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Visit [www.tallpinesconservancy.org](http://www.tallpinesconservancy.org)  
or call 262-369-0500.

You might note that this newsletter is a bit longer this time! The "TPC Chronicle" is jammed packed with stories written by staff, board members and volunteers, from their own voices on our many initiatives undertaken during these challenging times. We believe our work plays a significant role in the health, quality of life and well being of Lake Country. TPC will continue to work to protect land and water for you and our future!

—Susan Buchanan

## TPC Unveils Healing Nature Trail at Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park

by SUSAN BUCHANAN, TPC Executive Director

**Parks and preserves have been over-run, with many people taking refuge in the comforts of the outdoors during this uncertain time.** It has been wonderful to see the general public renew their connection to nature and, for some, begin it. At the same time, mental health issues, domestic abuse and suicides have skyrocketed.

It has become very clear to me that during these challenging times, there's a real need for healing benefits that nature can provide and not only in a recreational sense. However, it's been hard for us as a land trust which does the majority of its work protecting private land through conservation easements to make that connection. We don't have an easy way to get people out on the land to understand what we do.

Early in February, we were approached by two local individuals who were trained in guiding hikes on healing nature trails (also known as forest bathing) by the Healing Nature Center in



Susan Buchanan, TPC and Tamarack Song at the Healing Nature Center.

Three Lakes, Wisconsin. They somehow found out about our work implementing the master plan in partnership with

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# Dukelow Family Gives Back

by BETH HOEFER-JEZO, TPC Development Manager



Joe Dukelow, 5th generation working on Dukelow Farms in Dodge County, WI. Photo by Lisa Lauerman.

Joe is, in fact, the 5th generation of the Dukelow family to farm this now-sprawling acreage in Dodge County, which currently straddles Hustisford and Neosho with a driveway serving as the dividing line between the two municipalities. There are no descendants to take over the day-to-day operations once the trio of brothers, which includes Bill and Dave, decide to transition to permanent retirement. However, the Dukelow family, which has for several years shared the farm with bicyclists during Ride to the Barns, is committed to seeing the future of their land remain in farmland.

To be successful in farming is to be open to change – and new ideas. Fifty years ago, the first milking parlor was installed – and then updated 30 years later – to more efficiently manage the herd of approximately 100 cows who call the farm home. In the early 1990s, the family made (at the time) the somewhat revolutionary decision to eliminate the use of chemicals on their fields of oats, peas, barley, alfalfa and – of course – corn. By 1996, they had met the rigorous requirements to enter the organic market through their partnership with Organic Valley. Of course, this type of farming requires a little ingenuity. Corn is planted later, in mid-May, to better control weeds. And when weeds surface – and they do – they are removed the old-fashioned way, by hand.

But, getting back to farmland preservation. The process to permanently protect one's family homestead isn't always an easy one – even if the decision to do so is. There are any number of questions to be answered,



2019 Ride to the Barns hosted by the Dukelow family. Photo by Lisa Lauerman.

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## Healing Trail... (from PAGE 1)

the Town of Merton at the Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park. They visited the passive and somewhat remote park and found it to be a perfect location for a trail. During the stay at home order, the idea of making this trail a reality began to unfold in a fortuitous manner. In May (after the order came off), I took a trip to Three Lakes to see the Healing Nature



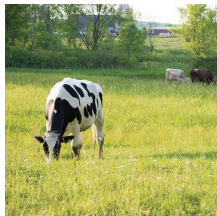
Trail designed by Tamarack Song and Lety Seidel of the Healing Nature Center. Whereas I had been somewhat skeptical previously, after walking the trail for 3 hours (it's only .75 miles long) and visiting every "reflection nook" and extensively discussing its healing components with Lety and Tamarack... I became a believer. There was only one thing missing – the funding! Then, on the way back from my journey, I received a phone call from the Kettle Moraine Garden Club that our grant application for funding the design portion was accepted! The universe provides! We subsequently finalized our partnership with the Town of Merton, Waukesha County, the Healing Nature Center and the Kettle Moraine Garden Club to make the trail a reality.

**About The Healing Nature Trail**  
Walking in nature has proven to lower heart rate and blood pressure, reduce stress hormone production, boost the immune system, and improve overall feelings of wellbeing. Scientific research shows that inhaling tree-derived compounds (known as phytoncides) reduces concentrations of stress hormones and enhances the activity of white-blood cells known as natural killer cells.

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# TPC's Ambitious & Crucial 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

by BILL BIERSTACH, TPC Advisory Board Member



It is with great expectation that we begin work on our next five-year strategic plan, which reflects the growth of Tall Pines' impact on open space conservation and the protection of water quality in our lake country community. Over its twenty years of work we have depended on the financial and volunteer support of a dedicated group of friends in the area. For the first fifteen years of our efforts, that support was employed to complete conservation projects without the support of other outside organizations. For the last five years, that approach has been expanded and it has provided the basis for our expanded strategic plan.

Our conservation efforts have moved northwestward deeper into the Oconomowoc River Watershed, which is the home source for all of our lakes and streams. Protecting the working farms that make up a large part of the water-

shed has led us to seek planning and financial partners in local, state, and federal programs that can help with technical expertise and funds to allow farms to stay in agriculture. Our donors' gifts are now being leveraged up to three times by dollars from these government programs and the resulting willingness of farm owners to forego a portion of their land's development value, all in the name of keeping their farms in agriculture rather than succumbing to the lure of development.

Working with farmers to keep their land in agriculture allows us to guide them to best farming practices to limit soil runoff and stream bank

erosion to help keep the waters running to our lakes clear. Keeping land in agriculture rather than converted to development reduces runoff from subdivision roads and roofs that is very hard to keep out of our feeder streams.

Tall Pines has already protected 1500 acres in our working territory and our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan calls for another 2500 acres to be conserved by 2025. A number of projects are already underway as we work toward this ambitious goal. We will need the help of our many loyal supporters to bring these projects and others that will follow to completion, but it is comforting to know that, as the leader in moving these efforts forward, we will have the help of our generous donors & partner organizations. Working together, we will be able to protect our watershed and the lakes and streams making it up for future generations. ▲

**TPC's Grand Total of Number of Acres Protected to Over 4,000 Acres by 2025!**



Neille Hoffman volunteers at the "Chaos Garden."

## Farmers for Lake Country Launches Educational Opportunities

by DARRELL SMITH, OWPP Ag Project Coordinator

After a six-month postponement, this August, local producers attended a free, socially-distanced event at two local farms on the science behind cover crops. First, the group met at the Palmyra farm of Tom Burlingham, where a presentation was given on Growing Cover Crops in Winter Wheat. The event concluded in Sullivan at the farm of Tom Novak, owner of Total Crop Management LLC. There, Jim Stute, a farmer and project consultant, presented the talk, "Do Cover Crops Pay? Results from Local On-Farm Research" followed by a discussion by Mr. Novak about, "On-Farm Trials: What They Can Do For You."

The event was a great opportunity to learn about building soil health using cover crops, and how this relates to farm productivity

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# TPC Achieves Accreditation Renewal Through Land Trust Alliance

by BETH HOEFER-JEZO, TPC Development Manager



Every five years, Tall Pines Conservancy embarks on a year-long journey known as Land Trust Alliance accreditation renewal. The process, which involves our entire staff, as well as a team of volunteers from our board and sub-committees, examines every aspect of our organization – from our financial fitness to

how we steward the land. Often challenging and sometimes stress-inducing, this rigorous review by the Land Trust Alliance, the national accrediting entity, requires us to submit a significant amount of paperwork, answer a boatload of questions and then – wait for the results. We're thrilled to announce that in August 2020, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded us renewed accreditation. TPC is one of 16 land trusts in the state of Wisconsin, and 443 in the United States, to achieve this distinction.

**So, what makes it worth all the time and energy? According to the Land Trust Alliance, "Accreditation is a catalyst for improvement, which results in faster, better, stronger conservation. The accreditation seal offers the assurance that a land trust can keep the promise of perpetuity and that it is worthy of the public trust." ▲**

*"Renewing our accreditation shows Tall Pines Conservancy's ongoing commitment to permanent land conservation in the Lake Country region – and beyond. We are a stronger organization than ever for having gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process. Our strength means special places – such as the Mayer Family Farm and the Wandschneider Audley Creek Preserve – will be protected forever, making our community an even greater place for us and our children."*

*—Susan Buchanan, TPC Executive Director*



Photo by Tom Lynn

## Farmers for Lake Country Launches Educational Opportunities... (from PAGE 3)

and profitability, while helping the environment too. While we have continued to actively reach out to local farmers through social media and other electronic methods, we all really welcomed the chance to meet in person and share ideas in a responsible way.

**This year's challenges with COVID have also spurred creative projects that have allowed Farmers for Lake Country to directly support the greater Oconomowoc area.** John Koepke and I planted a 3-acre "Chaos Garden" in one of the Koepke fields that had recently been harvested for wheat. John drilled vegetable seeds (bush



beans, snap peas, kale and spinach) in and amongst the volunteer wheat coming up. Despite a couple weeks of hot dry weather in August, our faith was rewarded in September with green fields of beautiful cover along with vegetables that are "Free Pick" for the community. There was a steady stream of cars coming to harvest vegetables. Truly tasty "chaos!" We hope to expand this idea next year so stay tuned.

Farmers for Lake Country is a farmer-led group managed by the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program with support from Tall Pines Conservancy to assist with farmer education and engagement in conservation cost-share programs. The objectives of these programs are to improve soil health and help preserve and protect our lakes and streams. For more information, please check out our website at [farmersforlakecountry.org](http://farmersforlakecountry.org) or find us on Facebook. ▲

# A Rider's Recollections on This Year's Ride to the Barns

by KATHY GREGORSKI



Photo by RTB participant  
Caryl Sewell.

**Full disclosure – this was my inaugural Ride to the Barns. And it didn't disappoint.**

For the first time ever, I was in town and available to Ride to the Barns. Thank you COVID-19 for clearing my calendar. I've always wanted to do

the ride – it takes place on my home turf, on the roads that I love to ride. So, I recruited a few cycling friends – Lisa, Tim, Lauren, Max, and Jenna, and we made our own adventure, riding on different days to take advantage of the DIY format. These were definitely the roads less traveled as we hardly saw a car on our Saturday morning rides. Tim and Lisa enjoyed it so much that they double-dipped on their entrance fees and rode the 40-mile route one weekend and the 60 the following weekend! We found the scavenger hunt items, took some selfies, and had our own socially-distanced post-ride adult beverage and snacks picnic in the parking lot.

So many rides this year went DIY or virtual, with riders putting in the equivalent miles – on their own routes. And there is honor in setting personal goals, over-

coming obstacles, and pushing oneself to achieve those goals. But the Ride to the Barns is a bit different. It is all about the place, the routes. It is about being awed by the vistas, challenged by hills, cruising the peaceful river valleys, passing through quaint small towns, connecting us to the farmers that grow the food that fuels us. Every mile of this ride connects you to why you do this ride – to preserve these places. And this year, it was clearer to me than ever before that we need these places – for recreation, solitude,

*"It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best."*  
—Ernest Hemingway

and sustainable local food production. We need places like these where the hum of our wheels, the click of our shifters, and our laughter can drown out the noise of the world.

I look forward to next year's ride – to experiencing the famously delicious locally-sourced food at the farm stops, to meeting the farmers and new friends. But it won't be the reason I ride. I'll ride again because 2020 has shown me that I need to invest in the places that sustain me. ▲



Ride to the Barns selfie contest winners enjoyed amazing prizes donated from local sponsors and partners. All participants had a chance to win.

## Thank You to Our Sponsors



## Thank You to Our Partners





# Lake Country Clean Waters Hosts Successful Online Conference

by BRAD STECKART, Lake Country Clean Waters

On June 5th, Lake Country Clean Waters (LCCW) held our 5th Annual Healthy Lakes and Rivers Conference via Zoom.

Usually the conference is a day for residents on different lakes and rivers to get together and celebrate Lake Country's waterways by viewing presentations, having comprehensive discussions, and riding around on a local lake in a convoy of pontoon boats to view water quality projects in the field. This year, social distancing requirements didn't allow the organizations to meet in person. Despite the pandemic, the LCCW Conference turned out to be an amazing event with more than 60 in attendance.

This year's theme was "Seeing 20/20: A clear vision for clean waters." LCCW recruited keynote speakers who focused on invasion ecology in the great lakes and put that into perspective in our local area water bodies. This clearly showed how science and research have addressed large-scale issues and brought that information back to local area waterways.

*"We learned from research scientists at the UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences about how zebra and quagga mussels feed. They can filter a gallon of algae a day and make the water clear. This leads to high plant growth and benefits other invaders like*

*"We missed seeing all of our friends, chatting in person about our lakes, sharing a meal, and getting out on the pontoon boats. That being said, we are so glad that we all still found a way to get together and learn about the health of our local waters."*

—Mike Engleson, Director of the Wisconsin Lake Partnership

Lake Country Clean Waters is an organization in its infancy, and is dedicated to keeping waterways free of aquatic invasive species, salts and chlorides, promoting collaboration between conservation groups, and keeping up with scientific research in order to provide informed solutions to water-related issues. As a partner organization with Tall Pines Conservancy (TPC) and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program, our main objective is to get folks together to focus on water health and conservation through this annual conference as well as our series of quarterly meetings.

*Eurasian watermilfoil,"* said Mary Knoll from Golden Lake Association.

At the conference, LCCW was also pleased to present its first Lake Recognition Award to the North Lake Management District (NLMD).



This award recognizes NLMD for its efforts to engage the public, volunteers, businesses, and other area partners in



Jerry Heine (right) of North Lake Management District receives the first Lake Recognition Award presented by Brad Steckart (left), Director of Lake Country Clean Waters.

protecting water quality and enhancing the appreciation of what the lake has to offer. Some of the strategies they have employed include: a strong fish stocking program, lake and river water quality monitoring, obtaining shoreline protection grants, extensive educational and outreach programs to lake residents and local schools and the encouragement of responsible and courteous lake usage that considers public safety, fisheries and shoreline.

The establishment of LCCW as an independent organization was made possible through funding provided by a generous donor to Tall Pines Conservancy. And while TPC and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program will continue to provide the same significant level of in-kind support to the organization, this temporary funding ends at the close of this year. **So, we need your help NOW more than ever** for the organization to continue to offer its quarterly meetings, annual conferences and other important services in the year 2021!

Please visit [lakecountrycleanwaters.org](http://lakecountrycleanwaters.org) for information on how to donate, as well as sponsorship and volunteer opportunities. ▲

# Nutrient Study of Tributaries Identifies Major Loading to North Lake

by EMILY WEBSTER, TPC Intern

My name is Emily Webster. I am a junior this year at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in their Conservation and Environmental Science program. This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Tall Pines and the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program (OWPP) on their North Lake Stream



Monitoring Project. This project sought to determine the flow rates and mass loading coming from three tributaries for North Lake during the months of May and June 2020. The three tributaries consisted of Mason Creek, the Little Oconomowoc River, and the Oconomowoc River.

In order to measure flow rates, you must have the width of the river, the depth, a distance you plan on measuring, as well as a velocity measurement for that distance. We measured both the width of the river and the specific distance beforehand. The velocity measurements and depth came down to me, two other

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## Giving a Gift That Will Last a Lifetime

by NANCY BONNIWELL, TPC Board President

As the newly elected President of the Tall Pines Conservancy Board, I have made the important decision to name TPC as a beneficiary in my estate plan. Considering what has transpired in the world this year, it has been a time of significant reflection. Many of us are having conversations with our family and loved ones that we never have had before.

Please know that the future of our precious land and lakes is in our hands. You can depend on Tall Pines to protect what we all love about our area. This commitment to protect our rural character is designed to last past our lifetimes—for our children, their children and beyond.

Talk about leaving a lasting legacy! This makes it essential that TPC continues to exist so that we can fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities to monitor these properties forever – and to protect MORE land and water to ensure the quality of life in our area for future generations.

My decision was easy. Please consider joining me in making a gift that will last FOREVER as a true legacy. I invite you to designate TPC as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or retirement plan or include a bequest provision in your will or trust.

Your legacy will be honored through the protection and care of our most precious places. If you would like more information about your planned giving options, please check the box on the enclosed envelope and return to TPC. Or, feel free to contact me directly at 262-853-9010. I am happy to work with you to tailor your future gift as you would like or provide sample language with you for your will or trust. Any gift, large or small, will help conserve our land. If you have already made the decision to honor TPC in your estate plans, please let us know so we can thank you personally and include you in our Legacy Circle of donors. ▲

## An Evening with Michael Perry to Benefit TPC

Thursday, February 25, 2021  
6:30p • Virtual Event

Michael is a New York Times Bestselling Author, Humorist, Singer/Songwriter and Intermittent Pig Farmer who will share stories of life on the farm while offering up for bid some truly unique silent auction experiences. ▲



In 2011, Michael Perry and the Longbeds performed at the incredibly successful TPC Fall Harvest celebrating the Zwieg Maple Acres conservation easement.



# Shoreline Restorations – *Protect Water Quality & Provide Critical Habitat for Riparian Wildlife*

by JILL BEDFORD, TPC Stewardship & Outreach



*Shoreline planting at North Lake.*

Many of our Lake Country lakes encourage shoreline buffers in various ways. Lac La Belle provides their own grant program, offering up to \$2000 for each planting project. Other lake groups, like North Lake, Pewaukee Lake and Lake Nagawicka, participate in the DNR Healthy Lakes & Rivers program, which includes 5 simple and inexpensive best practices that improve habitat and water quality on shoreline properties. Please visit [healthylakeswi.com](http://healthylakeswi.com) to learn more.

The program will provide \$1000 financial support for a 350-square-foot planting along the shores for either lakes or rivers. If your shore does not work well for shoreline plantings, consider the next best alternative: Find an area to put in a rain garden to dissipate the waters before entering the lake or river. A rain garden is basically a depression in the ground filled with flowers and grasses. Good examples of rain gardens can be seen at Fowler Lake behind Oconomowoc City Hall.

Tall Pines has a list of suggested landscapers specializing in shoreline restorations. Please contact TPC for that list or with any questions you may have.

**Where to start?** Look around your property and define part of the lawn you could comfortably allow to convert back to a natural state. There are many low-growing sedges, grasses and wildflowers that will not block the view of the water but only enhance it with a soft colorful forefront for the sky blue waters.



The benefits are many, including the satisfaction of knowing you are doing your part to help us protect our waters. If every landowner devoted a patch as small as 10 feet, it would make a huge difference. ▲

## Nutrient Study of Tributaries Identifies Major Loading to North Lake...

(from PAGE 7)

interns, and our project manager Tom Steinbach. Without official velocity equipment available, we used a cruder (however, still valid) way to measure velocity. By throwing a half-filled water bottle into the water and measuring the time it takes to flow over the predetermined distance, a velocity measurement can be obtained. We, of course, fished out the water bottles with nets.



*Volunteer Kelly Fleming.*

**In addition to the flow measurements, locals who lived near the streams generously offered to take daily water samples for us.** With both nutrient run-off and flow rates collected, we were able to put together the total amount of suspended solids and phosphorus flowing into North Lake from each tributary. We were able to prove that Mason Creek contributes a disproportionate amount of these nutrients to North Lake for the small amount of overall water it contributes to the lake. This data is invaluable to understand where the excessive nutrients originate, and how we can eliminate or reduce those sources. ▲



## Healing Trail... (from PAGE 2)

**Choosing to become present with the subtle sensations found only in nature opens a doorway into another realm.** Connecting with nature can shift the perceptions of your everyday world in profound ways. What follows becomes your own journey into peace of mind, tranquility, inspiration, and curiosity. It is a great place to rejuvenate for many who are experiencing anxiety, depression, any mental or physical health issues.

### Phase One

**The entrance to the Healing Nature Trail is marked by a woven and braided wood arch, which begins off the gravel road and brings walkers into the lush prairie.** Walking through the arch is the first step to leaving the busyness of daily life behind and giving oneself permission to let go and be im-



*Labyrinth constructed by volunteers as a passageway for visitors to release stress.*

mersed in the healing and replenishing energy of nature. The trail is very narrow by design, as to better immerse walkers in the feel and scents of nature. As the trail winds through the prairie, the journey takes one through a transition zone from prairie to woodland, and into the wetland leading to the river and back. Along the way, there is a "Zen Untangle"

featured area that offers users the ability to wander and lose themselves in working through obstacles and "tangles" that help them unravel troubles and to solve problems challenging them. Recently a large labyrinth was designed and installed by talented volunteers, that is meant to lead trail users through a stress-releasing experience.

The Trail was designed to provide a metaphor for the healing journey, offering multiple paths, alcoves for personal reflection, and (eventually) log benches nestled between elder trees overlooking the river along the way. All paths are suitable for barefoot walking which allow users to feel more fully the healing energies of Nature and the Earth. Plate-size finger labyrinths will eventually be available to take on the trail, which allows one to experience a labyrinth in whatever space calls you.

### Phase Two

**Phase Two of the trail will be a woodland loop leading off the parking area through the dense forest leading up to the overlook (Tall Pines installed the "Hunt Eldridge Memorial Overlook" last spring with generous funding provided by a local foundation).**

The Oconomowoc River Conservancy Park is located north of North Lake. Take 83 north to Kilbourne, follow Kilbourne north and east to Laskin Rd north. At the turn in the road West, there is a parking area. The Healing Nature Trail is located off of the gravel access road just to the north and east of the parking area.

If you would like to donate to this project, please visit [tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org). If you'd like to volunteer for phase two, or if you're a counselor wanting to use the trail for your clients, please feel free to contact me at 414-559-7460. ▲

## Dukelow Family Gives Back... (from PAGE 2)

lengthy family discussions to be completed – and all those legal documents to be carefully drafted, examined and approved. The time is often measured in years, not months – but as we close on the year 2020, we anticipate that the Dukelow Farm will be the newest, and by far the largest, property to be permanently protected through an easement with TPC. We hope you agree that is an incredibly inspiring way to close out a year that has been fraught with challenge.

### The Dukelow Family is giving our community an incredible gift.

They're donating the development rights on their farmland to make this conservation easement possible! However, we hope you will applaud and honor this incredible gift by making a donation to Tall Pines to cover acquisition costs associated with this transaction. ▲

**Please use the enclosed envelope or visit [tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org). Thank you for your continued support of farmland conservation.**

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

**Ride to the Barns**

**AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup> 2021**

**A FUNDRAISING  
EVENT TO BENEFIT  
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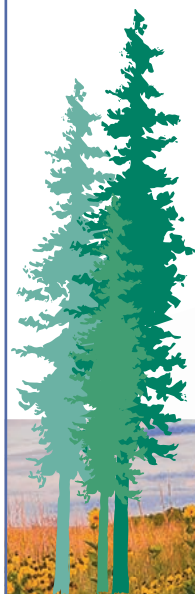
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[tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org)**

## The work of Tall Pines Conservancy is more important than ever before.

Thanks to you and your continued support, Tall Pines Conservancy is able to offer **real solutions** for saving valuable farmland – while protecting the integrity of our **rural landscape** and **improving the water quality of the lakes and rivers we ALL enjoy.**

Visit [tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org) to view our new video featuring the Mayer Family Farm Project and TPC's clean water initiatives!

**Your donation to our Annual Appeal is necessary for us to continue our important work.** Please make your year-end contribution using the enclosed envelope. Or, you may make a one-time credit card contribution or participate through a monthly giving program online. Visit [www.tallpinesconservancy.org](http://www.tallpinesconservancy.org) and click on the green donate button. Thank you! ▲



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