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January 29, 2024

Dear Friends of St. Xavier,

I'm writing with updates about St. Xavier, and to ***invite your participation in a fun project*** for which we at the Westmoreland Land Trust (WLT) hope to obtain your help!

Updates and Plans

Since assuming the St. Xavier property in August 2022, we've made extensive plantings of trees and shrubs along streams, and native grasses and wildflowers in the former farm fields. This work was completed with the support of the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation and the Sisters of Mercy, to whom we are very grateful. We've also worked extensively to rejuvenate the Grove alongside St. Xavier Road, removing fallen and dead trees, and reopening the paved walking trails. Another very large effort completed in 2023 was rehabilitation of the guesthouse Bellbrook.

On July 8th 2023 we hosted a family Firefly Watch in the back yard of Bellbrook, which was enjoyed by many families with children - some with grandchildren!

WLT Operations Assistant Karen Rose Cerccone secured THG Geophysics' donated use of ground penetrating radar to locate the foundations of the former campus buildings.

A very generous benefactor sponsored development of a Stewardship Plan for the St. Xavier land. On January 19th 2024 WLT's board adopted the plan, which was prepared by consulting firm Fahringer McCarty Grey, Inc. This plan is available online at our website.

The grounds are now open for public enjoyment, and Bellbrook by appointment. As the year progresses, we will develop signage and a trail map, and start to offer scheduled tours of the property and Bellbrook.

Once a year the WLT plans a "big event". For 2023 our big event was the September 9th Open House at St. Xavier. We had the pleasure of meeting many of you at this gathering. We will host another Open House at St. Xavier in fall 2024 (date yet to be determined).

We now benefit from the assistance of two terrific part time AmeriCorps Service Members - Sarah Poklembo and Dominic Demangone. Both Sarah and Dominic will be extensively involved in projects at St. Xavier and Dominic is actually based at St. Xavier. Later this year Dominic will start to lead tours of the property and host visits by groups and field trips by schools.

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More Plans

Also scheduled for 2024 is preparation of a Master Plan for the property. The Plan, funded by the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, will identify improvements for visitors such as parking areas and visitor amenities. As planning progresses, there will be more opportunities for individuals and classes to sponsor an improvement or an amenity for the nature preserve/park. Right now, there are only a few opportunities for sponsorship or improvements, which are listed on the next page.

Throughout the year, we will continue to open and improve existing trails, and nurture the extensive conservation tree, shrub, and meadow plantings.

Sarah is leading a project to identify, study, and map the many magnificent trees in the Grove. ***We believe some of the trees were planted by the Academy's graduating classes. If you happen to know about any of the trees or when they were planted, please contact Sarah at spoklembo.pmsc.wlt@gmail.com or (724) 244-1180.***

We Need your Help! An invitation

Dominic is leading our project to gather historical information and artifacts about St. Xavier. The project will have three aspects:

- 1) Gathering written recollections that you can email to ddemangone.pmsc.wlt@gmail.com or mail to Dominic Demangone / Westmoreland Land Trust / 218 Donohoe Road / Greensburg PA 15601.
- 2) Collecting oral histories from those who resided or studied at St. Xavier, or had some other close connection with St. Xavier. With Sarah, Dominic would like to talk to gather your recollections about St. Xavier.
- 3) Collecting any old photographs or mementos of St. Xavier that you might wish to donate for retention in Bellbrook.

The information and items gathered will contribute to exhibits to help enliven the history of the nature preserve/park for interested visitors.

Please help us capture your memories and learn more about the history of St. Xavier!

Please contact Dominic at ddemangone.pmsc.wlt@gmail.com or (724) 989-3711. If you have extensive recollections please offer to participate in our collection of oral histories, either on your own - or with one or two friends!

Please help spread the word about the project!

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Current Opportunities for Sponsorship

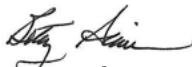
Current opportunities for sponsorship of improvements at St. Xavier are limited, pending development of a master plan for the property. However, there are a few:

- St. Xavier Nature Preserve signs – one at the Route 30 entrance, one along St. Xavier Road, one near the farm stand, and one in the western field (near the earlier Firestone sign)
- Cleaning and restoration of the statues of Blessed Mother and St. Theresa
- Replacement of roof and railings of the gazebo
- Rehabilitation of the Grotto holding the statue of St. Theresa

Please let us know if any of these opportunities interest you, your friends, or your class. Sponsors will be recognized in our annual report and on our website, and in a log displayed in Bellbrook's Oratory. Upon completion of a master plan, there will also be further opportunities.

Thank you for your interest in St. Xavier! Please do not hesitate to call, email, or write with questions, to request information, or to update contact information.

With warm wishes for the new year,



Betsy Aiken
Executive Director

Please contact Dominic Demangone at ddemangone.pmsc.wlt@gmail.com or (724) 989-3711 and share your memories of St. Xavier!

Image by Anna Alam from calligraphy thanking the Sisters of Mercy for conservation of St. Xavier



The Westmoreland Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions to the trust are tax-deductible under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code to the extent of the law.

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