

NATURE *Knows No* Boundaries

Caledonia Conservancy Invites You To Explore



By **Sabrina Nelson** Caledonia Conservancy Volunteer

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." -

Margaret Mead

What began in 1994 as a few neighbors coming together to keep riding trails and our unique rural scenery safe from development, has evolved into a nationally accredited land trust with a vision to build our community by connecting people to Caledonia's trails and greenspaces.

Now, more than a quarter of a century later, the Caledonia Conservancy has grown into a 501(c)(3) land trust preserving nearly 300 acres of greenspace within Caledonia, which includes both hiking and equestrian trails. These natural corridors provide respite not only for people but also provide habitat for a variety of creatures big and small including white-tailed deer, red fox, snapping turtles, blue birds, chickadees, hawks, and herons.

Caledonia Conservancy land includes remnants of a maple-beech forest that once covered this area, one of Eastern Racine County's last old-growth woods, and one of the few places in the area where you can see endangered plant-life like the Blue-stemmed Goldenrod, rare Prairie Trillium, and Blackhaw Viburnum. The Caledonia Conservancy is quite a hidden treasure within our area. But don't take our word for it - hear from two Wind Point neighbors!



Kim Poehlman: "Deer Don't Read Maps."

"Help Wanted." That was how Kim Poehlman first learned about the Caledonia Conservancy. By the late 1990s, the Conservancy had grown to a point where a part-time staffer was needed to help move the organization to the next level. Kim answered the

ad, got the job and left a lasting impression on the organization. "Kim held our first paid position and supported us for many, many years. She was integral in securing many of our Department of Natural Resources stewardship grants and in our achieving status as an accredited land trust," said Sandy DeWalt, Caledonia Conservancy Stewardship committee chairperson.

Growing up in South Milwaukee, just a few blocks from the lake, Kim has always had an affinity for nature. It's part of what attracted her to the job opening with the Conservancy and a big part of why she has been a Wind Point resident for more than 30 years. As a dog walker, she enjoys all that the Village has to offer from Shoop Park Golf Course to Wingspread and the Lighthouse.

There are hundreds of acres of undeveloped land for nature-lovers to enjoy. Kim adds that nature knows no boundaries. "Just because the majority of the Caledonia Conservancy lands are west of Hwy. 32, doesn't mean they aren't part of our community - all the environmental corridors are connected. Deer don't know property lines." The variety is also what appeals to Kim. "Caledonia Conservancy lands offer a very different scenery with prairies, ponds and old-growth forest - each with their own unique flora and fauna." For example, the "Poehlman Path," located in the Trout Ponds Prairie on 4 Mile Road and named after Kim in thanks for her outstanding efforts as not only a former employee, but ongoing volunteer, is a very unique spot where can you find trees, prairies and wetland all in one location. Mother Nature also puts on a different show all year round. The marked hiking and equestrian trails at each of the Caledonia Conservancy lands wind through acres of wilderness that reveal new beauty in every season from dawn to dusk including cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter to flower and bird walks in the spring. There is always something new to see.



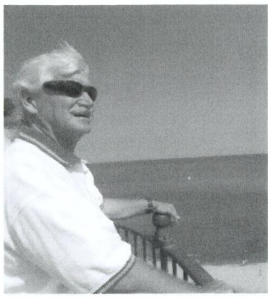
John: "It's important to develop a relationship with the horse you are riding. There is a very educational aspect to riding that I didn't realize until now." Photo courtesy of Roy Bohn.



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John Polodna:
“Back in the Saddle Again.”

John Polodna is a longtime resident of the area; living 40+ years in Mount Pleasant and Caledonia, and calling Wind Point home for the last three years. Having cross-country skied near the Conservancy trails and knowing people who were volunteers and

supporters, John was aware of the Caledonia Conservancy. But it wasn't until the idea of getting back onto a horse did it cross his mind that he really discovered this hidden gem in our community.

As a teenager, John was fortunate to have a friend who owned horses and they would go riding on his farm. So when he got the idea to get back on a horse, he figured, “I’ve ridden before, I’ll be good to go; just saddle up and, ‘Hi ho Silver away.’ What didn’t really cross his mind was that it had been about 30 years since he’d ridden a horse. Before hopping back in the saddle, John reached out to Sandy DeWalt in hopes of finding a local farm where he might ride again. A horse owner and longtime volunteer for the Caledonia Conservancy, Sandy is also chairperson for the Stewardship committee which is charged with overseeing and maintaining the Conservancy trails and lands. Sandy knows all the “horse-folks” in the area and put John in touch with Terese at Triple H Grange on 7 Mile in Caledonia, a horse farm adjacent to Conservancy trails.

Getting back into riding had been on John’s mind for several years and he was interested in recreational/trail riding. “I wasn’t looking to be an Olympian or win any medals!” When he finally made the call and was told that a lesson was available that afternoon, he was surprised, and a little nervous. Terese Heinen, owner of Triple H Grange, and longtime Caledonia Conservancy supporter, convinced John to come that very day. After a refresher course on things like safety and putting on a saddle and bridle, John was on the horse and enjoying a ride for the first time in many years. According to John, “It was a great experience. They paid attention to my comfort level and customized the lesson for me.”

John has had numerous lessons since then, and always with same horse. John states, “It’s important to develop a relationship with the horse you are riding. There is a very educational aspect to riding that I didn’t realize until now. As a kid, I’d just saddle up and go.” Another eye-opening experience for John has been enjoying the Caledonia Conservancy equestrian trails. “Even though I drive up and down these roads every day and see horse barns and farms, to now be on these magnificent Caledonia Conservancy trails, in these heavily-wooded, natural areas, is really phenomenal,” explains John.

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There is Solace in Nature

Kim agrees with John’s sentiment that this area is phenomenal and believes we are very fortunate to live in such a beautiful area: an urban setting filled with so much open and natural space. Kim notes, “Part of what makes this area beautiful is our public lands. It is what draws people to this area; greenspace is a selling point for developers, realtors and residents.” People seem to agree. During this past year, many have realized how important natural spaces are to our physical and mental health and have discovered “outside” areas, including those of the Caledonia Conservancy. Sandy Dewalt states, “We’ve seen a tremendous increase in the use of our lands; lots of new faces and new families out exploring and learning together.” As a former employee, Kim has a keen understanding of the importance of the Caledonia Conservancy, which as a 501(c)(3) is charged with protecting these lands for future public use. But as a mother, she has an even better appreciation of this mission sharing that “kids who have an understanding of how we all fit into the natural world are, I think better citizens, better neighbors, and better humans.”

Enjoy all of the Caledonia Conservancy properties; each is unique and has something special to offer:

- **King’s Corner at 4813 5 Mile Rd.:** Nearly 37 acres, this area features horse and walking trails around a large open field with a wooded back area. The area also has activities like tic-tac-toe, checkers and hopscotch; each built with elements from nature.
- **Neighborhood Central Walk at 1934 4½ Mile Rd.:** Hiking trails circle this 16.74 acre wooded wetland – a green oasis in the heart of an active neighborhood – and are best enjoyed in dry weather or winter.
- **Short Road Trailhead at 6111 Short Rd.:** A long, grassy lane leads into 14.84 acres of old-growth woods with bridges and lovely spring flowers. The trails connect to the right of way that extends from 6 Mile Road south to 5 Mile Road.
- **Tabor Woods at 5118 Pine Tree Circle/5131 Tabor Rd.:** Offering walking and horse trails, as well as a stroller-accessible path (in dry conditions), this 34.23 acre property includes old-growth forest more than 100 years in age and is comprised of three sections – McCalvy, Cameron-Erlandsson, and Gordon Tabor Woods.
- **Trout Ponds Prairie at 4819 4 Mile Rd.:** Nearly 31 acres of prairies and natural riverside wildlands, including seven ponds, this areas contains trails for horses and walkers.

Want to learn more about the Caledonia Conservancy?

Visit www.CaledoniaConservancy.org to join our mailing list, download trail maps or learn how you can get involved as a volunteer. Or contact Suzi Zierten, Executive Director at suzi.caledoniaconservancy@gmail.com / 262-498-4993.

The Caledonia Conservancy is a 501 (c)(3) organization focused on building the community by connecting people to Caledonia’s trails and greenspaces. The Caledonia Conservancy is committed to preserving land for future use. We connect people to nature education, enhancing quality of life through public access to equestrian and recreational trails. We strive to build a sustainable community through conservation, stewardship, education, outreach and partnerships with neighborhoods, schools, businesses and government.