DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

What an amazing year 2017 was!

We celebrated our golden anniversary—a half-century of stories, memories and reflections about the ways this land, over time, has connected hundreds of thousands of people to the magnificence of the natural world. Cincinnati Nature Center opened to the public on April 16, 1967, and commemorating this milestone, we were thrilled to celebrate “200 seasons of spectacular” throughout the year. During this historic celebration, we looked to the future as well with the grand opening of our new Center for Conservation which will impact regional conservation through education, collaboration and stewardship.

With deep respect and admiration, Cincinnati Nature Center acknowledged our founder Stanley M. Rowe, Sr. for his remarkable vision, high ethical standards, quiet determination and generous spirit which led to the creation of the Nature Center 50 years ago. We are forever grateful for his courage and dream of protecting and preserving this precious land.

Special thanks to everyone involved over the last half-century—trustees, donors, volunteers, members and staff—who have all helped make Cincinnati Nature Center a place like no other.

Here’s to the next 50!

Sincerely,

William H. Hopple III
Executive Director

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celebrating 200 seasons of spectacular

A half-century after welcoming our first visitors, Cincinnati Nature Center celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017 commemorating its many milestones and strengthening its focus on preserving this land for future generations. Back in 1967, after years of planning, organizing and fundraising, Stanley M. Rowe, Sr. and a dedicated group of founding trustees opened the gates to Cincinnati Nature Center on April 16.

Throughout the year we celebrated our rich history embracing the people and stories of five historical decades. We acknowledged those who helped to create and care for this community treasure and those who have afforded thousands the opportunity to enjoy and connect with nature’s splendor. Celebratory events included history tours of the Krippendorf and Groesbeck sites, the unveiling of a commissioned original artwork of Rowe Woods and Long Branch Farm & Trails and the first glimpse of the newly renovated Center for Conservation. This golden anniversary was enjoyed by hundreds with a special Member Celebration Day.

AND THE RAINS CAME

Rowe Visitor Center experienced extensive damage by spring deluge

It was a bittersweet day on April 16, 2017 for the Nature Center as we marked the 50th anniversary of our opening. It was this very day Mother Nature unleashed her might and the rains came and kept coming! Unfortunately, Rowe Visitor Center was overcome with flood water as torrential rains pounded the area.

As a result of this weather event, we experienced extension damage to both the main floor and basement offices and meeting rooms. When the deluge ceased, water had poured through the front doors and flooded 70% of Rowe Visitor Center—including most of the main floor. It leaked through the fireplaces saturating the lower level. Damage to the flooring was extensive, as was damage to drywall, electric and many supplies.

Undoubtedly, Rowe Visitor Center is the heart of the Nature Center. In a given year, more than 200,000 visitors pass through it, including 30,000 children who use the auditorium on school field trips and during our summer camps. Hikers and families use Rowe Visitor Center as a respite, and it is where visitors find shelter during bad weather.

- It houses our permanent educational exhibits and a nature library.
- It houses The Nature Shop and a very popular bird viewing area.
- Its auditorium is where our largest groups gather for programs, lectures and exhibits.
- It is where people purchase memberships and make donations.
- Visitors come here to learn from naturalists and plan their visit with front desk staff.
- It is the main office space for staff and volunteers.

In the true spirit of the Nature Center and with the generous financial support of our members and friends we prevailed, rebuilding and renovating in an expedient manner. With minimal down time Rowe Visitor Center was up and functional within days.
The Center for Conservation at Cincinnati Nature Center is committed to conservation across the region. Through a union of the departments of Education and Stewardship, we strive to help people connect to, and benefit from, nature. An integral and essential part of this is our desire to empower people to be conservationists on their own land.

**Native Plant Propagation Program**
In 2017, we officially launched our Native Plant Propagation Program with the groundbreaking of a one-acre native plant nursery at Long Branch Farm & Trails. The nursery is outfitted with a hoop house, irrigated beds, and is protected from deer grazing with fencing. Nearly 3,000 plants representing 37 species of native plants were potted from seeds collected on the property. Plants are used throughout the Nature Center and will be available to the public through The Nature Shop.

**Conversations on Conservation**
Our lecture series Conversations on Conservation, which is fully funded by a generous anonymous donor, was enthusiastically received and embraced by diverse audiences. In 2017, the scheduled lectures in this inaugural year attracted three nationally known conservation speakers, more than 350 audience members, and nearly 20 representatives from partnering organizations who attended special pre-lecture lunches with the speaker. Presenters included Louise Chawla, who discussed developing conservation minded children, author Doug Tallamy, who discussed the importance of native backyard habitat, and Professor Chip Taylor who presented on the organization Monarch Watch and the plight of the monarch butterfly.

**Protecting & Preserving Natural Habitats**
We received funding in the amount of $726,000, which was used to purchase and restore 125 acres of mixed agricultural and forest habitat adjacent to Long Branch Farm & Trails. This land will eventually be home to a new Goshen Prairie that will provide critical habitat to native plants, birds and other prairie-dwelling wildlife.

**Scenic and Sustainable Trails**
Two of our most popular trails were significantly rerouted and repaired. Portions of our Geology and Far Ridge Trails were restructured to provide visitors with new vistas of river, forest and field habitats. Measures were also taken to ensure both trails will be sustainable far into the future, and that unintended impacts on surrounding habitats, especially erosion, would be greatly reduced.
education

VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS
In 2017, we offered the first class of the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists (OCVN) Program, led by The Ohio State University. This program provides intensive, on-site training to members of the public who want to work as volunteers in various naturalist positions in the region. In our inaugural year, 40 participants completed the program, the first group of OCVN graduates ever in Clermont County. Many planned to do some or all of their required 40 hours of volunteer work at the Nature Center. This is a great new entryway to our volunteer program.

SCHOOL AND TEACHER PROGRAMS
More than 6,000 school children were served on and off site in 2017 resulting in our greatest participation in six years. In addition, our three-day summer teacher training institute in June served 21 teachers, primarily of the elementary grades.

We continued to collaborate with University of Cincinnati on a National Science Foundation-funded research project studying the impact of nature on pre-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) behaviors in preschoolers. The grant allowed the preschool to build a new “Drama Platform” which will be used for further research of child development.

NATURE PRESCHOOL
Enrollment in our preschool continued to rise and at the year’s end, 59 out of 60 spots were filled. Once again our Nature Preschool was awarded a 5-star rating through the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services’ Step Up to Quality in 2017.

CAMP AND SCHOOL YEAR SESSIONS
A record 971 children participated in our summer CincyNature Camp with additional children served through the Earthkids program. Nature Center camps offer children and teens the opportunity to learn and explore through hands-on activities in nature and up-close encounters with plants and animals.

For more than 25 years, our Earthkids program has made nature accessible to under-resourced youth from our community. Children visited the Nature Center or engaged with staff off site more than 1,100 times in 2017. Several of our key partner organizations once again brought children to one of our four weeks of EarthKids summer camps, where children enjoyed a five-day camp program.

NATURE PLAY
With an ever increasing interest in the creation of natural play areas for children, Nature Center staff provided free tours to dozens of groups of professionals in 2017 including Bernheim Arboretum, Dublin Ohio Nature Conservancy, Xavier Education Students, Ohio Parks & Recreation, local landscape architects and the US Army Corps of Engineers.
PROGRAMS FOR ALL
Nature Center programs are designed to encompass our mission of enriching lives and promoting passion in nature with others. We work diligently to plan and craft programs for all ages and interests which help foster attitudes of conservation and provide stewardship opportunities. Our goals are to extend the experience beyond the initial program and build a sense of community among nature lovers. These are just a sampling of the programs offered at the Nature Center in 2017:
• Heritage Walk: Architecture and Landscape Design of the Former Krippendorf and Groesbeck Estates
• Gardening for Butterflies and other Pollinators
• Owl Prowl Night Hike
• Maple Sugaring at Your Home & Cooking with Maple
• Getting Started with Mason Bees
• Solar Eclipse Viewing
• Preparing for Night

MARGE & CHARLES SCHOTT NATURE PLAYSCAPE
Approximately 45,000 children and caregivers visited the Marge & Charles Schott Nature PlayScape in 2017, which continued to evolve with new features, programs and experiences. With programming support from Jungle Jim’s International Food Market and Park National Bank, newly installed climbing logs, a Rock Garden and lengthened willow tunnel, along with the popular MudZone, provided wonderful experiences for younger and families to enjoy and share in. With increasing use of this play area we introduced a facilitator position and staffed the Nature PlayScape during busy times stepping up our programming to include such things as campfires, fort building and summer weekly story time.

SCOUTS
Ever popular with Boy and Girl Scout troops, the Nature Center hosted a record 851 scouts and their chaperones in 2017. In addition to earning a variety of badges, participants were treated to maple syruping, full moon walks and survival skills training.

TRAILSIDE AMBASSADORS
More than 7,000 visitors were served through our trailside ambassadors program. These ambassadors are primarily volunteers and interns sharing their knowledge and love of nature with our guests along the trails and in the Nature PlayScape.

HIKE FOR YOUR HEALTH
More than 640 people participated in Hike for Your Health, an initiative which encourages our members and visitors to explore our trails.
visitation and volunteering

MEMBERSHIP
As of December 2017, Cincinnati Nature Center membership exceeded 12,000 member households. Family Memberships have witnessed the greatest growth rate and comprised 45% of our membership. Nonmember visitation made up approximately 25% of our visitors.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT
With visitation rising to more than 200,000 at Rowe Woods in 2017 we were ever cognizant of the need to manage its impact on our lands. We created a new Nature Ranger position to help safeguard our property and to be a friendly resource to visitors on our trails during busy periods. A growth management team was put in place and actions implemented to safeguard both Rowe Woods and Long Branch Farm & Trails including:

- Visitation and membership data analysis and monitoring to predict and prepare for busy times
- Additional staff during busy hours/days – visitor services, membership, programs, volunteers and facility staff
- Comprehensive visitor services training for staff and volunteers
- Communication messaging through Newsleaf, social media and signage
- Trail re-routing
- Increased parking at the Center for Conservation

VOLUNTEERS
Hundreds of volunteers helped the Nature Center thrive throughout 2017 and worked in a variety of areas to support our mission. Volunteers devoted their time to everything from invasive species removal, to trail enhancement work, office help, special events support and summer camp leadership. They were integral contributors to conservation work including efforts in:

- Clearing the hillside on Fernwood and dramatically enhancing the surrounding landscape
- Supporting the launch of the Native Plant Propagation Program
- Renovating an aging structure at Long Branch Farm & Trails and transforming it into a custom-built, efficient potting shed.
- Potting hundreds of native plants which were sold at The Nature Shop
friends and fundraising

It was a host of friends and supporters which allowed Cincinnati Nature Center to flourish in 2017 and helped raise $2.5 million. We are forever grateful to the generosity of individuals, businesses and foundations that afforded us the opportunity to protect and preserve the magnificent forests, fields, streams and ponds that make Cincinnati Nature Center a place like no other.

CAPITAL PROJECTS
In 2017, we successfully raised $347,000 for the Celebrating 50 Years—Preparing for the Next! campaign bringing the total funds amassed to $5,482,912. An additional $505,200 was raised for various capital projects, including $400,000 for the renovation of the Groesbeck greenhouse.

NEW LAND
Through the generosity of supporters, an additional $726,500 was raised and enabled the Nature Center to purchase the Mills Property in Goshen. Adjacent to Long Branch Farm & Trails, this land added an additional 125 acres to this site. The funding campaign began in mid-August and resulted in $297,000. Remaining funds for the purchase were garnered with a grant of $429,462 received from the state of Ohio.

ANNUAL FUND
A record $590,000 was raised for the 2017 Annual Fund. This included support from Krippendorf Society memberships, gifts for Earth Day and all end-of-year giving. These critical unrestricted funds supported trail maintenance, upkeep of our facilities, innovative nature-based educational programs, as well as wildlife monitoring and land management.

EVENTS
A Grand Opening for the Center for Conservation was held in March of 2017 to thank campaign donors of $1,000 or more who helped make the vision of the Center a reality. Five additional open house events at the new Center for Conservation provided an opportunity for friends, supporters and all members to tour the renovated property. Other 2017 events included:

• Our signature gala, Back to Nature, which was attended by 350 friends and raised a record $140,000.
• The honoring of Masterworks of Nature artists at the Wood Thrush Award dinner followed by an extended art show. Proceeds of the event supported the Helen C. Black Conservation Fund which is used to preserve and protect Cincinnati Nature Center’s lands through land acquisition and conservation easements.
MESSAGES OF CONSERVATION
Expanding the Milkweed to Monarchs seed initiative, we transitioned the seed packet giveaway into the Plant NATIVE! campaign. The intent of this awareness campaign was twofold in both providing a continuing message of conservation and raising the profile of the Center for Conservation.

As part of the Plant NATIVE! campaign, we continued our partnerships with Graeter’s Ice Cream, LaRosa’s Pizzerias and the Krohn Conservatory. More than 100 retail outlets helped distribute 60,000 seed packets throughout the Greater Cincinnati Area in addition to thousands of Plant NATIVE! bookmarks distributed at Krohn Conservatory during their annual butterfly show.

Further development of messaging was the creation of the Random Acts of Conservation campaign to use in cultural organizations’ program advertising, our website and social media platforms in 2018. This campaign was developed to support the organization’s strategic plan for strengthening our conservation work into messages for greater conservation awareness, while promoting individual action.

BRAND STANDARDS
In an effort to solidify, strengthen and enhance the Nature Center’s visual presence in all aspects of design and media, a comprehensive brand standards handbook for the organization was created. This document serves to provide consistent standards for logo usage, brand colors, typography, paper stock, letter formatting, use of photography, website content, social media content and wayfinding signage.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEO
Filming and final editing was completed on the organizational video, A Place Like No Other, an overview of the Nature Center which was intended to be used for community awareness and fundraising purposes. The video was incorporated into the 2017 Annual Fund campaign and was distributed through a variety of media channels.
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES 2017

INCOME

REVENUE FOR OPERATIONS
- Investment Earnings $356,768
- Membership, Admissions & The Nature Shop (net) $1,002,210
- Program & Facility Use Income $803,980
- Fundraising, Krippendorf & Rowe Societies $653,117
- Sponsorships, Grants & Special Gifts $502,276

$3,318,351

INVESTMENT ACTIVITY
- Investment Income & Change in Fair Market Value $3,387,882
- Donations to Capital Projects, Future Programs $1,023,529
- Donations to Endowments $48,650

$4,460,061

EXPENSES

OPERATING EXPENSES
- Member & Visitor Experience $1,002,619
- Educational Programs $987,882
- Fundraising & Development $782,114
- Administrative, Legal, Finance & Marketing $688,005
- Conservation & Stewardship $501,832

$3,962,452

DEPRECIATION/INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT EXPENSES
- Depreciation Expense $836,805
- Investment Management Expense $87,948

$924,753

INCREASE IN NET ASSETS $2,891,207

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2017

ASSETS
- Investments & Beneficial Interest in Trust $27,294,138
- Property & Equipment $10,183,691
- Cash & Cash Equivalents $1,707,514
- Pledges Receivable $584,170
- Prepaid Expenses & Store Inventory $208,866
- Tuition & Other Receivables $53,386

Total Assets $40,031,765

LIABILITIES
- Line of Credit $467,623
- Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses $276,729
- Preschool Tuition, Events & Trip Deposits $343,018

Total Liabilities $1,087,370

NET ASSETS
- Board Designated Endowment $24,925,216
- Unrestricted $9,017,701
- Permanently Restricted $2,601,885
- Temporarily Restricted $2,399,593

Total Net Assets $38,944,395

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS $40,031,765

Named Funds
- Charles M. Drackett Fund for Long Branch Farm
- Mary Thayer Mickam Fund
- Gertrude M. Oliver Fund
- Louise B. & Stanley M. Rowe, Jr. Fund for Education

Intern Endowments
- Macy’s Foundation
- Katharine T. Nyce
- Louise and Stanley M. Rowe, Jr.
- Jacob G. Schmidlapp Foundation
- Edward M. Thayer
- Marcia Brady Tucker Foundation
- Webetook Fund
A TRIBUTE TO OUR 2017 DONORS

Many thanks to all our donors including Krippendorf Society members, foundations, businesses and other supporters. The following gifts of $250 or more were received between January 1 and December 31, 2017.

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Back cover photo: Cindi Williams
Enriching lives by inspiring passion for nature through experience, education and stewardship.