



Mississippi Valley Conservancy

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Media Advisory

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Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Permanently Protects Land on Arbor Day

An award-winning local tree farmer is celebrating Arbor Day Friday by signing a land protection agreement with Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

Gerald Kann of La Crosse who was named north central region Outstanding Tree Farmer of the year in 2016 by the American Tree Farm System, is permanently protecting his 114-acre Monroe County tree farm with a conservation easement.

Kann, who also received recognition in 2014 as Wisconsin Outstanding Tree farmer of the Year, said it was a nice coincidence to be closing on the agreement on a day set aside to celebrate the role of trees in our lives.

From 1974 through 2016, the Kann family, including wife Charlotte and sons Kurt and Karl, planted over 45,200 trees on their property. For 25 years, the tree farm was operated as a “choose-and-cut” Christmas tree farm.

“The Kann Property truly demonstrates exceptional forest stewardship,” said Carol Abrahamzon, executive director for the conservancy. “Their dedication to caring for the land is apparent in both the hours they’ve spent taking care of the property and also in the sheer numbers of trees planted.”

A conservation easement is a partnership between a land trust and a conservation-minded landowner. The conservation easement ensures that the Kann tree farm cannot, at any point in the future and regardless of ownership, be converted to a residential subdivision or cornfield, but remain as a refuge for area wildlife.

Abbie Church, MVC conservation director, said that wildlife observed over the years by the owners include bobcat, fisher, black bear and badger. Her most recent visit to the property included serenades of spring frogs, including spring peepers, chorus frogs, and wood frogs, all of which can be heard right from the porch of the log cabin on the property. Winter hikes on the on the property provide an abundance of wildlife tracks, the forest resources providing food and cover throughout the year.

The citation for the Wisconsin award says that the winning tree farmer “must exhibit the most exceptional forest stewardship to protect and improve forest health, wildlife habitat, clean water and sustainable wood supplies, and must promote this stewardship within their communities.”

Church said that meshes with the Conservancy’s focus to "conserve the forests, prairies, wetlands, streams, and farms that enrich our communities for the health and well-being of current and future generations.”

ABOUT MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited regional land trust that has permanently protected more than 18,900 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. The focus of the Conservancy is to conserve the forests, prairies, wetlands, streams and farms that enrich our communities, for the health and well-being of current and future generations.

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