

Place
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Summer 2026 Lily Pad Newsletter

- Artisan Market
- PEL Year in Review
- Thoughts on a Quarter Century
- Get Outdoors & Get Together Day
- Welcome Izzy & Stewardship Season!
- Summer Public Programs

Thoughts on a Quarter Century at Reinstein Woods

By Meaghan Boice-Green, Center Director

In 2000, I interviewed for a job in DEC's downtown Buffalo office. When I was told the job would include developing an environmental education center in Depew, I was very excited. Although I had never heard of Reinstein Woods, environmental education had been woven into my experiences since my undergraduate days. I was eager to dig into education full time, and also to try my hand at managing a large property.



In 2001, the "Education Center" was a garden shed visible in this photo from the first Fall Festival.

While I quickly discovered I had a lot to learn, it's been thrilling to watch both the nature preserve and its community grow and evolve. When I started, Reinstein Woods was closed to the public except for a few guided tours given at specific times. (Some may remember the locked gate across the parking lot entrance!) As a result, New York State provided few resources for the property.

By expanding public access, we secured funding to improve trail signage, replace the port-a-johns with restrooms, and grow the education programs. We built the current Education Center, a big step up from the garden shed with glass display cases that had been the education hub. I love the photo below from the 2006 volunteer picnic, showing volunteers in front of the partially built center. They couldn't wait to have a place to meet that had running water!

Twenty years later, the staff and programs have outgrown the education center. As I prepare to retire in August, I'm proud to have helped secure funding to transform this facility into the Western New York Living Environment Center at Reinstein Woods. The expanded space will be a model of how to design sustainable, accessible buildings that serve all members of the community. I'm looking forward to seeing what the extraordinary team of educators at Reinstein Woods will accomplish in the new space.

This continued growth is possible because of Friends of Reinstein Woods. Helping create this non-profit is one of my proudest achievements, one that I share with the volunteers and staff members who put in countless hours at many late-night meetings to develop the organization. I'm grateful to all of the members, volunteers, donors, staff and leaders who have shaped Friends of Reinstein Woods over the last 23 years. You have given me many happy memories and taught me a lot about teamwork. (If you aren't yet a member, join! This dynamic group of people who love Reinstein Woods are what makes it so special. They make it a great place to visit.)



If you visit Reinstein Woods between now and August, stop by the Education Center and say hello! Thank you for allowing me to lead, for teaching me about nature and community, and for making my time here a true highlight of my life.



Get Outdoors & Get Together Day

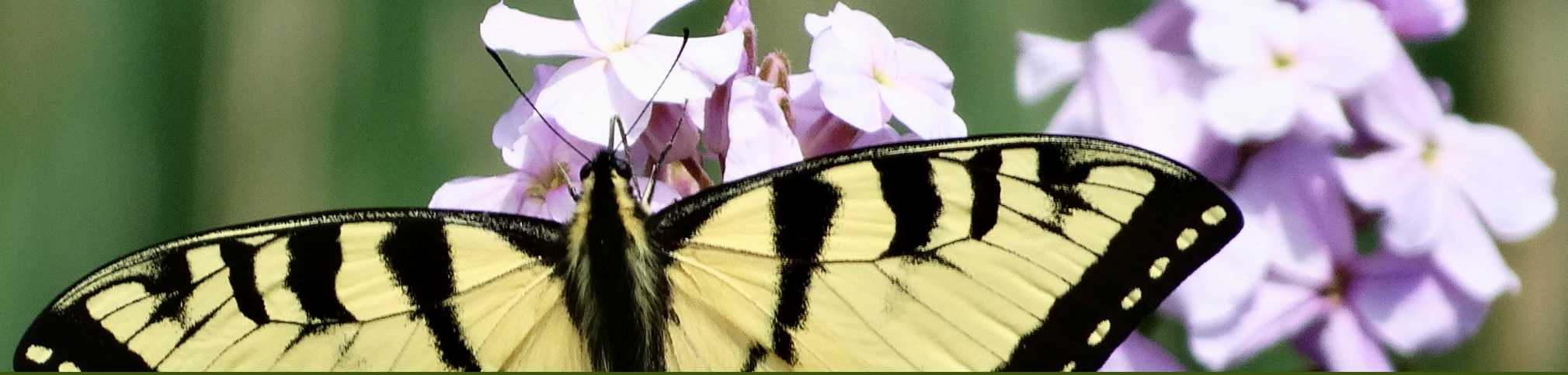
Saturday, June 13, 2026
10 am to 2 pm

Celebrate this day of inclusive recreation and fun! Free admission and family-friendly! Activities include guided strolls, hoverball archery, face painting, lawn games, scavenger hunts, birding, and more.

Visit www.reinsteinwoods.org or call (716) 683-5959 for more information.

at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve
93 Honorine Drive, Depew, NY 14043





Pathways to Environmental Learning Year In Review

Our Pathways to Environmental Learning (PEL) program welcomed 12 high school students into the 2025-2026 year, marking our second year! We connected these teens to environmental careers while fostering meaningful connections with their community. They conducted weekly water tests on the Scajaquada Creek and assisted in leading multiple environmental lessons at a local elementary after-school program, and grew the skills to act as environmental leaders!

“Every time I come from Pathways, I feel more confident about my future as an environmental educator or biologist.”

— Aaron, Pathways Student, 2025-2026



PEL Earth Day Clean Up

On April 22, Earth Day, they recruited 10 wonderful volunteers to clean up a creek and collected over 50 lbs of trash and recyclables within two hours! Some of the volunteers were alumni and friends from their school. It was a wholesome moment for our staff.

Throughout the school year, the Pathways teens interacted with 40+ elementary students, leading lessons such as tree identification, water pollution, and moon phases. The teens connected with The Tool Library, Silo City, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Massachusetts Avenue Project, and the WNY Land Conservancy to learn about their efforts in sustainability and conservation.

You can support this impactful program by heading to www.givebutter.com/PEL. These students have been a delight to work with. From the beginning of the program, we watched these students grow their confidence and become closer to their community.

Save the Date: Artisan Market at Reinstein Woods Saturday, July 11 from 11 am to 4 pm

Join us for a Summer Saturday of shopping along the trails at Reinstein Woods! We'll have more than 45 different artisans selling handmade soaps and candles, jewelry, fine woodwork, honey, and other hand-crafted items. This is the perfect time to see the pink water lilies at their peak.

Admission is free! This is a rain or shine event. Don't forget to bring cash to participate in our basket raffle. All proceeds will go towards Friends of Reinstein Woods, to support environmental education programs for children, students, teachers and our community!

For more information, visit www.reinsteinwoods.org/artisan-market



Welcome SCA Educator Izzy, and Help Her Steward Reinstein Woods During Trail Thursdays!

Stewardship season is finally here and we are seeking volunteers to assist with enhancing our trails! Activities include trail maintenance, trash cleanup, invasive species removal, and weeding our garden beds. Trail Thursday stewards meet every Thursday from 6 PM to 8 PM, until September! You don't need to attend every Thursday- you can volunteer as often as you like.

Interested in learning more? Contact SCA Educator Izzy at: isabelle.freda@dec.ny.gov or call (716) 683-5959.



Our SCA Educator, Izzy!



See our summer public programs by visiting reinsteinwoods.org/events or scan this QR code.

Call (716) 683-5959 to request a paper version of the program schedule.

