



SHELL PIERCE

## Field of Dreams

Students in Neighborhood Food Solution's PEAT program will get first-hand experience growing nutritious food this summer at our new Pasley's Swan Creek Farm in Fitchburg.

*By Mike Ivey, excerpted from the February 7, 2019 Isthmus*

There's a blanket of snow covering the vacant fields south of Madison along County MM but the heavy equipment stands at the ready, waiting for spring when work will continue on a major housing development in the city of Fitchburg. But across from the development site, on Goodland Park Road, Groundswell Conservancy has teamed up with long-time organic food advocate Robert Pierce on a unique project that will combine natural resources protection with the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

Robert will use a portion of the 36 acres recently acquired by Groundswell for a program called Farming After Incarceration Release, or FAIR. The idea is to engage recently-released felons in urban agriculture to create economic opportunity for them and their families. "Growing food can change the perception of how people see themselves," says Robert, executive director of the nonprofit Neighborhood Food Solutions. Robert will also use a portion of the land for his Program for Entrepreneurial Agricultural Training, or PEAT, which aims to get a younger generation involved in the urban farming movement. It includes a summer employment program that provides an opportunity for low-income or at-risk teens to learn new skills. "We've had to move around a lot," Robert laments. "I've gained land, lost land, but never had any of my own."

That's where Groundswell comes into the picture. "What we can offer Robert is land security," said Jim Welsh, Groundswell's Executive Director. In December, Groundswell purchased the 36 acres from fourth generation landowner Brian Pasley. Money for the purchase was provided by a combination of the Dane County Conservation Fund, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the estate of Marie Fraser, several anonymous donors, and Groundswell.

"You have two goals accomplished here. You're protecting an important natural area and making sure farmers, in this case farmers of color, have access to land", said Jim Welsh.

FIELD OF DREAMS *continued on flap*





## More to love at Patrick Marsh

Dineo Dowd loves Patrick Marsh. “It’s like a dream come true to live right next to such beautiful land. The trails are well maintained and it’s a peaceful land to walk all year around.” Dineo should know; she and her family are Sun Prairie residents and avid explorers of great local places. She is also the Madison representative for Hike It Baby, an organization dedicated to getting families together in nature with birth to school-age kids. And the good news is that in October we purchased 25 acres on the northwest side of Patrick Marsh. The land

occupies a low hill rising above the wildlife viewing platform and main trail into the wildlife area.

The City of Sun Prairie will be the long-term owner of the property. Sun Prairie Mayor Paul Esser has been a strong advocate for adding this land to Patrick Marsh. “I am so pleased that the purchase has been finalized. This addition to Patrick Marsh will benefit the people of northeast Dane County for years to come while providing much needed habitat for many members of the wildlife community.”

Groundswell, Patrick Marsh Conservancy, and our volunteers will partner with the city to plant the land to prairie. It is also a great place to add a scenic overlook and trail tying into the existing trails at the marsh. If you’d like to help with the restoration, please contact [Tony@groundswellwisconsin.org](mailto:Tony@groundswellwisconsin.org).

We are thankful to the landowner, Tom Hanley, for selling the property to us at a discount. And many thanks to these funders for their financial support: Dane County Conservation Fund, City of Sun Prairie, State of Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Town of Bristol, Patrick Marsh Conservancy, Token Creek Watershed Association, Bart and Shirley Klotzbach, Florence Schmitt, Samuel and Lynne Dennis, Jr., and supporters of Groundswell. We are especially grateful for our partnership with Patrick Marsh Conservancy over the years. This acquisition is a big win for Patrick Marsh. Thanks for your part in making it happen. ●



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## Landowners protect beloved farms

Thanks to the leadership of two families, in December the Town of Dunn and Groundswell added two more farms to the Town’s Rural Preservation Program.

One of these newly protected farms is owned by Roz and Bill Gausman, long-time dairy farmers in the Town. Their pasture-based dairy operation was ahead of its time and their milk has been used to make artisan cheeses here in southern Wisconsin.

Over the last 21 years, our partnership with the Town has resulted in the preservation of 30 farms totaling more than 3,200 acres of prime farmland, woodlands, and wetlands.

Our sincerest thanks go to the landowners who have permanently protected their farms for future generations. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provided important funding to purchase the agricultural conservation easements protecting the farms. And thanks to the residents of the Town of Dunn who have made their Rural Preservation Program an amazing success and funded these easements with their own tax dollars. ●



## Eagle conservation soars

Rivers connect places—and places connect people. One of these special places is Ferry Bluff State Natural Area, a critical winter congregating area for bald eagles within the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. There are only three winter concentrations in all of Wisconsin, and Ferry Bluff is the only communal roost on the Lower Wisconsin River that has gained significant long-term conservation protection.

Last November, with help from the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council—the nonprofit group that performs eagle research, develops educational programs, and leads eagle-watching tours—Groundswell purchased a 31-acre parcel of land adjacent to Ferry Bluff. The conservation minded landowner wanted the land to remain natural and undeveloped for the benefit of the entire community. We hope to donate the property to the state as an addition to the state natural area.

Thank you to the individuals, businesses, and foundations listed on our website at [groundswellwisconsin.org/ferrybluff](http://groundswellwisconsin.org/ferrybluff) who contributed half of the funds to purchase the property. The other half of the funds came from the State of Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. ●

## Persistence pays off in Oregon

Overlooking the Village of Oregon lie 59 acres of rolling fields and forest. Landowners Pat and Patricia Hermesen bought the property in 1984 and have thoroughly enjoyed this special place since then. But it wasn't enough for Pat and Patricia to just enjoy the property; they wanted to ensure that future generations in the community would be able to relish this area, too. A public conservation park would be an ideal way to do that.

"We thought that by donating this land other people could use it as well as we can for entertainment, and relaxation, and education," said Pat Hermesen. To start the process they reached

out to Groundswell Conservancy to help them achieve their goal. Sometimes, conservation easements happen quickly. This easement took almost four years of persistence. Pat and Patricia kept focused on their vision until finally, on December 11th, their property was permanently protected.

The Hermesens intend to donate the property to the Village for a park when they no longer live there. The conservation easement will ensure that the land remains undeveloped as a conservancy park. Their generosity and persistence will be a boon to the community for years to come. ●





## ON THE LAND

Groundswell enthusiasts enjoyed the Wisconsin winter around bonfires with friends and neighbors at Patrick Marsh and Westport Drumlin.

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## We are sorry that we left some of you out!

In our 2017-2018 Annual Report, the following supporters should have been listed under \$500-\$999. We apologize for these omissions.

Johanna & Mike Alex  
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Vicki Elkin & Mike Ivey  
Ferry Bluff Eagle Council  
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We protect special places, forever. Our vision is a world filled with green places where communities thrive.

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Robert Pierce of  
Neighborhood Food  
Solutions

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## FIELD OF DREAMS How you can help

Would you like to play a role in providing land security for immigrant and minority growers? Your help will be important for this new partnership with Neighborhood Food Solutions to succeed. The same is true for our work with Hmong farmers at our Westport Farm next to our Westport Drumlin preserve. Thanks to a grant from Madison Community Foundation, we have partnered with Community GroundWorks to develop a system of leases with the Hmong farmers. Both farming sites need infrastructure improvements such as water, electricity, and sheds – this is where you can help! For more information or to give a gift, visit [groundswellwisconsin.org/landforfood](http://groundswellwisconsin.org/landforfood) or contact Heidi Habeger at 608/258-9797 or [Heidi@groundswellwisconsin.org](mailto:Heidi@groundswellwisconsin.org) ●



As a Legacy Circle member, you are crucial to protecting our special places for future generations. Learn about your options for adding Groundswell Conservancy to your estate plans, including bequests, IRA or life insurance beneficiary designations, and more by contacting Heidi Habeger at [heidi@groundswellwisconsin.org](mailto:heidi@groundswellwisconsin.org) or (608) 258-9797.



## Donate for your chance to win

There are so many good reasons to give to Groundswell Conservancy. Give a gift of any amount this spring, between April 15 and May 31, 2019, and you will be entered in a drawing to win two tickets to Lake Wisconsin Cruises! Sustaining members (monthly givers) are automatically entered. Visit [groundswellwisconsin.org/drawing](http://groundswellwisconsin.org/drawing) for official drawing rules. Give online at [groundswellwisconsin.org/donate](http://groundswellwisconsin.org/donate) or send in the form below. We all win when we make conservation a priority! ●

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Payment Method: ☐ Check (payable to Groundswell Conservancy) ☐ Credit Card

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Contributions are tax-deductible as provided for by law.*

Please fill out this form and return to: Groundswell Conservancy, 303 S Paterson St, Suite 6, Madison WI 53703





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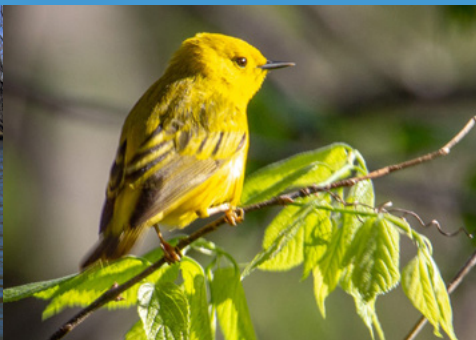
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## Places worth knowing

Join Groundswell Conservancy outside and get to know the places you help protect. Our expert-led outings offer you unique opportunities to enjoy and learn about our wonderful landscape while meeting others who share your commitment to conservation where you live. Our field trips are free of charge but pre-registration is required. Reserve your spot online today at [groundswellwisconsin.org/events](http://groundswellwisconsin.org/events).



BEN JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



SCOTT MAURER



MARIO QUINTANA

### Sugar River Paddle

**Saturday, April 27**  
**1 pm – 5 pm**

Explore the Sugar River with former Groundswell Conservancy Board President, Willi Van Haren, as your guide. You'll learn about the special places protected in the Sugar River area. Everyone is responsible for bringing their own equipment.

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### Annual Bird Walk

**Sunday, May 19th**  
**8:30 am – 10:30 am**

Join us for a morning walk at the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve with birder Marty Evanson. Hear our origin story of how citizens saved the 3.4 acre Wally Bauman Woods on the shore of Lake Mendota.

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### National Trails Day Hickory Hill Hike

**Saturday, June 1**  
**10 am – 12 pm**

Groundswell is joining the movement of National Trails Day. Join us as we hike a forested section of the Ice Age Trail at Hickory Hill in Cross Plains. Our guide, Kevin Thusius, will point out the unique features of this area.

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