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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of Blandford,

As I write this, there is a blanket of fallen leaves on the ground in the ravine outside my window, families are out in droves enjoying the cool weather and sunshine, and the critters in the wildlife center are unusually active. It's that time of year when we all want to get outside and soak up nature.

It's also that time of year when we're in the thick of planning for next year. Whether it is our school programming, community programming, festivals, or budget, we are eagerly scheduling with much excitement for what 2012 will bring. This newsletter shares updates on both the great progress we made in 2011 for "renewing Blandford" and the many new opportunities you will be able to enjoy in 2012. Many of you have shared your ideas with us (thank you!); we hope you see many of them reflected in our new offerings throughout 2012.

Come on out to see the investments and improvements we made using funds from your grants, gifts, and donations. We hope you will see not only the positive changes that have been made, but that you too will envision the promise Blandford Nature Center holds for so many additional opportunities. Check out our many new programs (pages 2 and 3) that run through March. As always, future program details are listed on the events page of our website and posted on our Facebook page. We hope you are a "fan" already!

We appreciate the support you give us and we hope you continue to enjoy Blandford Nature Center, your nature center, and everything it has to offer you and your family.

Sincerely,

Annoesjka Steinman



Upcoming Events, January through March 2012

This year we are putting our programs into “themes” so you can easily browse for those events that fit your interests and the age of your family members. Because our programs fill fast, you must RSVP to attend by calling 735-6240. Full program details will be listed on the events page of our website.

Nature Buddies

Programs geared for young kids up to 7 years old with a parent.
Programs are \$5 for members, \$6 for non-members.



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description
Jan 5th, Thursday	Owl Moon	6pm to 7:30 pm	Listen to a winter classic tale about a boy and grandfather's adventures during a night hike while you sip hot chocolate. After the story, we'll take a hike to talk with the owls.
Feb 4th, Saturday	The Mitten	2pm to 3:30pm	We'll read <i>The Mitten</i> , about a boy who loses his mitten in the snow and the animals who find it. Then we'll explore for animals on our trails.

Back to Basics: The Art of Simple Living

For those who want to live self-reliant & sustainably.
Programs are \$5 for members, \$6 for non-members (unless otherwise specified).



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description	Ages
Jan 7th, Saturday	Anishinaabe: Winter Life	2pm to 3:30pm	Come discover how the Native Americans of this area survived in the winter and have some fun in the process.	Family program for ages 7+
Jan 28th, Saturday	Garden Planning 101	2pm to 3:30pm	It's time to start looking at those seed catalogs again! Before you send in your order, let's discuss companion planting, crop rotation, and seed selection.	Adults & youth age 12+.
Feb 18th, Saturday	Intro to Organic Gardening	2pm to 3:30pm	What is organic gardening and what is all the hype? Come out to learn more about this method and discover some of the benefits for your health and the planet.	Adults & youth age 12+.
Mar 1st, Saturday	Backyard Maple Sugaring	5pm to 7pm	This demonstration will walk participants through the maple syrup process from beginning to end including: tree measurements, tapping and hanging buckets, filtering, cooking, and syrup finishing. \$10 members, \$12 non-members	Adult program
Mar 15th, Thursday	Three Season Gardening	6pm to 7:30pm	Get the most of your garden this growing season! Learn techniques for extending the season through rotation, companion planting and selecting cold-hardy varieties.	Adults & youth age 12+.

Art in Nature

Prices listed in description



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description	Ages
Jan 21st, Saturday	Winter Photography	2pm to 3:30pm	Professional photographer Dennis Grantz will guide you and your lens through Blandford's winter forest. Discover how to capture the beauty of winter. Bring your own camera. \$30 members, \$36 non-members	Adults & youth age 12+.
Feb 9th, Thursday	Recycled Crafts	6pm to 7:30pm	Join Blandford Nature Center as we make art from commonly found items. Three craft projects will be available along with new ideas to try at home.	Family program for ages 7+

Wild Adventures

Programs for ages 7 and older, some adult-only.
Programs are \$5 for members, \$6 for non-members.
(unless otherwise specified).



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description	Ages
Jan 14th Saturday	Winter Tracking	2pm to 3:30pm	Winter is a great time to learn the secrets of track identification. This interactive hike will get you moving and thinking like the animals of the woods.	Adult or youth age 7+ with an adult.
Jan 26th Thursday	Owl Prowl	6pm to 7:30pm	It's January and the owls are calling. We'll begin with an up-close look at our resident owls then head out on the trails to "talk with the owls" in our woods.	Family program for ages 7+
Feb 11th Saturday	Snowshoe Saturday (3 different hikes)	1:30 - 3pm 4pm - 5:30 6:30 - 8pm	With three fun ways to get outdoors and shake off those winter blues, there is something for everyone: an easy-paced hike for the whole family, a medium to fast paced-hike for adults and teens, and an adults-only night hike. Members: \$10 with snowshoe rental. \$5 without rental. Non-members: \$12 with snowshoe rental, \$6 without.	Ages 7+ for 1st class. Ages 12+ for cardio hike. Adults only night hike
Feb 23rd, Thursday	Nature Spy	6pm to 7:30pm	Dr. Mary Jane Dockeray presents <i>Nature Spy</i> . Join us as we listen to the humorous and informative account of this naturalist's long career working with wildlife and people.	Family program for ages 7+

Blandford Eco-Stewards

Programs designed to teach you about managing the natural environment, like meadow restoration, streambank erosion control, and invasive species removal while getting hands-on experience.
Prices listed in descriptions.



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description	Ages
Jan 19th, Thursday	Deer Management	6pm to 7:30pm	Join Professor Rob Keys as he discusses the results of Blandford Nature Center's deer herd management study. FREE	Adults & youth age 12+.
Feb 25th, Saturday	Managing for Bluebirds	2pm to 3:30pm	Peggy Falk of the Michigan Bluebird Society is passionate about improving the nesting success of Eastern Bluebirds, including on Blandford Property. Learn how you too can help the Bluebirds. \$5 members, \$6 non-members	Family program for ages 7+

Sugarbush - All month long in March.

Check our website closer to March for any changes in dates and times.
Programs are \$5 for members, \$6 for non-members (unless otherwise specified).



Date & Day	Title	Time	Description	Ages
March Tuesdays and Thursdays	Sugarbush Tours	2pm, 3pm & 4pm. One hour tours	See the process of syrup making, from tapping the tree to boiling the sap. RSVP required.	All ages - 2 and under are free
March Saturdays	Sugarbush Tours	12pm - 4pm. On the half hour.	See the process of syrup making, from tapping trees to boiling sap. Walk-ins welcome. One hour tours starting on the quarter hour or half hour, depending on group sizes.	All ages - 2 and under are free
March 24th Saturday	Sugarbush Festival	9am to 5pm	Pancakes, Sugarbush tours, all historic buildings open, horses, and more. \$5 Festival, \$5 pancake meal optional.	All ages - 2 and under are free



There have been lots of changes within the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center this year. It received a much-needed facelift with new lighting, new paint, a rearrangement of the sinks, and new bulletin boards with information about our animals and basic animal care. There are still some final touches we would like to add, but the bright new look has even perked up the birds!

We have good news regarding Jackie Wiers, one of our wildlife staff members. She and her husband are the proud parents of a healthy baby boy. Jackie had the baby in October. The bad news (for us) is that she decided to become a stay-at-home mom. We wish her all the best in her new role; we know she'll be a great mom since she took such great care of our animals.

We have hired Samantha "Sam" Smith part-time to fill Jackie's shoes. Sam had volunteered in the Wildlife Center while working to complete her degree in Wildlife Biology at GVSU. She will graduate in December and we welcome her to the Blandford Team!

Photos, clockwise from top right:

- 1) Renovated Indoor Wildlife Center.
- 2) Jackie with our older, well trained Barred Owl.
- 3) Sam with "Baby", the young Barred Owl brought to us as a baby with cataracts. Now a teenager, he still needs more training!





BLANDFORD

nature center

farm

The Blandford Farm is in full swing again, well, almost. We have our CSA delivering weekly shares of produce to shareholders, we have community gardeners working their plots, we have a youth farm team learning about sustainable farming, and we are selling fresh produce at the Fulton Street Farmers market. The only thing missing is animals! We hope to add some animals to the farm in the future, some of which may supplement the CSA offerings, such as farm-fresh eggs.

We are currently exploring grants and other funding opportunities to continue to grow the farm. We need to add more 10' tall fencing to enclose the full two acres we'll be farming next year. We want to add more greenhouses and hoop-houses to our facilities, and of course we need equipment to make our farm more efficient. An electric 2x4 Gator for hauling the harvest is at the top of the list. If you know anyone with a Gator or other used farm equipment they are willing to donate for a tax-deduction, have them contact us.



Current aerial view of active farm in foreground and tilled expansion area for 2012 in background.

As we move forward with planning for the 2012 CSA, we intend to increase the number of shares available, likely from 25 to 40.

If you were a CSA member this year, you'll get first-dibs on signing up. Registration will then open up to other Blandford members. Our amazing farmer, Aaron Snippe, will have more details coming out soon.



Photos of the CSA share pickup on weeks 9 and 11. One CSA member reported losing weight without trying and another reported lower cholesterol levels; all from eating these fantastic fresh vegetables!



BLANDFORD

nature center

youth farm team

Our new Youth Farm Team program was launched this summer. It was geared for 12-16 year-olds with an interest in learning about sustainable farming. Next year we'll have spring and summer sessions available to choose from.



BLANDFORD

nature center

community garden

Our community garden space was in full bloom this summer. We rented out 32 of 50 available plots this year and watched amazing things grow within the plots, from many beautiful flowers to specialty heirloom tomatoes.



If you are interested in learning more about our community garden or Youth Farm Team opportunities for 2012, contact Jessica Lamden at 735-6240 x 14 or jlamden@blandfordnaturecenter.org.

What's New at Blandford?

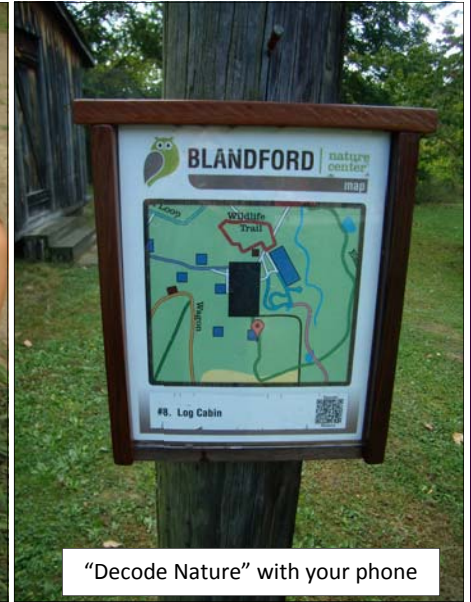
If you haven't visited lately, here are some photos of our new renovations and activity opportunities.



Snowshoe Making Workshop



Backpack Exploration Kits



"Decode Nature" with your phone



Reconstructed Frog Pond



New Lobby Art



Kids Exploring Nature Playscape Areas



New Nature Bench in Honor of Mary Jane Dockeray

Volunteers make a difference at Blandford!

We wish we had room for photos of all our volunteers, they are amazing! Here are a few photos of the great things they have accomplished for us. Call Jessie Schulte (735-6240 x 22) if you or a group would like to volunteer. Jessie will be organizing great land stewardship projects your organization can get involved in!



United Way Day of Caring volunteers chop fence materials.



Weekly volunteer Lee Roberts leads the GE volunteers with wood splitting duties.



Prepping the bridge in the Nature Nook.



GVSU students paint the barn



Deloitte volunteers before the work begins.



BLANDFORD | nature
center

1715 Hillburn Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616-735-6240
www.blandfordnaturecenter.org

HOURS

Monday – Friday
9 am to 5 pm

Saturday
Noon to 5pm

Closed Sundays and Holidays

Trails open every day during day-
light hours.

MISSION

To change lives through fun
and engaging learning
experiences in the natural world.



Carols * Treats * Games

Horse-drawn Wagon rides with sleigh bells

Make-and-take Holiday Crafts

Historical buildings by candlelight

December 10, 12-5 PM, \$5



Blandford Nature Center's

Homestead Holiday

