In Land We Trust
Johnson County Heritage Trust
Environmental Journal
November/December 2009
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Accreditation is in our future. I'm sure many of you have three questions running through your minds: 1) What is Accreditation? 2) What are the benefits of Accreditation to JCHT? and 3) What will it take to become Accredited?

1) What is Accreditation? Accreditation is an exciting new tool that became available to land trusts in 2008. The Accreditation Seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation. Accredited land trusts provide the assurance of quality and permanence the public is looking for.

Accredited land trusts demonstrate the following three characteristics:

* Excellence—Accredited land trusts demonstrate their commitment to national quality standards for non-profit management and land conservation.
* Trust—The Accreditation Seal provides an assurance of quality and permanence the public can trust.
* Permanence—Accreditation verifies that land trusts have systems in place to keep their promise for permanent land protection.

2) What are the benefits of Accreditation to JCHT? The public is increasingly demanding accountability from government and non-profit organizations including land trusts. Independent Accreditation provides the assurance the public is looking for. Preparing for Accreditation and the application process affords JCHT the opportunity to review and implement policies, streamline our operations and lead to more effective land conservation.

JCHT, like many other land trusts, has many members who support the organization. Accreditation will enhance our ability to provide transparency in our governance processes, use of contributions and management of our properties.

The Accreditation Seal is a mark of excellence noted by both the IRS and funding sources. The IRS who grants us our 501(c)3 non-profit status will view the Accreditation Seal as a mark of maturity and distinction. Funding sources will view the Accreditation Seal as additional assurance that the organization complies with the 12 standards set forth by the Land Trust Alliance.
(letter from president continued)

3) What will it take to become Accredited? Becoming an Accredited land trust will take significant effort. We have begun our work by asking John VanRybroek to chair our Accreditation initiative. John has embraced this important task and is vigorously providing leadership for it. John, working with Tammy, is utilizing the Standards and Practices from the Land Trust Alliance to identify where JCHT is already strong and where we need to improve our policies and practices. All facets of JCHT will be reviewed. Our governance, our land acquisition, our easements, our property management and our fiduciary systems.

While John is the leader, all members of the JCHT board will be engaged and educated throughout the process. In addition, as we move toward Accreditation, we will review our progress with our members. Currently, we are considering applying for Accreditation in 2012.

We would welcome your input and assistance on this important endeavor. I am confident that Accreditation will make our already excellent land trust even stronger in protecting the land and water in our beautiful county.

Dick Schwab, JCHT President

JOIN US FOR THE "BRINGING IOWA BACK TO BELGUM GROVE" TOUR!

All are welcome and encouraged to attend a tour of the Johnson County Heritage Trust's Belgum Grove property Saturday, November 14 from 8:00 a.m. to noon. As showcased in this issue of Heritage, great progress has been made in "Bringing Iowa Back to Belgum Grove". The Johnson County Heritage Trust board and Belgum Grove Property Managers would like you to see just how much progress has been made to date. Bus transportation will be provided, leaving from the Johnson County Fairgrounds parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and returning prior to noon. You are also welcome to meet the group at Belgum Grove if you'd like to provide your own transportation. If you are planning to ride the bus, please contact the Johnson County Heritage Trust office at 338-7030 or email info@jcht.org to reserve your seat on the bus! Once at Belgum Grove a hay rack ride tour will be offered as well.

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

I could not be prouder of JCHT's accomplishments the past few months. A very successful "Under a Cider Moon..." event was held due to the commitment and dedication of MANY volunteers.

Your JCHT property managers were also VERY busy with the Conservation Corps Iowa team that was with us from the 13th to the 28th of October. A lot of work was accomplished on our properties.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Land Trust Rally in Portland, Oregon, with nearly 2,000 other conservation professionals from around our great nation and beyond! I can't even begin to share how much I learned.

Finally, as we kick off our Property Management Capital Campaign, I invite you to read this publication, visit our website, call the office for more information and review our accomplishments. Then ask yourself, "How can I afford not to support such a worthy cause?" Your pledge card will arrive in the next few weeks with our capital campaign brochure. Please plan to make an end of the year tax-deductible contribution. Remember that we have secured anonymous matching funds so your donation will have even more benefit and generate even more results! —Tammy Richardson, Executive Director
The renovation of Belgum Grove has taken a major leap forward this year. After 3 years of planning, design work, fund raising, and getting the required permits, the construction of the pond has been completed. A five acre water feature now graces the grounds of Belgum Grove. About half of the surface area is shallow water habitat for ducks, geese and shore birds. About half of the pond provides deep water habitat for fish.

Once construction began, work was delayed numerous times due to frequent rain throughout August. It got dicey at times. After yet another delay the contractor finally had two good days of work that allowed them to get the core trench and the front slope of the dam up to the permanent pool elevation. Mark Muller brought his GPS unit out the evening of Tuesday August 25th and we GPS'd in various points on the bottom of the pond (deep holes where fill had been borrowed, drop offs, the old stream bed and logs placed for fish structure). The next day it started to rain. The pipe for the outlet was delivered and welded together in the rain on Wednesday. That night the rain really came, which led to flash flooding throughout eastern Iowa. The next morning the pond was full.

The contractor somehow got the pipe into place on Thursday (working in the rain again) to keep the outflow of the pond confined to the pipe outlet rather than flowing over the dam. It took awhile for things to dry out and for the contractor to be able to complete the construction of the dam. But, it did get finished in early September and a temporary seeding was installed on September 12. Of course, it didn't rain for about two weeks after the temporary seeding was in place which delayed germination. But some vegetative cover has been established and the permanent prairie seeding will be done as a dormant seeding in mid-November.

The seeding will be done on Saturday, November 14, 2009 as a demonstration during the tour that will be conducted at Belgum Grove that day. A straw mulch will also be blown on to control erosion and hold the seeding in place over winter.

Thanks go to our contractor Keith Dickel and his crew who went above and beyond to get the pond construction completed in difficult working conditions. We also thank our neighbors Roger and Sally Stutsman and Dean Dykstra. Our neighbors granted JCHT easements that allowed us to back water up onto their property. Without their cooperation it would not have been possible to do this project.

The new pond provides outstanding habitat and recreational opportunities but it also provides safe access to the southeast part of the property. The old structure that was replaced by the new pond had degraded to the point that it was no longer
crossable. The new pond will provide safe access for a lifetime of future JCHT members.

Other activities that have been accomplished in the recent past include removal of trees along the west property line and construction of new fence. The tree removal provides an open "prairie like" vista. Removal of woody growth has also been done along Dirty Face Creek along with removal of internal fences and trees, once again to provide an open prairie vista.

After two years of work to eliminate competing vegetation, the re-construction of prairie began in 2009. The field along the road north of Dirty Face Creek was seeded to a 60 species mix of prairie plants in late winter. Seeding was done on two inches of powdery snow on Sunday, February 15, 2009. The snow cover melted during the course of the following week and rain fell to pack seed into place. The seeding was mowed four times over the course of the 2009 growing season and by the end of the summer big bluestem plants were popping up above the foxtail competition. If conditions allow, the new seeding will be burned to stimulate faster establishment in 2010. The area south of the Creek was not seeded since we were not sure what all would be disturbed during construction of the pond. The rest of Belgium Grove (other than the oak slope, pine grove and old orchard) will be planted to prairie later this fall as a dormant seeding. A large sign was installed along 500th Avenue this summer that reads "Prairie Re-construction Project – Estimated Date of Maturity 2012". The neighbors and the many bicyclist that use 500th Avenue will monitor the development of the prairie at Belgium Grove.

The other major effort that has been going on is the clean up of the pine grove, orchard and the restoration of the oak remnant on the south side of the Creek. The pine grove suffered a number of snapped off trees during a windstorm in 2008. Clean up of the downed and damaged trees is nearly completed. There are still a number of snapped off pines that will be taken down and converted into lumber. We hope to recycle some of this wood into products that can be auctioned off at future Cider Moon events.

On Saturday October 17, 2009 we enjoyed the help of 14 volunteers from the University of Iowa with transportation provided by 10,000 Hours Show. They installed a fence in parking area at Belgium Grove. By pounding in steel fence posts, then wired cattle panels to them to create an area that will confine vehicular traffic and promote walking throughout the Belgium Grove property.

The Conservation Corps of Iowa completed three days of work in late October. They completed the clearing of an access lane along the top of the oak slope, down the east fence line, and back west along the south side of the creek. The goal was to open up lanes that will allow equipment in to begin to do controlled burns on the oak slope. In the future, additional understory removal will be completed to stimulate growth of native ground flora and allow regeneration of oak and hickory. Allowing more sun to reach the ground and fire management should facilitate restoration of the oak remnant.

There is still much to accomplish at Belgium Grove but we've made great progress in the last two years toward reaching the goal of "Bringing Iowa Back to Belgium Grove." It will take a couple more years to complete the renovation, but in the near future Belgium Grove will feature a glimpse of Iowa's native ecosystems—prairie, oak/hickory savannah, and wetland habitat.

I'd also like to recognize the contributions of JCHT Board member Dan Black. When Dan joined the management team for Belgium Grove major advancement began to happen. Dan's willingness to put in numerous hours, contribute equipment and provide the expertise to run the equipment has been an invaluable asset.
Belgium Grove—What It Is To Me

Kathie Belgum

When my husband David and I bought the 40 acres of land on the Sharon Center Road in 1972 we were ecstatic. Having moved to Iowa City from Minneapolis, where the closest affordable farm land to our house would have been at least 25 miles away, we were delighted to have to drive only nine miles to get to our own little piece of heaven. The impetus was, of course, horses. (We had a teenage daughter—enough said.) The property was mostly pasture land for Orville Graut’s cattle, with about four acres fenced off for a row crop. Dirty Face Creek which runs west to east through the property showed signs of periodic flooding. Large tree trunks had washed up against the eastern fence and collected debris like tires, oil cans, etc. This bothered our sensibilities.

We made a list of how to attack this new acquisition—how to become squires of the soil. First clean up the creek. Twenty-five years later mother nature, with our help, got the job done. Next problem—the horses needed a building. So we had a pole barn built with three stalls and space to store hay plus a little tool room with a cement floor which was used for an “overnight” party for our daughter’s 14th birthday. Our very friendly neighbor farmers referred to this treasure as a “shed”. In the cold of winter the horses stayed outside in the weather while the cows snuggled into the barn. Next problem—how to get across the creek in order to mow the pasture, which was now our hay crop. We watched with keen interest while one hundred-fifty TON of rock of various sizes was dumped into the narrowest section at the west end of the creek—near the barn. This worked well. David’s little 8N Ford tractor made the crossing with ease.

Now to the fun time—tree planting. We purchased 1000 white pine and scotch pine seedlings from Iowa State University and hand planted them in four acres at the east end of the property on the hill during the hottest, most arid summer
in the 70s. We had to carry water from the creek—up the hill—in buckets so the poor six inch trees could survive. To say nothing of cutting the weeds around them by hand. These trees are now 30 feet tall and provide a gorgeous protection for snoozing deer. The following year our good friend Clayton Ringenberg suggested, that since we had land and he had the “know how” we should go together and plant an apple orchard—which we did, about thirty trees near the evergreens. Believe it or not some of those trees are still bearing.

The tree program meant more fencing to keep out the cattle. What? I didn’t mention the cattle? David decided during the second year to purchase four heifers that would eat all that wonderful pasture we now owned. We’ll, “buy them in the spring, let them eat God’s grass and them sell them in the fall for a profit,” is what he said. But that summer the bottom fell out of the cattle market so we kept the cattle over the winter—buying hay to feed them. Then an amazing thing happened. The next April we went out to “the farm” one day and there was a little calf nursing from one of the “heifers”? Before long there was another and another—four in all—each healthy thanks to a passing farmer who had stopped to help one of the heifers who was struggling to deliver. We never did find out whose bull wandered into our pasture for his “fun” time.

So now with cattle and horses and the beginnings of a huge garden we needed water other than from the creek. Miller the Driller dug a superb well near the barn which meant we didn’t have to carry water from the creek to one of the calves which had to be kept in the barn, because it was blinded due to pink eye. And the garden thrived with regular watering from the hose.

We even drew up plans to build a sod house on the land, which would be dug into the little hill by the road. It was idyllic, however, David and I realized that not only did our now 16-year old daughter not want to live in the country (she was now big into swimming) but every time we went to the farm we worked ourselves into exhaustion. We could not just go out there and enjoy the view. So the decision was made to build a greenhouse onto our house in town and enjoy the farm as a hobby—a hobby which necessitated daily attention. When one has animals one must take care of them. So two horses, twenty-three head of black angus cattle and 14 cats all had to be fed every day no matter what the weather. So for twenty-eight years either one or both of us made the trek through sleet and snow, rain or shine. One blizzardy day we drove out and managed to get one mile on the Sharon Center Road (which had not been plowed) but could go no farther. Soon a man on a snowmobile came by and asked if he could help. David asked him if he could throw out some hay from the little white pole barn to the cattle on our property. “Sure” he said, “I know the place” and off he went.

Those experiences were great and made us value the land in our minds and hearts so that when the time came to let go we couldn’t just sell it. It had to be preserved. And now Beldum Grove with its new dam and pond is part of JCHT and a beauty to behold. I still love it and David would be so proud to see it as well.
CrRisp fall weather, delicious autumn flavors and spirited traditional folk tunes came together in natural harmony Saturday, Oct. 24, during JCHT’s third annual fundraiser, “Under a Cider Moon... a Celebration of Autumn.”

The event’s venue—this year, held in Dick Schwab’s newly-built Celebration Barn—was the perfect backdrop for a fundraiser that helps safeguard Johnson County’s precious native lands and natural resources. The barn, built with Iowa limestone, finished with wood from indigenous Iowa trees and resting in a pastoral setting overlooking a scenic rural pond, the Celebration Barn was an ideal location.

Approximately 270 people came out to enjoy music by the Iowa City-based, Celtic folk music quartet The Beggarmen, sample foods prepared by local businesses, savory beverages from Iowa’s own wineries and brew pubs, as well as bid on the many wonderful items offered in the live and silent auctions.

The auctions, conducted by Solon auctioneer Brent Wears, were made possible by the generous donations of nearly 130 area merchants, artists, crafters and individuals. A huge range of items were available, from unique gift baskets to hand-crafted furniture, certificates for goods and services and opportunities for group dinners, sporting events and trips—with destinations ranging from turkey hunting locales to the Grand Cayman Islands!

An example of the creativity and selflessness of those involved in “Under A Cider Moon” was a trip honoring Burlington native Aldo Leopold, an early American ecologist and author of A Sand County Almanac, (1949). The trip involved a tour of the Aldo Leopold family compound overlooking the Mississippi River, a visit to Leopold’s old stomping grounds near Crystal Lake and a lecture from Iowa historian Steve Brower. Quoting Brower and revisiting words penned by Leopold, past JCHT president Bob
Sayre highlighted the trip—and its intent, in keeping with the JCHT mission—during the live auction.

"Thinking like a mountain begins in the bottom lands of Iowa," Sayre reiterated. "What Brower is saying is that Leopold learned these lessons when he was hiking, hunting and bird watching around Burlington, along the Mississippi."

Altogether, 18 cash and in-kind sponsors, ticket sales of those in attendance and donations to the live and silent auctions helped bring over $25,000 to JCHT for day-to-day operations, rent expenses and on-going maintenance of the trust's seven properties. The sale of hand-crafted, commemorative coasters also helps purchase seed for planting acres of prairie.

The annual event is a year-long process for many volunteers, who secure auction items, organize volunteers, schedule the venue and obtain sponsors to make the affair happen. JCHT volunteers are already gathering items for the 2010 auction and reviewing this year's event to plan improvements for the fourth annual Under a Cider Moon.

JCHT's Executive Director, Tammy Richardson, is key among those who organize and orchestrate the annual fund-raiser; Richardson spent the evening taking photographs, directing volunteers and generally overseeing the event.

"Watching everyone enjoy the efforts of all the hard work and dedication is one of the best parts of this event," said Richardson. "I enjoy watching the items be 'bid up' by those who truly understand that this is a worthy cause that they are supporting!"

Richardson said the new location was great, and the collection of attendees was especially impressive.

"We had a great mix of supporters, from past board members, 11 of our 15 current board members and long-time donors, to people who were invited who didn't know much about JCHT. We also saw JCHT partners, such as representatives from Friends of Hickory Hill Park and Whiterock Conservancy," Richardson said. "A special treat was having the O'Mara family—donors of the O'Mara-Newport Woods property; Kate and Mike Massey from Washington state and the O'Mara brothers, one from Minnesota and one from the local area."

Richardson said many volunteers were involved in the fundraising efforts, and special recognition goes to "Under a Cider Moon ... a Celebration of Autumn" event chairman Jean VanRybroeck and volunteer Paula Henderson.

"These two ladies put in countless hours to make sure all of the auction items were collected, described and displayed in a very professional, informational and creative way," Richardson added. "Also a special thank you to our item donors, our event sponsors and to our very dedicated JCHT board of directors!"

If you would like to attend other exciting JCHT events like "Under A Cider Moon" here’s our upcoming schedule. FMI contact JCHT.

11/14
Belgium Grove Tour
8am-12pm

December: Happy Holidays!

3/9
Prairie Preview at Parkview Church

4/23
JCHT Annual meeting

5/23 (tentative date)
JCHT Family Day at Turkey Creek A day for kids of all ages!

10/9/2010
"Under A Cider Moon"
Become a fan of JCHT on Facebook

Johnson County Heritage Trust fulfills its mission through the generosity of its members and donors. Every gift to the Trust is respected and appreciated. Please think of JCHT for not only lifetime gifts, but also as a part of your testamentary planning. A gift to JCHT is a gift to your children and community.

If you are not up to date with your JCHT membership please make your annual pledge now to continue to receive Heritage and the other benefits of JCHT membership. Feel free to share this publication with your friends!

Pick a membership level and renew (or become a new member).

- Student Member  $10
- Regular Member  $25
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- Sponsor  $100
- Benefactor  $250
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