



2024 ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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 - 2024 marks the Foundation's tenth year of operations and its continued focus on two 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



Contents

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
PAGE 2 & 3

2024 FOCUS AREAS
PAGE 4

EVENT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
PAGE 5

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS
PAGE 6



2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Raising and administering financial support for the Forest Preserve District of Will County is The Nature Foundation of Will County's mission. It is bolstered by a strong commitment to meeting the interests of its donors in supporting meaningful and impactful programs and projects that protect nature, inspire discovery and bring people and nature together.

Legacy Gifts

In 2023, The Nature Foundation received \$450,000 in legacy gifts for preserve improvements at Lake Chaminwood Preserve as well as habitat restoration at Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve (GGNP).



The legacy gift received for habitat restoration at GGNP also creates a new Land Stewardship Fund which the Foundation will use to grow its commitment to restoring biodiversity and improving habitat in the Will County forest preserves. Initially, the Foundation hopes to provide matching dollars for grants that the Forest Preserve receives from national, regional, state, and local granting agencies.

Invest in Nature Corporate Partnership Projects

In 2023, The Nature Foundation of Will County secured over \$62,500 in funding from corporations, businesses and foundations to support Forest Preserve District initiatives as well as the Foundation's native plant sales and its Bringing Nature Home Initiative.

- STEM & STEAM education programs at all Forest Preserve Visitor Centers with funding from Pembina, matched by gifts made to The Nature Foundation by its donors and supporters.
- Connecting Kids with Nature School Bus Scholarship Program with funding from Pembina.
- Community events including Eagle Watch, Migration Celebration, and Pelican Party at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in partnership with Enbridge Alliance.
- Trout restocking at Hidden Lakes Trout Farm in partnership with Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's Outdoor Fund.
- New benches at Hidden Oaks Nature Center and Hidden Lakes Trout Farm in partnership with Vulcan Materials Company.
- Education and fishing program equipment and supplies for Hidden Oaks Nature Center in partnership with the Sgt. Thomas M. Gilbert Memorial Foundation.
- Supplies and equipment for volunteer community workdays and the Adopt-A-Preserve program in partnership with Target.
- Bicycle repair stations along the Hickory Creek Bikeway and the Veteran's Memorial Trail in partnership with the Joliet Bicycle Club, matched by gifts made to The Nature Foundation by its donors and supporters.
- Support for native plant sale events and the Bringing Nature Home Initiative in partnership with Enbridge, Brent Hassert Consulting LLC, Nicor, Pizzo & Associates LTD, Pizzo Native Plant Nursery, PuroClean of Romeoville, CBBE, JULIE Inc., KGG LLC, A.J. Dralle Inc, Strand Associates, Village of Romeoville, and Uni-Max Management Corporation.



2023 Projects

In 2023, the Foundation provided \$50,000 in funding for Forest Preserve District programs and initiatives made possible by gifts from individual donors.

STEM & STEAM Nature Education
Program Funding

Restore Will County Land Stewardship
Small Grants Program

Serve Will County
Youth Service Grant Program

Take It Outside Initiative

Will County Triple Crown Hiking
Challenge

Harvest Hustle Virtual 5K

Pumpkin Fun Run

Willy'sWilderness.org

The Buzz Nature Show

Woods Walk Program

World's Finest: Fly Fishing Tackle
Exhibition

Golden Opportunity: Botanical
Illustrations Exhibition

Journey Stories Exhibition

Animal Ambassadors

Willy Woodchuck's Makeover

Organizational Development

The Nature Foundation of Will County's capacity to accomplish its mission and meet the interests of its donors relies on solid fundraising and investment strategies, a growing donor base, an engaged Board of Directors, a growing community of volunteers, a strong leadership team, and a commitment to organizational development.

In 2023, the Foundation has made progress in each of these areas and in response to growing interest and support, it has taken the necessary steps to add new staff which is essential to managing its growth.

The Foundation has made progress on reaching many of the benchmarks it set in 2023 outlined below:

Fundraising & Projects

1. There is a constant 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. The Foundation is able to provide significant funding to the Forest Preserve District for its programs, projects and initiatives.

Finance & Investment

1. There is a constant and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
2. The Foundation is able to invest and earn interest income.
3. The operating reserve ratio is 1.5 to 2.
4. The program expense ratio is 75%.
5. Meet or exceed a 10% to 15% profit margin.

Board Development

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 Board Development committee is able to fill board member vacancies as needed.
4. Board members feel supported and valued.

Volunteerism & Community Engagement

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.

Leadership & Governance

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.
5. The Foundation has key staff in leadership roles.



Over \$1 Million in Assets
80% Reserved for Forest Preserve
District Programs & Initiatives

Over \$1.4 Million in Lifetime
Support Provided to the Forest
Preserve District of Will County

100,000 + People Served in 2023 by
Donor Supported Programs

Native Plant Sales:
\$90,000 - Gross Sales
30,000 - Flowers, grasses, and
sedges purchased
575 - Native trees and shrubs
purchased
550 - Online orders
850 - Customers

Take It Outside Merchandise Sales:
\$35,000 - Gross Sales
1,000 + Happy Customers

70 Volunteers
850 Donated Hours

3,500 Email Subscribers

2,100 Facebook Followers

FOCUS AREAS FOR 2024

Organizational Development & Leadership

Transition the leadership and management of the Foundation to its new Executive Director following the retirement of its former Executive Director and implement the new contractual Program Coordinator position. Continue to grow volunteer involvement and support.

Stewardship Development

Place a greater emphasis on stewardship efforts for all Foundation stakeholders including donors, corporate partners, volunteers, and board members.

Financial Development

Place increase emphasis on growing unrestricted gifts and funding the Foundation's mission while continuing to invest and grow assets, provided the climate is favorable.

Legacy Development

Complete development of the Legacy Society and Founder's Circle and continue to promote the benefits and impacts of legacy giving.

Invest in Nature Partnership Development

Continue to engage the business community in multiple ways and grow support for the Foundation and its initiatives as well as for Forest Preserve District programs and projects.

Board Member Development

Develop and implement an orientation, training and leadership development program for new and existing board members. Explore the possibility of holding hybrid board meetings.

Storytelling Development

Develop a storytelling approach in the Foundation's marketing and communications strategies that focuses on sharing donor impacts, celebrating achievements, highlighting important issues, and honoring its donors and partners.



2024 Projects

In 2024, The Nature Foundation is planning to provide over \$80,000 to the Forest Preserve District for programs and initiatives made possible by generous gifts from individual donors.

STEM & STEAM Nature Education
Program Funding

Restore Will County Land Stewardship
Small Grants Program

Serve Will County
Youth Service Grant Program

Take It Outside Initiative

Willy'sWilderness.org

Woods Walk Program

INNDIGE-FACTS Exhibition

Birds in Art Traveling Exhibition

Lost & Found Savannah Remnants
Exhibition

The State of Water Exhibition

Animal Ambassadors

Bicycle Racks, Interpretive Signage,
and Outdoor Bird Feeding Station
Enhancements - Various Locations

Campground Welcome Station -
Hammel Woods

2024 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Native Plant Sale Events

Bringing Nature Home Native Plant Sale

Online Sale: April 6 - 27, 2024

Pop-Up Sale: May 18 & 19, 2024

Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Pollinator Party Pop-Up Native Plant Sale

Saturday, June 15, 2024

Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Summer Blooms Native Plant Sale

Online Sale: June 22 - July 13, 2024

Pop-Up Sale: August 3 & 4, 2-24

Isle a la Cache Preserve, Romeoville

Summer Blooms Gathering

Friday, August 2, 2024

Isle a la Cache Museum, Romeoville

Gardens Gone Native Garden Tour

Saturday, July 13, 2024

Native Plant Gardens in Will County

Hummingbird Fest Native Plant Sale

Saturday, August 17, 2024

Plum Creek Nature Center, Beecher

Fall on the Farm Native Plant Sale

Saturday, September 14, 2024

Riverview Farmstead Preserve, Naperville

Outreach Events

Eagle Watch

Saturday, January 13, 2024

Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon

Mammal Madness

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon

Pollinator Party!

Saturday, June 15, 2024

Isle a la Cache Museum, Romeoville

Hummingbird Fest

Saturday, August 17, 2024

Plum Creek Nature Center, Beecher

Fall on the Farm

Saturday, September 14, 2024

Riverview Farmstead Preserve, Naperville

Pelican Party!

Saturday, September 28, 2024

Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon



Appreciation Events

Donor Appreciation Nights at Fun & Food Trucks

- June 14 - Whalon Lake
- July 12 - Hammel Woods
- August 9 - Hickory Creek

Learn & Grow Seminars

Gardening with Native Plants through the Seasons

Denise Sandoval - Good Natured

Landscapes LLC - March 2024

Gardening in the Shade

Benjamin Vogt - Monarch Gardens LLC -

April 2024

*Plus other presentations

Grant Programs

Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant Program & the Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program

Board Meetings

January 24, 2024

March 27, 2024

May 22, 2024

July 24, 2024

September 25, 2024

October 23, 2024

December 4, 2024

2023 BUDGET PROGRESS

2023 Revenue

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Gifts | \$509,186 |
| Fundraising Events & Activities | \$142,100 |
| Interest Income | <u>\$2,641</u> |
| | \$653,927 |

Revenue as of October 31, 2023. Represents 118% over anticipated revenue for the year.

2023 Expenditures

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Bank/Audit Fees | \$6,119 |
| Capital Projects | \$39,000 |
| Contractual Services | \$42,138 |
| Legal | \$950 |
| Misc. Commodities | \$66,000 |
| Admin/Office | \$3,100 |
| Sales Tax Paid | <u>\$7,540</u> |
| | \$164,847 |

Expenditures as of October 31, 2023. Tracking at 108% of planned expenditures for this time period.

Financial Position Summary

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| \$1,032,622 | Total Assets |
| 1,000,000 | Projected Carryover January 1 |
| \$505,000 | Gifts (Restricted/Non-Restricted) |
| \$79,500 | Invest in Nature Partnerships |
| \$65,000 | Capital Project Funds Awarded |
| \$123,000 | Fundraising Revenue (Gross) |
| \$1,200,000 | Legacy Gift (Expectancies) |

