



## Legacies and Looking Ahead

Winter 2015  
Newsletter

The past year has been an exciting year for River Fields in many ways. 2015 has been filled with interesting projects and indications of a strong future for our organization. Our conservation work continues to strengthen as we work with many varied partners to conserve the open spaces, natural, agricultural and historic resources of our region. A few recent projects are described below, and it's also exciting as our Board looks ahead to plan and chart the future of our 56-year-old organization

People like you have made River Fields a successful and positive force for open space and land conservation in our region, and I'm thrilled at the bright future we will achieve with your help!

### Two New Open Space Properties Along River Road

With support from a very generous donor, River Fields purchased two important open space properties along the River Road Scenic Byway in 2014. At the end of last year, three adjacent lots that border other River Fields open space properties in a residential area were bought to preserve the open space views and provide some much needed floodplain management. And a few miles away, River Fields purchased another two adjacent lots that border both River Road and the Ohio River. This last purchase protects river shoreline, countless mature trees and important greenspace in the Scenic Byway.



Before

#### Major clean up!

These last two parcels bordered by the Ohio River and the River Road Scenic Byway had been neglected and misused for many years prior to River Fields acquisition. Over the past year we have removed tons of trash, debris, and invasive species from the site. It's starting to look a lot better, and we continue to

improve this site with further efforts to eradicate invasive species. The picture at right shows the clean view of the river, while at left shows what we had to clean up to get to that!



After

### Important New Conservation Easement for a Country Estate of River Road

We were also privileged to finalize an important conservation easement with generous and future-minded landowners to conserve a beautiful six-acre property with a stunning historic home and historic landscape designed by the Olmsted



firm and Bryant Fleming. This property, now preserved forever, is protected by the **first conservation easement in the 700-acre nationally significant National Register for Historic Places District "Country Estates of River Road."**

Watch for more details about this exciting conservation success story coming soon!

### Remembering David French

2015 was marked by the loss of our beloved and long-time employee Dave French, Planner and Stewardship Coordinator for River Fields for 21 years. Dave leaves behind his wife and family who were most cherished by him. And, he also left behind a legacy of conservation and land protection along the Ohio River.

Before his 21-year career at River Fields, Dave served as Lead Planner at the US Army Corps of Engineers and was their planner for the Louisville Waterfront Park at the same time that River Fields was advocating for the creation of that park. At River Fields, Dave helped spearhead our acquisition of the Garvin Brown Preserve, one of our signature projects (pictured in the header above). Over the two decades that followed, Dave helped River Fields acquire nine more properties and begin its conservation easement program that protects over 2,000 acres **forever**. Now, that is a legacy!



David French

Dave loved the land and was great at overseeing the management of these properties and easements. However, he really excelled in building relationships with people. Everyone who met Dave French was charmed by his dedication and forthrightness. His success in his job is a reminder that **the business of land conservation is really a people business**, and nothing happens without trust and dialogue between people. Dave's gift for relationships has helped River Fields succeed, and we will strive to learn from his approach in the future. We know that the impacts of his work within the Ohio River Corridor will be enjoyed by his grandchildren's generation and beyond.

### New faces at River Fields

Speaking of the importance of people in land conservation, River Fields has welcomed three new team members. **Logan Ormerod**, a real estate agent at Kentucky Select Properties, joined the Board of Trustees this summer and is helping us tremendously with his real estate expertise, new perspectives and new energy.



New Trustee  
Logan Ormerod

Ben Miles, former executive director of a land trust, was hired as a consultant when Dave French became ill and has led our work on land conservation projects including the land trust accreditation process expertly ever since. We are also privileged to have the assistance of Vanessa Castle, who led the very successful annual fundraising event this fall; Vanessa is now a part of our fundraising team.

### River Fields Honors Christina Lee Brown at Our Most Successful "Celebration in the Country" Ever!

On October 16, we were thrilled to honor one of Louisville's most energetic and philanthropic leaders, Christina Lee Brown. Christy, a former President of River Fields, is the founder and current board chair of The Institute of Healthy Air, Water and Soil. Her goal is to ensure that our citizens live healthier lives by helping them deal directly with the degradation of our water, soil and air. She has a broad understanding of the critically important connection between a healthy environment and the health of its people and her emphasis on health underscores River Fields' mission of enhancing, preserving and protecting our natural, cultural, scenic and agricultural resources.



Christy Brown (L) with daughter Augusta and son-in-law Gill

This year's "A Celebration in the Country," was held at Gingerwoods and guests celebrated Christy while enjoying live and silent

auctions, locally-sourced food provided by Lilly's, and the landscape's lasting beauty. The generosity of this year's event attendees made this River Fields **most successful fundraiser in its fifty-six year history!**



We hope you'll join us for next year's event to be held on **Friday, September 23, 2016.** *Save that date!*

### Rehabilitation of African American Historic Home

For the past year River Fields has managed the slow but steady rehabilitation of the Merriweather House on River Road at Harrods Creek. This American Steamboat Gothic-style house was owned by Henry and Isaac Merriwether, thought to have been the first African-American landowners in the area. With an additional **\$150,000** grant funding just awarded last month from the Bridges Settlement money, River Fields will continue to rehabilitate this important icon of local African American history.

### River Fields Shows Commitment to Stewardship of Conservation Values

During last year's annual on-the-ground monitoring, which we do for each conservation easement we hold, River Fields discovered that a landowner had cleared nearly all the vegetation and several small trees within a conservation easement area that serves as a buffer for an important wetland on a River Fields preserve. After lengthy proceedings, the dedication of River Fields won the day and this area will soon be restored with native plantings.

### Looking Ahead- Forever is a Long Time!

Forever is a long time and land trusts make this promise of perpetuity in our conservation easements. National land trust leaders have organized an accreditation process to help assure longevity for land trusts, and this year the preparation and submittal of the application for Accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission was a big focus for River Fields Board and staff. We won't hear of the Commission's decision until August, but the arduous process was very helpful in ensuring our organization is prepared for our commitment to protect land in this area *in perpetuity*.

And to make sure the next few years are successful in achieving the River Fields mission, our Board and staff will be creating our new 2016-2018 strategic plan over the next few months. If you have any feedback you'd like to offer as we consider our work over the next three years, **please drop us a line** at [info@riverfields.org](mailto:info@riverfields.org).

**We see a promising future of important land conservation work for River Fields – but only with your continued support and input!** We look forward to sharing many future successes that protect what we love about living in our beautiful area!

This chart displays how River Fields allocates its expenses from January 1 to October 31, 2015 into its three programmatic areas:  
Land Conservation, Advocacy, and Education

