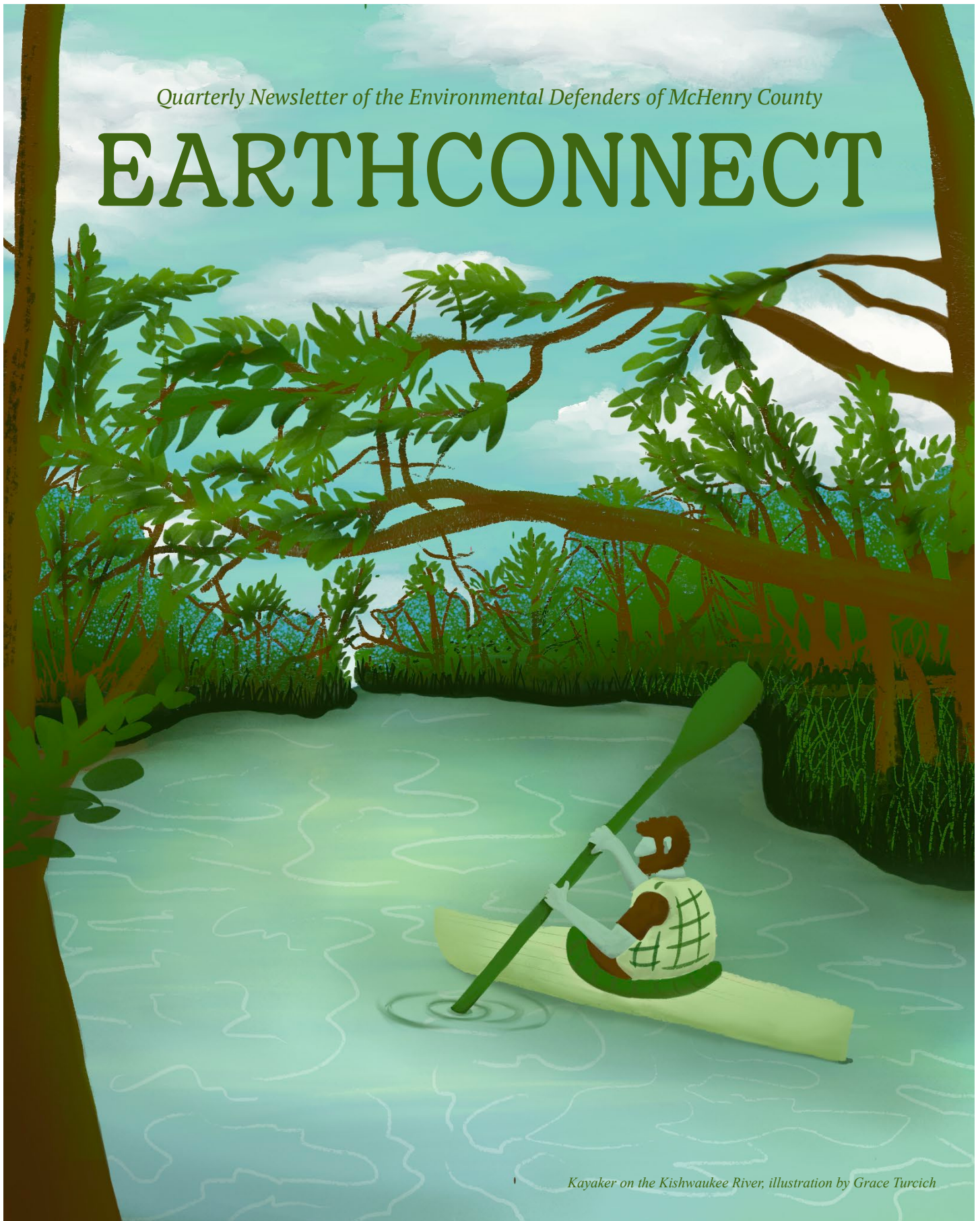


Quarterly Newsletter of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County

EARTHCONNECT



Kayaker on the Kishwaukee River; illustration by Grace Turcich

Table of Contents

01 A Note from Our President	3	08 Watershed Planning in the County	11
02 Summer School is in Session	4	09 The State of Federal Climate Change	12
03 Big Fall Book Sale	5	10 Planting for the Future	14
04 Summer Interns	6	11 Mayors' Monarch Pledge Update	15
05 Summer Fun at the Bookstores	8	12 Be a Supporter of the Defenders	16
06 Repair Before Replace	9	13 Welcome New Board Members	17
07 Summer Garage Sale	10	14 A Note from our Director	18



OUR VOLUNTEER ANN HELPING SORT ITEMS AT OUR STYROFOAM SHED AT THE ALGONQUIN TOWNSHIP ROAD DISTRICT



WASTE REDUCTION ACTION TEAM TOURING KISHWAUKEE BREWING COMPANY FOR IL COMPOST AWARENESS WEEK



DEFENDERS EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ON COMPOSTING AT PRIDE IN DOWNTOWN CRYSTAL LAKE

A Note from Our President

WRITTEN BY BEV DOW, PRESIDENT

I am honored to have been elected President of the Board of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County. I cannot recall when I first joined the Defenders. For many years I was a “just send money” sort of member. When I retired from my position as a Biology Instructor at McHenry County College in 2019 and had more free time, I became a Board member and was soon elected Secretary, a position I held until asked to step up to the Presidency.

I got my start in environmentalism at the Kalamazoo (MI) Nature Center when I was 8. They had a Young Naturalist program in which I learned not only the names of plants, butterflies, birds, and more but also basic ecological principles such as succession. Eventually, I got a B.A. from Reed College as a Biology/Pre-Med major. I worked in a hospital briefly, decided medicine was not for me, and went back to school for an 8-12 Biology teaching certification. I taught at Mukwonago High School (WI) for five years before starting a PhD program in Ecology and Evolution at UIC. In retrospect, I should have been a naturalist, but that had gone out of style. A long and complicated path led me to McHenry County College, where I could do the teaching that I loved without the research that I loathed.

This is an exciting time for the Defenders. In the face of a changing climate, our mission to preserve, protect, and educate about the environment has never been more critical. In addition to caring for the natural areas that still exist, there is an urgent need to connect people to the outdoors. There are books about research showing that connection with nature is vital to health and well-being. As a person who grew up playing in the woods, I can only say, “Duh.” In addition, people need to know and love nature to become passionate about protecting it. The Defenders have an opportunity for our organization to not only connect people to the natural world but also to each other. It is time for us to explore ways that we can attract new and diverse

members as well as build community. We are already working on software upgrades that will allow us to be more responsive to new memberships, membership renewals, and donations.

The Board and staff have started brainstorming ideas to make membership in the Defenders more valuable. More short-term volunteer activities? More social and/or family-friendly events? Better resources on our website? Better ways to connect volunteers with opportunities? How do you want to get involved? We’d love to hear your suggestions!

When I was a child, air and water pollution were big problems. Lake Erie was declared dead. The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught fire—14 times! Bald Eagles were nearly extinct from DDT. Later on, it was a growing hole in the ozone layer. I began teaching about global warming in 1984, hoping that I would be long gone before the effects were felt. Global warming was rebranded as climate change. Then came the droughts, fires, floods, and hurricanes. It’s here, and so am I.

Climate change is humanity’s biggest screw up to date. It’s easy to be paralyzed with fear if you think about the whole problem at once. My life experience suggests that big problems can be solved. I have seen bald eagles in my backyard. When I lived in Buffalo, I received a huge packet of data showing that Lake Erie water from my faucet was safe to drink. The ozone hole is shrinking. Burning River is nothing more than a Cleveland beer. I believe that small actions by many people can have significant effects. I try to live a sustainable life without too many hypocrisies. Maybe it doesn’t make a big difference, but it’s better than feeling helpless. No matter how bad things seem, every 24 hours, we get a new day and another chance to make the world a better place. If we work together, we have even more power.

I look forward to working with you.

Summer School is in Session

Community Education in Waste Reduction

WRITTEN BY CECILIA CARMAN

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

School is out but the Waste Reduction Action Team is continuing to provide opportunities to educate the public. Our first event was a composting seminar at the Algonquin Library. We had over 20 participants who were truly engaged and asked many questions. We were able to raffle prizes and hopefully the County has some new backyard composters. We are continuing our food waste and compost classes at Crystal Lake, McHenry and Huntley libraries. Don't see your library listed? Inform them of these great free classes and we can add them to our calendar.

BUSINESS COMPOSTING

Composting at home is not the only educational opportunity we have provided. The Waste Reduction Action Team had two Brewery Tours at Kishwaukee Brewing Company. Participants learned about their sustainably made beer and their large composting capacity. We are fortunate to have members like Ashley Lange who have developed great relationships with businesses in the area who want to work with us. Collaboration is the key for our success.

COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

Not all our educational opportunities have been formal. We participated at the Crystal Lake Pride event and informed residents of all the composting opportunities that are available to them. We provided a compost bin at the event and were able to have some hands-on learning in what goes in the bin. The item that most people were surprised about? Pizza boxes! Yes, you can't recycle your pizza box but you can compost it.

The team is also brainstorming on how to expand our already ongoing projects. We want to increase the participants in our Woodstock food scrap drop-off program, find a site for our community fridge program, and finish our green wedding guide.

We have other composting opportunities that are in the works right now so keep an eye out for *Waste Not's* green compost bin at a festival or business near you. Summer is the best time for us to keep moving forward. The sun is shining and giving us the momentum to keep going. How about you? What are you going to accomplish on that perfect summer day?

Happy days ahead!



SUCCESSFUL COMPOSTING SEMINAR AT THE ALGONQUIN LIBRARY

Big Fall Book Sale

Our Annual Book Sale is Back

WRITTEN BY ANNE BASTEN

The Big Fall Book Sale is back in September! Our fundraising event gives hundreds of books another chance to be enjoyed by book lovers and also supports the mission of the Defenders. As the Fundraising Action Team prepares for our big event, we're reaching out to our incredible community for your help!

SALE DATES September 20–October 4, 2025

LOCATION Algonquin Township Road District
Building 6B (Community garage)
3702 US-14, Crystal Lake

FUNDRAISER DETAILS

Our fundraiser will have hundreds of pre-loved books spanning various genres, from timeless classics to contemporary bestsellers. Our prices are affordable and proceeds go to support the Defenders' mission. Every book you buy helps us continue the work we do.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

We're looking for volunteers to help make this event a successful fundraiser. Whether you can spare a few hours on the day of the sale or assist with preparations beforehand, your contribution is always appreciated. Volunteer roles include:

SEPTEMBER 14, 4-7PM

Picking up and loading the books at their source and unloading them in Algonquin

SEPTEMBER 15–19

Setting up & organizing books

SEPTEMBER 20–OCTOBER 4

Assisting shoppers and answering queries

OCTOBER 5

Packing up at the end of the event

If you're interested in volunteering with the Defenders or have any questions, please reach out to Diane Greenman or Nancy Schietzelt or visit <https://signup.com/go/xtauGvp>. Mark your calendars and bring a friend. Together, let's make a difference, one book at a time!



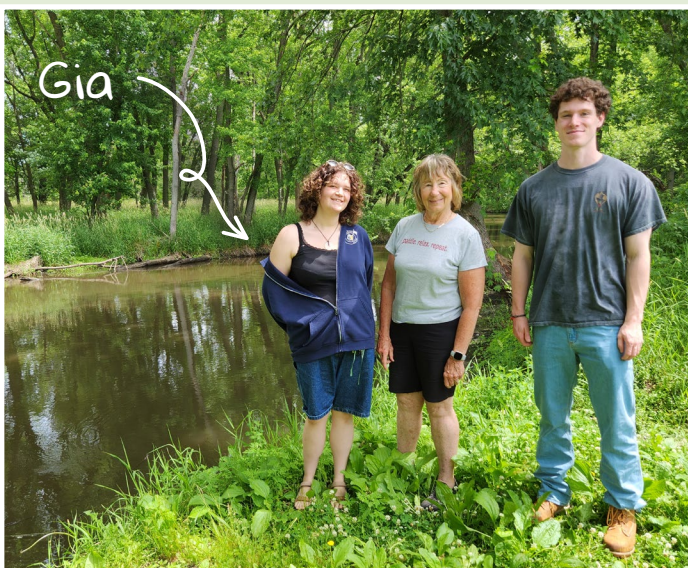
Summer Interns

Welcome Gia and Jacob

WRITTEN BY NANCY SCHIETZELT

Our interns, Gia Galati and Jacob Wisner, have helped with many projects so far this summer. Gia and Jacob have been busy taking groundwater samples in the Boone Creek watershed to test chloride levels, helping plant and weed pollinator gardens at the Fairgrounds, Petersen Park, and Northwestern Hospital, and removing invasives species at prairies that we steward. They have been working hard to follow the mission of the Defenders and gain valuable experiences out in the field.

Throughout their internship, Gia and Jacob have been developing skills and obtaining knowledge through our community and membership. They have been attending talks and tours with local experts, learning about planning and conducting large projects like Paddle the Kish with Pat Lawlor, and studying water resources in our county with Scott Kuykendall, McHenry County Water Resource Specialist. We are excited to provide these unique experiences for our interns and we look forward to their continuing efforts through the rest of their time with us this summer!



Gia Galati

B.S. in Environmental Studies and Sustainability

Minors in Earth Observation and Geospatial Analytics and Science, Technology, Environment, and Public Policy (STEPP)

Hello, my name is Gia Galati and I am one of the Defenders interns for the 2025 season! I grew up in Lakewood, and I am a rising junior at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

At Michigan State, I am a part of the honors college program obtaining a B.S. in environmental studies and sustainability with two minors in earth observation and geospatial analytics and science, technology, environment, and public policy (STEPP). In the future, I hope to pursue a career in environmental policy or consulting. At school, I stay involved with my community and environment working in our campus MRF and recycling center as a sort line worker. I am also vice president of an organization called SciReview. This organization aims to give students the opportunity to gain research experience in a low pressure environment and get the opportunity to publish a literature review in a student-run science journal. At school you can often find me hammocking somewhere along the banks of

the red cedar or doing yoga with my friends. When I'm not in school or at work I express myself through many creative outlets! For me, freetime is best spent thrifting, journaling, scrapbooking, playing the ukulele, or cooking. Recently, I have loved making sweet potato rice bowls with lots of different veggies. I am excited to grow my knowledge of McHenry County with the Defenders and continue to build relationships in the community among like-minded individuals. The experiences I've had so far with the Defenders have been eye opening and have caused me to think deeper about our local environment. With the Defenders I hope to keep challenging my thinking and find new perspectives in light of environmental challenges I may face day to day. I look forward to strengthening my relationship with the McHenry County community and furthering my environmental toolkit throughout this summer!

Jacob Wiser

B.S. in Environmental Science, Systems, and Sustainability

Hello Defenders, my name is Jacob Wiser, and I am an intern with the Defenders for the Summer of 2025. I am a student at Illinois State University, studying Environmental Science, Systems, and Sustainability, to pursue a career in consulting after graduation. I am from Gurnee, Illinois. When it comes to environmental health, some of my interests include: environmental policy, clean energy, habitat restoration, supporting local agriculture, native agriculture, water use, and energy efficiency. I didn't realize how much I cared about environmental sustainability until I saw how little other people cared; hearing people say "I won't be around for x-side effect" or "that doesn't affect me, so it doesn't matter" really rubbed me the wrong way. Though this was true, I still thought I wanted to do

something else, so my freshman year of college, I went to Purdue undecided in major, intending to pursue a degree in engineering. However, I quickly realized this was not the path for me, and I returned home and got an associate's degree in general science at College of Lake County, where I was reinvigorated with a passion for the environment. Through this organization, I hope to learn more about environmental policy, sustainability, and community outreach to help encourage healthier practices and awareness of local issues. Outside of the environment, my interests include: Christianity, hiking, rock climbing, exercise and healthy eating, drawing, creating and listening to music, movies, and thrifting.

Summer Fun at the Bookstores

The “Green” Bookstores

WRITTEN BY PAM JOHNSON & DIANE GREENMAN

Summer at the bookstores is always an exciting time as families stop by and children’s books fly off the shelves. To keep the little ones busy while parents browse the shelves, we provide chalk for kids to decorate the sidewalk out front of The Green Read and we have coloring pages for children to enjoy. Whether you are visiting the Farmers Market or out on the town, stop by our stores and check out our new arrivals.

THE HEART OF SUMMER - JULY

Events in both Woodstock and Crystal Lake will ramp up the summer fun factor in July. The “Where’s Waldo Local” scavenger hunt comes to both stores for the month of July, bringing in Waldo seekers of all ages.

During Crystal Lake’s Summer Sidewalk Sales from July 17th–20th, The Green Read will be rocking a “Christmas in July” theme. Of course, Christmas wouldn’t be complete without a visit from Santa! Santa will read a special book on Saturday, July 19th at 1pm.

GETTING READY FOR BACK TO SCHOOL - AUGUST

The Green Read is teaming up with MCSEEP for the first Teachers’ Night Out on Tuesday, August 5th from 5:30–8pm. McHenry County K-8 teachers can check out environmental education displays, demonstrations, and hands-on activities. There will be refreshments, a special sale, and a goodie bag for the first 25 teachers.

This August, The Green Spot will bring back the Window Displays Guessing Game! Stop by for a chance to win a \$10 gift certificate to our bookstores, no purchase necessary.

We will be bringing back our “Mystery” Mysteries sale during the month of August, with kraft paper-wrapped mystery/thrillers (with teaser descriptions) on sale for just \$5. You must buy before unwrapping!

HEADING TOWARD FALL - SEPTEMBER

Look for The Green Read’s scarecrow (previously prized for its decoration) at the Johnny Appleseed Festival in Crystal Lake on September 27th.

We are planning a volunteer picnic potluck once again. The picnic is a great way to get to know our volunteers better and get to know each other.

Please email thegreenreadbookstore@gmail.com if you would like to receive our bookstores’ email newsletters. Our newsletters are full of updates, events, sales, and sometimes coupons! Follow and share what we do on Facebook. Don’t forget to tell your friends and family, too! Word of mouth is the best kind of advertising.

Enjoy summer and don’t forget to bring a good book (or a puzzle!) with you to the beach, camping, on vacation, or even just in your own backyard!



Repair Before Replace

Pushing Back on Consumption

WRITTEN BY ASHLEY LANGE

A SUCCESSFUL REPAIR FAIR

In the age of ultra-capitalism, when an item is broken or damaged, it seems more economical to buy a replacement than to fix it. We're on a mission to encourage consumers to repair items before replacing them. In April, for the first time in McHenry County, MCC's Sustainability Center and EDMC collaborated to host our first Repair Fair. With the help of volunteers throughout the community, we offered free repairs on bicycles, lamps, small electronic appliances, and mending of clothes.

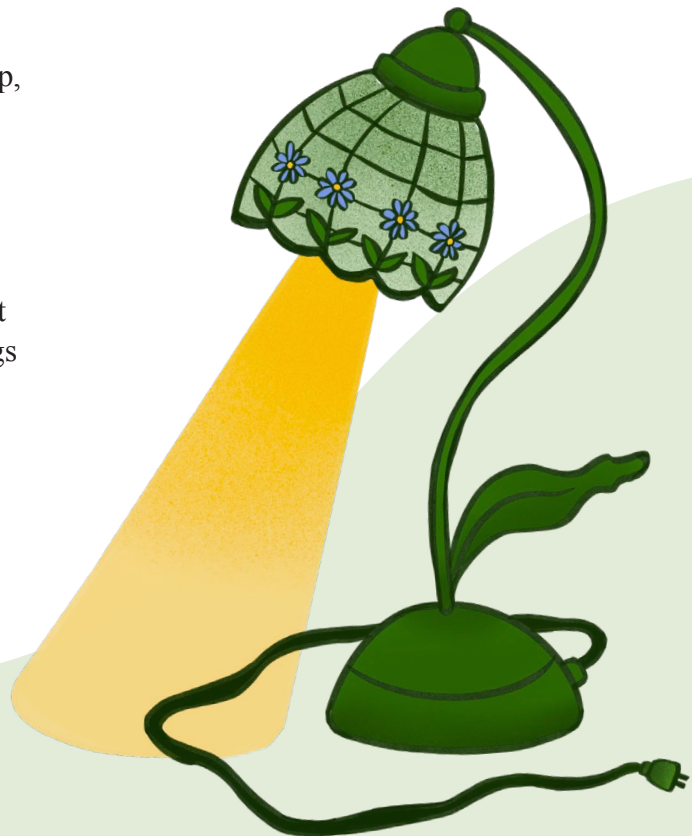
Not knowing what to expect, we were blown away by the success of the event. We helped thirty households and we repaired forty items. Our volunteers also diagnosed five items to be repaired with a new part, and only ten items were unable to be repaired. This was made possible by our wonderful volunteers who answered our call for help. Becky's Bike's in Crystal Lake represented a large portion of the volunteer group, assisting not only on bicycles but in all categories.

FUTURE REPAIRING

We have just begun planning for our second repair fair, taking place on November 1st, at MCC's Green Living Expo. We hope to have an even bigger impact at this event, given the large audience the Expo brings in. In addition to the services previously offered, we intend to add repairs on jewelry, eye glasses, and musical instruments. If you are able to assist with repairs in any of these categories, please email alange090@gmail.com for more information.

We hope that this endeavor will bring the community together through volunteer work and small business collaborations, all while diverting unnecessary, and potentially harmful, waste from our landfills. Along with repair services, our team is aiming to educate and rally the public in support of Right to Repair laws in Illinois. Right to Repair would require manufacturers to provide consumers and independent repair businesses with reasonable access to service information and affordable replacement parts, instead of requiring repairs to be directly through the manufacturer, where they have complete control over pricing. This has already been passed in five states, with the possibility of passing in Illinois in 2025.

We hope to see you at the Green Living Expo with your repair items in November!



Summer Garage Sale

Successful Fundraising and Finding

WRITTEN BY ANNE BASTEN

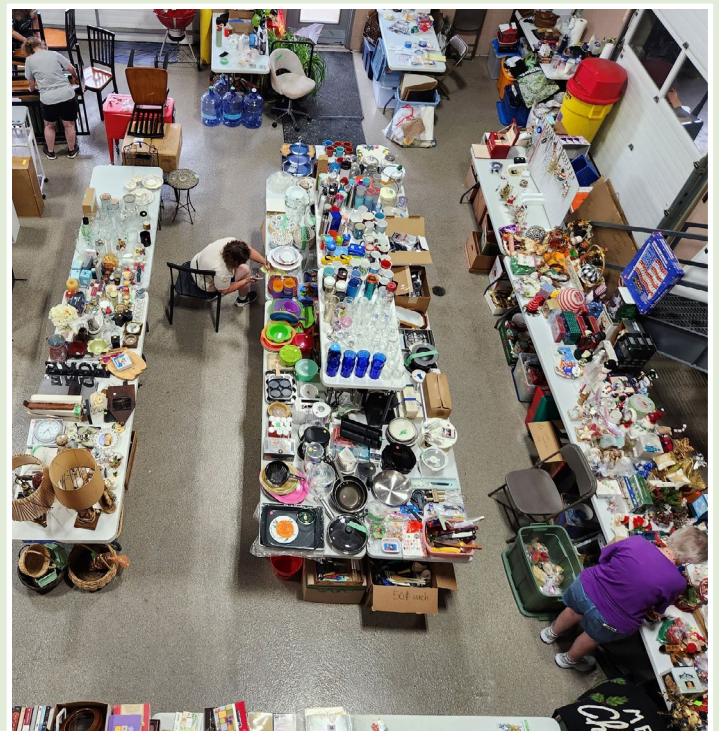
Once again this year, we had loads of donations for our Use-It-Again Garage Sale held annually at the Algonquin Road District Garage, as you can see in the photo. Fortunately, very few items ended up in the trash and most items got a second home!

Every year the sale provides people with the opportunity to donate their goods to be used again by someone else rather than putting them in the trash or sending them for recycling. The greatest percentage of items were sold, with the remaining items being provided to local charities for their fundraising purposes.

Thanks to all who donated and an especially huge thank you to all the volunteers who priced, arranged, and sold items, and helped to clean up the remains

at the end of the sale. The \$3,700 raised by the Fundraising Action Team, along with our other fundraising activities, will help fund the Defenders' utility bills and rent. If you would like to help with these activities, please contact the office. The Team would love to have your help!

***\$3,700 RAISED TO
HELP FUND THE
DEFENDERS ONGOING
EFFORTS IN THE
COMMUNITY***



Watershed Planning in the County

The Importance of Watershed Plans

WRITTEN BY SCOTT KUYKENDALL

Watershed planning is one of the most important methods of protecting water and sustainably managing land, but it seems that few people are familiar with this concept. The McHenry County Department of Planning and Development, with assistance from the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County and other stakeholders, are working to change that.

A watershed is a region of land that drains into a particular water body, such as a stream, river, lake, or ocean (*see Fig. 1*). The boundaries of a watershed are determined by the high ground surrounding the water body, which influences the direction that water will flow when it rains or snow melts. The size of the watershed area, which can be tiny or immense, is determined by the height and shape of land formations that define it.

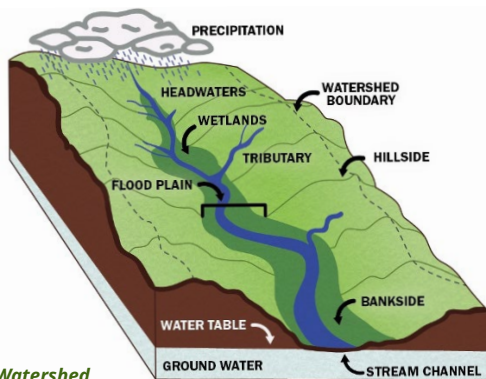


FIGURE 1:
Example of Watershed

Within each large watershed, there are usually many smaller sub-watersheds. McHenry County for instance has two main watersheds, the Fox River watershed and the Kishwaukee River watershed. The east half of the county drains to the Fox River and the west half drains to the Kishwaukee River. Within each of these large watersheds are many sub-watersheds formed around each of the smaller streams or creeks that drain to the Fox or Kishwaukee Rivers.

A watershed plan identifies the existing conditions within each watershed including the health of water bodies, the different types of land uses, and the potential sources of pollution. Watershed plans also identify specific actions or projects that can be taken to improve water quality or reduce flooding. These plans provide a solid roadmap for communities and other stakeholders to follow to make measurable improvements. Participation in a watershed plan can also help communities obtain funding for the projects identified in the plan.

McHenry County Planning and Development is in the process of preparing a strategy for a countywide approach to watershed planning. The primary goals of this planning effort are to better manage stormwater, improve water quality, protect groundwater aquifers, and reduce flooding throughout the county. Development of these plans will be a significant but rewarding effort that will require the participation of our communities, townships, and residents.

If you are interested in learning more about this fascinating subject or would like to be involved, you can visit the Watershed booth in Building C at the McHenry County Fair. You can also learn about watersheds and watershed planning at the Annual McHenry County Water Forum at the McHenry County College auditorium on September 10th, 5:30–8:00 PM. The Water Forum is an annual event that provides education on water resources in the county and is fully catered by Duke's Alehouse & Kitchen.

For more information, please contact Scott Kuykendall, McHenry County Water Resources Specialist, at 815-334-2863 or email at SHKuykendall@mchenrycountyil.gov.

The State of Federal Climate Change

Citizen's Climate Lobby

WRITTEN BY BETH HOLLAND

The United States Congress has formally known that greenhouse gases were warming the Earth's climate for nearly forty years. The Senate Energy Committee heard James Hansen's testimony in June of 1988. Hansen is a PhD physicist and was then director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies.

Thirty years later, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 was passed by a strict party line vote, our country's biggest investment in reducing climate change. The clean energy tax credits alone are expected to reduce carbon-based pollution by 40% by 2030. Its costs and benefits are described in the article *The Inflation Reduction Acts Benefits and Costs*, U.S. Department Of The Treasury published on March 1, 2024.

Now Congress is working on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that includes the end of many of IRA's clean energy tax credits. The House of Representatives has passed its version H.R.1 which would phase out tax credits for production and investments in clean electricity and nuclear power from 2029 to 2032. Additional tax credits ending this year are: home energy efficiency, heat pumps, the 30% for rooftop solar, and many for electric vehicles.

The Senate version eliminates many of these credits sooner—90 days after passage of the bill. Repealing the IRA would save the government around \$500 billion over the next decade, but would cost:

\$1 TRILLION IN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND AROUND \$2,000 PER AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD IN HIGHER ENERGY COSTS

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF LOST DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING AND CONSTRUCTION JOBS

REDUCED ENERGY SECURITY AND A HIGHER RISK OF BLACKOUTS

3 BILLION TONS OF CLIMATE POLLUTION AND THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN LIVES

The cuts being made that reduces climate-warming pollution, improves health, and increases jobs in Washington are not only to legislation. Executive orders have cut staff and budgets of government departments and agencies that relate to climate, pollution control, and fuel efficiency.

Critically affected is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a scientific agency whose work affects our safety, our everyday life, and the long-term health of our planet. Mandated by Congress, NOAA provides daily weather forecasts and warnings for tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, wildfires and floods. The National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center are part of NOAA.



Disaster and local officials depend on NOAA to advise the public on how to avoid danger. Farmers use seasonal outlooks for crop advice. Pilots use aviation forecasts. Private weather apps forecasts on phones and television are based on NOAA satellites, data and forecasts.

NOAA also does climate science research. Scientists and staff measure, study, publish, and store data about the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and ocean. This research is needed to follow the climate as it changes and is publicly available.

In February, when the Department of Government Efficiency cut jobs of probationary workers, 600 people at NOAA were fired. One researched which communities flood when it rains. Later plans are to eliminate 2,000, almost 20% of NOAA's workers.

There are now fewer weather balloons launched; some sites across the US, Pacific, and Caribbean have limited their daily 8AM and 8PM launchings. Cutting staff at NOAA limits its core work and opposes Congressional authority. The irreplaceable loss of data needed to understand and fight climate change jeopardizes our safety.

Other scientific research and environmental protections are being eliminated. The National Climate Assessment (NCA) is the most complete

and accurate information about how global warming affects the U.S. The NCA is mandated by Congress to be published every four years. It contains a summary of the best available science about the physics of climate change, its effects on the U.S. and how society is adapting. The 2023 edition reported the lower 48 states had warmed an average of 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1970. Examples of information in the NCA: the varying sea level rise in U.S. coastal cities, the normal amount of rain in different regions, how to deal with wildfire exposure, and local predictions of risk for communities. There will be no 2027 edition—in April the 400 scientists, economists, tribal leaders and climate experts writing it were dismissed.

Finally, two other examples of the elimination of climate protections include:

THE CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY (CAFE) NO LONGER IMPOSES A PENALTY ON MANUFACTURERS OF CARS AND LIGHT TRUCKS THAT DON'T MEET FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS.

IN MAY THE EPA REVOKED THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE WASTE METHANE CHARGE. THE LAW STANDS, BUT THE AMOUNT OF METHANE, AN EXTREMELY POTENT HEAT-TRAPPING GAS, RELEASED BY PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SYSTEMS WON'T BE MEASURED.

If you're concerned about climate change, consider that Citizens' Climate Lobby's mission is to create the political will for a liveable planet. You can:

TALK ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS

Of people polled around the world, 80–89% want their government to do more about climate change.

ASK YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO SUPPORT CLIMATE LEGISLATION

Take Action on Citizens' Climate Lobby's website. It's very easy and quick to call or email us at mchenry@citizensclimatelobby.org

VOTE FOR OUR PLANET

How many environmentalists did not vote in the 2024 presidential election? Eleven million!

Planting for the Future

Pollinator Gardens with C de C

WRITTEN BY NANCY SCHIETZELT & CINDY SKRUKRUD

Day campers from the Youth and Family Center of McHenry County spent two days during June's Pollinator Month expanding the pollinator garden in McHenry's Petersen Park. This is the third year these young people have teamed up with the Conversación de Conservación coalition to plant at this site. The kids took turns hauling mulch, pulling weeds, planting native flowers and sedges, checking for pollinators in the existing garden, and engaging in activities that taught them about flowers and pollination. Defenders summer interns joined the team leading the children in the various activities.

Conversación de Conservación is collaborative effort by groups that meet and plan special programs offered to the Latino community in McHenry County, which includes the Defenders, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County and McHenry County Conservation District. Small Waters Education designs the garden expansions and leads the planting effort.



Mayors' Monarch Pledge Update

2025 Update from McHenry County

WRITTEN BY CINDY SKRUKRUD

Great news! McHenry County represents 30% of all the signers of the 2025 Mayors' Monarch Pledge from Illinois. Each year members of the Defenders Water & Natural Resources Protection Action Team reach out to encourage local units of government to sign on. Every pledge signer must commit to conducting at least 3 actions designed to help monarchs and other pollinators in the course of the year and report on their activities before year's end. This year nineteen local units of government signed on: 17 towns, Coral Township and Crystal Lake Park District.

In June, the Environmental Defenders held a reception for the signers at which they each received a certificate of appreciation. There was much cross-pollination at the event as pledgers shared the actions they have taken and plan to undertake. Thank you to McHenry County for being a leader in helping the imperiled Monarch Butterfly, Illinois' state insect!

Read more about the Mayors' Monarch Pledge at nwf.org/mayorsmonarchpledge.



THANK YOU TO OUR LOCAL SIGNERS OF THE 2025 MAYORS' MONARCH PLEDGE

ALGONQUIN
BULL VALLEY
CRYSTAL LAKE
**CRYSTAL LAKE
PARK DISTRICT**

CORAL TOWNSHIP
HARVARD
HEBRON
HUNTLEY
JOHNSBURG

LAKE IN THE HILLS
MARENGO
OAKWOOD HILLS
PORT BARRINGTON
RICHMOND

RINGWOOD
TROUT VALLEY
UNION
WONDER LAKE
WOODSTOCK

PLEASE VIEW PHOTOS FROM AWARD CEREMONY ON OUR WEBSITE AT MCDEF.ORG/BLOG/

Be a Supporter of the Defenders

Donate While Saving on Taxes

WRITTEN BY CARL EDSTROM

As a grassroots organization, the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County has always relied on our members to support our mission – members who offer hours upon hours of donated time, pay annual membership dues, donate items to be sold in our bookstores and fundraisers, and generously give financial donations “above and beyond” annual dues. Everything our members have done, and continue to do, is greatly appreciated, and we thank you for your loyal support! We would not exist today without members like you.

Over the past several years, to further build our financial strength, we have been applying for grants to add income so we can fund more initiatives, pay our staff, and help cover the cost of rent and utilities for our bookstores and office spaces. In addition, several long-time members of the Environmental Defenders have introduced us to a new funding source by generously giving to the organization in a relatively “new” way: by making donations through IRA charitable rollovers, also called “qualified charitable distributions” (QCD). What is a qualified charitable distribution, why might you consider it, and what are the benefits?

Once you reach age 72, or if you turned 70½ in 2019 or before, you may be required to withdraw a certain amount of money from your tax-deferred retirement account each year – a required minimum distribution (RMD).

Since RMDs are taxed by the IRS as ordinary income, these normal withdrawals count toward your total taxable income for the year. They can effectively push you into a higher tax bracket and possibly increase the taxes you pay for Social Security or Medicare. A qualified charitable distribution - which is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian to a qualified charity (and the Environmental Defenders qualifies!) - can be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions for the year. And, since the amount donated is excluded from your taxable income, it actually makes it possible to benefit a charity of your choice while saving you money!

There are certain rules that must be met, and it’s best to consult with a tax advisor and/or your retirement fund administrator to determine exactly when you need to take RMDs and if a QCD is appropriate for your particular situation. Carl Edstrom, our Treasurer, can also provide direction on where to find more information.

If you qualify (or will soon), we hope you’ll consider this tax-free option to help us continue to defend the environment in McHenry County!

Welcome New Board Members



Elly Salazar

Elly is so excited and honored to be a board member with the Defenders! She has always loved all things nature. Ever since she put on her first “reduce, reuse, recycle” puppet show at 6 years old she has been invested in protecting the things she loves. Elly has a degree in environmental science with an emphasis in biological conservation from Drake University. She uses that degree every day at her job as a nature educator and school programs coordinator at a nature center in Rockford. Elly is a lifelong resident of McHenry County and recognizes the value of the community - both the passionate people and the wondrous green spaces! In fact, one of her favorite hobbies is birding in many of the many natural areas around the county. Elly also loves hiking, her cats, and singing in the McHenry County College Community Choir.



Kathy Slover

Kathy has a Master’s Degree in Nonprofit Management from DePaul University’s School for Public Service. Her career has focused on direction and management of programs for at-risk older adults and community outreach to marginalized and unhoused individuals. She has presented at the Illinois Governor’s Conference on Aging and the American Society on Aging Conference.

Kathy has lived in McHenry County since 2008 and enjoys its unique character. She joined the Defenders shortly after moving here. She is an active donor and volunteer for several local organizations, including The Land Conservancy, WPPC, the Food Shed Co-op, the Cary-Grove Food Pantry and Young at Heart Senior Pet Adoption.

She values native gardening, conservation and recycling, and lives by motto, “reduce, reuse, recycle.” She also is on a mission to visit all the U.S. National Parks (49/63 thus far) and to complete a half marathon this year. Kathy lives in unincorporated Algonquin with her partner, Michael, and a variety of pampered pets.

A Note from our Director

Summer is in full bloom here in McHenry County, and so are the efforts of our passionate Action Teams. I'm incredibly proud of the impactful work being carried out across the county thanks to your support, volunteer hours, and shared dedication to protecting our environment.

At Pedalpalooza, the Transportation Action Team proudly represented the Defenders while advocating for bike-friendly, low-emission transportation options. Events like this remind us that every trip we make, especially on two wheels instead of four, is a chance to protect our air, reduce congestion, and support healthier communities.

Our annual Use-It-Again Garage Sale was once again a tremendous success! Thanks to hundreds of donated items and a truly dedicated team of volunteers, we raised vital funds to support our mission, all while promoting reuse and keeping perfectly usable goods out of the landfill. This event is more than just a fundraiser, it's a celebration of community-based sustainability, and we're grateful to all who participated.

Our Recycling Drives continue to give residents meaningful ways to dispose of hard-to-recycle items responsibly—from electronics to textiles and everything in between. By offering these regular events throughout the Summer and Fall, we're making it easier for our neighbors to do the right thing—and keeping tons of waste from ending up in landfills.

With the growing success of our subscription-based composting program, more McHenry County households are turning their food scraps into soil-saving compost. This initiative is a simple but powerful step toward waste reduction and climate action, and we invite everyone to sign up and start composting with us!

There's no better way to connect than over live music and a shared passion for nature. Our Outreach Team has been out at the First Friday Concerts with the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD), meeting new faces and reconnecting with longtime supporters. These relaxed, fun evenings are a wonderful way to raise awareness about our work and inspire action in the community.

Another exciting achievement this season was nineteen McHenry County local governments signing on to the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors Monarch Pledge! This is a huge step toward preserving pollinator habitat across our region. These commitments will lead to more native plantings, public education, and monarch-friendly practices countywide. We're deeply grateful to our local leaders for taking action.

From recycling and composting to advocacy and education, every project reflects the spirit of the Defenders: grassroots, community-powered, and deeply committed to making a difference. None of this is possible without our volunteers, members, and partners thank you for continuing to stand with us.

Here's to a summer of action, connection, and a greener McHenry County.

With deep appreciation,

Erin Kennedy



OUR VOLUNTEERS REPRESENTING THE DEFENDERS AT PRIDE IN JUNE



BOARD MEMBER ZAK DOLEZAL PRESENTING AT GREEN DRINKS IN JUNE



DEFENDERS BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF ON A BISON TOUR WITH MCCD AT PLEASANT VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA IN MAY

Our Team

DEFENDERS' STAFF

Erin Kennedy
Executive Director

Grace Turcich
Manager of Communication & Membership

Pam Johnson
*Manager at The Green Read
and the Green Spot*

Diane Greenman
*Assistant Manager at The Green Read
and The Green Spot*

DEFENDERS' OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

Bev Dow *President*

Kim Compton *First Vice President*

Kim Hankins *Second Vice President*

Carl Edstrom *Treasurer*

Zak Dolezal *Secretary*

Rico Rotta

Ken Santowski

Ashley Lange

Elly Salazar

Kathy Slover

ABOUT EARTHCONNECT NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly by The Environmental
Defenders of McHenry County
LOC, ISSN# 1938-9795

114 S. Jefferson Street, Woodstock IL 60098
815-338-0393 | www.mcdef.org

Calendar

Summer/Fall Events of 2025

JULY

FRI 25 | BMP Talk & Tour: Stream Restoration for Flood Reduction and Water Quality

1 – 3PM at Dixie Creek in Algonquin

JUL 29 – AUG 3 | McHenry County Fair

Join us at our booth!

AUGUST

TUES 5 | Teachers' Night Out with MCSEEP

5:30 – 8pm at The Green Read

SAT 9 | Defenders' Picnic

12 – 3PM at Pleasant Valley Conservation Area

SUN 10 | Monarch Family Fun Fair

12:30 – 4PM at Crystal Lake Park District Main Beach Pavilion

FRI 15 | BMP Talk & Tour: Successful Natural Areas Management for Homeowner Associations

1 – 3PM at McAndrews Glen Subdivision, Bull Valley

SAT 16 | Moss & Marrow Tattoo Fundraiser

More information to come

SEPTEMBER

WED 10 | McHenry County Water Forum

5:30 – 8PM at McHenry County College Auditorium

SEPT 20 – OCT 4 | Big Fall Book Sale

Algonquin Township Road District

FRI 26 | BMP Talk & Tour: Water Reuse in McHenry County and Beyond

1 – 3PM at Village of Huntley's West Wastewater Treatment Plant

OCTOBER

FRI 24 | BMP Talk & Tour: Keeping Children Safe from Toxic Pavement Sealants

1 – 3PM. LOCATION TBD

RECURRING EVENTS

GREEN DRINKS First Wednesday of Every Month

5PM – 7PM | Duke's Alehouse & Kitchen

In-Person and on Zoom. Presentation begins at 5:45

STERNE'S FEN RESTORATION WORK DAY

Fourth Sunday of Every Month

9AM – 11AM | 5617 Hillside Dr, Crystal Lake

Environmental Defenders of McHenry County

114 S Jefferson St.

Woodstock, IL 60098



Open Monday – Saturday 10am – 4pm

CLOSED SUNDAY

815-527-7122

110 S. Johnson Street, Woodstock IL



Open Monday – Saturday 10am – 5pm

CLOSED SUNDAY

779-220-4945

61 N. Williams St, Crystal Lake, IL



One of the easiest ways to donate to The Environmental Defenders is by contributing to EarthShare in your workplace charity campaign. Talk with your employer or contact the Environmental Defenders at 815-338-0393.

Follow us on our Socials



@ENVIRONMENTAL_DEFENDERS

@ENVIRONMENTALDEFENDERS

@GREENREADBOOKSTORE

@THEGREENREAD