

WINTER/SPRING 2018



Nature's View

WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE AT SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE





Mission: Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College fosters environmental stewardship through education, recreation, and conservation.

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EDUCATION HORTICULTURIST:

Jennifer Eppolito

Website

www.wpnr.org

Learning Barn Hours

Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Contributors to the Issue

Angela Belli

Jennifer Eppolito

Seth Harbaugh (cover photo)

Dr. James Kellam

Allison Petris

Kim Metzgar

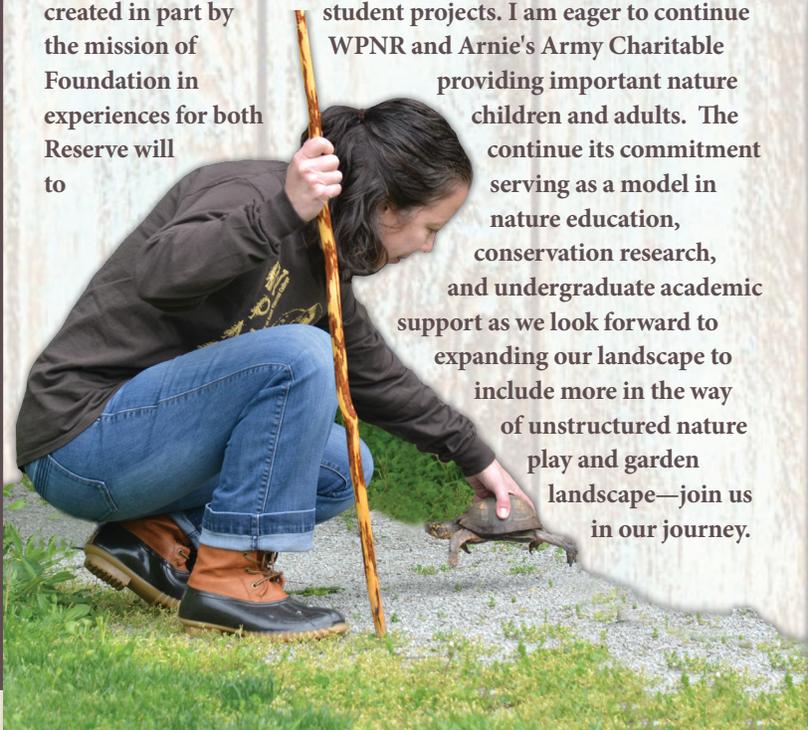
Dana Ricker

Jennifer Urban

Letter from the Director

Almost 20 years ago—I was elated to be given the opportunity to work with Saint Vincent College and the Palmer family in taking the vision of a landscape by one amazing woman – Winnie Palmer into a Reserve. Looking back on all that has been accomplished, there are no words to express my gratitude to so many that have contributed talent, time, creativity, and energy into this amazing space for nature, conservation, and recreation. I do not think Winnie Palmer would have ever imagined one act of preserving the view to Saint Vincent could prepare educators, bring the excitement of nature close to young and old, prepare future stewards of tomorrow, and bring the Saint Vincent College and local community together on a project so much more important than a land ethic, but a life of sustainability. Ten years open to the community, the Reserve continues to "Reach Out Through Nature" in so many aspects. The grounds extend learning through research and program offerings, and the Learning Center Barn provides a space for community and service to Saint Vincent and the greater neighborhood by impacting more than 600 individuals per month.

The Reserve is connected so intricately with the academics of Saint Vincent and its greater community—carefully designed to support the Benedictine Hallmarks of service, community, and stewardship. Science students gain research, nonprofit and natural history education experience, while education students at all levels develop curriculum, facilitate programs, and work with children on many levels. Much of the Reserve's landscape was created in part by student projects. I am eager to continue the mission of WPNR and Arnie's Army Charitable Foundation in providing important nature experiences for both children and adults. The Reserve will continue its commitment to serving as a model in nature education, conservation research, and undergraduate academic support as we look forward to expanding our landscape to include more in the way of unstructured nature play and garden landscape—join us in our journey.





Education Connection: Dana Ricker

Dana Ricker is a junior at Saint Vincent College majoring in Early Childhood Education with minors in Disabilities and Children's Literature. Her first time participating at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve was during her freshman year. She assisted with Nature Story Time and loved every minute of it. The following fall, she was brought onto the WPNR staff to serve as a work study student. For the past two years, she has assisted with Nature Story Time, Tiny Wonder Time, summer camps, field trips, and a variety of community events. "Children have an endless amount of curiosity of the world around them; providing the opportunities for children to explore allows endless growth in their minds and hearts," said Dana. "Working at WPNR has also highlighted the importance of incorporating science into a classroom's curriculum. During elementary years, especially in Kindergarten-2nd Grade, science is often pushed to the back burner because it is not a standardized tested subject until middle school. However, children absolutely love science." She plans to include science into a portion of her day for students to explore their curiosity, build problem solving skills, and think creatively.



Research Connection: Jenni Urban

Being a work-study at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve has been one of Jenni's best experiences as a student at Saint Vincent College. She first began

volunteering at the barn during the fall semester of her freshman year, where she first learned how to care for the educational animals.

From there, she began helping with odds and ends for the educational programs and family events such as preparing crafts, setting up tables and chairs, tidying up the storage closet when necessary and performing small maintenance projects on the trails. Beginning on her first day of volunteering, she felt very welcome at the barn, and it didn't take very long for her to become fond of working with the staff and fellow work-study students. During the second semester, she became more involved with the Nature Book Club and other educational programs. Willing to

take any opportunity that came her way in the environmental field, she was ecstatic when Angela asked if she would like to attend the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators conference. Not only was the conference an amazing opportunity to network and be exposed to the field of environmental education, but it opened her eyes to a passion for EE that she hadn't recognized before. Later in the semester, she was able to assist with the annual Westmoreland Earth Day celebration to spread awareness about WPNR. She was able to meet like-minded people from other environmental organizations. The following summer, she was an intern at the barn, assisting with summer camps, Nature Story Time, Tiny Wonder Time and Nature Discovery hikes on the trails. Her passion for connecting all ages with nature through education was growing faster than she could understand, and she knew that she wanted to continue to foster this passion. From Jenni's sophomore year on, she was guided towards other opportunities with the help of WPNR, such as volunteer experiences with Wildlife Works and an internship with Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve. During her junior and senior years, she has been working with Angela on her senior research project, studying Eastern Bluebird nesting behaviors throughout the nature reserve. While working at the barn, Jenni has always been encouraged by the staff to explore and learn something new every day. The relationships that she has developed during her time at WPNR are ones that will impact her life and career forever. She plans to go forward after graduating in May of 2018 to continue to foster her passion for environmental education with the knowledge and skills that she has acquired while being a part of the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve family.





Education Connection: Dr. James Kellam



Dr. James Kellam, Assistant Professor in Biology frequently utilizes the Reserve grounds for field research experiences in both Wildlife Biology and Ornithology with undergraduate students at Saint Vincent College. Students gain real world experiences while the data collected and analyzed assists in supporting a landscape for conservation of many native species. More than 50 students each semester participate in early morning bird walks, mammal trapping, mist netting native songbirds, or learning how use field equipment such as radio telemetry as part of their course requirements. In addition, senior undergraduate research students have conducted semester-long studies on Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, and Eastern Mountain Bluebird species. Independent of coursework, Dr. Kellam has held bird walks at WPNR every other Tuesday morning during spring semester for the Saint Vincent College Community, and spearheaded “Bearcat Bird Nerds”—an undergraduate student group that participated in the International World of Birding Competition that is held each year in Cape May, New Jersey. Dr. Kellam has been instrumental in supporting summer nature camps and other community events at WPNR providing his expertise in ornithology by live trapping many bird species for visitors to experience firsthand research and the wonderful world of birds in conservation. Faculty in the sciences continue to support the mission of the reserve in education and conservation through scientific research and add an academic component to many of the Reserve’s community programs for all ages.



Community Connection: Our Volunteers



Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve has grown with the many talented and committed community volunteers that have provided more than 1000 hours of service. Master Gardeners, such as Ron Patun, Jenn Eppolito, B.J. Bellotti, and so many others have planned, planted, weeded, and implemented many interesting and beneficial gardens into the Reserve landscape. The gardens and overall native landscape are crucial to the conservation of insects and animals that call the Reserve its home. Not only the garden expertise, but the educators, such as Ms. Polly and Ms. Janet that are retired teachers and bring a world of knowledge and enthusiasm to our curriculum and resources we offer in programs and at the Learning Center Barn. Ms. Janet shares her birding expertise on the trail with all ages, and is working towards redesigning the bird feeding station. Finally, the uniqueness of WPNR can be found in the spirit of stewardship brought by the Benedictine Monks at Saint Vincent College. Brother Lawrence Machia brings an energy like no other for beginning the process for maple sugaring at WPNR, and many other brothers have joined our programming at summer camps, bird walks and more. It is with many special and talented volunteers from Saint Vincent and the local community that have helped to establish the special place that is now utilized by so many.



WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Registration forms and additional information are available on the web site (www.wpnr.org)

No phone or e-mail reservations will be accepted.

ALL EVENTS ARE HELD AT WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.

tiny wonder time

10 a.m. to 11 a.m. or 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

January 17	.....Dinosaur Day
February 21	.....Owl Extravaganza
March 21	.....Compost Stew
April 18	.....Birds of a Feather
May 16	.....Tree-mendous Trees
June 20	.....Ribbit Ribbit
July 18	.....On the Seashore
August 15	.....The Bugliest Bug
September 19	.....Monarch Magic
October 17	.....Super Spiders
November 21	.....Fall into Fall
December 19	.....Warm and Fuzzy

events

February 10, 6 to 9 p.m.	.....Nature Night Out
February 24, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.	.....Project Learning Tree Educator Workshop
April 21, 1 to 6 p.m.	.....Earth Day
June 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.	.....Bee Festival
August 11, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.	.....Butterfly Release
October 27, 6:30 to 9 p.m.	.....Owl Prowl
December 1, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	.....Santa's "Wild" Wonderland

camps

June 12-14, 10 a.m. to noon	.....Bug Camp (5-6 w/ adult)
June 25-29, 1 to 4 p.m.	.....Challenge Camp
July 9-13, 9 a.m. to noon	.....Nature Discovery Camp (6-8)
July 23-27, 9 a.m. to noon	.....Eco Adventure Camp (9-12)
July 20, August 3, 10 a.m. to noon	.....Family Camp (All Ages)

nature play days

January 23	..... 10 to 11 a.m.
April 10	..... 10 to 11 a.m.
August 20	..... 10 to 11 a.m.
November 5	..... 10 to 11 a.m.

spring nature story time

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Session 1

January 19	.....Hibernation Celebration
January 26	.....Livin' in a Tree
February 2	.....Happy Groundhog Day
February 9	.....Valentine Mystery
February 16	.....Wonderful Winter

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Session 2

March 16	.....Down on the Farm
March 23	.....Thundering Thunderstorms
April 6	.....Coyote Chaos
April 13	.....Spectacular Seasons
April 20	.....Animal Homes and Habitats

fall nature story time

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Session 1

September 7	.....Get Ready Grasshopper
September 14	.....Amazing Maize
September 21	.....Frog in a Bog
September 28	.....Apples Apples Everywhere
October 5	.....Cycle of Life

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Session 2

October 19	.....Shades of Orange
October 26	.....Creepy Cool Nature Faces
November 2	.....Fun of Fall
November 9	.....Oh, Deer!
November 16Thanksgiving Production

environmental explorers

February 3 10 a.m. to noon
March 24 10 a.m. to noon



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Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve
at Saint Vincent College

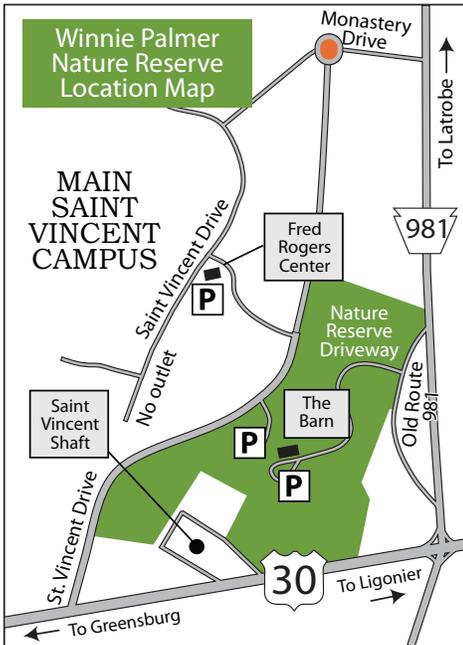




Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve
 At Saint Vincent College
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 Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650
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Growing Our Staff: Jennifer Eppolito

The Dirt from the Education Horticulturist



The ever-changing landscape at WPNR is wonderfully complex and diverse. In the cultivated spaces, such as the pollinator, harvest, and colonial gardens, the focus is on maximizing the growing season, while ensuring that there are always new varieties of plants being incorporated that might be interesting and educational for visitors. Biodynamic gardening practices are employed to build and protect the health of the soil, and the design of the gardens fluctuates as they are constantly assessed for their function in the landscape. The wild spaces are managed in a more hands-off approach to highlight their natural beauty. Monitoring the meadows and thickets for non-native invasive species and replacing them with native plants is top-priority, and projects such as propagating rare and endangered species are constantly evolving. Conservation of natural resources, ecological sustainability, and wildlife support and protection are invariably the primary goals. Looking forward, WPNR is a valuable resource for community education, and a tranquil space for quiet reflection and enjoyment.

