

REINSTEIN WOODS NATURE PRESERVE

ANNUAL REPORT



FRIENDS OF
Reinstein
WOODS

REFLECTIONS ON 2025

Dear Friends,

The past year may have had many challenges and difficulties, but I am sure it has also been filled with some heart-warming successes and blessings. Reinstein Woods represents one such blessing that we've enjoyed through our shared experiences this past year, whether they be volunteering, attending an event, or appreciating a relaxing walk in nature.

Friends of Reinstein Woods has likewise been blessed by your active participation in our community and by your unwavering support and dedication to our mission. Our year has also featured several organizational successes that we are happy to celebrate with you, along with exciting news of our future year ahead together.

This past year, our Board of Directors worked diligently to update the Friends of Reinstein Woods Mission Statement and craft a Vision Statement. While these statements don't alter the foundational vision of Dr. Reinstein or the work we've done for more than two decades, they do help us communicate our priorities better to others. They also guided our efforts to develop a strategic plan that prioritizes actions we can take to meet the challenges of coming years.

Central to the mission of Friends of Reinstein Woods is education and stewardship. This past year, we had our first successful year's class in Pathways to Environmental Learning, a program supported by a generous grant from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. The program connects Cheektowaga High School students with their local environment and with leaders in the environmental community, to expose them to job opportunities and empower them to act as environmental leaders and as mentors to younger students. The past year also marked significant development of the Woodland Garden thanks to a grant from Parks & Trails New York and the support of members, donors, and volunteers like you. Even after this short time, this area of the woods has had significant increases in plant species richness (with 300x more saplings, 120x more herbaceous plants, and a 5% increase in canopy cover!).

Also, thanks to your continuous generosity, we had a record-breaking Give 716 Day this year, with \$3,000 given in just one day. Your financial support matters now more than ever before, with disappearing funding resources that we've benefited from in the past to support our educational and stewardship efforts. While the Board is working to effectively respond to changing landscapes, we appreciate all the support you provide, including spreading the word about the beauty, value, and importance of Reinstein Woods.



One development this year that offers a chance for members and donors to make a lasting impact is significant progress in plans to expand the Reinstein Woods Environmental Education Center building. We are excited to work with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to design additional space that meets the needs of the education program with accessible spaces that demonstrate sustainable building practices. Look for more news regarding the building expansion in the coming year as we finally approach shovels breaking ground.

This was also another year of highly successful events that both the public and members were able to enjoy, including the Plant Sale, Artisan Market, Fall Fest, and countless programs offered by staff and volunteers. We've added online registration for public programs through Eventbrite, making our programs accessible to those who may have trouble registering by phone. If you missed any of the great events held in 2025, please plan to join us for the fun and educational experiences offered in 2026!

"We close our eyes and dream, and the world has turned around again. We close our eyes and dream, and another year has come and gone." These lyrics of the passing of days and years come from an Oingo Boingo song written by composer Danny Elfman. The song speaks about the 'big race,' 'roller coaster,' and fleeting nature of life, and about making the best of every moment we have on our planet together. With each season that we pass through, we continue to embrace the changes that come with it and look for the opportunities to continue helping our community share in nature's harmony at Reinstein Woods.

On behalf of the board of directors and staff, I again want to thank you for your involvement with Reinstein and for your dedicated support of our mission. We could not protect this beautiful space or inspire the next generation of scientists, naturalists, and stewards without your donations, volunteer hours, and advocacy.

With Gratitude,



Daniel Haeusser
President
Friends of Reinstein Woods



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



96,000+

Visitors at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve



3,286

Volunteer Hours, 500 more hours than the previous year



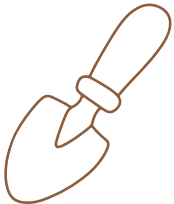
8

Scholarships given out to campers to attend Kids In The Woods Summer Day Camp



655

Plants sold at Friends of Reinstein Woods' Annual Plant Sale



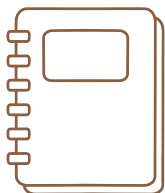
508

Volunteer hours dedicated towards invasive species removal



22

Pathways To Environmental Learning high school students hired

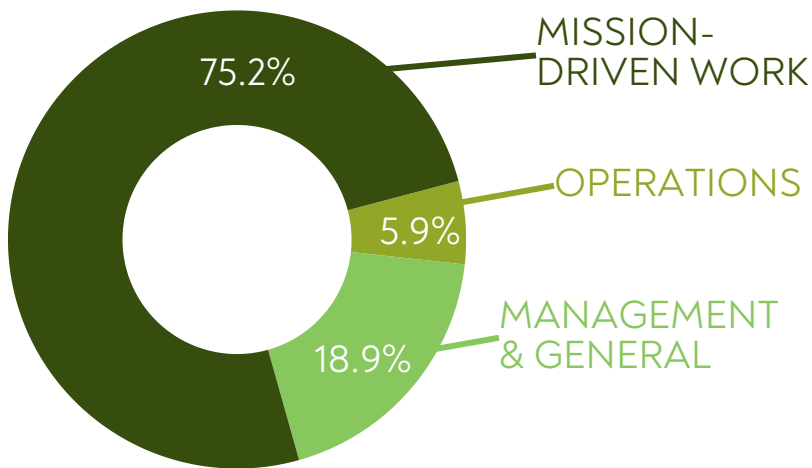


1,373+

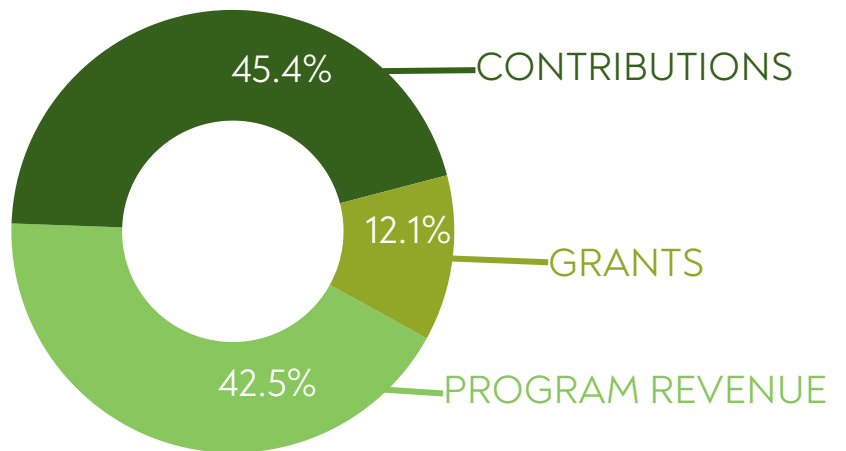
interactions with students through afterschool programs

2024 - 2025 FUNDING IMPACT

EXPENSES: \$312,678



INCOME: \$271,601



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



REINSTEIN TRUST



Community Foundation
for Greater Buffalo



YOUR SUPPORT FUNDED:



Woodland Garden Enclosure: The Finish Line

The finish line is in view: in 2026, Friends of Reinstein Woods will open the gates of the Woodland Garden to the public! In 2025, we received a \$20,717 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership Grants program to develop visitor access and improve habitats inside this enclosure that was erected in 2024. The grant will provide special gates so trail visitors can access the enclosure while keeping out deer. We can't wait to welcome visitors to the garden in 2026!

During 2025, teens in our Pathways to Environmental Learning program built four raised beds inside the enclosure to hold a variety of native plants for the education and enjoyment of visitors. Reinstein Woods stewardship volunteers and community members from six organizations helped plant native flowers and shrubs and prepared the ground for a new footpath scheduled to be installed in early 2026. Staff can't

wait to use the area for education programs (already, teens from the Omega Mentoring Program in East Buffalo and students from two local colleges have visited the site!). Thanks to the support of our donors, Friends of Reinstein Woods was able to provide the matching funds required for this grant.

The Woodland Garden project was supported by a New York State Park and Trail Partnership Grant and New York's Environmental Protection Fund. The Park and Trail Partnership Grants are administered by Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

"When [Community Services for Every1] came to help out with watering the plants in [the Woodland Garden] and learned about the different species and plants... I remember everyone was helping each other out and working as a team. The guys used both those moments to help build up their confidence and make new friends." - Michael Cirrito, Community Services for Every1

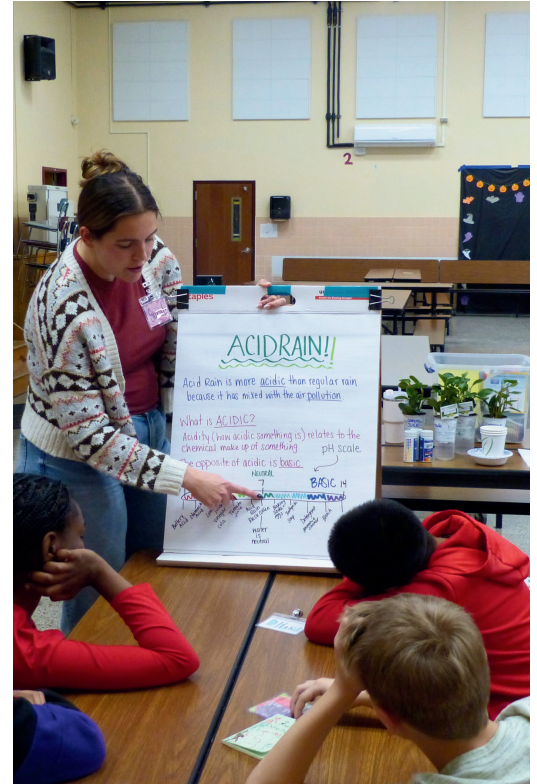


YOUR SUPPORT FUNDED:

NAAEE Afterschool Program

Our Friends Educator, Sarah Klos, engaged Cheektowaga Central and Maryvale elementary students through science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through weekly afterschool lessons about their local watershed as part of a \$39,168 “STEM in the Schoolyard: Watershed Engineers” grant from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Education.

With the help of interns, Sarah taught about the importance of watersheds and how to protect them. The students have enjoyed acting as “scientists” testing water quality, becoming “engineers” by designing water filters, and exploring how animals like beavers and humans have engineered our waterways over time. To apply their new knowledge, the students were tasked with creating a wetland diorama. Using pipe cleaners, pictures of plants and animals, colorful paper, and markers, they created their own unique wetland.



Thanks to the grant, Maryvale students were able to take a trip to Reinstein Woods. For many, it was their first time visiting and seeing the nature preserve. Some even saw animals like deer for the first time!

Maryvale student Isabel saw her diorama displayed at Reinstein Woods’ Education Center during her school trip. She was overjoyed to see her diorama proudly on view in the Education Center for visitors to see.

“Imagine the Scajaquada Creek was in your backyard. What would you do with it? Would you let people throw garbage in it? No! So let’s keep it clean forever.” - Elementary Afterschool Student



YOUR SUPPORT FUNDED:



More Scholarships For Kids in the Woods Summer Day Camp

If you went to Reinstein Woods this summer, you may have heard the laughter of kids echoing through the trails or seen a crowd of them carrying fish nets around Spring Pond. That is because Reinstein Woods' Kids in the Woods Summer Day Camp was underway, and in 2025, we welcomed over 100 campers!

We are especially thrilled because we were able to offer eight scholarships for campers in the summer of 2025. By providing partial or full scholarships, we provide access for kids who would not otherwise get to connect with nature while also building friendships and confidence.

We engaged the campers through fun activities like archery! Many of our campers were thrilled to hit a bullseye for the first time. The campers went home with a custom-painted pot filled with soil and coneflower seeds, carrying a sweet memento of their time at Reinstein Woods. We hope to see the campers again for another magical summer.

"This was Toby's first time attending anything like this ... everyday he gushed about the exciting adventures he got to go on at camp. Thank you for making his first camp experience not only comfortable and seamless but an unforgettable start to his summer." - Parent of 2025 Kids In The Wood Summer Day Camper



YOUR SUPPORT FUNDED:

Phragmites Treatment

You may recognize this plant commonly seen growing in roadside ditches. *Phragmites australis*, also known as the common reed, is an invasive wetland plant that crowds out native species and provides a low-quality habitat for wildlife. This aggressive plant has been a target for removal at Reinstein Woods for almost a decade.

Because of your support, Friends of Reinstein Woods was able to hire a contractor this fall to treat the plant on six sites across 17 acres throughout the preserve. Certified pesticide applicators cut the stems and directly apply chemicals to the plants, then later mowed them down.

This program began in 2015 in an effort to save the native cattail marshes that were being lost to the sea of phragmites. The treatments were initially made possible by grant funds and, more recently, by generous donations from supporters. In combination with volunteer efforts to maintain treated sites and plant native species, this program has improved more than 30 acres of wetland within Reinstein Woods.

The project provides space for interesting wetland species, such as buttonbush and American bur-reed, to take up residence. We wish to thank our dedicated volunteers, such as the Phragmites Strike Team, and the numerous stewardship groups, including NYSEG, who removed approximately 9.5 acres of phragmites this year alone! This effort would not be possible without the many hands and dollars our supporters have contributed.

“It was an amazing experience for our team and we look forward to working with you all again in the future.” - Michael Baggerman, NYSEG



Trail Thursdays Volunteers and SCA Intern, Hannah James

YOUR SUPPORT FUNDED:



New Beginnings For Pathways

Thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, we hired 10 Cheektowaga High School students as part of the Pathways to Environmental Learning Program (Pathways) for the 2024-2025 school year. This initiative engages students from diverse backgrounds by introducing them to a variety of environmental careers. Additionally, students have the chance to work with elementary school children in our after-school programs, acting as role models while leading engaging lessons on environmental topics.

The students were introduced to impactful organizations such as Buffalo Waterkeeper, and they also took memorable educational trips. One was to visit the GRoW Clean Energy Center at the University at Buffalo to meet with the Chief Sustainability Officer, Ryan McPherson. He provided insight into UB's Climate Action Plan and even led a walk around the Center's solar panels.

A highlight of the program was the Community Action Day, where the students organized a cleanup at Scajaquada Creek near their school. Through school morning announcements, flyers, and collaboration with their school's Conservation Club, the students recruited 20 energetic volunteers. Within two hours, they collected an impressive 68 pounds of trash, five pounds of recyclables, and a shopping cart.

For the 2025 -2026 year, we welcomed 12 new high school students to the Pathways program. Each cohort of students is encouraged to pursue summer jobs and other experiences, like the DEC Campership Program, to further their knowledge and interest in environmental careers. (continued)



New Beginnings For Pathways Continued

The long-term goal is to have some students end up working in environmental fields, perhaps even at Reinstein Woods someday! Friends of Reinstein Woods hopes to continue this project long-term and to continue to pay the students to participate, allowing them to commit fully rather than seeking other afterschool employment.

"I had a great time at this program. I never thought I'd be represented or could see myself in science fields or some of the careers available until we were introduced, and now I feel inspired to learn more and study the environment in college. I think this program was life changing for many like myself, and definitely eye opening knowing I could potentially do something like this in the future. Thank you for letting me join this program!" 2024-2025 Pathways Student



VOLUNTEERS HAVE OUR HEART

Thank you to our amazing greeters, nature guides, special event volunteers, trail stewards, community science volunteers, Friends of Reinstein Woods board and committee members for sharing your passion for Reinstein Woods. Without our volunteers, Reinstein Woods would not be where it is today.

2025 Accomplishments:

- Outreach volunteers and staff attended 15 off-site events to raise awareness for Reinstein Woods.
- Over 50 new volunteers were welcomed into the Reinstein Woods Volunteer Program.
- Volunteers worked more than 500 hours more than last year!

Congratulations to Barb Sandall for receiving the Al Schick Volunteer Recognition Award.



Friends of Reinstein Woods
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