

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Heritage Circle Members Goldie Edwards and Blithe Runsdorf

Marigold (Goldie) Edwards and Blithe Runsdorf grew up in vastly different worlds, but share a lifelong love of the outdoors, community and fitness. Their winding paths are full of unique experiences that ultimately led them to Pittsburgh and a partnership lasting more than forty years.

Born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, Goldie often talks of how "outdoor living is a way of life." She grew up hiking, camping and backpacking (known as "tramping" in New Zealand) in the serene beauty of the country's pristine national parks and The Great Walks, which are hiking trails that traverse the country's magnificent landscapes. These experiences cultivated her love of being in nature and formed an understanding of the great importance of conserving land.

Goldie graduated from the Universities of Otago and Canterbury in the South Island. Her journey to North America began when she took her few possessions and left New Zealand aboard a freighter hauling



Goldie and Blithe are frequent guests at WPC's annual Members' Day

frozen lamb for a job at the University of Saskatchewan. After a short stint in Canada, she accepted a job at the University of Pittsburgh in the health and physical activity department where she eventually earned her doctorate and served as an associate professor for 37 years.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, Blithe Runsdorf was born in Kentucky and grew up in Brooklyn, New York in a neighborhood full of kids who enjoyed "street sports." Luckily, she was also a natural athlete who was always playing sports with

the boys, eventually earning the first of many nicknames while playing street two-hand-touch football. She recalled "they called me a two-sewer quarterback because I could throw an accurate pass up to two sewers."

While Blithe had some early experiences hunting with her dad at a family cabin, her love for the outdoors really began on a monthlong cross-country trip with a college friend. With little money to spend they often camped, and she took to it with ease. "There is a rhythm to camping and being in the outdoors that always fit with me." Before long, she earned another nickname, "Wonder Woodsman," for being able to light a fire in any weather and make bread on a camp stove.

After graduating from the University of Kentucky in journalism, Blithe worked as a reporter and college administrator, which eventually led her to Pittsburgh to earn two graduate degrees at Pitt. After a fire in her apartment building left her without a place

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Blithe worked as a volunteer on the trails at Bear Run Nature Reserve.

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Goldie Edwards and Blithe Runsdorf

to stay, she learned that Goldie provided space in her Schenley Farms home to a nursing grad student. Despite not being a nursing student, she convinced Goldie to let her fill that space and they quickly became friends. One-year housemates morphed into a lifelong partnership. While Blithe worked as a reporter at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, taught business courses at Chatham University and served as a mediator and Judge of Elections, she would take care of the house while Goldie spent almost every weekend traveling to squash tournaments or health and fitness career commitments. Blithe said that we would be remiss not to mention one of Goldie's finest

accomplishments when she was inducted into the U.S. Squash Hall of Fame in 2013.

Goldie and Blithe were introduced to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy 10 years ago at a party hosted by neighbors Lewis and Kate Lobdell. After they learned more about the Conservancy's work and met staff members, they were inspired to become Leadership Circle members. They have continued their membership loyally "because of all the great things we learn every year about the work being done."

Recently, they took the next step in their journey with the Conservancy by naming

WPC as a beneficiary of their estate.

"We've always had more fun being outside than in. We want to help connect the dots of all the places that have already been protected to make them more usable and valuable."

Although they grew up worlds away from each other, Blithe and Goldie chose Western Pennsylvania as their home, and we're honored that they have entrusted the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with their legacies that reflect their lifetime love of outdoor adventure. 🌿

Recent Land and Species Protection Projects

Expanding Buchanan State Forest

This February, the Conservancy transferred 119 acres to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry to add to Buchanan State Forest in Southampton Township, Bedford County. This forested property is located in the headwaters of Town Creek, a High Quality Coldwater Fishery for trout. The new addition borders Mt. Zion Road and provides access for fishing and hiking in the forest. Buchanan State Forest now encompasses 71,802 acres.

This project was funded by a grant from the Family of B. Kenneth Simon.

A First for Clearfield County

In March, WPC closed on its first donated conservation easement in Clearfield County. This forested 100-acre property in Penn Township is densely wooded with mixed hardwoods, pine and hemlock stands. The western border follows Bell Run, a trout stream that flows into the West Branch Susquehanna River. This easement permanently protects the watershed, forest and scenic views from development and subdivision.



A scene from the first donated easement in Clearfield County

Ten-county Southwest Pennsylvania Species Inventory

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) is a partnership between the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the PA Game Commission and the PA Fish and Boat Commission that provides current and objective ecological data and analysis to guide conservation work and land-use planning.

PNHP reached a landmark achievement this winter by completing updated inventories for ten counties in southwestern Pennsylvania: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland. Staff conducted two years of fieldwork to search for and update rare plant and animal species records, identifying 643 Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) across this region. NHAs are sites that support rare plants or animals, exemplary ecological communities, and native species biodiversity. Of these southwestern PA sites, 111 are of global significance, meaning that the species or communities found there are rare and possibly imperiled across their ranges; 457 are of state significance, meaning that while not necessarily rare everywhere, they are found but are nonetheless rare in Pennsylvania.

Species like the green salamander (*Aneides aeneus*) and beautiful Barbara's buttons (*Marshallia pulcra*) are two species found only in southwestern Pennsylvania and are both endangered and globally rare. We have been fortunate to find more locations for the green salamander, but only south of the Youghiogheny River. Our continuing monitoring of *Marshallia* has shown a definite decline in populations at all known locations.

The inventory data can be accessed through the Pennsylvania Conservation Explorer at <https://conservationexplorer.dcnr.pa.gov/>. This project was conducted in partnership with the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC). 🌿



Marshallia pulcra is a globally rare species that is only found in Pennsylvania.

A sign of the times — volunteers exemplify safe distancing at the Beechwood Boulevard and Saline Street garden in Hazelwood



Seeking Volunteers and Stewards

Planting a garden is rewarding; sharing the garden with your community is even better! WPC will begin planting community flower gardens on May 1, and we need your help! COVID-19 safety requirements will be followed, including wearing masks and social distancing.

Are you interested in helping more often as a garden steward? A steward is a dedicated volunteer who helps monitor and care for a garden throughout the growing season and informs us when something requires attention.

If you are interested in helping to keep the flowers blooming as a volunteer or steward, contact Lynn McGuire-Olzak at **412-586-2324** or LMcGuire-Olzak@paconserve.org. 🌿



Garden planting at Ardmore Boulevard and Brinton Road in Wilkinsburg

Gardens in need of a Volunteer Steward

Allegheny County

Beltzhoover:

Liberty Tunnel and Route 51

Beechview:

Wenzell Ave and Broadway Ave

Carrick:

Concord Elementary School,
2350 Brownsville Road

Downtown:

Liberty Avenue and Commonwealth
Place — The Point

Downtown:

Grant Street at First Avenue

Edgewood:

South Braddock Avenue

Highland Park:

Highland Park Bridge at Butler Street

Hill District:

Centre Avenue and Herron Avenue

Larimer:

Lincoln Ave and Frankstown Ave

Moon Township:

Route 51 and Thorn Run Road

Parkway West:

Intersection of Routes 22, 30, 60

Ross Township:

McIntyre Road and McKnight Road
(co-steward needed)

Squirrel Hill:

Allderdice High School,
2409 Shady Avenue

Centre County

State College:

College Avenue (Rt 26) and
University Drive

Clarion County

Shippensburg (Clarion):

Route 66 and Route 322

Greene County

Waynesburg:

93 East High Street – Hooper Park

“I am excited that we are making plans to get back to our new normal and planting the garden is one of them.”

- Claire Capes, Garden Steward
at Parkway West Greentree

Thank You!

We're grateful to all of the Heritage Circle members who have included Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in their estate plans.

We are pleased to welcome the following people who have told us of their intentions:

Edward J. McCrea
Stephen and Angela Parks
Joel Smalley
Helen R. Yeisley
Anonymous

To stay informed about WPC's work, special projects and events, please provide your current email address by contacting Kathy Patrignani at kpatrignani@paconserve.org.

Western Pennsylvania
Conservancy



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Save the Date Virtual Annual Members' Meeting and Update

Tuesday, May 11 | Noon to 1:15 p.m.

While 2020 presented unprecedented challenges, our donors made all of the difference in keeping the Conservancy's work going strong, and supporting Fallingwater during its most challenging year ever. Join President Tom Saunders and program staff for a Conservancy update and highlights of projects that continued thanks to your crucial support.

**Zoom registration is required.
More information is coming soon.**

Imagine Your Legacy

**Estate gifts have helped the Conservancy
withstand all kinds of challenges.**

Over several decades, legacy gifts have supported land acquisition and the ongoing care of these protected landscapes, endowed beloved community gardens and preserved Fallingwater and its collections. The great thing about planned giving is that donors at all financial levels can easily include WPC or Fallingwater in their wills or trusts.

What moves you to be a donor now? Imagine what your legacy could be as a member of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Heritage Circle.

For more information about naming the Conservancy or Fallingwater in your will, contact Julie Holmes, director of development, at jholmes@paconserve.org or 412-586-2312.



Mission Statement: The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and preserves Fallingwater, a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.