McHenry County Conservation District 2019 Conservation Award Winners

William Howenstine
Bill is the living, breathing, embodiment of a Conservation Champion. Bill was instrumental in creating and founding the McHenry County Conservation District. He was one of the first District Trustees and served on the board for two terms. Bill also wrote the District’s Conservation Ethic statement which is read at the beginning of every board meeting to remind current board members of what we represent and why we do what we do. He taught Environmental Science at Northeastern Illinois University and served as head of the Geography and Environmental Studies department until his retirement.

For many years, Bill and his wife Alice have operated an organic Christmas Tree and hardwoods nursery, open to the public where they continue to educate the public on environmental topics. Bill and Alice were also involved in the creation of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County as well as ongoing promotion of conservation in McHenry County including recycling, the support of alternative energy, waste reduction, native plantings and restoration, renewable resources, and environmental education. In addition, much of their property has been placed in permanent conservation easements to preserve the land for future generations of residents including the flora and fauna which inhabit it.

Dave Miller
Since 2005, Dave has contributed hundreds of hours of volunteer bird survey work for the District across multiple natural communities. Dave enthusiastically committed himself to this project. The data he collected provided valuable information on our impact to grassland bird communities through restoration efforts, development impact, grassland bird re-nesting, bird use by seed mix, and a better understanding of the Henslow’s sparrow—habitat relationship. This work provided the foundation for data-based planning for establishment of the grassland venture program, growing season burning, and third and fourth generation grassland bird seed mixes at North Branch and Goose Lake Conservation Areas.

Beyond his contributions to the District’s scientific data and land management plans, Dave also has a passion for sharing his knowledge and his time to teach others. Dave has lead multiple bird walks over the years for all ages, assisting both the Education and Natural Resources Departments. His birding teaching has stimulated the creative minds of many, and the ripples of his passion will undoubtedly be felt in future generations.

Nominations for 2020 Conservation Awards

McHenry County Conservation District is seeking nominations of individuals who are and have been Conservation Champions for the Public Open Space of McHenry County. The two awards, Conservation Champion and Conservation Legacy, will recognize exceptional contributions of individuals who have made extraordinary impacts to the conservation movement through their continued dedication and support of the mission of the Conservation District.

The Conservation Champion Award recognizes individuals who have made one or more contributions of extraordinary significance or impact to the conservation movement through their continued dedication and support of the mission of the Conservation District. Significant contributions can include leadership, innovation, environmental legislation, community building, restoration fieldwork, citizen science and volunteering, donations of money and land.

The Conservation Legacy Award recognizes contributions that transcend time. Whether the award winner dedicated ten or fifty years towards the local environment, their work should live on well past their earthly lifetime. Their legacy should be a gift to their community, as well as the plant life and wildlife within it. Regardless of how many lives they touched, Conservation Legacy Award winners need to have inspired others to become stewards of the land.

To nominate a Conservation Champion or Legacy Award, download and submit an electronic nomination form from the District’s website (www.MCCDistrict.org). Nominations will be accepted through December 31, 2019.