



TWENTYTWENTY ANNUAL REPORT



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A word from Executive Director John Myers



Despite year of challenges, ICNC's future is strong

A unique paradox occurred this past April. As the nation came to a screeching halt and everyone entered lockdown, the Nature Center parking lot started to fill up. Day after day, hundreds of people flocked to

the outdoors seeking respite, peace, and solace from our newfound challenges. The Nature Center and its trails became a place of rejuvenation.

Around mid-August, another similar experience occurred. Many people who hadn't considered themselves "nature people" started reaching out to us after losing trees. Their experience of losing nature in their backyard hit hard and they began to experience emotion akin to grief. They realized how closely connected they were to their trees and the outdoors.

These challenges highlighted the many benefits of nature. While our traditional events, field trips and programs could not safely occur, the Nature Center's relevance and importance was actually elevated. Focusing on the core mission tenets, Indian Creek Nature Center provided a protected environment for people to find respite from the year's events. Your support allowed this core piece of our mission to continue, despite the year's setbacks.

I can confidently say that Indian Creek Nature Center ended the year stronger than when we started. We have increased our resolve to provide positive nature experiences to all, restored the land to a healthier state, and invested in areas such as trail development and school-based education.



As 2021 unfolds, be on the lookout for new opportunities for those of all ages to engage with nature.

Throughout this report you will read about the impact we have made and will be making in the future, including:

- 🌱 Recovering from the derecho
- 🌱 Rebuilding trails and improving them for the future
- 🌱 Launching the Fresh Air Academy for preK-5th graders
- 🌱 Continuing growth at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm
- 🌱 Installing the Indian Creek Exhibit in Amazing Space
- 🌱 And more...

Even in the most challenging times, this community showed its commitment to Indian Creek Nature Center’s mission. Without hesitation, our community came together — volunteers, donors, board members, trustees, and staff all rallied to support our vision to create Champions of Nature. As we look back on 2020, we see the challenges we collectively faced, but we also see growth in our mission and in our community’s dedication to come back stronger than before.



Financials

Total Revenues — \$1,778,089

■ Contributions	\$617,528
■ Endowment & Investments.....	\$364,320
■ Insurance Claims	\$214,552
■ Program Fees	\$144,795
■ Special Events/Online Sales.....	\$133,538
■ Grants.....	\$121,000
■ COVID Relief Funding.....	\$63,188
■ In-Kind Contributions	\$52,880
■ Memberships	\$26,885
■ Facility Rentals	\$19,699
■ Creekside Shop.....	\$12,150
■ Other Revenue	\$7,554

Total Expenditures — \$1,774, 220

■ Mission Support.....	\$420,975
■ Land & Property Management.....	\$342,042
■ Education & Programs.....	\$328,887
■ Capital Expenditures	\$270,763
■ Administration	\$187,910
■ Development & Marketing	\$144,710
■ Experiences	\$78,933

*Does Not Include PPP Loan



YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 creating Champions of Nature



ICNC SUSTAINERS + LIFETIME MEMBERS

In 2020 we welcomed 33 new ICNC Sustainers and 13 new lifetime members. Both Sustainers and lifetime members make a huge impact on our organization, but in different ways! By committing to a recurring donation, Sustainers ensure dollars are coming in on a regular basis, which guarantees our ability to deliver our mission. Lifetime members commit to a one-time \$1000 donation to our endowment fund, which supports sustained operations for years to come.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS + ONLINE BIRTHDAYS

Many programs in 2020 were either altered or created to fit a virtual format, including a new partnership with ISU Extension and Outreach's Linn County Master Gardeners to provide affordable education about gardening and property restoration in the wake of the derecho. We also made it possible to have online birthday parties with our naturalists via Zoom as a "socially distant" option

for families. Birthday parties support essential programming operations, like caring for the critters that live at Amazing Space.

FOOD DONATIONS

In August we donated 17 pounds of rainbow chard from Etzel Sugar Grove Farm to local nonprofit Feed Iowa First. In March, when we canceled the Maple Syrup Festival due to the pandemic, we were also able to donate 30 cases of Quaker pancake mix to the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP).

We're proud to partner with local nonprofits to help combat food insecurity, especially in a time of greater need.

"STORYTELLER" MEMORIAL BENCH

The "storyteller" memorial bench at Lynch Wetland was funded by Joan Anderson in memory of her husband, Allen ("Al"), who passed away in 2019. Joan and Al were a volunteer team at the Nature Center — they taught pond field trip programs



together at the Lynch Wetland and told stories to preschoolers as "Grandpa and Grandma Storyteller." Al was a science teacher and conservationist who loved the outdoors, especially prairie. While living in Pella, he established an outdoor classroom for his middle school, and he and Joan lived in an earth berm house with passive solar. Joan was a middle school teacher for most of her professional career, though she taught reading rather than science. Her nature passion is reflected in her love of birds. At the time she funded the Anderson bench, Joan donated to support the Nature Center's bird activities, many of which are focused in the Bird Room and the adjacent Bird Sanctuary. We are grateful for the Andersons and their lifelong dedication to creating Champions of Nature!

FULL HEN HOUSE + EGGS OUT OUR EARS

We filled our chicken house to 80 hens, producing more than 46 dozen organically-raised, free range eggs per week at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm. Thanks to a partnership with Frontier Co-op, we are able to sell many of the eggs for their company cafeteria, as well as in our Creekside Shop for the public. Also, at the beginning

of the pandemic we delivered fresh eggs to members' and donors' doorsteps as a special pick-me-up treat.

ONLINE PURCHASES + GIFT CARDS

In 2020 we began selling our maple syrup and honey online and made it possible to ship nationwide! We also added the opportunity to purchase gift cards online. The cards can be applied to anything at the Nature Center, including shop purchases, camps, programs, memberships and more.



2020 EVENTS

Pivoting in the Pandemic — How we held events in a time of social distancing

By Amazing Space Manager Sarah Botkin

Traditionally, special events have been a great way to get people out and enjoying all the Nature Center has to offer. But when a global pandemic hits, having large events with lots of people in attendance is just not possible. At first we thought we could postpone some events, thinking surely we'd be up and running as normal in a few weeks. It soon became evident that was not going to happen, either.

It was time to get creative and find a way to hold events without gathering — meaning some of our most beloved events that bring in hundreds and thousands of people would look entirely different, and potentially not have the same draw.

To our surprise and delight, the decision to transition our events to virtual or curbside worked out well. We already had the software in place, staff members who are hardworking and flexible, and volunteers who are ready to take on any task. Some of our biggest events — Plant and Art Sale, Monarch Fest, and Nature's Noel, for example — have a long history and large following, which contributed to the success of the events in their online format. Online events also allowed for participation from people whose schedules might not have permitted them to attend a live event.

Using the Spring Plant & Art Sale as an example, simply postponing this event was not an option due to the timeliness of the event. The sale is positioned to allow shoppers to get the plants they need in time for spring gardening. Delaying would miss a crucial planting window, and canceling wasn't an option due to plants already being ordered. So we had to pivot. Working in tandem with the ICNC Friends group, which hosts the annual sale, we decided to move the sale online. It was the first online sale of any kind for the Nature Center, and wasn't without its challenges, especially considering staff was primarily working from home. In the end, the sale was a success, bringing in more than 600 individual orders, with over \$25,000 in sales and \$4,000 in additional donations.

We are very grateful to all who have supported us as we've pivoted in the pandemic — that includes our entire community of supporters, staff, volunteers and sponsors. We also look forward to gathering again and celebrating these events in person, hopefully someday soon!

Backcountry Film Festival

January 24 & 25

SOKO, Fin & Feather, Big Grove Brewery, Scheels, Nature Freak, World of Bikes, Active Endeavors, Kiecks, Coe College



Spring Plant & Art Sale

April 17–May 2

(adapted to online sale)



Virtual Maple Syrup Festival

June 27 & 28

(event canceled, adapted to social media celebration)

Alliant Energy, Collins Aerospace, CIPCO, CR Association of Realtors, GreenState Credit Union; ImOn Communications in-kind: The Gazette, Carpenters Union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 405, Quaker Oats, Hy-Vee, Amerigas, Evergreen Packaging, Reinhart, Hansen's Dairy



Women in Nature

October 24

(rescheduled to fall)

Profile by Sanford, Nature Freak, Back in Line Chiropractic



Nature's Noel

December 4

(adapted to online sale)

GreenState Credit Union, CIPCO, CR Association of Realtors, Kerndt Brothers Bank, Shuttlesworth & Ingersoll, KCRG Show You Care

Farm to Table

February 27

John and Dina Linge Family Endowed Donor-Advised Fund of the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation; in-kind: The Flower Shop at Cedar Memorial, Frontier Co-op

Fall Tree Sale

September 16–28

Seed Savers Exchange

(*new online fundraiser in wake of derecho*)



Monarch Fest: Curbside Caterpillar Adoption

July 11

(adapted to curbside)

CIPCO, New Pioneer Food Co-op, Hills Bank, GreenState Credit Union, Farmers State Bank, CR Association of Realtors; in-kind: The Gazette



LAND

Restoring a Community Supported Forest

By Director of Land Stewardship Jean Wiedenheft



I am an advocate for creating a Community Supported Forest. Like the Community Supported Agriculture model, people would buy a share and reap the bounty of things like firewood and hazelnuts, maple syrup and raspberries, honey and apples. The forest historically sustained the community, and in return the community cared for the forest.

After the derecho, I watched as hundreds of volunteers poured into the Nature Center. They brought hand saws and chainsaws, work gloves and rakes. More chainsaws have run on this property since August than in the history of the Nature Center. Some volunteers even traveled from out-of-state to help. I realized, as people I had never met pitched in to clean up the mess, that I am already immersed in a Community Supported Forest.

Our community does not value the worth of the forest based solely on its economic value. We value the forest out of love. The trees that we have planted, that we sit under, and that we walk by every day have become our friends. We value the forest because it creates a community, bringing us together not only with each other, but also with wildlife. On a bench in the woods, we are together with the nuthatches and red-headed woodpeckers, the Polyphemus moths and the luna moths, the grey squirrels and the red foxes.

Throughout the summer and into fall, we cut trees that had fallen across trails and around buildings. We are not even a third of the way done. In shattering the trees, the wind had destroyed this

special space that brings people and nature together. We were working together to heal the land. Reopening and recreating those spaces is crucial.

I have two rituals for winter solstice. I go for a walk and I sit by a fire. This year, the fire I am tending is massive, a pyre formed from slash piles left from the derecho on a friend's land. Oak trunks more than two feet across mingle with much younger elms and box elders. Bittersweet vines are tangled through it. All night the fire blazed, returning the forest back to the earth in the form of carbon.

When we do a restoration woodland burn or a prairie burn, they are quick-moving fires that rejuvenate the land. Healthy roots and mycorrhizal networks remain intact. A massive slash pile sterilizes the soil underneath, wiping out the seedbank, roots, and mycorrhizae alike. At the Nature Center, deadfalls in the forest and small brush piles, formed during restoration work, are common and left to decompose. They provide sustenance for wildlife and slowly decompose back into the earth. Because of the vast extent of the derecho, pyres are, in some cases, very necessary. The entire forest has essentially become that brush pile.



The slash pyre I am sitting vigil by tells the story of a typical woodland in Eastern Iowa. Hundreds of years ago, the oaks grew in a sunny savanna. The forest was open and airy, maintained that way through periodic fires. The settlers would have kept the land open through grazing and removing a few trees each year for firewood or farmstead lumber. Then tragedy struck for the forest. Modernization brought livestock into the feedlot, small farmsteads converted to large fields of corn and soybeans, and homes were heated with gas instead of wood. We still loved and appreciated our woods. How we used them and cared for them changed, and thus their composition changed.

Mulberries and basswoods crept in among the oaks. Honeysuckle shrubs and young stands of black locust created shrubby barriers to the forest. Young maples replaced young oaks.

In some ways, the derecho wiped that slate clean. In some places, we have the opportunity to create a new forest. At the Nature Center, our oak savannas sustained far less damage. I have hugged the big, ancient beauties that remain. I have whispered words of encouragement to the small seedling oaks which are finally seeing the sunlight they will need for sustained growth. Next year, we will protect those young trees.



Due to significant damage and debris, we can't walk through parts of the forest. Volunteers and staff get disoriented trying. The woodlands remain closed to the public until the trails are re-established and safe. We have begun work on restoring and rerouting our trails, but it will take time before they will be ready to re-open, and they will not be the same. Meanwhile, the locust trees will send up new sprouts in the sunlight, sprouts that we won't be able to reach to cut or stump treat. The solid mass of downed logs makes replanting anything else there impossible right now.

We also lost many of our cottonwoods and pines. The restoration of the woodlands will take years. Although I am grieving the loss, it is important for me to focus not on what was, but on what we will do next. As we embark on that journey of restoration, co-creating a forest with the community and the land, there are a few things that I am keeping in mind.

Restoration has always been one of the priorities of Indian Creek Nature Center. It is woven into the fabric of the seasons. It engages volunteers. It creates a community of land stewards along with creating a more ecologically healthy ecosystem. This is our past and also our future.

The forest has been here before. On the original survey maps of the county, just east of here, is a significant swath marked "windfall." The forest recovered. In the coming years, the forest will recover again. Its composition as it recovers is largely up to us. We can help by planting the right tree in the right place, protecting those trees, and nurturing them. We can help by removing invasive species that spread and shade out native species. We can help by sharing what we know and learning from others who have similar experiences.

The forest isn't alone. It is not my forest, or the Nature Center's forest. The tree you replant in your front yard adds to the diversity and value of the woods as much as a tree planted here does. Out here, the squirrels will help with the replanting, and the deer will help with the thinning. The trails you help us rebuild will enable the restoration work to continue, and will bring people and nature together again. The forest belongs to all who care for it. The forest belongs to the community.

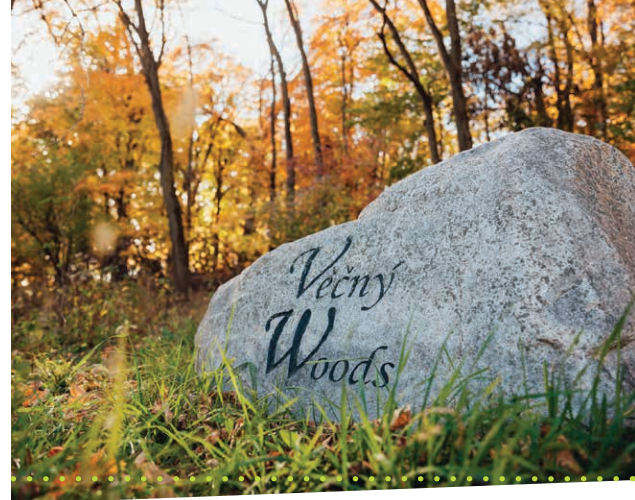
Adjacent to our oaks was a stand of black locust trees. Black locust trees are thorny, difficult to kill, and spread rapidly. They are highly invasive. The Nature Center has been working toward reducing their spread for more than 20 years. It involves working tree by tree, cutting, stump treating, hauling the wood back to the Sugarhouse for maple syruping season, and creating a brush pile with the rest. Black locust, imported from Appalachia, makes an exceptional firewood and excellent posts. We cut it as we have time to manage the space it leaves behind and as we need the wood.

The derecho dropped almost all of the black locust. It is staggering to see. In some ways, it achieved a significant restoration goal. In other ways, it has created real restoration challenges. Restoration and trails (also obliterated by the storm) have become my two biggest priorities.

TRAILS

A Path Forward — Reshaping our trail system in the wake of disaster

By Trail Manager Jason Bies



In early September, I ventured into the forest behind the Nature Center to survey the destruction of the August 10 derecho. While marveling at nature's power, I had become disoriented. Nearly every section of the woodland trail was impacted by storm debris and the trees that I had used as landmarks to orient myself in the

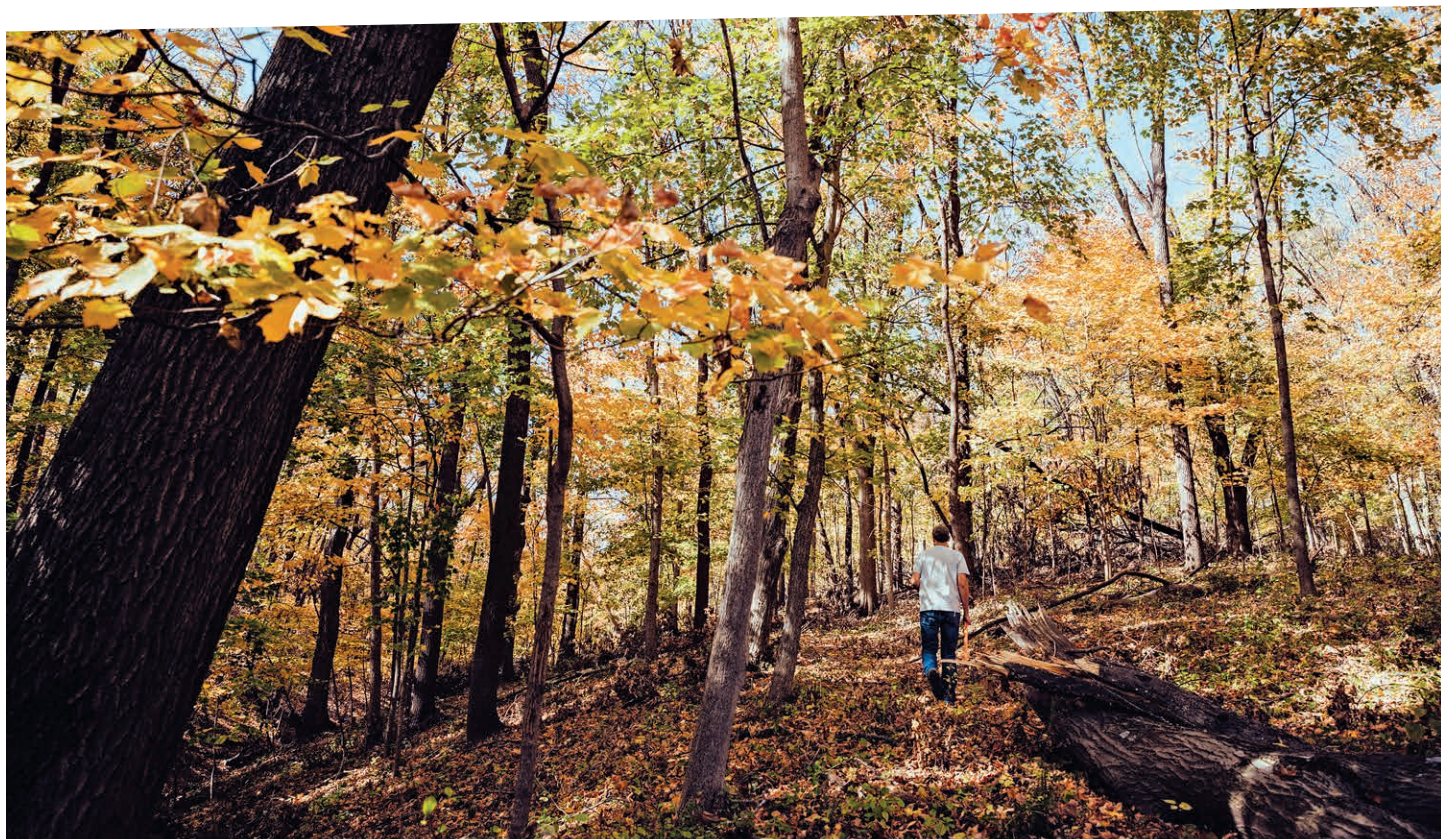
forest were gone or damaged beyond recognition. These trees had watched over these trails as I and countless others hiked past. Working to clean up the aftermath, I grieved for the trees; I grieved for the forest that we lost. I think we all did.

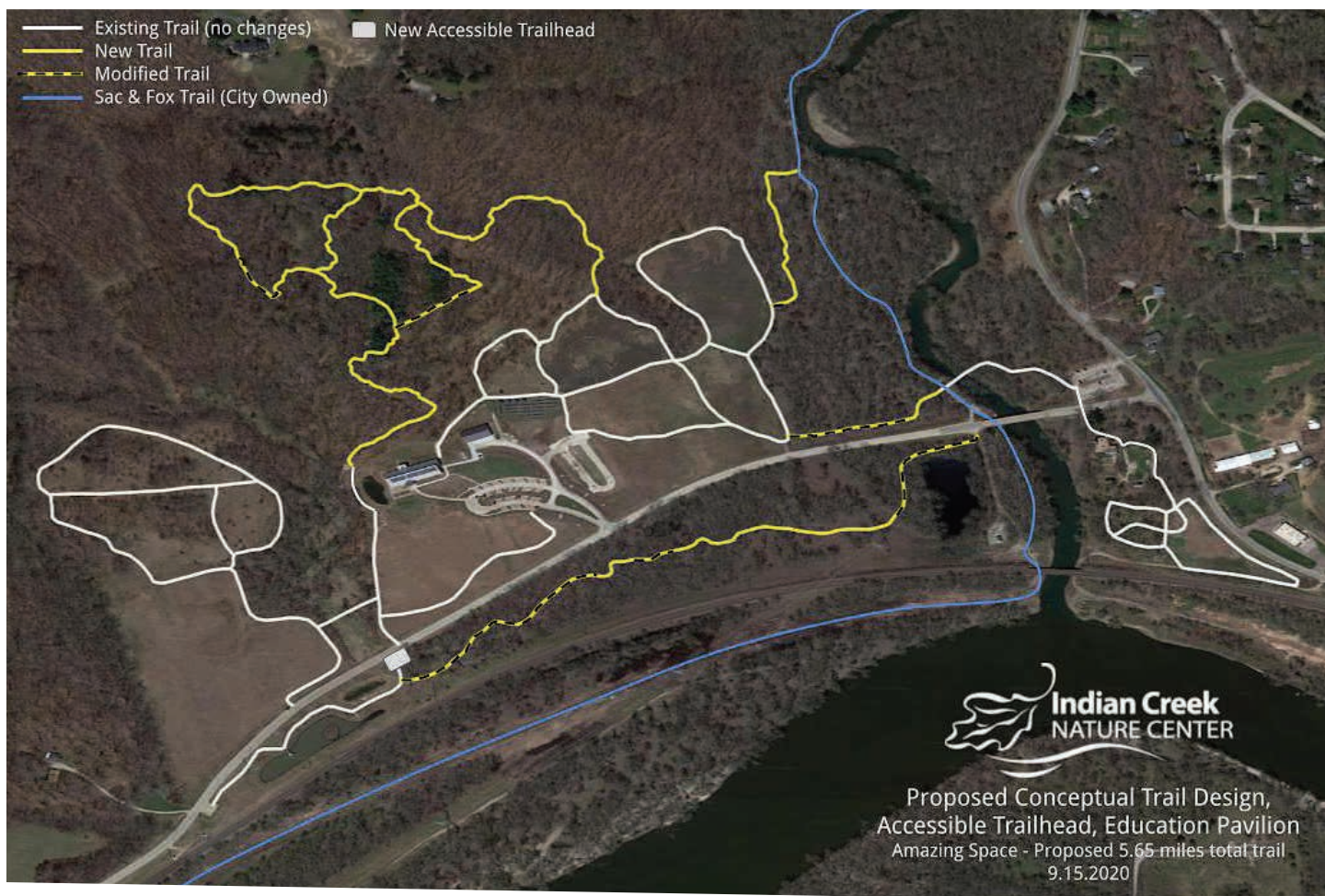
A few weeks after the derecho, we made a choice. We decided to remember the woods and trails as they

were, and to use the storm as an opportunity to reshape our trail system and undertake land restoration projects with renewed vigor. We decided to survey the damage and imagine what could be.

Together with many volunteers, we worked quickly to open up spaces around our buildings by removing brush, hazardous trees and hanging limbs to ensure that our visitors had a safe trail experience free from dangerous obstacles. We opened the prairie trails and the Bena Loop for visitors several months ago, but the other trails remain impassable or have trees that require professional removal. With a total of 500 acres across our properties, much of which remains heavily damaged, it will take significant time to recover. Instead of attempting to recreate what was, we will be blazing a new trail through this new landscape.

I spent much of the early fall planning an extensive overhaul of our trail system, which will allow for a new user experience, decreased erosion





risk, and more efficient trail maintenance. We clamored through the woods to map out new trail sections and tried to envision a path forward through the debris. Work has already begun on the woodland trail behind Amazing Space. Partnering with Dave Schmitt Construction, we were able to clear three quarters of a mile of hazardous trees and storm debris. Much work remains to be done before that trail is finished, but their help provided a major leap forward. In addition to rerouting the woodland trail, we will also establish a brand new trail on our Věčný Woods property to the southwest. These trails will offer new features, beautiful views, interesting landmarks and additional mileage to explore our property.

Along with all the work going into trail construction, we've also been laying the groundwork for two major reconstruction projects: a renovation of the small retention basin of the Lynch Wetland and a prairie reconstruction at the Věčný Woods property. The careful planning and initial work that we accomplished this fall has set us up for grand things the coming year. Restoration projects will build plant diversity on our property and provide meaningful experiences to the volunteers who engage with the Nature Center through these projects. The new trail system will provide hikers with an opportunity to experience this new, post-derecho forest and witness its recovery. We intend to help with targeted restoration: invasive species removal and protecting the young trees that are the future canopy. Those trees are seeds in the ground right now — I'm excited to see what comes up.



FARM

Adaptation is Resilience

By Farm Manager Scott Koepke

When I reflect on 2020 with my fellow farmer friends, we all seem to agree that one of the wisest lessons we learned this past year can be found in a pile of Mother Nature's compost: It is from decay that healthy new life is created. Adaptation is resilience.

My Grandma used to say, "A mess is an opportunity to clean up." I've taken that wisdom and created a new phrase for myself: "Dwell in transformation." Discerning what is out of our control at the farm (the weather!), and adjusting to whatever Mother Nature provides is energy well spent, not wasted.



Here's a very specific example: After honoring the grief of the loss of thousands of old trees at Sugar Grove from the derecho, the canopy immediately opened up to allow for more sunlight to penetrate the forest floor and photosynthesize thousands of baby trees to now explode in new growth for the next generation. Old becomes new. A beautiful life lesson.

In our divided world, I have found that food — the very food we grow at the farm — can cultivate common ground and nurture trust. We all eat. We can agree on that, and build bridges from there. Sowing, as Grandma also said, "seeds of kindness."



Despite adjustments to some scaled-back production priorities because of the pandemic and derecho, much was still accomplished at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm:

- 🌿 **Well and irrigation infrastructure** — Perhaps the most vital resource we acquired was the long-term investment of a well and irrigation infrastructure in the Frontier Permaculture Field.
- 🌿 **UNFI grant** — We were awarded a grant from the United Natural Foods Incorporated Foundation, which, in addition to funding irrigation infrastructure, allowed us to procure a rotary plow for the creation of raised vegetable beds, provided funding for organic certification of both the poultry and botany operations through the Midwest Organic Services Association, and purchased a cooler for our Creekside Shop to store fresh eggs and produce, as well as a GPS unit for precision plot mapping.
- 🌿 **Expanded chicken flock & apiary** — Our historic chicken house is now to capacity with just under 100 birds, and the three beehives yielded almost 100 pounds of honey!
- 🌿 **Hoop house installation** — A hoop house was also installed to allow us to produce winter greens.
- 🌿 **Garlic & onions doubled** — The derecho damaged much of the melon and squash plots, but garlic and onion volume was doubled in 2020. Both vegetables and eggs are sold in our Creekside Shop, and to Frontier Co-op.
- 🌿 **Plant sale contributions** — We were able to harvest and sell several species of spring ephemerals at the annual Spring Plant & Art Sale, including Dutchman's breeches, Virginia waterleaf, blue squill, ramps, iris and ferns.
- 🌿 **Relationship building** — Building unifying relationships with agriculture stakeholders of all persuasions continues to be a driving force at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm. By modeling biodiversity we are creating a big, welcoming tent with our neighbors that grows healthier every season.

EDUCATION

"Filling the Gap" in Education

By Director of Education Kelli Kennon-Lane

Nature teaches us many lessons, and one important lesson learned in 2020 is about adaptation. In scientific terms, adaptation is when an organism or living creature changes to become better suited to its environment. The way we execute our educational programming amid a pandemic has our staff adapting to the changing needs of our community, which has proved to be rewarding.

In March 2020 all of our regular programming — field trips, public programs, group experiences, and summer camps — was cancelled or moved to a virtual format. Public programs like the Backyard Chicken Certification class, beekeeping classes, and low-waste living classes have been quite popular. We launched a virtual Nature Birthday Party format, virtual family program sessions in the summer, and after the August 2020 derecho we partnered with the Linn County Master Gardeners to support homeowners with managing their new backyard landscapes.

When we realized families would be homeschooling or virtual schooling their children for an entire academic year, we knew we could help there, too. Time outdoors in nature (at a safe distance) has been encouraged for physical and mental health, especially during the pandemic. As an educational supplement to families home or virtually schooling, we created the Fresh Air Academy — an immersive nature experience with other children that would provide essential socialization and outdoor time away from a screen or device. The Fresh Air Academy is our attempt to "fill the gap" created by the pandemic: opportunities for children to learn alongside their peers, develop social skills and spend more time outdoors, away from a screen.



"The Fresh Air Academy provided our two elementary age children with a unique and memorable opportunity to immerse themselves in deep child-centered learning in nature. The Nature Center became a sanctuary for growing where our children were immersed in curiosity, play, creativity, and wonder. We observed our children taking risks, asking questions, creating, and connecting with themselves, others, and our world. Not only were they able to get out

and enjoy the fresh air, but also transform as human beings. We will forever be grateful for this opportunity for our children." —Cassidy and John Reinken



Serving children ages preschool to 5th grade, the Fresh Air Academy was unlike programming we've done in the past due to the intensive qualities of the program — kids would be outside almost double the time of our traditional programming, for example. Since its launch in the fall, children have gone on daily learning adventures with Naturalists Emily Roediger and Andria Cossolotto. They explored and learned as a multi-age group and in smaller age-based groups. They spent *three hours a day for six weeks* in the outdoors, exploring and learning in the Nature Center's 200-acre classroom.

"The Fresh Air Academy offered an extended time to play, learn and experience a lot of different things both planned and unplanned, structured and unstructured," Roediger said. "We saw ice form, melt and form again on the ponds. We went on big adventures and also examined things up close. We played and explored on sunny and warm days, jumped in puddles and mud on rainy days, and also got to play and make art in the snow."

The impact of the Fresh Air Academy on families was significant, and we found the benefits were not just for the participating child, but for ICNC staff as well.

"The best part about Fresh Air Academy was I was able to teach in a whole new way, my favorite way," Cossolotto said. "For example, many of our days included an adventure to Indian Creek. After being there on several sunny days we found ourselves there on a day of heavy rain. They noticed right away that the water was no longer clear and asked why they couldn't see the fish and other things in the creek anymore."

"Perfect," she thought. "Now here comes the lesson, and they are already eager to learn more about this topic. This is my much preferred way of teaching."

Even when uncomfortable, sometimes adaptation can yield even better results in the end.

EDUCATION

Inspiring Curiosity — Indian Creek Exhibit adds to educational toolkit

By Naturalist Emily Roediger



The newly installed Indian Creek Exhibit is not only a beautiful addition to the space that greets visitors as they enter the Nature Center, it is also a valuable educational tool that we are excited to have in our toolkit.

From an educational perspective, we think it will bring people in and inspire their curiosity. We hope it sparks questions that lead people to discover and learn new things. One of the best ways to learn about nature is to observe, ask questions, and then try to investigate further clues to find the answers, whether your question is something already discovered by somebody else long ago or something totally new.

The exhibit also gives a different perspective than a typical program, camp or field trip visit. For example, it depicts multiple seasons, while most programs offer more of a snapshot in time.



We hope this depiction of all of the seasons inspires people to visit at different times of the year to see and enjoy some of those real-life seasonal changes for themselves.

There are so many different elements to the exhibit that a visitor may not be able to take everything in during just one visit, which gives the opportunity for repeat visits to lead to further discoveries. Some things in the exhibit might sometimes be difficult to find or observe out in nature, so having them in the exhibit gives the opportunity to bring light and attention to otherwise unseen activities that occur in the wild.

Most of all, we are excited to see how this new exhibit gets people excited about exploring outside for themselves and seeing what they can find, discover and learn!



Watch our videos on



to learn more!



BEAUTY & FUNCTION

John Schwartzkopf artfully crafted the backing of the Indian Creek Exhibit donor wall. He used local wood generously donated by Grant Smith. Each curved piece is one piece of wood split into 5 pieces, bent into their swooping shapes and fused back together again. John's artwork can be seen throughout Amazing Space — the front desk and Creekside Shop doors as well as the beautiful oak and cherry table in the conference room. John's commitment to bringing the outdoors in, to inspire all who visit the Nature Center, is gratefully appreciated by all.



“One of the things we love about our business is that we get to bring something to the public that educates them. A lot of the things in the creek, most people would never see unless they see it here and then go out looking for them. When they become more familiar with what’s in the environment, they have more of a sense of wanting to take care of it. All things begin and end with nature, and it’s our job to take care of that. To take care of nature. If we can educate people on things that are out there that they aren’t aware of, it gives more of a sense of ownership and wanting to care more for what’s in our environment.” —Terry Brown, Museum Professionals Inc.

The Indian Creek Exhibit would not be possible without the time, talent and passions of Terry and Paula Brown, our incredible exhibit designers & fabricators from Minnesota. Terry and Paula have worked tirelessly over the past two years, spending endless hours in their home studio meticulously creating every piece of the exhibit, from the sandy bottom and blades of grass, to the very realistic taxidermied beaver and otter swimming upstream. Each plant and animal featured in the exhibit was painstakingly researched and carefully modeled from its real-life counterpart to make sure it was realistic and scientifically accurate. In total, the exhibit displays nearly 200 handmade zoological and biological models, as well as real wood, shells, sand and soil from the actual Indian Creek.

Since the creek “flows” through all four seasons, Terry and Paula also needed to research seasonal differences in the critters’ appearances to ensure they appeared just as they would if they’d been spotted in the wild. For example, an orangespotted sunfish changes colors throughout the year, so depending on where it was placed in the creek, it needed to be a specific color to fit the time of year.

Terry Brown has been building museum and nature center exhibits for 28 years — including the wetland exhibit located in the Penningroth Barn. Paula, his wife, joined him five years ago after retiring from her own career. Their business, Museum Professionals, has created exhibits for nearly 100 museums and nature centers across the country. The Indian Creek Exhibit was Terry’s retirement project — his final masterpiece — and will be an incredible resource to educate and inspire Champions of Nature for years to come.

NATURE IS FOR EVERYONE

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

There are many words you could use to describe 2020 — stressful, trying, anxiety-inducing, draining... crack open your thesaurus and try any word in this category and it seems to fit. But one word seems to encompass it all quite well: disruption. And while disruption can be challenging in many ways, it can also be rewarding. Disruption typically brings change, and if 2020 taught us nothing else, it's that change is necessary. Especially when it comes to racial and social justice.

Our work to create Champions of Nature through education and inspiration cannot be achieved without racial and social justice. In 2019, we began training staff in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) with Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

Qualified Administrator Ken Morris,

Jr., which was supported by an Organizational Development Fund grant through the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation. This work continued into 2020 and was amplified in the wake of continued unjust killings and treatment of BIPOC individuals around the country. As protests erupted throughout the

“Prioritizing equity and inclusion allows us to nurture an environment where all people can experience time in nature. Investing in our staff is an investment in the community and in nature. Personally, I've been proud to see how each person on the team has grown, myself included, in our understanding of how to welcome all people into the outdoors.”

— John Myers, Executive Director

“It is easy to want to be further along in our DEI work. To want for our team to all be bridge builders in adaptation working with a multicultural mindset. But that is not an accurate reflection or realistic expectation. However, it is worth imagining a world, or at least a community, where we are all working to better understand our biases, our privilege and to look beyond our site and to ask ‘how welcoming are we to our neighbors?’”

— Sarah Halbrook, Director of Development & Marketing

nation and even in our own community, we dug deeper into our DEI work with Ken.

A significant piece of our IDI training was determining our team's individual and collective intercultural competence, which is the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. The IDI's questionnaire determined that, as a team, we were caught in “minimization.” On the IDI spectrum, minimization means that cultural differences are acknowledged, but concepts like “colorblindness” can mask deeper understanding and create a blind spot in DEI.

“The DEI training provided me with the perspective, knowledge, and next steps for being an ally to the families and students we serve in education programs. As we welcome families to Creekside Forest School next fall, I have a deeper understanding of the lack of access BIPOC and LGBTQ+ families have to outdoor and nature-based early childhood education. I have a lot more to learn (and unlearn), and am focused on incorporating this into all facets of the ICNC mission to create Champions of Nature.”

— Kelli Kennon-Lane,
Director of Education





"Intercultural Development is all about meeting people where they are in their developmental process," said Ken. "It is difficult for most people to be aware of their own biases. When we see only one layer of an individual we may not see that person for the complex individual they are and what they may bring to a situation or organization." The goal, Ken says, is not only to recognize our own cultural "filter" but also to learn to "put on the lens of someone from a different cultural background" in any given situation. IDI is like our "personal navigation device" to aid in cultural awareness.

At the Nature Center we want to be welcoming to all our neighbors. We aspire to be an ally, and to be a place of comfort and safety for all to enjoy nature. Every day we are listening, educating ourselves, having difficult conversations and taking action to be more inclusive and equitable in our work. We know we still have a lot of work to do, and we are committed to doing our part to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion are at the forefront of our work. We continue to ask ourselves what we can do to combat racism and inequality so that everyone feels welcome and safe to enjoy the outdoors.

"I'm encouraged by the courageous work the Nature Center is undertaking in re-visioning its mission and purpose by centering diversity, equity and inclusion," Ken said. "The Nature Center is poised to make a transformative shift in creating a more welcoming and inclusive outdoor community where nature is and should be for everyone to enjoy without fear."

"Diversity, equity and inclusion issues are seen in many outdoor and nature-based activities, but not always acknowledged. I think it is important that our organization has been making efforts to both recognize and work on these issues. Prioritizing time for this work has led me to seek out more resources than I might have otherwise on my own, and ultimately led to growth and changes in my personal knowledge and outlook that might impact both my personal views and work-related activities."

— Emily Roediger, Naturalist

"My awareness of social/racial/environmental injustice has been heightened. These training sessions have influenced me to really listen to and see what is happening in my community rather than staying within my 'bubble.' I'm inspired to go out of my comfort zone for my daughters. I want to be the best example possible for them, which includes teaching them about DEI at home. I'm proud that we as an organization are committed to being an example of diversity and inclusion. There's a lot of work to do, but it is great to have support from my team to get there."

— Rachel Bailey, Registrar

"I am proud to work for an organization that prioritizes racial and social justice. These trainings in diversity, equity and inclusion have given me the tools to not only be a better ally in my personal life, but also professionally. With the help of these sessions, as well as reading and research outside of work, I have become more careful and considerate in the ways I communicate with others to try to ensure I am welcoming and inclusive to all."

— Liz Zabel, Marketing Manager

"I appreciate that I work for a company that has a zero tolerance policy for gossip and has gone the extra step of incorporating equity, inclusivity and diversity as a goal. The goal of becoming more inclusive is an individual journey of learning and sharing that we are always on."

Right now, I am looking up words and phrases I frequently use and hear, to ensure that they aren't offensive and that they mean what I think they mean. I have been engaging in longer conversations with people. It is the best way to get to know who they are, what they value, and how their experiences have shaped their perceptions and their realities."

— Jean Wiedenheft, Director of Land Stewardship

INTENTIONAL GIVING

Lackners' generosity preserves mission for years to come

By Director of Development Sarah Halbrook & Marketing Manager Liz Zabel



Nancy and Tom Lackner have many shared experiences as you would expect from a longtime married couple. Whether it was being nontraditional college students together, their love of science and nature taking them to far-flung travel destinations, or their shared values of endowment giving — Nancy and Tom see each other as a “donating team.”

Over the past ten years the Lackners have donated a number of major gifts to several local nonprofit organizations, each time being selective and thoughtful in their choice. With significant consideration, they’ve been careful to choose nonprofits they trust, and have been intentional in their pursuit to “keep organizations alive for more than just a few years,” Tom said. This, among other reasons, is why they often choose to donate to endowment funds.

In 2020 the Lackners chose to give a generous gift to the Nature Center’s Land and Facilities Endowment Fund, managed by the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, with the goal of supporting the land acquisition north of Věčný Woods, as well as ongoing efforts to protect and preserve land well into the future.

“Seeing wilderness and other nature spaces abroad or wherever it may be I think helps drive the impetus to want to make such places around here, that we all can enjoy near home,” Nancy said. “We spend most of our time at home in Cedar Rapids. Being able to get out, recreate and enjoy the fresh air and all the benefits that nature affords us at home is where we want to put our resources and hopefully inspire others to do the same.”

Nancy and Tom emphasized that what we have here in Iowa, right here at Indian Creek Nature Center, is rare.

“So many different ecosystems are represented at the Nature Center,” Tom said. “To have prairie, oak savannas, upland forest, riparian system, wetlands...all within walking distance from one building. The Nature Center makes it possible to teach kids and adults the importance of preservation, what their history was, and what their future could be. Giving to the Nature Center’s endowment helps ensure these activities will go on not just for a few months, but for years to come.”

With Nancy’s passion for land protection and restoration and Tom’s for education, this was an easy decision for them. They feel it is important for people to “think about why and who you are giving to.” That one should “stay engaged with that organization and follow their work. One must understand the importance of selecting carefully what one gives to.”

There is no doubt the Lackners have stayed engaged with the Nature Center and know quite well the inner workings of our organization, as Nancy celebrated her 20th year as an ICNC employee this year. Over the years, Nancy has developed “much faith and trust in the leadership,”





including the board, Executive Director John Myers and the leadership team. Donating is one way she and Tom can show their faith in that leadership. And, as Membership and Development Coordinator, Nancy knows firsthand the impact donations make, whether they are \$10 or \$10,000. She “celebrates every gift that comes in,” she said. Everyone gives in their own way. It’s not the amount, but the meaning behind it that makes her “heart swell.”

While Nancy’s many years of service is a gift of its own to the Nature Center, the Lackners’ endowment gift was another way for them to “pay it forward” — a gift that lives on in perpetuity not only benefits an organization for years to come, but also honors those who came before, Nancy said.

“Spaces like the Nature Center are becoming rarer, and I don’t think that’s going to change any time soon,” she added. “The future of the Nature Center is probably even more important than its present — protecting natural spaces and educating people to care about the environment is very important. Anything we can do to preserve nature and share it with others is a high priority for us, and we hope to inspire others to make a lasting impact.”

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

We are lucky to work with so many individuals and organizations on a day-to-day basis. Many choose to give back to the Nature Center not only with monetary donations, but also with their time, in-kind (non-cash good or service) gifts, or in other ways. See event sponsors on Page 5.

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THANK YOU

We are overwhelmed with awe and gratitude for our community's ongoing support of initiatives like these. We are able to deliver our mission because of this support and generosity.

THANK YOU
to all who support
Indian Creek Nature Center
— your donations
of all kinds make
our mission a
reality.

DAVE SCHMITT CONSTRUCTION

A great example of an in-kind gift is the Nature Center's long-standing partnership with Dave Schmitt Construction. They have helped us build two wetlands: The Lynch Wetland across from our Amazing Space location built in the late 1990s, and a nutrient reduction wetland at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm built in 2019. Last fall, the Dave Schmitt team spent three days helping reroute the well-known trail leading up the hill behind Amazing Space. Volunteering their time, labor and equipment, they cleared over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of tree debris from the derecho. In 2021, they will again dredge the Lynch Wetland. This project requires the removal of an estimated 138 truck loads of silt, or undesirable material. The project is funded by a grant from Dupont and an individual donor.



LOCAL UNIONS

Love our Maple Syrup Festival pancakes? Thank Carpenters Union Local 308. Every year they bring out their grills and their members to flip pancakes all day on the Saturday of Maple Syrup Festival. This has become a time-honored tradition for them and for us! It has inspired other unions, like IBEW 405, to take pancake flipping shifts on Sunday. Both unions also helped with the installation of our in-floor Indian Creek Exhibit (see page 12).

THEISEN'S

When possible, ICNC employees will work with a vendor to receive a discount on a product we purchase regularly. An example is Theisen's. In 2020, they began offering a discount on the organic chicken feed we purchase for our flock at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm. Their in-kind donation for chicken feed in 2020 was \$1,428. Our chickens ate over five pallets of feed last year!



BEE BOBBLEHEAD

A unique gift came from Arlene Spina, facilitated by Bob Wolff and Kathleen Aller, who donated a bee bobblehead display for educational use in our classroom. The display previously belonged to Alrene's husband, Larry Spina, who would take the display on the road to teach kids and adults alike about pollinators and beekeeping. Larry wanted us to have the display when he passed away so that it could continue to educate and inspire future generations.

"Larry kept bees for over a quarter of a century. He was very active in the beekeeping community both locally and at the state level. He helped with the ICNC's beekeeping class and mentored many new beekeepers in the area. His signature of notoriety was the Bobble Headed Bee Guy! Larry built this educational tool to demonstrate the internal workings of a beehive. Larry toured the state with the display for many years, teaching kids young and old about bees. Larry would be very happy to know the Bobble Headed Bee Guy is on display at the Nature Center." —Bob Wolff

MERCY & MACook DESIGN

This annual report would not be possible without the support of Mercy and MACook Design.

Molly Reeser (MACook Design) designs the report annually and chooses to donate a portion of her fee to ICNC. Her passion for and deep understanding of our mission makes our annual report magnificent every year. Mercy's in-house printing services handle the printing. Their staff are knowledgeable, supportive and make it an easy process. Both partnerships have been in place for six years and have allowed us to focus on content and creativity, not cost.





The response was incredible — people wanted to have a piece of history. Orders came in from all over the United States, as supporters of the Cedar Rapids community from all around the nation chipped in. As of March 2021, we've cut more than 12,000 blank "tree cookies" for the coaster project. The response was so overwhelming, in fact, that sales had to be cut off. The total dollar amount is still being determined, as we are still completing orders coming into April 2021.



We are proud to come together with other local nonprofits for a shared fundraiser, the likes of which hadn't been achieved to this level prior to this project. This was a unique and wildly successful initiative, and we are overjoyed by the broad support of our nationwide community.

The tree print project was launched by local artists and neighbors to the Nature Center, Jamie and Kyle Morrissey, who began making prints in the immediate aftermath of the derecho as a way to preserve the stories of fallen trees throughout the city. Like many in Cedar Rapids, the Morrisseys were heartbroken by the devastation of the derecho. But instead of despair, they looked for beauty in the rubble.

"Every tree has a story," Jamie Morrissey said. "We saw the beauty of these trees and couldn't just let them go to the grinder. We want to give them a little life after they're gone. We wanted to find a way to make something beautiful from this tragedy."

In addition to the many prints the Morrisseys created for individuals, they also partnered with us to create prints from three trees — a maple, an oak and a walnut — from our property." We were able to sell 548 poster-sized prints and 358 notecard sets, totaling \$17,580 raised for ongoing land recovery and restoration efforts.

TREE PRINTS & COASTERS

In the wake of the devastating derecho we were fortunate to work with community creatives to make coasters and prints, which not only provided beautiful memorabilia to soothe our aching hearts, but also raised money for the Nature Center in a critical time.

The coaster project was born from a conversation between ICNC's John Myers, NewBoCo's Eric Engelmann and Brucemore's David Janssen. The local nonprofit leaders were looking for ways to benefit nonprofits following the derecho, and having just done a "tree cookie" project with NewBoCo for our Indian Creek Exhibit donor wall, the idea floated to turn "tree cookies" into coasters. In a matter of days, samples were made, a website was put up, and marketing launched. We expanded the project to include other Cedar Rapids nonprofits, who were able to jump on board and get a cut of the proceeds.

VOLUNTEERS

The gift of time is precious, and in 2020 we were blessed with an abundance of volunteers despite the limitations of physical distancing due to the pandemic. In 2020 we had 287 volunteers and 2,852 hours donated to ICNC. This included many new volunteers due to the derecho, which brought daily crews to clear and remove debris from our three sites. In addition, our Friends group shared many hours of their time and talent with us to put on their two annual events: the Spring Plant & Art Sale and Nature's Noel. Seeing friends new and old on our site as much as we did this year was heartwarming and made a huge difference in the work we do.

[2852 hours | 287 volunteers]



This is an aerial view of Founders' Grove / Amazing Space after the derecho. The cover is a before-and-after of Founders' Grove, which is a portion of our trail that was planted in honor of our founders, B.B. Stamats & Jean O'Donnell. The area suffered significant damage in the derecho, but will be restored with a new trail in 2021.



Indian Creek Nature Center is Iowa's first and only independently owned and operated nonprofit nature center. ICNC's mission is to promote a sustainable future by nurturing individuals through environmental education, providing leadership in land protection and restoration, and encouraging responsible interaction with nature. We create #championsofnature, and we hope you'll join us in fostering environmental stewards who are passionate about nature and will protect it into the future.



indiancreeknaturecenter.org
NatureCenter@indiancreeknaturecenter.org
5300 Otis Rd SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403
(319) 362-0664

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