



PHOTO BY APRIL GRAVES/LIGHTDRAWN STUDIOS



▲ Bertram James Grigsby (born in 1884) owned land that became CFC's first preserve, located in Barrington Hills. His daughter, Peggy Grigsby Richards (1914-2012) knew that her father wanted the family land kept intact for the grassland birds, and she honored his vision with the donation of the land to CFC.

Citizens for Conservation Celebrates 50 Years

You are invited to celebrate with CFC this year with events for all people of all ages.

BY LISA STAMOS

If you want to know the value of something, ask yourself, “Where would we be without it?” Residents of the greater Barrington area, including creatures and plants that reside here, enjoy the benefits of wide-open spaces. Citizens for Conservation and local land-conscious organizations have protected and preserved our natural resources in earnest for 50 years. Had they not, much of our rural character would have given way to development. Once razed, land is forever gone.

We can thank visionaries dating back to late-19th century landowners, like Bertram James Grigsby, who had a desire to protect open meadows and patches of prairie for wildlife. His daughter, Peggy (pictured above) honored his vision, and donated a large parcel of family land to become the first CFC Preserve.

In 1970, the Barrington Area Development Council urged that a Barrington Area Council of Governments and a Conservation Committee be formed, and for 50 years, both have played a role in the health and preservation of our open spaces and waterways.

In 1971, the newly incubated Conservation Committee incorporated as Citizens for Conservation. Bill H. Miller was CFC's first president, and under his leadership, the founding members set the stage for today's CFC, one of our most important, successful, and enduring nonprofit organizations.

A VISIT WITH CFC PRESIDENT KATHLEEN LEITNER

Quintessential Barrington asked Kathleen Leitner, former president of the Village of Tower Lakes and CFC's current president, about her perspective.

Did your childhood give you an appreciation of nature?

I always loved exploring woods, ravines, creeks—inspired by my favorite childhood book “Winnie The Pooh”. And it was calmer than in our 10-person house!

What did you learn about nature and preservation as president of Tower Lakes?

I was the Village President of Tower Lakes from 2007-2015, but it was moving to Tower Lakes in 1992 that the preservation of nature became an active part of my lifestyle. Tower Lakes is a community centered on the recreational opportunities afforded by the lakes. But the lakes require maintenance, and so, in turn does the land around the lakes. This maintenance work is managed by the resident members of the homeowner association. Tower Lakes typically conducts lake clean-up days twice a year where community volunteers clear buckthorn or other nonnative plants in the parks, and various shoreline restoration projects.

◀ CFC's mission is Saving Living Space for Living Things.

As Village President I was an active member of BACOG, and CFC regularly updated BACOG about its projects, seeking our support or participation, as necessary. That is how I came to really appreciate CFC and its influence in the community.

How is being the president of CFC differ from leading a municipality or village?

A municipality is primarily focused on maintaining a happy, healthy, and safe environment for its residents, and so it creates or enforces local ordinances, state, and federal regulations toward that end. Both the state and the federal government dictate, to a large extent, how a municipality operates. And our constituency is set—the residents of the Village.

As a non-profit, CFC has much more leeway in its choice of pursuits, but we model our governance style on the Land Trust Alliance guidelines and are committed to our mission of “Saving Living Space for Living Things” through protection, restoration, and stewardship of land, conservation of natural resources, and education of the community. It is our Board who decides what those goals are, and how to prioritize and accomplish those goals. And our constituency is our members, donors, grantors, volunteers, and the local governments and businesses.

My experience with both is similar in one respect, though: the successes accomplished by the Village of Tower Lakes and by CFC come from the generosity and expertise of dedicated board members, staff, and volunteers.

Why do you think people connect with CFC so quickly?

The most striking thing about CFC to me is the number of long-term members and volunteers who give their time and treasure so selflessly. CFC offers people an opportunity to contribute directly to the well-being of our environment with whatever resource they have to offer, whether that is expertise, labor, or financial contributions. And you don't have to be an authority on plants, birds, or ecosystems to do it. But you will learn so much when you volunteer at CFC. Altogether, that's what hooks people!

What are the roles of your employees and volunteers?

CFC has two employees: Kevin Scheiwiller our Restoration Manager, and Juli LaRocque our Office Manager. Kevin directs volunteers for all of the outdoor projects—cutting and burning buckthorn, planting wetland plugs, collecting, or spreading native seeds to name some (there is ALWAYS an outdoor project). Juli directs volunteers for the projects in the office. They may include uploading contact information to the computer, putting out a mailing, or writing for our eNews. Also, our Board members run all of the committees which in turn are 'staffed' by volunteers. Examples of those include the Annual Appeal, the Annual Meeting, the Membership Drive,

Earth Day, and the Plant Sales. We are truly a working board.

What other agencies does CFC work with?

In 2017 Tom Vanderpoel and Wendy Paulson executed an idea they had been considering for quite a while and created the Barrington Greenway Initiative with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Lake County Forest Preserves, the Bobolink Foundation, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon Great Lakes, and now, McHenry County Conservation District. In normal times, this group creates and executes an annual plan that involves a restoration project approximately every month on one of the members' designated properties. They marshal their respective volunteers to amass groups of 40 or 50 people to accomplish in three hours work that would take days to complete otherwise.

We have partnered with Smart Farm to install permaculture around their plant beds to help with flooding, and with Mindful Waste to promote 'reduce, reuse and recycle' at our Volunteer luncheon and at Ignite the Night. We have worked with Flint Creek Spring Creek Watershed Partnership and Barrington Area Conservation Trust to install wetland shoreline plant plugs along Flint Creek; with Cuba Township and Tower Lakes on a restoration plan for the Tower Lakes Preserve which is being managed by the Barrington Area Conservation Trust; and with Lake Barrington to create native plantings at their village hall.

What is the biggest misconception about CFC?

CFC is not just another conservation organization. What people don't realize is that CFC is recognized nationally for our volunteer-based work ethic, and also for how we execute projects, including experimenting with new seed propagation techniques and implementation of restoration plans. These innovations inspire and engage

our next generation of conservationists to continue CFC's good work.

Tell us about the conservation education efforts of CFC.

In normal times we have in-person summer camps, community education seminars, and our 4th Graders on the Prairie programs. But 2020 threw us a curve ball and we were able to run with it!

In 2020, our summer camps for 5-10 years olds were reduced to maintain social distancing, but we still managed to create a hands-on experience of learning and fun through different activities and crafts.

And while our 2020 Community Education program was cut short, in 2021 we have partnered with the Barrington Library to run our programs through their Zoom meetings. So instead of being able to host 50-60 people at our seminars, we had 123 participants in January—getting more of our message out to more people!

Our 4th Graders on the Prairie was also successful because Board



PHOTO BY LINDA M. BARRETT

▲ CFC President Kathleen Leitner

member Edith Auchter created two different videos demonstrating STEM concepts that the District 220 grade schools shared with their 600 4th graders.

And our College Internship Program gives four students majoring in an ecology or conservation-related field hands on experience.

CFC was initiated by Barrington's longest running community needs incubator—the Barrington Area Development Council. Yet the CFC founders really ran with the idea. How might the Barrington area look or be different had CFC not succeeded since its founding back in 1971?

For starters, in the 1970s, Cuba Marsh would not have been acquired and restored by the Lake County Forest Preserve. A proposal to build an industrial and residential development came to the Barrington Village Board which caught the attention of CFC and other groups, causing them to investigate the property only to discover that it held significant pre-settlement plant and animal communities. The group defeated the proposal and encouraged the Forest Preserve to acquire the land.

Then beginning in the 1980s, Grigsby Prairie in Barrington Hills may not have been donated as a conservation area if CFC had not existed to accept it. Now so many native plants are so well established at this preserve that it has become CFC's top seed harvesting location. And Wendy Paulson started the Youth Education program with a class on fall bird migration at Crabtree Nature Center.

In 1987, CFC convinced the Village of Barrington to restore the rare savanna ecosystem at Baker's Lake. Then in 1988, CFC provided input for BADC's natural resources report identifying 12 natural areas that needed protection. One has been destroyed, one has been left unprotected, but 10 of the identified properties are now permanently protected. Also, in 1988, a North Shore developer proposed a massive hotel and resort complex on the Fox River off Roberts Road. CFC joined other groups to fight this development, citing important environmental reasons for its defeat. Lake County Forest Preserves then acquired this property, developing it into the beautiful public marina and boat launch that exist today.

In the early aughts, CFC created the Community Education program and our Native Seed Gardener program, expanding on our education offerings.

These are some of the most obvious impacts CFC has had on our community. To date, CFC has helped to protect more than 3,500 acres of ecologically important lands in our area. We regularly have over 15,000 hours of volunteer time, which, valued at approximately \$30/hour, contributes at least \$450,000 of value to our community.

What will CFC's priorities be in the next three to five years?

We continue to reach out to the broader community to invite new members and volunteers, focusing on our mission to improve the quality of life in the Barrington community by engaging citizens in the understanding and appreciation of native landscapes and how those landscapes improve the land, air, and water that support us. By leveraging our strongest resources—native seeds and plants, restoration experience, partnership activities and especially our volunteers- for the greater good of the region, we strive to restore lost ecosystems while adapting to the challenges and opportunities of the future, just like nature.



▲ CFC headquarters is located at its Flint Creek Savanna.

Area Leaders Recognize CFC

KAREN DARCH

*President, Village of Barrington
Member of CFC*

I believe CFC is important for our community because throughout its 50 years of existence, it has led the way in care and protection for our environment. CFC was founded by people who not only believed in the importance of "Saving living space for living things", but who put incredible time, energy, and dedication into making that a reality. The acres of land acquired and restored, the plants rescued, and the crop of volunteers harvested and regrown over the years to keep its good work happening are jewels in the crown CFC deserves as royalty in the Barrington area's long history of environmental stewardship.

JANET AGNOLETTI

BACOG Executive Director, Retired

As a city and regional planner, I became aware of Citizens for Conservation (CFC) in the 1980s. CFC and BACOG were formed at nearly the same time, with BACOG to manage the area's rapidly escalating development and CFC to conserve the area's natural resources. These sister organizations provided the leadership and drive to integrate environmental protection with municipal land use planning, and together they were instrumental in creating the beautiful green, low-density, and highly unique "greater Barrington area" that residents enjoy.

While our local governments were overseeing development, CFC was identifying natural areas for conservation and restoration and energizing volunteer work efforts. CFC not only maintained pockets of woodlands, wetlands, and prairielands, but also acquired new open space properties over the years, and the organization recently established the Barrington Area Greenway that will link waterways, aquatic life, and wildlife to the surrounding region. These natural areas are a key contributor to the area's value and distinctiveness.

CFC has had an enormous impact in the greater Barrington area, helping to build a region that brims with green open space, connects people to nature, and is recognized as a model for environmental stewardship. CFC's continuing partnership with BACOG and its local governments, and their engagement of citizens and students to study and improve the area's

natural resources, is a testament to the power and value of collaboration. Congratulations to CFC on its 50th anniversary, and I commend them for a job excellently done!

JULIE MARTINEZ

Youth Education Director, CFC

I am the Youth Education Director for CFC and am also on the Board. Before that, I volunteered with CFC for years, so I've been involved for nearly 15 years. Professionally, I'm an ESL resource teacher/bilingual Spanish teacher at a middle school.

For me, CFC encourages the community to celebrate their local ecological heritage. It empowers locals of all skill levels and ages to participate in land stewardship. What's more, it offers a unique community-building experience. Local youth are offered an opportunity to explore the nature that exists in their communities.

WENDY PAULSON

Chairman, Bobolink Foundation

Long-time CFC Member

Citizens for Conservation is the most effective community-based conservation group I know. It started 50 years ago at the behest of the Barrington Area Development Council, mostly as a small land trust with modest holdings and as a facilitator for recycling in Barrington. Today, CFC is recognized as a regional leader in native habitat restoration and conservation action. Not only does it manage its own nearly 500 acres in the Barrington area; with partners it is working to link and restore 14,000 acres of native habitats through the Barrington Greenway Initiative (BGI).

The genius of CFC is in the volunteer fabric of the organization: it was started and continues to be powered by volunteers in education, land protection, and natural area restoration. There are innumerable opportunities to become involved—from participating in the more than 140 restoration workdays each year, to leading field trips for students, managing social media, speaking to civic groups, tending the native plant nursery, organizing member events, sprucing up the farmhouse, or tending the archives. The possibilities are as abundant as the skills and interests of the volunteers. And the impact on conservation in the Barrington area continues to grow.

SARAH VOSKA

Restoration Sales

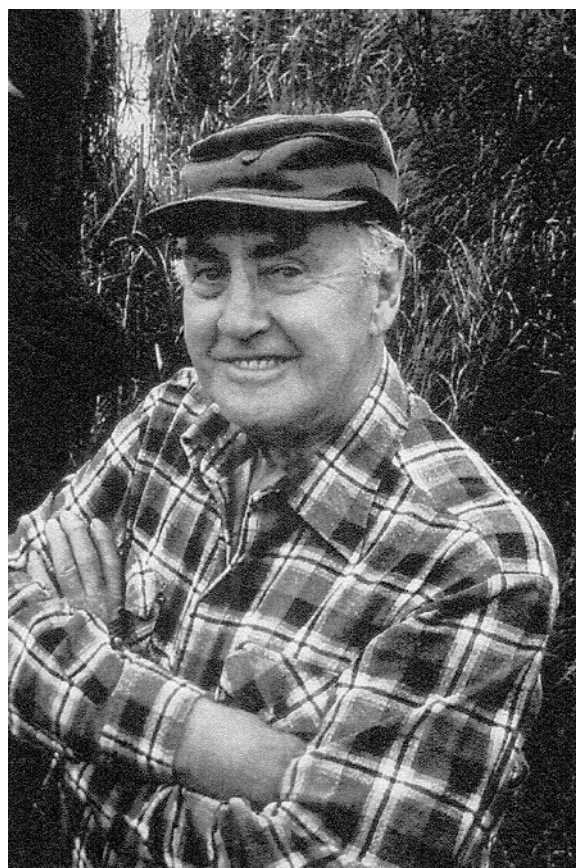
Bluestem Ecological Services

CFC plays a vital role in the Barrington ecosystem. Their roots in Barrington run as deep as the Compass Plant that dots Flint Creek Savanna—from their first efforts 50 years ago to promote recycling, to their current land acquisition and restoration goals to save living space for living things. Their branches stretch to each child in the Barrington School District with a field trip to the prairie. I distinctly remember that day, when I was at North Barrington, and hearing the tall grasses rustle in the wind. The Nature Lady program throughout Elementary School was my first introduction to CFC and sparked in me the deep desire to care for and to know the natural world.

As a college student, I got heavily involved in the environmental movement, and attended conferences about climate change in Morocco, China,

and Germany. I thought I knew everything about sustainability until I interned at CFC. I realized that carbon sequestration was happening right at home in Barrington. CFC's work connects directly to the global UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, as well as to the strategy of local government from BACOG to Lake County, and every level in between. Through restoring prairies, they were helping our community to adapt to climate change, protect natural habitat, sequester carbon in our soils, and restore historical ecosystems and human connections. It was through the work of this organization that I finally felt like I understood community engagement for climate action. My internship turned into a career, and I now work for a native landscaping contractor, where I get to spend each day educating our clients about the importance of saving living space for living things.

CFC executes its vision by transforming farm fields into award-winning prairies. They have taught our community to appreciate the natural world and they continue to develop new processes for accelerating land management efforts, used by conservation corps around the country. CFC's success over the past 50 years is a testament to the dedicated volunteers who go out to lead workdays, to the cutting-edge research in restoration ecology led by their citizen scientists, and the strong support of an engaged community. U



▲ William H. Miller was the primary founder of CFC. He was also its first president and remained in the position for 13 years. An annual award in his name is given in recognition of outstanding contributions toward conservation in the Barrington area.

Celebrate with CFC All Year

- ▶ **50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS: MARCH 13**—Free webinars and recordings presented in collaboration with the Barrington Area Library. Register online. Open to all. Topics: How to use native plants in your landscape. Examples of the diversity of wildlife possible in backyard habitats. Stormwater management practices with native plants.
- ▶ **50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING: MARCH 11**—Presented virtually. A historic 50-year review of shaping conservation in the Barrington area. Distinguished panelists Wendy Paulson, Steve Packard, Sam Oliver, and Patsy Mortimer will highlight building on past efforts toward CFC's future. Invited are members, donors, and guests.
- ▶ **SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE: MAY 7–9**—Sales are online. Huge native plant sale offering hard-to-find species. Online pre-orders, garden combination packages, and a special 50th anniversary garden selection. Online orders 3/1-4/18. Pickup is 5/6-5/8.
- ▶ **EARTH DAY AND BGI CELEBRATION: APRIL 24**—CFC's BGI event aligns with the global "Restore Our Earth" Earth Day. Volunteers will install new plants and lead various educational activities for multiple ages. Volunteer reservations accepted.
- ▶ **COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: JULY TO AUGUST**—Highly sought out ecological internship for college students. The paid, 10-week program offers hands-on experience in restoration management methods and techniques. Applications are now being accepted.
- ▶ **YOUTH NATURE SUMMER CAMP: JUNE**—Inspiring an understanding and love of the natural world. Hands-on experiences, learning, crafts, and new friends. Age-appropriate activities in small groups with high adult-to-camper ratio. Two age groups, 5-7 and 8-10, for week-long learning and adventure. Reservations required.
- ▶ **CRAFTSBURY PRESERVE DEDICATION & CFC MAJOR DONOR RECOGNITION: AUGUST 20**—To be held at the Wild Onion Brewery. Celebration and social luncheon thanking major donors. Presentation on the beneficial impact of their contributions and future CFC plans. Bus transport to dedication ceremony of the new Craftsbury Preserve. Invited are donors, grantors, and press.
- ▶ **50 FEST COMMUNITY CELEBRATION: SEPTEMBER**—A big top tent will be located at the Smith Building, CFC Farmhouse, Flint Creek Savanna. Festivities will be family friendly, fun, and offer something for everyone. Enjoy food truck offerings and beverages. Music, crafts, and other entertainment. Take a guided tour of Flint Creek Savanna. Open to all. Ticketed fundraiser.
- ▶ **TOM VANDERPOEL RECOGNITIONS: SEPTEMBER**—Two dedication events will honor Tom Vanderpoel's decades of leadership in regional conservation and the community's future. Tom was a beloved and respected mentor to many. Farmhouse event open to all. Barrington Hills event will have press coverage.
- ▶ **4TH GRADERS ON THE PRAIRIE PROGRAM: MID-SEPTEMBER**—This program is in its 13th year. All 4th-grade students in the district participate each year in this integrated curriculum that uses prairie and native plants to help teach STEM concepts. A true investment in the future.
- ▶ **FALL NATIVE TREE & SHRUB SALE: SEPTEMBER 18 & 19**—Helping homeowners by providing plant materials selected for the best protection of land, color, and habitat for wildlife. High-quality and hard-to-find species are offered. Online sales and other details TBD.
- ▶ **VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT: OCTOBER 9**—A celebration event honoring all the volunteers who are the core of CFC. From back office work to teaching and restoration, all efforts help nature. To be held at the CFC Farmhouse, this event is about friends, laughter, and sharing conservation success stories. By invitation and press coverage.
- ▶ **CONSERVATION ART SHOW: DECEMBER 16**—At Barrington's White House. This free event will showcase the accomplished work of various CFC volunteers, members, and BHS students. The artist will share their love of nature across various media. Juried BHS student creations from recycled materials will be on display.

Additional Events Details

Events will be adjusted to accommodate current public health guidelines.

For additional and updated information, visit citizensforconservation.org online, or reach the CFC Office at cfc@citizensforconservation.org or by calling 847-382-7283.

To speak with someone from CFC, contact: Patty Barten at patty.barten@citizensforconservation.org.

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