



# 2020 Annual Report Environmental Defenders of McHenry



## FROM OUR LEADERSHIP: Our 50th Anniversary Year amidst COVID

*Cynthia Kanner, Executive Director & Lori McConville, President*

To say that 2020 was a year like no other would be to speak a truth that all humans on Earth understand. It also happened to be our organization's 50th anniversary. In fact, on March 8, 2020, our members and guests celebrated together for the only time during the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, just before everything closed down.



While the rest of our programming for our 50th Anniversary year was cancelled, as were our fundraisers and special projects, our dinner saw 220 members come together to celebrate all the work we have achieved over the past 50 years. While our office and book stores were closed, we scrambled to make alternatives work, such as working from home and selling books online. Enter the world of ZOOM. Our Board meetings, Action Team meetings, panels and talks, quarterly documentaries, Green Drinks monthly programs, and even interviews for a new job opening here at the office all took place on Zoom. And, it's safe to say, we'll be utilizing it and other virtual platforms well into the future.

Albert Camus once wrote, "Sometimes carrying on, just carrying on, is the super-human achievement." This holds true for the Environmental Defenders, but we extended beyond just carrying on—we persevered. During a trying year for our world and community, we hired new staff and managed four summer interns, completed our documentary, "50 Years of Defending," received grants and loans to help us through, enriched our partnerships with Latino Outreach Programming, and even started a major new endeavor—becoming the new home of the McHenry County Schools Environmental Education Program. Our book stores opened back up at first with limited hours in June as did our office in July. We finished out the year in a very positive spirit and adjusted along the way, and our loyal members—you—came right along with us. *Thank you!*



## Board of Directors—2020

Lori McConville, *President*

Kim Hankins, *First Vice President*

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Bev Dow, *Secretary*

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Dwight Dalton

Ed Ellinghausen

Claire Hodge

Sue Jensen

Zak Klehr

Rico Rotta

Ken Santowski

Juanita Vega

## Staff

Cynthia Kanner, *Executive Director*

Mallory Fischer, *Communications & Membership Specialist*

Pam Johnson, *Manager, The Green Read*

Barb Day, *Newsletter Editor*

Lynn Rotunno, *Newsletter Layout*

## Summer Interns

Katie Evans—Communications

Martin Hurst—Waste Reduction

Jacob Karkowski—Water & Natural Resources

Isabel Bernardi—Water & Natural Resources

Thank you to the foundations that have supported us  
throughout 2020.

We are grateful!

Aptargroup Charitable Foundation

Big Cat Foundation

Community Foundation for McHenry County

Fidelity Charitable Donor Advised Fund

Full Circle Foundation

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation

The Gerry & Bill Cowlin Foundation

Grand Victoria Foundation

## Environmental Defenders' Business Members

(current)

1776 Restaurant — 815-356-1776

1776restaurant.com

About Better Living: — 847-639-2564

lee@aboutbetterliving.com

Adele Petersen, Broker Associate, B&W — 815-355-5729

www.adelepetersen.bairdwarner.com

Alpine Accessories — 847-854-4754

www.alpineaccessories.com

American Ad Bag — 800-382-6844

www.adbag.com

The Backdrop — 815-338-3007

Thebackdrop106.com

Bluestem Ecological Services — 630-417-1922

www.bluestemeco.com

Calco Pallets — 815-725-5387

815pallets@sbcglobal.net

Certasun — 312-462-3265

www.certasun.com

Charger Dur-Bar—815-338-3900

www.charterdura-bar.com

Conscious Cup Coffee Roasters — 815-356-0115

www.consciouscup.com

Copy Express, Inc. — 815-338-7161

www.copyexpressyes.com

Crystal Lake Park District — 815-459-0680

www.crystallakeparks.org

Current Automotive — 630-615-5710

www.currentautomotive.com

Dave's Bait & Tackle — 815-861-1533

davekranz@sbcglobal.net

Duke's Alehouse & Kitchen — 815-356-9980

Thedukeabides.com

Falcon Green Recycling, Inc — 815-334-8689

FalconGreenResources.com

Gypsy Glen K-9 Castle — 815-385-8585

Gypsyglenk9castle.com

Habitat For Humanity McHenry Cty — 815-331-8153

Chicagolandhabitat.org

Hastings Asphalt Services, Inc. — 815-648-9099

Hastingsasphaltservices.com

Hyperstitch — 815-568-0590

www.hyperstitch.com

Lehman & Menis — 815-459-7400

www.lehmanmenis.com

Magitek Energy Solutions, Inc. — 847-409-1927

www.magitekenergy.com

Mars Insurance — 779-220-4179

Marvin's Toy Store — 779-220-4179

www.marvinstoystore.com

McHenry County College — 815-479-7765

www.mcc.edu

McHenry County Dept of Health — 815-334-4585

www.mcdh.info

McHenry Co. Dept. of Water Resources — 815-334-4213

waterres@co.mchenry.il.us

Natural Communities Native Plants — 331-248-1016

www.naturalcommunities.net

Oakford Physical Therapy — 815-334-8850

www.oakfordphysicaltherapy.co

Organic Rootz— 224-209-8648

www.organicrootzshop.com

Pioneer Tree Farm — 815-385-8512

www.pioneertreefarm.com

Prairieland Disposal — 847-381-9300

www.prairielanddisposal.com

RCW Tax Services — 815-893-0736

www.rcwtax.com

Red Buffalo Nursery — 815-678-4848

www.redbuffalonursery.com

Reprographics — 815-477-1018

www.reprograhics.org

Riverbottom Ice Cream Co — 224-678-9438

[www.riverbottomicecream.com](http://www.riverbottomicecream.com)

Savior World — 847-728-8811

[www.saviorworld.com](http://www.saviorworld.com)

Seven Point — 312-593-8448

[www.sevenpoint.org](http://www.sevenpoint.org)

Silver Prairie Natural Soap Company — 630-207-9968

[www.silverprairiefarm.com](http://www.silverprairiefarm.com)

Simotronics

[simotronics.com](http://simotronics.com)

Soil and Spade

[www.soilandspadecompany.com](http://www.soilandspadecompany.com)

Soulful Prairies

[www.soulfulprairies.com](http://www.soulfulprairies.com)

TGEP (The Green Electric Product) — 630-847-1421

[www.tgeponline.com](http://www.tgeponline.com)

Terra Vitae Farms — 815-245-0490

[www.terravitae farms.com](http://www.terravitae farms.com)

U of I Extension Master Gardeners — 815-338-3737

<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/>

The UPS Store of Crystal Lake

[www.theupsstore.com/1947.htm](http://www.theupsstore.com/1947.htm)

U-HAUL Crystal Lake & Woodstock

Wells Fargo Advisors — 815-338-2550

[wellsfargoadvisors.com](http://wellsfargoadvisors.com)

Wheel Werks Bikes — 815-444-6897

[wheelwerksbikes.com](http://wheelwerksbikes.com)

White Oak Interiors — 847-854-8892

[whiteoakinteriors.com](http://whiteoakinteriors.com)

William R. Kreznor & Associates — 815-338-2362

[www.wrksoiltesting.com](http://www.wrksoiltesting.com) — 815-308-5610

Woodstock Chamber of Commerce

[www.woodstockilchamber.com](http://www.woodstockilchamber.com)

## NEW IN 2020!

### Microplastic Study

The Environmental Defenders, with partners from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign began conducting a first-ever microplastic study in our watershed in McHenry County and took samples from the Kishwaukee and Nippersink rivers. Both rivers show 150 parts per liter of microplastics and further studies in 2021 hope to determine what types of plastic. Photos at are right of Scott Kuykendall sampling on the Kishwaukee and Cindy Skrukrud on the Nippersink.

## Welcome MCSEEP!

In 2020, The Environmental Defenders' Board of Directors voted "yes" to becoming the new home to the McHenry County Schools Environmental Education Program or MCSEEP. With a perfect space available at the Woodstock Square Mall, just upstairs from the Environmental Defenders' office, we started paying rent on the office as of February 1 and officially became the fiscal sponsors of MCSEEP in July when the group moved in. With Bill Donato, the MCSEEP director for several years, retired, new Director Gigi Carlson was brought on to lead the group and did so during a very challenging year for schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gigi was joined by three Environmental Educators who together devised new ways of reaching schools virtually to share the MCSEEP curriculum. The Environmental Educators are Pamela King, Christine Kustra and Hannah Pfaff.







**HOURS:**

**MON-SAT – 10AM TO 5PM;**

**61 N. WILLIAMS STREET CRYSTAL LAKE**

2020 was...well, 2020. Lots of unexpected changes for everyone, including The Green Read. The year started off well for the bookstore, then came to a screeching halt on March 19. But when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade! Some sales, mainly of puzzles, were generated through emailed lists and pictures of what was available. Purchases were paid over the phone by credit card, and then delivered to people's porches.

Being closed provided an opportunity to make improvements to the store. New shelves were installed for displaying puzzles and other new merchandise. A free website for the store was developed. Some reorganizing, paint touch-ups, and deep cleaning was done. When we were finally able to reopen on May 29, the store looked better than ever! A week later, however, the landlord made the difficult decision to board up the entire building for several days because of protests that were happening in downtown Crystal Lake. (The weekend before, several suburbs suffered serious damage during the protests). Thankfully the protests were peaceful and we were able to reopen (again) without any problem.

The store reopened following the recommended COVID-19 safety precautions, but about 2/3 of the volunteers preferred not to return to the store in May because of the pandemic. We did have enough volunteers to be able to return to normal hours Monday through Saturday but remain closed on Sunday. A huge thank you to the volunteers who are manning the store at this time!

The community has been wonderful supporting local and small businesses, and The Green Read ended 2020 even stronger than it started. We were not able to plan story times, author talks, Zentangle classes, drop-in crafts, and other events that we had hosted before COVID-19, but The Green Readers book club has continued to meet every month, either in person or by Zoom, depending on which phase McHenry County was in at the time. We participated in a story walk that the Crystal Lake Public Library put together, with a different page from a children's story placed in various downtown businesses so that families could read the book as they strolled along Williams Street.

At the end of the summer after attending an invitation-only trade show in Des Plaines, a variety of new products were brought into the store, including some especially for the holiday season. The store now carries three puzzle lines, expanded stationery products, and will hopefully be carrying greeting cards soon. The coffee station we had installed before COVID-19 did not result in sales, so the coffee maker is just for volunteer use only now. Plans for a custom-made counter area are underway and should be done in the first half of 2021.

Thanks again to all who have contributed to the success of The Green Read over the past year. The store would not be the wonderful place it is without your support!





**HOURS: MON-FRI- 11AM TO 4PM; SAT – 11AM TO 3PM**

**110 S. JOHNSON STREET, SUITE 104 WOODSTOCK**

The Environmental Defender's Green Spot Used Bookstore in Woodstock celebrated its 10th Anniversary in October 2020. Run entirely by volunteers and using donated books, The Green Spot has achieved local success. In addition to keeping books out of landfills and encouraging reuse, the store generates steady income. In 2020, The Green Spot generated \$15,000 in sales, which resulted in net income of \$7,000 after deduction for rent and utilities.

The bookstore was closed for 2 ½ months per the Governor's stay at home order and re-opened on June 3rd. Our customers returned and sales were good for the rest of the year. We held a hallway book sale in August and in October. After our hallway sale in October, space was available in our building and we opened a Clearance Corner with books at reduced prices.

With the help of additional Volunteers, we are now open 6 days a week. It takes a lot of hours, work and dedication to sort donations and sell all those books. Thank you to all The Green Spot volunteers, book donors and customers.



## Latino Outreach Program

### 2020 Highlights:

Throughout 2020, despite the pandemic, the “Conversacion de Conservacion” program, a collaborative endeavor of The Environmental Defenders, The Land Conservancy, The McHenry County Conservation District, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and Hispanic Connections Woodstock, continued its work to reach out to this under-represented community within all of our organizations. We met via Zoom to organize and held virtual and outdoor in-person events safely, to celebrate Latino Conservation week in July 2020. We planned post-pandemic events for 2021 and strategized ways to bring our message to others as we hope to learn from our Latino community all the questions and needs that they may have where it comes to the environment and conservation. Thankfully, with the great outdoors not limited to us or the community, we were able to gather at social distance and forged ahead with plans as best we could, including hikes and visit to our organization’s respective properties.





## Fundraising Action Team — *Chair, Anne Basten*

During 2020 our fundraising efforts brought in a total of \$16,064. As you can tell from that number, 2020 was a challenging year for fundraising, as it was for so many things.

We were able to carry out the following activities while following Covid-19 protocols:

- Two hallway book sales in Woodstock
- Our Annual Meeting raffle and silent auction
- One Use-It-Again Sale at the Algonquin Township site
- Sale of used books and other items online

And of course, we operated our Green Spot Used Book Store for most of the year after having to close it during much of March and all of April and May. We so appreciate all of our bookstore volunteers who were eager to get back to work, thus making it possible for us to reopen the store in June.

We were unable to hold our Annual Fall Book Sale at the Algonquin Township site and a second Use-It-Again Sale. And with Pioneer Tree Farm needing to be closed for health reasons this year, we also did not take in funds from volunteer assistance at the farm nor from our baked goods sale there.

But we still feel good about all that we accomplished during this difficult time! And we want to say a big “Thank you!” to all our volunteers who made these activities possible. We also want to thank all those who donated items for our Use-It-Again Sales and our book sales, as well as those of you who bought them! Everyone who contributes to our efforts helps to keep the Defenders afloat and able to conduct our projects to protect our environment in McHenry County!

Moving forward, we’re hoping to diversify our fundraising activities, so please share any ideas you have with us and consider volunteering to serve as an organizer of one or more aspects of these fundraising activities – we can always use the new energy! And lastly, please continue to respond quickly to our volunteer need requests online at the “SignUp!” link on the Defenders’ website so we can concentrate on fundraising instead of calling volunteers.



## Education Action Team —

*Co-chairs, Dave Roggenbuck & Kim Compton*

- ◇ The Green Screen documentary series had to go virtual but we successfully offered quarterly movies to our members and the public via zoom, including:
- ◇ The speakers bureau slowed down a little when COVID-19 hit but we still managed to book two presentations a month in the first half of the year to:
- ◇ The biggest accomplishment was achieved by member Pamela King, who created a digital resource guide for schools that want to start an environmental club. We expect to make printed copies and publicize to schools in 2021. The production of the guide was made possible by the Full Circle Foundation.
- ◇ Three scholarships were given to deserving high school seniors, including our first scholarship to a student of Latino dissent.
- ◇ Unfortunately, all tabling events, including the annual Earth Day Celebration, which would have marked 50 years of Earth Day, were canceled due to the pandemic.





## Transportation Action Team — *Chair, Gary Kanner*

While 2020 was a challenging year due to COVID-19, our Transportation Action Team membership grew and continued meeting monthly via Zoom on the first Mondays. We are grateful to those members committed to the Team's projects and conversations that incorporate issues such as bike friendly roads and bike path connectivity, clean energy for transportation, regional planning and more. In 2020, electric vehicle charging station plans came to fruition in both the City of Woodstock at the Metra Station parking lot and the County at the Court House. For the latter, McHenry County Administration, in addition to accepting the station from the Environmental Defenders, purchased an additional station, creating an area capable of charging four cars. Other activities of this Team included:

- ◇ Continued getting updates from our liaison from MCDOT on bike and pedestrian trails.
- ◇ Continued to advocate for electric vehicle charging stations—two installed at the County Courthouse and starting to work with the City of Crystal Lake.
- ◇ Organized 4th annual Defenders' member Bike Ride, which took a small group back to a roundtrip between Glacial Park and Richmond with a stop for lunch.





## Waste Reduction Action Team —

*Co-chairs, Cecilia Carman & Michelle Muryn*

Our team's goal is to reduce and divert waste streams from going to landfills. We target waste streams, such as single-use plastics, foam, and food waste. In 2020 we established new goals to focus on waste reduction in restaurants. Our team would provide resources and encouragement to restaurants to implement waste reduction initiatives. We have specifically targeted plastic straws, plastic cutlery, styrofoam takeout containers, plastic bags, and food waste.

However, due to the pandemic we had to adapt our focus and move to a virtual meeting platform. We redirected our focus to food waste diversion and composting. This year we worked to identify diversion opportunities at local farmer's markets, food pantries, and through residential curbside pickup. In 2020 we had a handful of guest speakers join our monthly calls to share their experiences. We heard from restaurant owners, food waste haulers, and residents who made composting personal.

In addition to our focus on food waste, we also launched our neighborhood styrofoam recycling campaign. Members posted signs in their front yards which read 'Styrofoam Home'. The sign serves as a notice to neighbors that they will collect their styrofoam and make sure it gets recycled!

Martin Hurst, a senior at NIU and one of our four summer interns was active with this Action Team and we appreciated his work on researching ordinances and writing up a draft ordinance for a Styrofoam ban.

Looking into 2021, our team will continue to pursue composting and food waste diversion as a main focus as well as plastic reduction. We will also host guest speakers on our monthly calls and push for a grass-roots approach to curbing buying habits.



## Water & Natural Resource Protection Action Team — *Chair, Cindy Skrukrud*

Held Planting Natives on Solar Farms Workshop at McHenry County College for solar developers and native landscapers

Served as host organization for the Silver and Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition

Began as host organization for Boone/Dutch Creek watersheds to implement the watershed plan

Continued to hold monthly Sterne's Fen habitat restoration workdays

Completed Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) Stewardship Challenge grant in support of restoration work at Sterne's Fen in the amount of \$34,000, including raising \$7000 in matching funds, completing 400 hours of volunteer stewardship and 100 hour of social media outreach on the project. Hired professionals to control cattails and phragmites at Sterne's Fen

Removed trash and invasive species at the roadside prairies we tend to improve these sites for pollinator habitat

Adopted a portion of the MCCD Ridgefield Trace Trail next to Woodstock Triangle roadside prairie

Held workdays at our Dean Street site removing invasive brush

Received milkweed seedlings from Monarch Watch, which we planted at O'Brien Prairie

Secured Community Foundation of McHenry County grant for planting of four miles of roadside prairie by McHenry Township Road District and worked with them on pre-planting plant and insect surveys

Working with Friends of Hackmatack NWR, we continued to tend pollinator garden and stream buffer along Silver Creek at the fairgrounds

Hosted two summer interns, Isabel Dunn and Jacob Karkowski, who continued the monitoring of chloride levels in the seeps in the Boone Creek watershed and organized years of data and worked on restoration and plans for our roadside prairies

Conducted educational activities and distributed information about water resources protection at our Earth Day Celebration, the County Fair, the Hackmatack Monarch Coalition Fest, Green Living Expo and It's Our River Day

Conducted a Boone Creek cleanup with Fox Waterway Agency and a Crystal Creek cleanup with Village of Algonquin at It's Our River Day

Organized McHenry County Watershed Roundtable get-togethers and hosted walk at Sterne's Fen

Served as fiscal agent and distributed information about protecting our water at the third annual McHenry County Water Forum

Participated in McHenry County Water Resources Action Plan





## Recycling Action Team — *Chair, Barb Day*

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing, masks, gloves and all the other required gear, the Recycling Action Team again participated in four recycling drives with the McHenry County Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health: one at Harvard's Milky Way Park, one at the County Government Center in Woodstock, one at Chesak Elementary School in Huntley, and one at McHenry County College. The County collected electronics and the Environmental Defenders collected Styrofoam, CFL tubes and bulbs, and textiles. We held nine drives at the McHenry Township offices as well. This would not have been possible without the help of all of our brave volunteers who logged a total of 304 hours! We collected 3,042 fluorescent tubes and bulbs! Our Styrofoam Collection Program continued to run smoothly. While our sites were closed temporarily due to the pandemic, once it was felt to be safer, our volunteers were back out there, making weekly runs to all three sites – Woodstock, Algonquin and Crystal Lake – and logged 342.5 hours of volunteer time sorting and moving tens of thousands of pounds of Styrofoam to our drop-off point in Elgin. We would be nowhere without our volunteers!





## Membership Action Team — *Chair, Cynthia Kanner*

The main event of 2020 for this team was the 50th Anniversary Dinner, which we managed to hold on March 8, 2020 just before our society closed down due to the pandemic. With so many of the teams programs about being with people, tabling at others' events, such as the Native Landscaping Seminar and the Green Living Expo, connecting and recruiting, it was impossible to carry out our regular activities with all the cancelations. Even our Members Only events were affected, of course, so we missed our long-running Corn Roast and volunteer appreciation day. But, our membership renewals held steady and with 2021 around the corner, we'll be looking forward to getting back out there soon! Until then, enjoy this brief photo journey of our 50th celebration!







**Environmental Defenders of McHenry County  
Statement of Financial Position  
as of December 31 for each year**

	<b>2020 Unaudited</b>	<b>2019 Audited</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	249,774	180,521
Investments	354,068	325,363
Other Receivables	3,862	0
Prepaid		1,772
Property & Equipment	101,294	101,294
Other Assets	2,850	1,850
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>711,848</b>	<b>610,800</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Fiscal Agent Payable	22,095	1,880
Payroll Tax Liability	1,550	1,380
Accrued Liabilities	898	2,193
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>24,543</b>	<b>5,453</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted, Undesignated	687,305	605,347
Temporary Restricted		
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>687,305</b>	<b>605,347</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>711,848</b>	<b>610,800</b>



## PRESERVE PROTECT EDUCATE

**MISSION** In order to protect all living things, the Environmental Defenders is dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the natural environment in McHenry County. As a grassroots organization, we are committed to building sound ecological relationships between people and the natural world that supports all life.

**VISION** We envision a planet that is healthy for future generations and understand that decisions today affect everyone's tomorrow. We understand and work to educate everyone residing in our county about the local connection to global realities and how global trends affect the well-being of humans and all species, locally. From the threats of global climate change, habitat loss and polluted watersheds to soil health and plastic reduction, it is vital that we advocate for best management practices with regard to decisions that affect our shared environment.

*Throughout our 2020 Annual Report,* you will see the mention of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout. Just after our group met for our 50th Anniversary Dinner on March 8, life as we knew it essentially closed down on March 13. Our office and book stores both closed temporarily, but our activities continued after a brief period of consideration. With a Zoom subscription, the Environmental Defenders carried on meeting, presenting, showing films, and participating in others' activities as much as possible.





In addition to all the work shared here and completed by our hard-working volunteer Action Teams, we also provide education and advocacy regarding policies that protect the environment in McHenry County and facilitate meaningful dialogue between and among other groups and partners.

- ◇ Facilitated monthly Green Drinks events via Zoom (February 2020 meeting below.)
- ◇ Facilitated the McHenry County Chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby.
- ◇ Participated in weekly zoom calls with the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) in order to stay current about legislative issues that may affect McHenry County
- ◇ Shared IEC Action Alerts with our membership to encourage the filing of witness slips to support environmental legislation in the State Legislature
- ◇ Participated in the regular meetings of Hispanic Connections in Woodstock.



*Professional affiliations.*

