



# The Merry Leaflet

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College

P.O. Box 263, Wolf Lake, IN 46796 260-799-5869

<http://merrylea.goshen.edu/> [merrylea@goshen.edu](mailto:merrylea@goshen.edu)

## Seven Reasons for Hope:

# Merry Lea Welcomes New GC President

Goshen College celebrated the inauguration of Dr. Rebecca Stoltzfus on February 17 with the pomp and ceremony appropriate to a new president. What you might not guess if you saw only the photo ops is just how counter-cultural the college's new executive is.

Rebecca spent much of her career focused on the needs of malnourished women and children. She believes joy is a sign of the Holy Spirit and describes constructive criticism as a form of academic love. What might this unusual leader have to offer Goshen College's eastern campus? The Merry Lea Team and board members found much to inspire hope. These seven points summarize some of their ideas.

**1. A new president provides stability and a broad horizon.** Our staff will change over the next decade, but we look forward to keeping the same president for a long time.

**2. Rebecca knows how to develop a compelling vision.** Marcos Stoltzfus, director of Environmental Education Outreach, appreciates a leader who knows where to start. "She may not know exactly where we're headed, but she has a clear idea how we're going to get there," he says.

Rebecca asked many questions—of groups of faculty at her home, of students on the sidewalk, in campus meetings. She then shared the data

she gathered so that others could offer feedback and evaluate her conclusions.

**3. Rebecca's vision and Merry Lea's vision complement each other.**

When she visited Merry Lea's most recent board meeting, Heather Harwood, a board member from Syracuse, Ind., was impressed with the inclusion of words like *outstanding*, *joyful* and *purposeful* in her vision. Heather added:

"She was engaged with the Board and mentioned she had been at Gallup recently. She commented on Indiana being in the bottom 20% regarding well-being. This was a surprise to me,

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Goshen College President Rebecca Stoltzfus and her husband, Kevin Miller, after a lunch with the Merry Lea Team.



What's this about? See page 3.



Dr. Luke Gascho

## Director's Desk

# Winter Regeneration

by Luke A. Gascho

My childhood in northern Minnesota forever influenced my view of winter. It was not a time to be dreaded, but to be embraced. I have vivid memories of snow and cold in abundance. Within

that context, I experienced great warmth and love of family as we sat around the wood stove after a day of work on the farm and at school. The frigidness of winter didn't stop our care of the animals, the cutting of wood for the fire, riding the bus to school or the gatherings with neighbors. Winter was a time to just be—with others, with a book, with seed catalogs, with the beauty of the dormant landscape and with the warmth of home.

**“ Winter was a time to just be—with others, with a book, with seed catalogs, with the beauty of the dormant landscape...”**

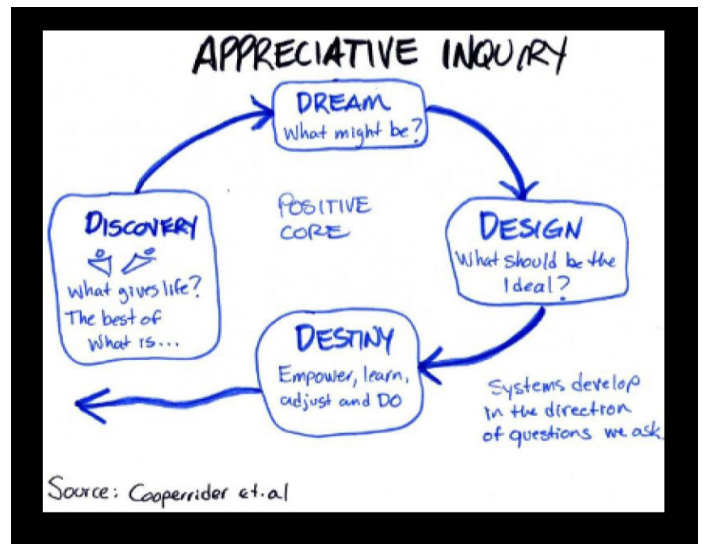
The wintery weeks that we've been experiencing in northern Indiana are reminiscent for me. I'm writing this by the wood fire in our den at home in Goshen. The temperature is well below freezing and everything outside is blanketed with a deep layer of snow. The stack of seed catalogs and good books are within easy reach. Even though many aspects of our world remain unsettled, the season of winter brings a sense of regeneration to my heart and mind.

**The winter season is a time for regeneration at Merry Lea too.** The schedules are very full for all the team members with many activities on the calendar. Included in the mix is the anticipation of—and preparation for—the fast-approaching spring and summer that will be brimming with programs for all ages. Every winter includes times when the whole team gathers for planning. Currently we are working on the next five-year strategic plan. This is time for sitting and stirring together. We are imagining the ways we can strengthen the

many facets of the work we do. In January, we spent a half-day together in a time of reflection, generation of questions and ideas—and much hearty laughter! We were energized as we saw clear directions emerging.

During the past ten days, I shared regenerative winter learning experiences with our graduate students. They are spending three weeks on Andros Island in The Bahamas, within the context of different climate patterns, ecosystems, cultural perspectives and primary schools. The students will gain insights into how environmental education principles and practices are applicable in multiple settings. They will also be rejuvenated for their final spring months in the master's program back at Merry Lea.

Regeneration happens in many ways, but winter is an amazingly beautiful way in which it occurs. Just as it happens in nature, may the winter times of sitting and stirring strengthen us all for the seasons that are ahead. Ω



The Merry Lea Team used a process known as appreciative inquiry at their strategic planning retreat January 30. The method focuses on developing strengths rather than shoring up weak areas.

### ABOUT MERRY LEA

Merry Lea was created with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy and through the generosity of Lee A. and Mary Jane Rieth. It is operated by Goshen College. The center provides a comprehensive program of environmental education and recreation.

The *Merry Leaflet*, published in spring, summer, fall and winter, provides news about programs and developments at Merry Lea. Jennifer Halteman Schrock is its editor and the author of articles without bylines. See the news tab at [www.goshen.edu/merrylea](http://www.goshen.edu/merrylea) for more news.

### TEAM MEMBERS

- Luke Gascho, Executive Director
- Kerry Goodrich, Property Supervisor
- Carol Good-Elliott, Environmental Educator
- Tom Hartzell, Coordinator of Undergraduate Programs
- Jane Litwiller, Environmental Educator
- Bill F. Minter, Director of Land Management
- John Mischler, Director of Agroecology
- Ruth Mischler, Assistant Professor, SEED
- Dave Ostergren, Director of Graduate Program
- Joel Pontius, Director of the Sustainability Leadership Semester
- Ellie Schertz, Assistant Farm Manager
- Jonathon Schramm, Associate Professor, SEED
- Jennifer Halteman Schrock, Communications Manager
- Katie Stoltzfus, Public Program Coordinator/Environmental Ed.
- Marcos Stoltzfus, Director of Environmental Education Outreach
- Maria Tice, Admin. Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator
- Jon Zirkle, Farm Manager

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Marcia McNagny, Chair
- Heather Harwood, Asst. Chair
- Jim McFarlin, Treasurer
- Colleen Banta
- Nancy Brown
- Janeen Bertsche Johnson
- Melissa Kinsey
- Kenneth Newbold, Jr.
- Fancheon Resler
- John Yordy
- Ex Officio: Jo-Ann Brant
- Luke Gascho



# EEO Plans Proud-Foot Activities for Inauguration



This indoor birder might be comparing the diverse kinds of feet on the bird mounts he's spotted in Goshen College's Recreation Fitness Center. Some are webbed, some are made for perching and some are lethal weapons. Why this assignment? Because *Stoltzfus* means *Proudfoot* in German. The other activities Merry Lea sponsored had a foot theme as well.

Fun fact: 50% of Merry Lea's core EEO Team is also named *Stoltzfus*.

Merry Lea's Environmental Outreach Team (EEO) rose to new heights of creativity and daring on February 17. That night, they provided environmental education activities for the *Stoltzfest*—a celebration preceding Rebecca *Stoltzfus*' inauguration.

Visitors were provided with binoculars and invited to do some indoor birding in Goshen College's Recreation Fitness Center. A great-horned owl scrutinized the proceedings from a perch on the rafters. A regal sandhill crane presided over the west exit of the building. A grebe's wings clipped the edge of the running track. If you fudge and count taxidermy, many beginning birders added six species to their life lists while attending the *Stoltzfest*.

Marcos *Stoltzfus*, director of the EEO, added a first to his life list as well: operating a lift 15 or 20 feet in the air in order to affix bird mounts to the lofty ceiling. Ω

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## Merry Lea Welcomes New GC President

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and reinforced the importance of our mission and outreach.”

“What she said was so relevant to Merry Lea,” added Fancheon Resler, a board member from Albion, Ind.

Jonathon Schramm, an associate professor in the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department, found support for his teaching. “I am glad to hear her articulating a desire to strengthen rigorous academics with even more rootedness in the Goshen community. I try to do a lot of community engagement in my sustainability courses, so it was exciting to me to hear her commitment to this,” he said.

### 4. Rebecca's background in research and the sciences gives her insight into Merry Lea's work.

When she visited with us over lunch, we reflected together on the ways the field of sustainability intersects with her field of nutrition. Rebecca is also interested in the activities occurring in the Institute for Ecological Regeneration (IER) — the research arm of Merry Lea.

“She has already made suggestions for grants and research that IER can pursue. She believes that research should be part of enhancing undergraduate learning experiences,” said Luke Gascho, executive director.

### 5. Rebecca brings new eyes to the resources Merry Lea provides to Goshen College.

Marcos observed that Merry Lea may be a bit like the underutilized corridor in the Union Building that was recently slated to receive a facelift. “What perspective might she bring that sparks the campus to say, “Wow, we have these 1200 acres down there! It could transform the way we all look at things.”

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Maria Tice, volunteer coordinator, thinks the collaboration between Merry Lea and Goshen College will become stronger, with Merry Lea emerging as a new Goshen College distinctive.

“She has reached out to us and is paying attention to the fact that we are part of Goshen College,” she said. Rebecca is asking questions that direct

others' attention to what Merry Lea has to offer.

### 6. We see her as inclusive.

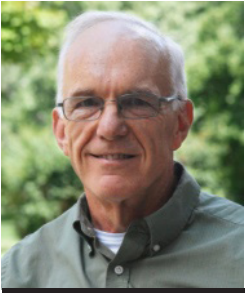
Environmental Educator Jane Litwiller wants to work in a place where everyone is welcome.

“I'm hopeful that Rebecca will create positive culture change on campus, especially in terms of diversity and inclusion. I think she can help us evaluate our identity and understand who we are and what that means,” see said.

“I look forward to all-staff meetings because they give me a chance to watch a woman in leadership,” said Jennifer Schrock, communications manager. “Because she is a woman my age, I find it easy to identify with her and cheer on her successes.”

### 7. She seems to like us!

Rebecca has been to Merry Lea three times since she was named candidate of choice last summer. She admits she'd like to come again for a get-away retreat. We'll be delighted to host her. Ω



Luke



Carol



Kerry



Tom



Jane



Bill

# What We Love About Winter

*Many people complain about the biting chill and the darkness of winter. They dread November and are not content until the temperature climbs into the 70s in May. We at Merry Lea are not those people. If you are, may this collection of what moves us about the Midwest's least popular season carry you through until the trillium bloom.*

## Luke Gascho

**Executive Director**

Winter is a time to let things sit and stir. Winter is like a good cup of tea that steeps for just the right amount of time, yielding a pleasing aroma and an invigorating bouquet of flavors.

## Carol Good-Elliott

**Environmental Educator**

Because there is so much less sunlight in the winter months, I appreciate light and how it changes the appearance of things. Sometimes when I'm near a woods in the shadow of a cloud, the sunlight will shine on the woods making it look like the woods are glowing from the inside out. The contrast in light and dark and the depth it brings out in the forest amaze me.

## Kerry Goodrich

**Property Supervisor**

I like to watch the eagles heading north at the end of winter. There seems to be a flight path over the Goodrich property on the west side of Merry Lea. I see four to six come through every year in March. Last year, a pair stayed around the Learning Center for about a week.

## Tom Hartzell

**Residential Undergraduate Programs**

A blanket of white snow covering everything reminds me of a blank canvas. The possibilities that presents are energizing to me: the possible ways of exploring and experiencing nature, the possible discoveries that lie hidden and dormant, the possible renewal of life and color when spring returns.

## Jane Litwiller

**Environmental Educator**

I like the way freezing temperatures allow us access to places we couldn't walk otherwise. It's fun to hike across Onion Bottom or through the swamp by the trail shelter when it's frozen. And of course walking on ice provides the thrill of uncertainty. Is the ice cracking? Is it squishy?

## Bill Minter

**Director of Land Management**

As I am coming out of the field, I like seeing shadows lengthening over the landscape as the sun is approaching the southwest horizon.

## John Mischler

**Director of the Agroecology Summer Intensive**

I like ice. Ice on the lakes, ice on my beard, and icicles hanging down off of trees and roofs. Ice is a challenge we are always thinking about on the farm. Ice in hoses, ice in water tanks, ice on the ground as we are doing chores... I have always loved the first solid freezing of the year. Get out the tank heaters! Drain the hoses! Pull up the irrigation! Ice brings a flurry of activity.

## Ruth Mischler

**Assistant Professor in SEED**

I love how in winter the barn becomes a gathering place for the animals. I love seeing the goats nestle in beds of straw, laying down together for warmth, or the pigs huddled together in a steamy pile, and the cattle with their long, shaggy coats unfazed by the bitter cold.



Jonathon



Jennifer



Katie



Marcos



Maria



Jon





**Dave Ostergren**  
**Director of Graduate Program in Environmental Education**

My favorite winter feeling is a pre-dawn walk while it's snowing big flakes. When I stop and listen, I hear the snowflakes fall, lightly touching the trees and other sleeping plants. It seems as if all sound, all of the outside world, is muted and silenced for me to enjoy the peaceful, quiet snow.

**Joel Pontius**  
**Director of Sustainability Leadership Semester and Assistant Professor**

One of my favorite things about winter is being able to see the landscape's form. The land says so much in its rises and falls, and this subtlety is hidden much of the year. I also love exploring off trail in winter. It helps me put together larger patterns of animal and plant movement that are based on the shape of the land. I also love the frigid, moving air. It makes me feel alive!

**Ellie Schertz**  
**Assistant Farm Manager**

When I'm working in the greenhouse, it's fascinating to me to see the sun's power to warm things up. On a sunny

day, the greenhouse is in the upper 70s even if it is 19 degrees outside. On a cloudy day, it would be in the 40s. Whether it is cloudy or clear affects the greenhouse temperature much more than the temperature outside does.

**Jonathon Schramm**  
**Associate Professor in SEED**

Every winter I find myself marveling again at the beauty of bare trees. I love laying in the snow under the canopy of limbs and seeing the whole architecture of the tree: their graceful structures, idiosyncratic bark and gentle movements in the breeze.

**Jennifer Schrock**  
**Communications Manager & Mennonite Creation Care Network**

When I go out on a winter walk, I often hear the drumming of woodpeckers echoing through the woods. I enjoy their cheerful presence at our feeders as well.

**Katie Stoltzfus**  
**Environmental Educator and Public Program Coordinator**

I love showing children animal tracks. One day during a home school program,

we spent a whole hour just looking at tracks along the lane.

**Marcos Stoltzfus**  
**Director of Environmental Education Outreach**

I like the visual reminder of animal activity that snow provides. Lately on winter walks, I've seen fox tracks with a bright spot of blood between the pads. I've seen the imprints of birds' wings, the trail of a mouse going from one tunnel to the next and holes in the snow where a squirrel raided a cache.

**Maria Tice**  
**Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant**

I enjoy seeing shadows falling on the snow. Often they're blue; sometimes they are so deep they're almost purple. I enjoy looking out over the landscape and seeing the way the shadows highlight the contours of the land.

**Jon Zirkle**  
**Sustainable Food Systems Educator and Farm Manager**

I love the way hoarfrost highlights the low spots around Rieth Village. Many mornings, a half-inch of crystals cover the grass. Ω



**Beat that, Bahamas!**

Marcos Stoltzfus, Carol Good-Elliott and Maria Tice bask in the winter sun.



## Winter Nature:

# How to Identify Trees without Leaves



Bill Minter points out red twig dogwood during a winter tree hike. The shrub is common in wet areas.

Recognizing trees even in winter when their leaves are gone is part of feeling connected to your place. At least that's how things look to Katie Stoltzfus, Merry Lea's coordinator of public programs. She also enjoys teasing out the signs of life that a winter tree holds.

"It doesn't look like there's a lot of life out there, but if you look closely, the buds on the trees remind you that new life will come again," Katie says.

Bill Minter, Merry Lea's land manager and a certified forester, has a more practical reason for identifying trees in winter. "Winter tree ID is important for me to know when I am determining which species of trees to remove and retain in my oak woodland restoration projects," he explains. On January 30, Bill shared his knowledge of the topic during a public program that served a mix of Merry Lea volunteers and community members.

"Tree identification is like medicine; it's diagnostic," Bill says. He led the group through a series of questions that help rule out lookalikes and lead to the right identity. Here are two places to begin:

### 1. What habitat does the tree occupy?

The chart below shows tree species in the same family that can be difficult to tell apart without their distinctive leaves. However, they occupy different ecological niches and prefer different levels of light and moisture. If the oak you are trying to identify is on the edge of a swamp, it's not a black oak. Some species such as the red maple and white elm can tolerate wet and dry extremes but are outcompeted on more hospitable soils.

### 2. Does the twig structure show alternate or opposite branching?

In the Midwest, the MADHORSE addage will take you far. Most trees have alternate branching, but the twigs of **maple**, **ash**, **dogwood** and the **horse** chestnuts and buckeyes are opposite each other. The leaves of the catalpa tree grow in whorls with more than two leaf scars opposite each other. The shape and size of the leaf scars on a twig can provide clues to its identity as well.

The group also hiked to Thomas Woods to see some distinctive species firsthand. Bill pointed out the chocolate brown bark of a black walnut tree and slit open one of its twigs to reveal the chambered pith in the center. He also used his axe to chip off a bit of bark from a northern red oak. Inside is a salmon color, whereas a black oak has yellower wood.

Later, the group found a tree with chunky twigs and bark that looked like burnt potato chips. These are characteristics of a Kentucky coffee tree—named for a beverage Indigenous Peoples made from the seeds.

Keying out a tree is a detail-oriented process that wouldn't appeal to everyone. But for those who enjoy detective work, it is a rewarding way to spend a winter afternoon.

## Tree Ecology

	Dry		Increasing Soil Moisture >>>		Wet	
	Bigtooth Aspen		Quaking Aspen		Cottonwood	
	Black Oak	White Oak	Northern Red Oak	Chinkapin Oak	Burr Oak	Swamp White Oak
	Shagbark/Pignut Hickory		Bitternut Hickory		Shellbark Hickory	
		White Ash			Green Ash	Black Ash
	White Elm		Red Elm		White Elm	
	Red Maple		Sugar Maple		Silver Maple/Red Maple	
	Oak Hickory Forest Cover Type		Northern Hardwoods Forest Cover Type		Lowland Hardwoods Forest Cover Type	

<<< Increasing Shade



## Recommended:

### Trees of Northern Indiana by May and Tom Watts

Available in Merry Lea's bookstore

This 4 x 6" booklet will fit in your pocket and is inexpensive enough to buy every year if you're hard on it. The guide leads you step-by-step through the details you'll need to notice to correctly identify Indiana trees.

### Native Trees of the Midwest By Sally Weeks and Harmon Weeks

This is a comprehensive guide that includes photos of leaves, bark, buds, flowers and fruit. It covers both native and invasive species, with tips on landscaping uses and the ways wildlife use trees. The authors have also published a book on shrubs and vines. Ω



Julie Davidson and Barry Dupen of Columbia City, scrutinize the leaf scars on a twig to determine the species it came from. Both are Merry Lea volunteers.

## Sustainability Summit: Merry Lea's Leadership Training Finds Regional Audience

Leadership training is a routine part of Merry Lea's undergraduate and graduate programs, but this year, it reached students as far away as central Michigan, Illinois and Eastern Ohio. The theme of the annual Sustainability Summit for undergraduates was strength-based leadership. About 20 students from eight different schools participated.

The weekend when students arrive is one of the most rewarding parts of Tom Hartzell's job. As the coordinator of undergraduate programs, he plans this event and revels in the chance to prepare experiences that may have lasting effects on people.

**Set up for success:** "I think it is important to work on leadership development with college students. They are figuring out who they are, and I want to help set them up for success," Tom says.

This year, he greeted each student with a nametag listing the top strengths indicated when she or he took the CliftonStrengths assessment in preparation for the weekend. Studies of top leaders in many fields show that while no single set of strengths describes all leaders, self-knowledge and the freedom to work out of one's own strengths is a recipe for success.

**Swapping ideas:** In addition to the input Merry Lea provides, participants gain a valuable opportunity to talk shop with students from other colleges. Most come as representatives of a sustainability club. When they return home, they often try out each other's ideas.

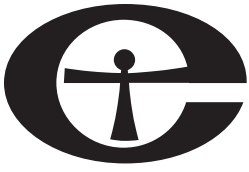
As always, the Summit included opportunities to learn hands-on skills. Participants chose between baking bread and making soap using milk from Merry Lea's goats.

"I took great pleasure in sending each student home with a half pint jar of my sourdough barm," recalled Jonathon

Schramm, who taught the baking session. Barm is a form of home-grown leaven. Ω



Rheannon Starr of Goshen College (center) and Madison Proctor of Hiram College (right) work together to pour soap into molds during a hands-on activity at the Summit. Rheannon's discipline is on display as she carefully pours the soap, and Madison's positivity is evident from her bright smile.



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Environmental Learning Center  
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1700 South Main St.  
Goshen, IN 46526

Non-profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit 71  
Goshen, IN 46526

“ Where Earth and People Meet ”

## 2018 Friends Dinner: Merry Lea on Andros Island

Meet at the Farmstead Barn  
Saturday, April 7, 2018  
4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The annual Friends Dinner includes a hike, conversation, good food and an after-dinner presentation about Merry Lea's programs.

This year's presentation will follow Merry Lea's master's students to Andros Island in the Bahamas where they take a course on international environmental education and teach in local schools.

To join the hike, meet at 4:30 p.m. at the Farmstead Barn. Dinner will be served in the same location at 6 p.m. The dinner is free to Friends of Merry Lea; \$15 per person for others.

### Also coming up:

Family Frog Hike, 4/3/18  
Family Vernal Pond Discoveries, 4/5/18  
NatureFest, 5/18 to 19

Details at [www.goshen.edu/merrylea](http://www.goshen.edu/merrylea).



Carina Zehr, a 2017 - 2018 student in Merry Lea's Master's in Environmental Education (MAEE) program shares a book with children on Andros Island in The Bahamas. The MAEE students work closely with Bahamian teachers in local schools. The international course gives students a chance to experience teaching in a different cultural context and to witness the effects of climate change on an island ecosystem.