



— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

ANNUAL | 20
REPORT | 19

50th Anniversary
1969-2019

CONNECT
CONTRIBUTE
CONSERVE

A NATION THAT DESTROYS
ITS SOILS, DESTROYS
ITSELF. FORESTS ARE THE
LUNGS OF OUR LAND,
PURIFYING THE AIR AND
GIVING FRESH STRENGTH
TO OUR PEOPLE.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

250 Thorold St. West
Welland, ON L3C 3W2

905-788-3135 ext 242

foundation@npca.ca

niagaraconservationfoundation.com

Charitable No. 119057511 RR0001



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BRIAN BATY

Chair (Jan- April)

TOM INSINNA

Chair (April -Present)

ROBERT FOSTER

Vice Chair (NPCA Representative)

D. GAYLE WOOD

NPCA CAO/Secretary-Treasurer

DOMINIC "MICKEY" DIFRUSCIO

Director

2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (NPCF). Finishing my first full year as Chair, I am excited to report that we have regained momentum in achieving our mission, vision and objectives.

As we look to 2020, I want to thank our outgoing Chair, Mr. Brian Baty, and Foundation Coordinator, Andrea DiCenso, for their dedication to the NPCF and the work they completed to move the organization forward. 2019 saw a new Board of Directors lead the Foundation. We approved our revised Strategic Plan 2020-2022: A Commitment to Conservation, with new goals for the next two years. We committed to expanding our Board of Directors with citizen representation, strengthening our governance, and focusing on a new fundraising strategy.

I am excited about our future. With passionate Directors, assistance from NPCA staff, and exceptional donors, I am confident that we will realize our mission to raise funds for the health and prosperity of our shared Niagara Peninsula watershed.

Tom Insinna,
NPCF Chair



You can help support the work of the Foundation by making a donation online:

niagaraconservationfoundation.com

To mail a cheque:
250 Thorold Rd West, 3rd Floor
Welland, Ontario
L3C 3W2

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Founded on May 5, 1969, the NPCF is a registered charity dedicated to raising funds that aid in the conservation of our natural resources for present and future generations.

Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, we raise funds to support the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

When you donate to the Foundation, you help support conservation projects and programs that contribute to improving our watershed.

In 2019, the NPCF approved a new two-year Strategic Plan with the following strategic goals, Vision, and Mission:

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Strengthening organizational governance
2. Becoming Niagara's environmental charity of choice
3. Building strong partnerships
4. Continuing endowments and scholarships
5. Developing a Fundraising Strategy

VISION

NPCF is a leader in providing resources to support conservation work throughout the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

MISSION

Our Mission is to raise funds toward environmental endeavors that include increasing green space, improving water quality, restoring habitat and conducting environmental research and education.



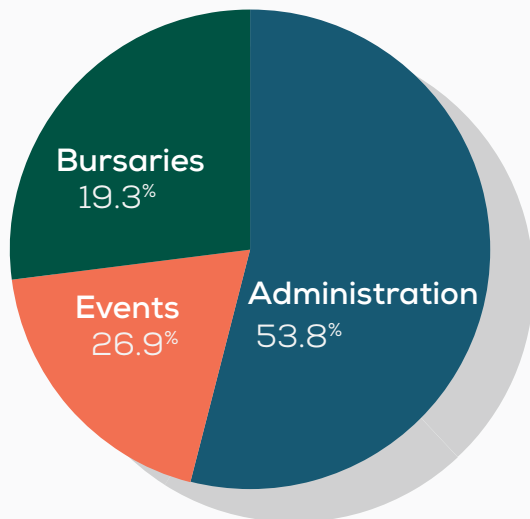
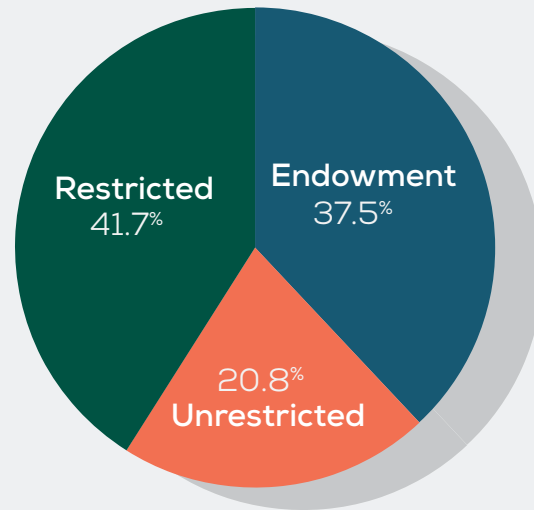
REVENUES

Endowment
\$15,017

Restricted/Nevada
\$8,328

Unrestricted/Donations
\$16,673

Total Revenues
\$40,018



EXPENSES

Administration
\$20,883

Bursaries
\$7,500

Special Events
\$10,427

Total Expenses
\$38,810



NIAGARA REGIONAL CHAIR OUTDOOR EDUCATION FUND-2019 UPDATE

In April 2017, the Foundation launched the Niagara Regional Chair Outdoor Education Fund after receiving a donation from the Niagara Regional Chair's Charity Golf Tournament for the very first time. The foundation was a lucky recipient among many other local charities across Niagara. The Outdoor Education fund was established to focus on support for children and youth 18 and under, and to help provide outdoor education opportunities in the form of supported camp subsidies.

The Foundation received two additional donations from the Niagara Regional Chairs Charity Golf Tournament in 2017 and 2018, and at that time the fund was extended to include other outdoor education programming needs that could not otherwise be supported by the NPCA.

Summer Adventure Day Camp

Each year, Ball's Falls Conservation Area offers Summer Adventure Day Camp, an outdoor, educational and recreational day camp program running nine weeks each summer for children ages 6 through 12. This immersive, hands-on and exploratory program takes campers out into the Carolinian forest, and down the trails alongside the Twenty Mile Creek, to explore the diverse environment and habitats for many important plant and animal species. Weekly themes explore

the natural world, as well as the exciting heritage and history of Ball's Falls and the early settler village of Glen Elgin. Recreational challenges and activities include an outdoor archery course, large group games, and forest scavenger hunts.

Through the Outdoor Education Fund, the NPCA was able to offer a subsidy on camp registrations for families in need of additional support, to provide their campers with the opportunity to experience and explore the outdoors for a full week of adventure at Ball's Falls.

In 2017 and 2018, camp registration fees and transportation costs were subsidized for many families throughout the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

Adventure Camp and Outdoor Education Program Supplies

Each year, the NPCA offers PD day, March Break Adventure, and Summer day camps, as well as curriculum-based education and recreational programming. Programs are offered to children and students of all ages from early-years to high school, as well as college and university classes. In order to effectively run such programs and activities, specific materials, supplies and equipment are required and in regular need of repairs and maintenance.



One essential area that the Outdoor Education Fund supports is the Introduction to Archery program. It is led by certified archery instructors, and delivered to a variety of class groups, and special-interest visitors, such as Scouts and Guides. The Archery program is central to the recreational offerings at Ball's Falls Conservation Area, and as a popular program, requires replacement and equipment repair throughout the year. This program is an important component to the Outdoor Overnight Adventure program offered to intermediate students from schools within the DSNB as part of outdoor educational programming.



A second programming area that the Outdoor Education Fund supports are the guided interpretive tours and re-enactments in the heritage village at Ball's Falls Conservation Area. New, customized and historically-accurate costumery, suitable for outdoor interpretation through all seasons, was acquired for educator staff. The costumes were debuted in the spring of 2019 for the Spring Awakening outdoor education program that explores early settler life in the Glen Elgin village, connecting with grade three curriculum. These costumes were showcased at the 2019 Ball's Falls Heritage Day, a free event open to the public in July.



New! Ball's Falls Forest Playscape

Through the Niagara Regional Chair's Outdoor Education Fund, the NPCA has been able to meet a long-time outdoor educational and recreational goal with the development of a forest playscape at Ball's Falls Conservation Area. Also referred to as a free-play forest space, this area, situated within a pine plantation at Ball's Falls, is a safe and enclosed space for children to play and immerse themselves in the wonder of the forest with loose-parts materials and the opportunity to play freely within this setting. The Forest Playscape project consists of the construction of a modest, natural cedar split-rail fence acting as a perimeter so that parents and school and camp group leaders can allow their children to play freely, within a monitored and safe space, eliminating some of the risks that come with forest play, like the fear of getting lost.



The Forest Playscape area is underway and is expected to open officially in 2020, with a grand opening celebration in the heart of the forest.



Left to Right: Renee Bisson (NPCA) Helen Armstong (Development Officer with Niagara College)

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

With the creation of the Rt. Hon. John Turner Water & Environmental Leadership Award and Gala in 2015, a ten-year scholarship was established with Brock University, and in 2016 a five-year bursary was added to include students at Niagara College pursuing environmental education. This year, the NPCF provided the funding commitments in full to both academic institutions.

These awards help ease the economic burden of higher education and allows students more time to focus on their studies. Thanks to support from the Rt. Hon. John Turner, the NPCF is able to invest into the next generation of environmental scientists, researchers and conservationists.



2019: **\$6,000** towards the Rt. Hon. John Turner Water & Environmental Leadership Scholarship at Brock University.



2019: **\$1,500** towards the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Bursary at Niagara College.



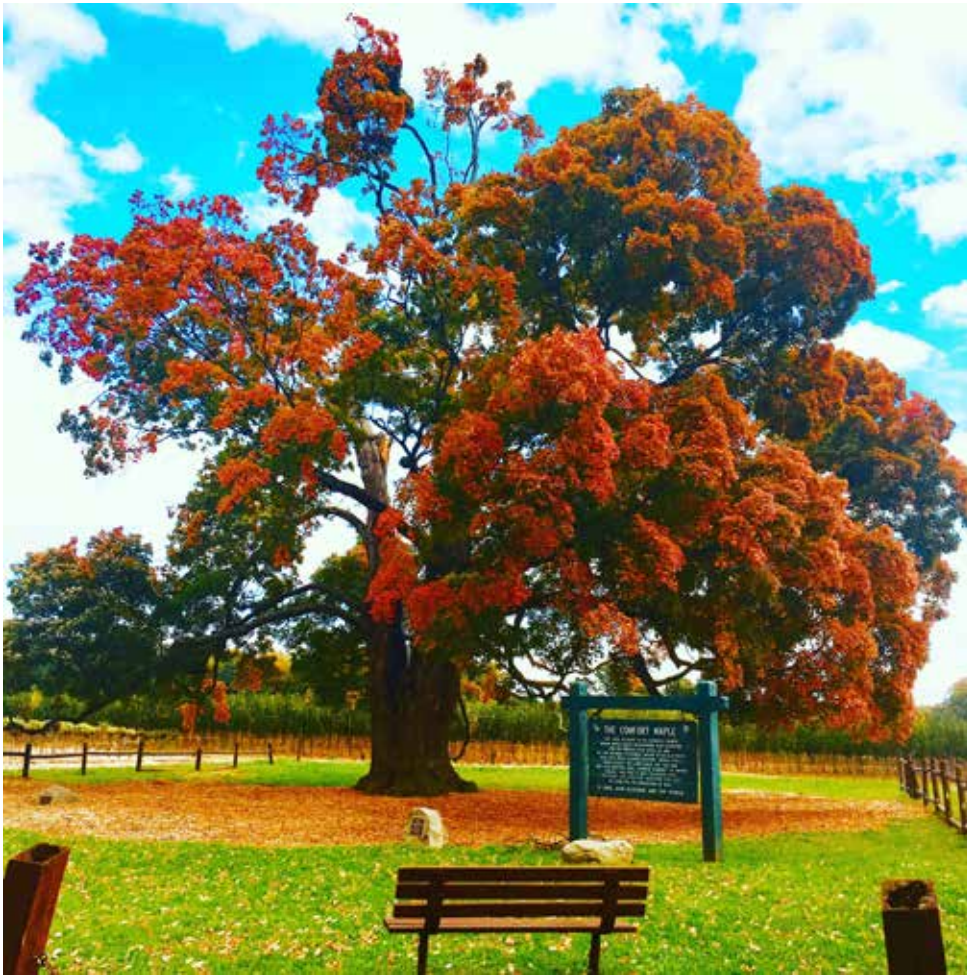
THE COMFORT MAPLE PEN FUNDRAISER

The Comfort Maple Conservation Area conserves what is widely believed to be the oldest and finest sugar maple tree in Canada, estimated to be over 540 years old, and was designated a heritage tree in June 2000 under the Ontario Heritage Act. Originally in an area of hardwood forest, the tree's size and shape suggest the forest was cleared when the tree was still young, likely for agricultural purposes. The 0.2-hectare area was land was owned by the Crown and granted to Major Robert Secord in 1808. It was then sold by the Secord family to the Comfort family in 1816, and later entrusted to the NPCA on April 30, 1961 by Miss Edna Eleanor Comfort (Lease for 999 years), to conserve the 'old growth' tree for its historical and biological significance.

Over the years, NPCA arborists have collected the wood pruned annually for repair and health, and in 2015, the NPCF launched a fundraiser selling pens by turner Marv Ens of Fenwick, ON. Mr. Ens continues to make these hand-crafted pens to preserve and highlight the beauty and character of this magnificent tree. It is truly a "one of a kind" writing instrument.

In 2019, \$1,648.25 was raised towards the Comfort Maple Legacy Project.

To purchase your own piece of Canadian Heritage, please email foundation@npc.ca or online at niagaraconservationfoundation.com



THE COMFORT MAPLE LEGACY PROJECT:

Partnership between the NPCA, NPCF and Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture

On Friday October 4, 2019, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and the Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture completed the final phase of a research project to preserve the legacy of the Comfort Maple tree.

Over the years, there have been propagation initiatives where the NPCA successfully collected seed and planted seedlings at various conservation areas, but this time a new method “air layering” was utilized to capture 100 per cent DNA from the tree. Special consideration had to be made to not harm the tree due to its age, therefore specialists and students from the Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture chose this technique as it’s recognized for being gentle on old growth trees. Air layering helps to grow rooted seedlings high up in the tree’s canopy. Installation took place in spring of 2019.

This important legacy project will ensure the Comfort Maple tree’s DNA will survive for future generations of Canadians, while marking the beginning of a new partnership between the NPCA and NPCF, and in celebration of the NPCF’s 50th Anniversary since its founding in 1969.

Special thank you to Tanya Blankenburg, Instructor/Curator, Rose & Vegetable Gardens, The Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens & School Of Horticulture and her students from the Horticulture Diploma Program.





THE COMFORT MAPLE TREE HAS BEEN FEATURED BY:

CTV

Toronto Star

CBC

National Post

National Observer

Cottage Life

Narcity.com

The Voice of Pelham

Niagara This Week

The St. Catharines Standard

The Welland Tribune

The Niagara Falls Review

Filming Request for Film and
Television Productions

Canadian Club

Maple Whiskey Commercial

Histoires d'Arbres Saison 2
Les Nourriciers (French Documentary)



NPCF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS



To further the mission of the NPCF and its efforts to improve water quality, increased green spaces, wetland and habitat, the Board of Directors approved two community stewardship projects that met the Environmental Grant Program requirements.

PROJECT 1: MARINER'S PARK, COMMUNITY GREENSPACE IN PORT COLBORNE

The Port Colborne Park Committee, comprising of volunteers from the Horticultural Society and St. James & St. Brendan Church, requested financial support from the NPCF in May 2019. The goal was to re-naturalize a lot, deep in the heart of the city, that had remained vacant for over 30 years. Work began once the funding request was approved by the Board of Directors, and the committee successfully turned the property into a public greenspace with pollinator habitat.

Some of the challenges undertaken during Phase One remediation were projects including the installation of underground conduits for water and electricity and costly design layout for pavers and concrete work. The Park Committee sought funding from multiple grants to finance Phase One, and the NPCF provided support for the restoration work in Phase Two. This included two large 60 mm caliper trees, 40 shrubs, perimeter gardens, all reported to be doing very well. After a site-visit and consultation with Kerry Royer,

the volunteers selected a variety of native plants including echinacea, grasses, potentilla, silverleaf dogwood, wine & roses weigela, marguerite daisy, joe pyeweed, and tiny wine ninebark. Next steps in the project will see the addition of a pavilion, accessible benches, and water features.

Recent studies show that the City of Port Colborne has a higher than average senior population (21.93%), with many living under the poverty level, according to Niagara Prosperity Initiative. The Park Committee plans to hold concerts and activities for those who live in the area at no cost.

In addition to this, the Horticultural Society will provide educational workshops and tours to teach the community and local schools the benefits of native plants. Another local organization, The Community Artists of Niagara, are now partnering to display art onsite in free standing cabinets with funds from the City of Port Colborne.

Overall, the project has been well received by the community at large as an enhancement into a gathering space where the many can enjoy, socialize and participate in cultural events.

On June 23, the Horticultural Society planted a Serviceberry Bush to commemorate their 90th anniversary.

NPCF PROJECT INVESTMENT: \$2,000



PROJECT 2: POLLINATOR GARDEN AND STONE PATHWAY IN STEVENSVILLE, FORT ERIE CONSERVATION CLUB

In June 2019, a group of horticultural enthusiasts from the Ridgeway & District Garden Club planted a 900 sq. ft garden, with 2700 native plants at the Fort Erie Conservation Club in Stevensville, Ontario. The group consulted with NPCA Community Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, Kerry Royer, to select appropriate native plant species because they want to be able to offer guided tours to the public.

The Garden Club aims to learn and grow their knowledge of horticulture and assist in beautifying the neighbourhood. They achieve this by holding an annual plant sale and donate funds to four other communities for restoration work. They also developed a partnership with a local senior care facility to help with maintenance and watering. The Fort Erie site is the first of three proposed gardens with two more locations to come in Crystal Beach and Ridgeway.

Eventually, the club members would like to install additional solitary bee houses and butterfly feeding stations.

Thanks to these 25 volunteers, their community now has increased opportunity to learn about the importance of native plants and their relationship to pollinating insects.

Everyone can play a role in building up awareness that native plants are not only useful, but beautiful.

NPCF PROJECT INVESTMENT: \$3,000





Peter
Van Helsdingen

CORPORATE SPONSOR HIGHLIGHT

The Van Helsdingen Family are the owner-operators of Calamus Estate Winery, a 32-acre vineyard adjacent to Ball's Falls Conservation Area. After purchasing the property, the family launched a signature Ball's Falls branded wine and effectively began a new partnership with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation.

A \$1,500 cheque was presented to the NPCF at the 2019 Vendor's Thanksgiving Dinner, which is held on the first evening of the Thanksgiving Festival. The proceeds were raised at a Charity Movie Night hosted by the winery, as well as some proceeds from wine sales.

Calamus Winery and the Van Helsdingen Family have committed to donating portions of the proceeds from the sale of all Ball's Falls branded wines. At the family's request, funding will support conservation projects within the Ball's Falls Conservation Area.

The NPCF would like to deeply thank the Van Helsdingen's for their generosity. It is because of these thoughtful donors that many programs are made possible, ensuring the beauty of the natural landscape can be preserved for future generations to enjoy.



ST. JOHNS TROUT OPENING & CEREMONIAL CAST BY DOMINIC “MICKEY” DIFRUSCIO

On Saturday, April 27, 2019, the NPCA celebrated the opening of trout season in Niagara, taking the opportunity to promote the sustainability and conservation of native fish species. In keeping with tradition, the ceremonial first cast by NPCF Board Member, Mickey DiFruscio was at Noon. One lucky angler had the opportunity to catch a special tagged fish for a prize of \$25, courtesy of the DiFruscio family.

The Niagara Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) joined the event once again, to demonstrate fly casting and fly tying. The group of volunteers works alongside various partners like the NPCA, to preserve and restore Twelve Mile Creek, which at one time was home to native Brook Trout. Encroaching development, erosion, and warming of the stream have reduced these fish to a few isolated pockets and TUC works to improve the habitat so they can once again thrive in the Twelve.

Guests enjoyed the day with family and friends at this popular community event. With various opportunities like trout fishing, birding, and hiking, the community can enjoy being surrounded by a wide variety of Carolinian species with unique escarpment features to see and explore.

The day featured complimentary face painting, recreational fishing, informational booths, and BBQ food for sale by RJ’s Rolling Cookhouse. The annual event has a voluntary admission fee of \$2 per person or \$5 per family, with proceeds benefiting the continued conservation efforts of the NPCA and NPCF.

You can visit the St. Johns Pond Conservation Area, located at 3101 Barron Road in Fonthill, Ontario.





WOMENCHANT CHORUS & DRUMMERS

“Winter Solstice” Benefit Concert for the NPCF

On Sunday, December 22, 2019, Ball’s Falls Conservation Area and staff hosted a sold-out benefit concert in support of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. The event was graciously organized by local group WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers, a community ensemble of choristers and drummers lead by Artistic Director, Laura Thomas, and accompanied by pianist Laurel Candler.

WomEnchant performs music that promotes peace, social justice, respect for land, and demonstrates the power of sisterhood and song to make positive changes in their community and beyond. Their members come from diverse backgrounds with a wide range of musical experience, that over the years has attracted a loyal following.

The Winter Solstice Concert featured a mix of original music by Laura Thomas, traditional native American songs, seasonal music, poetry and instrumentals.

Thanks to tickets sales, online donations and a silent auction table, these hard-working volunteers helped raise \$4,041.

All net proceeds supported the work of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation, which in-turn supports local conservation improvement projects, children’s education programs and the protection and recovery of species at risk.

The NPCA and NPCF hope to have Laura and her choir back again for an outdoor event to celebrate nature, unity and Mother Earth.





SOPRANO

- Agnes Liles*
- Betty Rennison
- Caroline Misener*
- Elizabeth Agnew
- Karen Widmer
- Kathy Dallaire
- Linda Meerveld
- Liz Watson
- Lu Lenz
- Marilyn Smith
- Marsha Hildebrand*
- Rose Delottinville
- Valerie Nielsen

MEZZO

- Beth Schat
- Cathy Mackenzie
- Daphne Drysdale
- Heather Scott
- Irene Altimira
- Janet Davey
- Janet Knoop
- Jerri Penrose*
- Jill Van Biesbrouck
- Karen Gough
- Mary Davies
- Mollie Holloway*
- Patrice Johnson*
- Peggy Sample*
- Phyllis Dowd
- Sandy Lambie
- Sharon Martinello
- Sheila Massey*
- Sue Jackson
- Sue Wells*
- Suzanne McClennan*
- Tricia McNaughton

Drummers*

ALTO 1

- Annelien van Velzen
- Catherine Tompkins*
- Daphne Davis
- Jackie McKierman
- Karen Perry
- Katherine Cooke*
- Sam Cooke
- Lena V. Nielsen*
- Mary Bondarchuk
- Pat Vinton*

ALTO 2

- Jill Darke
- Laura Baird*
- Lorraine Burr*
- Louise Farrar
- Marg Hipkin

DRUMMERS ONLY

- Gloria Ugarte*
- Sybil Wilson*

With Appreciation from WomEnchant

- Tom Insinna, NPCF Chair
 - Gayle Wood, NPCF Secretary-Treasurer
 - Brian Kon, President of the Niagara Region Metis Council
 - Brenda Mulholland, Mixed Media Artist (Poster)
 - Sarah Baker, Front Door Reception
 - Maureen Norrie, Silent Auction Table
 - Gerry Hotson, Sound
 - Ted Morton, Les Hildebrand, Jeff Winger Lighting
- Post Concert Reception provided by the WomEnchant Volunteers.



“LONG LIVE THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY!”

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Dominic “Mickey” DiFruscio

Dominic “Mickey” DiFruscio was a member of the NPCA Board of Directors from 1994 to 2019, and is a current member of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. As a proud representative of the City of Thorold, he has always been an advocate for water, nature and conservation.

Mickey is responsible for bringing forward many successful initiatives, the St. Johns Pond Trout Season Opener and the NPCF Wild Game Dinner Fundraiser to name just a few. He’s attended as many NPCA events as he could over the years and is known for his generosity, often bringing gifts of home-cooked food, basil, milkweed plants, and sweets that are always appreciated.

He has donated hundreds of native plants and trees to the NPCA, and various community plantings, and continues to be a stalwart advocate for pollinators species, including his beloved Monarch Butterfly. Recently, the NPCA Board of Directors approved the “Mickey DiFruscio

and Family Legacy Pollinator Project” which sees pollinator gardens installed throughout the watershed. Mickey was honoured at his final meeting, marking 25 years of service, on December 18, 2019. NPCA Board Chair, Dave Bylsma, presented him with a plaque, a framed photograph, a sign denoting his home as a stopping point on the Monarch Butterfly migration route, and a Lifetime Pass to the NPCA Conservation Areas.

Mickey’s dedicated work as a citizen, and a long-standing NPCA volunteer, was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement-Award of Merit at the Conservation Awards on February 27, 2020. Mickey received a standing ovation from 370+ staff and volunteers in gratitude for his time, passion and dedication to conservation.

He continues to serve on the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Board of Directors as a citizen representative of the City of Thorold.



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

-Rachel Carson

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS, CORPORATE SPONSORS AND DONORS

VOLUNTEERS

WOMENCHANT CHORUS & DRUMMERS
MARV ENS
MICKEY AND LIZ DIFRUSCIO

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ENVIRO-STEP
KAUPP ELECTRIC
OPG
NIAGARA PENINSULA
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PBI
THE LCBO

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