



# 2022

## Annual Report



# A Letter from Debra Walker Johnson, President & Executive Director



*Partnership.* It's central to our mission, emblematic of this past year and at the heart of our vision going forward.

As the philanthropic partner of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Forest Preserve Foundation shares the commitment to conserve and restore one of the oldest and largest Forest Preserve districts in the United States. And we are grateful for your partnership in this crucial work of protecting the nature that sustains our communities.

In Cook County we are fortunate that nearly 70,000 acres of public land and natural habitats have been preserved in this urban area. Without them, our health, air quality, water, wildlife, plants, and communities would be at greater risk. When we partner together to keep these valued natural areas healthy, we all can thrive.

With your donations and grants, the Foundation provides support for projects at the Forest Preserves of Cook County that restore these vital lands, eliminate barriers to equitable access, nourish cultural engagement and nurture the next generation of nature advocates. Since our inception, we have provided over \$3 million in support.

The Foundation recognizes that protecting our preserves is a collective effort, and we would not be where we are today without our partners who provide essential funding to support our work. This annual report celebrates some of the things we have accomplished together over the past year. You helped us:

- Grant more than \$262,000 in funding to support restoration, conservation corps programs and cultural programming in the forest preserves
- Provide employment opportunities to 140 next generation environmental leaders
- Surpass our Conservation Cup fundraising goals for the second year in a row
- Restore Forest Preserve land in 15 locations throughout the county

We've got big plans for 2023. With the support of our amazing Board of Directors and staff, we plan to expand our partnerships with individuals, corporate leaders, foundations, and major donors to increase our investments in environmental restoration and programming in the forest preserves. These investments help ensure the health and vitality of these treasured public lands for everyone.

Thank you for partnering with us and thank you for your generous support. We look forward to working with you in 2023. I invite you to follow us on our website and social media channels ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#)) to follow the impact of our work.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Debra Walker Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.



# *We need healthy* Humans • Air • Water Wildlife • Plants Communities

The nearly 70,000 acres of the Forest Preserves of Cook County support the health and well-being of all of these.

As their philanthropic partner, the Forest Preserve Foundation supports the Preserves. And we are grateful for your partnership in this crucial work.



# IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

**2022  
GRANTS AWARDED  
\$262,350**

*These investments help ensure the health and vitality of these treasured public lands for everyone.*



With your donations and grants, the Foundation provides support for projects at the Forest Preserves of Cook County that restore these vital lands, eliminate barriers to equitable access, nourish cultural engagement and nurture the next generation of environmental advocates.

YOU DID THIS!

# GRANTS AWARDED FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

for RESTORATION & CULTURAL  
PROGRAMMING PROJECTS



## Sweet Woods Restoration \$99,325

This grant funded invasive species removal and re-growth treatment on woodland and wetland in Sweet Woods. This work is part of the ongoing restoration of Sweet Woods, the largest-scale restoration project in the Foundation's history.



## Schiller Woods Restoration & Cultural Programming \$18,000

Funded restoration of 2.6 acres at Schiller Woods near the contemporary installation Serpent Twin Mound (Pokto Činto) by SANTIAGO X. An ecological contractor controlled a Canada thistle infestation and other herbaceous weed on the mounds and the surrounding area.

The Conservation & Experiential Programming Department strengthened its partnership with the American Indian Center, the oldest urban Native American center in the United States and developed educational and experiential opportunities at the site.

# FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY continued

## *for* CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAMS

### Forest Preserve Experience

**\$55,000**

This grant supported an introductory five-week paid summer jobs program, Forest Preserve Experience, for youth served by the Housing Authority of Cook County.

### Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

**\$75,000**

This grant supported a five-week paid summer jobs program, Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps, for youth conservationists from Chicago and suburban Cook County.

## GREENCORPS CHICAGO

## *for* RESTORATION OF SWEET WOODS

**\$15,025**

Part of the larger Restoration of Sweet Woods, this grant funded a restoration crew from Greencorps, a hands-on conservation and jobs training program for adults who face barriers to employment. The crew removed invasives by hand in areas inaccessible with heavy equipment.

# Work areas for grants

## FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY

Forest Preserve Experience (FPE)

Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps (CCLC)

Restoration Work not part of CCLC or FPE

Cultural Programming Partnership

GREENCORPS CHICAGO

Restoration Work





# CONSERVATION CORPS

## Forest Preserve Experience

This five-week paid summer program engages high-school-aged youth in hands-on conservation work and education experiences. Youth work in teams to improve the health of the Preserves, while also gaining job skills and enjoying nature. The Forest Preserve Foundation partners with Friends of the Forest Preserves, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the Housing Authority of Cook County to nurture the next generation of nature advocates.

- Crew activity examples
- Remove invasive plants
  - Gain nature knowledge
  - Learn leadership skills
  - Recreate in nature
  - Improve wildlife habitat
  - Explore green careers

I feel that I developed more social skills by talking to new people. I really enjoyed our educational lessons and the activity where we developed our own society because we had to make difficult decisions and it really made us think."

Ryah Revis

Beaubien Woods Crew Member



"During this program you get to make new friends and gain new experiences... I learned about invasive plants and the problems they present, environmental racism, and how to canoe. I really enjoyed canoeing because I was afraid but ended up having a lot of fun... I feel inspired after our discussions on environmental racism to change things for the better to help our communities that face issues with contamination and pollution."

Elijah Winston

Clayhole Woods Crew Member



"I would recommend this program... you get to see things up-close, like the animals at Brookfield Zoo. I really enjoyed going to Moraine Valley Community College and talking about jobs and careers as it helped me think about my options and what I want in my future.

Fredrick Champion

Joe Orr Woods crew member



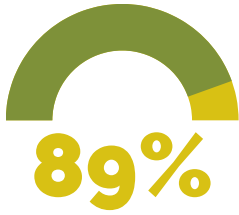


# Conserve. Educate. Enjoy.

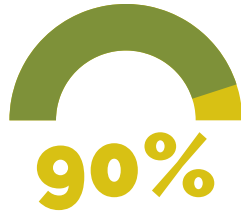
## 2022 Forest Preserve Experience



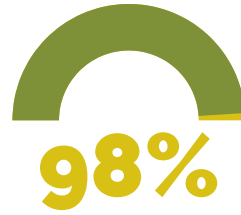
# Forest Preserve Experience By The Numbers



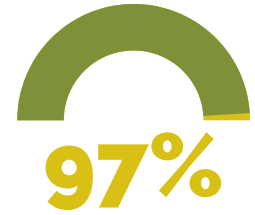
Believe the Forest Preserves and nature are important to their quality of life



Would recommend the program to a friend



Think we should protect the Forest Preserves and nature for future generations



Feel confident in their leadership skills post program

*99 youth • 27 adult leaders*

**African American/Black**  
94%

**Multi-Racial**  
5%

**Hispanic/Latinx**  
1%

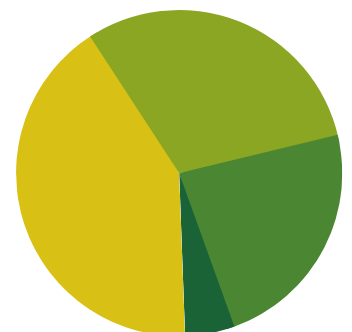
Hours Completed

**Experiential nature-based activities**  
6,701 hours

**Job readiness training**  
4,926 hours

**Conservation Work**  
3,769 hours

**Environmental education**  
797 hours





# CONSERVATION CORPS

## Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

This five-week paid summer program engages high-school-aged youth in hands-on conservation work and education experiences. Youth work in teams to improve the health of the Preserves, while also gaining job skills and enjoying nature. The Forest Preserve Foundation partners with the Student Conservation Association, Friends of the Forest Preserves, and the Forest Preserves of Cook County, to nurture the next generation of nature advocates.

### Crew activity examples

- Remove invasive plants
- Trail building
- Nature play area construction
- Learn leadership skills
- Expand environmental education
- Explore green careers
- Recreation in nature

"I keep coming back because of the relationships with people from all over the county and because we're doing great work that the community benefits from."

Jamarian

Began as crew member 2019  
Assistant Crew Leader



".... I've never done anything like this before  
"When I first came here, everyone was very welcoming. I learned a lot about identifying plant species. It was also cool to learn about conservation and the importance of removing invasive species. I would recommend this program to anyone."

Jose C.

Crew Member

"I'm grateful for the experience as I got to be outside and learn about not only my environment, but I got to learn a lot about myself too! Me and the trees, we're growing together!"

Kylie E.

Crew Member





# Conserve. Educate. Enjoy.

## 2022 Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps



# Chicago Conservation Leadership Corps

## By The Numbers



**44%**

Plan to pursue education in a green field



**88%**

Often try to persuade others that the Forest Preserves are important



**100%**

Would like to volunteer in the Forest Preserves on their own time



**97%**

Believe that the Forest Preserves and nature are important to their quality of life

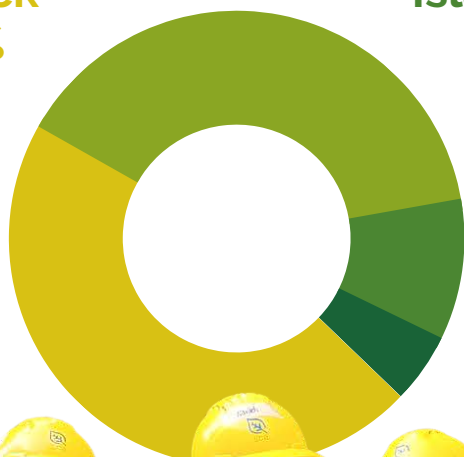
*41 youth • 11 adult leaders*

**African American/ Black**  
46%

**White**  
39%

**Asian/ Pacific Islander**  
10%

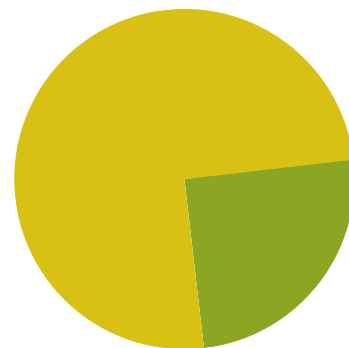
**Hispanic/ Latinx**  
5%



Hours Completed

**Conservation Work**  
**5,565**

**Environmental education, Job readiness training, and nature-based recreation experiences**  
**1,855**

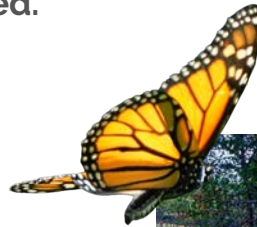




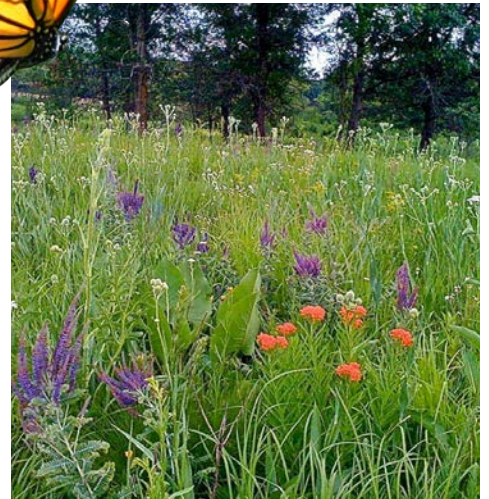
# RESTORATION

Ecological restoration is the process of returning landscapes to health using scientific knowledge and recognized techniques to create an ecosystem filled with a diversity of native plants and animals.

Funding supports restoration in areas of the highest need, where invasive species threaten sensitive ecosystems and where habitats have been damaged.



With restoration, rare and important native plants can flourish. Their flowers attract bees and other critical pollinating insects, which in turn provide for larger bird and animal populations. Restored areas are better for water quality, too, and more inviting for visitors.



Before and after removing invasive species.



Before



After

"When we start working, there's a lot to clear out. As time goes on, you see progress. Major progress. And it really makes you feel good. It makes you feel like you have a purpose with doing this job. I feel like I have a purpose now."

- Davion Hickland

Began as FPE crew member 2017  
Assistant Crew Leader 2019-2020  
Crew Leader 2021-2022





# 11TH ANNUAL CONSERVATION CUP

George W. Dunne National Golf Course  
September 8, 2022

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and partners, this year's event raised \$238,000, the highest amount raised by the Conservation Cup.

## *Fundraising & Raising Fun*

At the Forest Preserve Foundation's 11th Annual Conservation Cup on Thursday, September 8, 2022, over 100 golfers, along with some non-golfers, played, laughed, connected and enjoyed the beautiful George W. Dunne National Golf Course. The event raised \$238,000 to support the Foundation's 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.





After introductory remarks, golfers kicked off the day in the warm sun, not a cloud in the sky. In line with the theme of fundraising and raising fun, foursomes on the course could be seen joking, dancing, encouraging, teasing, cheering and bemoaning that near-miss.

*Dancing and clapping to a beat followed this shot*



That was a great shot.  
GREAT SHOT!  
Birdie time!







As evening settled in, golfers gathered back at the tented pavilion for a cocktail reception and dinner, where they joined non-golfing supporters already enjoying the beats of the DJ. When the helicopter could be heard humming overhead, all went out to watch the balls dropped over hole #1

in this fun golf twist on a raffle. Josh Geppi of Indigo Golf announced winners of the Golfer's Delight Raffle, Square Space and various golf contests.

Three special guests shared their first-hand experience with the restoration work that is essential to protect our valuable habitats. Davion Hickland, Forest Preserve Experience Crew Leader who began as a crew member in 2017 shared some of the ways the program has benefitted him, such as "learning to be a better leader, learning communication skills to create an organized and positive environment and developing problem solving skills."



Alice Brandon gave a snapshot of the Conservation Corps and the work being done to nurture the next generation of conservation leaders



Iza Redlinski shared with the audience how essential their support is to taking care of the 70,000 acres of preserves in the most biodiverse county in the state.





*Thank you!*

We are truly grateful for supporters who made this tremendous success possible.

You provide the resources needed to restore the preserves to full health and foster the next generation of environmental advocates and young leaders.

By investing in programs and opportunities that are proactively inclusive and reflective of the diversity of Cook County, together we support both preserves and people in our communities.

**[For the full photo gallery click here to visit our website.](#)**

*Save the Date! Thursday, Sept 7, 2023*

# FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP



**Debra Walker Johnson**  
President



**Jim Beck**  
Board Chair



Sagawau Environmental Learning Center



**The Board in action and in the field**  
Hybrid Meeting at Barnes & Thornburg Office

## The Forest Preserve Foundation welcomes a new member to its board of directors.



**Ankur Udani.** Board Member  
Director at PwC

Ankur Udani is a digital leader that builds innovative products and applications combining technology and user experience design. He loves getting into the details of the solution design and working with his clients to come up with breakthrough experiences that produce business results.

**Jim Beck, Chair**

Executive Relationship Manager  
Nationwide Retirement Solutions

**Theresa Salus, Vice Chair**

National Field Service Manager  
Co-op Experiences  
REI Co-op

**Mark Lester, Treasurer**

Director  
Senior Lead Relationship Manager  
Government & Institutional Banking  
Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

**Jeffrey Gray, Secretary**

Partner  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP

**Stuart A. Cohn, Chair emeritus**

Attorney  
Law Offices of Stuart A. Cohn

**Stephen B. Friedman**

President  
SB Friedman Development Advisors, LLC

**Claudette Grant**

Director  
BlackRock

**Tom Lanctot**

CEO  
Catholic Investment Services

**Howard A. Learner**

President and Executive Director  
Environmental Law & Policy Center

**Rana Lee**

PrincipalR  
SmithGroup

**Tom Livingston**

Vice President  
Government Affairs  
CSX Transportation

**Arnold Randall**

General Superintendent  
Forest Preserves of Cook County

**Eric Rockhold**

Managing Director, Co-Head Central Region  
Bank of America Securities

**LeeAnn Tomas-Foster**

Chicago City Executive  
Arcadis U.S., Inc.

**Ankur Udani**

Director  
PwC

## FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION STAFF

**Debra Walker Johnson**

President & Executive Director

**Susanne Fairfax**

Communications Manager

**Erika Soria**

Development Director

**Samuel Davis**

Development Associate  
(January - September)



# In Gratitude

## \$100,000 +

Forest Preserves of Cook County  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

## \$20,000 - 99,999

Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's Outdoor Fund  
Central Indiana Community Foundation  
CSX  
Indigo Golf Partners  
Lumpkin Family Foundation  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
REI Co-op

## \$10,000 - \$19,999

Barnes & Thornburg LLP  
Thomas Lancot  
Peoples Gas  
Troon Partners

## \$5,000 - \$19,999

Assured Guaranty  
Bank of America  
Brookfield Zoo  
d'Escoto, Inc.  
Great Lakes Advisors  
Melvin Securities, LLC  
Nationwide Retirement Solutions  
Nixon Peabody LLP  
R.M. Chin and Associates, Inc.  
Sycamore Advisors

## \$2,500 - \$4,999

AltusWorks, Inc.  
Arcadis U.S., Inc.  
Ardmore Roderick  
Ashlaur Construction JV  
Barclays  
Brown & Brown of Illinois Inc.  
Cardno now Stantec  
Chapman and Cutler LLP  
Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.  
DeVore Radunsky LLC  
F. H. Paschen  
Ice Miller LLP  
john burns construction company  
Loop Capital LLC  
The Pizzo Group  
RES  
Ramirez Asset Management  
SB Friedman Development Advisors, LLC

## \$2,500 - \$4,999 continued

Siebert Williams Shank & Co.  
SmithGroup  
SP Murphy, Inc.  
SWCA Environmental Consultants  
Wells Fargo

## \$1,000 - \$2,499

Clayco Inc.  
Stuart and Vivian A. Cohn  
Gilbane Development Company  
Good Heart Work Smart Foundation  
Huntington Bank  
Isaac Family Institute of Charity  
Howard Learner  
Levin Schreder & Carey  
Metro Edge Development Partners  
Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone  
PMA  
Carleen Schreder  
Woodward Family Foundation

## \$100 - \$999

2614 Partners LLC  
Ann Petric  
Arlington Heights Garden Club  
Judith Arnold  
BAC Administrative District Council 1 of Illinois  
Nicole Bakula  
James Beck  
Paul Benko  
Tim Burge  
David Curry  
Charles Diewald  
Margaret Fahrenbach  
Claire Ferguson  
Laura Ferrell  
Deborah Franczek  
Frontstream  
Dan Gilbert  
Girl Scout Troop 45274  
Robert Graves  
Christopher Grady  
Claudette Grant  
Lesley Hughes  
Cheryl Igrasek  
Patricia L. Kammeyer  
Elizabeth Koltz  
Katy Krigbaum  
George Langowski  
Rana Lee  
David Levinson  
Omar Love

continued ...

## **\$100 - \$999** continued

Shawn Lucas  
Robert Meza  
Miden Limited  
Chris Osorio  
Jay Pittas  
Arnold Randall  
Eric Rockhold  
Theresa Salus  
Elena Shevlyagin  
Erika Soria  
Ben Spencer  
Mika Stambaugh  
Eileen Sutter  
Monica Thuet  
TXI  
Catherine M. Villinski  
Lawrence Wilson  
Nick Zaluzec

## **Below \$99**

Amazon Smile  
Blackbaud Giving Fund  
Taylor Christy  
Samuel Davis  
Emerson Dority  
Krista Elam  
Mark Finger  
Dianne M. Ghaster  
Kathryn Haun  
Olyvia Jarmoszka  
Kelly Jozefiak  
Mary Klaus  
Robert Lininger  
Rick Lucchetti  
Leon McKenzie  
Rick & Kathy Netzel  
Kimberly O'Rourke  
Elizabeth A. Patterson  
Karin Peraino  
Scott Schiappacasse  
Sarah Simmons  
Michael Szewc  
The Stars

## **Memorial/Tribute Gifts**

Daniel Alekna  
Michele Alm  
Michael Bartlett  
Mac and Hailey Booth  
Anthony Bottalla  
Laura Cramer  
Virginia Diaz  
Susan Diaz-Sonnefeldt  
Forest Preserve District of Cook County  
Tom Giller  
Jeff Gray  
Karen Gray-Keeler  
David Herlihy  
Thomas Kittle-Kamp  
Barbara A. Koch  
Urszula Kuzba  
Diane Langowski  
Carolynn C. Lindberg  
Kimberly Lintner  
Laura Mackey  
Carol J. McCann  
Brian McDonald  
Joseph McGovern  
Don and Karen Norman  
Mary E. O'Connor  
Debora O'Malley  
Cathy Okrzesik  
Adam J. Okrzesik  
Judy Pell  
Francene Robb  
Alec Rowell  
Thomas Ryan  
Shamrock Catering  
Scott W. Simmons  
Wanda Sowa  
Paul C. Stauffer  
R. Bruce Tubbs  
John M. Whitehouse  
Lori Zembinski  
Jay H. Zimble  
Mery Zuniga





# Acknowledgements

The Forest Preserve Foundation leadership would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their time, talent, and support.

## Conservation Cup Committee

Rana Lee (co-chair)  
Eric R. Rockhold (co-chair)  
Anngie Richter (co-chair)  
Jim Beck  
Charles Bernardini  
Jason DeVore  
Justin Erkfritz-Gay  
Joshua Geppi  
Michelle McClendon  
Alex Rorke  
Carleen Schreder  
Mika Ann Stambaugh  
LeeAnn Tomas-Foster  
Claire Williams  
Michael Witte

## Conservation Cup Event Management

Indigo Golf Partners  
Tailored Events  
Troon Partners  
Fab Photo

## Conservation Cup Volunteers

Cheryl Lawrence  
Wanda Llorens  
Yolanda Myles  
Anngie Richter  
Janice Thompson  
Audrey Tolliver

## Office of the Cook County Board President

Toni Preckwinkle, President

## Forest Preserves of Cook County

General Superintendent Arnold Randall  
Deputy Superintendent Eileen Figel  
Office of the General Superintendent  
Office of the Deputy Superintendent  
Department of Conservation and Experiential Programming  
Department of Permits, Rentals & Concessions  
Department of Resource Management

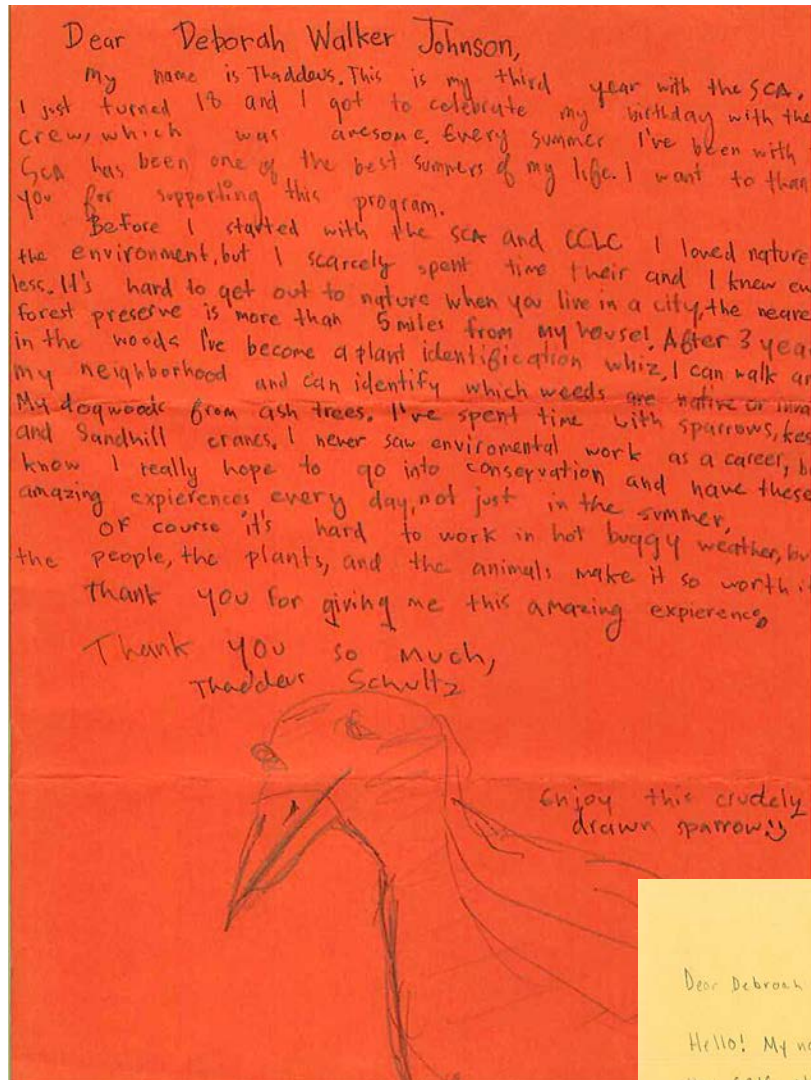
## Photo Credits

Friends of the Forest Preserves  
Student Conservation Association  
Forest Preserves of Cook County  
Forest Preserve Foundation

## In-kind

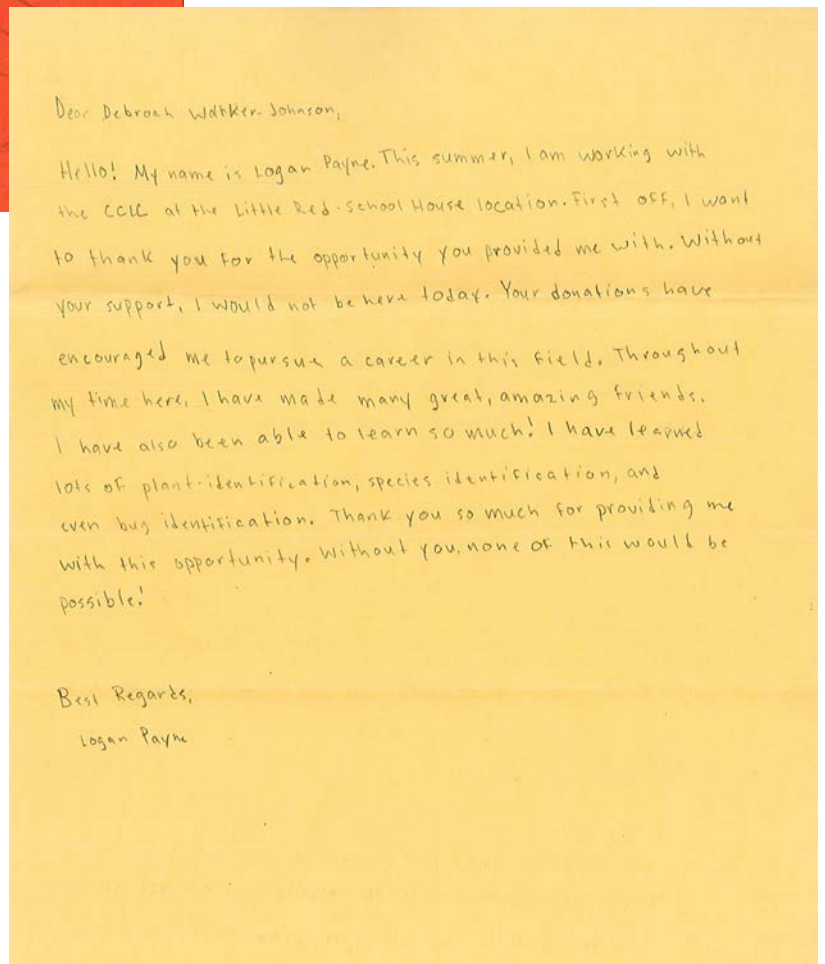
Brookfield Zoo  
Indigo Golf Partners  
Troon Partners  
Wines for Humanity  
Forest Preserves of Cook County





Thank you  
notes from  
Conservation  
Corps crew  
members

You did  
this!





# LIFETIME INVESTMENT

**\$3.06 million**

lifetime investment in our mission

**677**

next generation environmental leaders supported

**1,169**

acres restored via ecological restoration

*“ We believe nature is a vital resource for everyone's enjoyment, experience, and existence. ”*

Thank you for your support!  
The Forest Preserve Foundation

