
FRIENDS OF REINSTEIN WOODS 2021

ANNUAL REPORT



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Pictured (left to right): Campers at the 2021 *Kids In The Woods* Summer Day Camp; Students from Buffalo Public Schools learning to Cross Country Ski with one of our staff during an off-site outreach program.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the board of directors and staff at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, we want to thank you for your unwavering support this past year.

With challenges surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the past couple years have humbled us all. Despite these hurdles, this community has shown how truly remarkable you are. Because of your support, the Friends of Reinstein Woods continues to grow, welcoming new members, volunteers and staff. While some have discovered the irreplaceable value of our outdoor spaces, others have solidified their love of nature and the outdoors. We know the woods is not only important for our physical health, but our overall well-being. We are grateful to be an integral part of providing a place of peace for you and your families to unwind and revel in.

Through grants received and continued support from this community, we were able to continue to provide opportunities for the next generation to learn about our environment through our environmental education programs. We were able to mitigate the effects of pandemic traffic for some trails and enhance other trails. We were able to expand our reach and promote an environmentally-friendly lifestyle. And, we made a difference in the lives of our Reinstein Woods family.

As you review the successes in this report, it is our hope that you see it not only as a reflection of the past year, but as a call to join the circle of support that gives Reinstein Woods life. Our hope is that you see this as an invitation to join us as we ***Share in Nature's Harmony.***

With fondness and gratitude,

Terrence Boyle

Terry Boyle
President





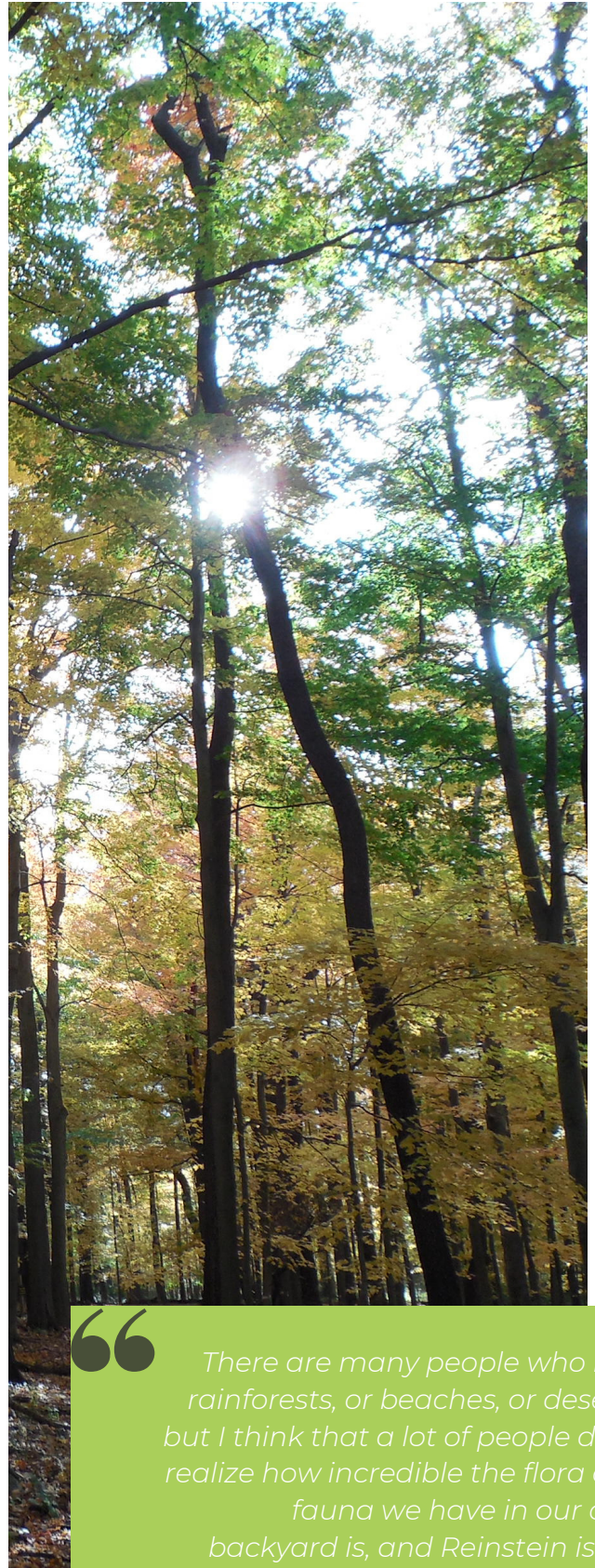
OUR MISSION

Friends of Reinstein Woods promotes knowledge of nature through awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of the unique and diverse environment of Reinstein Woods and its programs.

OUR VISION

Friends of Reinstein Woods seeks to provide support for the Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve through financial and volunteer support for environmental education programs, promotion of a sustainable lifestyle, and stewardship projects designed to protect and restore the natural habitats at Reinstein Woods.

We have accomplished much over the past year with a focus on our six strategic goals: 1. Achieve financial independence & develop strategic resources; 2. Expand educational initiatives; 3. Maintain and enhance stewardship of the property; 4. Promote Reinstein Woods; 5. Enhance and maintain relevance; and, 6. Promote nature and the environment beyond the woods.



“

There are many people who love rainforests, or beaches, or deserts, but I think that a lot of people don't realize how incredible the flora and fauna we have in our own backyard is, and Reinstein is the best place I know to show them.

-Fen Stanczyk

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HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESSES

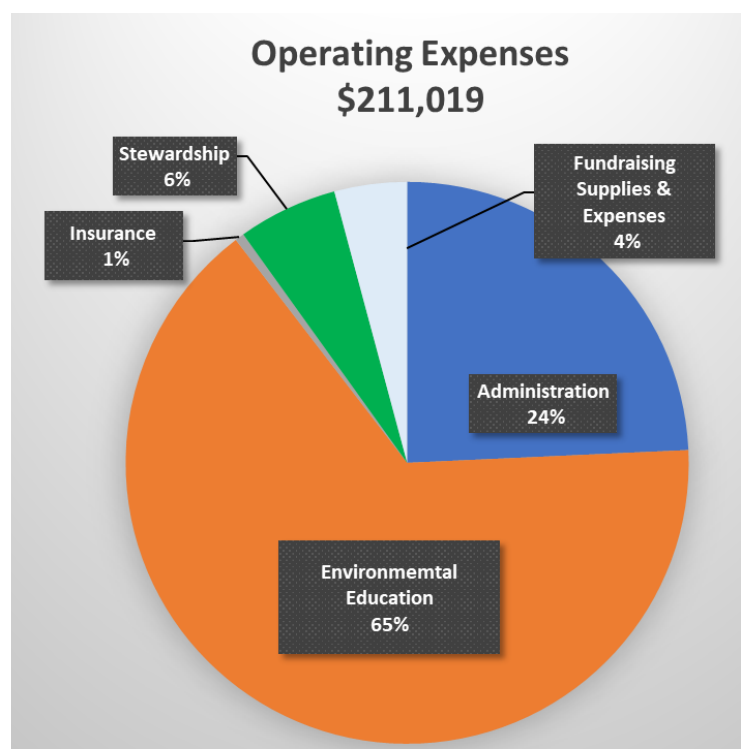
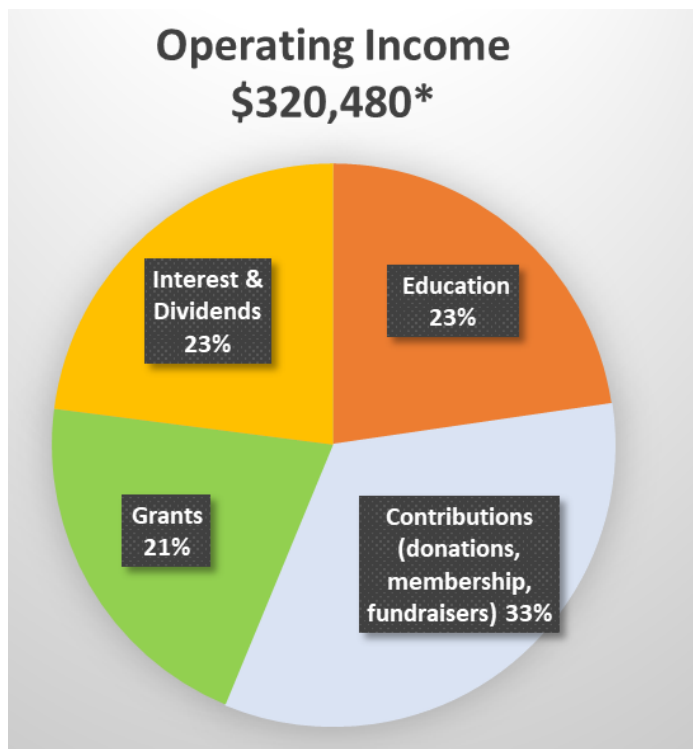
Although 2021 was difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Friends of Reinstein Woods and our partners at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) rose to the challenge. We embraced our ability to hold outdoor programs on the 292-acre property and used virtual learning to continue "classroom" programming. This year we:

- Engaged more than 14,000 people in our public programs and group tours.
- Received grants totaling about \$44,000 dedicated to improving our trails and expanding watershed education programs.
- Planted more than 200 native plants in Reinstein Woods.
- Educated thousands of youth from urban, underserved neighborhoods.
- Provided professional development for more than 280 educators so that they can incorporate environmental learning in their lessons.

COVID highlights:

- In March 2021, a Reinstein staff person presented inside a school for the first time in a year.
- In June, Elba Elementary School students were the first school children to visit Reinstein Woods for a guided tour in 16 months.
- July 12, 2021 the Education Center returned to normal operating hours.
- In Fall 2021 we held our first in person member event since early 2020!

2021 OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENSES



*Paycheck Protection Program Loans were also part of our annual income.

GRANTS

We are fortunate to have received several grants this year to secure & expand the organization's capacity.

WATERSHED STEM IN THE SCHOOLYARD

Reinstein Woods helped students at Maryvale Intermediate School and Buffalo Public School 45 collect weather data and explore their local watershed in after-school programs thanks to a 21st Century Community Learning Centers Watershed STEM Education Partnership Grant. The 2020 grant from the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Education, will fund programs through spring 2022.



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE FUND

This \$2,474 grant addressed off-trail damage near Heron Pond created by an increase in visitation during COVID. A stable path, pond viewing platform (*pictured left*) and Leave No Trace sign created by NYSDEC staff and Friends volunteers will encourage visitors to stay on the trail and help save native plants from off-trail traffic.

PARKS AND TRAILS NEW YORK

In conjunction with a \$2,200 donation from a private donor, we were awarded \$6,510 from the New York State Park and Trail Partnership Grant program to improve the signs along the History Trail. This grant was secured with support from Assembly Member Monica Wallace (*Pictured on the far left along side Friends board president, Reinstein Woods Staff, and Parks & Trails NY staff*), Erie County Legislator Tim Meyers, and Senator Tim Kennedy. Look for the project to be completed in Spring 2022.



NEW YORK SEA GRANT

New York Sea Grant awarded Friends of Reinstein about \$25,000 for a 2022 Data Jam & Environmental Stewards Project to engage students and teachers in complementary programs designed to increase knowledge and understanding of Great Lakes issues. The Data Jam competition encourages students to analyze and present Great Lakes data in creative ways, while the environmental stewards program will immerse students in a 10-week program that teaches them how water quality and human health relate to environmental justice.

STEWARDSHIP

The Friends oversaw a number of projects dedicated to preserving and enhancing Reinstein Woods for generations to come.

Forest Management Plan

In 2019, the Friends commissioned a Forest Management Plan for Reinstein Woods. Following pandemic delays, Forester Bob Ott completed the plan in 2021. The plan provides a detailed inventory of trees at Reinstein Woods and documents threats to the forest, including infestations of peach bark beetle, severe deer pressure, and invasive species. It also noted several plant species that had not been previously identified at Reinstein Woods. The plan makes recommendations for how to prioritize actions to maintain the forest and improve its health. The Friends and DEC will collaborate to implement actions under the plan in the next few years.



EAB Treatments

In June, DEC Foresters Nate Morey and Theresa Draves treated 21 of our ash trees to help save them from the invasive Emerald Ash Borer beetle. Friends of Reinstein provided chemicals and equipment for the treatment.

Pictured (left to right): NYS Foresters applying treatments to ash trees; WNY PRISM crew planting native plants and removing *Phragmites*.

Wetland Restoration

We continued efforts to reclaim areas that were dominated by the plant *Phragmites australis*, especially on the north edge of the preserve. Jennifer Taylor, who served as an AmeriCorps member at Reinstein Woods, coordinated efforts to purchase native plants and shrubs to create better wildlife habitat in this area. A crew from the Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNY PRISM) planted 170 native plants and shrubs in an area previously dominated by *Phragmites australis* at Reinstein Woods. Volunteers prepared the site for planting and installed fencing to protect the plants. Friends of Reinstein Woods provided funding to purchase the native plants and fencing.



MEMBERSHIP

After a year of uncertainty, our membership base has grown and continues to be the lifeline of our family.

Membership

As we navigated in-person events during the pandemic, the Friends of Reinstein Woods membership committee played a vital role in reaching out to local senior centers, creating fun and engaging events, and welcoming 60 new members this past year. In addition, we added a membership benefit with local zero-waste shop, [Little Salmon](#), to encourage and help our members move toward a more sustainable lifestyle.



Annual Membership Meeting

We were fortunate to hold this year's annual membership meeting in person. Each committee- finance, membership, and development - discussed its progress toward the Friends' strategic goals and 50 members enjoyed a presentation from our friends at [Wild Spirit Education](#).

Members-Only Events

As we began to have more in-person events, we were grateful to have the opportunity to welcome new members at a new member hike in September and to host a group of Friends' members at Ellicottville for a Fall Foliage hike led by one of our volunteers. An enthusiastic membership committee welcomed two new committee members.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year saw growth through our community partnerships as well as increased engagement with the community.

SUPPORT FOR YOUTH EDUCATION



NYS Assembly Member Monica Wallace attended the Day in the Life field experience with Depew High School students.

A Day In The Life of the Niagara River/ Lake Erie Watershed Program

About 275 students and teachers from Western New York participated in Reinstein Woods' ninth annual "Day in the Life" event, collecting water quality data at ten sites throughout the Niagara River/Lake Erie watershed. The data becomes part of an international water quality database.

Summer Camps

After a one-year hiatus in 2020, we were so excited to bring back our *Kids In The Woods* summer day camps. We served 145 campers over 8 weekly sessions. Campers learned new skills like fishing and birding while nourishing their curiosity and appreciation for nature and the outdoors.



Camp Successes:

- No COVID interruptions affected camp.
- Camps were 100% full, including 5 scholarship recipients. The NYS Outdoor Education Association provided scholarships for two campers.
- **Following a week at camp, 92% of campers surveyed indicated a desire to learn more about nature or spend more time outdoors.**

Some students witnessed a major local water quality issue when staff noticed algae at their Hyde Park Lake sampling site in Niagara Falls. Niagara University professors Coleen Edwards and Dr. Bill Edwards quickly analyzed a water sample and identified harmful algal species. The students were able to see the effects of a harmful algal bloom first-hand and developed a deeper understanding of the importance of watershed protection.

Read a full report [here](#).

“Everyone should know how amazing of a camp you offer...Your staff provides the campers with the experiences, learning, memories and laughter that childhood is all about. They are directly changing our future by building the passion in these campers.

-Lindsay Brauer Dzielski (camper parent)

VOLUNTEERS AND PROGRAMMING

Sundaes and Sunset Stroll

In place of our annual volunteer picnic, the Friends sponsored a "Sundaes and Sunset Stroll" to thank 38 of our volunteers. This year volunteers logged 2,525 hours of volunteer time. They enthusiastically participated in our annual Fall Festival, revived the trails during Trail Thursdays, greeted visitors at the Education Center, led guided tours, and worked at our fundraisers.



Christmas Bird Count For Kids: Educators from Reinstein Woods and State Parks led our 4th Christmas Bird Count for kids in January. While following social distance guidelines, 23 new birders in 5 different groups search roughly 7 miles of trails for as many birds as they could find. These groups found 17 different bird species and a total of 174 birds. The black – capped chickadee was a favorite bird that excited the young birders.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Friends and DEC continue efforts to reach out to and welcome new audiences to Reinstein Woods, especially to visit the trails and participate in general public programs. The staff and board consider these efforts to be a multi-year process as we acknowledge the inequities facing some members of our community. We continue to collect information from our visitors to find out how to best serve everyone in our community and strive to give all the opportunity to access nature. One positive development in 2021 was the annual "I Love My Park Day" event, where volunteers planted about 200 trees and removed trash from the sanctuary inlet and trails. For the first time, volunteers reflected the demographics of Erie County, with about 20% of participants being people of color.



2021 "Re-Imagined" Fall Festival

More than 250 people participated in Reinstein Woods' 21st Annual Fall Festival. Instead of one large festival, the event boasted five days of activities and hikes.

Program Highlights

Teen Naturalist Club: This Spring we welcomed a group of teenagers to the woods after school to learn about animal tracks, wetlands, and our animal friends.

FUNDRAISING

Steel Magnolias Flower Sculpture

The *Steel Magnolias* recycled metal sculpture, a popular selfie spot in the Reinstein Woods' parking lot, was restored by a metal fabrication company. Thanks to sculpture donors Paul and Sylvia Tokasz and several other donors, we raised over \$3,000 to refurbish the one-of-a-kind art piece.



**THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS
DONORS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO
THE SCULPTURE RESTORATION!**

8th Annual Plant Sale

Our 8th annual plant sale made record-breaking sales! We sold:

- 1,086 native plants
- 47 plant nursery vouchers
- a dozen rain barrels, and
- 13 native plant guides

The plants are grown by three local growers, including a minority, woman-owned business.

Summer Fundraiser, Honey Tasting, and More

Among this year's fundraisers, we held our annual BBQ fundraiser with the twist of a virtual auction. One of our most successful fundraisers to date, we sold more than 325 meals.

Along with [Bee Happy Farm & Apothecary](#), we held a Honey Tasting event to teach 45 participants about beekeeping, bees and how our flying friends benefit the environment.

Partner [Community Beer Works](#), created a limited-edition "Flora & Fauna" Jasmine IPA beer that was distributed in grocery stores and spread awareness about Reinstein Woods. With our friends at [Yogis In Service](#), we welcomed 36 participants to join us for forest bathing and yoga (*pictured*).



CORPORATE SPONSORS

We are grateful for our community partners and corporate sponsors.

Thank you to our all our 2021 sponsors! With their help, we were able to raise approximately \$13,000 towards our work to maintain Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve and engage the public in environmental education programs.

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I am sharing my stimulus check by way of thanking you for existing and keeping the woods open during this challenging time. The air in these woods, along your trails, has been a breath of peace and sanity for a whole lot of us in this area. Thank you deeply.
-Susan P.

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WAYS TO GIVE

Friends of Reinstein Woods wouldn't be successful without contributions from you - our devoted community and fellow nature lovers. Want to be a part of this passionate group?

- Become A Member to join the family
- Sign-Up to Volunteer
- Donate to support our education programs
- Become a Nature's Nurturer through our monthly giving program
- Remember Reinstein through your planned gift and make a difference for years to come

Visit reinsteinwoods.org today to learn more!



WALKING THE WALK

Working toward a more sustainable world.

The Friends take pride in the fact that we are not only advocates for Reinstein Woods but for the environment beyond this land. We believe it is important to not only talk the talk, but to walk the walk.

DOING OUR PART

Virtual Sustainability Sessions

We encourage our members and the public to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, but recognize people may not know where to start. To help people start their journey, we offered virtual sessions throughout the year, educating hundreds of participants. We also partnered with [PUSH Buffalo](#) to offer programs on transitioning to a more energy efficient and fossil fuel-free home.

A Fossil Fuel-Free Investment Portfolio

To avoid the worst effects of climate change, science tells us we need to keep almost all known coal and most oil and gas resources in the ground. This means we need to stop investing in fossil fuel extraction. Our finance committee and board of directors successfully transferred our investments into a fossil fuel-free portfolio which excludes companies that develop and extract fossil fuel resources. For more information about why fossil fuel divestment is important, visit [divestinvest.org](#).

Reducing Our Carbon Footprint

We are the proud partners of [Carbonfund.org](#), a group that offsets our carbon footprint by investing in projects that support renewable energy, energy efficiency and forestry. With thousands of visitors to the woods, we strive to reduce our environmental impact in any way possible.

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"We are inspired to try a little harder."
-Virtual Sustainability Session participant

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2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terrence Boyle, President
Eric Gallo, Vice President
Vinod Suchak, Treasurer
Amanda Lippes, Secretary

Esther Clabeaux
John DiMaio
Rob Fetter
Daniel Hauesser
Jennifer Lodi-Smith Hebrank
Andrew Moon
Tim Robson

“

*If you keep taking care of nature, it will
take care of you.*

-Third Grader at Tapestry Charter School

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