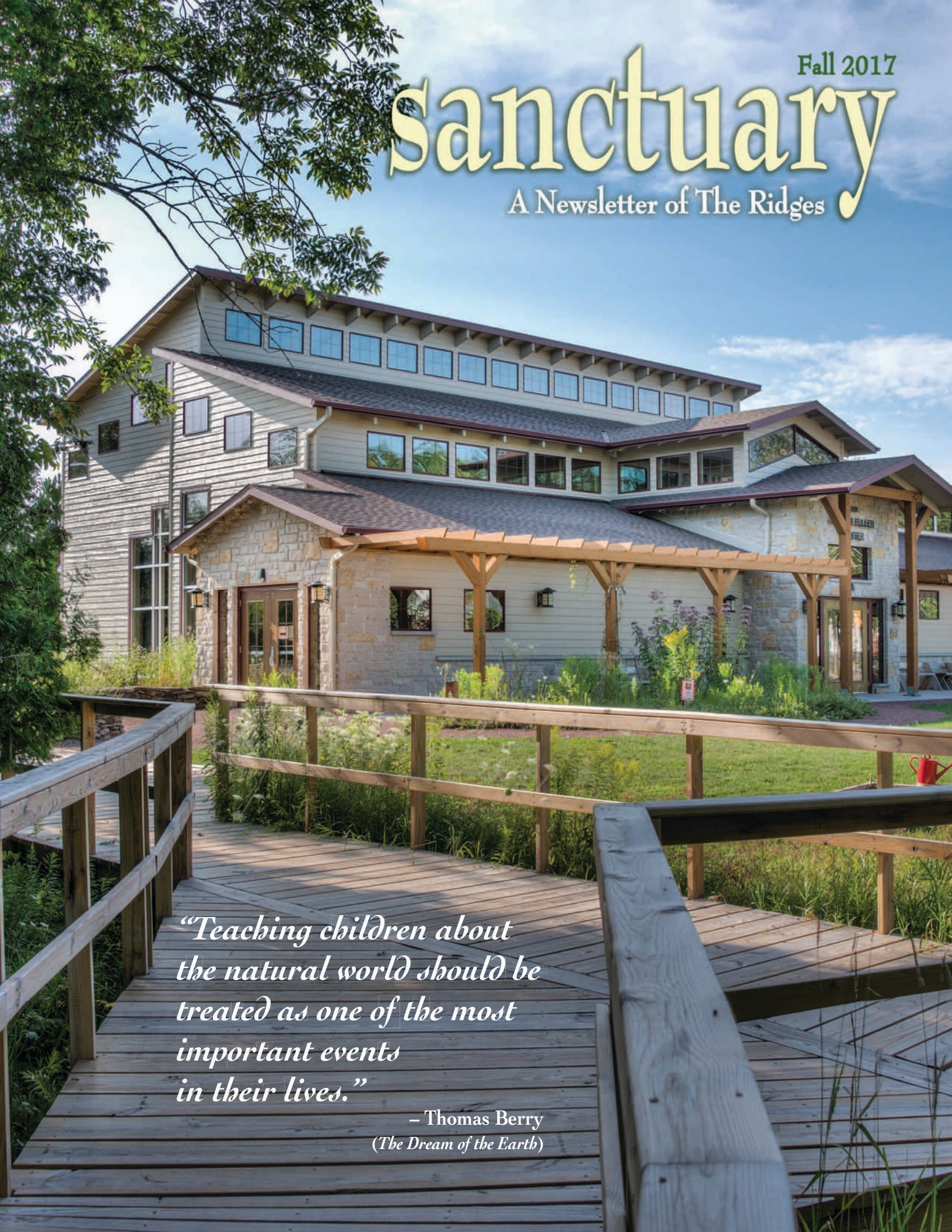


Fall 2017

sanctuary

A Newsletter of The Ridges



*"Teaching children about
the natural world should be
treated as one of the most
important events
in their lives."*

– Thomas Berry
(*The Dream of the Earth*)

*The mission of the
Ridges Sanctuary is to
protect the Sanctuary and
inspire stewardship of natural
areas through programs
of education, outreach
and research.*



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Fall 2017 - Vol. 44, Issue 2
Cover photo by Boldt Company



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From the Nature Center

Naturally ... Education

In this issue of the *Sanctuary*, we highlight one of the three pillars of our mission, **education**.

Since our founding in 1937, education has been at the forefront of all we do. From bringing youth up from Milwaukee to visit the area in the 1930s, to Family Camp in 2017, education is a critical component of our mission.

This year we have started a number of initiatives in the realm of education. At the forefront are the Family Discovery Areas. Situated both indoors and out, these areas include several stations that have been created for children of all ages to learn, create, and discover different aspects of the natural world. Led by our program directors, families now have more learning options at The Ridges than ever before.

In July, The Ridges held its first ever Family Camp. Sixteen grandparents, parents, and children took part in everything from fire building & kayaking to hiking &

wilderness survival skills. Participants appreciated the opportunity to create new bonds with their family members as well as the others who participated. We plan to hold this program again in 2018, building off of our success this year.

Perhaps the most popular educational program we provide is our guided hike. This summer (May – September), nearly 1,200 people participated in a guided hike. This two-hour program, held daily, focuses on the flora and fauna of The Ridges as well as its cultural and natural history. With participation up 16% over last year, this program continues to be more popular than ever.

The Ridges will continue to be a resource for those who are interested in environmental education. Thank you to all who support this wonderful place and its mission!

Steve Leonard, *Executive Director*
steve@ridgessanctuary.org



Taking Learning to The Ridges

Sheryl Honig,
Environmental Educator

What is learning? Learning happens when we are inspired to deepen our understanding about something. Children come to The Ridges for field trips, for summer camp, or for a day with their families. In each case, children find a fertile ground for learning. Why is this so? It is because learners learn best when the content is inspiring, interconnected, and language rich. Ridges experiences offer all of the above!

I have seen firsthand how The Ridges inspires learners of all ages. I have walked in the sun-dappled forest with a young child whose gaze is transfixed on the crown above, and who murmurs, "It's just so beautiful! I will remember this forever!" I have seen a courageous four-year-old set out across a log with the words "keep my balance, don't be scared;" upon reaching the other side, a loud STOMP proclaims her confidence. These powerful experiences inspire children to connect with the essence of the woods. Suddenly they are hungry for distinctions between Green Frogs and Wood Frogs, or the songs of Chickadees and Black-throated Green Warblers.

Once we have the learner's attention, how do we frame content so it is whole, or interconnected? In the classroom of the forest, learners experience a natural habitat that makes sense. Here we have trees and shrubs growing where they naturally occur, among neighbors that are complexly inter-

related. They learn to look for the Grass of Parnassus blooms in the same place they once marveled at the Arctic Primrose. They come to expect to see moss covering cedar root mounds

beside Marsh Marigolds. They know the Wood Frog will be in the leaf litter because he looks like leaf litter! In such a setting of obvious connections, children even have the capacity to consider the underground magic of fungus connected to tree roots, orchids, and mushrooms. Instead of learning isolated factoids about plants and animals, children at The Ridges learn about the Boreal Forest as a whole, interrelated, complex thing!

Why is the language of learning in the environment so important? Language mediates understanding. Parents know that rich vocabulary is crucial for learning in school. At The Ridges, children have opportunities to see and touch and talk about things like "tamaracks," and they do so in relation to sedges and marsh marigolds, crayfish burrows, and Hines Emerald Dragonfly larvae. Ridges staff immerse learners in authentic opportunities to use the language of the Boreal Forest. Because children are up close to these plants and animals, their language learning is highly contextualized – in other words, it is REAL to them. This makes learning powerful.



Learning at The Ridges is everything we wish school science could be! It is fresh, inspiring, rich, and meets each learner at a place that is personally relevant so that it deepens his understanding.

Because this kind of education is so powerful, the effects are long-lived. We are passionate about the educational impact The Ridges programs have on young and old alike. We share this precious Sanctuary with all learners who walk on our trails, with the vision that they will walk through life in harmony with the natural world.



Not Just a Walk in the Woods



Bill Wolff,
Ridges Board Member & Hike Leader

So, just what is a guided hike at the Ridges Sanctuary in Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin? To me it is not just a walk in the woods, but an experience with many layers and discoveries. I have learned the difference in the 12 years that I have lived full-time in Door County. I am a city boy from the suburbs of Chicago. When I retired to Door County after a career as a high school teacher in those suburbs, my idea of hiking in a park was an opportunity to take a walk and get some exercise. I enjoyed being outdoors and getting some fresh air as I exercised. How much I missed in those early walks.

My eyes were opened, however, on my first guided hike at The Ridges. These walks were like experiencing a many-layered landscape. Suddenly the woods came alive with so many different things to be seen and enjoyed. The trees, the flowers, the birds, the insects, the mushrooms, the scented plants, the landscape, the geology, the sounds, the silence all entered my consciousness like a flowing river. I found myself seeing and experiencing all of this for the first time.

Each time I went out for a walk with a naturalist, my mind was opened to all that was around me. It challenged me to learn something new and to appreciate all there was to know about being in nature. I began to identify trees and flowers, the sounds of birds, the patterns of nature and the changes that occur almost daily in a living forest. It amazed me to pay attention to how flowers go through their lives during the spring, summer, and fall. How they change almost daily and how each gives way in its time to another flower at that particular time of the year.

More than just experiencing the natural world in all its glory, however, there was suddenly the opportunity to learn about how this all happens. I learned to understand the fragility of the environment. About how important it is to appreciate, respect, and care for nature in every way. I learned about my relationship to all this creation. About how it could be and is abused by all of us. I began to think about my responsibility to the present as well as the future generations who will call Door County home or to just visit. I became aware of my role as protector and conservator.

Once aware of my role in this relationship with nature, I also understood my role now in helping others. It was now my responsibility to share with both young and old, that they must take this responsibility seriously and begin to make a positive impact themselves.

As a hike leader at The Ridges, I have come to the ultimate understanding of the value of a guided hike. I can pass on not only the knowledge of the nature around us that we see and experience, but I can also pass along the understanding of our role in this wonder. Hopefully my greatest contribution to others as we hike would be for them to open their eyes as I did and come to realize that they are the caretakers and advocates of the future both here and at home. They must be advocates for the preservation of the great gifts of nature that we all can enjoy.

The relationships formed, the common bonds created, and the learning that takes place is what keeps me coming back to lead guided hikes. It's not always about how many plants you can memorize or identifying what bird just made that sound, it's about the importance of understanding why we must protect and preserve our natural environment. In the 1930s a group of individuals witnessed first-hand the importance of The Ridges and fought to save this wonder land from development. We must honor those individuals and do the same today.

I look forward to the next multi-layered experience once again, as we walk through The Ridges together.



Conservation Champions

Katie Krouse,
Program Coordinator

Why is it our duty to be the champions of conservation? What would a species of concern do without our help? What would the world look like without bats, pollinators or raptors? This year we piloted a Conservation Champions series to answer these questions. The sole purpose of this series is to educate the public on conservation initiatives and promote the protection of critical species.

BATS

Jennifer Redell, WDNR bat biologist, joined us in October to teach us about the importance of our amaz-



ing superheroes of the night sky. Wisconsin bats have been exposed to the white-nose syndrome which inhibits their ability to hibernate properly and has resulted in a dramatic decrease in

many bat populations. Citizen Science programs are essential for learning more about populations and how they are affected by the white-nose syndrome. By getting involved, we can help to champion these bat populations back to their glory days.

POLLINATORS

Pollinators are responsible for many aspects of our everyday life. From pollinating the fruits and vegetables that we consume, to keeping our natural habitats beautiful and lush by pollinating our flora, pollinators are essential to our environment. Imagine a walk through The Ridges Sanctuary and not experiencing the abundance of orchids such as the yellow lady's slipper or the grass pink. Or imagine Door County without cherries! All of these items, and thousands more, rely on insects for proper pollination.

Marge Trocki, from the Downers Grove Park District, stopped by to educate us on another pollinator that we all know and love: honey bees. Honey bees are capable of yielding products that we value as well as aid in the pollination of crops and native plants.

It is important for all of us to do what we can to protect local pollinators. Every action we take has a cascading effect on our ecosystem. If everyone were to plant a small pollinator garden, we would help improve populations of bees, flies, butterflies and beetles, which then supports birds that actively feed on these native pollinators. We can all make a difference!



RAPTORS

Throughout the country, bird sanctuaries are doing what they can to rehabilitate and educate the public on our masters of the food web. Open Door Bird Sanctuary (ODBS) does just that. ODBS partnered with The Ridges to show off some impressive birds while educating individuals on the importance of each species in our local habitats. I stop in my tracks every time I see a peregrine falcon or red-tailed hawk gearing up to make its rapid descent to the ground for its catch of the day. Raptors are a vital part of our ecosystem and food chain. By supporting organizations like ODBS, we continue to provide an opportunity for individuals to learn about the importance of key species in our ecosystem.

There is still work to be done. In order for the mosquito eating bat population to rebound or the pollinator species to thrive, we must get involved. Consider acting in concert with one another to allow future generations to experience the world that we know and love.



Backpack Adventure Camp



Drew Richmond,
*Development &
Marketing Director*

Each July, The Ridges open its doors for groups of kids to experience the Sanctuary. These children, ages 4-10, arrive ready to face the adventures that await them. Whether it be Mucky Ducks, Tiny Twigs, or Monarch Madness they stand ready, backpacks on.

The Backpack Adventure Camp began in 1984 with the goal of introducing children to all The Ridges has to offer. Led by staff with environmental education backgrounds, the program focuses on teaching kids about the natural environment & discovery. Children from all over the Midwest attend this small group, hands-on, interactive program.

The day starts with different nature themed crafts or inside activities and are held in our beautiful rustic cabins on the north end of the property. Campers get to know each other, as there may be new kids each day. The cabins are filled with games, books, and tanks filled with frogs, turtles, and even the occasional snake.

Once the group is gathered for the morning, like any great adventure, a plan is discussed: maybe a creek crossing, maybe a camp fire, or even fort building. Each day's adventure is as exciting as the next.

One of the most heavily used areas for the Backpack Adventure Camp is the Family Discovery Trail. This 120 acre parcel was purchased in 2005 and is available for all families to utilize throughout the summer months. This area has six separate program areas for kids to explore. From fort building and creek crossing, to butterflies and the "bone yard," children and families can spend hours discovering nature and learning a little bit about themselves.



As the campers and staff enter the Family Discovery Trail, excitement builds. Perhaps a challenge has been presented...how do we get to the other side of the creek? "We can just walk across" one brave soul typically states aloud. "How about we just stay here?" another might say in contrast. "We need to work together and figure it out" the staff encourage and remind as they stay on task. One by one they start to formulate a plan. Discussions begin and ideas are generated. As boards start to be picked up, typically by 2-3 campers at a time, they are set in place and a sense of accomplishment begins to grow.



Backpack Adventure Camp, continued



to fort building? First of all, what's the fun in that? But most important, think of the lessons this teaches a 5, 6, or 7-year-old: problem solving, team work, even adaptability. And individually, one can surely feel discouraged and frustrated, or excited and challenged. All of this is what we are looking for! What better lessons to learn early in life than how to work with others, problem solve, be challenged and persevere.



The success of this program is due to loyal families, adventurous campers, creative and driven staff, and donors who make it all possible. In 2017 this program had 110 campers enroll. This is a 20% increase over last year. 4 out of the 8 sessions were at capacity. The best news is, nearly 100% of the parents surveyed said their children will be back again next year.

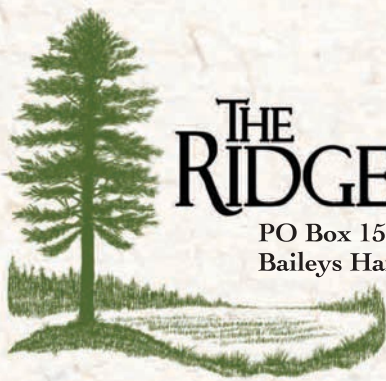
Getting children to explore nature is critical. The Backpack Adventure Camp is just one of the ways we accomplish this and the future is looking very bright.

Leaders begin to emerge; maybe grabbing a hand to help take the first step in crossing or to encourage those a bit too timid with taking such a perceived risk. Those that were nervous at the idea of crossing now encourage others and tell them "it's okay, you will be fine." And when the last person crosses the creek, it's time to celebrate. Not just the fact that they are all on the other side, albeit very important, but to discuss the process it

took to get there. To remind those that didn't think they could do it that they could. To help remind those that wanted to just walk across and get their feet wet for the rest of the day, that working with others is a lifelong lesson that can't ever be learned too soon.

So why cross the creek at all? Why not have the wonderful volunteers just simply build a bridge to get





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Sanctuary - Fall 2017; Volume 44, No. 2

How Can You Get Involved?

DONATE

- **Orchid Restoration Project** – This is the largest orchid restoration project in the history of The Ridges. We have documented 16 of the 26 orchids originally found on our property; we need your support to conduct our research.

- **Upper Range Light** – Fundraising has begun to restore this Baileys Harbor landmark. We have completed Phase 1: replacement of the roof and renovation of the exterior Light room. Phase 2: A full renovation of the building is under way.

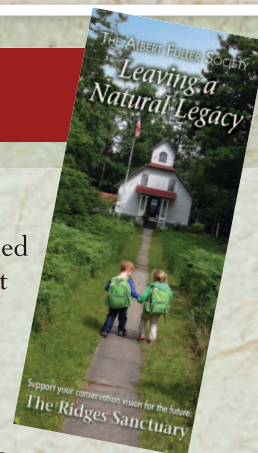


- **Planned Giving** – You may wish to consider the lasting impact of a Planned Gift. If you'd like to know more about including The Ridges in your estate, call us to request a copy of our brochure The Albert Fuller Society: Leaving a Natural Legacy.

- **Endowment** – Funds contributed to The Ridges Endowment ensure long lasting, regular contributions to help offset operational expenses.

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are the backbone of The Ridges and the core of many of our important programs. Over 200 dedicated individuals assist our staff in a number of different areas. Visit our website or call to find out how you can be a part of the team.



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