

A close-up photograph of several purple flowers with yellow centers, likely asters, in bloom. The flowers are the background for the top half of the page.

DECEMBER 1, 2021

2022 PLAN OF WORK

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Bertrand Leclercq - Riverview Farmstead

Long Range Planning Goals

Goal 1: Take action to ensure that The Nature Foundation of Will County continues to grow its operations.

Goal 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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2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Eileen Capodice - McKinley Woods

Successes

- Have built a solid base of donor support
- Native plant sale events and our ability to adapt to current events
- Maintaining our existence during these difficult times and meeting our objectives

Strengths

- Trustworthy
- Adaptable
- Resilient
- Accommodating
- Focused
- Responsive

Concerns

- Need more aggressive outreach to acquire more support and to cultivate additional/new relationships
- Need to publicize the foundation and events more to be more effective
- The pandemic has continued to limit our ability to meet and socialize face-to-face
- Demands are growing and we need additional help

Priorities

- Increase promotion, advertising, networking, and outreach to sustain current relationships, build new relationships, and garner more support
- Launch a volunteer program
- Develop a growth plan for donors, sponsors, revenue, marketing and programming
- Address the need for increased staff support
- Develop a focused board member recruitment plan
- Explore professional fundraising as a strategy to accomplish goals
- Adjust the process for reviewing and awarding funding requests from the Forest Preserve District

Projects

Preserve the Moment Photo Contest

Willy'sWilderness.org

Sculpting Wild Juried Art Contest at
Plum Creek Nature Center

National Parks Endangered Animals
Quilt Exhibition

Woods Walk Program

Care & Feeding of Live Animals

Don't Be A Zombie Exhibition at
Plum Creek Nature Center

Restore Will County Land
Stewardship Small Grants Program

Serve Will County
Youth Service Grant Program

All Persons Interpretive Trail at
Four Rivers Environmental
Education Center



FUNDRAISING & PROJECTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Mark Hanna- McKinley Woods

Campaigns - Using the best practices in fundraising, develop and implement an engaging year-end appeal around important and urgent issues that will garner new donors and retain existing donors.

Fundraising Events - Through fundraising events, expand the Foundation's Bring Nature Home Initiative and offer a suite of online native plant sales and pop-up sales in the spring, summer and possibly autumn months. Offer an additional ticketed fundraising event in 2022.

Community Partnerships - Foster relationships and network with the business community to build support for events, programs, developments and initiatives. Take a more active role in the Joliet Area Chamber of Commerce and introduce local businesses to the Foundation. Develop a stewardship program and process for business community partners that expresses appreciation and shows the value of their support.

Donor Stewardship - Offer donor appreciation gatherings and outings. Continue to offer The Monarch Newsletter to active donors. Look for opportunities to expand current stewardship activities to better thank donors and demonstrate the impact of their support.

Nature Foundation Legacy Society - With a newly extended deadline of December 31, 2022, work to promote the program and enrollment by interested individuals as founding members of the society. Develop and implement a Society Member Benefits program.

Native Plant and Seed Exchange - Offer a new in-person program in the fall months which encourages the public to share native plant cuttings, plants and seeds as a way to further the Bringing Nature Home Initiative.

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

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

Amy Miller - Rock Run Preserve

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

Internal Controls - Establish and adopt appropriate internal control strategies to manage risks to the Foundation and develop and enforce guidelines and practices for staff, Board members and volunteers.

Fundraising & Projects - Work with the Fundraising & Projects Committee to assist them in setting their fundraising goals and creating an annual budget which supports the committee's work and meets the Forest Preserve's annual funding request.

Planned Giving - Support and guide the establishment of the Nature Foundation Legacy Society as means to accept donations from wills, estates, and trusts or as a beneficiary designation. Develop Planned giving tools such as Gift Agreement and detailed digital brochure on planned giving opportunities.

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

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.

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

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Evi Kempf - Riverview Farmstead

RECRUITMENT

Vacancies - Fill vacancies as needed and when feasible depending on the pandemic's status. Maintain an ongoing list of prospects.

Prospective Board Member Recruitment - Create a recruitment packet with cover letter, job description, committee descriptions, bylaws, annual budget and work plan, program overview, current financial statements, 990, and a board member directory and profiles. Update existing guidelines/policies regarding board member characteristics.

Director Agreement - Update and expand the agreement to be more explicit (state expectations, provide examples and options) in the duties and responsibilities of each board member.

Director Candidate Application - Update and streamline the application form and align components of the application with the expectations expressed in the revised Director Agreement.

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.

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 are diverse in terms of experience, interests and geographic representation.
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

Ronald Kapala - McKinley Woods

Organizational Development - Work in partnership with the Forest Preserve District to develop a multi-year, phased organizational structure and associated positions and funding strategies that will build capacity and carry the Foundation into the future.

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, improve the process for identifying projects, awarding funds, project tracking, reporting and administering funds.

Board Meeting Schedule

January 26
March 23
May 25
July 27
September 28
October 26 - Annual Planning Session
November 30 - 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 and a 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.



COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Blain Alden - Old Plank Road Trail

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 - Design and develop new communication features to keep donors engaged. These include photo galleries on Flickr, website Blog, monthly newsletter, expansion of resources for using native plants including links to native landscape photo galleries.

Business Community Outreach - Sponsor Joliet Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfasts and Luncheons (ongoing name recognition) as a way to increase awareness of the Foundation and its work.

Check Presentations

February 10

June 9

August 11

December 8

Business Community Outreach

Business After Hours, Joliet Area Chamber of Commerce at
Sugar Creek Administration Center - May 26

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.



VOLUNTEERISM

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Mary Listermann - Hickory Creek Preserve

Program Development - Work with 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.

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

Mat Zook - Rock Run Rookery

Native Plant Sales

Bringing Nature Home Online Native Plant Sale - April 1 to May 8

- Customer Order Pickup - May 21/22 at Isle a la Cache Preserve
- Spring Pop-Up Sale - May 21/22 at Isle a la Cache Preserve

Summer Blooms Online Native Plant Sale - June 17 to July 10

- Customer Order Pickup - July 23/24 at Isle a la Cache Preserve
- Pop-Up Pollinator Sale - July 23/24 at Isle a la Cache Preserve

Fall Native Tree & Shrub Sale - TBD (May be combined with new seed and plant exchange event)

Learn & Grow Opportunities

February - TBD

March - TBD

April - Heather Holm, The Bombus Among Us - Bumble Bee Basics

June - Heather Holm, Specialist Bees

August - TBD

Sept/Oct - Native Plant Seed and Plant Swap - Fall/TBD

Outreach Events

4/16 - Get Gardening Seed Expo & Plant Swap, Fountaindale Library

5/14 - Migration Celebration, Four Rivers EE Center

6/25 - Pollinator Party, Isle a la Cache Museum

7/9 - Four Rivers for All, Four Rivers EE Center

9/24 - Pelican Watch, Four Rivers EE Center

10/1 - Farmstead Frolic, Riverview Farmstead

10/15 - Pumpkin Fun Run, Hadley Valley

Appreciation Events

Fun & Food Trucks VIP Events

- June 24 at Hickory Creek Preserve
- July 22 at Whalon Lake Preserve
- August 26 at Hammel Woods Preserve

Grant Programs

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

Summer Concert

- August at Four Rivers EE Center

CAPITAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County



Penny Schnay - Rock Run Rookery

2022 Project Requests

The Way We Worked Special Exhibition - Isle a la Cache Museum
The Diversity of Life Special Exhibition - Plum Creek Nature Center
Dive In Special Traveling Event - Plum Creek Nature Center
Trail Readers for All Persons Trail at Four Rivers EE Center
Campground Welcome Station at Hammel Woods
Willy's Wilderness
Preserve the Moment Photo Contest
Woods Walk Challenge
The Buzz
Special Recreation Initiative - Reaching Underserved Communities
Care & Feeding of Live Animals

*Funds for these projects are allocated in the 2022 Budget. This does not include potential new requests from the Forest Preserve District which the Foundation anticipates in 2022.

2021 Projects

Sculpting Wild Art Competition
Willy's Wilderness
National Park Service Endangered Species Quilt Exhibition
Preserve the Moment Photo Contest
Don't Be a Zombie Preparedness Exhibit
Care & Feeding of Live Animals
Woods Walk Challenge
All Person's Ability Trail at Four Rivers

2022 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Nature Foundation of Will County

Cynthia Harn - Sugar Creek Preserve

REVENUE

Donations	17,500
Native Plant Sales	75,000
Summer Concert Event	15,000
Interest Income	200
Carryover	<u>197,032</u>
	304,732

EXPENDITURES

Bank/Audit Fees	674
Capital Projects	49,500
Contractual Services	18,040
Legal	1,250
Liability Insurance	1,000
Misc. Commodities	44,705
Other Misc. Service Cost	12,000
Office Supplies	300
Postage	150
Uniforms	200
Sales Tax Paid	4,000
Contingency/Reserve	15,000
Projected Carryover	<u>157,913</u>
	304,732

Pending Budget Approval

Financial Position

\$254,545	Total Assets
\$197,032	Projected Carryover January 1
\$13,044	Individual Donations
\$10,250	Pledges
\$42,056	Capital Project Funds Awarded
\$64,239	Native Plant Sale Revenue
\$15,474	Net Revenue
\$1,450,000	Legacy Gift (Expectancies)

*As of November 22, 2021
Prior to Year-End Appeal*