



A Phoenix Rises at Patrick Marsh

Metal artist Don Schmidt holds a piece of the flames that will surround the phoenix sculpture.

For the last year many of us strengthened our connections with nature. We visited our local natural areas to hike trails. We paddled kayaks and canoes from launches and sat in grassy patches to enjoy a picnic. The trails, boat launches, and the land itself supported our connections to nature.

This spring at Patrick Marsh, Groundswell will unveil an interactive sculpture to support everyone's connections to nature through art. Designed by students at Sun Prairie's Prairie Phoenix Academy and Westside Elementary School, the sculpture depicts a phoenix rising out of flames. The students chose this design to represent their feelings about nature, resilience, second chances, and personal and community growth. For them, beauty can rise through adversity.

Don Schmidt, a metal artist and conservation easement landowner in the Town of Dunn, brought this sculpture to life. The phoenix stands more than twelve feet in the air above steel flames.

Groundswell invites you to visit the sculpture on the south side of the marsh and weave flowers, grasses, and branches into the metal flames. We will burn them away each winter. Each spring we will start anew.

Thank you to these supporters for making this sculpture possible: Anonymous, John and Judith Hutchinson, Tim and Beth Mielcarek, and Ann and Ron Semmann. ●

PROTECTED FOREVER



Jay Loewi, Fred Wolf, and a canine companion on the Wolf Run Trail.

Wolf Run Trail

Stream health, flood control, and the potential for a longer bike/hike trail were the ingredients that landowner Fred Wolf mixed together in November for a new streambank and trail easement on Halfway Prairie Creek. Located on the east side of the Village of Mazomanie, this ten-acre easement has two main purposes: streambank restoration and extension of a popular hike/bike trail.

The easement joins the Wolf Run Trail that links Mazomanie with Wisconsin Heights School. It is part of an ambitious trail that will one day connect Madison and Middleton with Sauk City, passing through Cross Plains, Black Earth, and Mazomanie.

Mazomanie is located near the bottom of the Black Earth Creek watershed and is especially vulnerable to flooding as our climate and land uses change. The community was hit very hard during the big flood in 2018. The easement allows the county to work with Fred to restore more than 1,000 feet of Halfway Prairie Creek, reconnecting the creek to its floodplain and improving fish habitat. Mazomanie Village Administrator Peter Huebner said that the easement is important to the village: “This easement along Halfway Prairie Creek/Spring Valley Creek would be a great benefit for the Village of Mazomanie. The benefits are twofold: it will increase the creek’s effectiveness of holding back floodwaters, and the resulting trail will add to the enjoyment of those that already use our trails.”

This is the second time that Fred Wolf has protected land for the public good. As Fred put it, “I am just proud to be part of this work. It is in my family blood to do this. I saw an 80-year-old couple on the trail, with smiles on their faces. That is why I do this.”

Dane County funded the purchase of the easement. Groundswell co-holds the easement with the county and is responsible for annual monitoring of the easement to ensure that its conservation rules are upheld. ●

More land protected in Town of Dunn

Last fall, the Town of Dunn and Groundswell permanently protected 53 acres of farmland in the Town. In 23 years of partnership with the Town, we have protected 33 farms. Behind each of these farms is an individual or family who knows the value of land. Each of them has chosen to leave a legacy of land protection. Last November, John Gefke left his legacy.

We thank landowner John Gefke for protecting his farm for future generations. Funding to purchase the conservation easement that protects the farm was provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Groundswell supporters, and residents of the Town of Dunn. This is the latest conservation success for the Town’s Rural Preservation Program. ●



The Prairies Expand at Patrick Marsh and Westport Prairie

This summer you and the birds will enjoy five more acres of grassland at Westport Prairie. Our dedicated volunteers spent a bright winter morning in February spreading prairie seed on the snow. Once the snow melts and spring arrives, the seeds will germinate and begin to send roots deep into the soil. This planting was made possible by a grant from the Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund, a program sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to expand quality wildlife habitat. The grant allowed us to hire Kaylee Nelsen to collect the seed last year and also to contract with Quercus Land Stewardship Services to remove invasive brush from a nearby oak woodlot.

This year restoration work at Patrick Marsh has moved to the west side of the marsh. Thanks to the John C. Bock Foundation, the hard work of Quercus Land Stewardship Services, and our volunteers during cold winter weather, there is a lot less invasive brush around the kettle pond. Nearby trees have been removed from the vicinity of a 25-acre field where Patrick Marsh Middle School students will plant prairie this fall. The new planting will provide a beautiful transition from prairie to oak savanna to wetland. However, in order to plant 25 acres of prairie, we need 25 acres of prairie seed. This is where the generous help of Ron Endres and Dane County Parks volunteers comes in, with their donation of all of the native prairie seed needed for the planting. We're so excited for what's to come in 2021! ●

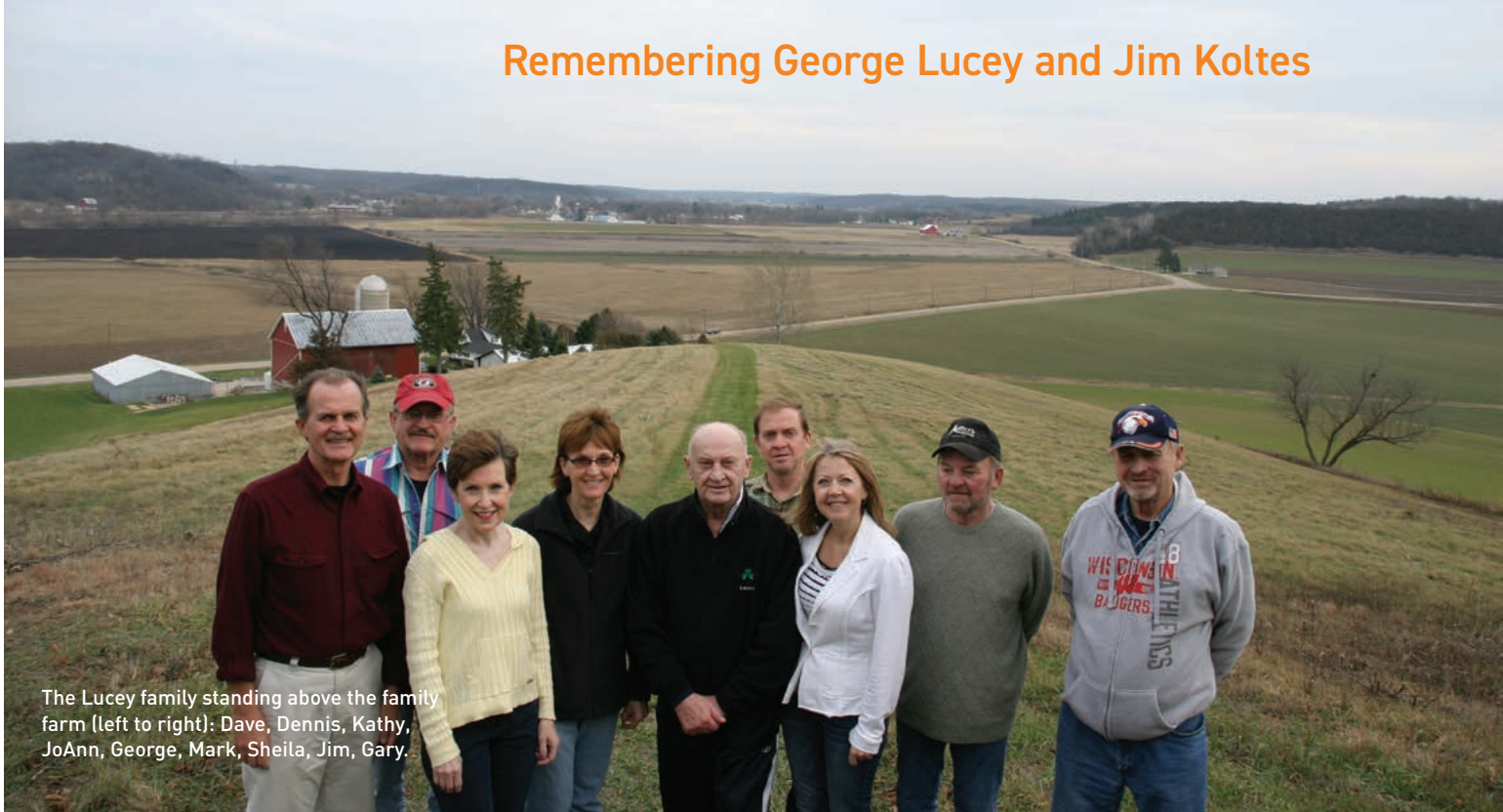
Groundswell Conservationist BJ Byers with a car full of seed donated by Ron Endres and Dane County Parks volunteers for planting at Patrick Marsh.

RON ENDRES



ROBERTA HERSCHLEB

Remembering George Lucey and Jim Koltes



The Lucey family standing above the family farm (left to right): Dave, Dennis, Kathy, JoAnn, George, Mark, Sheila, Jim, Gary.

The Black Earth Creek valley in western Dane County has some of the most productive farmland in Wisconsin. George Lucey considered himself extremely fortunate to acquire the 180-acre Ryan Farm when it came up for sale in 1967. With this land being used for crop production, he and two of his sons were able to expand the dairy and hog operation on the home farm, Pork-N-Pines Dairy, Inc., a mile away. Acquiring this land allowed George to continue the family enterprise into the next generation.

As he neared retirement, George often contemplated what would happen to the 180-acre farm. He worried that it would eventually be divided and developed like much productive farmland in Wisconsin. When he learned there was a program that would guarantee this land would remain productive in perpetuity through a conservation easement, he talked with Kate Wipperman and Caleb Pourchot from Groundswell. They felt that the quality of the land and its location, with the Black Earth Creek on the eastern edge and the Black Earth Rettenmund State Natural Area to the south, made it a very desirable parcel to protect. It became permanently protected in 2012 with the signing of the conservation easement. Many times before his passing in November, George stated that it was one of the actions of which he was most proud. Groundswell made it all possible.

— Dave Lucey, one of George's seven children

I had been working for Groundswell for just a few years when Mark Martin (then a DNR Conservation Biologist) invited me to meet Jim Koltes. Jim and his brothers

owned a farm on the south side of Westport Drumlin, an incredibly rich 15-acre prairie remnant and state natural area east of Waunakee. At that meeting Jim shared newspaper clippings and stories about his life, the first of many memorable conversations I had with Jim over the years before and after he and his brothers sold us their 110-acre farm south of the Drumlin. Jim died in November, but his stories live on. He leaves an impressive conservation legacy; the farm holds three prairie remnants. The farm is now the center for our restoration work at our 227-acre Westport Prairie preserve.

As Jim told me in 2010, he and his brothers had seen offers to buy the farm for quarry operations. But Jim said he never wanted to see the land developed or turned to gravel. "I'm glad it's getting preserved forever," said Koltes. "I think I'll visit as long as I'm able." And he did. For many years he was a welcome guest at our field trips and events. He fascinated us with stories about growing up in Waunakee (where he was a standout on the football team), the hard work of farming tobacco for 40 years, and his abiding love of land. Jim was an apostle of land conservation — perhaps you read some of his letters to the editor in the *Capital Times* about why we need to conserve the land that nurtures us.

The next time you visit Westport Prairie and see the old lilac bush, the silos, and the tobacco shed that remain from the Koltes farm, I hope that you will think of Jim and what he made possible.

— Jim Welsh, Executive Director



Jim Welsh and Jim Koltes
at Westport Drumlin.



Norman Anderson is
second from the right.

Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future

The founders of Groundswell Conservancy changed our world in 1983, creating an organization where people could come together to protect wonderful parts of the landscape that define our community. I am incredibly grateful to everyone listed below who gave a memorial gift to honor one of those founders, Norman Anderson. Their gifts established the \$80,000 Norman Anderson Conservation Opportunities Fund. This fund will help us capture conservation opportunities that are beyond our normal financial reach and allow us to continue preserving special places and providing equitable access to land and water.

Norm, who died last June, served as our first president. His leadership provided our new land trust with credibility and opened the doors for success. Some of our other founders, Bill O'Connor, Jean and Walter Meanwell, Nancy Heiden, and Joe Sensenbrenner, worked with Norm Anderson in those early years to establish our organization. I can't thank them enough for initiating the appeal to honor Norm's leadership and preserve his remarkable conservation legacy.

— Heidi Habeger, Director of Major and Planned Gifts

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Protecting Land for the Next Generation of Nature Heroes – Funding is at Risk!

Wisconsin's long-time and incredibly successful land acquisition program – the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program – will expire in July unless we take action now.

For more than 30 years, the Stewardship Program has helped land owners, communities, and land trusts like Groundswell permanently protect great places like Cherokee Marsh and the Black Earth Creek valley here in Dane County and across the state.

Please help save the Stewardship Program by contacting your legislators now. Please let them know how important Wisconsin's great outdoors are to you, your family, and your community.

A fun, effective, and easy way to contact your legislators is to send them a picture postcard of your favorite place in Wisconsin! It just takes a few moments to upload your photo and say why you care about land. To send your postcard, visit: knowlesnelson.org/take-action

Thanks for doing your part to ensure that the next generations of Wisconsinites will have a state that they can be proud of. ●

Spring into action... and your gift will be MATCHED

Spring calls us back to nature and fills our sails with warmer winds. Give back to nature this spring with a gift to Groundswell. Your gift will be matched (up to \$7,500) if you give by June 30. You make it possible to connect our community with nature and preserve and restore our area's natural beauty with a donation. Give online at groundswellwisconsin.org/donate or visit groundswellwisconsin.org/waystogive for more options. Checks should be mailed to Groundswell, 303 S. Paterson St, Suite 6, Madison, WI 53703. ●



BEN JONES



Groundswell Maintains National Recognition

One thing that unites us as a nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the open spaces they love. Since 1983 Groundswell has been doing just that for the people of southern Wisconsin. This winter we earned renewal of our accreditation with the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, demonstrating our commitment to professional excellence and maintaining the public's trust in our conservation work.

Groundswell's long-time volunteer Nancy McGill once again provided yeoman's service in preparing us for re-accreditation. The next time you see Nancy, please thank her for all she does for the special places in and around Dane County. ●



Author Dineo Dowd and her daughter Armani read Dineo's story on a hike at Patrick Marsh.

Story and Poetry Hikes at Patrick Marsh

Our 2021 field trip series kicked off in February with a self-guided story hike at Patrick Marsh featuring the children's book *Sunset Hike* by local author Dineo Dowd. In March, we partnered with Sun Prairie schools to create a poetry hike at the preserve. Students of all ages from Sun Prairie schools got creative and wrote poems inspired by nature. We hope these self-guided hikes inspired you to get outside and connect with the outdoors through the power of words. ●

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ON THE LAND

TradeRoots farming at Pasley's Swan Creek Farm

From a culinary startup at Badger Rock Neighborhood Center kitchen, passion for food and giving back to the community is never-ending for TradeRoots, LLC. Their love of food expands the idea of farm-to-table with a focus on culinary and agriculture education.

This year TradeRoots will pilot their AfroDiaspora Gardens project at our Pasley's Swan Creek Farm in Fitchburg. The project will reflect African growing techniques and culinary practices that are culturally relevant to the Black community. Educational materials created from the project will be available to the public and the production yields will be donated to communities in need of food. ●

Teb Txhawb Siab Lifting Hearts Therapeutic Garden

With no choice but to flee persecution because of allegiance to America during the Vietnam War, Hmong families can never return to a place they once called home. Those who live to tell their stories survived, but will never forget.

Many Hmong elders are living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression because they survived non-stop trauma nearly their whole lives. Gardening is a therapeutic antidote to these disorders. It is a lifelong activity for the elders and is resistant to memory loss. Gardening also allows the elders to feed their families, contributing to their sense of worth and connecting them to nature.

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, Hmong elders have been socially isolated at home and the isolation has increased their feelings of meaninglessness. In partnership with the Southeast Asian Healing Center, this year Groundswell is creating access to land for therapeutic healing for Hmong elders living with PTSD, depression, and dementia. The one-acre therapy garden will be located at our Westport Farm east of Waunakee. ●



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 undeveloped land now, it may be lost forever.

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Places worth knowing

Get outside safely this spring with Groundswell's self-guided and virtual field trip series. We hope these opportunities encourage you to spend more time outdoors as the weather gets warmer.



Earth Day Scavenger Hunt

April 19 – 25, 2021

Take a closer look at nature this Earth Day with a free downloadable scavenger hunt! You can join in the fun in your backyard, local park, or anywhere you like. Learn more at groundswell-wisconsin.org/events.

Virtual Birding

May 5 – 16, 2021

Calling all birders and new-to-birding! Groundswell's annual bird walk will be virtual. Join the Groundswell Birding Facebook Group to collaborate with friends, neighbors, staff, and volunteers to report on birds observed locally. Post lists and photos of the birds you see from May 5 to 16 as we appreciate the magic of the spring migration. Check out www.facebook.com/groundswell.wi for more info.

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