

thrive

REIMAGINING A COLLECTIVE FUTURE OF ABUNDANCE | SUMMER 2025

THE RESILIENCE ISSUE

Resilient Nature, Resilient Communities

Backpacks and Beyond
THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

The Maxine M. Hunter
Performance Plaza
The gift of a lifetime



BRUSHWOOD

thrive

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thrive

Brushwood's seasonal newsletter for collective change!

Thrive is a print and digital publication that helps us reimagine a collective future of abundance.

Special thanks to our contributors, editors, and artists for elevating the intersectional issues of health equity, access to nature, environmental justice, and more in our Lake County and Chicago region community.



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PHOTOGRAPHY THIS ISSUE:

In Life Photography, JoeShmoe Productions, Michael Kardas Photography, Diana Noh, and Brushwood Staff & Contributors

READ THRIVE IN SPANISH

Scan the QR code on the inside back cover to read this edition of Thrive in Spanish!

¡Escanee el código QR en la contraportada para leer esta edición de Thrive en español!



PHOTOS

COVER: Navy Veteran Angela Walker, who was recently honored by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs as an Illinois Women Veteran Leader of 2025, engaged the room with her soulful voice during *Joyful! A Celebration of Black History Month*. Willie 'Smooth' Fultz accompanies on guitar.

INSIDE COVER: Tarik Shahzad led a bird walk through Ryerson Woods and presented on *Cook County Birding Big Year*.

THIS PAGE: Pastor Cory E. Ratliff, (Founder and Artistic Director of ALATS Dance an outreach ministry of The Sign of the Dove) leads an inspirational exercise during *Joyful!*, our Black History Month celebration.

A group of 14 Veterans and family members participated in *Water(color) for the Soul*, led by Black Moon Trio, Kathryn P. Haydon, and HeeYoung Kim.

Dear Brushwood Supporter,

At Brushwood Center, we work toward a future of resilient and connected communities, both human and ecological, where all lead healthy and thriving lives.

As we approach our 5th Community Leadership Roundtable in June, where civic and community leaders come together around issues of environmental justice in Lake County, we are asking: **What makes a community resilient and connected?**

There is certainly more than one answer, but when we think about it, we see a community where the individual can see beyond themselves and root in the collective, with people and nature. Together, we're stronger, more adaptable, and more able to weather the storms of life.

In this issue of *Thrive*, we are exploring resilience and what we can learn about it from nature, our communities, and each other. Navigating uncertain times for people and the climate requires building our resilience by increasing connections, advocating for each other, and working together to protect our natural resources.

Based on a foundation of respect for ourselves, each other, our community, and the natural world, the Brushwood community is strong and resourceful. We're glad you're a part of it!

Sincerely,

Dani Abboud
Senior Program Director

Jacalyn Ramdin-Johnson
Brushwood Board Member

Resilient Nature, Resilient Communities

By Megan Donahue

Earlier this spring, I was walking through the woods. It was one of those first perfect days—warm, but not too hot, the sky a brilliant blue. As I wandered along the paths, I noted the signs of spring migratory birds calling to each other, carpets of spring ephemeral wildflowers, the leaves just starting to emerge. Every year, spring feels like a miracle to me, and this year, especially. On both the macro and micro level, it had been a long winter.

I rounded a bend and saw a fallen tree. Not unusual— the winter winds take some out every year. What struck me was all the new growth sprouting out of it. Branches with bright yellow-green leaves were beginning to unfurl. I looked closer; there was just a small section of the trunk still connected to the roots. Apparently, that was enough to keep this tree going.

The metaphor was hard to miss.

Merriam Webster defines resilience as:

- 1: the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress
- 2: an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change

In tumultuous times, we know that cultivating resilience is important. When we are that strained body, we want to

NATURE'S EMPORIUM

Nature's Emporium is a holistic wellness center in Waukegan. "It's more than a brick and mortar store. It's really a community center in Lake County," says founder Bruce Wright. "We do a lot of community outreach work and also provide a lot of natural products and information about holistic healing." Nature's Emporium created unique tea blends for Brushwood's TIERRA program's forest bathing experiences. Visit them at 1101 W Greenwood Ave, Waukegan.

recover and adjust. Nature offers us many examples of resilience, from the fresh regrowth after forest fires to the dandelions that grow in the cracks in the sidewalk.

"To me, resilience means a way of grounding yourself, recovering. It's a way of having a self-care plan. I think nature's just wonderful because it's so resilient. I mean, it don't matter if it's a storm, if it's a flood, it's a fire. It always finds a way to heal itself," says Bruce Wright, founder of Nature's Emporium in Waukegan.

Here in Lake County, there is a powerful story of resilience and recovery: The Waukegan Dunes.

Lessons from the Dunes

The natural environment along the Waukegan lakeshore is special. It includes a rare landscape of dunes, swales, bluffs, and ravines found in very few other places in the world. But the Waukegan Harbor and lakefront were long contaminated

by over a century of industry. As Brushwood Center reported in the 2023 *Health, Equity, and Nature: A Changing Climate in Lake County, Illinois* (HEN report).

"Waukegan's industrial pollution traces back to its development as a port city. In 1855, the economic future of the town seemed assured with the first train running through Waukegan connecting Chicago to Milwaukee. Waukegan Harbor was one of the busiest on the Great Lakes, and throughout the 1900s Waukegan continued to grow. Throughout the twentieth century, the city grew as an industrial center with companies such as Abbott Laboratories, Outboard Marine Corporation, and Medline."

The industrial activity resulted in a staggering amount of pollution, and today Waukegan is home to five Superfund sites (there are eight total in Lake County). Superfund sites are sites of environmental contamination that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designates as significant hazards that must be cleaned up. It also requires the parties responsible for the contamination to either perform cleanups or reimburse

ROOTED IN THE SHADOW OF COAL

This summer, Brushwood will explore the resilience of this ecosystem in a new exhibition, *Rooted in the Shadow of Coal: Botanical Treasures of the Waukegan Dunes*. In this exhibition, we will celebrate the plants of the dunes, and also address the Dune's environmental importance.

the government for EPA-led cleanup work.

At the end of the 20th century, the Waukegan shoreline was overwhelmed with contamination. But with community action and advocacy, the Harbor and surrounding dunes were rehabilitated in an extraordinary way.

From the HEN Report:

...Fortunately, community action and advocacy has led to the continued remediation of these sites, and particularly in Waukegan Harbor. In 1990, the Waukegan Harbor Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) was formed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to lead the development of a remedial action plan (RAP) for the Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern.

In 2013, the final environmental dredge of Waukegan Harbor was completed. As of August 2020, the Waukegan Area of Concern (AOC) has only one Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) remaining: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources monitors polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) levels in harbor fish. The CAG continues "to work with local, state and federal agencies to assure that the remaining contaminated sites located along the Waukegan lakefront are remediated and the remaining BUI is delisted and the AOC be declared an Area of Recovery."

With remediation, protection, new dune fences, and green infrastructure, the natural environment is making a big comeback. In a recent interview with the Chicago Tribune, Lisa May, Waukegan Lakefront Coordinator, talked about the nature on the shoreline re-emerging. "It was Mother Nature taking back her territory. Mother Nature does what she wants, and she always wins."



The diverse native wildflowers and plants of the dunes have reemerged. Hundreds of plant species grow in what was once a heavily industrial area. This scrap of nature has survived and thrived thanks to community engagement.

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Robin Wall Kimmerer, author, scientist, mother, professor, and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, is best known for her books *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *The Serviceberry*, but she's also Brushwood's 2025 Smith Nature Symposium Honoree. Join us as we present her with the Environmental Leadership Award on October 11, 2025 at the Awards Dinner.

Cultivating Resilience in Our Communities and Ourselves

"In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top—the pinnacle of evolution, the darling of Creation—and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as 'the younger brothers of Creation,'" wrote Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*. "We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn—we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live. They teach us by example. They've been on the earth far longer than we have been, and have had time to figure things out."

Jess Rodriguez, Brushwood's Coalition Building Manager, is one of our resident experts on community and connectedness. Jess says, "A resilient community is one where you can feel safe and supported, one where you can offer support, knowing that your wellbeing is directly intertwined to the well-being of those directly around you."

This practice doesn't have to be complicated, Jess explains. "It may be as simple as saying good morning, learning someone's name, and sharing a skill, resource, or new piece of information with someone. A resilient community starts with connection to what is within your reach and has the possibility of having a profound ripple effect."

There's a lot to learn from the Dunes about the power of community and the potential to reshape, reform, and recover. In spite of tremendous adversity, the revitalized Dunes show us what it looks like to make a comeback and celebrate the good things that remain. Similarly, as our communities face climate change, political strife, trauma, and uncertain times, we need each other to be resilient.

NATURE EVERYWHERE

The Children & Nature Network, National League of Cities, Morrison Family Foundation, and KABOOM! are partnering to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play in 100 U.S. communities by 2025. With support from a number of private funders, Waukegan will join the Nature Everywhere Communities initiative. Waukegan possesses a number of natural assets from the beach to the bicycle trail, district parks, forest preserves and ravines. Initial conversations with stakeholders also surfaced a number of community assets including a strong environmental justice advocates, a county nature coalition, a health coalition, and documented community engagement and mapping as it relates to nature access.

Nature Everywhere Waukegan presents an opportunity to build a thriving Waukegan where healthy lands and waters and access to nature serve as key components of community health.

At first glance, my fallen tree looks like the story of a rugged individual, eking out its existence despite all the odds. But there's a community at work there, too. The soil and sunlight are feeding the tree. Insects help pollinate it. Birds rest in its branches. That tree is not alone, and neither are we.

This story originally stated that the Waukegan Dunes "re-emerged." Thanks to our friends at the Waukegan Harbor Citizens Advisory Group for clarifying that while a natural environment has re-emerged, the current dunal system formed in the late 20th century.

A Forest Bathing Invitation

By Jess Rodriguez

Wander out into a nearby nature space and set a timer for 15-20 minutes to be completely tuned into your senses.

You might turn your phone on silent and put away any time telling devices to simply give yourself a moment to wander slowly and perhaps quietly.

Once you do, notice all of the sounds that are playing in the space.

How many different sounds might you hear?

If there is a sound that particularly grabs your attention what would it be like to follow that sound?

You might also add sounds to the space. Notice what that feels like.

If you find that you cannot hear anything you might notice what the air feels like around your ears.

Maybe you notice what it's like to listen to the space with your heart sense.

Take some time to wander slowly and quietly in nature, perhaps with your heart as your guide.

Jess Rodriguez seeks to expand community engagement and organizes around solutions identified in the Health, Equity, and Nature Accelerator Report as Brushwood Center's Coalition Building Manager. They support community members to advocate for environmental, social, and economic justice for a thriving, resilient future. Jess is also a certified Nature and Forest Therapy guide and has their own private practice known as Reciprocal Forest Bathing. They have a deep love for spending time with the more-than-human-world whether through backpacking, canoeing, or wandering around Lake Michigan.

Summer at Brushwood Center has a signature item for the *It's A W.I.N (Art and Wellness in Nature)* team. Beach towels? No. Sunscreen? Nope.

Backpacks

This year, Brushwood and a network of dedicated community partners are teaming up to distribute 1,200 *Nature Explorer Backpacks/ Mochilas de Explorador*. These backpacks are filled with supplies and resources to encourage families to explore the natural spaces around them through activities focused on nurturing wellness and creativity.

Juan Diaz is the Community Engagement Coordinator, and Sandra Lopez is the Communications and Organizational Development Director at the Round Lake Area Public Library. We sat down with them to talk about our collaboration, which grew from backpack summers to a year-round multi-faceted partnership.

What does the partnership between Brushwood Center and the Round Lake Area Public Library look like?

Juan Diaz: We originally started with Brushwood offering the *Nature Explorer Backpack* program. We hosted a program here where we talked a little bit about education/nature, and then we would give out the backpacks to the participants. Once we saw how successful that program was, we decided to do other nature programs. We started meeting quarterly and we would do other one-off programs. The last one we did was Scavenger Hunt.

We're actually lucky that we're right next door to the park district, and we have a woods area behind the library-a part of it has been made into a trail.

So we went to the trail and we were able to take a small group back there, and Brushwood came in and was able to share their expertise on nature and how to look at the leaves or the birds. From that program, Brushwood also developed their *Little Explorer* backpacks, and then they were able to give us four backpacks. We've just been building off from all the previous programs to either offer more nature programs or even resources that we can let our patrons borrow.

How does this partnership help you with your goals for community engagement at the library?

Sandra Lopez: Brushwood has been a force that has helped us reach more people. Without Brushwood, we

were limited by our reach because of funds and also because of manpower. The library and Brushwood have a similar vision in a lot of ways: we both value lifelong learning, the arts, science, things like that. So the partnership just makes sense. We're very aligned.

JD: Partnering with Brushwood has allowed us to reach a lot more people who might have a specific niche with nature and art that we might have not been able to reach before. Out of the partnership, we were able to establish a lot of new programs, offer more resources.

SL: We value Brushwood's creativity and generosity and just overall commitment to the community. The team has brought in a lot of tools to make it happen. So it's definitely the partnership that's rooted, in a lot of mutual respect and shared goals that inspire that connection to nature, that as a library, I don't think we'd be able to necessarily do alone. Brushwood provides a lot of access to the nature tools, to the guidance on how to explore the outdoors. And the *Nature Explorer* and *Little Explorer Backpacks* have really been what has helped us bridge that gap so that every child can develop through play, and discover nature and wellness.

JD: Thanks to Brushwood we've been able to reach different community needs. Like some patrons, were excited to use the backpacks since it was close to the start of school, they could use it for that reason. There were other families who were really excited because the backpack was going to aid the parents to have tools for their children to use when they go outside and explore nature. Round Lake has a lot of nature trails, so that's another resource that parents can have and use with their children. We were able to reach different interests and provide something for anyone.

What is the impact of the Nature Explorer and Little Explorer Backpacks?

SL: They encourage observation, creativity, reflection, which aligns really beautifully with the library's literacy and STEM and STEAM goals that we have in our strategic plan. The backpacks help us remove some of the barriers by giving families free access to the tools, or the ideas, or outdoor explanation. I know that sometimes as parents, we want our children to know more about nature, but we're so disconnected sometimes that we don't even know how. So I feel like the backpacks help bridge that gap for that "how" and explain or support mental wellness, curiosity, even physical health.

Through this partnership, the library has invested in connecting the community with nature and the outdoors. Why?

SL: Yes, we're a library and one of our values is literacy, but our second highest value is bridging the gap in the community. And part of that is connecting to nature,

connecting to creativity, connecting to STEAM and STEM. Through this collaboration we're helping the community, helping families build that deeper relationship with lifelong learning, with nature, with each other. Our partnership just shows what's possible when two organizations come together with a shared purpose. Brushwood has brought their vision and their resources to the library, and together we're creating this educational experience that I feel is very joyful for families who might not have been able to have it otherwise. And that's really the heart of the partnership.

How does the library contribute to community resilience?

JD: Going back to when we started this partnership with Brushwood, it started during COVID. That's a good example of the resilience of both organizations, to come together and still meet the needs of the community in an entirely different way. It shows the adaptability of libraries and how no matter what hardships the community might be going through or just the world in general, the library will always be an institution that will be able to, or try our best to be, a resource. Whether that be through books or partnering with organizations to provide more resources.

SL: I feel like the library's resilience is within the community by being a consistent, reliable resource for learning, for connection, for support in times of

uncertainty. Libraries are often the safe haven that provides access to the information, to the resources, sometimes even emotional support to help people either cope or cope and thrive. That often happens through educational programs, community events, resources like the *Nature Explorer* and *Little Explorer Backpacks* that encourage this outdoor learning exploration that we've been talking about.

We help individuals and families figure out challenges and build skills for resilience. I think we're the connector that links people to services, to mental health resources, to tools that they might not otherwise be able to access. We're not just books, right? Our role isn't just about providing books. It's about creating connections in an environment where people feel empowered, people feel informed, and people feel supported.

Check Out Little Explorer Backpacks at a Library Near You!

The *Nature Explorer Backpacks* have received a rave response from our partners and participants, so we decided keep the excitement going all year long. Brushwood has partnered with libraries across Lake County to create the *Little Explorer's Backpack*, filled with new and thrilling activities for families to enjoy. Available for checkout at North Chicago Public Library, Round Lake Area Public Library and Warren-Newport Public Library.



2025 GOAL:

1,200
BACKPACKS

2,500
ACTIVITY BOOKS

Back a Backpack

This summer, Brushwood and our partners will provide 1,200 bilingual *Nature Explorer Backpacks / Mochilas de Explorador* to youth and family members in Waukegan, North Chicago, Round Lake, Gurnee, and Highwood, but we need your help!

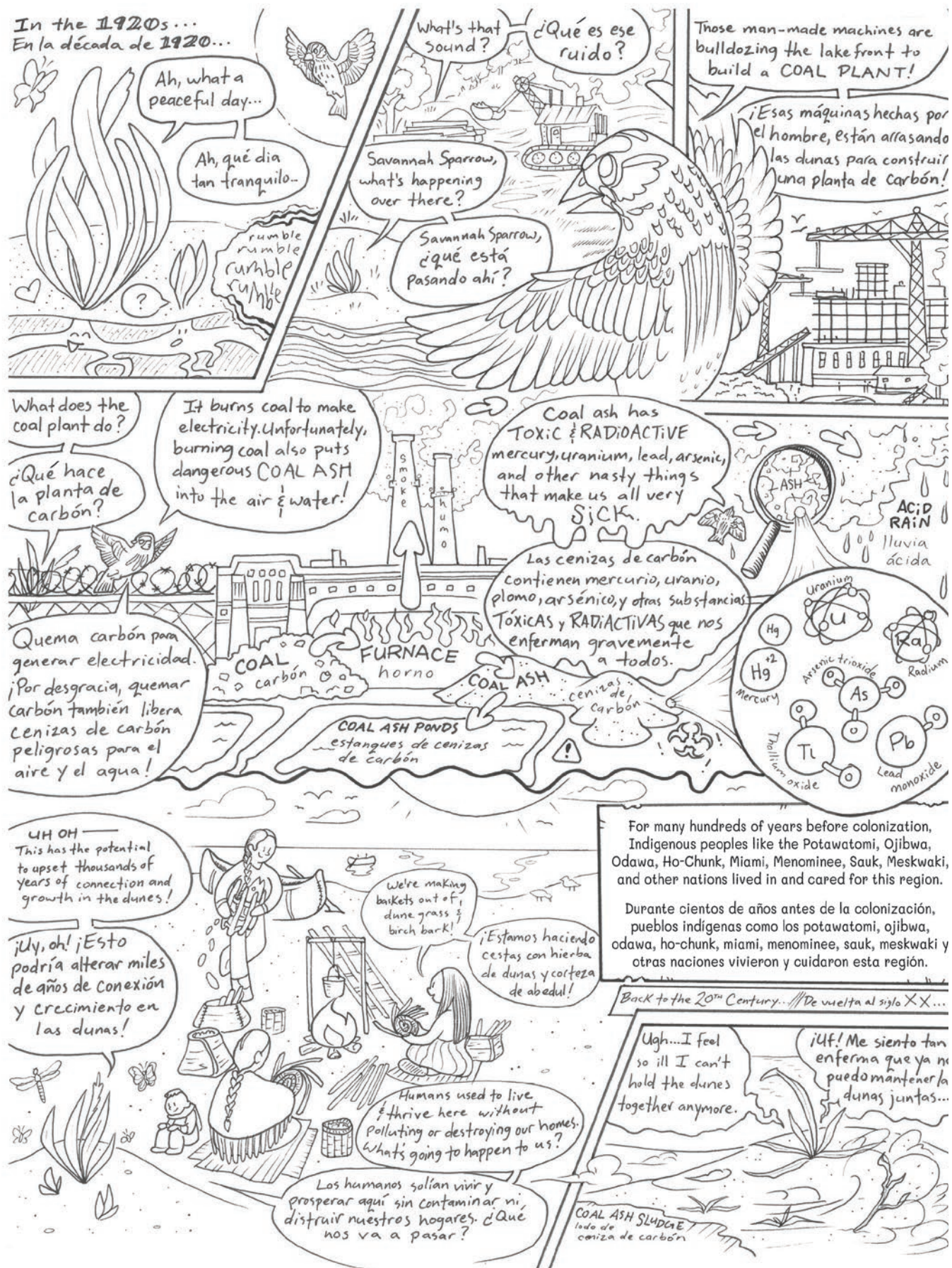
At such a critical time for our environment and communities, we need your help to support the health and wellbeing of young people in Lake County. A gift of \$50 provides one *Nature Explorer Backpack* and all the materials to fill it. Will you back a backpack?



Thank you to our 2025 Nature Explorer Backpack Sponsors!

The Buchanan Family Foundation | Grainger Grainger Foundation | Jonathan Huisel Northwestern Medicine | Wintrust Community Banks

Every year, the It's A W.I.N. team collaborates with an artist to create a special nature activity book for the Nature Explorer Backpack Project. Here's a sneak peek



from this year's edition, created with artist, Royce Galindo...The Amazing Adventures of the Dune Defenders!



42nd Annual Smith Nature Symposium Awards Dinner

with Emcees Bill Kurtis & Donna LaPietra

FLOURISH

EMBRACING INDIGENOUS AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Saturday, October 11, 2025

5:30 - 9:00 PM | Chicago Botanic Garden



Robin Wall Kimmerer

2025 Environmental Leadership Award Recipient

2025 CO-CHAIRS

Janea Harris and Lois Morrison

SAVE THE DATE:

Robin Wall Kimmerer at Smith Nature Symposium

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is the author of *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, which has earned Kimmerer wide acclaim.

On October 11, 2025, we'll honor her as the recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Environmental Leadership Award at the Smith Nature Symposium Awards Dinner. Get your tickets now!

SMITH NATURE SYMPOSIUM

SPECIAL SPONSOR BENEFITS

Directly support programs in our community for youth, families, seniors, and Veterans.

- Name recognition opportunities throughout the Smith Series, with programming running from July to October 2025, including Summer 2025 and Fall 2025 exhibitions.
- Celebrate at the in-person Awards Dinner honoring author, scientist, and professor Robin Wall Kimmerer.
- Join a community of supporters committed to a thriving and equitable world for people and nature.

A VIP EVENT FOR SPONSORS

Brushwood Brunch with Robin Wall Kimmerer

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12 | 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Join Robin Wall Kimmerer and your fellow sponsors for an intimate gathering at Brushwood Center highlighting this year's Smith Nature Symposium exhibition by Osage artist Lydia Cheshewalla.



For more information, tickets, and to sponsor now!

FALL EXHIBITION Lydia Cheshewalla

Sunday, September 7 to Sunday, October 23

Lydia Cheshewalla (she/we) is an Osage ephemeral artist from Oklahoma, living and working in motion throughout the Great Plains ecoregion. Through the creation of site-specific land art and ephemeral installations grounded in Indigenous land stewardship practices and kinship pedagogies, Lydia engages in multivocal conversations about place and relationship. Her work has been shown at Generator Space, the Union for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE), Comfort Station, Harold Washington Library, and the Center for Native Futures (Chicago, IL) among others. She is currently filling the bucket with water to see if it leaks and is often found standing in fields.

Center for Humans and Nature Residency, August 2025
The Center for Humans & Nature is the 2025 Smith Nature Symposium Residency Partner. Lydia Cheshewalla will be artist-in-residence for August 2025 residency at the Humans & Nature Farm in Libertyville, Illinois. Humans & Nature Farm is where ideas take root. The farm is a place to activate examples of reciprocal relationships among humans and nature. Lydia will create new place-based ephemeral works during the residency.

Meet Kathryn Haydon, Brushwood's Poet-in-Residence

Brushwood Center's Poet-in-Residence, Kathryn P. Haydon is the author of seven books, including her latest poetry collection *Unsalted Blue Sunrise: Poems of Lake Michigan*, which was featured in Brushwood's *Water(color) for the Soul: Music of Lake Michigan* program earlier this year.

Kathryn earned her BA in Latin American and Spanish literature from Northwestern University and her MSc in creativity and change leadership from the acclaimed International Center for Studies in Creativity at the State University of New York. Her award-winning haiku and poetry have been published internationally in leading journals such as *The Heron's Nest*, *Humana Obscura*, *Wales Haiku Journal*, *East on Central*, and many others, as well as in books and academic journals. The founder of Sparkitivity, Kathryn writes about people who think a lot, feel a lot, and wonder a lot in her *Substack*, *Deep Soul Strengths*.

She says, "It has been a delight to partner with Brushwood, rounding out its artistic residencies with the written and spoken word. My first significant project with the musicians- and artist-in-residence was to serve the Military Veterans who have so selflessly served us. In Brushwood's program *Water(color) for the Soul*, we used my poetry about Lake Michigan to kindle Veterans' own recollections about water. This inspiration led to a wide range of memories, from joyful times in childhood to

harrowing events in wartime. These stories formed the nucleus of the Veterans' visually-depicted musical compositions."



Listen Here

Listen to the compositions here.

Below, Kathryn shares a poem from her poetry collection, *Unsalted Blue Sunrise*, which she shared during *Water(color) for the Soul*. This book contains 45 of the poems she wrote during daily walks to the lakeshore over the course of one year. "It was an incredible challenge to observe the same frame of nature and the dramatic and nuanced changes that took place in that frame from one July through all the seasons to another," Kathryn says.

**The gentle coming and going waves
croon in my ears this morning**

**Crescendo and diminuendo like billowy smoke
yawn in these early hours**

**Coral morning light lingers above the horizon
thoughts stretch across time**

**I'm loath to return to ones and zeroes
to zeroes and never the one.**

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Curating Conversations: Rooted in the Shadow of Coal

This summer, Brushwood Center is partnering with the Driehaus Museum to explore perspectives on art and nature in association with their summer exhibition, *Rory McEwen: A New Perspective on Nature*. Brushwood Center will open its companion exhibition, *Rooted in the Shadow of Coal: The Botanical Treasures of the Waukegan Dunes* on July 13.

Rory McEwen: A New Perspective on Nature is an exhibition exploring the trailblazing career and legacy of Scottish artist Rory McEwen, whose work is considered one of the major turning points in the development of contemporary botanical art. The exhibition reveals how McEwen forged his own personal interpretation of 20th century modernism, portraying flowers, leaves, and vegetables as individual subjects worthy of their own portraits.

Botanical art is a proud tradition at Brushwood, which has been home to renowned botanical artist Heeyoung Kim's Botanical Art Academy for

over a decade. *Rooted in the Shadow of Coal* embraces that tradition while expanding to include a wider range of artists and media, all focused on the resilient plants of the Waukegan Dunes. Each artwork in the show includes a reference to at least one, and sometimes several, of these botanical wonders.

"By focusing on the plants of the Dunes, the exhibition naturally engages with the toxic history and environmental justice action around the region," says Julia Kemerer, Brushwood's Director of Art and Administration. "We're asking questions like: 'What has proximity to pollution done to the site? What does it mean to have this surviving and thriving natural environment next to coal ash ponds?' We're using botanical art as a lens to consider health, equity, and nature."

Rory McEwen: A New Perspective on Nature is on view at the Driehaus Museum, 50 E. Erie Street in Chicago from May 16 to August 17, 2025.

Rooted in the Shadow of Coal: Botanical Treasures of the Waukegan Dunes will be on view at Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods from July 13 to August 31, 2025.

ILLUSTRATION: *Walking Up The Dune* by Josie Levin



Building a Healthy Future

Brushwood Center Annual Report is Here!

2024 was a year of impact where Brushwood's programs, partners, and strategies converged to build a healthy future!

Building a Healthy Future, Brushwood Center's 2024 annual report is available to download and read online at brushwoodcenter.org



Nature Book Club with Kathryn

Starting this summer, Kathryn will co-lead Brushwood's new monthly meet up focused on nature literature, joined by writer-artist Megan Donahue. Each meeting includes discussion, creative writing, and art activities to engage with the themes of the chosen book.

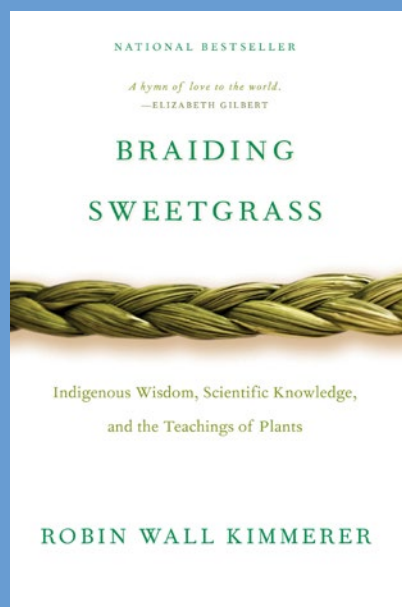
Our summer series of meetings is focused on the work of the 2025 Smith Nature Symposium Honoree, Robin Wall Kimmerer. In July and August, we'll read *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, and in

September, *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*.

Receive 15% off of the purchase price of the books at Lake Forest Book Store when you mention Brushwood Nature Book Club or Kathryn Haydon!



Sign up for the first meeting!





ART EXHIBITION
The Future Voyagers Exhibit
 May 18 - July 6

In partnership with Chicago Voyagers, a nonprofit whose mission is to empower local, underrepresented youth through outdoor adventure therapy programs.

The show includes new work that features portraits of youths who currently participate in Chicago Voyagers programs. These youths are using outdoor exploration as a means to become leaders and impact the world in a positive way.

ART EXHIBITION
Rooted in the Shadow of Coal: Botanical Treasures of the Waukegan Dunes
 July 13 - August 31

RECEPTION | July 13 | 1-3pm

Located in the northeastern corner of Illinois, the Waukegan Dunes is an area of great environmental and historical significance that is home to hundreds of species of native plants worth celebrating. The fact that this scrap of nature has survived and thrived thanks to community engagement is significant not just for its biodiversity, but also because of its location next to a recently closed coal plant, where remaining coal ash ponds continue to leach toxic pollutants.

FALL EXHIBITION
Lydia Cheshewalla
 September 7 - October 23

RECEPTION | Sept 7 | 1-3pm

Lydia Cheshewalla (she/we) is an Osage ephemeral artist from Oklahoma, living and working in motion throughout the Great Plains ecoregion. Through the creation of site-specific land art and ephemeral installations grounded in Indigenous land stewardship practices and kinship pedagogies, Lydia engages in multivocal conversations about place and relationship.

BRUSHWOOD EVENTS

PERFORMANCES

The Great Lakes: Our Freshwater Treasure with Black Moon Trio at the Driehaus Museum
 50 E. Erie St., Chicago, IL
 July 16 | 6pm-7pm

CREATE WITH US

BASE: Open Art Workshop with the Artist of the Month ●
 Last Saturday of each month
 May 31 | 10am-3pm
Magdalena Kranc Velazquez
 June 28 | 10am-3pm
Maryann Wattelle
 July 26 | 10am-3pm
Susan Teller
 August 30 | 10am-3pm
Kirsten Saunders

BASE: Create & Sip with the Artist of the Month ●
 June 18 | 7pm-9pm | Make a Junk Journal with **Magdalena Kranc Velazquez**
 July 16 | 7pm-9pm Collage Portraits with **Maryann Wattelle**
 August 13 | 7pm-9pm | Views from your Window - Accordion Art Books with **Susan Teller**

AT EASE: VETERANS AND THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

Veterans Acrylic Paint & Sip Nights
 June 26, July 9, August 13 | 6:30-9pm
 American Legion, Cicero
Watercolor Painting for Women Veterans and Families
 June 26, July 24, August 28
 6:30pm - 8pm | Virtual
Art Impact Project
 June 17, July 15, August 19
 10am - 11:30am | Mundelein
Paint and Photo the Prairie
 July 20, August 24 | 3pm-7pm Midewin
 National Tallgrass Prairie
Military Kids Fest ●
 August 16 | 10am -2pm

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Backpack Distributions
North Chicago Library
 June 9 | 5pm-6pm
Warren- Newport Public Library
 July 26 | 10am - 12pm
Round Lake Library
 July 7 | 3pm - 4pm
 July 17 | 6pm - 7pm
Highwood Library
 June 5 | 1:30pm - 2:30pm
HACES
 August 8 | 11am - 1pm
Mano a Mano
 August 9
 Round Lake Sports Center

PARTNER EVENTS

Textured Collagraph Printmaking with Emily Luna
 June 5 | 6pm-7:30pm
 Round Lake Area Public Library
 June 19 | 6pm - 7:30pm
 Round Lake Area Public Library
Nature Fun Fest
 August 23 | 1pm-4pm
 Round Lake Area Park District

NATURE OPPORTUNITIES

Celestial Nature and Forest Therapy
Summer Solstice
 June 20 | 1pm-3pm
 Ryerson Woods
Sturgeon Moon
 August 9 | 10am-12pm
 Ryerson Woods
Nature Book Club
Braiding Sweetgrass Part 1 ●
 July 26 | 10am - 11:30am
Braiding Sweetgrass Part 2 ●
 August 23 | 10am - 11:30am

PLAN YOUR EVENT!

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods is available for rental. Experience the warmth and charm of the historic Ryerson estate, surrounded by nature.

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods is a gathering place nestled deep in the 565 acres of the tranquil wooded sanctuary of the Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area in Riverwoods, Illinois.

Brushwood Center's venue rentals are an extension of our mission of improving health equity through community, nature, and the arts. As such, we prioritize rental inquiries from community members, organizations, artists, businesses, teachers, and health workers to provide spaces for connection and collaboration.

Contact Justin Reyna at jreyna@brushwoodcenter.org with inquiries.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Brushwood Center has opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill-levels to get involved in helping us deliver high-quality programming to communities in Lake County. Email info@brushwoodcenter.org.

BRUSHWOOD CENTER AT RYERSON WOODS
 21850 N. Riverwoods Road
 Riverwoods, IL 60015

OPEN HOURS
 MONDAY-THURSDAY: 10AM - 3PM
 SATURDAY: 10AM - 3PM
 SUNDAY: 1PM - 3PM
 and by appointment

BRUSHWOOD CENTER NORTH
 415 Washington Street
 Suite #009
 Waukegan, IL 60085

OPEN HOURS
 MONDAY-THURSDAY: 10AM - 3PM
 and by appointment



FOR MORE DETAILS

Visit brushwoodcenter.org for more information.
 ● Events take place at Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods unless otherwise noted.

Celebrating Maxine M. Hunter's Legacy



The Maxine M. Hunter Performance Plaza

The new plaza will be a dynamic, three-season open-air event space four times larger than the current structure. The increased space will enhance Brushwood's ability to reach broader audiences, host more participants, and explore new, creative programs. The Plaza will feature solar panels to generate renewable energy for programming and technology, and a rainwater collection system that nourishes surrounding healing gardens and native plantings. The Plaza will offer a seamless transition between indoor comfort and outdoor connection, allowing Brushwood visitors to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of nature while immersed in music, movement, and creative expression.

This spring, Brushwood Center announced a historic \$2.5 million gift from the Hunter Family Foundation. This gift, the largest in Brushwood's history, will go toward the construction of a new performance and event space, to be named the Maxine M. Hunter Performance Plaza, in honor of Maxine M. Hunter, Brushwood Center's first board chair.

The relationship between the Hunter Family Foundation and Brushwood Center has sustained over the decades. Here, we share a conversation between Willard M. (Bill) Hunter, Chair and CEO of the Hunter Family Foundation, and Brushwood Center's Director of Development, Mirja Spooner Haffner, about Maxine and her legacy at Brushwood.

Mirja: How does this generous gift from the Hunter Family Foundation represent Maxine Hunter's life and legacy?

Bill: My mother, Maxine, cared deeply about her community. She was the founding board president of what is now Brushwood Center and remained a committed supporter throughout her life. A talented pianist and music teacher, Maxine believed people came to Brushwood to find peace, learn, and feel a sense of wonder in nature. She once said, "I work on things that are important to me: art,

nature, conservation. We should be supportive of the community we live in, to make the world a better place." We believe a performance plaza at Brushwood is a fitting tribute to her life and values.

Mirja: The Maxine M. Hunter Performance Plaza at Brushwood Center will have a profound impact on the accessibility, reach, and impact of our work, supporting the health and well-being of participants from all backgrounds and experiences in healing art and nature programming. How does this impact align with the Hunter Family Foundation's philanthropic mission?

Bill: The Hunter Family Foundation, founded in 1993 by my parents, Maxine and Thomas B. Hunter III, strives to improve lives in sustainable ways by supporting families to access equitable opportunities to learn, play, and grow in their home communities. Over the years, our partnership with Brushwood has supported this mission. Now, we are pleased to provide the opportunity for Brushwood to expand its wide range of programming for children, adults, families, and Veterans in the Lake County community. Our family can visualize my mother loving to come to this beautiful place and hear music and speakers interact with the audience in this intimate setting, a place open to everyone.

OUR VISION

We work toward a future of resilient and connected communities, both human and ecological, where all lead healthy and thriving lives.

OUR MISSION

Brushwood Center works collaboratively with community partners, artists, health care providers, and scientists to improve health equity and access to nature in Lake County, Illinois, and the Chicago region. We engage people with the outdoors through the arts, environmental education, and community action. Brushwood Center's programs focus on youth, families, Military Veterans, and those facing racial and economic injustices.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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PHOTO: A blossoming artist at the Mother Earth Market





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Riverwoods, IL 60015

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Your next issue of
thrive has arrived!



Attention,
Military Families!

Kid Fest August 16

Celebrate summer with Brushwood Center's *At Ease* initiative and enjoy art, music, activities, games, and nature with other members of the Military Community! Join us August 16th at Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods.

In collaboration with Kids Rank, Veteran Art Tribe and other Veteran organizations, Brushwood's second annual Military Kids Fest offers an open house with art, exploration, and fun.