

Established 1983

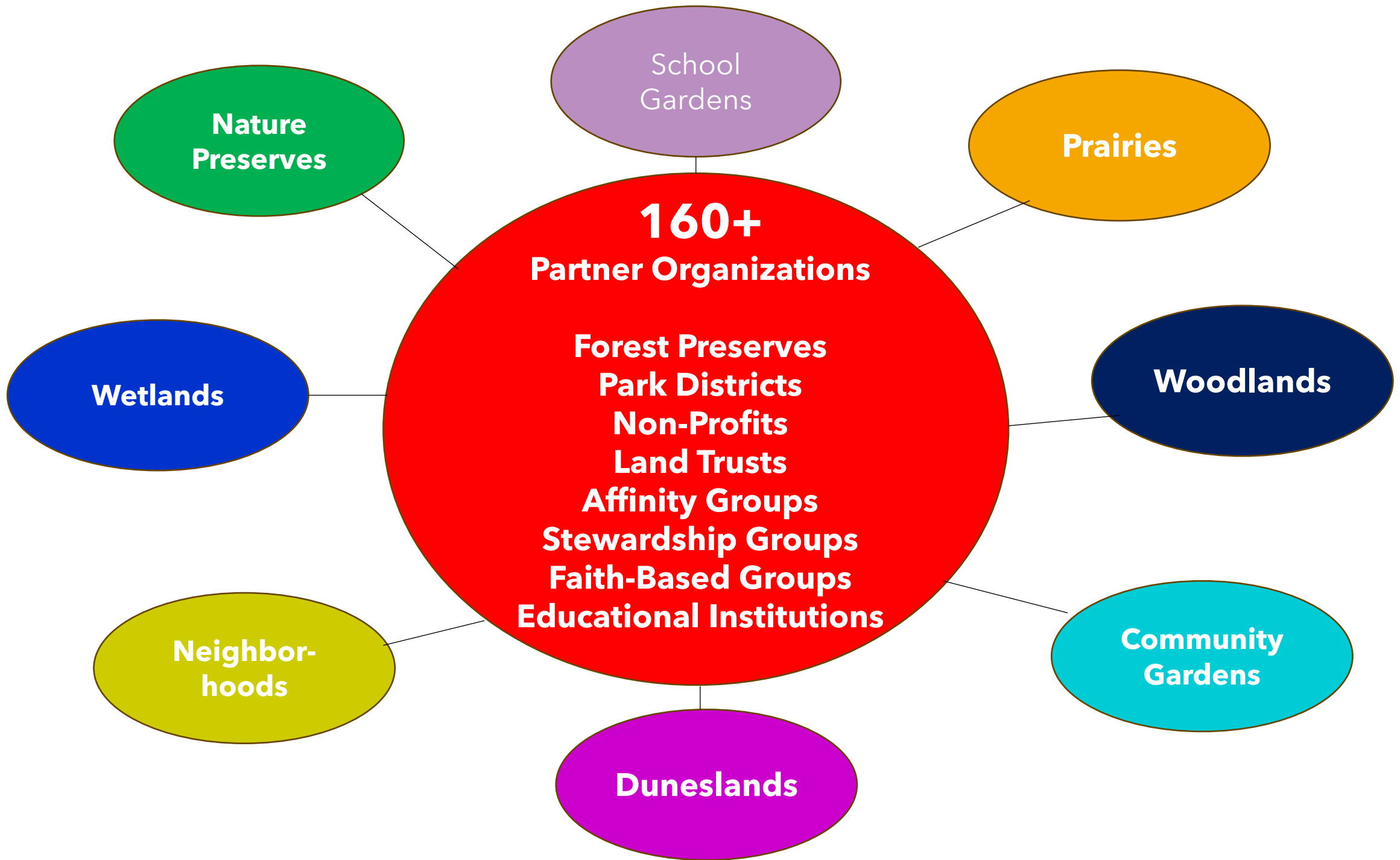


The Nature  
Conservancy



Nature Preserves Commission

———— Volunteer Stewardship Network ————





# Ways Volunteers Help



Cleanup and litter removal



Seed collection/dispersal



Trail maintenance



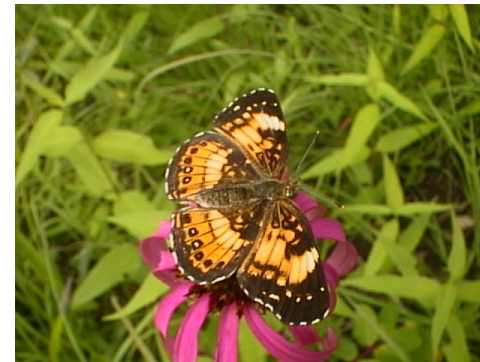
Brush Clearing



Native species planting



Invasive species removal



Citizen Science (monitoring frogs, butterflies, plants, birds)



Growing Food

# VSN Lends Support to Partners

- Sponsorship of Regional Meetings
- Network for Nature (Virtual and In-Person Gatherings)
- Stewardship Fund
- Scholarship Fund
- Community Convening Fund



Photos courtesy of Grand Prairie Friends



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## **Community Convening Fund:**

***Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections***



## Community Convening Fund: *Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections*

Bring groups into the VSN that provide a different, but essential, benefit to human and non-human life.

Support community-based organizations of all sizes that engage individuals living in the vicinity of green spaces.

Commit resources to Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQIA+, veterans, people with disabilities, and other communities and organizations that have not been prioritized in the past, in the programming of outdoor activities and care and protection of green space.

Provide support to groups working to diversify their volunteer base and outdoor programming activities

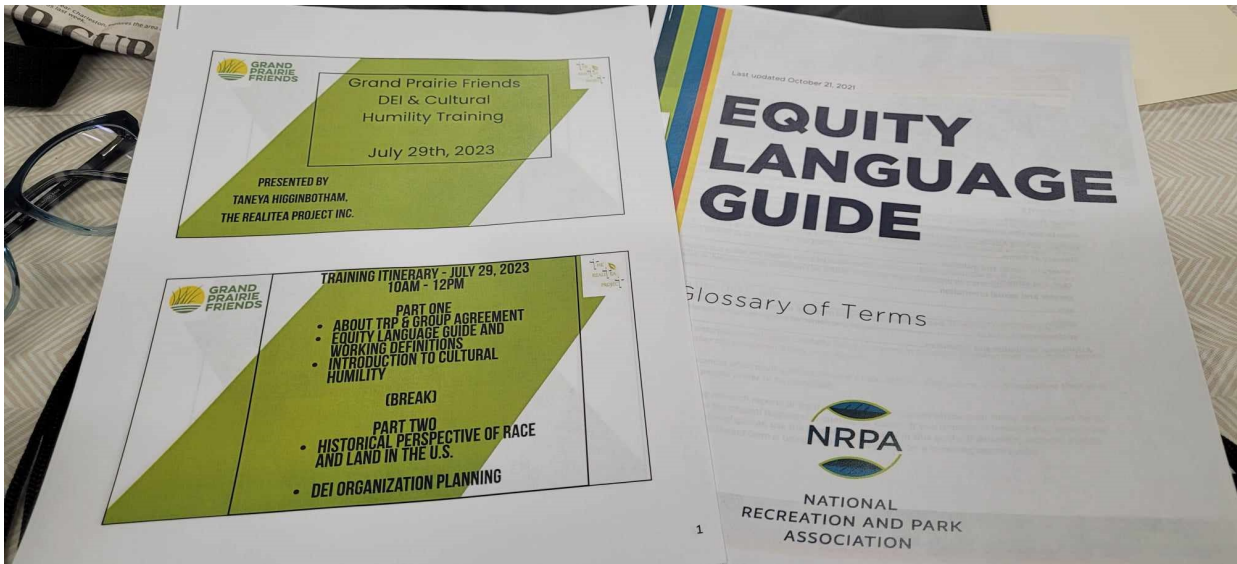


Photo Courtesy of Stephanie Eicholz, Green Earth, Inc.



# Community Convening Fund: *Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections*

## Stories from the Field Sarah Livesay, Executive Director, Grand Prairie Friends



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## Community Convening Fund: *Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections*

### Warbler Ridge Conservation Area Welcomes the Fallen Outdoors Hunting Program for Wounded Veterans

Rob Stroud

Originally published in the Journal Gazette & Times Courier, November 13, 2023

CHARLESTON — Navy veteran Ashtin Bader has long enjoyed the skills and quietness involved with archery, an interest that led her to become a bowhunter a few years ago.

Now, the Tuscola resident is helping provide outdoor sports opportunities for fellow veterans and promoting hunting to other women as a volunteer with The Fallen Outdoors. This nationwide nonprofit group's programs include a new partnership with the Warbler Ridge Conservation Area in Charleston, where nine veterans have been taking part in a 15-day bow hunt set to conclude Wednesday.

"It's beautiful terrain," Bader said of her impression of Warbler Ridge after scouting hills and ridges there that feel like they belong in the Appalachian Mountains. "It's almost like you are

**Stories from the Field**  
Sarah Livesay, Executive  
Director, Grand Prairie Friends





# Community Convening Fund: Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections




**WANDERING THE WOODS**

*Grand Prairie Friends invites senior living community groups to pilot a guided auto-tour experience at their Warbler Ridge Conservation Area, just south of Charleston.*

**WOODS THROUGH THE WINDOW**

Length: One Hour

Mobility Considerations: Vehicle for entirety.

Participants will enjoy a narrated auto-tour of the preserve.

**WALK IN THE WOODS**

Length: 1.5 Hours

Mobility Considerations: Exit from vehicle. Typical flat grass yard stability with some narrow dirt path sections along Aspen Trail.

Participants will enjoy a narrated auto-tour of the entire property with a stop at the iconic "Little Red Shack". Here, guests have the option to deboard and walk the Aspen trail, a 0.5-mile mowed grass loop near the parking area or sit and enjoy the scenery at the outdoor viewing area.

**WORDS IN THE WOODS**

Length: 1.5 Hours

Mobility Considerations: Exit from vehicle.

Participants will enjoy a narrated auto-tour of the entire property and conclude by deboarding at the Warbler Crossing education room for an indoor presentation on the preserve.

**NOTES TO KNOW**

- The tour is suitable for a wide variety of abilities. Participants using walkers or wheelchairs will be able to access all program areas except Aspen Trail.
- The tour guide will meet all groups to board their vehicle at Warbler Crossing, 17487 Bypass Rd, located just two miles south of Charleston on Hwy 130.
- Restrooms and portable toilets are available at two points throughout the tour. Please note, neither are wheelchair accessible.
- As a pilot program, experiences are being offered without cost thanks to sponsorship from CABOT. Participant evaluations are required to help shape the future of the program.

**WHO WE ARE** 

Since 1984, Grand Prairie Friends has served as a not-for-profit, conservation land trust with a mission to preserve, protect and promote natural areas across east-central Illinois. GPF manages more than 1,200-acres across six counties including Warbler Ridge Conservation Area. [www.GRANDPRAIRIEFRIENDS.org](http://www.GRANDPRAIRIEFRIENDS.org)

**Stories from the Field**  
Sarah Livesay, Executive  
Director, Grand Prairie Friends



**REGISTRATION:**  
Email: [Woods@grandprairiefriends.org](mailto:Woods@grandprairiefriends.org)

**QUESTIONS:**  
PHONE: (217) 621-6299



# Community Convening Fund: *Planting Seeds, Growing Community Connections*

## Neighborhood Naturalists

- Mobile Tour: Book & Food Mobiles
- Neighborhood Naturalist Kits for children





# Community Convening Fund: *Planting Seeds, Growing* **Community** Connections

## Campfire & Concert



DOUGLAS-HART NATURE CENTER PRESENTS

### CAMPFIRE & CONCERT

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11  
5-7PM

**Black Vinyl**

Enjoy the local high school band Black Vinyl while roasting hotdogs for an end of the summer celebration! All ages welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Hotdogs available while supplies last. Limited seating available. Lawn chairs recommended.

**FREE** donations appreciated

**DOUGLAS-HART NATURE CENTER**  
2204 Dewitt Ave E, Mattoon, IL 61938  
217-235-4644  
programs@dhnature.org

This event is made possible by the Volunteer Stewardship Network Community Convening Fund.

# Community Convening Fund Recipients (2021 - 2024)

Academy for Global Citizenship

All Things Through Christ Outreach  
Ministries

Blacks in Green

Community Development  
Corporation

Douglas-Hart Foundation

Forest Preserve Friends Foundation

Friends of Hosah Prairie

Upper Sangamon River Conservancy

Boone County Conservation District

Friends of the Forest Preserves

McHenry County Conservation  
Foundation

El Paseo Community Garden

Maxwell Street Community Garden

Sugar Grove Foundation

Trickster Cultural Center

Friends of Hosah Prairie

Out in Nature

Friends of Sangamon Valley

Peterson Elementary

Prairie State Conservation Coalition

Possum Hollow Stewards

BIPOC Birders

Grand Prairie Friends

Heartlands Conservancy

Salaam Community Wellness Center

Empire 13

The Conservation Foundation

Kenwood Academy High School

McHenry County Conservation  
Foundation

Phoenix Community Development  
Service



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© Bruce Colvay (Upper Sangamon River Conservancy)



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# Thank you!

Questions?