It’s hard to overstate how challenging it can be for a big extended family to reach a decision to permanently preserve their land. Let alone for local conservationists to be able to put together resources in a timely way to make such a win-win deal possible. I’m just thrilled to have been a part of the Morris family’s success story.

The story began for me, when I heard from Hope Taft and other neighbors of the property, that Morrises were likely to sell their 171 acre farm soon. With a recent commercial development nearby, and development of thousands of units of housing in the area, the neighbors feared that the gentle wooded hills on the property would soon be covered with new houses, driveways, and roads, disturbing the sensitive habitat along the river.

I composed a letter to the Morris family saying that there were some conservation alternatives they might want to consider. After nearly 2 years, I finally heard from the sole family member still living in the area, June Madden. The Morrises, spread from New York to California, were ready to sell. She and her cousin, Mary Blackwell, were sincerely interested in preserving the property before it was sold, but didn’t know where to begin. I set up a meeting with some conservation allies I thought might be interested in helping to preserve the farm.

Walking the land built up everyone’s hopes to preserve it. “After walking the property,” says June, there’s no way you’d want to see houses on that hillside!” June’s family has had many good times on the farm, especially at the shelter house by the river.

There were several possibilities for funding and ultimate ownership of the land, but none were a certainty! The Morrises professional land manager, Jay VanGorden, helped by talking to the family about land values and uses. Appraisals were conducted and an offer was extended by the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Park District to purchase the land. Once the Morrises accepted their offer, the park district made a successful application to the Clean Ohio Green Space fund and the Upper River Fund of the Dayton Foundation to purchase the land.

Continued on page 5
Adam Frantz grew up in Ohio, but not on a farm. At a young age he went to work on a dairy farm and fell in love with agriculture. “There is an intimacy in agriculture that you don’t get in other lines of work,” says Adam. He appreciates the personal commitment each farmer makes to their land.

Today, Adam lives on a farm in Champaign County with his wife Mia Grimes, who is a full-time farmer, and their baby daughter, Marie. Mia’s father, the late Burley Grimes, was influential in Adam’s decision to get more involved with TLT. Burley was a past TLT board member, an easement donor, and an avid conservationist. Working in agribusiness for Bayer Crop Science is another motivator. Adam gets the connection between farmland preservation and strong agribusiness. The land trust’s goals to not only preserve land, but also ensure the use of best management practices, including protecting water quality, improving pollinator health, and preventing soil erosion all make for a strong agricultural future. Adam says, “I’ve made TLT a priority in my daily life because I am committed to the on-going stewardship of the prime farmland we are so fortunate to have.”

**TLT Book Club Founder Joins Board**

From the outset, new board member Bonnie Wilkinson was embraced by Tecumseh Land Trust—literally. After she and husband Mickey bought property in Clark County, they realized their 18 acres were sandwiched by Julia Cady’s 440-acre farm, preserved by TLT since 1994. “With lots of borrowed scenery,” Bonnie says, laughing.

When the Wilkinsons expressed interest in volunteering with TLT, Krista Magaw suggested they start a group to discuss conservation-oriented books. Now in its third year, the group meets at the Yellow Springs Library every 4-6 weeks, attracting between 6-12 people; a recent discussion of The Pope’s Encyclical on the Environment drew 17.

Bonnie began volunteering on the education committee in 2015 and joined the board in March, 2016. Now she and Mickey are working with TLT to donate an easement on their land. “Open land speaks to me,” Bonnie says quietly. “This is the way I want to spend my time.”
Volunteers are the backbone of any non-profit organization. TLT uses volunteers in a variety of ways, depending on the interests and ideas of each volunteer. Some folks just want to come to the office and help, while others want to be out in the community soliciting items for the auction or out on the land interacting with the farmers. Whatever your pleasure we invite you to join the TLT volunteer team.

There are many exciting possibilities right now. For instance we have a podcast volunteer team. Kat Walters, Tom Amrhein, and Kathy Robertson are working together to get landowners’ and conservationists’ stories on the air via a series of podcasts entitled “This Land I Love.” Their first interview is complete, telling the story of a young farmer in Clark County who loves the precision technology behind farming. An interview with Krista Magaw is currently being edited for kick-off later this fall. You will be able to listen to them on our website at www.tecumsehlandtrust.org later this year.

For the first time in 12 years we finally have a logo specific to our Harvest Auction. Thanks to Kyle Peterson for using his graphic design talents to craft a sophisticated logo that we can use every year to promote the auction. Its great to have a brand! Kyle has also helped update the TLT logo which we hope to unveil soon. An avid bicyclist he is also biking around to his neighbors to help inform them of land preservation opportunities.

Next spring we will host another restoration work day at the Glass Farm. Once invasive species have been removed, we will need a team to plant native wetland and prairie species.

This story simply wouldn’t be complete if we didn’t mention Angus Randolph, jack of all trades. Angus tends to show up just at the exact moment when we need someone. From pouring beer at Dave Chappelle’s Juke Joint, to directing traffic in the sunflower field, to sitting at the booth during Street Fair, Angus is our go-to-guy.

Volunteers provide much needed support to the staff at TLT. They also can help shape our outreach efforts by introducing new ideas into the mix. Volunteers are our support team and the future leaders of the land trust!

You are invited to TLT’s Holiday Party!

What better way to show you care than by stopping by TLT’s 3rd Annual Holiday Open House at our office on Whitehall Farm.

Catch up with staff to see what we’ve been up to all year. If you haven’t been by to see the new office take a look around. Some of the best views in Miami Township are from the 940-acre Whitehall Farm.

Then, take a moment to browse the merchandise that is for sale. We have hats, cards, handmade items, and much more. A gift from TLT is one that keeps giving all year. If the person you are buying for has everything they need, then a Preserve-an-Acre gift might be the ticket!

Delicious homemade treats, seasonal music, and great conversations will highlight the party. So don’t miss out on Friday, December 16 from 3:00 - 5:30.

And all TLT volunteers should stop by. We have a special thank you gift for all of you who have donated your time and talents to our organization. We couldn’t do all that we do without your support.
KIDS HAVE A FUN DAY ON SOUTH CHARLESTON FARM

Nearly 50 people, including TLT staff and event volunteers, enjoyed a sweet summer afternoon in early August at the preserved property of Bob and Dana Schutte in Clark County.

Parents, grandparents and children from Springfield, Xenia and Yellow Springs, along with some of the Schutte’s South Charleston neighbors, gathered on the 113-acre property off Stewart Road to meet the resident animals, play games, walk to the pond and savor homemade cookies, lemonade and watermelon.

The barnyard animals were the big draw for this free, family-friendly event. Visitors delighted in the chance to interact with the Schutte’s horses, goats, sheep, donkeys, chickens, peacocks and a pot-bellied pig named Korky.

We appreciate the Schutte’s generosity in opening their farm on behalf of the land trust!

OPERATION BLUEBIRD BRINGS STUDENTS TO PRESERVED FARM

TLT is partnering with the Ohio Bluebird Society and the Yellow Springs schools in a project that connects middle school students and teachers to land, birds, and conservation. Earlier this year, Kate Anderson, and Bethany Gray, who both serve on TLT’s education committee, met with McKinney Middle School science teacher Rebecca Eastman to develop the project. The first step was to establish nest boxes. With the help of Bethany’s husband Jordan, they established a nest box trail on Kate’s property designed to attract Eastern Bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds. Kate and her family have been monitoring the boxes weekly and collecting data to share with scientists in Ohio and at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens have all nested successfully.

Next spring 7th grade students, will be involved with nest box monitoring, data collection, and conservation education. In addition to introducing students to “citizen science,” aspects of this project will correlate with curriculum requirements and the district’s Project-Based Learning requirements.

TLT will also host another bluebird workshop in early 2017. Stay tuned!

Do you enjoy exploring nature in the wintertime and snapping pictures? If so, the 2nd Annual Winter Photo Contest is just for you! TLT is looking for winter-themed photos of plants, animals, and the natural world. The winning photo and honorable mentions will be featured on TLT’s website as well as Facebook. The lucky winner will be receiving a special winter care package (specific items in the package will be announced). Each entry must be digital. The contest rules along with an entry form are available on the TLT website. All entries can be submitted to sunflowers@tecumsehlandtrust.org. You may submit up to two pictures. Adult amateur, adult professional, and youth under 18 photographers are invited to participate in this contest. The deadline will be March 1, 2017. Happy photo taking!
Morris Family Continued

I eventually got to meet all 21 members of the Morris family on their Sugarcreek Township farm purchased by their father, grandfather, and great grandfather nearly 80 years ago. They gathered together to inter the ashes of Evan Morris at the Bellbrook Cemetery and to return to their ancestral farm along the Little Miami River.

Mary Blackwell said “We’re really a poster family for land preservation.” She and June were eager to share their story. Key advice from Mary and June to families in a similar position includes:

1) Don’t give up.

2) Get good professional advice. Find knowledgeable people who can be your advocates.

3) Really investigate the possibilities – don’t be in a hurry.

4) Find your allies in the family you don’t know what people think until you talk to them.

5) Call Krista, or a conservation advocate at another land trust, to get learn about the possibilities

6) It won’t happen overnight.

Mary, who had recently returned from a volunteer trip to Yosemite, said, “Public spaces are a part of our democracy – access to open space strengthens our identity as Americans. We need wild places for our emotional and physical well-being.” The cousins ask everyone to consider what they want their legacy to be. “Volunteer,” urges Mary, “whether it’s on a local level or at a national park, you can make a difference.”

- Krista Magaw

Calendar of Events

Dec. 1, 7-9pm
Thirsty Thursdays
Yellow Springs Brewery
305 N. Walnut St.
Yellow Springs, OH
Meet us on the first Thursday of each month at the YS Brewery as they donate $1 for every beer sold from 7-9 p.m. to TLT’s 1% for Green Space program. Reoccuring on Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1

Dec. 9, 7pm
Winter Solstice Poetry Reading
Glen Helen Vernet Building
405 Corry St.
Yellow Springs, OH
Welcome the solstice with poets from the Miami Valley who will celebrate Glen Helen’s preservation through original poetry.

Dec. 10, 10-3pm
Alternative Gift Fair
Yellow Springs Senior Center
305 N. Walnut St.
Yellow Springs, OH
Spread some holiday cheer while supporting Yellow Springs non-profit organizations. Many groups will be there offering gift ideas that support their work.

Dec. 16, 3:00-5:30pm
TLT Holiday Open House
TLT Offices, Whitehall Farm
4627 U.S. 68
Yellow Springs, OH
Ring in the holidays with TLT staff - seasonal cheer, light refreshments, and purchase some holiday items that benefit the land trust.

Monthly (mid-week days TBD), 4pm
TLT Book Group Discussion
Yellow Springs Library

415 Xenia Ave.
Yellow Springs, OH
Join the discussion each month when a topical book is selected and read. Check the TLT website for dates and books.

March 5, 2pm
Sugar Shack Tour
Flying Mouse Farms
100 E. Fairfield Pk.
Yellow Springs, OH
Take a tour of Flying Mouse Farms and learn how maple syrup is made. Dress for the weather and muddy conditions. Actual syrup production is weather dependent. Event will only be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

June 4, 2-4pm
Community Picnic
Location: TBA
Everyone is invited to our 27th annual meeting and picnic. Live music, refreshments, games and children’s activities will be part of the afternoon’s festivities.

August 2017
Local Foods Dinner
The Winds Café
Yellow Springs, OH
Stay tuned for exact date because you don’t want to miss out on this delicious 5 course meal all sourced locally.

September 15, 2017, 6:00pm
13th Annual Harvest Auction
Hollenbeck Bayley Conference Center
Springfield, OH
Date to be announced soon! It’s a great party. A night out not to be missed and it all supports our daily work.
In September, TLT received funding for 14 conservation easements, protecting 2,318 more acres for a total of $2.7 million. These easements are being funded through the Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program and the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

Never in TLT’s 26 year history has it received such a large award. This came about because the federal easement program unexpectedly changed their grant deadline and TLT just happened to have plenty of landowners ready to make applications. TLT’s associate director, Michele Burns, says, “If it weren’t for these farmers who have been applying again and again we could not have submitted so many applications in such a short period of time.”

For 2017 the deadline will again be this December. TLT is ready to make as many applications as possible. For now, staff are working on all 14 of these projects with projected closings in mid-2018. “It’s exciting to help so many families achieve their goals for their family farms,” says Michele.

If you are interested in learning more about these programs for future funding rounds please contact Michele at 767-9490 or burns@tecumsehlandtrust.org.

Karen Greene first came to Tecumseh Land Trust as a woman on a mission. She knew exactly what her goals were, but was not quite sure how to get there. She wanted to ensure the historic Baylor Hill Farm given to Captain Baylor for his service in the Revolutionary War in 1798, would forever be a working farm.

For 27 years, Karen has tended to the horses boarded on the farm, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. “With that kind of investment you don’t want to see it being taken over by urban sprawl,” says Karen. With that in mind she contacted the land trust and TLT staff went to work writing a grant to the Clean Ohio Green Space Fund.

This grant program will purchase conservation easements on properties that are a majority woods or wildlife habitat, or contain high-quality water resources. A perfect fit for this 109 acre farm with 75 acres of woods and a headwater stream to the Little Miami River. TLT secured the funding for the easement in August 2015 and was able to close in June 2016. That’s pretty fast conservation work, especially considering that this is forever.

“The River Road area is an important area to preserve,” says Krista Magaw, executive director of TLT. “We have preserved 42 miles of streams and rivers within our conservation easements and we take great pride in that. Buffering our streams with permanent, natural filters instead of pavement is good for the environment,” adds Magaw.

Karen’s focus has certainly been on the protective nature of easements. She believes, “You can’t count on future owners, so this is a way to have a permanent say-so in how the land is used. The restrictions placed on the property by an easement are minor in comparison to the protective aspects the easement places on the land.”

It is peace of mind to know that as water flows down the hillsides at Baylor Hill into the Little Miami River just below, a protective filter is now permanently in place.
DRONES IN AGRICULTURE - THE SKY IS THE LIMIT!

Oldtimers always said you can’t see much of your growing crop by looking out the pickup truck window. With this in mind our family decided it was time to ride the current wave in agriculture and buy a drone. After some research we made a purchase, registered it with the FAA, and started flying.

After one month of using Donny (the drone), we realized the economic benefits of Donny will more than pay back the initial investment. We have scouted cornfields for nutrient deficiencies, identified areas of compaction from heavy traffic areas where last years crop was hauled out of fields, scouted soybeans for weed escapes, and identified corn varieties that didn’t stand well after the late summer severe thunderstorms.

This fall we plan to use Donny to map drain tile installations. Detailed pictures with coordinates will document where each tile line was run. We have also sent field photos to absentee landlords to show them how their farms were doing this year. Future developments in technology will keep Donny the Drone earning his keep on our farm.

- Dave Baird

Aerial photograph of the Baird Farm in Clark County via drone.

ACCREDITED LAND TRUSTS
GET THE JOB DONE

Accredited land trusts get more done! There are now 317 accredited land trusts out of a total of over 1700 nationwide. There are 5 accredited land trusts in Ohio.

Those 317 land trusts protect more than 75% of the land and easements held by land trusts across the country. TLT is among them, having received our reaccreditation in 2014.

“More than anything,” says TLT Executive Director Krista Magaw, the land trusts that work for and maintain accreditation understand that they’ve made a promise to protect land FOREVER.”

The Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices are a great “best practice” formulation. They were introduced in 1996, and our land trust joined hundreds of others in committing to follow them. But accreditation forces a land trust to make implementation of the standards and practices measurable. The factors reviewed for accreditation help the land trust defend the conservation values of the properties and ultimately help the easements stand if ever challenged.

Accredited land trusts are proactive, documenting their work to make it last. For donors and funders, our accreditation seal says we’re in this for good!
A great time was had by all who attended the 12th annual Harvest Auction! This really is the crown jewel of TLT events featuring great food, fantastic music by Sawgrass, and over 120 unique auction items. You really don’t want to miss out on this party. Mark your calendar for Sept. 15, 2017. We want to see each and every one of you there with bidding paddles in the air!