



NOVEMBER 30, 2022

2023 PLAN OF WORK

Greg Winkelmann - Hidden Oaks Preserve

The Nature Foundation of Will County

The Nature Foundation of Will County is a 501c3 charitable organization dedicated to supporting the Forest Preserve District of Will County's education, recreation and conservation programs that protect nature, inspire discovery and bring people and nature together.

Long Range Planning Goals - 2023 marks the Foundation's ninth year of operations and the number of years its work has been focuses on accomplishing two main strategic goals:

1. Take action to ensure that The Nature Foundation of Will County continues to grow its operations.
2. Take action to create organizational sustainability.

Mission - We work to create a legacy of giving that supports and celebrates the preservation, conservation, educational and recreational priorities of the Forest Preserve District of Will County in perpetuity.

Vision - We envision a vital, dynamic and self-sustaining foundation that is committed to cultivating relationships and forging solid partnerships within our community that benefit and support the District's ability to protect, conserve, enhance and promote Will County's natural heritage for the educational, recreational, and environmental benefit of present and future generations.

Values - We believe in:

- Supporting and investing in high quality, mission-focused projects and programs
- Fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability in all endeavors
- Cultivating and maintaining positive, sustainable relationships with our donors and supporters

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2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Successes

- Three successful online and pop-up native plant sale events
- Great participation at the Fun & Food Trucks Donor Appreciation Nights
- The Monarch Newsletter
- The Foundation is growing and the Board recognizes the need to support that growth
- Growing donor and supporter base with increasing email signups and social media
- First private fundraising event held by Foundation Chair

Strengths

- Trustworthy
- Passionate Board
- Financial Position
- Expanding Support Base
- Program Quality

Concerns

- There is no staff other than the ED and the organization needs depth and the capacity to meet growing needs and interests
- Board member recruitment and engagement needs to increase - lost momentum after the pandemic

Priorities

- Increase focus on garnering corporate and foundation support including the health/wellness sector
- Lay the groundwork and hire new part-time contractual personnel to meet demands
- Increase focus on stewardship efforts across all stakeholders to create community and build legacy

2022 Corporate Partnership Projects

- Bench seating along the interpretive trail at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in partnership with INEOS Styrolution
- Trout restocking at Hidden Lakes Trout Farm in partnership with Bass Pro & Cabela's Outdoor Fund
- Educational wayfinding signposts at Whalon Lake in partnership with Vulcan Materials Company
- Funding for Forest Invaders high school program and natural areas restoration at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in partnership with Pembina
- Funding for Birding & River Ecology Events including Eagle Watch, Migration Celebration and Pelican Watch at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in partnership with Enbridge Alliance

2022 Projects

Audio Reader Units for the All-Persons Trail at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center

The Way We Worked Exhibition at Isle a la Cache Museum

Visions of Nature Art Exhibition at Hidden Oaks Nature Center

The Diversity of Life Exhibition at Isle a la Cache Museum

Dive IN! Conservation Special Event at Plum Creek Nature Center

Campground Welcome Station at Hammel Woods Preserve

Preserve the Moment Photo Contest

Willy'sWilderness.org

The Buzz Nature Show

Woods Walk Program

The Preserves Are For You Initiative

Care & Feeding of Animal Ambassadors

Restore Will County Land Stewardship Small Grants Program

Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program



Thomas Hahn-Hickory Creek Preserve

FUNDRAISING & PROJECTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Campaigns - Develop and implement an engaging year-end appeal around important and urgent issues that will garner new donors and retain existing donors.

Fundraising Events - Offer a suite of online native plant sales and pop-up sales throughout the spring, summer and autumn months.

Community Partnerships - Foster relationships and network with the business community to build support for events, programs, developments and initiatives.

Donor Stewardship - Implement a variety of stewardship activities to better thank donors and demonstrate the impact of their support.

Planned Giving & The Nature Foundation Legacy Society - Create awareness and promote the Foundation's planned giving opportunities including membership in the Legacy Society.

Outreach - Attend Forest Preserve and community events to create awareness of the Foundation and its work.

Focus Areas

- Increase stewardship efforts for new donors.
- Increase communications among all stakeholders around impact stories.
- Integrate the CRM with email marketing and accounting to reduce duplicate data entry across systems and improve donor management, record-keeping and communications.
- Reinstitute the Summer Blooms Gathering on the Friday evening before the pop-up sale.
- Host mix and mingle breakfasts to build and deepen relationships with new and existing corporate community partners.
- Collaborate with the Forest Preserve to create a continual flow of funding needs to support the Foundation's corporate fundraising efforts.
- Capitalize on corporate ESG and develop strategies to align corporate community partners with those initiatives.

Significance

Fundraising is a primary mandate of the Foundation and it is essential for organizational stability, long term sustainability and for building the capacity to meet the needs and interest of its donors as well as its benefactor, the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

Benchmarks

1. There is a continual and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
2. Donors are engaged and our donor base is ever-growing.
3. Donors are motivated to give planned gifts.
4. We provide significant funding to the Forest Preserve District for its programs, projects and initiatives.



FINANCE

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Investments - Monitor and manage investments and seek new investment opportunities.

Internal Controls - Adopt and manage internal control strategies to manage risks to the Foundation.

Fundraising & Projects - Work with the Fundraising & Projects Committee to set fundraising goals and create an annual budget.

Planned Giving - Support and guide the Nature Foundation Legacy Society as the Foundation accepts donations from wills, estates, and trusts or as a beneficiary designation.

Financial Oversight - Work with the Executive Director to monitor and manage the Foundation's assets and complete the Federal and State 990 tax return and audit.

Capacity Building - Work with the Executive Director and fellow Board members to ensure that there are budgetary guidelines in place that build the Foundation's capacity to support its operational expenses now and its growth in the future.

Fiscal Management - Identify and formalize policies or best practices for budgeting and budget execution that not only build capacity but follow ethical standards and ensure accountability and transparency.

Focus Areas

- Conduct an audit of 2022 fiscal year and plan for the 2023 audit.
- Implement the new contractual bookkeeping position.
- Develop guidelines and take specific actions to reduce theft and fraud.
- Evaluate current investment strategies and seek new opportunities.
- Work towards establishing an endowment for the Forest Preserve's land stewardship activities.

Significance

The presence of a fully engaged Finance Committee is a strong indication that an organization is committed to good stewardship and is actively building and preserving the financial resources necessary to support the accomplishments of its mission, both in the short and long term.

Benchmarks

1. There is a continual and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
2. Our operating reserve ratio is 1.5 to 2 during the pandemic.
3. Our program expense ratio is 75%.
4. Our profit margin ratio is 10% to 25%.



BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Charlie Parchem-O'Hara Woods Preserve

The Nature Foundation of Will County

RECRUITMENT

Vacancies - Fill vacancies as needed. Maintain an ongoing list of prospects.

Prospective Board Member Recruitment - Expand recruitment efforts, increase board diversity, and open recruitment opportunities to qualified individuals using existing and new networks and channels of communication.

ORIENTATION, TRAINING & GOVERNANCE

Onboarding for New Board Members - Develop and implement an orientation program for new board members which includes a training module, board buddy, board handbook and welcome gathering.

Annual Board Member Plan - Develop and institute an annual plan that outlines the actions a board member will take each year to conduct donor stewardship, cultivate donors and supporters, serve as an ambassador or make community connections that further the Foundation's critical work.

Focus Areas

- Increase board diversity and board member recruitment efforts.
- Develop an orientation and training program for new board members.
- Develop a stewardship program for board members.
- Institute use of the annual board member plan.
- Capitalize on virtual meetings for committees to facilitate board member engagement.

Significance

A diversified, vibrant and stable Board is critical for the Foundation to accomplish its mission. The Board Development Committee ensures that the operations of the Board are always high quality in meeting all of the responsibilities of a Board of Directors.

Benchmarks

1. Board members represent diverse communities and have a diversity of experiences and interests.
2. Board members are engaged and active in their roles as directors, officers, committee chairs and committee members.
3. The committee is able to fill board member vacancies as needed.
4. Board members feel supported and valued.

GOVERNANCE

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Organizational Development - Work in partnership with the Forest Preserve District to implement a multi-year, phased organizational structure that will build the Foundation's capacity to support its growing base and fundraising efforts.

Board Development - Support the Board Development Committee in its efforts to onboard new Directors and ensure that each Director understands his/her roles and responsibilities for ethical conduct and organizational oversight.

Committee Support - Support all committees to ensure they are effective and self-guided in their work and actions.

Professional Development - Continue to create and offer training modules for Board members on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest, Governance, Fundraising, and New Board Member Orientation.

Office Management & Administration - Ensure the successful daily management and administration of the Foundation and its activities and maintain the Foundation's Good Standing.

Capital Project Coordination - In partnership with the Forest Preserve, continue to improve and enhance the process for identifying projects, awarding funds, project tracking, reporting and administering funds.

Focus Areas

- Create and fund new contractual positions to meet growing demands.
- Work towards implementing the Foundation's new Executive Director position.
- Institute the board member orientation and training program.

Board Meeting Schedule

January 25
March 22
May 24
July 26
September 27
October 25 - Annual Planning
November 29 - Annual Meeting

Significance

Good governance is essential to long term sustainability. Donors are more likely to support organizations that have the capacity to make a difference. A strong commitment to good governance helps build organizational capacity and has the ability to create a lasting legacy.

Benchmarks

1. The Foundation is modeling best practices in non-profit governance.
2. Daily administration and management creates a smooth-running organization.
3. Committees and work groups are self-guided and highly motivated to accomplish their goals.
4. The Foundation is trusted and respected among its donors, supporters and peer organizations.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Virginia Rimeika-Messenger Woods Preserve

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Fundraising & Projects Support - Support and market the events, projects and initiatives identified by Fundraising & Projects Committee and Board across all channels (digital, social and print), as needed to ensure fundraising success.

Fundraising Campaigns - Develop and execute campaign marketing efforts across all channels (digital, social and print) using current best practices to retain existing donors and garner support from new donors.

New Features - Continue to design and develop new communication features to keep donors engaged as well as enhance existing features. These include things like website enhancements, photo galleries on Flickr, the YouTube channel, website Blog, monthly newsletter, expansion of resources for using native plants including links to native landscape photo galleries, and the like.

Focus Areas

- Establish a LinkedIn and Instagram account for the Foundation.
- Develop marketing and onboarding materials for new donors, new board members and new corporate community partners.
- Produce a variety of impact reports for different stakeholder audiences.
- Update and reorganize the Foundation's website and add new pages to support impact stories, corporate partnerships and volunteerism.
- Establish portals on the website to support and facilitate the funding request process for Forest Preserve staff and volunteer stewards.

**Check
Presentations**

February 9

June 8

September 14

December 14

Significance

Well executed communications and marketing is essential in building awareness, garnering support, executing successful fundraising campaigns initiatives, gaining respect and trust, and recognizing its donors and supporters in meaningful ways.

Benchmarks

1. Promotional material directly supports and drives the success of the Foundation's fundraising efforts.
2. The Foundation utilizes current and effective messaging to garner support across a variety of platforms.
3. The Foundation's social and digital media audience grows.
4. Messaging results in a growing donor base.



Deepak Sibal - Whalon Lake Preserve

VOLUNTEERISM

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Program Development - Work with Forest Preserve Volunteer Services to develop key volunteer opportunities for the Foundation which include, but are not limited to, photography, nature writing, event support, and program and outreach support.

Small Grants Programs - Continue to administer small grants in support of Volunteer Stewards through the Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant program and of youth through the Serve Will County Youth Service Grant program.

Corporate Workdays - Collaborate with Volunteer Services to meet the needs and interests of the Foundation's Corporate and Business Partners to provide community workdays for their employees as part of their support for the Foundation and Forest Preserve District.

Focus Areas

- Continue to develop and enhance volunteer opportunities that support special events, outreach and office administration functions.
- Develop and implement corporate engagement opportunities for the Foundation's corporate community partners.
- Increase stewardship focus for the Foundation's volunteers.
- Participate in the Forest Preserve's volunteer recognition efforts.

Significance

The Foundation provides opportunities for the Forest Preserve District's volunteers to expand their involvement and develop new skills. These volunteers are the Foundation's best and most dedicated ambassadors. Their support and involvement builds trust and the Foundation's capacity to meet its mission.

Benchmarks

1. There is a collaborative relationship with Volunteer Services.
2. Experiences with the Foundation are positive.
3. Volunteers seek out Foundation assignments, programs and projects.
4. Foundation opportunities enhance the Forest Preserve's volunteer program.

EVENT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Native Plant Sale Events

Bringing Nature Home Native Plant Sale

- Online Sale: April 1-30, 2023
- Pop-Up Sale: May 20 & 21, 2023
- Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Summer Blooms Native Plant Sale

- Online Sale: June 9-July 9, 2023
- Pop-Up Sale: July 29 & 30, 2023
- Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Summer Blooms Gathering

- Friday, July 28, 2023
- Isle a la Cache Museum, Romeoville

Hummingbird Fest Native Plant Sale

- Saturday, August 19, 2023
- Plum Creek Nature Center, Beecher

Autumn Native Tree & Shrub Sale

- Online Sale: September 1-24, 2023
- Pop-Up Sale: September 30, 2023
- Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Outreach Events

January 14 - Eagle Watch, Four Rivers Environmental Education Center

April 15 - Get Gardening Expo, Fountaindale Library

April 22 - Earth Day Festival, Hidden Oaks Nature Center

May 13 - Migration Celebration, Four Rivers Environmental Education Center

June 24 - Pollinator Party, Isle a la Cache Museum

August 19 - Hummingbird Fest, Plum Creek Nature Center

September 16 - Farmstead Frolic, Riverview Farmstead

September 23 - Pelican Watch, Four Rivers EE Center

Appreciation Events

Donor Appreciation Nights at Fun & Food Trucks

- June 2 - Whalon Lake
- July 7 - Hammel Woods
- August 4 - Hickory Creek

Learn & Grow Seminars

Benjamin Vogt - Monarch Gardens

Starting Your Native Plant Garden
Wednesday, March 15, 2023 - Zoom

When Weed Control Comes
Wednesday, June 14, 2023 - Zoom

Xerces Society

*Setting topics and dates - TBD

Grant Programs

- **Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant Program** (March 2023 - March 2024)
- **Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program** (January 1-December 31, 2022)



CAPITAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Byron Morgan-Hickory-Creek Preserve

The Nature Foundation of Will County

2023 Project Requests

Golden Opportunity - Botanical Illustration Traveling Exhibition, Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, October-December 2023

Journey Stories Special Exhibition from the Smithsonian, Isle a la Cache Museum, February-May 2023

Fly Fishing Special Exhibition from the American Museum of Fly Fishing, Monee Reservoir, September-October 2023

Willy's Wilderness Website for Kids

Preserve the Moment Photo Contest

Health & Wellness Initiatives: Woods Walk Challenge, Harvest Hustle, Pumpkin Fun Run and Triple Crown Challenge

The Buzz Nature Show

Bicycle Repair Stations

Nature Education Programs & STEM Funding for Science Equipment and Technology

Care & Feeding - Animal Ambassadors

Completion of Campground Welcome Station at Hammel Woods - 2022 Funding Award

Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant Program

Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program

*This represents a preliminary project list. Funds for these projects are allocated in the 2023 Budget and represent over \$62,000 in financial support. Additional requests will be made by the Forest Preserve in 2023.

2022 Projects

Audio Reader Units for the All-Persons Trail at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center

The Way We Worked Exhibition at Isle a la Cache Museum

Visions of Nature Art Exhibition at Hidden Oaks Nature Center

The Diversity of Life Exhibition at Isle a la Cache Museum

Dive IN! Conservation Special Event at Plum Creek Nature Center

Campground Welcome Station at Hammel Woods Preserve

Preserve the Moment Photo Contest

Willy'sWilderness.org

The Buzz Nature Show

Woods Walk Program

The Preserves Are For You Initiative

Care & Feeding of Animal Ambassadors

Restore Will County Land Stewardship Small Grants Program

Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program



2022 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Joseph Traina-Hammel Woods Preserve

Revenue

Gifts*	\$462,800
Fundraising Events	\$97,500
Interest Income	\$100
Carryover*	<u>\$526,452</u>
	\$1,086,852

*Gifts and Carryover includes \$750,000 in Restricted Gifts

Expenditures

Bank/Audit Fees	\$6,559
Capital Projects	\$500,000
Contractual Services	\$65,525
Legal	\$3,500
Misc. Commodities	\$48,000
Office Supplies	\$300
Postage	\$150
Uniforms	\$200
Sales Tax Paid	\$7,150
Contingency/Reserve	\$20,000
Projected Carryover	<u>\$454,968</u>
	\$1,086,852

Resolution No. 22-03, The Nature Foundation of Will County
2023 Budget, Approved November 30, 2022

Financial Position

\$535,000	Total Assets
\$526,000	Projected Carryover January 1
\$400,000	Gifts (Restricted/Non-Restricted)
\$33,500	Corporate Partnerships
\$397,000	Capital Project Funds Awarded
\$77,000	Native Plant Sale Revenue
\$30,000	Net Revenue
\$1,450,000	Legacy Gift (Expectancies)

As of October 31, 2022