

thrive

REIMAGINING A COLLECTIVE FUTURE OF ABUNDANCE | SUMMER 2026

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND NATURE ISSUE

Community Health Workers

Connecting Lake County
to Better Health

Nature Explorer Backpacks Mochilas de Explorador

Healing Illinois
Investing in Community



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.

LEA THRIVE EN ESPAÑOL

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!



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PHOTOGRAPHY THIS ISSUE:

In Life Photography, Michael Kardas Photography, Jenna Jo Pawlicki, and Brushwood Staff & Contributors

PHOTOS: (COVER) **TIERRA** workshop participant Mariana Garrido creates art that will be exhibited at the **TIERRA** exhibition.
(RIGHT) Making butterfly art at the Mother Earth Market

Dear Brushwood Supporter,

As a physician, I know that your health matters. I also know that accessing healthcare can be a complicated process for many people.

Individuals accessing healthcare, or even simply trying to learn more about their own health, may encounter cultural, financial, transportation, language, or other barriers. How does someone without a car get to an appointment if it's not accessible by public transit? How do you make decisions about treatment when you're unfamiliar with the system and the options?

Community Health Workers are a bridge between communities and the healthcare system. They help community members navigate the process of taking care of their health. As members of the communities they serve, they are trusted guides that help and empower people to get the care they need and improve their health.

As Brushwood Center demonstrated in its report, *Health, Equity, and Nature: A Changing Climate in Lake County, IL*, the bigger picture of health goes beyond the individual - systems, policy, and social determinants of health like income stability, neighborhood, environment, access to nature, and community context all play a part.

Improving health equity in our region requires collaboration, community building, and strong coalitions of diverse leaders and community members to tackle complex issues. Community Health Workers are a crucial part of the puzzle, ensuring that more community members access healthcare and receive culturally competent care when they do. In this issue of *Thrive*, we're excited to share about what their work looks like in Lake County, and how Brushwood is partnering with community organizations to bring nature-based health solutions to Community Health Workers.

Thank you for being a part of the Brushwood community - enjoy the issue!

In Community,

Dr. Martha Twaddle
Brushwood Center Board Member



Community Health Workers: Connecting Lake County to Better Health

By Megan Donahue

PHOTOS: Artist Nydia González-Carson leads an art workshop for TIERRA participants.

You thought the medical practice accepted your insurance. They don't.

The clinic is open on Wednesdays and Fridays, but the provider who speaks your language is only there every other week.

You might qualify for Medicaid, but applying on the website is confusing.

Accessing healthcare can be a challenge for many people in America. Additional barriers like finances, transportation, language, education, and cultural differences can make it even more difficult. Systemic racism and the historic abuse of some communities by the medical system adds yet another layer of complexity when seeking care.

Tracey Smith of the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA) saw the scale of the problem when she was working in healthcare in the early 2000's. She noticed a major misalignment with complex patients, who were utilizing the emergency department often, but were missing out on other available resources.

The more she spoke with these patients, the more she realized that while they did need access to healthcare, "...they didn't necessarily need what people were saying they needed, like another clinic on another corner closer to them. What they needed was help to get to those places, help to understand, help to be comfortable sitting in the doctor's office, or finding a doctor that connected with them, and getting information to help providers provide the care needed."

They needed a Community Health Worker.

What is a Community Health Worker?

The American Public Health Association defines a Community Health Worker (CHW) as: *"a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A community health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities, such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy."*

As Venoncia Bates-Ambrus, Executive Director of the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County and a former CHW herself, explains, CHWs are different from other healthcare professionals. "As a community professional with expertise on community networks, community needs, community resources, challenges, barriers, and assets, they have all of that unique community-situated knowledge, or they develop it through the course of their work." This expertise, and the trusted role they hold within the community, makes it possible for the CHW to serve as liaison or ambassador, connecting the community to healthcare.

While CHWs are most often found in healthcare and public health settings, a variety of organizations employ CHWs, including libraries, schools and more. Sometimes known as promotoras de salud, patient navigators, outreach workers, or peer health counselors, CHWs go by many titles, but all of them describe an important role in reducing health disparities.

What a Community Health Worker Does

The specific roles and responsibilities of a CHW vary depending on their community and organization, but Venoncia identifies two areas where CHWs are especially important: overcoming stigma and navigating access to care.

"In certain cultures and communities, there may be a feeling of taboo," she explains. "[CHWs] really help to address barriers around accessing the healthcare because they address stigma, which can be associated with why people don't actually ask for help or utilize resources when they're available," she says.

CHWs are also helpful partners in figuring out the available resources and explaining information. "Organizations or sectors may have jargon, they may have different ways of communicating that aren't always understood by others outside of that sector," says Venoncia. "So CHWs are uniquely situated to be able to transfer that knowledge back and forth between community and organizations."

Andrea Barba is a Community Health Worker at Mano a Mano Family Resource Center in Round Lake. "What we do is mainly education and outreach. We have a group of eleven promotoras, and we educate the community with various health topics like cancer, diabetes, mental health. We mainly do preventative education," she says.

The CHWs give presentations on health topics, and have a weekly live stream. “Every week we have a different guest to talk about a health topic or resource. We’re always trying to look for a way to reach as many people as we can to provide education and empower them.”

The community is an important part of Andrea’s life. “I’m an immigrant myself. When I saw Mano a Mano, I saw all the things that they were doing, and I always liked how the community, when I came here, embraced me. I really felt like I belonged to the community and I wanted to do something for them as well.” When she learned about the role of CHWs, it resonated with her. “Something that came up a lot was being the bridge to fill the gap between the community, the people, and the systems that don’t always include them. I wanted to do that to help people integrate and be a part of the community.”

Next Steps for Community Health Workers in Illinois

Community Health Worker education and workforce development became the center of Tracey Smith’s career in public health. Once she learned about CHWs and saw the potential, she was committed to the model. “Many other countries have had community health workers at larger levels for a number of years, and we’d had it in the United States, but it would come and go in different decades and have different approaches, never well organized.” She implemented a CHW program, then became very involved in Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) conversations about CHWs. Soon, she was connecting with other states that had CHWs, “it just kind of became a snowball ripple after that,” she says.

Now, in her work at IPHA, Tracey is very focused on launching a state certification for CHWs, with a primary goal of enabling CHWs to bill Medicaid and Medicare in the state, potentially creating more stable funding for CHW work.

This work is necessary. As Tracey explains, “When we think about a continuum of health, I have different people I reach out to when I need some assistance. So many people don’t. But that’s where CHWs can fill so many spaces. They don’t have to be experts in the disease process, or anything else. It’s really about having someone to listen, to be able to connect, and when the route gets a little crooked or a little uncomfortable, being there to hold people up and to continue down the process.”

How Brushwood Supports Community Health Workers

Brushwood’s *Health, Equity, and Nature Accelerator* activates equitable nature-based solutions through community and healthcare partnerships. In 2023-2024, Brushwood Center collaborated with DePaul University and the Highwood Library & Community Center to create a trauma-informed group-based intervention in nature called Transforming Internal Experiences for Resilience and Restoration through Acceptance, or *TIERRA*, for the Latine community in Highwood, Illinois.

After the 2024 pilot, the program expanded to include other community organizations, including the Family First Center, the HAP Foundation, Mano a Mano Family Resource Center, Roberti Community House, and Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center.

TIERRA combines third-wave Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with forest bathing to foster radical hope. The intervention utilizes a community health worker model to address service gaps and empower the community.

“One of the best parts about TIERRA was our participants telling us what it really meant to them, how it really helped them in their everyday life,” says Andrea Barba, who delivered the intervention to a group at Mano a Mano. “You can really tell that the person that started the first week until the last week,

they had changed and they had learned how to manage their stress in new ways.”

At Roberti Community House in Waukegan, TIERRA has become another tool in CHW’s toolkits. Founder and CEO Maribeth Roberti explains, “There are several different touch points that we provide to support stabilizing health, and opportunities to look at preventative health.” TIERRA has joined the list, along with a robust food program, health workshops, screenings, walks, yoga, and more. The Roberti House team presented TIERRA both in Spanish and English. “Both were very successful. People are waiting for us to offer TIERRA again. Participants in our first groups want to join and still get together,” she says.

Initial research results from the TIERRA pilot program at Highwood Library indicated that the intervention reduced depression and stress, and created an increased sense of belonging. The intervention may also help with symptoms of anxiety and PTSD.

Brushwood also led the development of a CHW curriculum module focused on maternal and infant environmental health. This training will be delivered this year, and is designed for CHWs who work in perinatal health.

“Community Health Workers are trusted community members, working directly with people in our communities who are most impacted by environmental justice issues,” says Catherine Game, Executive Director of Brushwood Center. “Sharing Brushwood’s expertise and resources on environmental health and nature-based solutions with CHWs, who then bring that knowledge into their communities, is a powerful way to empower health equity.”



Congratulations to Shreya Aragula!

Shreya Aragula came to Brushwood as a Community Research Fellow of the Health, Equity, and Nature Accelerator, where she was a driving force in the creation of the report *Health, Equity, and Nature: A Changing Climate in Lake County, IL*. From there, she became the lead researcher and co-author of TIERRA, working with Brushwood Coalition Building Manager Jess Rodriguez to create the intervention and run the research project.

A doctoral candidate at DePaul University, Shreya defended her dissertation in April and was awarded her Ph.D. in June. Congratulations, Dr. Aragula!

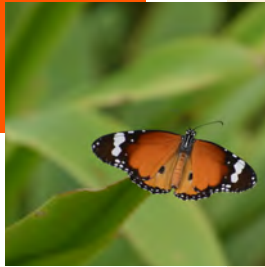
PHOTO: (ABOVE) Shea Anthony, Shreya Aragula, and Dani Abboud

PHOTO: TIERRA art workshop participants from Highwood Library & Community Center and Roberti Community House



Lake County Community Health Workers Get a Boost

Big things are happening for Community Health Workers in Lake County.



The Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County, the Hunter Family Foundation, and the Steans Family Foundation launched a collaborative funding initiative to help support and build out Lake County's Community Health Worker infrastructure. The funding supports the HAP Foundation as an anchor organization for a group of organizations including the Illinois Public Health Association and the Illinois Primary Care Association.

This three-year pilot project aims to illustrate the value of community health workers, support them in their work, and also look at future opportunities for reimbursement via Medicaid and Medicare once the CHW certification is made available by the state.

Rachael Telleen is Executive Director of Workforce Development and Community Education at the HAP Foundation. "We were tasked with really trying to support the Community Health Worker workforce in Lake County," she says.

Much of the project involves discovering what the CHW landscape is in Lake County, and where opportunities may exist. "Do organizations have people who are community health workers? Do they call them community health workers? Do they even know they have a community health worker? How could we help them get certified if that's something they're interested in? Would they have opportunities to do any billing?"

And if so, what can we do to help them get ready for that billing?" Rachael says. "It's taking everything we're doing through the state, but doing it very specifically in Lake County."

Venoncia Bates-Ambrus of the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County says, **"I think this approach is suitable for Lake County because we are really fortunate to have a very strong infrastructure of nonprofit or community-based organizations that are serving Lake County. Many of those organizations belong to coalitions, and so they're working alongside of one another, doing shared referrals, shared resources, even in some cases, seeking collaborative funding."**

This infrastructure supports CHWs in their work. "They have community partners that they can communicate with, that they can pick up the phone and ask questions or send an email where they can do warm handoffs for their clients rather than just giving them a piece of paper to an unknown entity. So because Lake County has organizations that are already working so closely in coalition, these are known entities," says Venoncia.

Rachael is optimistic about the impact of the project. With a clear understanding of how CHWs are working in Lake County, and just how many there are, she looks forward to being able to champion the work and find ways to make it more sustainable. Doing public health work is challenging, and resources are tight. "If we can take a little bit of that pressure and they can at least feel they can make it from month to month with a little bit more breathing room, I personally would feel phenomenal," she says.

To learn more or get involved, contact Rachael Telleen at rtelleen@thefoundation.org



Health, Equity, and Nature Accelerator Launches Maternal & Environmental Health Training

New! This six part training explores how environment impacts pregnancy, providing tools, strategies, and resources for supporting maternal health.

Did you know that extreme heat events can increase risk of pregnancy complications by 25%? There are many environmental and climate factors shaping our children's health before they are even born.

Brushwood's new Maternal & Environmental Health Training teaches CHWs and other birth workers how the environment impacts pregnancy, helping them gain tools, strategies and resources for supporting maternal health.

Presented in partnership with the Illinois Public Health Association and Rosalind Franklin University, training topics include: Air Pollution and Pregnancy Outcomes, Pregnancy in Heat Stress and Climate Change, Environmental Disasters and Displacement, Chemical Exposure and Pregnancy, and Healthy Environments for Healthy Pregnancies.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THIS TRAINING?
CONTACT ASHLEY CULLEN-WILLIAMS AT ACULLENWILLIAMS@BRUSHWOODCENTER.ORG

Healing Illinois



Radical Hope in the Woods

Radical Hope in the Woods: Ancestral Paths to Freedom became more than an initiative- it was a living story, a remembering, a return- rooted in racial healing and grounded in the sacred relationship between the natural world and the long, unfinished journey toward freedom within the Black and African American experience. It called participants back to the same woods that once held whispers of escape, strategy, and survival.

Developed and led by Ashley Cullen-Williams, Brushwood Center Senior Program Director, the event series was woven like a quilt of memory-featuring virtual healing circles, folklore storytelling, and mindful walks that echoed the footsteps of the enslaved ancestors who



moved through dense forests under moonlight, guided by stars, spirit and unshakable will to free. Through the honoring of slave narratives, freedom songs, and oral traditions passed hand to hand and voice to voice, the project bridged past and present- blending ancestral knowledge with contemporary practices of mindfulness and creative expression. Participants gathered both online and beneath open skies to not only remember, but to feel - to sit with the land - honoring ancestral resilience, tending to generational wounds and reclaiming the outdoors as sacred ground for rest, remembrance, and radical hope.

"I wanted to bring more Black people outdoors - not just to visit, but to remember," Ashley shared. "To rebuild our relationship with nature as something that has always been ours. Historically, the woods have held stories of fear - of being hunted, of running, of surviving. But those same woods also held strategy, protection, and possibility. At Brushwood, I was invited - pushed even - to step outside, to slow down, to regulate, to listen deeply. And in that listening, I was reminded that this connection belongs to me. It has always belonged to us."

Since 2020, Healing Illinois has invested in community-led efforts to address racial inequities across the state. Managed in partnership by the Field Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services, these grants are supporting racial healing events and projects at nearly 200 nonprofit organizations from January through June 2026. Brushwood Center was honored to receive one Healing Illinois Grant to support two new projects, as well as another in collaboration with the Lake County Racial Healing Collaborative.

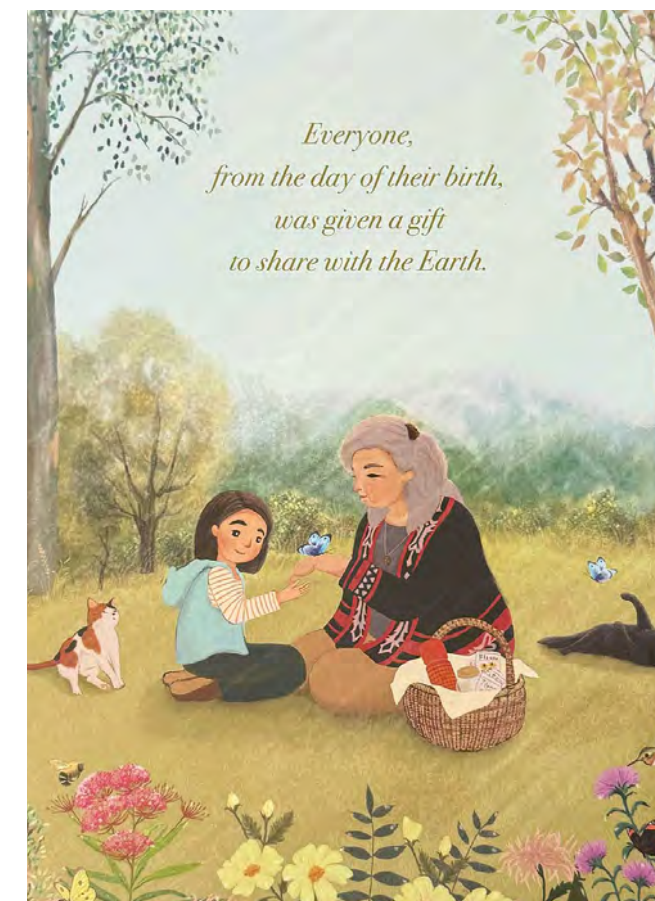
Racial healing is the process of restoring individuals and communities to wholeness; repairing the damage caused by racism; and building mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines. Racial healing helps communities acknowledge our shared humanity, deepen understanding of the past, and build trust that enables collaboration toward a more just future.

Bud Finds Her Gift

Bud Finds Her Gift is a new multidisciplinary performance created by Black Moon Trio, Brushwood's Ensemble-in-Residence in collaboration with Potawatomi author, scientist, and 2025 Smith Nature Symposium Environmental Leadership Award Honoree, Robin Wall Kimmerer. The performance is inspired by Kimmerer's picture book of the same title, a story about belonging, reciprocity, and embodying Indigenous wisdom and the gifts each of us brings to the world.

"This original program brings Kimmerer's words and illustrator Naoko Stoop's art to life through a dynamic integration of music, narration, and visual storytelling, creating an immersive experience for audiences of all ages," says Parker Nelson, Brushwood Center's Director of Public Programs and Music, and horn player of Black Moon Trio.

This new concert and storytelling experience uplifts Indigenous perspectives and celebrates ecological awareness, honoring Kimmerer's vision of gratitude and reciprocity while fostering cross-disciplinary connections between music, storytelling, Indigenous wisdom, and environmental consciousness. It debuted for school audiences in Waukegan this spring and will be available for additional bookings throughout Black Moon Trio's 2026-2027 season.



Healing Lake County Collaborative

The Healing Lake County Collaborative includes Brushwood Center, Community Youth Network Counseling Center, the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County, and Illinois Partners for Human Services. Together, the Collaborative bring residents together and create reflective spaces to support racial healing through dialogue.

The Collaborative supports Racial Healing Circles and multicultural healing practices that build deeper interpersonal interactions, including honoring the National Day of Racial Healing by collaborating with the healing-focused events hosted by Brushwood Center. It also offers a Caring for the Caregiver series of restorative activities for leaders in anti-racist work, and led the effort to unify the Lake County community by launching a two-day training of 24 health and human services nonprofit leaders to become Racial Healing Circle Keepers/Practitioners to increase the county's capacity.

Brushwood Center extends our gratitude to Healing Illinois for supporting our community to continue the work of racial healing.

PHOTOS: (LEFT TOP) Family members of all ages took part in the *Radical Hope in the Woods* event series

PHOTOS: (LEFT CENTER) Brushwood's Senior Program Director, Ashley Cullen-Williams, leads a group on a *Radical Hope in the Woods* walk

PHOTO: (LEFT) A page out of Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Bud Finds Her Gift* shares a message of belonging and the gifts that each of us bring to the world

(PHOTO TOP RIGHT) *Radical Hope in the Woods* participants visiting Ryerson Woods

2026 NATURE EXPLORER BACKPACK PROJECT | MOCHILAS DE EXPLORADOR

Sponsor the Nature Explorer Backpacks



2026 GOAL:
1,000
BACKPACKS
3,000
CHILDREN'S
BOOKS

Let's Get Outside!

Since 2020, the Nature Explorer Backpack/Mochilas de Explorador program has empowered nature exploration and healthy family-friendly activities. Brushwood Center and our partners across Lake County are once again teaming up to provide 1,000 bilingual Nature Explorer Backpacks / Mochilas de Explorador to youth and families in Waukegan, North Chicago, Round Lake, Gurnee, and Highwood.

We will also distribute a new children's book highlighting the power of community across borders.

SPONSOR THE BACKPACK PROJECT!

Your donation makes a difference to Lake County families

We welcome gifts of any amount to support purchase of the backpacks and supplies.

Sponsors will be acknowledged throughout the year on the Brushwood website, as program sponsors for the Smith Nature Symposium, and in social media posts related to the program.

To sponsor the Backpack Project:
Please contact Brushwood Center's Director of Development, Mirja Spooner Haffner at mspoonerhaffner@brushwoodcenter.org

\$25,000	Premier sponsorship supports coordination of the Backpack Program and nature education events throughout the summer ✱ Includes two tickets to the 2026 Smith Nature Symposium Awards Dinner on October 10th.
\$15,000	Supports purchase of 1,000 backpacks for children and transportation for distribution ✱ Includes two tickets to the 2026 Smith Nature Symposium Awards Dinner on October 10th.
\$10,000	Printing of 3,000 children's books and backpack Parent Packets in English and Spanish
\$5,000	Supplemental materials in backpacks including art supplies, magnifying lenses, field guides, and more
\$2,500	Translation and editing of all health and nature resources in backpacks
\$1,000	Supports a local artist in creating the children's book

ACTIVATE CAMPAIGN

Over Brushwood Center's four decades of action, one fundamental mission has remained the same: connecting people with nature. Now, Brushwood is taking that mission even further with **ACTIVATE: A Campaign for Investment in Community**. This \$10 million comprehensive campaign activates Brushwood Center's mission further by expanding programs and improving Brushwood's historic building.

Thanks to our community, our goal is in sight! Learn more at brushwoodcenter.org/activate.



Please contact Brushwood Center's Director of Development, Mirja Spooner Haffner at mspoonerhaffner@brushwoodcenter.org to explore giving options that best support your interests, including monthly donations, multi-year pledges, or one-time donations, as well as naming opportunities and specific program support.

Thank You, Addie Morrison!

Addie Morrison is a dedicated champion of Lake County and a long-standing friend of Brushwood Center. This spring, Addie inspired generosity across our community by offering the \$1 million Joyful Impact Challenge Match.

Addie was a founding board member of the Lake County Community Foundation, and in 1994, established the Harold M. and Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation with her late husband Harold, to bring their family together to make a difference in their community.

"Brushwood Center brings the power of nature and the arts to improve health and wellbeing for everyone. I invite you to join me in supporting ACTIVATE: A Campaign for Investment in Community to make a joyful impact."

— Addie Morrison

Black Moon Trio at Ravinia

Black Moon Trio is celebrating the Great Lakes with two programs for their Ravinia Festival premiere this summer. Congratulations to our Ensemble-in-Residence!

On August 2, music, verse, and visuals coalesce in Black Moon Trio's premiere of *Lakenotes*, a multi-dimensional tribute to the mystery and majesty of Lake Michigan.

This unique artistic journey is the result of a collaboration between three acclaimed artists, each bringing a distinct creative lens to one of the world's most awe-inspiring freshwater lakes. Poet Kathryn Haydon, Brushwood's Poet-in-Residence, offers vivid and reflective lyricism that gives voice to the lake's many moods, from the stillness of winter ice to the restless churn of autumn waves. Visual artist Lincoln Schatz, who exhibited at the Brushwood Gallery in January 2026, captures the lake's vast palette through sweeping videography and striking photography, revealing its ever-changing character across seasons and time of day.

At the core of *Lakenotes* is a powerful new commissioned work by award-winning Chicago composer Stacy Garrop, performed by Black Moon Trio and based on Haydon's poetry. This contemporary chamber piece conjures the natural rhythms and hidden depths of Lake Michigan through a richly textured soundscape.

On August 8, Black Moon Trio will present their family-friendly concert, *The Great Lakes: Freshwater Treasures*. A companion to Barb Rosenstock and illustrator Jamey Christoph's picture book of the same title, the concert is a journey through the scientific wonder of our five freshwater jewels, offering an approachable way to gain appreciation for their role in sustaining nature and culture.



Over the past several years, Brushwood's programs have blossomed and visitorship has grown. The need for building renovations to accommodate this surge in demand is increasingly vital. Thanks to supporters of **ACTIVATE: A Campaign for Investment in Community**, we anticipate breaking ground on renovations later this year.

Improvements to our historic building will create an inclusive and sustainable space for the future and will have a community-wide impact, including greater ADA-accessibility, expanding access for all community members.

We're looking forward to breaking ground on the new Maxine M. Hunter Performance Plaza, a three-season pavilion that expands audience capacity and increases opportunities for cold weather programming, along with flexible programming spaces and more room to move.

As we prepare for construction, Brushwood's programs are taking flight into the community, spreading the healing power of the arts and nature. Look for us at partner sites throughout Lake County. The Brushwood Center website, www.brushwoodcenter.org will have the most up to date information.



Did You See Our Annual Report?

As we're taking flight into the future, we're not losing sight of the past. Join us in reflecting on 2025 with ***Rooted in Joy: The 2025 Brushwood Annual Report***



A Forest Bathing Invitation

By Jess Rodriguez

Set a timer for 20 minutes to sit with nature and away from any screens. This time can be with a tree in your neighborhood, a plant in your home, a nearby forest preserve, or even the lake.

Choose a location and once you arrive, take a moment to notice your breath. Take 3 deep inhales through your nose and 3 deep exhales out through your mouth.

As you settle into your spot, begin to notice what is growing. Move slowly and gently through the practice.

What plant beings are growing and can you follow their growth back to their roots? Can you spot areas of new growth emerging?

What animal beings are beginning to emerge and grow in this season? How are they growing in nature?

Does the wind or water in the nature around you grow? Do wind gusts shift from light to heavy? Does water flow in smaller or larger waves and ripples?

What would it be like to allow yourself to grow in and with your nature spot?

Once 20 minutes are up, feel free to then draw, journal, or take pictures of what you noticed in your practice.

BRUSHWOOD EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE

The 43rd Annual Smith Nature Symposium Awards Dinner, Honoring Karenn Gore
October 10 | Chicago Botanic Garden

Building for Impact: The Evolution of Brushwood Art Exhibition
July 12–August 22
Opening Reception July 12
1 pm–3 pm

PERFORMANCES

Joel Greenberg Author Talk
To Life: Jews in Nature
August 1

Black Moon Trio presents
Lakenotes at Ravinia
August 2

Black Moon Trio presents
The Great Lakes at Ravinia
August 8

CREATE WITH US

BASE: Create and Sip
July 15: **Macrame Plant Hangers**
August 19: **Doodle Embroidery**

AT EASE: VETERANS AND THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

Veterans Acrylic Paint & Sip Nights
July 8, and August 12
6:30 pm–9 pm
American Legion Cicero Post 96

Watercolor Painting for Women Veterans and Families
July 23, and August 27
6:30pm–8:00 pm
Virtual

Art Impact Project
July 21, and August 18
10 am–11:30 am
Mundelein Parks and Recreation Community Center

FAMILY FRIENDLY

It's A W.I.N. Park Hours
Join Brushwood for family fun and activities at local parks
July 21 | 10 am–1 pm
Lakefront Park, Round Lake Beach, IL
August 4 | 10 am–1 pm
Everts Park, Highland, IL

NATURE OPPORTUNITIES

Celestial Forest Bathing
July 29: **Buck Full Moon**
August 12: **Particle Solar Eclipse**
Waukegan and Riverwoods

NATURE BOOK CLUB

10am–11:30am
July 25: **A Sand County Almanac**
Lake Forest Open Lands Mellody Farm Nature Preserve
August 29: **My First Summer in the Sierra**, Lake Forest Open Lands Mellody Farm Nature Preserve

Visit BRUSHWOODCENTER.ORG to register.



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-WEDNESDAY 10AM–3PM
SATURDAY: 10AM–3PM
and by appointment

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



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Supporting Health Equity in Northern Lake County

The Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County supports efforts that improve access to health services for underserved Lake County, Illinois, residents. They strive to improve the health status of uninsured, underinsured, and medically underserved residents. They are especially interested in addressing gaps in health services; increasing the capacity of effective organizations and programs; and fostering innovative solutions to persistent healthcare access problems.

Brushwood Center is honored to be supported by the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County, which helped fund the creation of TIERRA, and is a valued partner in promoting health equity in Lake County.

HFNLC Executive Director, Venoncia Bates-Ambrus also serves on the Advisory Board for TIERRA. "We helped to fund TIERRA, which helped CHWs be able to utilize nature-based health and wellness practices for their own self-care and to work with their clients and communities and organizations as well," she says. "It is an honor and a privilege to be able to fund the work of Community Health Workers, whether they are employed or trained by Brushwood Center or by a hospital, or a community-based organization. I think that Community Health Workers can bring value to many organizations and the communities served by those organizations and should be deployed

more broadly outside of just traditional health and public health spaces."

Last year, Venoncia joined Brushwood and other community leaders for the *5th Annual Community Leadership Roundtable: In the Field*, which included bus tours of some of Waukegan's most relevant environmental justice sites. She reflects: "It was very eye-opening for me to be a part of that journey and to learn from that. Brushwood Center is such a nimble learning organization, and more than just an organization, a learning community to really help inform people who, without a Brushwood, might be ignorant to these issues, or at least not be as well-informed."

We extend our deepest thanks to the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County for partnering in this work!

The Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County supports *TIERRA: Transforming Internal Experiences for Resilience and Restoration through Acceptance*, a project of the Health, Equity, and Nature Accelerator.

PHOTO: Community leaders gathered in 2025 to tour Waukegan's environmental justice sites.

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.

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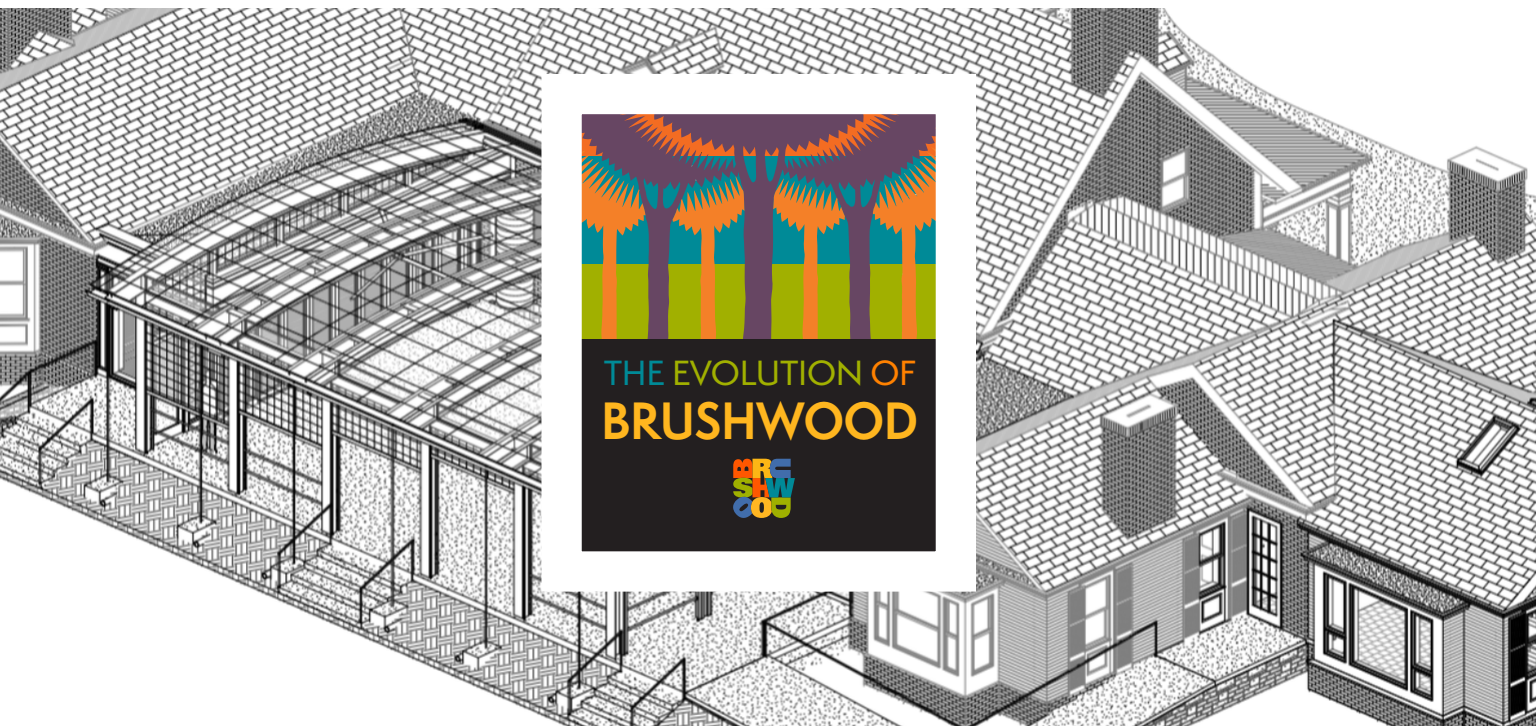


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