



Our 2019 Prairie Partners Interns (left to right): Tucker Sanborn, Dane McKittrick, Calla Norris, Margaret Johnson, & Rachel Mortensen.

## Prairie Partners Interns Restoring Habitat Once Again!

**“Our job is to sharpen our tools and make them cut the right way...” – Aldo Leopold**

Each summer, Groundswell partners with Madison Audubon Society, Lakeshore Nature Preserve, Pheasant Branch Conservancy, and Pope Farm Conservancy to hire five undergraduate interns to restore wildlife habitat at each partner’s site. Rain or shine, the interns work five days a week from May-August with each of their site supervisors.

Groundswell’s habitat restoration sites include Westport Prairie and Patrick Marsh. Located east of Waunakee, Westport Prairie is a small remnant of the former 150,000-acre Empire Prairie which stretched across northern Dane and southern Columbia Counties. Patrick Marsh, on Sun Prairie’s eastern doorstep, is a prairie, savanna, and marsh landscape. This picturesque marsh is home to pods of white pelicans, a siege of herons, and rafts of waterfowl.

Every other Monday and each Tuesday, our Prairie Partners intern crew throws on their work gloves and spends the whole day restoring the land. This year they were removing invasive herbaceous plants like garlic mustard and giant ragweed as well as cutting back invasive brush like honeysuckle and buckthorn. Where there once was an impenetrable wall of honeysuckle on the base of the drumlin at Westport Prairie, there is now open, oak-savanna habitat.

The 2019 Prairie Partners intern crew joins us from UW-Madison (Margaret Johnson, Tucker Sanborn, Dane McKittrick, and Calla Norris) and UW-Stevens Point (Rachel Mortensen). The internship provides invaluable hands-on experience with habitat restoration that will further their careers.

This internship program would not be possible without the financial support of this year’s crew sponsors: Mary Binkley & Dennis Petzke, Nancy & Lou Bruch, Nancy & Wes Carter, Doug & Sherry Caves, Nancy Heiden, Les & Susan Hoffman, Susan & Conrad Jostad, Mark & Sarah McGuire, Jim & Rumi O’Brien, Cary & Scott Reich, Mark Smith & Dan Rigney, Don & Joanne Tierney, and Darcy Kind & Marc Vitale. ●

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## Another Town of Dunn farmer protects land

In March another conservation-minded landowner permanently protected their farmland in the Town of Dunn south of Madison. The farmer entered into a permanent conservation easement – a voluntary land protection agreement – with the Town of Dunn and Groundswell Conservancy. This agreement ensures that the rich soils on the farm cannot be developed and will remain available for farming now and in the future.

The residents of the Town of Dunn have made conservation a priority by providing funding for this conservation easement through the town's Rural Preservation Program.

Ed Minihan, the Chair of the Town of Dunn said, "This property is proof that the PDR program works. Here, we have a young farmer that wanted to purchase his own farm in the Town of Dunn and expand his business. The money he received through the PDR program made this dream economically feasible."

This 80-acre farm is now part of a larger protected landscape. About 13% of the Town is permanently protected from development through the partnership of landowners, the Town, and Groundswell. ●

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## Groundswell welcomes two new board members



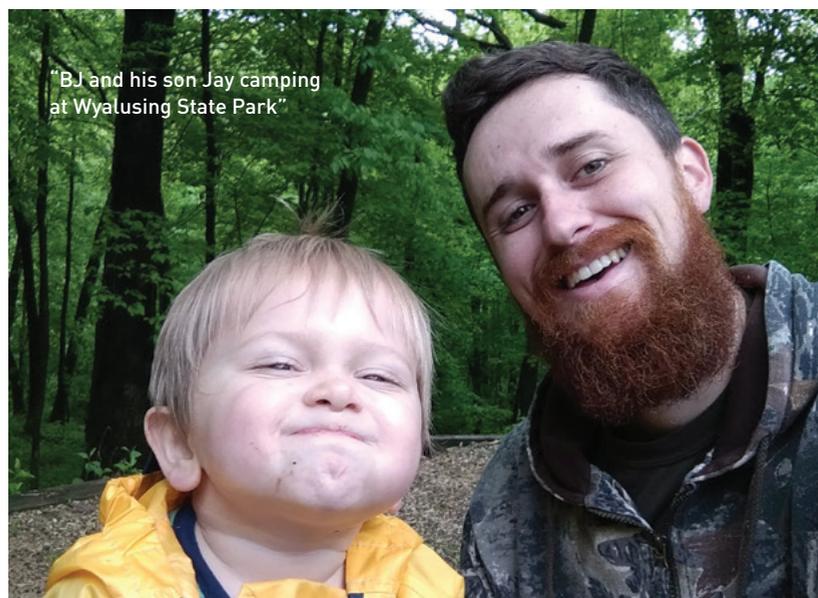
**Tracy Wiklund** recently retired from a 32-year career at UW-Madison. As a department administrator, her responsibilities included budgeting, human resources, financial oversight, facilities management and planning. She holds a BS in Accounting and a MS in Management. Tracy lives in a rural township near Madison with her husband and dog on 16 acres of restored prairie. For over a decade she served as a member (and then Chair) of the town's Land Trust Commission, preserving farmland and natural areas through the town's Purchase of Development Rights Program. Tracy enjoys painting (canvas, not walls), volunteering on the UW Credit Union's Audit Committee, and spending time outside trying to keep honeysuckle and aspen out of the family prairie. "Scientific research is showing that human health improves from exposure to nature. These days, nature's health seems to also need humans - as advocates, champions, protectors. I'm honored to be part of nature's best advocate, Groundswell Conservancy."



**Curt Bjurlin** is an environmental practitioner who leads Stantec Consulting Inc.'s U.S. power business. He holds a Master of Science degree in wildlife biology from Utah State University. For the past 13 years, he has worked in the energy sector, conducting renewable energy and transmission line siting and civic group discussions. Curt spent the first ten years of his career researching threatened and endangered species throughout the United States. He has published numerous scientific papers on the ways in which desert tortoises and San Joaquin kit foxes interact with transportation and energy infrastructure. In his free time, he enjoys cross country skiing, gardening, and canoeing. He lives in Madison with his wife, Alex, and their twin boys. "I'm excited to service on the Groundswell Conservancy board because I believe people can achieve their best selves if they spend time in nature." ●

Carole and Don Schmidt were gracious hosts of our **Town of Dunn Food Cart Night** on August 14th. Protected forever, their prairie was a picturesque setting for Groundswell supporters and the many others who joined us, including Michael and Carol Smith, pictured here. Thank you to these food carts for donating a percentage of their proceeds to Groundswell: Fast N Fresh, Soho, Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream and Karbon4 Brewing.

Thank you to our sponsor:  **SVA | Financial Group**



"BJ and his son Jay camping at Wyalusing State Park"

## Meet BJ Byers

As our new Conservationist hired in March, BJ Byers has his sights trained on Westport Prairie and Patrick Marsh. He intends to ensure that those landscapes are ecologically sound, as well as enjoyed both by people and by wildlife. He also looks forward to supporting community conservation projects. For example, he is overseeing the drilling of a new well at Westport Farm, so the Hmong growers there no longer have to bring water from offsite to irrigate their crops. His duties include other community engagement efforts, as well as work with our conservation easements.

BJ brings a master's degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Wisconsin, where he conducted research on grassland birds. His love for birds led to employment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he worked one-on-one with private landowners to restore native prairie, savanna, and wetland habitats. His job was partially funded by Ducks Unlimited, and in that capacity he wrote and administered North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants. This included two \$1,000,000 grants, and Groundswell Conservancy was a partner for one of those.

Although he has lived in Wisconsin for several years, BJ grew up in a military family that lived in 4 states and 3 countries. Wherever he lived, BJ was drawn to the outdoors. He enjoys fishing, hunting, canoeing, hiking, birdwatching, and vegetable gardening.

BJ's favorite bird is the northern flicker, and he counts Rachel Carson among his conservation heroes. He shares a love for birds with his wife Carolyn and their young son Jay (named after the bird). ●



ROBERTA HERSCHLEB

Tenny Albert perfecting his cast.

**ON THE LAND**

On a perfect July morning at Salmo Pond, Bill Sonzogni, our fly fishing instructor, emphasized to Groundswell supporters that trout fishing wouldn't be possible on Black Earth Creek if it weren't for conservation efforts.

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We protect special places forever.  
We want everyone to live in a world filled with green places where communities thrive. We believe that land is essential for people's physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. If we don't protect land now, it may be lost forever.

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Andy Yang is one of the 9 farmers raising vegetables, fruits, and flowers at Westport Farm.



## Westport Farm gets boost from Madison Community Foundation

Madison Community Foundation has helped us achieve many goals over the years. Thanks to a new \$19,000 grant, we are well on our way to improving land security for a group of Hmong farmers at Groundswell's new 10-acre Westport Farm in Waunakee.

"We've participated in a lot of exciting projects through the years, but I honestly can't think of any that serve so many purposes and help so many hard-working people as the Westport Farm," said Jim Welsh, executive director of Groundswell Conservancy. "This is a wonderful partnership between the Hmong growers, Peg Whiteside who generously sold the land to us, Community GroundWorks, and MCF".

MCF has a track record of funding projects with both Groundswell Conservancy and Community GroundWorks but this one is unique, says Tom Linfield, MCF's Vice President of Community Impact. "We are excited to be part of this project, which develops infrastructure, governance, self-determination and long-term land stewardship for a group of local farmers," he said. "The effort combines environmental stewardship and education with a culturally-inclusive approach to the Hmong community, who may not often be included in local planning efforts yet have a powerful agricultural background and knowledge. This grant enriches not only the county's environmental sustainability but also recognizes the riches of our increasingly diverse community."

The grant is helping us work with the Hmong growers to add infrastructure like a well and create long-term leases that will give them security on the land. Grower Mai Chang says that the project will enhance her connections to the fertile fields north of Madison which date back 14 years. "Every time I'm out at the land tending to the vegetables I've grown out of love, I'm so happy," she said. "I feel this enormous weight lifted from my shoulders." ●



### Can you volunteer at our trail run in October?

The annual Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run will take place on Sunday, October 20, 2019. The 8K and 16K courses near Sauk City take runners through restored prairie, hardwood forest, and a pine plantation above the Wisconsin River valley. Proceeds help Groundswell protect the special places you love. If you would like to help with parking, registration, or water stations, please contact Danni at (608) 258-9797 or [danni@groundswellwisconsin.org](mailto:danni@groundswellwisconsin.org).



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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).

### Token Creek Food Cart Night

Thursday, September 12  
5:00 - 7:00 pm



Food AND nature, what a combo! Join Groundswell Conservancy at Token Creek County Park for a Food Cart Night as part of Land Trust Days. Purchase your food and then find a spot to settle

in to enjoy the picturesque setting at the park with friends and neighbors. ●

Thank you to our sponsor:



### Ephemeral Art

Friday, September 20  
4:30 - 6:30 pm

Let your creativity go wild at the Ephemeral Art experience this fall. Our guide, Sonya Sankaran, will lead you in art projects that use the natural elements found in the plants and minerals at Patrick Marsh. ●

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