

Leaving a Legacy of Loving Nature: 313 Acres Conserved

Sitting in the two-story farmhouse where he was raised, you quickly discover Howard Asch's deep love of the land that surrounds it.

"It's been 15 years since I actually farmed it," he said, "but, you know, you still get the itch to get the plow out and smell that damp earth turned over."

And, there's a lot to love. With a mix of productive farmland, forest, grassy fields and wetlands, Mr. Asch's property covers 313 acres in Gladwin County.

"It's really nice to have a mile-long backyard," Mr. Asch said. "That's something that is really valuable and I would hate to see that carved up and destroyed."

To make sure that didn't happen, Mr. Asch and his wife, Jill, donated a conservation easement to Little Forks Conservancy.

Doug Koop, executive director of Little Forks Conservancy, explained, "Our conservation easement projects are a partnership with the landowners. They own and manage the land, but choose to limit activities that could damage its natural

resources." Little Forks then visits the property once a year to meet with the landowner and ensure the terms of the agreement are being met.

Little Forks' largest conservation easement project to date, the property is also one of the most diverse.

"For an area that is primarily agriculture," said Mr. Koop, "this land represents a wide variety of Michigan habitat types – from the working farmland to upland forest to grasslands to willow swamp."

Mr. Asch added, "Unless we start preserving land now, eventually it's going to get to the point where it's all carved up into such small parcels that many of the features that make Michigan what it is are going to be gone – we'll lose the wildlife, we'll lose the open spaces and feel."

In just his lifetime, Mr. Asch has seen – and made – many changes to the land.

When his parents purchased the first parcel during the Great Depression, he recalled, "it was the typical farm that you'd see back in



Howard Asch (right) shakes hands with Doug Koop following the signing of his conservation easement to protect 313 acres in Gladwin.

the 20's and 30's when I grew up here. We had some cattle and some pigs and some crops, mainly to feed the cattle and the pigs."

Once he started working outside the farm to earn a living, it became more of a second job and Mr. Asch converted most of the pasture to row crops. Several years ago, Mr. Asch restored about 30 acres of farmland to native grasses and wildflowers.

"These are now well-established native communities," said Mr. Koop, "that support wildlife habitat and benefit our local water quality."

It was through the years of working and restoring the land that Mr. Asch's love of nature and passion for conservation grew.

"Many people can't understand attachment to the land," Mr. Asch said. "When you spend a significant number of years working in the ground and working with the ground to produce a living, it does something to you. You get an attachment that people who haven't done that can't understand."

Seeing his land conserved forever "is what I've been hoping for, for a long time," Mr. Asch said. "I want that to be my legacy."

The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and preserves natural lands that add to the quality of life in our mid-Michigan community.

Giving More Than Time

*Doug Koop,
Executive Director*

"Many hands make light work." Our work would not be possible without the help of many, many hands.

Little Forks' volunteers are passionate, dedicated individuals who consistently rise to the challenge. This was most evident with the stairway project at Riverview Natural Area.

Dozens of volunteers, ranging in age from 13 to 86, gave hundreds of hours alongside our board and staff to finish the largest stewardship project we've done.

I was amazed at how hard they worked – through the heat of the summer – digging through clay and carrying dirt and gravel up and down the steep slopes of the ravine.

I – and everyone at Little Forks – cannot thank them enough. Thank you to everyone who has generously given their time to support our work.

There are still plenty of opportunities to volunteer this fall! Contact our office to find out more.



New Program Gets a Boost!

The Midland Area Community Foundation has awarded a grant to expand the Conservation@Home program.

The expansion of the program will be called Conservation@Work and will focus on conservation-friendly



This beautiful stream is part of a Conservation@Home certified yard!

The Elowski family makes conscious efforts to create and preserve wildlife habitat and to protect the native plants that grow on their property.

For your free yard assessment, contact Andrea at afoster@littleforks.org.

Stairway Opening Celebration

The stairway at Riverview Natural Area is ready for visitors! Join us to celebrate Thursday, Oct. 1 at 5 p.m.

Following brief remarks, enjoy light refreshments and explore two more miles of trails!

Over the summer, Little Forks staff and

volunteers installed terrace steps along the banks of the ravine.

The stairway was made possible by a grant from the Consumers Energy Foundation and in-kind contributions from Three Rivers Corporation.

For directions and more, visit littleforks.org.

practices for local businesses.

Little Forks is working to develop the program, which will be launched in the coming months.

The grant will also help Little Forks increase our outreach for both programs. To learn more, contact our office.



Plants Donated to Little Forks

The wonderful folks at Better Finds, LLC have graciously donated six native plants to our Conservation@Home demonstration gardens!

The plants donated are Michigan Lilies, a Northern Small-Flowered

Yellow Lady's Slipper, and the threatened species American Ginseng.

Thank you to Better Finds, LLC for such beautiful native plants!

Stop by our office to explore the gardens and to learn more!



wild about nature



It Was A Hoot!

A howlin' good time was had by all at Little Forks' Hoot-n-Howl on Aug. 29. Thanks to our generous sponsors and friends, we raised \$25,000 for land conservation!

Hoot-n-Howl was sponsored by The Dow Chemical Company and Dave and Patti Kepler. Other sponsors included Conservancy Law PLC, Dow Chemical



Employees Credit Union, leuter Insurance Group, Members First Credit Union, Morley Companies, Pizza Dude, SYM Financial Advisors, Upstream Investment Partners, and Warner Norcross Judd LLP.

Identifying Macroinvertebrates

Little Forks' first MiCorps collection date is rapidly approaching! On Saturday, Oct. 3, volunteers will be in the Cedar River collecting samples of macroinvertebrates.

Little Forks received a grant from the State of Michigan to expand our volunteer stream monitoring program in Gladwin and Clare counties. The monitoring program provides data to evaluate the health of the stream.

Following the sampling day, Little Forks needs your help to identify them all! Join us at our office Tuesday, October 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. for an identification day! To help, contact our office.

Join the Hunt for Invasive Species This Fall!

Little Forks challenges you to find the most invasive species in your county!

Little Forks is hosting an Invasive Species Awareness Week from October 21-28.

Join us at one of the free kickoff events in Midland, Gladwin and Clare counties featuring a presentation by Andrea Foster with the Little Forks Conservancy. She

will help you identify invasive plants, explain the rules of the online challenge, and provide instructions to use the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN) app.

Joining the challenge is easy. Just sign up at littleforks.org and download the MISIN app on your smartphone, tablet or computer. During the challenge

week, log as many invasive plant sites as you can find into MISIN for a chance to win! One winner will be named from each county.

This project is possible in part with funds from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program through the Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Quality, and Agriculture and Rural Development.

Find your nearest **Invasive Species Week Kickoff location:**

Clare County
October 16 • 5:30pm
The Pere Marquette District Library

Gladwin County
October 19 • 5:30pm
Gladwin County Library

Midland County
October 21 • 5:30 pm
Little Forks' office

Details at littleforks.org

Fall Maple Syrup Sale

The weather's getting colder – it's the perfect time for pancakes!

And nothing goes better with pancakes than pure maple syrup from land protected by Little Forks Conservancy.

Call or stop by today!
\$15 per pint
2 for \$25

Thank You 2015 Business Sponsors!

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 Dave and Patti Kepler

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In-Kind: Three Rivers Corporation

Memorials and Honoraria

In Memory of
Marceau Colarelli
Gene and Deana Beckham

In Memory of
Hugh and Eileen Starks
Libby Starks-Thompson





The Little Forks Conservancy
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Your Fall Newsletter



Open New Paths to Explore

Right now, you can double your impact with one donation! That's because qualifying donations to Little Forks Conservancy will be matched dollar-for-dollar by The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation.

Your gift will not only help us maintain more than six miles of nature trails but help blaze new paths for our community to enjoy!

If you haven't given in a while, your gift will be doubled. If you're a member who gives a little extra, the increased amount will be matched.

To make your gift count more this year, please give before October 31. (After that date, your gift will be matched in 2016.)

**Make your gift go further.
Donate online today at littleforks.org**

Upcoming Events

Stairway Opening Celebration

Thurs, Oct. 1 | 5 to 7 pm at
Riverview Natural Area
Enjoy light refreshments and
explore two more miles of trails
to celebrate the completion of
the terrace steps through the
ravine!

Autumn Leaves Walk

Sat, Oct. 10 | 3 to 4 pm at
Albert & Virginia Szok Preserve
Full program description at
chippewanaturecenter.org.

Invasive Species Awareness Week and Scavenger Hunt

Oct. 21-28
Full details on page 3.

Holiday Open House

Tues., Dec. 8 | 5 to 7 p.m. at
Little Forks' office
Bring a friend to celebrate the
holidays and the end of another
great year!