



Asbury Woods

Annual Report
2023-2024

ONCE AGAIN

Asbury Woods has made a huge impact in our region on environmental education, conservation, and outdoor recreation over the past year! This annual report captures the numbers, the statistics, and the quantifiable results, but it can never truly showcase the difference Asbury Woods makes in the lives of tens of thousands of people each year. From children releasing trout into local waterways after watching them grow in the Nature Center, to senior citizen walking groups using the trails to stay active and healthy, Asbury Woods makes a positive impact in countless ways.

During this past fiscal year, several areas of focus emerged. On the environmental education portion of our mission, significant progress was made in partnership with United Way of Erie County's Community Schools program, taking hands-on STEM activities to students who have not traditionally been able to visit Asbury Woods for curriculum-enhancing experiences. Tremendous strides were also made in the area of conservation, helping to manage and protect the property under Asbury Woods' care, ensuring it is a vital natural place for generations to come. Programmatically, Asbury Woods is in the midst of the *Year of Trees*, a twelve-months long dive into the many facets of trees. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of J. Thomas Tree Service, we've been able to offer a diverse range of tree-related programs highlighting this incredible renewable natural resource that cleans our air, helps cool environments, provides wildlife habitat, controls erosion, and adds beauty to landscapes.

All our programs, conservation efforts, and environmental education activities are possible thanks to the generosity of the thousands of people and organizations listed in this annual report. Your gifts bring our mission to life and move us towards the shared vision that includes a future for Northwestern Pennsylvania where appreciation for and protection of natural places is a deeply held personal and community value.

Thank you for the role that you play in the success of Asbury Woods and our work in environmental education, conservation, and outdoor recreation.

Gratefully,



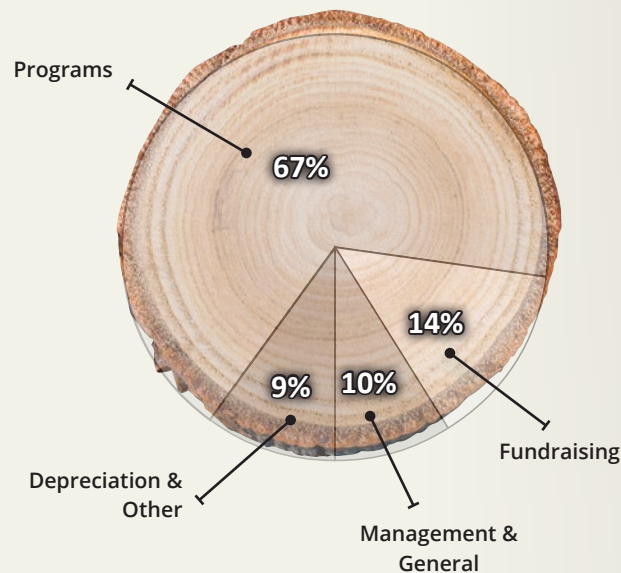
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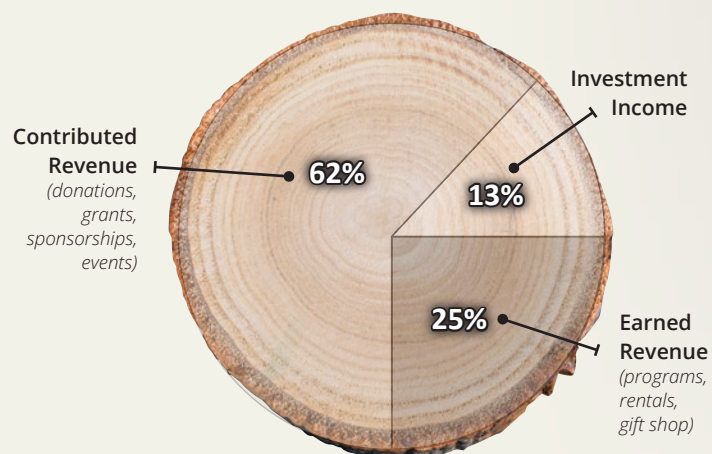
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Unaudited Financials
September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024

EXPENSES



INCOME



Gross Income \$1,315,093
Total Expenses \$1,035,196
Net Income \$279,897



A YEAR OF IMPACT

This past year at Asbury Woods has been one of incredible growth and engagement. Our mission statement includes three prongs: conservation of the land, environmental education, and outdoor recreation.

Our educational programs have reached more students than ever before, our conservation efforts have ensured that the beauty and diversity of our woods are preserved for future generations, and our outdoor recreation opportunities continue to expand through a multitude of programs and festivals. Highlights of the achievements made possible through the generous support of donors, volunteers, and community partners who join Asbury Woods in inspiring a greater sense of environmental awareness, sustainability, and stewardship in Northwestern Pennsylvania include:

- **Innovative Educational Programs:** The enhancement and expansion of educational programs, serving over 21,000 children and adults.
- **Community Engagement:** The successful hosting of community events like the Maple Festival, Arbor Day Celebrations and Winter Wonderland, which attracted over 20,000 attendees.
- **Conservation Initiatives:** Strategic conservation efforts that led to the preservation of 17.89 additional acres of land in 2023, and 68 total additional acres since 2021, safeguarding critical habitats.
- Raised 175 trout from eggs in our exhibit hall and invited the public to help release them into Lake Pleasant.
- 240 volunteers contributed 5,108 hours to help us achieve our mission of conservation, environmental education, and outdoor recreation.
- **Discovery Stations:** Hands-on discovery stations were added to the nature center to provide a new self-guided activity for visitors each month.
- **Nature Exploration for Adults with Disabilities:** Added a monthly program to expand opportunities for people of all abilities to engage with nature.





THE YEAR OF TREES

Asbury Woods is thrilled to have a yearlong theme once again for our programs and outreach activities, with 2024 being The Year of Trees. Trees form the backdrop for most of the Asbury Woods property and are core to the establishment of Asbury Woods by Dr. Otto Behrend, co-founder of Hammermill Paper Company in Erie, upon his passing in 1957.

The value of trees in a community is well-documented, providing shade and lowering energy costs, attracting wildlife, contributing to cleaner air, controlling erosion, reducing carbon in the atmosphere, beautifying urban, shopping, and residential areas, and so much more! Yearly themes help Asbury Woods dive deeper into various environmental and conservation topics as we pursue our vision for Northwestern Pennsylvania to be a place where appreciation for and protection of natural places is a deeply held personal and community value.

Asbury Woods has celebrated The Year of Trees throughout 2024. In March we hosted Maple Festival and celebrated a heritage unique to our region, and the trees that bring forth the sap to make syrup. In April we celebrated our mighty trees on Arbor Day with a family friendly event for all ages. The summer months brought our Trees Are Terrific program to several city parks in conjunction with our Nature in Your Neighborhood series. Throughout the year we have hosted 20 tree related programs and projects for all ages including hikes, self-guided activities, and lectures.

We are extremely grateful to J. Thomas Tree Service for serving as the Presenting Sponsor of The Year of Trees. Their involvement and support provided topic experts for various programs and helped us offer several new programs at no cost throughout the year. Owner, Jake Thomas, commented, "Asbury Woods is a special place in our community and I'm proud that our company has supported them for many years. During 2024 it is our pleasure to expand that support and partnership to present The Year of Trees."



LAND STEWARDSHIP

Over the past twelve months, Asbury Woods has undertaken the implementation of the Conservation Stewardship plan that was adopted in July 2023. This comprehensive plan catalogs the species found on our property, documents

more than 100 trail improvement needs, maps invasive species, advises on streambank restoration projects, and updates needed to the built environment such as signage, wayfinding and access.

During the past year, we formed a Conservation Stewardship Committee, bringing in experts with knowledge in ecology, invasive species, biology, watersheds, and project management to help oversee the implementation of the Conservation Stewardship Plan.

Invasive species management was done on 88.8 acres of our property during fall 2023 and fall 2024. High priority species as identified in the conservation stewardship plan were treated, checked and retreated as necessary. The committee did a visual assessment of the results with invasive plant specialists in June 2024 to facilitate decisions on future applications.

Also in June 2024, Asbury Woods hosted a trail care school with the International Mountain Bike Association, widely recognized as the leader in sustainable trail care, building and maintenance. Four staff members and eight volunteers participated in the two-day on-site workshop that included classroom portions and on trail learning. Each volunteer who participated in the workshop committed a minimum of 20 hours of trail work to Asbury Woods to help address priority trail fixes identified in the conservation stewardship plan.

In August 2024, a dynamic new trail map was launched, addressing wayfinding needs identified in the plan. The application allows visitors to engage in an app-like experience without having to download a new app to their mobile device and provides blue dot tracking to show your location on the property. It also provides points of interest that can be changed on the fly for seasonal interpretive information, short term trail closures and other information that enhances the visitor experience.

All of these projects have been made possible thanks to support from various grant sources.



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Over the past two years, Asbury Woods has worked closely with United Way of Erie County Community Schools to provide increased environmental education and hands-on learning opportunities. United Way Community Schools work to improve student outcomes by increasing resources and engagement. To date, Asbury Woods has engaged with 14 different community schools in all four community school districts (School District of the City of Erie, Union City School District, Girard School District and Iroquois School District) including students in kindergarten through 8th grade. We have worked to make these programs accessible by providing both field trips to Asbury Woods and outreach programs where we take our engaging programs to the schools. Both United Way funding and grants secured by Asbury Woods have made these STEM learning experiences possible. Through this partnership, Asbury Woods has worked to fulfill our mission to inspire a greater connection to the natural world among children living in urban and under-resourced communities.

Increased funding and collaboration have resulted in a threefold increase in interactions with students from community schools during the 2023-2024 school year compared to the previous year and an incredible 15-fold increase compared to the 2021-2022 school year.

Our expanded work with the community schools directly relates to our board-adopted strategic plan which challenges us to foster the diversity of visitors to Asbury Woods and among those who engage in our programming.



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in memory of Oma & Opa
Michelle Bessetti
Gregory & Lori Blatt
in memory of Glenna Mae Bartlett
Dori Gravanda Fish
in memory of Henry & Laurana Fish
Mr. & Mrs. George Flanders
in memory of Glenna Mae Bartlett
General Partitions Mfg Corp.
in memory of Glenna Mae Bartlett
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dedicated to Dan Franks
Craig Pepper
in memory of Glenna Bartlett
Rotary Club of Presque Isle
in memory of William DeWitt
Jack & Jackie Smith
Suzanne Weber
in honor of Pat Brown
Susan Willis
in memory of Rolf and Helga Scheufe
Susan Zill
in memory of Lou Ann Andrews



Other Contributions

Otto Behrend Legacy Society Members

Legacy Society Members have included Asbury Woods in their estate plans.

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The Clemens Fund
Andrew J. Conner
Suzanne Neth
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The Elton E. Bock Summer Camp Endowment

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Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)
Erie Yacht Club Foundation
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Robert F. Schumann Foundation
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in memory of L. McBrier
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in appreciation of Bill and Sally DeWitt
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in memory of Paul Thomas Bowser

Dori Gravanda Fish
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in memory of Glenna Mae Bartlett
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Rotary Club of Presque Isle
in memory of William DeWitt
Suzanne Weber
in honor of Pat Brown
Leo & Sue Williard
in memory of Paul Thomas Bowser
Susan Zill
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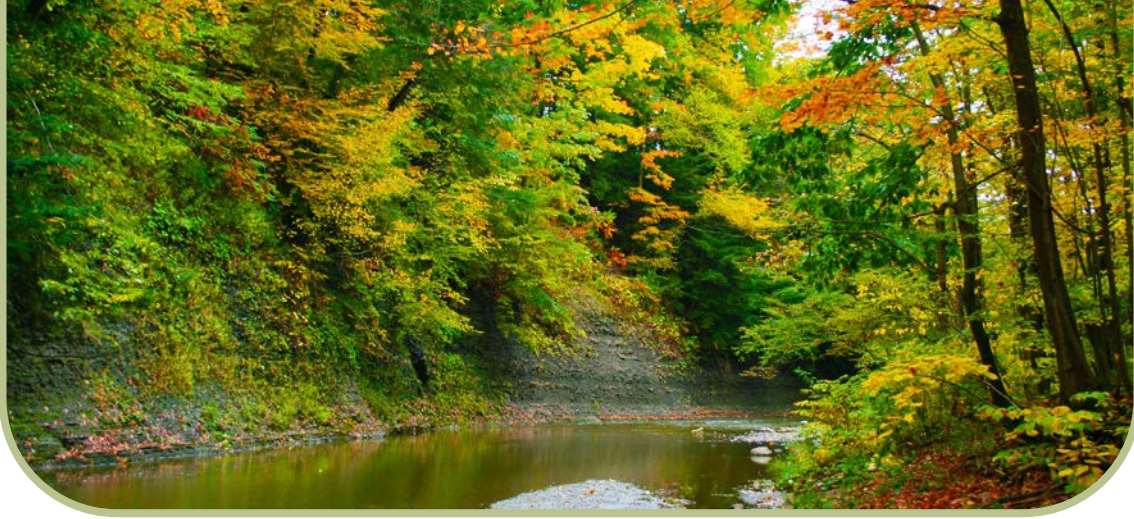
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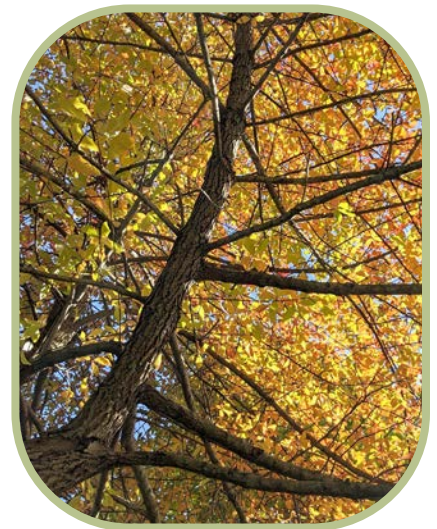
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Asbury Woods strives to realize a future for Northwestern Pennsylvania where appreciation for and protection of natural places is a deeply held personal and community value.

The mission of Asbury Woods is to inspire a greater connection to the natural world by protecting, managing, and interpreting our property; providing outdoor recreational opportunities; and offering environmental education experiences.



Asbury Woods
The woods are calling.

4105 Asbury Road • Erie, PA 16506
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