



NATURE CENTER
AT SHAKER LAKES

Conserve. Connect. Inspire.

A Warm Embrace

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

September 1, 2022–August 31, 2023

Dear Nature Center Friends and Family,



Many of you have a deep connection with the Nature Center, and we have continually felt the warm embrace of our community as we work to fulfill our mission. This shared bond has motivated our team to build upon the remarkable successes we’ve achieved in recent years, thanks to the visionary leadership of Kay Carlson.

In the past year, we bid farewell to Kay, our fearless leader of 15 years, who transformed the Shaker Parklands into an invaluable regional treasure. In her honor, we continue to embrace our rich history, celebrate the experiential programming that has touched the lives of many, and formulate a strategy that will ensure our offerings continue to expand and improve.

In fiscal year ‘23, Nature Center has experienced significant growth in visitorship, programming, and engagement. As a testament to our impact, we set a new record last year, with over 140,000 individuals enjoying our trails and facility. Events like our annual benefit, “Nature at Night,” and our beloved Summer Outdoor Adventure Camps not only sold out, but surpassed our revenue projections. The CMSD ASK! (Applied Science for Kids) program, now in its 11th year, remains our most successful educational initiative, having served over 36,000 students since its inception, instilling a love for environmental stewardship from an early age.

While we celebrate our present achievements, we remain connected to our founding history and the purpose behind our existence—a timeless grassroots story of conserving greenspace from urban development. The historic freeway battle has left a lasting mark on our community, shaping a way of life intertwined with trees and trails

for all residents and visitors to the Shaker Parklands. Moreover, it’s essential for us to acknowledge that the land we reside on is the traditional homeland of numerous Indigenous tribes, including the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Lenape, Shawnee, Wyandot, Miami, Ottawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Iroquois, and other Great Lakes tribes. Today, Northeast Ohio is home to 28,000 Native American people from over 100 tribal nations, and it’s crucial to honor and pay homage to the original stewards of this land as we reflect on our role as current land stewards.

As we move forward, we are poised to tackle the ever-increasing need for climate resiliency and ecological restoration through mission-based programming and seasonal celebrations, and amplify our impact through environmental stewardship, volunteering, and giving. These endeavors inspire hope for what the upcoming year will bring us.

We are grateful to share this exceptional place and its memorable experiences with all of you. Your unwavering support and passion mean the world to us. We encourage you to continue attending our programs and events, share your environmental passions with others, visit frequently, and explore our trails. We look forward to seeing you out there.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Peter Bode

Meg Hunter

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*as of 10.30.23

A WARM THANK YOU TO KAY CARLSON

KAY CARLSON RETIRES AFTER 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Kay Carlson, past President & CEO, retired in June 2023 after 15 years of dedicated service to the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.



Kay & staff in front of her newly planted Sunset Maple Tribute Tree. To learn more about the Tribute Tree program visit shakerlakes.org/tributetree.

Since 2008, Kay had many notable accomplishments which included: successfully implementing the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) business model to guide, streamline and drive efficiency in the organization’s strategic and tactical planning processes; creating a reserve fund to protect the financial health of the organization; and launching the Applied Science for Kids (ASK!) program 11 years ago with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, which significantly expanded the organization’s environmental and science education programming and increased its reach to underserved youth in the region. In 2019, Kay was named a Notable Woman in Nonprofits by Crain’s Cleveland Business. Most recently, Kay’s visionary leadership lead to the completion of a successful capital campaign from 2017 to 2021, which included a transformative restoration of the Nature Center’s trails and habitats. While her presence is missed by all of those who knew and worked with Kay, she ensured a smooth transition of leadership to Peter Bode and the Nature Center & community wish Kay a healthy and happy retirement.

LEADERSHIP FUND IN HONOR OF KAY CARLSON

The Leadership Fund in Honor of Kay Carlson recognizes past President & CEO Kay Carlson for her outstanding 15+ years of service to the organization. The Nature Center seeks to raise \$3 million for the Leadership Fund.

Learn more and contribute shakerlakes.org/endowment/

Just as the Nature Center is a special place for so many in our region, it is and always will be for me as well. From visiting and attending NCSL programs as a child, to serving on the board prior to becoming CEO, I will always carry fond memories of the organization with me.

KAY CARLSON
Past President & CEO



Expanding Reach and Inspiring Students through Summer Adventures



Throughout the year, our dedicated education team worked tirelessly to uphold the highest standards of environmental education through offering the first year of a fully American Camp Association (ACA) accredited camp and reaching new students in our community through expanded financial aid opportunities.

Meeting Accreditation Requirements

In 2022, the Nature Center enhanced our camp training procedures, aligning them with the stringent accreditation requirements set forth by the American Camp Association (ACA). As the only national accrediting body for camps of all types, ACA’s standards focus on health, safety, and risk management, serving as benchmarks even for government entities.

Lauren Schmidt, Environmental Educator, meticulously documented and compiled existing records, ensuring that our camp met ACA’s rigorous accreditation standards. This effort aimed to provide public evidence of our unwavering commitment to the well-being of both campers and staff.

The hard work paid off, as during the 2022 camp season, our education team successfully implemented the necessary changes. We showcased our compliance with ACA standards to a representative of the ACA, and in October 2022, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes became an accredited program. Outdoor Adventure Camp 2023 led by new Outdoor Adventure Camp Manager, Hunter Hammil, became the first year we offered a fully ACA accredited camp experience which opened doors for the Nature Center’s reach and financial aid offerings.

Enhancing Accessibility

At the core of the Nature Center’s mission is the goal of making environmental education accessible to all members of our community. To achieve this, we have developed financial aid and intern programs that have demonstrated remarkable success.

These initiatives have not only facilitated greater accessibility but also fostered a path of growth and development for our interns. Many of our interns express desire to return year-after-year, creating a sustainable pipeline from volunteer to intern to educator.

Impactful Financial Aid Programs

One of the most significant achievements in 2022 was the substantial increase in financial aid recipients. An impressive 12.7% of campers received financial aid, totaling \$16,271.38 in aid awarded to the Nature Center and our partners. This support has enabled us to welcome a diverse group of campers, ensuring that the Nature Center’s programs are available to all, regardless of their financial circumstances.

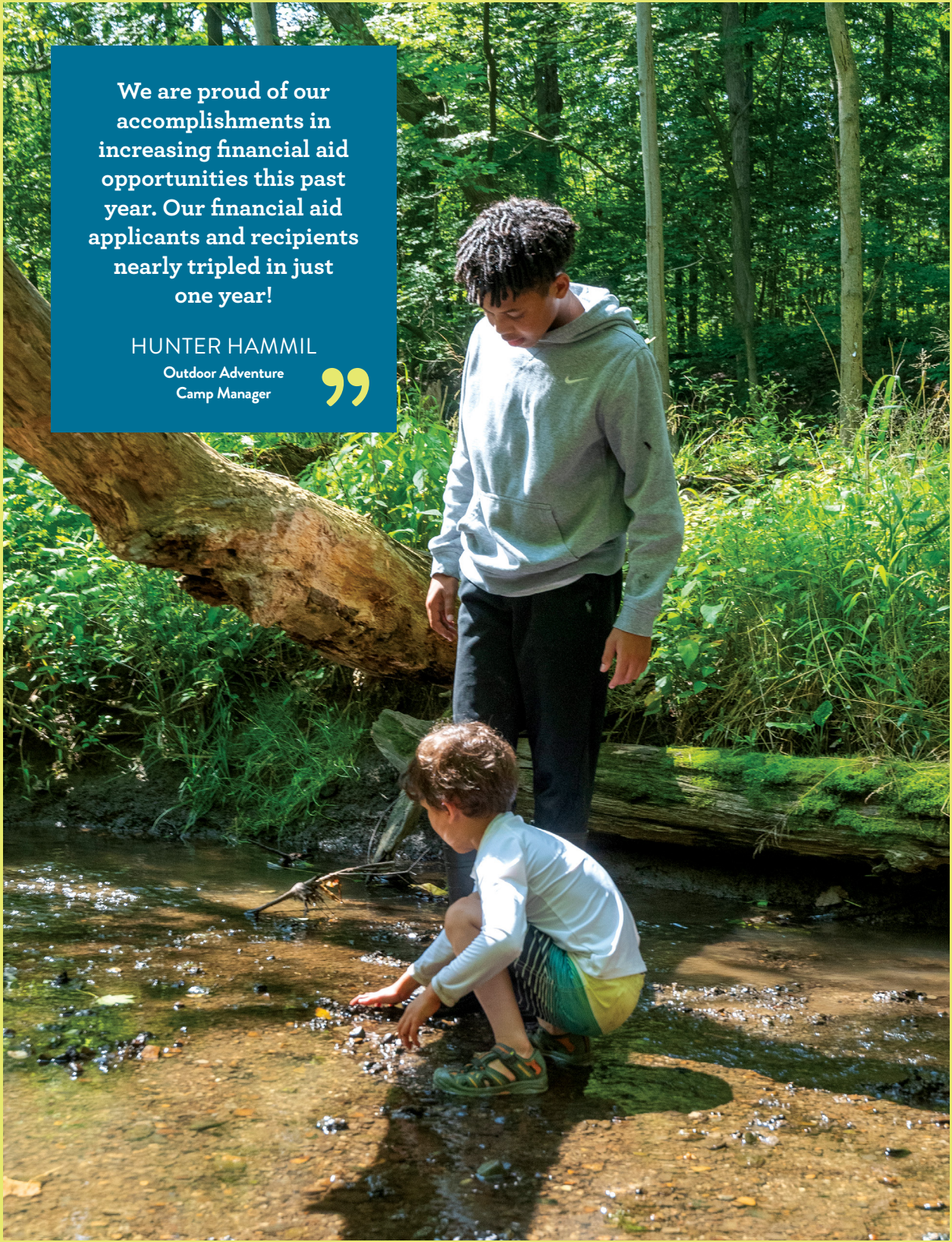
Fulfilling Our Mission

The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes takes great pride in meeting its financial goals while extending support to the community. In 2022, we not only achieved our revenue targets but also distributed \$5,217 in financial aid, further underlining our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

Looking Forward

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2022, we look forward with enthusiasm to the opportunities and challenges that the future holds. The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes remains dedicated to environmental education, community outreach, and ensuring that the wonders of the natural world are accessible to all. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff, volunteers, and supporters who make our mission a reality. Together, we will continue to grow, learn, and inspire future generations.

12.7%	OF CAMPERS RECEIVED FINANCIAL AID
244	UNIQUE CAMPERS
90%	OF FAMILIES PLAN TO RETURN TO CAMP NEXT YEAR



We are proud of our accomplishments in increasing financial aid opportunities this past year. Our financial aid applicants and recipients nearly tripled in just one year!

HUNTER HAMMIL
Outdoor Adventure
Camp Manager



Embracing Summer Wednesdays: A New Memorable Summer Experience at the Nature Center



This past summer was our second year of new building hours, which includes extended hours throughout the summer, Memorial Day to Labor Day, on Wednesday evenings. To encourage visitors to enjoy our extended summer hours, Community Events Manager Nia Turner, thoughtfully curated distinctive themes and events for each Wednesday evening.

Our first Summer Wednesday series was a success! This NEW summer series welcomed over 1,400 visitors, many of whom hadn't visited before. Attendees joined us to try their hand at blacksmithing, were able to finally visit the Nature Center with their pet on our special pet-friendly evening, had a picnic or dinner with us, enjoyed

ice cream and Italian ice, viewed ballet and live music, joined a guided hike, enjoyed wine and cheese or a cooking demonstration with tahini, shopped with us at Art in the Park, or joined us for our outdoor movie finale! This diverse programming encouraged visitors to experience the Nature Center in new and exciting ways.

Thank you to all who participated in Summer Wednesday programming! We cannot wait for next summer as we look to offer more unique programming and find opportunities for our visitors to get outside, enjoy the longer summer days, and more deeply connect with our natural world.



Young children enjoy singing and playing along with musician Jane Tomick on July 26, 2023.



Many visitors enjoyed the fresh taste of Mount Granita Italian Ice on our outdoor trails.



Art in the Park, a partnership with studio Chartreuse, offered vendors and artists across our trails for a pop-up shopping event.



Dancers from the City Ballet of Cleveland entertained guests with a nature-themed performances.



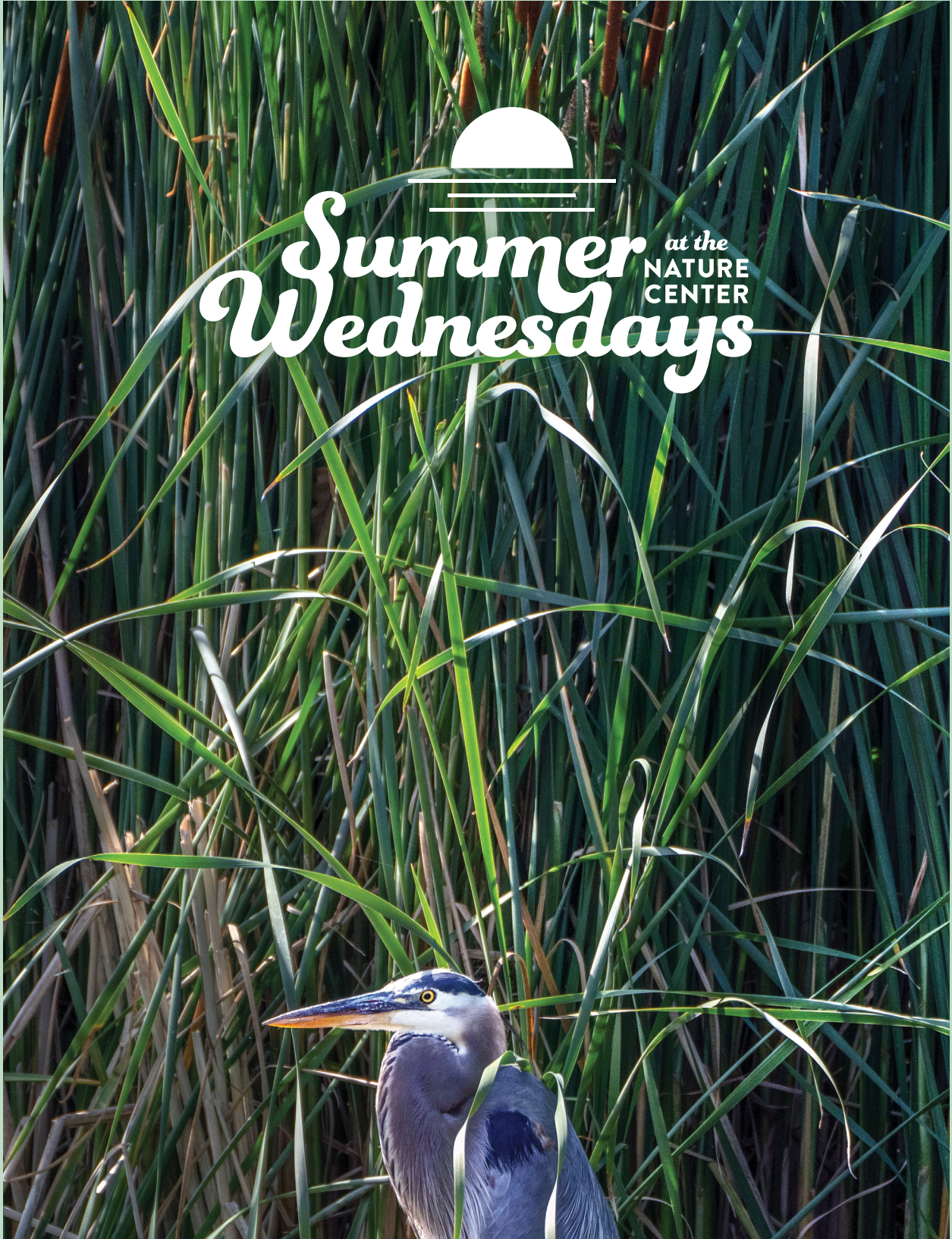
Leashed pets were invited to visit our trails for a special night. In order to protect our native wildlife, pet owners are asked to keep their furry friends home for typical visits to the Nature Center.



Board member Doug Katz and Dana Harary, co-owner of SoCo Tahini, joined us for a native plant hike focusing on the edible elderberry plant, and taught attendees to make a delicious elderberry and tahini pudding, among other delicious tahini mixtures.

A WARM APPRECIATION TO OUR SUMMER WEDNESDAY PARTNERS

MUSICIANS	ORGANIZATIONS	SMALL/LOCAL BUSINESSES			
John Thayer (musician)	Heights Public Library	Ono Brew Cafe	studio Chartreuse	Gem & Point	Hazelmade
Charlie Mosbrook	Literary Cleveland	Mount Granita	Meredith's Ink	The Sunday Collection	Enchanted Phoenix
Jane Tomick	Wick Poetry Center	Mason's Creamery	Santa Rosa Stitches	Room Service	Larchmere Fireworks
Maxwell Stern	Wild Ones Greater Cleveland	Good Times Food Truck	Noble Fawn Jewelry	Earth Light Art Source	
	City Ballet of Cleveland	Marchant Manor	Vimbayi Katso	S'il Vous Play	
		The Wine Spot	Li'l Boite Pâtisserie	Frayed Knot Farm	



Volunteer Engagement Reaches All-Time High

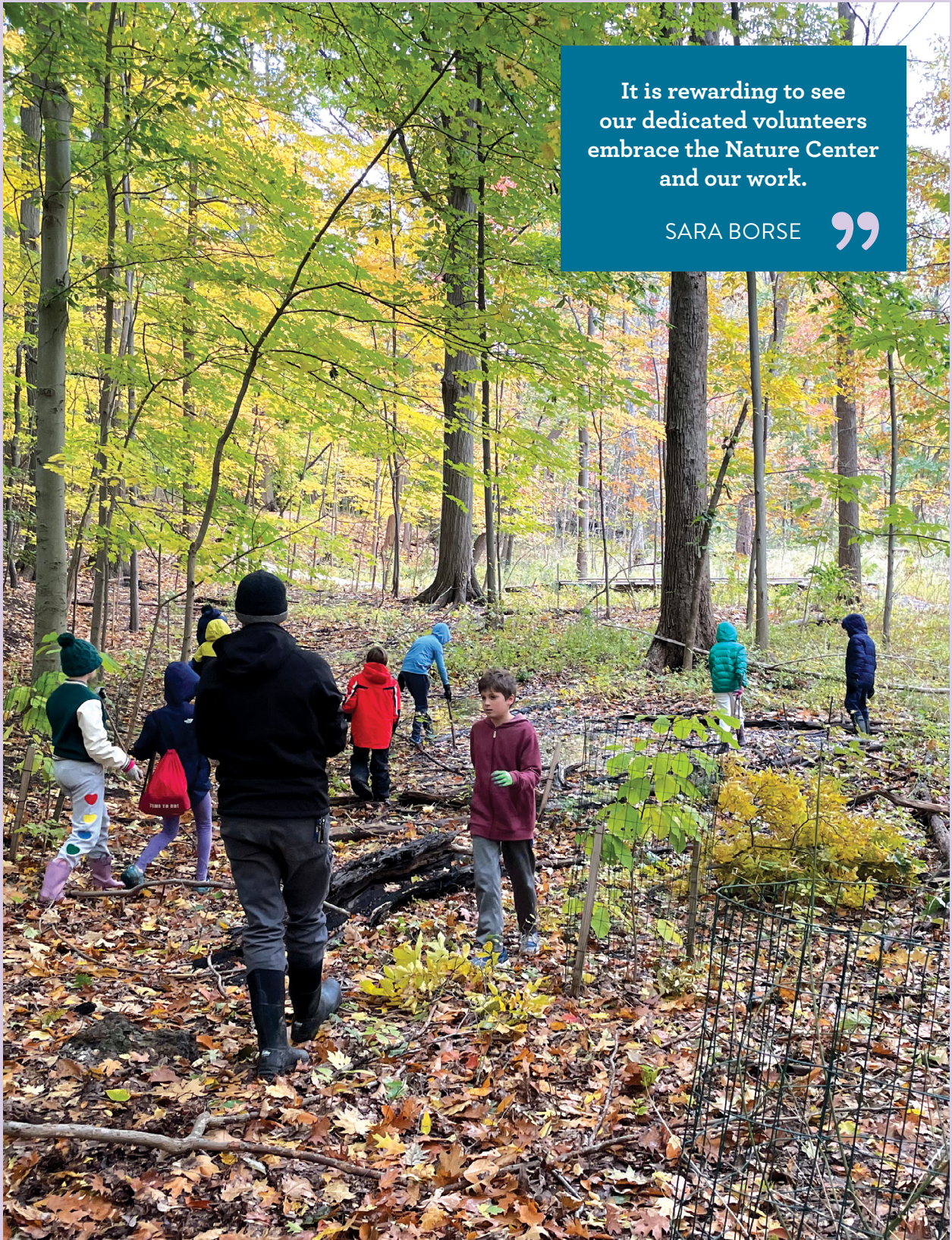
Sara Borse, our dedicated Volunteer Manager, has been an instrumental force in the remarkable growth of our volunteer program at the Nature Center this past year. In FY23, under her leadership, we experienced a phenomenal 120% increase in volunteers, with 820 individuals generously offering their time and expertise compared to the 375 volunteers in FY22 prior to Sara joining our team. This tremendous expansion is not only seen in numbers, but also in the substantial rise in service projects completed. In FY23, we successfully undertook 24 service projects with school and corporate groups, a notable increase from the 9 projects in FY22. Moreover, Sara’s outstanding efforts are evident in the significant threefold growth of our trail ambassador volunteers. The impact of her leadership is further evident in the Summer Teen program, where hours of engagement surged from 1,818 hours in FY22 to a remarkable 3,228 hours in FY23. Sara’s dedication and skill in attracting and retaining volunteers have been a driving force in our mission to inspire a love of nature in our community.

A BIG thank you to Sara and all of her effort.

TOM PRIOR: Volunteer of the Year
Tom Prior retired in 2022 after 32 years as the Director of the Genetics Labs at Ohio State University and then at Case Western medical centers. Tom pursued several volunteer possibilities and through good fortune found a perfect opportunity at the Nature Center. He has been involved in a diverse number of volunteer roles including: Trail Ambassador, Project FeederWatch, painting the interior of the Nature Center, Welcome desk volunteering, chaperoning summer field trips, and numerous data processing functions. Tom appreciates the diversity of these activities because he was concerned about the possibility of too much spare time and overall redundancy of activities during retirement.

JENNA LOVEMAN: Youth Volunteer of the Year
Jenna Loveman began volunteering as a Summer Youth Steward in 2021 and has returned each summer since. Jenna started volunteering at the Nature Center because she was looking for a way to get involved in her community and protect the environment. Throughout Jenna’s summers at the Nature Center, she has assisted in removing countless invasive plants and planting native plants. She has thoroughly enjoyed being able to learn about ecology, making connections with people of all ages interested in nature, and doing her part to conserve the local land. Jenna has also volunteered with bird banding, and she volunteered at the Nature Center for her Senior Project. She is a freshman at Skidmore College and is majoring in environmental studies.

820	UNIQUE VOLUNTEERS (INCLUDING TRUSTEES)
10,656+	TOTAL ACCUMULATED VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR FY23
\$338,861	VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS GIVEN



It is rewarding to see our dedicated volunteers embrace the Nature Center and our work.

SARA BORSE ”

Summer Youth Stewards Share Their Passion with NCSL

On a sunny summer afternoon in June, marketing content manager, Alexandria Yurosko sat down with this year’s Summer Youth Stewards Kiran Herbert and Jenna Loveman to talk about their experiences working as Summer Youth Stewards.

Hi Kiran & Jenna thanks for sitting down with me to talk! What were you doing in the marsh doing today?

We were replanting a site that we had cleared of invasive shrubs a few days prior. Nick [Mikash] often delivers plants from the boardwalk to us standing below in the marsh. He then directs us to the plant’s final destination in the habitat.

Can you tell me a little about your backgrounds?

Kiran
Sure! This is my second year working as a Summer Youth Steward for NCSL. I went to high school at Hawken and plan to attend Boston College for environmental studies.

Jenna
Kiran and I have worked together in the past, this is actually my third summer working as a Summer Youth Steward. I went to Shaker Heights for high school and will attend Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs for environmental science.

Those career paths seem fitting given your experiences here. How did you get to know the Nature Center or learn about the position?

K: Growing up in this area, I had been coming to the Nature Center for years. Last summer I was searching online for opportunities when I came across the Summer Youth Stewards. I was interested in pursuing a career path in this field so I was excited to try it out. I loved it so much I asked to come back this summer!

J: In high school, I was looking for volunteer opportunities and a teacher suggested the Nature Center. I was a Summer Youth Steward in 2021 enjoyed it enough to spend three summers here. Both of us worked at the Nature Center for our Senior projects. We worked with Nick all day, followed him and his team planting, removing invasive plants, and received special training to use herbicides where necessary.

You both expressed your passion for the Nature Center was what encouraged you to return as Summer Youth Stewards. What do you like about working here?

K: Every day here is different! I appreciate that we were invited to sit in on weekly meetings and learn more about the Nature Center as an organization. It helped to see how the whole business works, beyond the stewardship aspect.

J: I value the team mentality. The departments support each other and staff are positive and friendly. One time, the education department needed a log moved to demonstrate decomposition. It was fun for us to help out with that project for the students! It’s also fun being able to identify plants. I am always pointing out honeysuckle or privet to my friends.

I certainly would echo that team mentality among staff, everyone is so welcoming and I have to think you’ve experienced that with Nick?

K: Nick is really cool and doesn’t talk down to you. You can tell he enjoys his job and helping us learn. He’s very open with us and works to make it an interesting experience.

Each year, The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes welcomes teens to assist our land management staff with natural-area projects. Responsibilities include pulling invasive plants, trail maintenance, trash collection, and learning about plants and ecology. Training and guidance in native plants, land management techniques, and trail maintenance is part of the program. Oftentimes, our Youth Stewards form lifelong connections to the Nature Center, beginning as young campers, or encountering a program through school field trip offerings.

J: We feel lucky to work with Nick and our volunteers. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly. Just the other day, I met Bob [volunteer] and he was asking me about schools I’ve applied to. He ended the conversation by saying you probably should have a hat for your work today! Then he gave me his hat! It made my day and it was such a nice, fun conversation.

Those interactions are so meaningful, I am sure it makes you feel like you have purpose when you come here.

K: This is a feel-good place. After planting something, I love thinking about how that tree or shrub will be enjoyed by wildlife and visitors for years to come. There is also an element of individual and group responsibility. No one is telling you to make these positive changes to the local environment, it just feels great to be a part of this work.

J: I agree. With climate change and eco anxiety being so prevalent, working here makes me feel hopeful. Its fulfilling seeing kids get interested in science and nature through summer camp and watching them learn. I think I can speak for both of us when we say we love that we are doing something so good for the future.

I find this program to be one of the most rewarding parts of my job. Working with young people, seeing them connect with nature and each other, and knowing that some of them connect strongly enough to pursue education and careers in the environmental field. Seeing some of them come back year after year tells me they find value in this work and our team. It’s a unique program and fulfills our mission at NCSL.

NICK MIKASH
Natural Resources Manager

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NEW Amenities to Embrace at the Nature Center!



THIS PAST YEAR BROUGHT MANY NEW IMPROVEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE NATURE CENTER’S 20 ACRES

Aiming at the Archery Range

Campers hit the bullseye at our brand-new archery range, immersing themselves in the thrill of precision! A certified Nature Center employee must accompany anyone using this new range. Look for public programming in the future to take advantage of this exciting new feature.

Interpretive Signage Enhances Visitor Experience

Six new interpretive signs now are found across the trails. These signs were made possible through our Ohio EPA OEEF Grant. On your next visit, make sure to stop, read, learn, and let these signs be your guide!

New Look for Wayfinding Signage

We installed all new trail and wayfinding signage this past year. This included the front primary sign that is backlit for better

visibility, a new sign on South Park and Shaker Boulevard, new trailhead entrance signs, and trail marker and directional signage.

Climb On Up!

Our new climbing structure is installed in the Nature Play Area. The latest addition was designed by facilities manager Eric Gregorcick and installed by our hardworking staff and summer stewardship volunteers. It has already been enjoyed by plenty of visitors- there are two sides with different climbing challenges and a two-person swing. Stop by soon to check it out!

Building Bridges

With funds donated through the Shaker Garden Club the Youth Stewards planted a beautiful pollinator garden at our trail entrance and Eagle Scout Henry Brown designed and installed a bridge close to the upper rim trail near West Park Blvd.



YOU CAN HELP FURTHER OUR IMPACT!

Membership

Become a member by giving a 100% tax-deductible gift at one of our six levels ranging from \$50–\$1,000+, and receive a sense of pride knowing that your membership supports community, conservation, and education. Members qualify for special benefits, including early and discounted program registration, 10% off our Duck Pond Gift Shop, invitations to members-only events, and more.

Annual Fund

Already a member? The Annual Fund is a year-round effort to raise additional funds necessary to support the daily operations of our organization, including the maintenance of our trails and facilities. Gifts of any size are appreciated and are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Heron Society

The Heron Society recognizes our dedicated donors who annually give \$1,000 or more. In addition to a host of membership benefits, Heron Society patrons enjoy access to exclusive events.

Tribute Gifts

A tribute gift is a wonderful way to recognize an important person, honor the memory of a loved one, or celebrate a special occasion. Your gift will help us continue to provide rewarding experiences and high-quality educational programming to thousands of visitors each year. We have several opportunities to make a tribute gift, including our new Tribute Tree program.

Planned Giving & Evergreen Society

Making a planned gift is one of the most impactful ways to invest in the Nature Center and to create a legacy of conservation and environmental education. You may designate your gift for a specific purpose or offer broad support through an unrestricted gift. There are many ways to make a planned gift, including bequests, charitable trusts, and gifts of appreciated securities.

Stock, IRA & Donor-Advised Funds

Your contribution can be made in the form of a gift of appreciated assets such as IRAs, stock, or securities. We also welcome gifts from donor-advised funds.

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RANGE OF GIVING OPTIONS
Robert Sikora, Chief Development Officer | 216.321.5935 ext. 223 | sikora@shakerlakes.org
Cara Anderson, Development Associate | 216.321.5935 ext. 232 | cara@shakerlakes.org

The Nature Center is and will always be a transparent organization that is thankful for the gifts our community members bestow upon us to further our mission. As the only independently-operated nonprofit nature center in northern Ohio, your gift is vital and will ensure that we remain free and open to the public, connecting future generations to nature.

NATURE CENTER STAFF*

Cara Anderson
Development Associate

Maria Asher
Grant Strategist

Shelley Bender
Environmental Educator

Peter Bode
President & CEO

Casey Bogus
Environmental Educator

Sara Borse
Volunteer Manager

Christi Carlson
Rentals and HR Coordinator

Lisa Golba
Environmental Educator in Residence Program Manager

Eric Gregorchik
Director of Facilities Operations

Christopher Hall
Director of Finance and Administration

Michelle Hall
Accountant Bookkeeper

Hunter Hammil
Outdoor Adventure Camp Manager

Emmaline Hannan
Visitor Services Associate

Katrina Heinzen
Seasonal Environmental Educator + B’earthday Party Educator

Sarah Holden
Environmental Educator

Delaney Kelly
B’earthday Party Educator

Miranda Luse”
AmeriCorps Staff Member

Tami Masuoka
Visitor Services Associate

Nick Mikash
Natural Resources Manager

Erica Prange
Director of Education

Katie Ross
School Programs Manager

Meri Ruble
Environmental Educator

Greg Sabin
Facilities Assistant

Lauren Schmidt
Environmental Educator

Carnya Scott
Visitor Services Associate

Robert Sikora
Chief Development Officer

Nia Turner
Community Engagement Manager

Sydney Turner
Visitor Services Associate

Kyle Warren
Natural Resources Technician

Andy Weiss
Visitor Services Associate

Wendy Weiss
Visitor Services Associate

Rachel Weller
Visitor Services and Office Manager

Melissa Whitten
B’earthday Party Educator

Maya Williams
Environmental Educator

Tania Younkin
Director of Marketing and Community Engagement

Alexandria Yurosko
Marketing Content Manager

**as of 11/1/2023*
***not employed by NCSL*

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Maribeth & Christopher Gibbon
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Thomas Prior
Norma Storer
Julie West

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Kiran Hebert

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Karen Ault

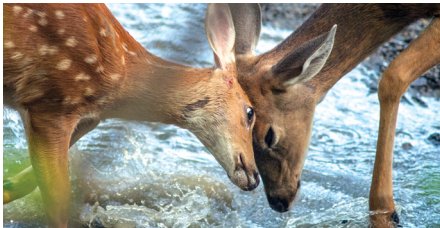
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Noa Hollander
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Chagrin River Watershed Partners
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The Cleveland Heights
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Cleveland-Cliffs Foundation
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Cuyahoga Arts & Culture
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If you would like to change the way your name is listed in future publications or have other corrections, please contact Cara Anderson at 216.321.5935 ext. 232 or cara@shakerlakes.org.

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION FY23

(UNAUDITED)

REVENUE Contributed

INDIVIDUALS	\$350,321
CORPORATIONS / FOUNDATIONS	\$741,993
GOVERNMENT*	\$58,469
EVENTS (NET OF COG – PLANT SALE / ART ON VIEW)	\$326,966
PLANNED GIFTS	\$1,000,000
ENDOWMENT (DISTRIBUTION)	\$116,163

REVENUE Earned

PROGRAM FEES	\$247,695
FACILITY RENTALS/MERCHANDISE (NET)	\$69,639

TOTAL REVENUE \$2,911,246

EXPENSES

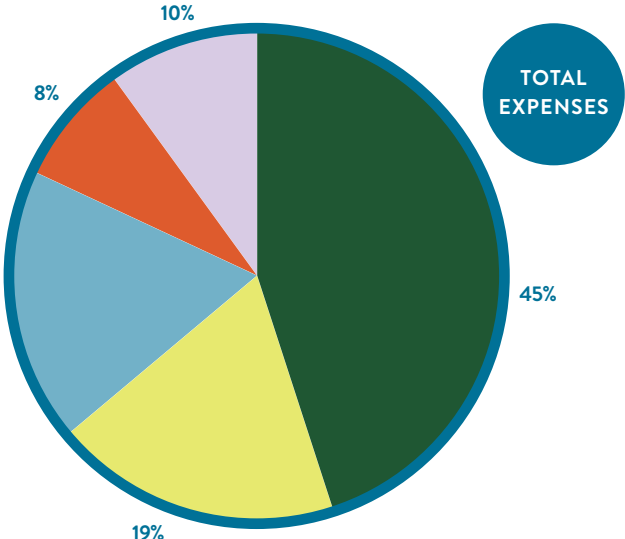
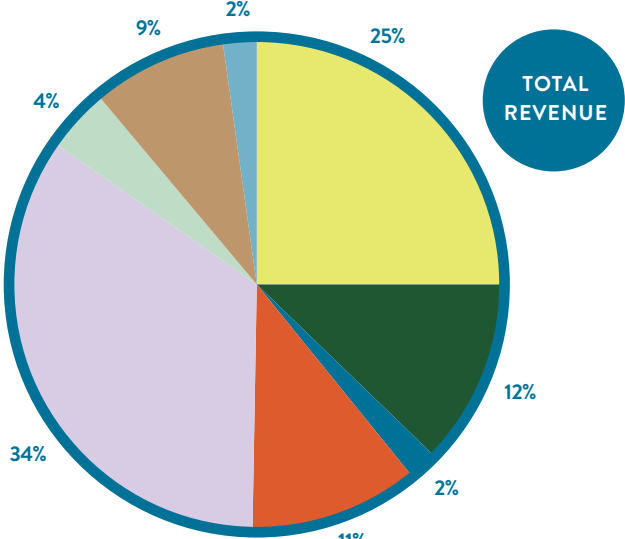
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH	\$843,257
FACILITIES AND LAND MANAGEMENT	\$356,042
FUNDRAISING	\$337,303
MARKETING	\$149,912
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL	\$187,391

TOTAL EXPENSES \$1,873,905

NET OPERATING REVENUE* \$1,037,341

**excludes depreciation and other y/e adjusting entries.*

The Nature Center’s community outreach, education programming, and natural resources management activities have continued to grow during FY23. In FY24, the development team is focusing on planned Giving and Endowments to help secure sustainable funding for the Nature Center’s future.





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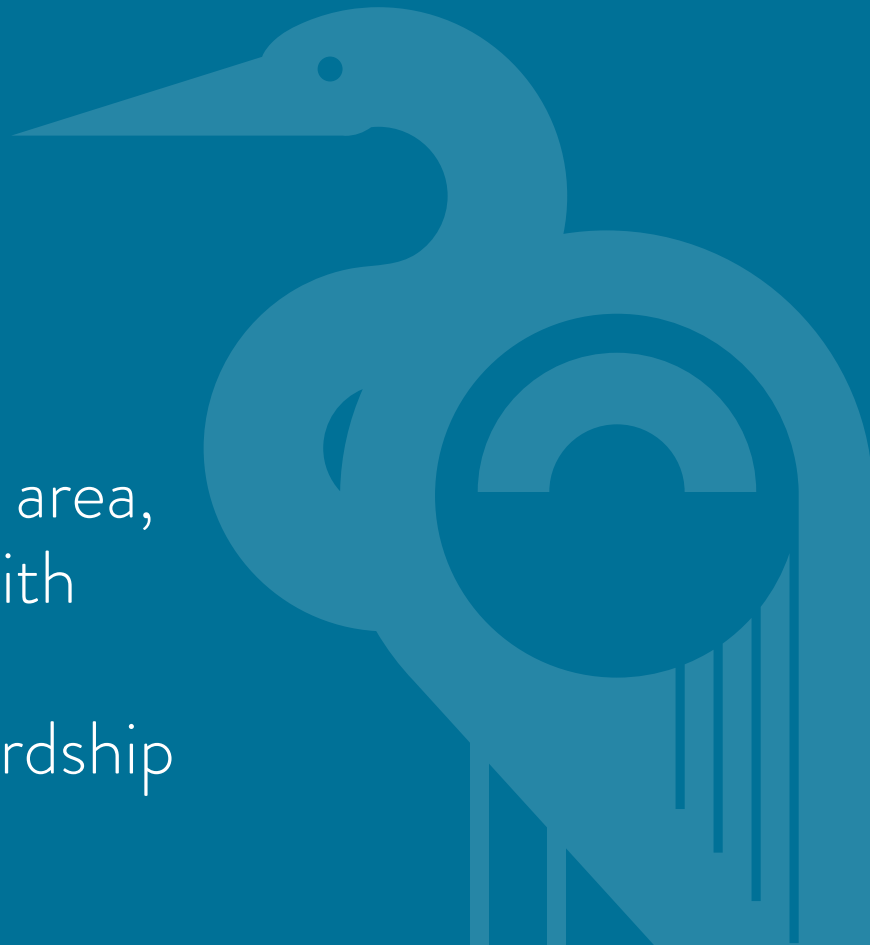
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