



2016 ANNUAL REPORT



New 2017 offerings at the Nature Center include:

- ▶ Two farm-to-table dinners highlighting cuisine by local chefs using local ingredients
- ▶ New summer music series at Amazing Space
- ▶ New yoga series with talented local instructor Maria Dummermuth
- ▶ Expanded Nature's Noel activities for families
- ▶ Increased summer camp programs, including overnight camps for older kids, before and after camp care, and expanded activities.
- ▶ Educational programs for retirement communities



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John Myers
Executive Director

During Indian Creek Nature Center's history, many pivotal moments have guided its growth and expanded its mission. Among these turning points are the organization's inception, with the vision and leadership of BB Stamats and Jean O'Donnell; planting of prairie in the '80s and '90s; and acquiring the Bena Farm. Achievements in 2016 undoubtedly and without exception rank high among such moments. Opening Amazing Space to the public was not only a dream discussed for over twenty years, but a grand opportunity to move beyond the community's perception of ICNC as a "hidden gem." Thanks to thousands of people's direct support, we invested millions of dollars into the Center's future.

The grand opening of Amazing Space was just the beginning. As I have shared many times, the building is one of the least important parts of a nature center. First and foremost are the new outdoor education elements; exciting programs; land restoration; and the impact ICNC has on people. To that end, 2017 continues the excitement as we impact thousands of children through hundreds of preschool programs,

school field trips, scouting programs, and more. We look forward to rolling out new and evolved initiatives for all generations that focus on relaxation, recreation, and environmental education. Furthermore, 2017 will see the creation of a new pond, landscaping, and wildlife areas at Amazing Space, installation of four monarch rearing tents in partnership with Monarch Zones, and much more land restoration work, including prairie plantings and removal of invasive species at Sugar Grove Farm.

While ICNC continues to grow and adapt to what the community seeks from it, its vision to create champions of nature remains steadfast. From the beginning, leaders of Indian Creek Nature Center have believed in creating a special place that inspires and educates. You have my commitment that this vision will continue. We will strive to keep Indian Creek Nature Center one of the best in the nation!



"THANK YOU to ICNC for all aspects of its monarch rearing program, starting with exposure and guidance, and ending with the remarkable experience of raising monarchs at home. Our family was so excited to help, and to get firsthand experience in the process."

— Stan and Carol Eilers, and Lily Eilers, age 9

Saving the planet, one monarch at a time

Monarch butterflies capture hearts and inspire wonder in adults and children alike. Sadly, the number of monarchs in North America has been steadily declining due primarily to the lack of food and habitat along its migration route. Since moving to Amazing Space, Indian Creek Nature Center is expanding programming around this fascinating creature and ramping up education and awareness about the plight of the monarch and how to help.

In summer 2017, visitors can tour the new, much larger hoop house at Amazing Space, observe four 12x12 bio-tents that will provide shelter for rearing monarchs, and attend the Monarch Festival in July. Ongoing conservation activities include raising and rearing monarchs, adopting caterpillars to the public, tagging monarchs to learn about

their migration, giving away milkweed, monitoring butterflies and conducting field observations. Indian Creek Nature Center and Monarch Zones have partnered to achieve each of these initiatives and increase the monarch population in Linn County.

Each of these conservation activities provides an opportunity for the public to learn more about monarchs, which inspires people to enact their own conservation efforts — such as planting milkweed in home gardens. Ultimately, the public's interest in the monarch helps to increase awareness about the plight of all pollinators and the importance of environmental conservation efforts in general. This is one of the many ways Indian Creek Nature Center fulfills its vision to create champions of nature.



The McClain Family

Four generations of nature champions

ON EARTH DAY, APRIL 22, 1990, the McClain family gathered at Indian Creek Nature Center to plant a tree in honor of Doris (Dodie) White McClain's 75th birthday. That maple tree lives today along the path in front of the barn — but more importantly, Dodie's legacy of caring for the environment lives on in her family. Indian Creek Nature Center is a common thread among four generations of McClains who are all champions of nature in their own right.

Dodie was born before Earth Day was established — the first Earth Day wasn't until April 22, 1975 — but the fact that it fell on her birthday was fitting.



Doris (Dodie) White McClain and Carl (Mac) McClain, pictured in undated photo. The Carl and Doris McClain Fund for Ecological Restoration at the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation supports ICNC in perpetuity.

Dodie loved nature. George McClain, one of Dodie and Carl (Mac)'s three children, recalls that the family often went camping during his childhood. Dodie also nurtured a garden on their property on the southeast side of Cedar Rapids. And, as a home economics teacher, she appreciated the educational element of what the Nature Center was out to do.

"My mom was most influential in my interest in the outdoors," says George, 69, an avid ICNC volunteer who lives only a couple miles from the Nature Center. "She instilled in me a passion for animals and nature." George and his wife Janelle moved back to Cedar Rapids after four years in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1975 — the same year the tree was planted on

his mother's birthday. "When we moved back, we still wanted to be involved in the outdoors," says George. "In Alaska, you could walk 100 yards off the road and feel like you were the only person who ever walked there. So we moved back, started having babies, and coming to the Nature Center."

George and Janelle's son Quinton, 35, also recalls a childhood spent outdoors, and at ICNC in particular: coming to the Maple Syrup Festival, hiking on the trails, and even jogging to the Nature Center along the Sac & Fox Trail when he got older. "[ICNC] has always seemed ingrained in our family history. I always thought it was crazy when people hadn't heard of it, because it was so important to us."

Quinton and his wife, Ana, are continuing the family tradition of involvement at ICNC. Through their business, Lion Bridge Brewing Company, Quin is helping to plan two farm-to-table dinners at the Nature Center in 2017 that bring fresh, local food and beer to the table and highlight the importance of a local food system. Additionally, Lion Bridge brewed a beer made with the Nature Center's honey for the grand opening of Amazing Space in 2016.

Perhaps the most enduring (and adorable) sign of Quinton and Ana's strong belief in environmental conservation is the newest member of their family: Aldo Howard McClain, born on December 7, 2016. They named him after Iowa-born conservationist and writer Aldo Leopold. "When [Leopold] was writing in the '30s and '40s, the idea that natural lands must be preserved and not developed was kind of radical," Quin says. "What he embodies in his writing — as well the way he writes it — is really wonderful."



Quinton, Ana and baby Aldo McClain

There is no doubt the littlest McClain will spend time at the Nature Center and carry on the family tradition. "Getting kids outside is more important than ever — it's really important that they have a connection to nature. Our son will go to the Nature Center and experience it like I did," says Quinton.

In essence, that's what the Nature Center's vision — to create champions of nature — is all about. Only people who have a connection to the natural world will work to protect it.

"Humans have this responsibility. We can do these things that are devastating, but we also have this capacity to look after the world in a way that no other animal has," Quin says.



The McClain family at Dodie's 75th birthday tree planting, April 22, 1990, Earth Day, Indian Creek Nature Center. Pictured to the left of the tree are, from left, George and Janelle's children Yara, Logan and Quinton; Janelle and George in the back, and Dodie to the left of her maple tree. Mac is behind the tree, and George's two siblings and a nephew are to the right of the tree.

Jean Wiedenheft wins staff excellence award

JEAN WIEDENHEFT, ICNC'S DIRECTOR OF LAND STEWARDSHIP and also the staff project manager for the Amazing Space project, was the 2016 recipient of the Minnie Rubek Staff Excellence Award from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation. The award recognizes a nonprofit staff member who has gone "above and beyond" in their support of the organization's mission and has greatly enhanced the overall effectiveness of the organization through his/her work. Jean truly does go above and beyond in her work at the Nature Center every day — her passion for the mission of the organization shines through in everything she does. Jean received the award during the Foundation's Celebration of Community event, held in November 2016.



Three directors

► Pictured to the right are all three executive directors of Indian Creek Nature Center. From left: John Myers, director from 2013 to present; Rich Patterson, director from 1978-2013; and Curt Abdouch, first director of the Nature Center, 1973-1978. The three were present for the Amazing Space Grand Opening Weekend in September 2016.





190-acre Sugar Grove Farm donation ushers in a new era of ecological sustainability for Indian Creek Nature Center

When siblings George and Bertha Etzel donated the 190-acre Sugar Grove Farm to Indian Creek Nature Center in 2016, its natural beauty and unique heritage were unmistakable. The land was purchased by the Etzel family in 1888, and the stories — from Native Americans tapping maple trees to the stagecoach line that ran through the pasture — parallel the transformation of Iowa from a land of fertile, rolling prairies and woodlands to land covered by 23 million acres of corn and soybean crops today.

Sugar Grove Farm, located about 15 miles north of downtown Cedar Rapids, will enable ICNC to create the next revolutionary transformation of land use: a modern farm that merges the sustainable practices of ecological restoration with perennial crop-based permaculture which can feed our community. The 76 acres currently in corn and soybean production will be used to demonstrate the future of farming by modeling diverse and sustainable agroforestry practices. Agroforestry:

- relies on perennial crops that are acclimated to the region, reducing the need for annual planting, watering, tilling, and fertilizing
- maximizes the collection of available sunlight by layering taller crops, including pecans and butternuts,

above lower-growing species, including apples and paw paws

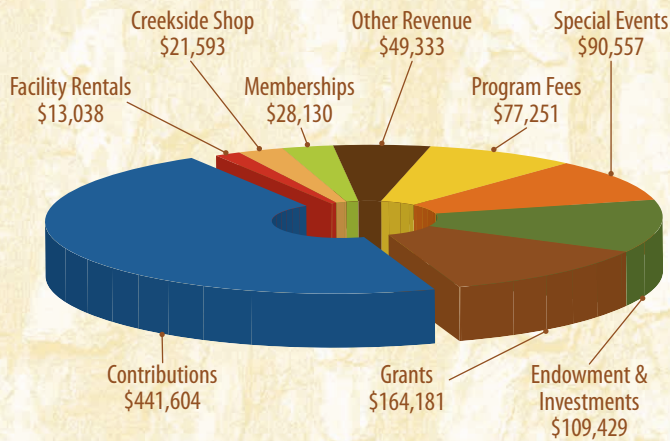
- selects species for maximum productivity and overall health
- plants in rows to follow natural contours of the land, allowing for mechanized harvesting where possible while minimizing soil loss and water runoff
- maintains a diversity of species, minimizing the economic losses of potential crop failure in any one year and balancing soil inputs

In the coming years, the cornfields at Sugar Grove Farm will give way to perennial row crops, including hazelnuts and blackberries. Wetlands will be added in key locations to reduce agricultural nutrients from neighboring fields running off into East Otter Creek. Interspersed prairies will attract native pollinators and increase crop yields while rebuilding healthy soils.

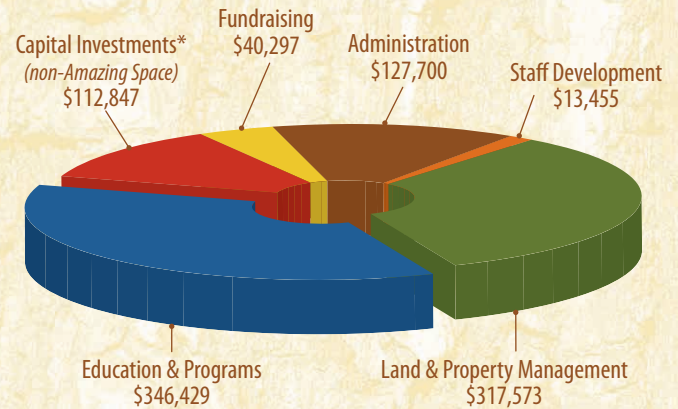
Agroforestry relies on restoring the dynamic principles of healthy, diverse woodlands to provide healthy, diverse sustenance for the community. The Etzel family's careful stewardship of the land for the last 128 years provides us with the good soil and strong vision to not only protect the land in the future, but also make it a model for what every farm can become: both economically productive and ecologically sustainable.

Financials

Total Revenues — \$995,121



Total Expenditures — \$958,304



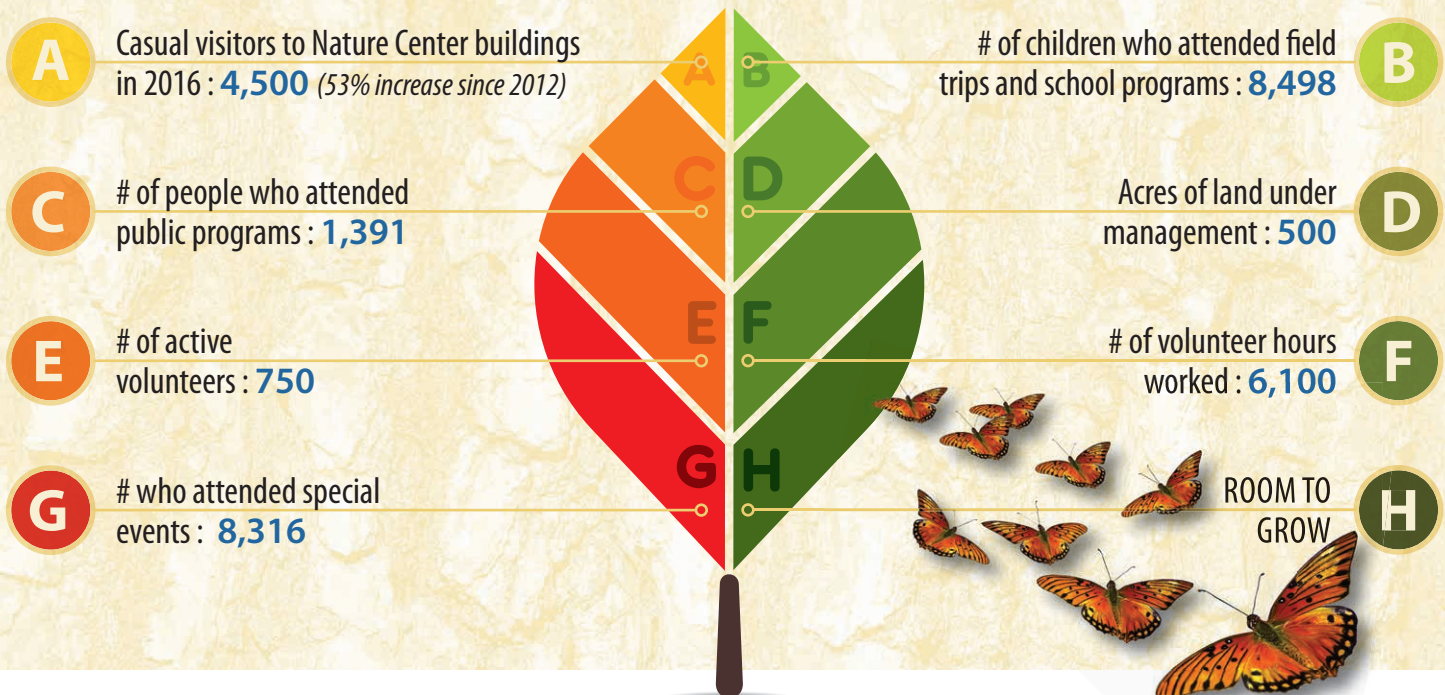
*Capital investments include: Kubota Tractor • Kubota All-Terrain Vehicle • John Deere Mower • Hoop House Honey Extractor • Communication Radios • Reroofed Bena House • New Computers

The Friends of the Nature Center volunteer group, previously known as the Nature Center Guild, raised **\$27,000 in 2016**, which is a **40% increase** over 2014. These funds directly support children's education; specifically, they offset the salary of a new full-time naturalist position added in 2016. The Nature Center is **grateful to the Friends group** for

its many hours of hard work to put on the **Spring Plant Sale**, **Nature's Noel**, and the **Soup's On** soup supper.

ICNC gained **27 new lifetime members** during 2016. With the match from the **Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation Endowment Challenge Grant** this resulted in **\$36,000** in new money being invested into the endowment.

BY THE NUMBERS — FOR THE YEAR OF 2016



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CliftonLarsonAllen employees make an impact through volunteering

Have your kids hopped from log to log in the Nature Center's outdoor classroom? Or, have you relaxed on the beautiful wooden benches on the deck overlooking the wetland? If so, you have the employees of CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) to thank. On June 17, 2016, employees of CLA spent a full day at the Nature Center working on assembling and finishing benches, and installing elements of the outdoor classroom. Given time off by the company for volunteer hours, the 12 employees who participated were able to create a lasting impact at the Nature Center while also deriving a sense of purpose from being actively engaged in the community. "Our group really enjoyed getting outside and helping build our community. It's nice to work for a company that encourages their employees to volunteer during business hours!" said Amber Markwardt, Client Services Assistant/Marketing at CLA.

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities for your organization, contact Lindsey Flannery at the Nature Center at (319) 362-0664 x308 or lindsey@indiancreeknaturecenter.org.



Rentals at Amazing Space

Amazing Space provides a beautiful, natural setting for every kind of event, from corporate meetings and retreats to private parties and weddings. A variety of spaces including the exhibit hall, auditorium, conference room and classrooms can accommodate a variety of group sizes and needs. Contact Rentals Coordinator Rachel Bailey to check availability and book your rental!

Rachel Bailey
Rentals Coordinator

(319) 362-0664 x304
rachel@indiancreeknaturecenter.org



www.indiancreeknaturecenter.org
NatureCenter@indiancreeknaturecenter.org
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