



FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2015

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## **FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION STAFF:**

Shelley A. Davis, President and Executive Director  
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## **OUR MISSION:**

To engage in protecting and restoring the treasured natural habitats of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and to enhance the outdoor experiences of all communities.

We will do this by encouraging and administering private gifts to further the Forest Preserves' mission and goals.



Dear Friend,

This year we celebrated the Forest Preserves of Cook County's 100th birthday and honored the intention of its founders – to always set aside nature as a fundamental necessity of the human experience.

Spending time outdoors affects us all in unique ways. But whether you ask experts who have researched its benefits - or the youth and adults themselves – there is a commonality in the experience that affects us all. Openness, wonder, relief from stress, connections with nature, with oneself, and with others...these are some of the qualities that make outdoor experiences vital to our well being. And these experiences will ultimately influence the future decisions regarding nature and our preserves.

The Forest Preserves are a 69,000 acre world of natural wonder, connections and possibility. The Foundation's generous donors are helping to open up this world and make it more meaningful for urban youth and families who 'never even knew the forests were here.' Through guided, educational activities, we are opening the doors for all communities to experience nature – and care for nature, too. This year our grants supported initiatives such as Camping courses and camp gear rental programs, the Conservation Corps workforce development and habitat restoration program, and capital improvements to how the forest preserves welcome and engage visitors at its gateways.

Thanks to its generous donors, Foundation grant support has increased from \$3,500 in 2012 to nearly \$250,000 in 2015. The resounding show of support from the donor community inspired our leaders to embark on a strategic planning process. The plan will now guide our growth and open up the world of nature, opportunity and wonder for more people. Our goal is to grant \$1 million by 2021 in support of the Forest Preserves by building partnerships with Cook County's generous donor community. We invite you to join us, and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,


A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Stuart Cohn".

Stuart A. Cohn  
*Chair, Board of Directors*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Shelley A. Davis".

Shelley A. Davis  
*President and Executive Director*





*Conservation Corps crew members with the Student Conservation Association lead a volunteer restoration work day at Thatcher Woods as part of the Forest Preserves' 100 Years, 100 Events celebration. Volunteers helped remove invasive plant species, creating opportunity for native plants to thrive.*

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

For Tamia, Justin, Sol, Judy, Alisha, Oscar, and others – the reflections on time spent outdoors carries a strong sense of freshness, groundedness, relief, confidence, opportunity, and openness.

The programs we support are designed for youth and families to connect to nature and feel empowered by their skills, their mentors, and themselves. These programs spark participants’ curiosity and equip them with the knowledge and skills to go forward along a path that will reinforce their confidence and their capacity to make sound choices for the environment.



## CAMPING

Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Proyecto Juventud teen youth program participated in its first program-wide overnight camping trip at Camp Sullivan in Oak Forest this summer. 49 teens and their mentors

experienced the joys (and hardships) of camping, many for their first time. 78% of the teens had never been camping before.

“The program offered a new kind of experience that many teens were excited to participate in. Disconnected from any





*Proyecto Juventud at Camp Sullivan.*

technology...teens gained hands-on experience setting up their own tents, preparing their own meals, hiking, playing community building and outdoor recreational activities, stargazing, and a night campfire,” says Maritza Rocha, Director of Youth Programs.

With support from the Foundation, the group’s leaders participated in the Forest Preserves’ Camping Leadership Immersion Course (CLIC), which provides group leaders with an overnight training to learn the in’s and out’s of camping -- and of guiding a youth group through its own camping experience.

This year the Foundation granted \$100,000 to the Forest Preserves of Cook County’s first year of public camping

opportunities at its newly created or redesigned sites across the County. The Foundation directed its support to make the joys of camping accessible to those who have never tried it before by providing funding for its ‘Gear Library’ rental, CLIC skills training, family camping sponsorships, and guided campground activities. Mujeres Latinas en Accion received a Foundation grant to support its participation in these programs.

## **CONSERVATION CORPS**

This year, as part of its focus on expanding the Conservation Corps, The Forest Preserve Foundation supported the Student Conservation Association’s ‘Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps’ Program with a \$70,000 grant. This program runs in

partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County and Friends of the Forest Preserves. The goal is to accomplish habitat restoration goals while providing teens with employment experience, science education, and a self-esteem enriching summer. "This experience has changed my life in a way, by helping me figure out what I want to do with my life," said Nathan Taylor, who will now double major in Illustration and Wildlife biology.

The overall program supported

**"YOU GET TO BECOME ONE WITH NATURE IN THIS JOB. I ALWAYS LIKED IT WHEN THE SUN HIT THE LEAVES. NOW I KNOW WHAT TYPE OF LEAF IT IS."**

**- TAMIA, A 15 YEAR OLD CREW MEMBER**

61 interns and 12 crew leaders this summer. Their accomplishments included removing almost 5 acres of invasive plants, improving 5 miles of trails and maintaining the gardens located at the preserves' nature centers.

The exposure to hard work, opportunities for jobs and careers in conservation, special certifications such as chainsaw handling, and the deep bonds formed among crew members impacts the teens even more.

"You get to become one with nature in this job. I always liked it when the sun hit the leaves. Now I know what type of leaf it is," says Tamia, a 15 year old crew member.

## **MEMORIAL GIVING PROGRAM**

The Foundation offers residents the opportunity to honor a special person or occasion by planting a tree or installing a bench in their honor in the Forest Preserves. While creating a special place for families and friends to reflect and honor the lives of individuals, these donations enhance the preserves for everyone. A tree-planting ceremony is held in celebration of Arbor Day for friends and family of all tree donors.

This past year, dedicated benches and/or trees were placed in Busse Woods, Wampum Lake, and Deer Grove.

## 2015 EVENTS

Foundation events bring like-minded individuals and community leaders together for a great cause and fabulous time.



*2015 Conservation Cup winners MB Financial with Cook County Board and Forest Preserve District President Toni Preckwinkle.*

### CONSERVATION CUP

The Fourth Annual Conservation Cup was held on September 17 at the George W. Dunne National Golf Course in Oak Forest. Over 150 guests enjoyed a beautiful day of golf and helped raise \$168,000 in support of the Foundation's mission and programs. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution congratulating the Conservation Cup Host Committee, major donors and the winners of the Cup.





## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

The Young Professionals Association hosted two fundraising and networking events this year, with \$7,500 in proceeds being granted to support the Conservation Corps program. Their spring social was held at Moe's Cantina and featured Ernie Wong, founding Principal and President of site design group, ltd and former Conservation Corps participant. The group's Oktoberfest in the Woods event was held at Thatcher Woods, in conjunction with the Forest Preserves' 100 Years, 100 Events celebration. Guests met Conservation Corps crew members for a

first-hand account of the impact the program has on the participants and on the ecology of the preserves.

## ARBOR DAY

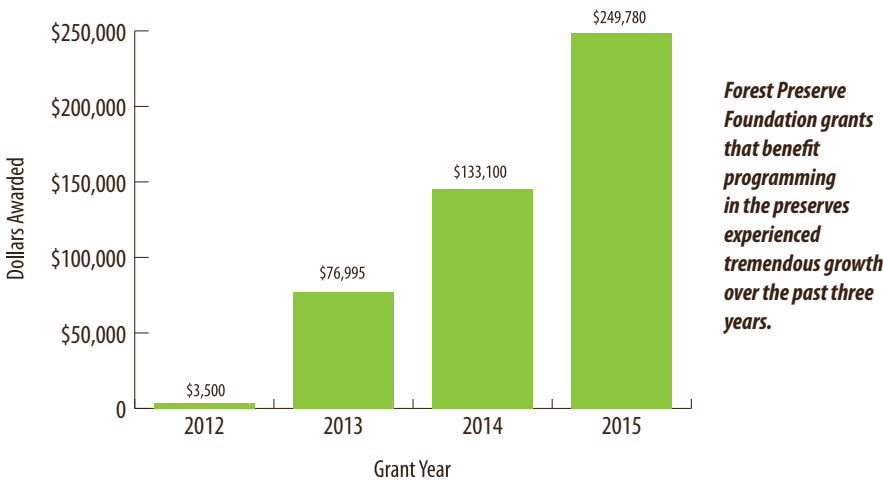
The Arbor Day celebration at LaBagh Woods brought together friends and families who dedicated a tree in honor of a loved one through the Foundation's memorial giving program. Guests gathered in the cold yet nurturing rain for a special memorial reading from Forest Preserves staff and lent a hand in the ceremonial tree planting.

# GRANTS

The Forest Preserve Foundation granted \$249,780 in 2015. Since 2012, the Foundation has granted over \$463,000.

The Foundation’s financial audit information is accessible at [www.forestpreservefoundation.org/financial-information.html](http://www.forestpreservefoundation.org/financial-information.html).

## FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION GRANT AWARD HISTORY



## FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION 2015 GRANTS AWARDED

Program	Recipient	Purpose	Amount
Conservation Corps	Student Conservation Association	To support the engagement of youth Conservation Corps crews	\$70,000
Gateway Site Plans for Forest Preserves' Chicago Locations	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To develop engaging gateways for 3 pilot sites -Dan Ryan Woods, Caldwell Woods, and Eggers Grove - and increase access and use of the Forest Preserves	\$51,000
Family Campout and Camperships	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To ensure that no family is prevented from experiencing camping due to financial challenges by providing reduced rates, camp gear rental, food and activities	\$50,000

Program	Recipient	Purpose	Amount
Forest Preserve Leadership Corps: A Conservation Corps Program	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To provide gainful employment, valuable certifications and skills to youth while supporting habitat restoration and outreach goals	\$41,200
Protecting Shoe Factory Nature Preserve	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To promote understanding and proper use of this unique nature preserve	\$9,000
Memorial Tree & Bench Dedication	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To create a special place for donors to celebrate a loved one or an important event	\$8,846
Community Engagement Mini Grant	El Valor	To facilitate the participation of adults with disabilities at special events in the preserves	\$5,000
Community Engagement Mini Grant	Wild Indigo/ Chicago Audubon	To facilitate the participation of families at special events in the preserves	\$5,000
Community Engagement Mini Grant	Mujeres Latinas en Accion	To facilitate the participation of staff and youth in a meaningful camping experience	\$2,500
Centennial Symposium and Canyon Tour	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To bring awareness to Chicago's history and to explore how relevant the forest preserves are to our lives	\$2,207
AmeriCorps Nat'l Civilian Conservation Corps	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To support the Americorps participants use of campgrounds	\$1,200
I Love My Preserve	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To direct donations to benefit nature, trail maintenance, education, restoration and volunteer efforts at specific forest preserve sites	\$1,119
Volunteer Recognition	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To celebrate the spirit and impact that volunteers have on making the forest preserves healthy and vibrant	\$1,008
Volunteer Recognition	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To recognize volunteers for their services and the considerable time that they commit to enhancing the forest preserves	\$900
AmeriCorps Nat'l Civilian Conservation Corps	Forest Preserves of Cook County	To supply this and future Conservation Corps crews with essential equipment	\$800



# 2015 DONORS

Thank you to our generous donors. This list reflects gifts given or pledged from January 1 through November 1, 2015.

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*Jack Pizzo and fellow golfers at the  
2015 Conservation Cup.*

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 Russell Leon Raupp  
 James August Smith

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The Honorable Carl McCormick



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Forest Preserves of Cook County Leadership

Arnold Randall, General Superintendent

Eileen Figel, Deputy General Superintendent

Billy Casper Golf

Charlotte Flinn, Flinn Consultants

The Chicago Community Trust

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Justin Pepper, Executive Director, Bobolink Foundation

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*Back Cover Image: Young Professional Association members enjoy the 2015 Oktoberfest in the Woods.*



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[forestpreservefoundation.org](http://forestpreservefoundation.org)