Dear Nature Center Family,

Summer has finally arrived! For all of us, the last few months have been anything but business as usual. Here at the Nature Center, I would be misleading you if I did not admit it has been an overwhelming challenge at times. I could not be more proud of our staff for their creativity, resolve, and agility as we closed our building, canceled school field trips and programming, implemented work from home policies, and through it all continued to serve you through unique online programming and digital resources.

Despite the challenges the Nature Center has faced, we are proud to provide a safe outdoor destination and resource for our region during a time when many social activities have been prohibited. Our grounds have remained open, allowing visitors to take in all that nature has to offer—it lets us breathe, unwind, reconnect, and ready ourselves to take on another day of uncertainty. There has never been a time when I have felt more deeply committed to sustaining our mission and continuing the work we have done since 1966 to ensure the 20 acres that make up our outdoor classroom and public greenspace are protected, enhanced, and accessible to all.

With a refreshed appreciation for the importance of our mission, and facing significant income loss due to cancellation of programs including our spring break and summer camps, we have sought alternative ways to keep our operations strong. Our 38th Annual Plant Sale shifted to a fully online model with nearly double the number of people taking advantage of this safe and easy way to obtain high-quality plants for their gardens. The annual benefit, Nature at Night, transitioned to a virtual happy hour and toast with over 150 guests either donating or attending from home, raising critical funds needed to support our operations. Summer Outdoor Adventure Camps have been moved to a virtual experience with the addition of home ‘adventure packs’ to facilitate outdoor summer enrichment and environmental education lessons from home.

As a result of the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, we have been forced to reduce expenditures during this time. As one way to help conserve funds, we made the decision to publish our full summer Rookery newsletter digitally. The content will be released in a special edition “Nature Break” email and posted to our website’s blog. If you aren’t already receiving our emails, we encourage you to subscribe to our email list by visiting https://tinyurl.com/ybsx4ro2, or emailing naturecenter@shakerlakes.org with the subject line “OPT ME IN.” You can also follow us at facebook.com/naturecenter and on Instagram at #shakerlakes where we will be sharing the same content.

We appreciate your support more than ever during this time of great need. With the help of our members and donors, we are determined to move forward and navigate these obstacles successfully. As a nonprofit funded solely by gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations, your support has been our lifeline. We know that times are tough for so many right now, and we are grateful for your generosity, which enables us to keep our operations strong as we overcome these new challenges.

See you on the trails!

Kay Carlson,
President & CEO

INVESTING IN THE RESTORATION OF OUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: STEARNS WOODLAND TRAIL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

We have officially broken ground on the new Stearns Woodland Trail! Due to social distancing recommendations and restrictions on large gatherings, construction began on May 13 without a formal ceremony to commemorate the occasion. With restoration and enhancements to the trail underway, the trail will remain closed through its grand opening in the fall of 2020. This exciting capital project is the third phase of a comprehensive vision to reinvigorate our outdoor classroom and enhance our ability to connect visitors with the natural world.

The importance of our natural world and sustaining this place for future generations has never been more clear. Through the rapid changes and uncertainty of the last few months, our trails have seen a record number of visitors seeking nature as a safe and healthy activity. The newly constructed All People’s Trail has been a mainstay for visitors in the last months, and will continue to be open to and welcome visitors during construction of the Stearns Trail.

The Stearns Memorial Nature Trail was the first trail system built by the Nature Center in 1971 in honor of Maybelle Stearns. It was then reconstructed in 1984. The enhancements planned will bring each aspect of this trail to life in new ways—whether for formal, dynamic group educational experiences, or the quiet and solitary moments of peace found within these acres.

Please visit shakerlakes.org to see our progress and plans for the Stearns Trail—as well as the exciting vision for the rest of our outdoor classroom.
AUDUBON BIRD WALKS
Select Wednesdays, June 10, July 8, August 12 | 6:30PM
Join a guided walk through the Shaker Parklands looking and listening for birds. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot. Six feet of social distancing between non-family participants will be required. Please wear a mask and bring your own binoculars.
Free. No registration required. Note: Building and restrooms remain closed to the public, please plan accordingly.

FREDWALKS NATURALIST-LEAD HIKE ON THE ALL PEOPLE'S TRAIL: THE WONDERS OF WATERSHEDS
Thursday, July 9 | 5–6PM | Nature Center at Shaker Lakes
Grab your wheelchair, walker, stroller or shoes and head to the Nature Center’s All People’s Trail. A Nature Center educator will guide you on this short hike around our ADA-accessible trail to discover what a watershed is and why it is important to the health of our waterways. This walk can be viewed digitally from Facebook Live or enjoyed in person provided we are able to safely gather in small groups at that time. Please RSVP and we will be in touch with details leading up to the event if it must be canceled. This event is supported by the Cleveland Foundation as a part of Common Ground and #FredWalksCLE, a neighborhood event series that explores our community. Free. Register at shakerlakes.org.

VIRTUAL OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CAMP
June 15–August 13 | Ages 4–Grade 9
Engage with our Nature Center instructors and counselors in a new way! With planned limited screen time and ample outdoor activities for discovery and enrichment, together with an “Adventure Pack” for pick-up at the Nature Center each week, children will be sure to have a fantastic summer learning and exploring outdoors. Cost per Week: $95 Non-members, $85 Members. Register at shakerlakes.org/camp.

VIRTUAL NATURE STORY TIME
Mondays from June 15–August 10 | 10–11AM
Children ages 3 1/2–7 can tune in and listen to a Nature Center educator read a story and share an activity related to the theme of the day to try at home. Please pre-register to obtain Zoom login and let us know which themes you’ll be attending at shakerlakes.org. Please see all weekly themes at shakerlakes.org. Examples include:

· Beautiful Birds | Monday, June 29
  Discover which birds live around the Nature Center all year and which ones only visit for a short time.

· Buggin’ Out | Monday, July 13
  We will use our imaginations and learn about all the creepy, crawling critters we can find in our backyards.

· Water, Water, Everywhere | Monday, August 3
  Learn which animals call the Doan Brook home and which ones you might be able spot on your next visit to the Nature Center.

ART ON VIEW: “THE WOODS” BY LARI JACOBSON*
Opening reception Thursday, July 9 | 5:30PM | Nature Center at Shaker Lakes
Meet artist Lari Jacobson and view her exhibit “The Woods.” Featuring pictures from around the Shaker Lakes, nature and the birds of the Shaker Lakes have become her inspiration. Art has always been Lari’s passion—a central influence on her life. Approaching each piece, Lari considers the personal, social, or historical context of the subject using sketches and conversation to focus each project. Further inspiration is drawn from texture, color and pattern. Exhibit on view through October 4 and is free to view. Pieces may be purchased for a fee with a percentage of proceeds benefiting the Nature Center.

FAMILY FIELD SCIENCE: MACROINVERTEBRATE SAMPLING
Saturday, July 25 | 10–11:30AM | Nature Center at Shaker Lakes
Curious what lives in the Doan Brook and why it matters? Join the Nature Center team as we shuffle through the stream (bring shoes that can get wet!), scoop up some samples, and study them under the microscope. Recommended for Jr. Scientists ages 8+ with an adult. $10 member, $15 non-member per one adult-child team. Add an extra person to your team for $5. Register at shakerlakes.org.

THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTICS
Presented by Jill Bartolotta, Extension Educator for the Ohio Sea Grant College Program
Thursday, August 13 | 6–7PM | Nature Center at Shaker Lakes
Plastic is the most common item found on trash cleanups with most of these items being single-use, disposable plastics. We must stop plastic at its source and use less of it. Plastic is harmful to the environment and all living organisms. We need to rethink how we use plastic and ultimately make the decision to use less in our lives. Capacity is set low in anticipation of group size restrictions. Please use the waitlist feature so we can stay in contact as we learn more. $5 suggested donation. Register at shakerlakes.org.

HIKE, RUN & FUN*
Sunday, September 13
The importance of exercise and the outdoors to our health and well-being are more important than ever! Get outside and join the Nature Center community for this important fundraiser and the area’s most scenic races and multi-distance hikes to benefit environmental education. There will be races and hikes for every level and age! A portion of the proceeds benefit the Jenny Goldman Fund. For more information and to register, visit shakerlakes.org.

*Note: For these and all programs, we are monitoring the COVID-19 situation and will remain flexible for the safety of our staff and guests. Please check the website for up to date information.