

A photograph of four people, three women and one man, standing in a field of tall grass and pink wildflowers. They are all wearing backpacks and work clothes. The woman on the far left is wearing a blue t-shirt with 'AUGUST' on it. The man on the far right is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a yellow cap. The other two are wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a pink long-sleeved shirt respectively. They are all smiling at the camera.

## Prairie Partners Interns: Boots on the Ground

Ben Jones

### BJ Byers, Land Management Director

2023 marks the 12th year of the Prairie Partners internship program! Oh, how time flies when you're outside all summer sweating and getting eaten alive by insects (and doing important conservation work all the while). Once again, Groundswell has partnered with Madison Audubon Society, Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Friends of Lakeshore Nature Preserve, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh to employ interns to restore local land. But the program is about a lot more than just land work. These paid internships also give students the chance to learn about land management practices, gain hands-on work experience, and give back to their communities.

From May to August each year, our five undergraduate interns are in the field working hard. They lace up their boots, put on their work gloves, and spend each day restoring land at a different partner's site. When working on Groundswell sites, the crew alternates

Mondays at Westport Prairie and Patrick Marsh. While the work activities change throughout the season, the mission to remove invasive plants stays the same. Tasks include pulling garlic mustard and sweet clover, digging up wild parsnip, and cutting back aggressive trees and shrubs like buckthorn and honeysuckle.

Groundswell's participation in this internship program is possible thanks to support from: Mary Binkley and Dennis Petzke, David Boutwell, Nancy and Lou Bruch, Nancy and Wes Carter, Doug and Sherry Caves, Nancy Heiden, Susan and Conrad Jostad, Jim and Rumi O'Brien, Cary and Scott Reich, Mark Smith and Dan Rigney, Don and Joanne Tierney, Lorette Wambach, and Susan and Les Hoffman.

We're so proud of our Prairie Partners intern crew. We look forward to seeing them do great things in their future conservation careers. Here's to the next 12 years!

*Left to right: Maurisa Perez, Emma Thogmartin, Krister Martensson, & Paul Millan (Katie Porubcan not pictured)*



# Good News for the Wisconsin River Valley

Protecting special places forever is always a team effort. We recently had the pleasure of teaming up with The Prairie Enthusiasts, along with two conservation-minded landowners, to help protect 40 acres of land in the Wisconsin River Valley.

When Wisconsinites think of their landscapes, they rarely envision sandy areas where cacti could thrive. So, it may be surprising to learn that within the Wisconsin River Valley, such an ecosystem has survived the changes of the last century and is now permanently protected by The Prairie Enthusiasts.

With the help of Groundswell, this 40-acre parcel, now named Giordano Oak Barrens and Sand Prairie, was donated to The Prairie Enthusiasts by Ron and Darla Giordano on May 16, 2023. Groundswell led negotiations with the owners, made arrangements for and helped cover costs associated with the closing. With help, in part, from a generous donation provided by the Giordanos to support initial management of the site, The Prairie Enthusiasts can now ensure the continued vitality of this area.

The Giordanos took an interest in the area many years ago. For ten years, they called the original owner twice a year, asking if he was interested in selling. When the day finally came, the original owner asked to meet the Giordanos to ensure they were people

who would care for the land. Satisfied with the Giordanos' intent, he sold them the property, and they quickly began making improvements.

They contacted the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to survey the land and understand its history. They planted trees and removed dead brush. Their stewardship was driven by their goal for the land to be a haven for the natural world and for others to enjoy its splendor.

The property has a beautiful view overlooking Lake Wisconsin and the Merrimac Railroad Bridge. It also has various native ecosystems that were once common but are now rare.

We are grateful to the Giordanos, The Prairie Enthusiasts, and the many volunteers who helped protect this property for generations to come. Current and new volunteers will now work to bring the ecosystem back to sand prairie and oak barrens, its original condition when the Ho Chunk Nation was caring for the land for thousands of years.







*Landowners  
Ron & Darla  
Giordano pose  
with The Prairie  
Enthusiasts  
Executive  
Director Debra  
Behrens*

The Prairie Enthusiasts

## The Town of Dunkirk is a Special Place

**Tony Abate, Conservation Director**

With its rich farm soils and miles of Yahara riverbank, the Town of Dunkirk is a special place. That's why we're partnering with Dunkirk to protect the rural character of the Town. Located southeast of the City of Stoughton, Town of Dunkirk residents voted to protect the Town's rural character through a Purchase of Development Rights program. This program, funded by a tax on residents in the Town, helps purchase development rights to keep farmland farmland and open spaces open. Each purchase protects the property with a conservation easement.

Groundswell and the Town are evaluating potential projects as they arise. Groundswell will help raise additional funds and complete land deals. As properties are protected, the Town and Groundswell will work together to monitor them annually. Groundswell is excited to build a new partnership with the Town of Dunkirk.



Renee Lauber





## New Tractor for Westport Prairie

**BJ Byers, Land Management Director**

We did it! Groundswell is now the proud owner of a brand-new Holland Workmaster 50 tractor, and we couldn't have done it without you! Each year we plant more acres of prairie at Westport Prairie. These newly planted acres need to be mowed two to three times per year for the first couple of years to eliminate weeds and allow sunlight to reach the tiny prairie seedlings. We'll use our new tractor mainly for maintenance mowing in our newly planted prairies. We'll also use it to mow the various trails at Westport Prairie. We're so excited to get outside and put it to good use for wildlife habitat!

BJ Byers

**A special thank you to these supporters for making the purchase of a tractor and mower possible!**

Terri Beck-Engel  
 Scott & Dawn Bethke  
 Lois Curtiss  
 Phyllis Davis  
 Mike Foy & Carrie Morgan  
 Karl Gutknecht & Susan Hunt  
 Green Bay Packers Foundation  
 Stan Kanter  
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## Give the Gift of Protecting Special Places

### Pat Wende, Volunteer & Supporter

It's a material world, or so it is said. Tradition dictates giving gifts to our loved ones for every life event - giving more THINGS! Do we need more things? I, for one, don't! How about you?

Donations show your humanity and desire to make a difference in the world. Making charitable donations in honor or memory of your loved ones enriches your life by focusing on the positive impact you can make. This giving brings a feeling of satisfaction and joy to both you and the recipient.

Groundswell has made giving in someone's honor easy. Go to [groundswellconservancy.org/donate](http://groundswellconservancy.org/donate) and check the box that says, "I'd like to make this gift in honor or memory of someone special." Groundswell can send an e-card or greeting card to the honoree on your behalf. Mother Earth and Groundswell will thank you.



# We've Moved!

We're excited to share that we've moved offices! Our new address is:

**211 S. Paterson St., Suite 250  
Madison, WI 53703**

To better fit our growing team, we moved to a bigger space in the building next door to our old office. You might recognize it by the large metal bird sculptures ("Dreamkeepers" made by Thomas Every) out front.

In addition to having more space to work, we also have great new neighbors! We now share a building with Gathering Waters, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and Madison Audubon.

If you recently mailed something to our old address, we'll still get it. Our mail will be forwarded to our new location for a while longer. Our phone number, 608-258-9797, remains the same.

Liz Pelton



## Ben Lam, Outreach & Events Coordinator

Ben shares the stories and the news happening at Groundswell. He also coordinates the events that give you a chance to visit some of the special places that Groundswell and our supporters protect. Ben earned his B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at Clemson University. Before joining Groundswell, he was the Sustainable Events Manager at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center. Prior to that, he was the Education Program Coordinator at the International Crane Foundation. In his free time, Ben enjoys birding, cooking, playing video games, or hanging out on the couch with his cat, Pistachio.



## Ann Vaj, Outreach & Technical Assistance Manager

Ann provides outreach and technical assistance to HMoob farmers to connect them to farmer programs, grants, loans, and other resources. The daughter of HMoob refugee parents who came to the United States in the early 1980s, she has lived in Wisconsin for much of her life. Ann graduated from Mid State Technical College and holds a Financial Services Technical Diploma, Associate Degree in Supervisory Management, and is certified as a Nursing Assistant. She is currently a board member for the HMoob American Association of Portage County and a Community Action Board Member for Marshfield Hospital. Ann became invested in supporting HMoob farmers through agriculture, securing farmland, and food security while working at Central Rivers Farmshed where she served as the Sib Pab Program Lead.



### **Lizzie Condon**

Lizzie is the Director of Science and Climate Programs at the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, & Letters. Lizzie grew up in the Chicago suburbs and received her degree in biology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She then completed her master's degree at the University of Minnesota. She has a strong background in ornithological field studies, as well as outreach and advocacy for environmental causes. Lizzie worked for the International Crane Foundation prior to joining the Wisconsin Academy. She volunteers for the Feminist Bird Club Madison Chapter, Eken Park Neighborhood Festival, and Big City Mountaineers.



### **Susan Hoffman**

Following a career as an English teacher, reading specialist, and district reading coordinator, Susan has continued her involvement in public education and community engagement through tutoring, online teaching, and maintaining a blog promoting literacy in the home. She was instrumental in the development of the DeForest Area School District's "Big Hill" school forest and continues her commitment to preserving and maintaining natural areas through local volunteer work throughout the seasons. The author and illustrator of two children's books, Susan relaxes with a paintbrush or book in hand when she's not gardening, baking, hiking, or traveling.



### **Todd Shucha**

Todd is an educator with over 30 years of experience. This year, he's entering his 25th year of teaching life sciences at his alma mater, Waunakee Community High School. He is a University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point graduate, with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and broad-field life sciences education. His passion is for getting students into the outdoors to help them understand and care for their world. With the exception of five years, Todd has lived his entire life in Wisconsin, enjoying the abundance of natural wonders the state has to offer. He currently lives in DeForest, with his wife and two college-aged children. Todd enjoys landscaping, walking the family dog, camping, hiking, and paddling.



### **Sara Walling**

For nearly 20 years, Sara has worked at the nexus of agriculture and water quality, applying conservation principles and policies to agricultural systems in the Great Lakes. She is currently the Water & Agriculture Program Director for Clean Wisconsin where she works to protect and improve the quality of our state's lakes, streams, and groundwater. Prior to joining Clean Wisconsin, Sara spent nearly 15 years at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Sara holds a Master of Science in Land Resources & Environmental Sciences from Montana State University-Bozeman and a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources & Water Quality from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Sara lives in Madison with her husband, two teenaged sons, and two dogs. She enjoys kayaking, gardening, fishing, camping, and hiking.



### **Forrest Woolworth**

Forrest has been a champion of all things entrepreneurial in Madison and a leader in the startup community for over a decade. He is COO of PerBlue, a mobile games studio started from a college apartment that now entertains millions of players around the world. Forrest was a founding team member of StartingBlock Madison and served as board co-chair, co-founded Capital Entrepreneurs, and was a founding organizer of the Forward Festival. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a double major in Computer Engineering and Computer Science. Forrest enjoys spending time in and helping conserve natural spaces around Madison and throughout the Driftless area.



On a beautiful summer morning in July, Groundswell partnered with the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin to host a special birding field trip at Patrick Marsh. We spotted 45 species and felt lots of bird joy! A special thanks to Dexter Patterson and Dr. Jeff Galligan for leading this event and for the important work they do to make nature more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Mario Quintana



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## MISSION

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 all people's physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. If we don't protect undeveloped land now, it may be lost forever.

## HMoob vs. Hmong Terminology

Liz Pelton, Development Coordinator

Have you noticed that we've been using the term HMoob instead of Hmong lately? Throughout written work, the HMoob people and language have been categorized under the generic term "Hmong." However, the HMoob people and language represent a diverse group of communities and identities. The term "HMoob" was created by community members as a more inclusive word that encompasses two main dialects, Green and White.

To be more inclusive of the different communities within the larger HMoob community, Groundswell will use the term "HMoob" in writing going forward. Even though the spelling is different, the English pronunciation is the same (muhng).



Roberta Herschleb

## Leave a Legacy

Want to do even more to conserve land for generations to come? Join Groundswell's Legacy Circle by leaving a gift to Groundswell in your will or estate plans. To learn more about your options, contact Heidi Habeger at [heidi@groundswellconservancy.org](mailto:heidi@groundswellconservancy.org), call (608) 258-9797, or go to [groundswellconservancy.org/legacy](https://groundswellconservancy.org/legacy).





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Newsletter designed by Jeff Weyer

Groundswell Conservancy strives to use equitable language in our written communications. If you have feedback about how we can improve, please contact Liz at [liz@groundswellconservancy.org](mailto:liz@groundswellconservancy.org).

## Places Worth Knowing

Celebrate Groundswell's 40th anniversary this year by attending an event! Reserve your spot today at [groundswellconservancy.org/events](http://groundswellconservancy.org/events).



### New Moon Hike at Picnic Point

Ben Jones

Saturday, October 14, 2023

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Soak in the beauty of the New Moon along the shore of Lake Mendota. Former board member Mary Binkley will lead an evening hike on the wooded trails near Groundswell's first protected property in the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve. We'll hike out to Picnic Point and enjoy a bonfire with s'mores on the lakeshore.

Thank you to our sponsors:



### Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run

Roberta Herschleb

The annual Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run will take place on Sunday, October 22. 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 Ben at (608) 258-9797 or [ben@groundswellconservancy.org](mailto:ben@groundswellconservancy.org). Sign up to run at [wisconsintrailruns.com](http://wisconsintrailruns.com).