

Mississippi Valley
CONSERVANCY

Annual Report 2017

Join us in lacing up our boots and hitting the trails for an amazing year ahead. Together we can do much more.



In every walk
with nature
one receives
far more
than he seeks.

~ John Muir





It was difficult to imagine any bigger cause for celebration than Mississippi Valley Conservancy's twentieth anniversary . . .

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Front Cover: Hikers in the 2017 *Trail Trek Challenge* on one of the public nature preserves protected by the Conservancy. Above: Young bird-watcher at a Conservancy education event.

Marching into the next 20 years

When you lace up your boots in the morning you just never know who will cross your path. A number of years ago I met a very special person. She has been a supporter of the Conservancy for many years. She owns land she has protected from development through a conservation agreement. She supports the everyday operations of our land conservation mission. She is a great ambassador for oaks, and birds, and doing what's best for the land, our future. She is one of my personal daily inspirations for our work of protecting and restoring land as well as teaching land ethic to our children.

She is inspiring to me for many reasons but most of all because she lives a very modest life and focuses on giving back for the future.

Recently, she made an amazing gift to the future of land protection. A \$1 million gift – the beginning of an opportunity to build an endowment for the Conservancy. **Our Children's Natural Heritage Endowment.**

Our board has seized the moment to match this amazing gift, not just once but two times, to create a fund of \$3 million dollars. A fund that will provide long-term stability, fiscal responsibility, and allow for program expansion opportunities.

In the coming year, the whole Team here at Mississippi Valley Conservancy is committed to boots on the ground. We have mapped out our trail to make a difference in land protection and restoration. We will help the children tie their boots and march out to learn about and enjoy nature.

I hope you will lace up your own boots and join us in whatever way you can. Attend a hike, volunteer, make a donation, or help us build our endowment. Your boots make a difference. Let's make a difference together.

Carol Abrahamzon

Carol Abrahamzon,
Executive Director



Campaign Launched!

OUR CHILDREN'S NATURAL HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

WHO: Anonymous donor

WHAT: Gave \$1 million to Mississippi Valley Conservancy's new endowment fund

WHY: To conserve habitat for birds, other wildlife and people

The anonymous donor who has launched Mississippi Valley Conservancy's endowment fund with a \$1 million gift is a long-time member of our organization. And she is among the donors of conservation easements on their properties.

She has decided, based on personal experience, that the endowment gift is the best way to further her ambition to "promote long term good for our Earth, and our beloved Driftless Area," as she expressed it in a letter to Executive Director Carol Abrahamzon. Abrahamzon said the gift will "kick off a campaign to grow the funds for *Our Children's Natural Heritage Endowment*. The vision of this donor is for the endowment to grow to \$3 million dollars through matched gifts and pledges."

Conservancy President Warren Loveland said that the "protected forever" signs placed on Mississippi Valley Conservancy-protected properties "suggests the need for an endowment to help provide the financial capacity necessary to ensure that the Conservancy will be there to fulfill its promise." Rob Tyser, who will take over as president in 2018, said the beauty of the donor's gift is that "this fund will also be 'forever' -- an enduring resource for safeguarding these lands in perpetuity."

Abrahamzon added that the endowment "will help us to expand our land conservation, restoration work, and environmental education efforts in the Driftless Area."

After a lifetime of working with wildlife, our million-dollar donor came to the conclusion that conserving habitat was the most important contribution she could make toward their well-being:

"I vowed to do what I could to preserve habitat, which I knew in my bones was needed more than anything, although I could not imagine how I would be able to work toward that end."

Then she learned about Mississippi Valley Conservancy. She offered this endorsement:

"The Conservancy's mission and work are directly aimed at education of children and landowners and saving what can possibly be saved for future generations. Please join me in my commitment to Mississippi Valley Conservancy."

No Stranger to Conservation:

Landowner makes second conservation agreement



Joan Greshik may not be a spring chicken, but she acts like one as she exits the truck and starts up the hill along the field edge and into the woodland fringe. Along the way she points out oak trees, limestone bluffs, game trails, and the stubble of recently harvested potatoes, corn, and soybeans. Partway up the hill, she turns and identifies features of the farm below, the Mississippi River wetlands and the Minnesota bluffs to the southwest.

“We came here and put our hearts into the land,” she said.

In 2017, Joan placed 710 acres of family land into a conservation agreement with Mississippi Valley Conservancy. In Buffalo County, this parcel extends from the Mississippi River to the blufftops.

“Joan’s property is most impressive because of its diversity,” said Abbie Church, Conservancy Conservation Director. “It has everything from river backwaters to farmland, and up the hill it has oak openings and goat prairies. And it’s right along the Great River Road.”

According to Church, the property also meets a Conservancy preservation objective in that it borders other natural areas including the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge and Wisconsin’s Whitman Dam Wildlife Area. “This property hit every one of our categories,” said Church.

It is the second piece of Greshik land to be enrolled in a conservation easement. In 2011, Joan protected 404 acres of blufftop fields, native prairie, hickory and oak woods with the Conservancy.

Asked why she added the second piece, Joan said, “I was so pleased with the way the first one was done.”

Greshik and her late husband, Joe Greshik, moved here in 1964 shortly after they were married and began farming. On this and nearby land, they raised hogs, cattle and crops until 2009 when Joe died. Their son Keith Greshik now farms the family land.

She is modest about her interest in protecting the farm. “It wasn’t me,” she said, “It was my husband. He was the conservationist. We had lots of talks before he died. It became my mission—it grows with you.”

Joan spoke of her late husband’s love of the land—farmland, woods, wetlands and bluffs.

“He couldn’t see lots of people coming in and building houses,” she said. “He would put his hands in the ground and just watch the soil trickle through.”

But she is no stranger to conservation.

“I’ve been watching so carefully about what is going to happen to the farm as time goes on.”



“We came here and put our hearts into the land.”

She wants it to stay in the family, or at least be protected from development and environmental damage.

For at least three generations, the family has been keen on good conservation farm practices, including her late husband Joe.

“He wanted to do more to keep the farm as it was,” Greshik said. “He looked for measures to protect the land, but also to plant and harvest. We don’t have a plow anymore. We don’t turn our land. It will be planted without turning anything.”

Greshik spoke lovingly about her farm neighborhood and the depth of people’s connection to the land. The county hosts many multi-generation family farms.

“Buffalo County is not big on industry—we’re ag people,” she said. “The land gives us food and nature. Sons and daughters go away, work in the cities, maybe raise families. But then, after twenty or thirty years, they come back and farm. It’s a culture.”

And the future of the land?

“I hope it does exactly what it is doing. Maybe we need crops that can withstand the changing weather better.” Joan is concerned about herbicides and pesticides. “We need to plant with more brains and less chemicals.

“My next thought is the wetlands,” she added.

Joan now lives a few miles upriver near Cochrane, Wisconsin, while son Keith and his family live on the old home place.

“I’m still in the country, though!” she pointed out.



The 2017 conservation agreement made between Joan Greshik (left) and the Conservancy is her second such agreement. It protects a 710-acre parcel of farmland, forests, and bluffs near Cochrane. Greshik’s first conservation agreement with the Conservancy was for 404 acres on the bluffs above Fountain City, back in 2011. The land is still farmed by her son, while the blufftop fields, native prairie, hickory and oak woods provide a respite for native species, including these cardinal flowers.

MORE LANDS CONSERVED



54
a c r e s

George and Carmeen Johnston's prairies and oak woodlands near Norwalk will help protect the water flowing into the Kickapoo River and on down to the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers.



146
a c r e s

Mark Heberlein's and Kathleen Fitzgerald's years of work invested in habitat restoration will now be protected forever. Their land on the South Fork Bad Axe River connects with three adjacent protected properties.



89
a c r e s

Wilton Hemlocks is the Conservancy's first public nature preserve in Monroe County, thanks to the donation by Eric and Inese Epstein of this ecologically important property on the Kickapoo River.



114
a c r e s

The Kann family's "choose and cut" Christmas tree farm in Monroe County provides habitat for a variety of creatures that can be seen and heard from the front porch of the property's log cabin.



83
a c r e s

Thanks to generous supporters, the Conservancy completed acquisition of the *Kickapoo Caverns* property from Carole Porter. The spectacular natural cavern, now dedicated to protecting bat populations, will be open on a limited basis.



29
a c r e s

The seven Tweed siblings collaborated in the formation of the conservation agreement that now protects bluffs that include Native American effigy mounds and habitat for migrating birds and the rare five-lined skink.

Partnership Outreach Success in Kickapoo & Adjacent Watersheds

Since 2014, with support from the McKnight Foundation, the Conservancy has partnered with Valley Stewardship Network and the Kickapoo Grazing Initiative in an outreach campaign to connect with farmers and landowners regarding conservation resources, financial incentives, and land protection. Conservancy staff members have conducted dozens of landowner visits to discuss improved conservation practices while offering the opportunity to protect investments with conservation agreements. Through this connection, the Conservancy is building long-term relationships with individuals and the community.

85 visits with interested landowners

10,000 acres discussed for conservation recommendations

11 landowners completed conservation agreements in project area

1,047 acres now protected with conservation agreements

The Role of Land Use in Preservation

Karen Oberhauser, the newly-named director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum, is notable for her viewpoint on an issue important to the Mississippi Valley Conservancy and everywhere else in the state where people are working to conserve and protect land.

Oberhauser says she brings to her job an understanding of the tension between habitat preservation and multiple uses of protected land, including scientific work, education and recreation. All of these things are important, she says. When visitors walk on the Arboretum trails, “they’re making connections to nature. And based on those connections, we hope that they become more invested in preserving land like the Arboretum.”

She hopes to ease the tension between preservation and use that she says has been with the Arboretum since its dedication in 1934, when Aldo Leopold served as its first research director.

Oberhauser received her doctorate in ecology and behavioral biology from the University of Minnesota where she became professor in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation of Biology.

Oberhauser on education:

“... we need people to care about biodiversity and natural history and organisms. And we can only make them care through education.”

In her work at the University of Minnesota, Karen Oberhauser was chair of the steering committee of the Monarch Joint Venture, a collaboration of some 60 organizations working to promote the sustainability of monarch populations. Her monarch work included leading a citizen science project that engages volunteers in tracking monarch populations. And she developed a science education program called Monarchs in the Classroom.

Photo by Bryce Richter, UW-Madison

Accreditation Renewed



Accredited land trusts protected five times more land from 2010 to 2015 than land trusts that were not accredited. Furthermore, accreditation has increased the public's trust in land conservation, which has helped win support for federal, state and local conservation funding measures.

Mississippi Valley Conservancy's renewed accreditation was awarded by the The Land Trust Accreditation Commission in August, 2017, signifying its confidence that the Conservancy's lands will be protected forever.

The Conservancy had to provide extensive documentation and undergo a comprehensive review as part of its accreditation renewal process. The renewal proves once again that, as part of a network of only 389 accredited land trusts across the nation, we are committed to professional excellence and to maintaining the public's trust in our conservation work.

Additionally, the Conservancy was awarded a special Commendation for its Project Evaluation Worksheet. The Commission will use this worksheet as an example of excellence for all land trusts nationwide.



The Challenge is ON!

The first annual *Trail Trek Challenge* in June 2017 was a big success, and we're excited to build upon that to create an annual destination event. Hikers and sponsors brought in a combined total of nearly \$13,000, and sponsors benefitted from online, print, and broadcast media exposure. Some of them even recruited teams of employees to participate as brand champions for wellness.



Each team participating in the 2017 event hiked three different trails on the Conservancy's public preserves in the La Crosse area. Their course was a mystery until the start of each "leg" in the event, where trail ambassadors stamped hiking passports (*upper left*) and sent the teams to their next hiking destinations.

We're thrilled to announce that Organic Valley has committed to the lead sponsorship for a second year in 2018, and WKBT has also committed to being our primary media sponsor for a second year!

Our goal for 2018 is to exponentially grow the event by inspiring 2017 team members to step up and form hiking teams of their own. We plan to expand our outreach through many of the area's youth organizations and the wellness departments of area businesses.

With support from outdoor enthusiasts, nature lovers, hikers, businesses and community organizations, the *Trail Trek Challenge* will become a popular annual tradition that helps protect our natural treasures. There are lots of surprises in store for the 2018 event on Sunday, June 10th. *Mark your calendar and lace up your boots for some fun fundraising and a great day outdoors!*



2017 Year in Review

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead

These words describe perfectly the beginning years of Mississippi Valley Conservancy. It all started with 47 acres of wetlands and a big dream. 20 years later, nearly 20,000 acres of trees, bluffs, prairies, and clear running streams have been protected from development for the sake of birds, bees, frogs, fish and our children.

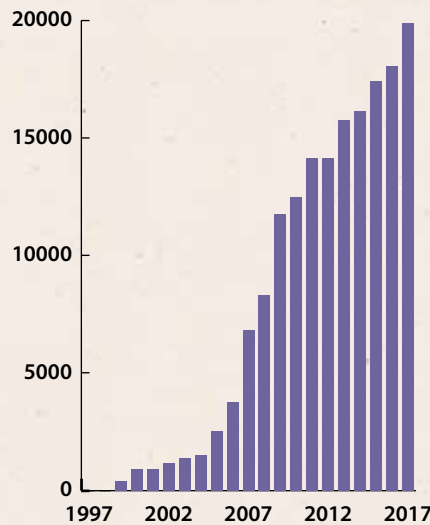
Now we look toward the next 20 years. We're lacing up our boots, loading up our tools, and continuing the work of land conservation. Together we can continue to make a positive and lasting change. With the help of board, staff, volunteers, and most of all donors, let's start working on the next year, the next 20 years – the next acre, the next 20,000 acres!

Together in conservation,
Carol Abrahamzon

MORE PROTECTED LAND MEANS INCREASING RESPONSIBILITIES. YOUR SUPPORT MAKES IT POSSIBLE.

Every protected property requires an investment of scientific, legal, and administrative resources to assess, document, and monitor the health of the land. Fundraising and education efforts require time and resources to create awareness among landowners and keep the community engaged.

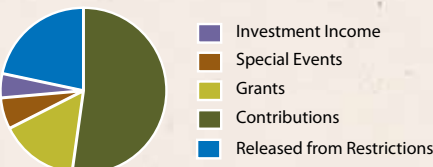
The bars on this chart show the growing number of acres protected by the Conservancy – nearly 20,000 acres in 20 years!



Fiscal Year 2016-17 Income

Total Revenue \$884,012 (unrestricted)

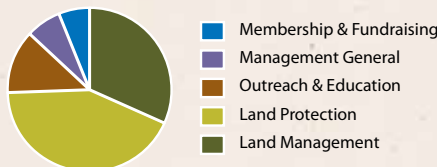
Investment Income	\$ 42,780.
Special Events	\$ 54,328.
Grants	\$135,589.
Contributions	\$461,937.
Released from Restrictions	\$189,378.
Total Revenue	\$884,012.



Fiscal Year 2016-17 Expenses

Total Expenses \$664,070

Membership & Fundraising	\$ 39,847.
Management General	\$ 46,314.
Outreach & Education	\$ 82,614.
Land Protection	\$284,533.
Land Management	\$210,762.
Total Expenses	\$664,070.



2017 HIGHLIGHTS

19,535 acres
protected *forever*

Seven new properties loaded with natural treasures were added to our list of protected lands in 2017.

1,227
acres added

Each of the properties described on the previous pages represents a landowner's dream to protect what is here. Each is a gift to our wildlife, our communities, and our children.

3,000
schoolchildren

The outdoor classrooms and playgrounds we protect were enjoyed by 3,000 schoolchildren in 2017.

We thank the La Crosse Community Foundation for its support and WisCorps for its collaboration.



Fishing with Dad

A story of wisdom gained as a child in nature



CONTRIBUTED BY
ROSALIE "ROZ" SCHNICK,
CONSERVANCY SUPPORTER

My dad took me fishing when I was four years old and that has made all the difference. There are many reasons why I feel this is so true.

My dad taught me so much about observing my natural surroundings and being in the moment when fishing which has helped me in both my professional and personal life. Here are some lessons I learned: (1) How to "read" the water to locate fish by its ripples and bubbles, (2) How to identify and avoid where the vegetation, rocks, and things might make navigation difficult, (3) How to watch the clouds and direction of the wind for upcoming storms and potential for danger, (4) What techniques and equipment to use when fishing while standing on the shore, in the water, or sitting in a boat when anchored, floating, or trolling, and (5) How to communicate without speaking and to be silent and still for long periods of time. What a wonderful way to bond with another person!

My dad instilled in me a sense of wonder for nature and how we are so dependent upon our environment to live and thrive. It was amazing to me how all of the animals and plants form a matrix that continues to sustain this planet. This wonder led me to a career and interest in fisheries and environmental issues. I realized how important it was to protect the environment to safeguard people's health and recreation at the same time. Aquaculture, including aquaponics, and fisheries are interconnected in that they help sustain each other. Having sustainable sources of healthy protein for everyone no matter what their financial circumstances is so important for their quality of life and the viability of our economy.

My dad, by taking me fishing when I was four, convinced me that I was equal to any boy at a time when girls were not considered to be equal by many, including girls my age. I expected to be treated with respect in a career path where most of the participants were men during the early part of my career.

I have been truly blessed to have fished with my dad when I was four!

Thanks to *YOU*,
amazing things
are happening.

MEMBERS OF 2017

Million Dollar Gift

Anonymous

\$10,000 & Above

Anonymous

Anonymous

Kristi and Frank Cadwell

Eric and Inese Epstein

Barbara and Donald Frank

La Crosse Community Foundation

La Crosse Community Foundation's

Warren & Denise Loveland Family Fund

Mayo Clinic Health System

The Paul E. Stry Foundation

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Allan Beatty

Frank and Mary Anne Brazelton

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Joan Greshik

Gundersen Health System

J.F. Brennan

James E. Dutton Foundation

Gerald and Charlotte Kann

George and Sharon Kerckhove

Organic Valley

Radisson Hotel La Crosse

The Brookby Foundation

\$1,000 - \$4,999

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Michael Aleckson

American Transmission Company

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Jerry and Marilyn Arndt

Associated Bank N.A.

David Bange

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Roland Cline and Mary Papenfuss

Chris and Elizabeth Cogbill

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Joan Filla

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Greater Milwaukee Foundation

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Edwin and Nancy Hill

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Bob and Marilyn Hurt

Kirk Jacobson and Donna Pittman

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Tim and Regina Johnson

George and Carmeen Johnston

Kenneth and Deneen Kickbusch

Maureen Kinney

Sue Knopf and Jim Rothwell

Barbara and Joseph Kruse

Joel Lazinger

John and Louise Leary

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Tom Lukens

Beverly Mach

Mike and Carol Mader

Richard Meloy

Robert and Patricia Mika

David R Morrison

Michael and Susan Mosling

Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

Loran Nordgren

Mike and Sylvia O'Brien

Dennis and Sarah Ohlrogge

Andy and Laura Patten

MaryEllen Paudler

Harry and Sylvia Peterson

Ron and Jane Rada

Scott Reber and Marilyn Shultz

Jon and Ann Rigden

Mark and Mary Jo Sandheinrich

Patricia Schmid

Robert and Carol Schmidt

Rosalie "Roz" Schnick

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The Sinsinawa Dominicans

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Rob and Kathie Tyser

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Pat and Bobbie Wilson

Wisconsin Land Fund

Nick and Yonok Zeller

\$500 - \$999

Philip and Kathy Aaker

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Julie Abrahamzon and TJ Clark

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Cindy and Bill Berg

Dianna Brown

Elizabeth Campbell

Rebecca Christoffel

Cleary-Kumm Foundation

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James and Sue Dillenbeck

Mark and Jane Domroese

EarthShare

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Dianne Greenley

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Clare Henneman

Drake Hokanson and Carol Kratz

Jane Houlihan

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Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins and Glen Jenkins

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Rev. Allan and Carla Townsend

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Wauzeka Lions Club

Kathy Wehrs

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Levi Wood

\$250 - \$499

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Ruthann Benson

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Daniel L Blumer

Carmen Boucher

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Pauline Buckland

Martin and Kathleen Buehler

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Emily Campbell

Roy Campbell and Ellen Ullsvik

Marianne and Patrick Carolan

LaRene Carpenter

Abbie Church

Tom Claffin

Peter Clark

Tom and Mary Jo Clark

Keith and Linda Clifford

Matthew and Marilee Cole

Timothy and Cheryl Collins

Judith Corbett Hutchens

Lloyd and Mary Croatt

Thomas and Kimberley Culp

Bill and Eileen Daily

Davy Engineering Co.

Dean and Phyllis Dempsey

John and Nancy Diekelmann

Energy for Health LLC

Juliet Eyers

Annette Friedewald

Ruth Frise

Ned and Carol Gatzke

Greater Green Bay Community Foundation

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Julie Haas

Mary Helgren and Richard Radek

Lorne Hillier and Kathryn Turdeu

Mike and Mary Carole Hoffman

Tim and Lisa Jacobson

Larry and Susan Kirch

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Robert Koehler

Peter and Krin Krause

Nancy Kroner
George and Elizabeth Kruck
La Crosse Community Foundation
Land Trust Alliance
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Richard and Dorothy Lenard
Thomas and Margaret Ley
David and Connie Long
Robin and Charles Malayter
Bruce and Diane May
Kevin and Jenny McCoy
Dick and Julie McGarry
Lisa McNamara
Forrest Moe
David and Sheila Momont
John Monson
Ursula Muehlechner
Mike Mulroy
Jim and Ruth Nissen
James and Donna Omernik
John Osmundson
People's Food Cooperative, Inc.
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John and Nancy Rieder
Jim Ringstrom
Mike and Kathy Ripp
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Dr. Charles and Judy Shepard
Art and Pat Soell
Dennis and Betsy Stannard
Philip and Nancy Steinhoff
Harold and Wanda Swanson
Castle La Crosse
The Insurance Center
Trane-Ingersoll Rand
Jon and Peggy Traver
Tom and Jane Treglowne
Christine Uber
Mary Veldey
Walmart
Mary Westlund
John Wetzal
Bonnie Wideman
Xcel Energy

\$100 - \$249

4 Sisters, Inc.
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Karen Acker
Active Chiropractic
Kay Adams and Jack Fleig
Dr. Chris and Emily Adams
Chelsea Adams
Greg and Molly Aleckson
Garland and Nancy Amunson
David and Janine Andersen
Jim and Marlene Bannen
Tom and Kathy Barth
Craig and Mary Bartos
Bill and Marsha Bateman
Dr. James and Peggy Baumgaertner
Judy Bautch
Randall Bekkers and Laurie Harmon
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Howard and Katherine Bell
Dr. Bill and Heidi Bender
Dan Benjamin
Brian and Barb Benson
Robin Bernacchi
Mary Lou Biddlestone
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Sandra Cepoi
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Michael and Carmen DeYoe
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Herbert Grimek
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Wendelin A Guentner
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Rachel and Cameron Gundersen
Peter and Janice Gutierrez
Dave Hackett and Ellen Brooks
Amy and Kevin Hansen

Charles and Cheryl Hanson
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Dale and Jean Harger
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Jaime Healy
Dale and Kathleen Hein
Patricia Heizler
Betty Heuslein
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Betsy Chris Holland
Christopher and Krista Huiras
Adam Huntington
Erin Hussey and Tony Batya
Yvonne Hyde
Wayne Jacobson
Forest Jenkins
Jim and Linda Jenkins
Jackie Joday
Leta Johnson
Amy Johnson
Kent and Lee Johnson
Bill and Catherine Johnson
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Chad Kassera
Mark Kastel
John Kelly
Chris and Jane Kerbaugh
Ron and Tawni Kind
Jeffrey Kish
Khris and Liz Kleba
Dr. Fredric and Marion Kleinberg
Kathryn Kleist
Allison Kleist
Kathy Knox
Ann and Carl Korschgen
Stephen and Barbara Kozerowitz
Eric Kraemer and Francine Klein
Mark and Leanne Kruse
Lars Kulleseid
John Kussmaul
Richard and Cynthia Kyte
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The Radisson Hotel La Crosse values what Mississippi Valley Conservancy does to protect our natural landscape – a key reason tourism and convention business is drawn to our city. Without our scenic beauty, La Crosse would be just another city. The Conservancy's initiatives protect the beauty of our area that will ensure a positive future for tourism and a wonderful environment for all to enjoy. Over the past 11 years, the Radisson has donated services to support the mission of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy. "Thank you, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, for your leadership in education and land preservation," writes Tami Woods, Director of Catering.

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The result of this work is our greater ability to reach and engage the people who can make the biggest difference in protecting the land we call home.

There are many treasures to be protected. We couldn't do it without the talent and support of generous sponsors like Vendi Advertising.





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Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Conservancy permanently conserved 19,535 acres of bluffslands, praries, wetlands, and streams in and around the Mississippi, Kickapoo, and Wisconsin River since our founding in 1997. Over 4,000 acres are open to the public for hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and snowshoeing.

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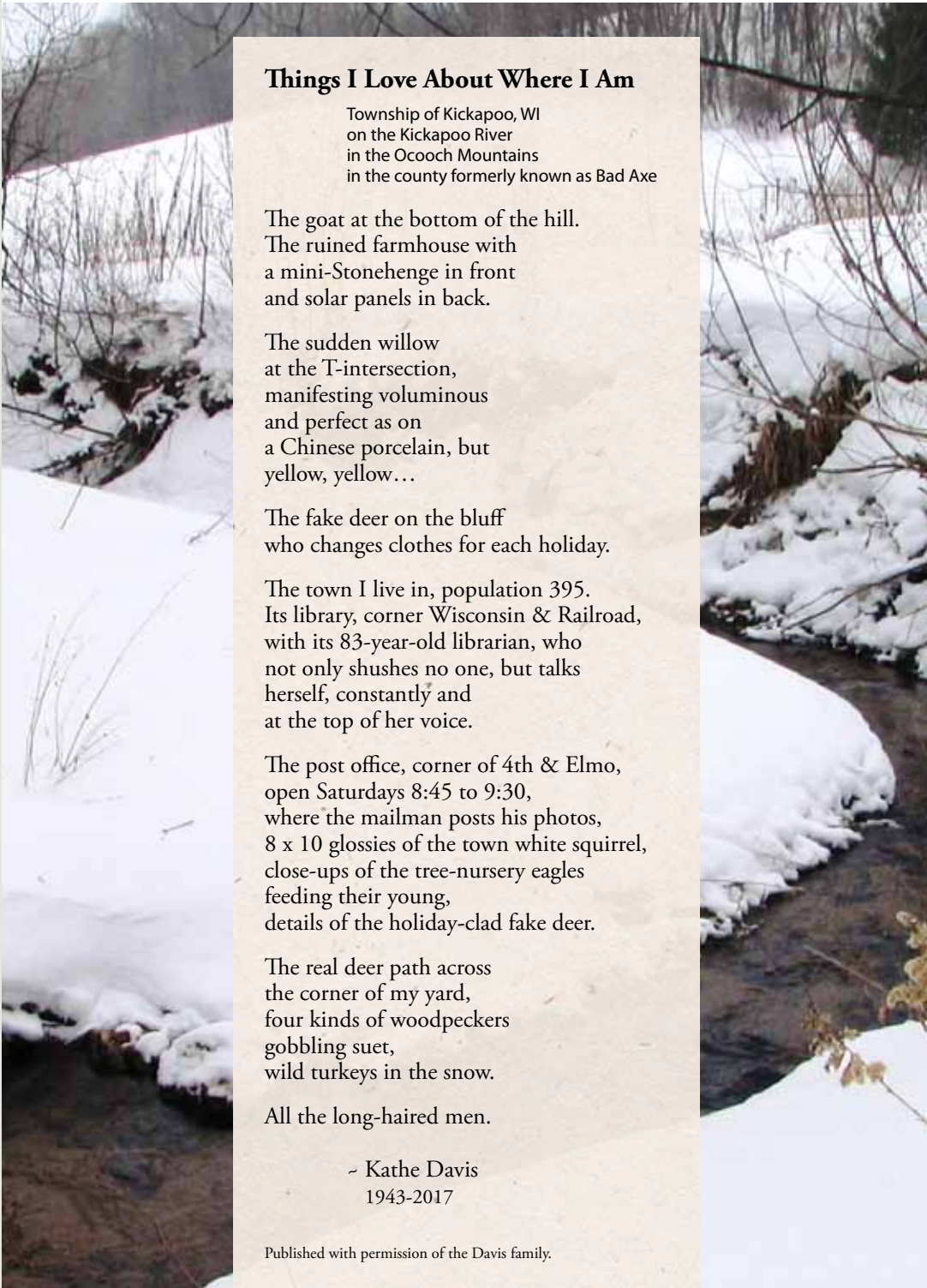
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Things I Love About Where I Am

Township of Kickapoo, WI
on the Kickapoo River
in the Ocooch Mountains
in the county formerly known as Bad Axe

The goat at the bottom of the hill.
The ruined farmhouse with
a mini-Stonehenge in front
and solar panels in back.

The sudden willow
at the T-intersection,
manifesting voluminous
and perfect as on
a Chinese porcelain, but
yellow, yellow...

The fake deer on the bluff
who changes clothes for each holiday.

The town I live in, population 395.
Its library, corner Wisconsin & Railroad,
with its 83-year-old librarian, who
not only shushes no one, but talks
herself, constantly and
at the top of her voice.

The post office, corner of 4th & Elmo,
open Saturdays 8:45 to 9:30,
where the mailman posts his photos,
8 x 10 glossies of the town white squirrel,
close-ups of the tree-nursery eagles
feeding their young,
details of the holiday-clad fake deer.

The real deer path across
the corner of my yard,
four kinds of woodpeckers
gobbling suet,
wild turkeys in the snow.

All the long-haired men.

~ Kathe Davis
1943-2017

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