

A photograph of a frozen stream in a wooded area. The stream is partially covered in ice, with some water visible in the center. The banks are covered in snow and dry grass. Bare trees are visible in the background and foreground.

# *Heritage*

Johnson County Heritage Trust • Environmental Journal Winter 2011



## President's Column

by Mark Madsen



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This fall has been an incredibly busy and productive time for JCHT, especially the last 4 weeks. At the end of September, the board met with MaryKay O'Donnell from the Upper Mississippi Land Trust Excellence Program for an organizational assessment. MaryKay led the board through all the 12 Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices, a process that took nearly 4 hours. In addition, Tammy Richardson spent much of the day with MaryKay going through JCHT documentation related to the Standards and Practices. Although this took a lot of time, it shows the dedication our organization has to being informed and executing the best practices recommended for land trust operation.

The Land Trust Alliance Rally was held in Milwaukee, WI from October 13-16 and was attended by Jim Fluck, Tammy Richardson and me. The theme of the plenary sessions was devoted to urban interactions with spectacular presentations by Will Allen from Growing Power, Inc. and Will Rogers from the Trust for Public Lands. Information about both these organizations is widely available on the internet and I recommend that anyone who wants to be inspired check out what these groups have accomplished. As always, Rally was a treasure trove of information and contacts. Together the three of us brought back a wealth of information on strategic conservation planning, organizational practices and accreditation that we can't wait to implement.

Without hardly having enough time to catch our breath, we returned from Rally and jumped into the Under a Cider Moon event. This year was a tremendous success that was the culmination of the time, energy and support from many, many individuals throughout JCHT. In addition to the very generous support from many sponsors, the Cider Moon committee chaired by Deb Pullin-Van Auken worked tirelessly along with Tammy Richardson to solicit auction items and prepare the facility for the evening. There are simply too many people to name who gave their time and energy to make Cider Moon a success, but they share the common thread that they believe preserving land with significant environmental value is important and is a cause worth contributing to. We thank those who made Cider Moon possible and we thank the community for attending to support our conservation efforts.

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Heritage is published four times a year. If you have articles, photographs, or ideas you'd like to contribute please do so.

# Executive Director's Report

by Tammy Richardson

Has it ever been a whirlwind here at Johnson County Heritage Trust! We cannot thank you all enough for all that you do and for making our Fifth Annual "Under a Cider Moon . . . a Celebration of Autumn" a grand success! Thanks to your generosity, when it's all said and done we should clear over \$36,000. This is a significant increase over last year. Thank you!

Prior to "Cider Moon," I was fortunate to be able to attend the National Land Conference (aka Land Trust Rally) with President, Mark Madsen, Jim Fluck and his partner Julie Scott. It was an awesome experience, and now that our "big event" is over, I hope to review some of the great information I obtained in Milwaukee in those very informative four days.

JCHT has officially registered for Accreditation, and we are well on our way to being ready to submit our pre-application in June and final application in September of 2012. There is a lot of work to be completed; however, we have a GREAT team and I have complete faith that we will become accredited. As part of that process, JCHT's Board of Directors went through a guided organizational assessment with a representative from the Midwest Land Trust Alliance. This was a great session, and I think we all came away from it with a renewed sense of the importance of the work that Johnson County Heritage Trust does to protect lands in perpetuity.

We had a Conservation Corps Iowa team here in October to work on seven of our eight properties. Thank you to our volunteer property managers who took time from their busy schedules to work with the team to make incredible progress on our properties. Way to go!

I couldn't be happier to announce that we now have an Accreditation Intern and a Marketing Intern.

I can't wait to see the great things that these two ladies will accomplish. Even more exciting than that . . . interviews have been conducted and we have hired Jacob Hart, JCHT's first ever Property Stewardship Specialist! Welcome Jake!



## Johnson County Heritage Trust Appreciates Our 2011 "Under a Cider Moon . . . a Celebration of Autumn"

### Sponsors:

Lady Slipper - \$5,000.00 level

Dick Schwab and Katherine Burford  
River Products Company

Sunflower - \$1,000.00 level

Adams & Baumbach Associates  
Blank & McCune The Real Estate Company  
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Neumann Monson, P. C.

Aster - \$500.00 level

Alphagraphics  
Dickel Construction Company  
Tom and Becky Gelman  
Hills Bank  
MidAmerican Energy  
Quality Care Storage Company  
Total Tree Care of Iowa City

## Johnson County Heritage Trust Upcoming Events:

- 11/22 and 12/27 Bluebird Diner "Share the Profits" 5-9:00
- 12/4/11 and 6/10/12 Devotay Benefit Sundays (Please call 354-1001 for reservations.)
- 3/8/12 Prairie Preview at Parkview Church
- 4/20/12 Annual Meeting at Coral Ridge Pavilion
- 5/22/12 Family Day at Turkey Creek Preserve
- 10/19/12 Johnson County Heritage Trust's 6th Annual "Under a Cider Moon . . . a Celebration of Autumn"

# Johnson County Heritage Trust welcomes Jacob Hart

by Liz Maas

Johnson County Heritage Trust would like to give a hearty welcome to our newest addition, Mr. Jacob Hart! Jacob will make history by being the first individual to hold the title of Property Stewardship Specialist.

Described as “one in a million,” Jacob comes to JCHT from Cerro Gordo County, having worked as a Natural Resource Biologist with the Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board’s Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program. This program is responsible for vegetation management within 900+ miles of county road right-of-ways, which has provided him with experience in brush control, noxious weed control, native vegetation establishment, and management.

A graduate of Northland College in 2006, Jacob had the opportunity to previously work for the Iowa DNR at the Prairie Resource Center, and for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska. These experiences and others have allowed Jacob to work with many different ages of volunteers, to learn prairie seed propagation techniques, and to hone his naturalist skills.

One of Jacob’s first duties will be to compose consistent Landscape Management Plans for each property, a process necessary to help JCHT meet one of the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation requirements. This will give Jacob a great opportunity to intimately learn about the special value of each property, the challenges that remain, and the many successes that have been preserved.

The Property Managers look forward to meeting with Jacob, walking the properties, and continuing to grow this wonderful organization.

Welcome Jacob!



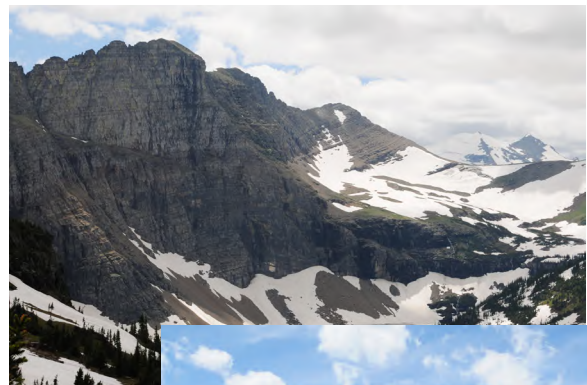
# What was the best part of JCHT’s July Glacier National Park Trip?

By Lorie Reins-Schweer and Pam Dorale

What was the best part of JCHT’s July Glacier National Park Trip? Was it the beautiful vistas across the Midwest as we traveled west on the Empire Builder? Was it the expansive mountain and lake views in Glacier National Park? Or was it the opportunity to see a bear or a mountain goat baby close up? ...or too close up?

Or perhaps it was the more intimate discovery of the Park features on our beautiful hikes. The seemingly endless diversity of flowers throughout the park? Maybe it was that “down dog” at the top of a mountain and the discovery of perhaps 50 plant “micro” plant varieties in a six-inch square segment of alpine tundra.

For me, the best part was sharing. The fact that generous JCHT supporters shared their financial support and time to provide this experience. Jeff Dorale’s sharing of ecological experiences that enriched the trip for all. The very best part was sharing time, stories, fun and community with other JCHT supporters.



# The afterglow of Cider Moon

By Lori Lindner



A brand new venue added a touch of additional excitement to attendees of the Johnson County Heritage Trust's "Under a Cider Moon...a Celebration of Autumn." This fall marked the fifth year for the annual fundraiser, bringing in an estimated \$36,000 for the trust.

The location may have been new, but the surroundings looked somewhat familiar. This year's fundraising celebration was held at Dick Schwab's new Celebration Farm, located on Highway 1 between Solon and Iowa City. The new barn, styled similarly to the round stone barn located on Dick's Scott's Lane property, is larger and topped with not one but three round cupolas overlooking the beautiful Johnson County landscape.

Also familiar were some of the accompaniments enjoyed by attendees. The Guy Drollinger Trio performed traditional folk music while approximately 225 guests sampled wines from Brick Arch Winery of West Branch and Fireside Winery of Marengo, microbrews by Old Capitol Brew Works and a buffet of hors d'oeuvres catered by HyVee First Avenue. Topping off the evening was coffee and desserts.

The trust continues to receive generous donations of time, sponsorships, funding and auction items to make the event happen from year to year. Brent Wears and his capable staff from Wears Auctioneering once again conducted the auctions. Whether live or silent, Brent's auctions are always energetic and fun affairs. This year, the auctions were graced with over 150 items, ranging from gift baskets and fine art pieces to artisan's jewelry and crafts, handmade furniture and

unique group experiences like camping in a restored caboose, a mushroom hunting excursion, vacation packages and private, catered picnics and guided hiking tours on some of the JCHT properties. The items were donated by about 120 individuals and business donors. Staff from sponsor MidWestOne Bank helped with registration and checkout.

JCHT is thankful for the support of wonderful sponsors—13 in all this year—as well as the 11 event committee members and the 25 to 30 volunteers who all helped make Cider Moon happen. A core group of four to five volunteers work nearly year-round to secure donations, obtain sponsorships, book the venue and take on the dozens of other jobs that contribute to the fundraiser's success.

But it's a success that lasts beyond the fall season. The event is also an opportunity to bring together those people who support the Johnson County Heritage Trust's message and mission: to preserve our natural heritage through protection and management of land and water of significant environmental value.

"Whether they are volunteers, or those who donate auction items, join as members, or maybe those for whom the event was a one-time experience," said Tammy Richardson JCHT Executive Director, "we hope it's just the beginning of a long term relationship with those that will help us make Johnson County a better place to live, work and raise families."

Solon Middle School teacher Sue Protheroe and her husband Jerry fall into the latter category, as first-time Cider Moon attendees. In fact, the couple was previously unfamiliar with JCHT and its mission, but were invited to this year's event by JCHT board member Jim Fluck.

"The first thing that struck me was how cool the barn was," said Sue Protheroe, "but we both commented later that this event brought together people we know from all different parts of our lives, people that we would not normally see together in the same room. And they are all people who share this value."

The proceeds from "Under a Cider Moon...a Celebration of Autumn" are used to support JCHT operations, including maintaining JCHT's eight natural properties.

# Belgum Grove hosts second annual Family Day

By Lori Lindner

It was a damp and misty morning, making for a moderately cool and cloudy afternoon; perfect weather for a fall hayrack ride, fishing in the pond and hiking through the restored prairie land at Belgum Grove.

A small but enthusiastic group of people gathered at the 40-acre property near Hills on Sunday, Sept. 18, to enjoy the second annual Family Day at Belgum Grove hosted by Johnson County Heritage Trust (JCHT). The public was invited to enjoy and explore the restored prairie, stroll through the old orchard and move through learning stations— with hands-on experiences designed to teach about the about the flora and fauna of Iowa’s natural prairies, streams, ponds, wetlands and woodlands.

Children were able to study skeletons and pelts of creatures that have made southeast Iowa their home for centuries, including the skull from a saber tooth cat and the leg bone of a bison that carried the remains of a musket ball. Catch-and-release fishing in the pond netted some blue gills for kids to get an up-close look.

Kathie Belgum, who together with her husband David donated the property to JCHT in 1998, went along for a tractor-pulled hayrack ride around the restored prairie.

“I still love the old place,” Belgum said. “We worked on it for 27 years, and I am delighted that people can still come here and enjoy it.”

She pointed to the grove of about 500 trees she and her husband planted together in 1972.

“It’s a joy to see them now. When we put them in, most were just inches big. They’re so tall now.”

Belgum said it was always David’s hope that Belgum Grove would be used for educational purposes and public use.

“It’s so beautiful, he wanted it to be useful to someone.”

JCHT property managers Wayne Peterson and Dan Black have been working to restore the Belgum Grove property, placing part of the acreage into the Conservation Reserve Program, which was planted in natural prairie plants about eight or nine years ago, said Peterson. Five years ago, they started in earnest to do additional ecosystem reconstruction.

“We are in our third year of intense prairie reconstruction, and will be making another burst at restoration work on the remnant oak community yet this fall,” said Petersen.

The Belgum Grove property has hosted school groups, library readings, and even a nature outing with hiking and a gourmet picnic. JCHT holds a couple of workdays each year, relying on volunteers to help clean up the site, clear brush, trim and mow. Live Christmas trees were placed in the Belgum Grove pond last winter to help create a natural fish habitat.

Petersen encouraged those interested in holding an event at the Belgum Grove property to call him at 319-430-7480.



# Fly Fishing

By Ryan Maas

“Then in the Arctic half-light of the canyon, all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories and the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise. Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it.” --Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

While lacking the poetry of Maclean, and the profound imagery of the Blackfoot River, it was with no less fortitude that Ben and Dena Dillon and I set out to Kent Park the morning of this last July 4th to discover the fun and fascination of fly fishing. Ben and Dena had generously bid on the private fly fishing instruction session which I donated for the 2010 Cider Moon auction and I was excited to share with them my passion for the sport.

Norman Maclean’s father, a Presbyterian minister, held that “all good things—trout as well as eternal salvation—come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy.” With due respect to all things difficult, most surely trout and eternal salvation among them, my mission was to render fly fishing into the simple and enjoyable pursuit that it really is.

We started from the basic concept that our objective is to catch fish, so we needed to talk about what triggers a fish to strike, and why a fly may be a suitable – and sometimes the only – lure that will convince a fish to bite. From there, and giving a nod to the origins of fly fishing where flies were tied to imitate wispy, feather-light insects, we delved into the physical properties of the fly cast and why it is fundamentally different from conventional fishing (while some would argue the fundamental difference is undeniable “coolness,” the actual difference is that, in fly fishing, the mass of the fly line is what what carries the lure to the target, rather than the other way ‘round). Ben and Dena were indulgent students and patiently listened to my explanation of the basic equipment (rod, reel, fly line, tapered leader, tippet, and fly), the multitude of fly types and for what the general categories of flies were used, the typical fish one might expect to catch on flies in Iowa, and how one can go about assembling an affordable fly-fishing outfit. But the morning was getting warmer and I could tell they were itching to get on the water and do some casting.

Leaving the shady refuge of the picnic table by the aptly-named Angler’s parking lot, we took several

rods over to the open shoreline north of the beach and got started. This piece of shoreline is ideal for fly casting instruction, with few obstructions behind and mown grass down to the water’s edge which keeps your fly line from tangling, and I thank the JCCB staff for maintaining it so well. After a bit of coaching to break the usual preconceived habits folks bring to fly casting, Ben and Dena both took readily to the basic cast. What are some common novice habits? I nearly always see adults (i) bend their wrist way too much, (ii) sweep the rod too far back and downward behind them on the backcast, and (iii) wave the rod back and forth too rapidly, without allowing the line time to unroll in each direction before reversing. These can be fixed, respectively, by (a) tucking the butt of the rod handle in the cuff of your (long-sleeved) shirt to get the feeling of a static wrist, (b) on the backcast, sweeping the rod swiftly up and back but then stopping the hand next to your ear, and (c) using the 4-count rhythm described by Maclean, i.e. lifting the line, leader, and fly off the water in an accelerating motion; throwing them up and behind with a staunch halt by your ear; giving a little beat of time for the line to unroll behind with your hand and rod drifting ever-so-slightly backward; and then powerfully accelerating forward to throw the line until you reach ten o’clock with the rod.

By the end of the casting session, Dena and Ben were both able to cast in a straight line and with enough distance to reach your typical farm pond bass and bluegill. We even worked on the roll cast, a simple cast that comes in handy when you have trees or brush behind you. With their new skills, the fresh flyfishers wanted to try some actual fishing, but the high afternoon sun (and perhaps our last 2 hours of whipping the water with our practice) seemed to keep the fish tight-lipped. After a full day at the lake, and unusually sore arms, we were all ready to call it quits.

While there is definitely art and grace in fly fishing, it should not be mysterious and, with our modern equipment, can be easy to learn and quite affordable. To get started yourself, one of many good websites is: <http://flyangleronline.com/begin/101/index.php>. There are also local organizations and retailers happy to help.

I want to thank Ben and Dena for their generous purchase at last year’s Cider Moon and hope that they, and you, can discover the personal, humbling, and thrilling experience of fly fishing.

**JCHT**

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