

# Philander Chase Conservancy

2023 – 2024  
YEAR IN REVIEW





## Letter from Zali Win '84, Chair, Philander Chase Conservancy Board of Directors

**The recent plans by Intel to invest more than \$28 billion in the construction of two new chip factories northeast of Columbus has put regional planning, land use, development and agricultural and rural lands on the front burner in Gambier, Knox County and greater Columbus.**

Following this announcement, the area around Kenyon College has experienced an increase in property values as people realize that Gambier and Mount Vernon are within easy commuting distance to Columbus, bringing continued threats to the rural space that we all know and love.

Growth is inevitable, but with resilient partnerships, we continue to work to find the right balance between development and conservation. We are proud of the strong associations we have forged to support conservation — with conservation easement grantors, Knox County parks officials, local and regional planning officials, the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Owl Creek Conservancy, the other land trust in Knox County. With them, and grounded by our unique relationship with and support from Kenyon, we continue to conserve open spaces, including farmland, forests, and waterways in and around Gambier and the county.

Founded in 2000, and the only land trust established by a college or university in the U.S., we are at approximately 5,600 acres of protected land and counting.

None of our work would be possible without the generous support of our most important partners — our donors and supporters. Led by the generosity of John A' Woollam '61, and from our growing base of Kenyon alumni annual and capital gift donors, we have been able to meet our annual conservation goals and to set ourselves on a pathway towards financial self-sufficiency.

We are grateful for your support, which contributes to our strong and lasting partnerships.

Zali Win '84  
Board Chair

# Letter from Amy Henricksen, Director, Philander Chase Conservancy

**It is an absolute honor to be serving as the director of the Philander Chase Conservancy, 23 years after moving to Knox County, and 11 years after joining the Conservancy's staff.**

It is a privilege and a profound responsibility to build upon the legacy and important work of my predecessors and continue working with local landowners as well as our many community partners to further protect Knox County's rural character and sense of place.

The serenity and beauty of this rural community drew my husband, Chris, and me to Knox County from the suburbs of Columbus in March 2001. We moved to the eastern edge of Mount Vernon in Pleasant Township because it reminded us of the open countryside and the farms and rolling fields of Wayne County, Ohio, where we both grew up. Knox County's parks and the local preserves offered endless opportunities for outdoor activities and exploration as did the scenic Kokosing River and the Kokosing Gap Trail running alongside the river's banks. We were also impressed by the presence of three institutions of higher education in the county — Central Ohio Technical College, Mount Vernon Nazarene University and Kenyon College, and we were amazed that Knox County had not one, but *two* land trusts (Philander Chase Conservancy and Owl Creek Conservancy) working to protect its unique conservation values and rural character.

We knew that this was “our place,” a community in which we wished to establish roots.

This year, the Conservancy's annual report highlights some of the ways we are advancing our mission within our community. Specifically, we have:

- **Partnered with local landowners who have protected, or who are seeking to protect, their beautiful land**
- **Helped spread the word regarding the importance of land conservation through our “Protected in Partnership” conservation easement signs with our new logo**
- **Joined forces with a visionary donor and Kenyon alumnus, John A. Woollam '61, the Knox County Park District, and the Brown Family Environmental Center to add over 150 acres of publicly accessible open space and hiking trails through the Yauger Road and Coshocton Road projects**
- **Supported local youth participating in the Knox County Junior Fair**
- **Championed community volunteers who help keep Knox County beautiful**
- **Facilitated the work of the Conservancy's student interns and Kenyon's faculty and student researchers**

Finally, the Conservancy is honored to offer the community an option for green burial at Kokosing Nature Preserve and to assist our customers in selecting their final resting place.

As I reflect on our shared accomplishments in 2024, highlighted in this Year in Review, I am filled with renewed energy and a deepened sense of purpose. The story of the Conservancy's progress is truly the story of our community — a story we are proud to share with you.



Amy Henricksen  
Director





Yauger Road property facing north toward Wolf Run Regional Park

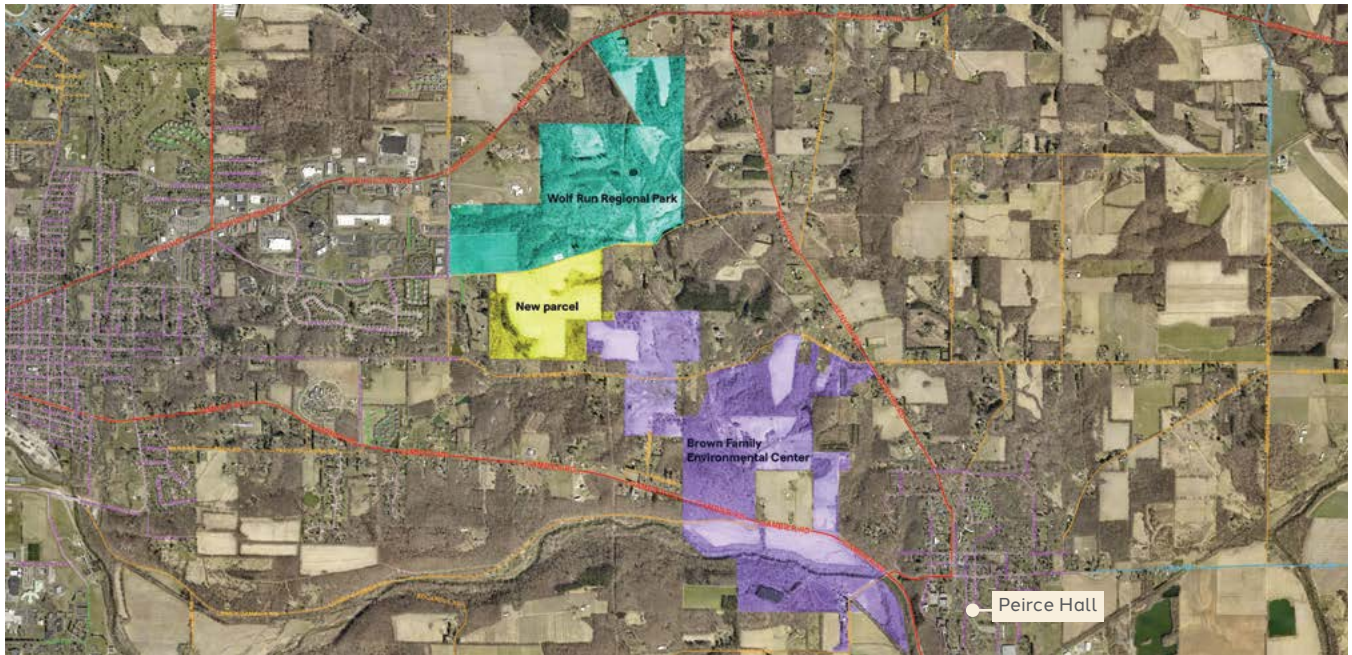
## Yauger Road Project Connects the Brown Family Environmental Center with Wolf Run Regional Park and Creates More Open Space for Public Use

In January 2024, the Philander Chase Conservancy was a key partner in connecting Kenyon’s Brown Family Environmental Center (BFEC) with the Knox County Park District’s Wolf Run Regional Park thanks to the vision and generous support of John A. Woollam ’61. Woollam originally purchased the 124-acre property in April of 2022 to conserve the land and create public open space that would connect the BFEC with Wolf Run Regional Park. The property consists of 49 acres of unmanaged forest and 75 acres of agricultural land that had been slated for development.

The Conservancy purchased the property from Woollam in December 2023 using grant funds from the Ohio Public Works Commission’s Clean Ohio Fund Green Space Conservation Program. The property is the final link that creates a 1,200-acre corridor of publicly accessible green space for recreational, educational,

and research purposes. The forested areas will be actively managed to promote biodiversity, including the protection of several natural springs, and the area that is currently in agriculture will be restored to native prairie. The property, bordered to the north by Wolf Run Regional Park and to the south by the BFEC lands, will connect more than 20 miles of hiking trails.

Upon completion of this protection effort, the Conservancy’s Board Chair Zali Win ’84, said, “The Conservancy is delighted to be able to once again work with the Knox County Park District in enhancing access to Wolf Run Regional Park. This access is made even more valuable because of the contiguous access to the BFEC. We are grateful to John Woollam and to the OPWC’s Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program for helping to make this important acquisition possible for the community to enjoy.”



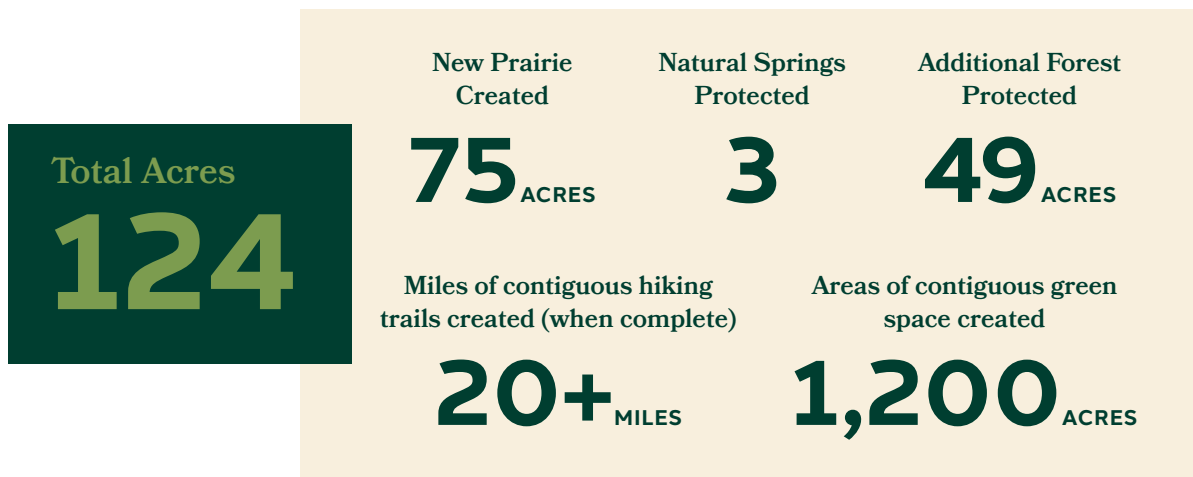
Yauger Road property map

The newly acquired property will be administered under the auspices of the BFEC, Kenyon’s 600-acre nature preserve, under a memorandum of understanding with the Conservancy. The property is protected under a deed restriction that safeguards the conservation purposes of the property in perpetuity.

Noelle Jordan, director of the BFEC, also described the impact of this project: “The BFEC is very excited

to be part of a project that links 1,200 acres of green space in the middle of Knox County. This green corridor is intersected by the Kokosing River and the Kokosing Gap Trail, providing amazing connectivity for outdoor recreationalists. As Knox County grows, we hope this natural area will become a much-loved feature that will support active lifestyles and social interaction.”

## YAUGER ROAD PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL



## Partnership with Knox County Park District Protects Land on Coshocton Road in Perpetuity

Land previously owned by Kenyon College’s Philander Chase Conservancy — 62 acres adjacent to Wolf Run Regional Park at 18220 Coshocton Road — was purchased by the Knox County Park District in September 2023. The land was simultaneously protected with a conservation easement donated to the Conservancy by the Park District. This newly acquired park property consists largely of 33 acres of woodland and 27 acres of tillable land, the latter of which will continue to be leased to a local farmer.

The sale of the Coshocton Road property to the Park District, and subsequent easement, ensures its stewardship for generations to come. The property will add to Wolf Run Regional Park’s existing network of hiking and interpretive trails and will now provide public access to open space from Coshocton Road/U.S. 36. It will also protect a tributary of Wolf Run and other seasonal streams and springs.

The property was purchased by the Conservancy in 2020 through the support of Kenyon alumnus John A. Woollam ’61, who envisioned that the land would one day be part of the public open space available to all Knox County residents. Woollam’s generosity also allowed the county to purchase the land for less than half of the Conservancy’s acquisition cost, with the remaining funds serving as a grant from the Conservancy.

At the time of the project’s completion, now-retired Knox County Park District Director Lori Totman said, “Knox County Park District is thrilled this land has been conserved in one of Knox County’s fastest growing areas of the county. This acquisition is directly aligned with our mission to acquire, conserve and manage Knox County’s natural resources while maintaining green space and providing public access. The park district is extremely pleased to have collaborated with Philander Chase Conservancy, and now this parcel will be conserved in perpetuity as a public park.”

Dave Heithaus ’99, the current Park District director, and former director of green initiatives at Kenyon, added, “Expanding Wolf Run is exciting not just for improved access and additional green space but also because it is part of a broader partnership among the Park District, Philander Chase Conservancy, and the Brown Family Environmental Center. This creates a 1,200-acre publicly accessible natural area stretching from Coshocton Road on the north past the Kokosing River on the south.”



Entrance sign to Wolf Run Regional Park from Coshocton Road (U.S. 36)



## Environmental Sustainability Award from the Knox County Chamber of Commerce

Each year the Knox County Chamber of Commerce celebrates the county's business community by honoring businesses and individuals who have made significant contributions to the community in the previous year. Kokosing Nature Preserve was honored to be awarded the Chamber's 2023 Environmental Sustainability Award in March 2024. The award was presented at a gala hosted by Kenyon and attended by more than 500 people. The work we do at the Preserve in support of our clients, their families and friends, the community, and our planet is intrinsically rewarding, and it is especially meaningful to have that work publicly acknowledged by our local community.



Jill Shriver and Amy Henricksen,  
Philander Chase Conservancy



Sam Barone '72 GP'25

## Knox County Community Member, Sam Barone '72 GP'25, joins the Conservancy Board

The Conservancy is thrilled to welcome Sam Barone '72 GP '25, with his more than 50 years of community service, to our board of directors. In 2020, Sam retired from his 18-year tenure as executive director of the Knox County Foundation. He held prior leadership roles at USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Ohio Democratic Party, Mid-Ohio Transit Authority and Knox County License Bureau. Sam began his career in Kenyon's public relations office after receiving a master's degree from the Medill School of Journalism in 1973. Sam is a former member of Mount Vernon City Council, past president of the Kiwanis Club of Mount Vernon, past vice-chair and member of the

Foundation Park Conservancy Board, a past commissioner of the Knox County Park District, and past EMT lieutenant on the College-Monroe Township Volunteer Fire Department. He is currently chairman of the Knox Community Hospital Board of Trustees and a co-class agent for the Kenyon Class of 1972. Sam is a recipient of the Kenyon Middle Path Medal and the Knox County Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award, among other honors. He and his wife Paula '72, have three children and nine grandchildren.

### Yauger Road Cleanup - Community Partnership

Community member and retired Mount Vernon High School teacher Marcie Steen coordinated a litter cleanup at the Conservancy's newly acquired property on Yauger Road. Mount Vernon High School Key Club students volunteered to assist and collected 150 pounds of trash along approximately 2,550 feet of road frontage on the Yauger Road property. We are grateful to Marcie and the Key Club students for their service.



MVHS students Amanda Misarti and Sala Glandon



### John A. Woollam '61 H'08 Honored with Distinguished Service Award

John A. Woollam '61 H'08 has been the Conservancy's most supportive partner, contributing to the protection of over 2,800 acres across 32 properties, helping to preserve the rural character of the lands surrounding Kenyon and Gambier. The Kenyon Alumni Council presented John with a Distinguished Service Award at the College's bicentennial reunion for his outstanding commitment to the Conservancy, the College, and to land conservation in Knox County. The Conservancy is thrilled with the College's recognition of John's steadfast support of our work. Read more about John's latest conservation projects on pages 4-6.



Student interns Tommy Hillmer '25 and Clara Hales '26 staffing the event with author Brooks Lamb

## In Sum

by Clara Hales '26, Student Intern

What does it mean to summarize a place and its history? This spring, I began creating summary sheets for every property that has an easement held by the Philander Chase Conservancy. I thought this project was purely for the sake of organization, to help the staff find important information easily. As an organizationally minded person, I was happy to dig into our records to do so.

There's a wall of shelves filled with binders in the Conservancy offices. Each binder contains the history of a particular easement. Working with these binders over the course of several weeks left dates, names and parcel numbers stuck in

my mind. Beyond each easement's individual history, I could see how the protected properties fit into a larger story, one that has developed over the past two decades.

I began to wonder if there might be two goals to the summary sheet project. The primary goal remained the ease of finding information in the future. A secondary goal occurred to me on a driving tour of protected properties in Knox County, led by Conservancy staff members Jill Shriver and Amy Henricksen.

On this tour, my fellow intern Tommy Hillmer '25 and I were able to see the scope of the Conservancy's work. After creating

summary sheets, it felt like I was finally putting a face to a name. I recalled details I had seen on paper, and I was able to map them onto the landscapes in front of me. It turned out that the summary sheets had allowed me to get to know each property intimately, without me noticing.

Now, I look out at the rolling, Ohio hills with a greater appreciation of the land and the amount of work it takes to preserve these spaces. There is something that goes beyond anything that could be encapsulated in a summary sheet, and to get a sense of that, you must put the binders back on the shelves and walk the fields.

### Knox County Junior Fair Livestock Sale

Philander Chase Conservancy was excited to partner with the Kenyon Office for Community Partnerships’ Rural Life Initiative to purchase Titus Tyson’s market rabbits at the Knox County Junior Fair Livestock Sale in July 2023. Titus is a member of the Knox Rocks 4-H Club and is the son of Rachel and Casey Tyson. 2023 was his first year participating in the sale!



### Protected Property Signs

Following a redesign of the Conservancy’s logo to better represent our mission to conserve the lands and viewshed from the tower of Peirce Hall, we have produced protected property signs that are available for use by conservation easement holders.

The signs are similar in concept to the Ohio Preserved Farmland signs that can be seen throughout the state on farms with agricultural easements. The Conservancy’s signs affirm our partnerships with landowners who have granted conservation easements on their properties. We are grateful to our easement grantors for helping us spread the word regarding the importance of land conservation.



### Brooks Lamb

The Conservancy and Kenyon’s Rural Life Initiative co-hosted writer, conservationist and agrarian Brooks Lamb. Lamb discussed his recently published book “Love for the Land: Lessons from Farmers who Persist in Place.” Lamb’s research for his book consisted of in-depth interviews with farmers, local leaders, agricultural service providers and land conservationists, as well as his own hands-on experiences growing up on a farm in Tennessee.

Lamb shared stories highlighting the power of people-to-place relationships. He emphasized the motivations of farmers who understand their land and are committed to its care and stewardship — even in the face of challenges such as suburban sprawl, agricultural consolidation and racial injustice.





### **Emma Schurink '17 Drawing of the Bruce Kiracofe '72 Protected Property**

Emma Schurink '17, who was a sociology major and studio art minor at Kenyon, created this drawing of the beautiful Kiracofe property, located on the banks of the Kokosing River. Bruce Kiracofe, who graduated from the College in 1972, granted a conservation easement to the Conservancy in 2023 to protect his 25.6-acre property in perpetuity. You can see more of Emma's work at [emmaschurinkart.com](http://emmaschurinkart.com).



## What Defines a Place?

by Tommy Hillmer '25, Student Intern

*Is it the rolling hills that can make your stomach drop?*

*The winding rivers and creeks that run Big?*

*The paths connecting meadow and grove, friend and foe?*

*The rain and winds that can leave us powerless, yet linked?*

*Perhaps it's the people*

*Those who remember, who share history and tradition, who tell others about the beauty of their home*

*Those who know every crest and divot of the land, who feel the earth like an extension of their being*

*Those who create and give back, who form our community*

Working for the Philander Chase Conservancy this past year has shown me just how deeply the Knox County community cares about their special place. Too often Kenyon students fall into the trap of seeing Gambier as the “middle of nowhere,” far from an urban center they deem worthy of appreciation.

But Knox County is filled with a rural character and beauty — a beauty that first attracted Bishop Philander Chase, our organization's namesake, to leave Worthington and resettle Kenyon on the Hill, away from the distractions of city life.

Bringing students this past fall to meet landowners who have granted easements to the Philander Chase Conservancy allowed me to show other students the beauty of our area. They were introduced to community members, many

with different backgrounds than their own, and learned about their commitment to preserving their land.

In today's world, it's crucial that, as people of a shared place, we focus on our shared values. Our love for the land. Our appreciation for rivers and forests, hills and meadows. Our commitment to letting future generations love these features as we do today.

Discovering these shared values with Knox County landowners has been the greatest joy of working with Philander Chase Conservancy thus far, and I look forward to continuing our work as we head into its 25th year.

## Farm Tour

The Conservancy's student interns, Zachary Aronson-Paxton '25, Clara Hales '26, Tommy Hillmer '25, and Jordan Schisler '25, planned a tour of several Conservancy-protected farms for fellow students. Pictured are landowners and easement grantors Jay Dorsey and Beth Waller speaking with the interns about the operation of their sustainable grazing cattle farm.



## Trick or Treat

Student interns Jordan Schisler '25, Zachary Aronson-Paxton '25 and Tommy Hillmer '25 participated in the College's annual trick-or-treat event, spreading the word about the Conservancy's work by handing out candy and Land Matters buttons.

## Samantha Bartram Named Green Burial Coordinator at Kokosing Nature Preserve



Samantha Bartram has been selected as the new green burial coordinator at Kokosing Nature Preserve, Kenyon’s conservation burial ground located on Quarry Chapel Road in Gambier. Bartram’s appointment followed the promotion of the founding steward, Amy Henricksen, to director of the Philander Chase Conservancy.

Kokosing Nature Preserve, a project of the Philander Chase Conservancy and dedicated as a cemetery in October 2015, is Central Ohio’s first and only conservation burial ground. There, amid rolling prairies planted with native wildflowers, remains are interred using biodegradable containers and without the use of harsh chemicals. Green burial is increasingly popular among people seeking more environmentally conscious end-of-life options.

Upon her selection for this position, Bartram said, “Nature has long been my refuge — being outside among the flowers, trees and birds has helped me get through the most difficult times in my life. I am thrilled and honored to have the opportunity at Kokosing Nature Preserve to share that healing experience with others, and to help guide people through the green burial process.”

As green burial coordinator, Bartram will be responsible for all aspects of the operation and maintenance of the preserve, including client relations, interment services, land stewardship, volunteer management, and community education and outreach.

Bartram earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Wittenberg University and worked for more than a decade in journalism and publishing as a writer and editor. She obtained her professional yoga instructor certification in 2017 and has since been teaching regularly.

For more information about Kokosing Nature Preserve and green burial, you can visit [kokosingnaturepreserve.org](http://kokosingnaturepreserve.org) or contact Bartram at [info@kokosingnaturepreserve.org](mailto:info@kokosingnaturepreserve.org).

### Convergence: Art & Ecology

The Worthington Area Art League presented an exhibit in spring 2024 entitled “Convergence: Art & Ecology.”

In an effort to celebrate the human relationship with nature, artists were asked to research ecological projects and use them as inspiration to create works of art.

Artist Elizabeth Veldey used Kokosing Nature Preserve as her inspiration to paint “Kokosing Natural Cemetery.” (opposite page)

Veldey and Conservancy Director Amy Henricksen, were invited to speak about their respective work at a panel discussion at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus, intended to shine a light on the progress we are making in Central Ohio to achieve a sustainable future.

You can learn more about Elizabeth and her art at [eveldeyart.com](http://eveldeyart.com). The original painting and professional prints are available for purchase.







## Summer Science at Kokosing Nature Preserve

A research project at Kokosing Nature Preserve this summer was designed to obtain a better understanding of its flora and insect fauna, as well as studying nutrient dynamics at a green burial site.

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies Lauren M. Schmitt and environmental studies major Grant Gerhardt '25 are using the Teabag Index methodology, a research method applied globally to study the decay rate of plant material in different settings.

Schmitt and Gerhardt buried two tea bags just a few inches below the surface of a gravesite. After two months they removed and analyzed changes to their contents to gather useful information about the nutrient dynamics at the sites where the teabags were buried, given that the contents of the teabags were the same at the time they were buried.

The research project is seeking to quantify plant density and species richness, with the expectation that with more plants and more diverse plant communities,

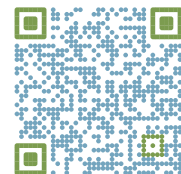
insect density and richness will also increase. Tracking the plant and insect communities across the Preserve, across the summer, and also in comparison with other conventional cemeteries and nearby prairies, will assist in quantifying the effects of green burial on ecosystem restoration.

Because gravesites are being used for the research project, it was important that families of the individuals buried at the preserve opt in to the research. Fifteen families agreed to lend a small spot on their loved one's final resting place to the tea bag experiment. One family member responded, "My mother loved both science and tea. Please include her burial lot in this summer's planned research project."

Schmitt and Gerhardt plan to present their findings at Kenyon's Summer Science Symposium. You can read more about their research on the project website [lmschmitt.com/succession-and-green-burials.html](https://lmschmitt.com/succession-and-green-burials.html) or follow the QR code below.



Grant Gerhardt '25 and Assistant Professor Lauren Schmitt



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The Philander Chase Conservancy is grateful to the 205 donors who contributed in support of our ongoing land conservation work last year. A gift of \$2,500 currently protects approximately one acre of land and creates eligibility for the purchase of interment rights at Kokosing Nature Preserve. Thank you for supporting the sense of place enjoyed by so many. To learn more about supporting the Conservancy, including through the purchase of interment rights, please contact the Conservancy at 740-427-5258 or [pchaseconservancy@kenyon.edu](mailto:pchaseconservancy@kenyon.edu).

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Lisa Volpe McCabe '88  
Chandra McClelland '06  
David McGue '78  
Martin McKerrow '64  
George Meyer P'26  
Poppy Meyer '26  
Sarah Mitchell Buller '85 P'08  
Meredith Moore '88 and Steve Rabbe  
Susan Moore '05  
Anne Morrissy '01  
Neil and Christine Mortine  
Richard Mulligan '73  
Philip Musser '94  
Bill O'Hearn '90 and  
Diana Smith '87  
Karena O'Donnell  
Katrinka Orr  
Frank Paino  
Ildiko Pallos  
William Paraska '70  
Clyde Park  
William Portman '77  
Kathy Prestidge  
Michael and Patricia Prunty  
Stuart Raby  
Thomas and Victoria Reidy  
Kristin Richardson '84  
Betsy '81 and Graham '81 Robb  
Laurie '74 and Daniel Roche  
Gwen Romagnoli

Andrew Rushing '00  
Howard H'16 and Judy Sacks P'08  
Doyle Salsberry  
Elizabeth Salt  
Jeffrey Salt '77  
Tom Sant '65 H'13  
Lisa '80 and Stu Schott  
Tracy Seretean P'27 '27  
Jill Shriver  
Amber Siegel '15  
Michael Sitter  
Paul Skinner '68  
Janis Small  
Andrew Smith '86  
Susan Smith '85  
Cary Snyder '02  
Kelli Sorkin '92  
Mike Spetrino '77 P'15  
Diane and Jack Spiegler P'06  
Donna Spiegler '78  
Sarah Spiegler '06  
Diane Staats '11  
Doug Stevens '65 P'89  
Elaine Stratton Hild

Dorothy Stratton  
Robert Sykes '68  
Graham Thomas '99  
David Thomas-Train '73  
Sam Todd '76 P'13  
Wolfe Tone '88  
Garrick Vance '04  
Helen Veit '00  
Robin Walters  
Jay and Kymber Waltnumson P'27  
Zack Weber '06  
Wendy Webster and Stuart Davidson P'18  
Zali Win '84  
Dennis Wipper '77  
Emily Wise '96  
Richard Wolfson  
Charlotte Wood '83  
John Woollam '61 H'08  
Henry Woolsey '76  
John and Ann Woolsey P'19  
Bill Yost '68  
Bob Zoller '74





## Philander Chase Conservancy

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### On the Cover:

Norris Grain Farms planted this stunning field of sunflowers at the Lee and Mary Ann McPhail's Lane View Farm on Newcastle Road east of Gambier. The community was invited to come stroll the paths and purchase flowers from the field. Both the McPhail and Norris families have granted conservation and agricultural easements to the Philander Chase Conservancy. The silos of Lane View Farm are visible from the east-facing windows of Peirce Hall.

