do! I hope you are finding time to enjoy this season - and every season throughout the year.

Welcome New Members!

Terri Abrams | Woodstock
Cynthia Allen Schenk | Marengo
Sandi Alvarez | Harvard
Paula Bauman | Woodstock
Niki Bivona | Richmond
Alan Bland | Crystal Lake
Vicki Burger | Crystal Lake
Mark Denzel | McHenry
Steve Diogo | Crystal Lake
Chris Gatts | Cary
Paul Goggin | Algonquin
Nancy Grandinetti | Woodstock
Kate Heroux | Woodstock

Maureen Kilhoffer | Crystal Lake
Joan MacHarg | Evanston
Nick Martin | Algonquin
Jennifer Read | Spring Grove
Linda Schweiger | Genoa
Jan Carter Seymour | Crystal Lake
Amanda Slayton | Crystal Lake
Margaret Stolze | Pingree Grove
Diane Urban | Marengo
Rev. Leslie Anne Walker-Indyke | Woodstock
Jane Workinger | Island Lake

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!



A quick, easy tip to make your home more Earth friendly

Karen Lavin, TLC Board Member
lawdog57@hotmail.com

I recently returned from a trip to the United Kingdom. While Europe is far ahead of us on climate change issues and alternate energy, I was disappointed to see very few native plants in my travels.

After a week of touring castles, palaces, and their gardens I felt out of sorts—I needed to be in nature again.

When I got home, I got busy in my garden and felt much better. I had my granddaughters (ages 5 and 7) over, and they wanted to help weed. The weeding part lasted all of five minutes, but the five-year-old hung around and found a fuzzy striped caterpillar. Fascinated, she gently picked it up. It promptly curled into a ball, then pooped in her hand.

I explained that was a defense mechanism. After talking about caterpillars and finding a second one, she gently put them back on the ground, then enthusiastically said, "I love caterpillars!". Sharing nature with a little kid who finds joy in mundane things is such a trip. Being in nature, even if it's

just a city park, is healing for us adults who forget the wonders of nature (and caterpillars), with our often-stressful adult lives.

You can add nature at home. If you live in an apartment, you can plant native plants in pots and put them on your balcony or at a sunny window. I put Cardinal Flower on my deck, and within a couple of days had hummingbirds feeding from it. If you have yard space, plant some natives.

If you're new to native plants, go to Conservemc.org, then Conservation@tclc.org programs. Take a walk in one of TLC's restored properties; for a list go to [Our Preserves](http://OurPreserves.org) on the TLC website. These places are guaranteed to inspire and will give you ideas for creating your own little piece of nature close to home. And, if you have a five-year-old to share it with, all the better!

PS: If you know someone who could use egg cartons, please let me know. I am happy to deliver. Better to re-use than recycle.

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

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ConserveMC.org

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Rusty Patch Bumblebee on Sweet Joe Pye



Hot Rusty Summer

Walking through your garden or along a trail you notice several fuzzy bumblebees buzzing around patches of flowers. You stop to watch them bumble from flower to flower, when you notice one that looks a little different; a distinctive black band between its wings and a hint of orange edged by yellow on the black abdomen ... could it be? Yes, a Rusty-patched Bumblebee!

This summer wraps up an incredible season for the federally endangered Rusty-patched Bumblebee. Sightings of the bees were posted on social media from all over the area. The Great Lakes region is considered a stronghold for Rusty-patched Bumblebee populations, and McHenry County has had numerous Rusty-patched sightings on both private and public lands.

Rusty-patched Bumblebees were documented on three TLC sites this summer (near Harvard, Woodstock and Bull Valley). They were also documented at two TLC easement sites and one **Conservation@Home** participant's home. A Hot Rusty Summer indeed! In the past, Rusty-patched Bumblebees have been seen at other TLC sites and easements; a big win to have these areas that support this endangered bee protected forever!

You can support Rusty-patched Bumblebees in your own yard by planting native flowers and grasses. If you want ideas or help on how to create habitat for pollinators and wildlife, sign up for our **Conservation@Home** program!

Owl Prowls

Wintertime is owling time! Join us for one or two owl prowls where we will look and listen for owls. We will primarily be listening for owls, and if lucky, we may get to see one! We will look for Great Horned, Barred, Eastern Screech, Short-eared and Northern Saw-Whet owls. Please note that there will be some walking in the dark and (possibly) snow.



Registration is required. Space is limited to better enhance our chances of finding owls. Weather conditions can affect owling and safety, so registrants will be notified of any cancellations. The precise location of each trip will be provided to registrants.

Please note—We will try, but owls are secretive by nature so finding one is not guaranteed.

Dates: Wednesday, Dec. 3 (Woodstock), 4:30-6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 10 (Bull Valley), 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Locations: Owl Prowl locations will be emailed to registered participants. Register at [ConserveMC.org](https://conserveMC.org)



Conservation@Home Spotlight – Rita Duffy

What do you do when you move from a small lot to a large one? For Rita Duffy and her husband Jude, the answer is to add more native plants!

Rita's interest in native plants started with her hiking club. Seeing the variety of plants, trees and shrubs along the trails of various nature preserves piqued her interest in planting native.

In spring 2025, Rita and her husband moved from Hoffman Estates to Woodstock. They had set out looking for a ranch house, but the sight of a gorgeous, 300-year-old oak tree on the land of their soon-to-be home convinced them to buy their current two-story home instead.

Rita met TLC at the Monarchs & Music event in Crystal Lake and signed up for a Conservation@Home site consultation because she moved from a quarter-acre to over two acres and wasn't sure where to start. She brought a few young native plants from her old yard to start her new native landscape. She also wanted to make sure their spectacular oak tree has the best living conditions possible.

She is planning to gradually remove invasive plants and shrubs on their property and replace them with natives. Rita says, "Even starting small is exciting." She had a flowerbed on the small lot at their previous home and filled it with natives. "Once I saw all the butterflies, bees, birds and dragonflies on the flowers, I was excited to plant more. And now I have plenty of room!"



Rita Duffy poses under her large oak tree at home in Woodstock.



Beyond Conservation@Home

Help Us Grow a Greener, More Native McHenry County!

If you've been inspired by **Conservation@Home**, there's even more you can do!

Explore our **Conservation@Work** program—designed to bring sustainable, native landscaping to businesses, churches, homeowner associations, and entire neighborhoods.

- **Schedule a site consultation for your business, church, or HOA.**
- **Spread the word—share with friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors.**
- **Be part of the movement to restore nature, one property at a time.**

The more people we reach, the greater the impact we can make—growing healthy, connected landscapes across McHenry County.

To learn more and help spread the word, visit us at:
<https://conserveMC.org/conservation-work/>

What happens when a conservation easement changes hands?

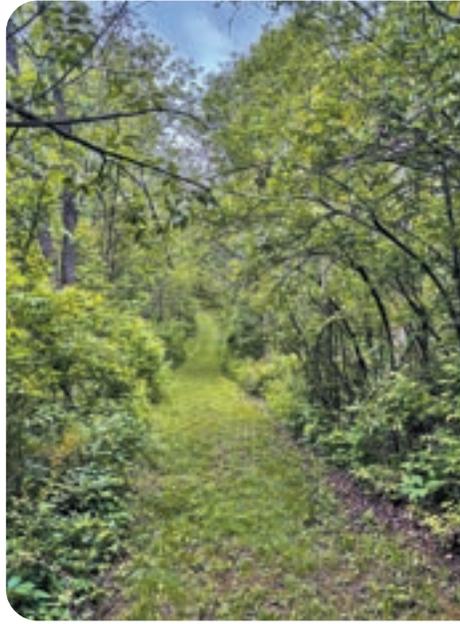
In spring 2024, Jeff and Nichole Tipps were looking for a new home to settle in with their family. They had been living near Crystal Lake, but were looking for a change of pace – somewhere with more space, seclusion, peace and proximity to nature. They found a property on Country Club Rd. in Woodstock, and were drawn in, according to Jeff, by the “rich nature and topography of the land.”

He grew up in the area and recalled driving through Bull Valley with his parents. “I would see the vast properties with long driveways and wonder what was back there and who lived there.” The homes he saw were all different, each with unique qualities. He adds, “My curiosity often ran wild. Just over a year ago, the opportunity to fulfill my curiosity became possible.”

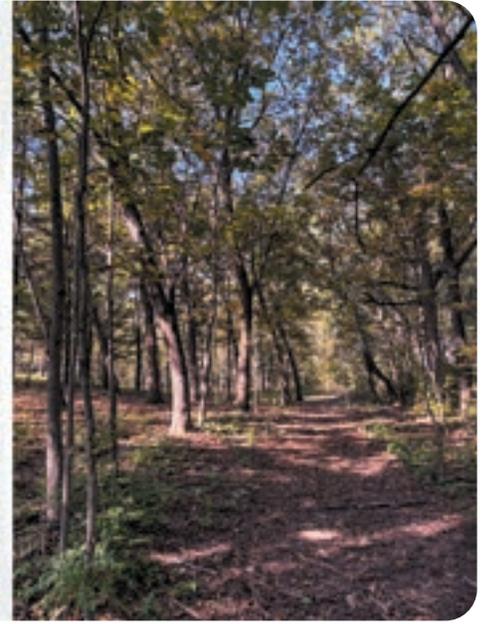
The Tippses were set to close on their new home, but a surprise was in store for the family—at the last minute, they were notified of the conservation easement on the property. For some, this might be a roadblock. For the Tippses, the conservation easement ended up being “the cherry on top.”

This particular conservation easement was granted by Robert and Elizabeth Scherer in 2009. Like many other conservation-minded people in the county, the Scherers sought to preserve their woods—a 12-acre oak/hickory woodland and glacial kettle wetland ecosystem. To ensure the rolling hills they held dear would forever and irrevocably retain their beauty, open space and natural habitat, they placed a conservation easement on their land. The Land Conservancy of McHenry County (TLC) holds the easement, and since then has been upholding its purpose to ensure the dignity of the natural area.

The Tippses scoured the terms of the conservation easement, including all of its purposes, restrictions, rights, baseline conditions and the management plan laid out by TLC. “The easement educated us on the property’s history and gave us a well-laid-out, approved plan to ensure its wonderful longevity and value,” says Jeff. Jeff and Nichole determined that it was actually in line with what they were hoping to do with the property, and



Before



After

they found that they could use the management plan as a guideline for improving the beauty and natural quality of their woods. Jeff adds, “When executed as intended, the conservation easement allows for a thriving ecosystem, as well as usage and enjoyment of the entire property.”

“The easement educated us on the property’s history and gave us a well-laid-out, approved plan to ensure its wonderful longevity and value.”

They got to work. Jeff hired a forester to supplement the easement’s management plan with a forest management plan. He also got a start on removing the thickets of buckthorn, honeysuckle and multiflora rose that had overtaken the property by hiring a local land clearing and management contractor.

In just a year, the Tippses have transformed their 12 acres from a gnarled forest dominated

by woody invasives into a woodland with a renewed chance to flourish. “[The conservation easement] has given us a paint-by-numbers process for regenerating the land so that native species and wildlife thrive, which is great for our environment and our humanity,” says Jeff.

With the dense brush removed from most of their property (an incredible feat for anyone familiar with cutting, hauling, and burning brush!) more light is reaching the forest floor. Oaks and hickories finally have some room to breathe, and acorns and seeds of native flowers that have been patiently waiting in the soil will now get the chance to poke their heads out of the ground, stretch out their arms into new pockets of sunlight, and be welcomed into a forest like the ones their great-great-grandparents knew well. It will be exciting to see what natural gems pop up come springtime.

Placing a conservation easement on one’s own property – the intention of preserving land in perpetuity – is extremely important, but it is only the first step. No one can steward the land forever, so we must place our trust in the generations after us. As time goes on, conservation easements will change hands, and we can’t predict exactly how new owners will react to the restrictions and challenges that come with protecting nature. Luckily, the Scherer conservation easement found its way into the hands of the Tipps family. They have enthusiastically begun their tenure as stewards of the woods, and the land is better for it.

If you are interested in preserving your own land with a conservation easement, please contact TLC’s Land Preservation Specialist, Kathryn Dawdy, at kdawdy@conservemc.org or 815-337-9502 x108.



Before



After



Carbon Credits Help Fund Restoration at Crowley Oaks

Back in 2022 TLC started a program to preserve more than 80 acres of oak woodlands in McHenry County as urban forest carbon credits through a partnership with City Forest Credits.

Through this program, TLC recently partnered with McHenry County College (MCC) and The Green Living Expo, which takes place Nov. 1. For the first time, MCC calculated building emissions typically consumed during the event, including electric and natural gas consumption, and made the big decision to become carbon neutral.

TLC met with Kim Hankins at MCC to discuss urban forest carbon credits available at Crowley Oaks Conservation Area in Harvard, and she was impressed with the quality of the carbon program and how easy it was to purchase offsets for the event. We hope to continue this partnership for future events to ensure that local forests are preserved, and

energy consumption is offset, in a mutually beneficial relationship for our community.

In addition to this partnership, we recently completed a sale with Climate Resilience Consulting (CRC), a firm that helps communities, governments and institutions prepare for, and resist climate impacts. CRC purchased credits to offset their air travel, building emissions and overall carbon footprint.

Joyce Coffee, President, said, "We view this investment as an inset, not just an offset—it strengthens the local ecosystem that supports our employees, neighbors, and future generations."

These sales directly contribute to forest preservation at Crowley Oaks, where 45 acres of mature old growth oaks have been preserved.

If you or your business are interested in learning more about how you can purchase urban forest carbon credits to offset your carbon footprint, including regular air travel, vehicle miles traveled, or building emissions, please reach out to Jess Beverly (Jbeverly@conservemc.org) for more information.

Interested in Learning More about Carbon Credits? TLC Executive Director, Lisa Haderlein, and Forest Carbon Program Director, Jess Beverly, will be presenting to *Green Drinks McHenry County* at 5:00 p.m. on Nov. 5 at Duke's Alehouse in Crystal Lake, to discuss how urban forest carbon credit projects are created and our approach to sales, as well as other projects in the area.

The Nomads of Winter



Redpoll



Evening Grosbeak



Pine Siskin

Winter can be a drab time for many people, but it has surprises if you know where to look. For birders, winter means the possibility of northern irruption species making their way south. An irruption is when a species moves out of its normal range in big numbers, usually due to a population boom that forces the young to search far and wide for food. Snowy Owls are one such species, as are Red-breasted Nuthatches, which are already showing up in big numbers this fall.

The finches that reside in the boreal forest are another group of winter irruption species that we look forward to seeing. These nomadic finches move south from their typical northern range in search of food. While the location of where their food sources have failed in the north can help determine where they will end up in the south, determining when they move can be tricky. In general, their movements are multifaceted and can be unpredictable, making it a rare treat when you do find them.

The winter of 2020–21 produced spectacular showings of Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak and Red Crossbill in McHenry County and the surrounding area. A few White-winged Crossbills also showed up in the area. Red-breasted Nuthatch was also a common sight. 2021–22 had incredible numbers of

Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills. Northern owls also had a good year with Northern Saw-whets being found in several locations.

The 2025–26 winter season is predicted to be a good one due to a combination of cone crop failures in the north paired with a good breeding season due to abundant budworm outbreaks. Aside from Purple Finches, which have already been turning up in big numbers, we could see Redpolls, Pine Siskins, Red Crossbills and even Evening Grosbeaks.

These birds are always on the go and typically do not linger in any one place for long. Familiarizing yourself with their preferred food sources will greatly improve your chances of finding one this winter. They can be found anywhere they find food, from natural areas to business parks and neighborhoods to backyard feeders.

Finch preferred food sources:

Evening Grosbeak: Maple, ash, box elder seeds and buds. Fruiting trees/shrubs. Large platform feeders with black oil sunflower.

Red Crossbill: Eastern white, red and jack pine. Any spruce species. Eastern hemlock and Eastern white cedar (*arbor vitae*). Black oil sunflower feeders.

White-winged Crossbill: Tamaracks (native and European), white, red, black and blue spruce. Black oil sunflower feeders.

Pine Siskin: Alder, Eastern white cedar (*arbor vitae*), spruce, ash, and in weedy fields. Thistle feeders.

Redpoll: Birch, alder and weedy fields. Thistle and black oil sunflower feeders.

Bohemian Waxwing and Pine Grosbeak:

Are much rarer irruption species that will occasionally come south later in winter (January/February) once fruit crops have been depleted in the north. Keep an eye out for Bohemians mixed in with flocks of Cedar Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks on crabapples, mountain ash, buckthorn and other trees/shrubs that hold fruit through the winter.

Tracking these ever-on-the-move birds is a challenge that relies heavily on the observations of individuals like us. If you do get lucky and spot one of these birds, please report your sightings on eBird.org to help further our knowledge and understanding of these special visitors from the north.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Forest Bathing Walks with Cathy McCauley

Join certified forest bathing guide Cathy McCauley for a nourishing afternoon sensory walk as the sun goes down earlier and days grow shorter. Through a series of gentle invitations, you'll be encouraged to slow down, engage your senses, and connect with the dimming natural world as you explore Wolf Oak Woods. This relaxed walk unfolds at a slow, meditative pace covering less than a mile. The walk will conclude with a small forest celebration featuring tea brewed from native plants harvested from a local garden.



November Nourish Forest Walk with Cathy McCauley

Date/Time: Saturday, Nov 8, 2–4pm

Location: Wolf Oak Woods, site and parking located on Route 120, just west of Thompson Road, Bull Valley

Fee: \$30 per person (max 15 people), please register through Cathy's website, Birdsong Nature Co. Visit www.birdsongnatureco.com/events and select the event "Nourish in November", or email info@birdsongnatureco.com.

December Presence Forest Walk with Cathy McCauley

Date/Time: Saturday, Dec 6, 2–4pm

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

Fee: \$30 per person (max 15 people), please register through Cathy's website, Birdsong Nature Co. Visit www.birdsongnatureco.com/events and select the event "December Presence", or email info@birdsongnatureco.com. A portion of the proceeds from this walk will be donated to TLC.



Help TLC Collect Native Seed for Restoration!

Help TLC collect native seed to help restoration efforts for TLC's 1,000 acres of natural areas across McHenry County! No experience necessary – we will help you learn the different plants we want to collect. Bring gloves and water to drink (and paper bags & hand snips if you have them!). We recommend wearing closed-toe shoes with socks. Reach out to Daniel Pohl at dpohl@conserveMC.org with any questions.

Date/Time: Wednesday, Nov. 5, 1–3:00 p.m.

Location: Westwood Conservation Area, 1525 Hillside Tr., Woodstock.

Fee: Free, please register at ConserveMC.org



Common Ground

Join us for **Common Ground**, the only farmland access gathering in northern Illinois! At this unique educational and social event, farmers, landowners, and supporters come together to gain practical skills, brainstorm creative solutions, share success stories, and build community.

Date/Time: Sunday, Dec. 7, 1:30–6:00 p.m.

Location: Main Stay Therapeutic Farm, 6919 Keystone Rd., Richmond.

Fee: \$10 / person. Please register at <https://www.illinoisfarmlink.org/cgnorthernillinois/>

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.

Nov. 1: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 19019 Lincoln Rd., Harvard. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Nov. 3: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Nov. 5: **TLC Native Seed Collection for Restoration** Westwood Conservation Area 1525 Hillside Tr., Woodstock. 1–3:00 p.m.

Nov. 8: Boloria Meadows restoration workday. 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Nov. 8: **Nourish Forest Therapy Walk with Cathy McCauley** Wolf Oak Woods, 9016 IL Route 120, Woodstock. \$30/person, register at Birdsongnatureco.com/events 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Nov. 12: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Nov. 17: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley. 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Nov. 26: Crowley Oaks restoration workday. 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Dec. 1: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Dec. 3: **Owl Prowl in Woodstock** Location will be emailed to registered participants. Register at ConserveMC.org 4:30–6:00 p.m.

Dec. 6: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 19019 Lincoln Rd., Harvard. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Dec. 6: **Presence Forest Therapy Walk with Cathy McCauley** Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St., Woodstock. \$30/person, register at Birdsongnatureco.com/events 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Dec. 7: **Common Ground** at Main Stay Therapeutic Farm, 6919 Keystone Rd., Richmond. \$10 per person.

Please register at <https://www.illinoisfarmlink.org/> 1:30–6:00 p.m.

Dec. 10: **Owl Prowl in Bull Valley** Location will be emailed to registered participants. Register at ConserveMC.org 4:30–6:00 p.m.

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

Dec. 13: Boloria Meadows restoration workday. 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Dec. 15: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday. 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

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