

Summer 2014



The Merry Leaflet

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College

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A Day in the Life of Merry Lea

This is the first of two Merry Leaflets that will give each of our staff members the opportunity to tell about their workdays. Six staff members are featured in this issue. The remainder will be covered in the fall or winter.

Maria Tice Administrative Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator

What's happening at Merry Lea? Is summer a slow time of the year? I am often asked these questions, and while they seem straightforward, the answers are not. Many things are happening at Merry Lea; some days it feels like everything is happening at once.

I do not have a typical workday. Consider Thursday, August 7th. I arrived at Merry Lea knowing that I would wear my figurative hostess hat. Preparing petty cash records, typing meeting minutes, ordering bookstore supplies, planning volunteer training sessions and the like would have to wait until later. Goshen College admissions staff told us to expect a prospective student and a parent considering our Master's in Environmental Education program. Normally, this student would meet with the director of the program, Dr. David Ostergren, but as Dave was out of the country, I would help the college junior connect with two professors in the MAEE program.

When a vehicle pulled into the parking lot a little after ten, I was surprised to see two elementary-aged cousins accompanying the prospective

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Tom Hartzell and Lisa Zinn spent a day this summer checking out the Wawasee Watershed.

Tom Hartzell, Coordinator of Residential Undergraduate Programs **Dr. Lisa Zinn, Director of the Sustainability Semester**

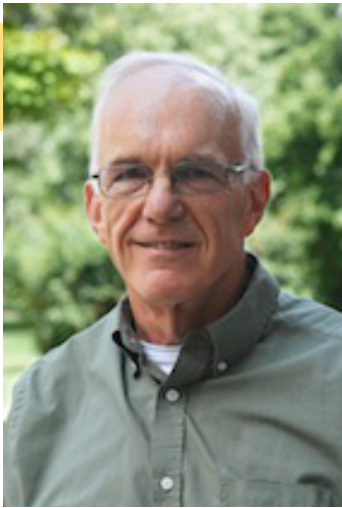
A number of my workdays each year are spent canoeing. I lead the canoe trip for undergraduates in the Sustainability Leadership Semester (SLS). I also need to scout the route to make sure it is passable and to find suitable stopping places.

Students in the SLS canoe from Ligonier, Ind., to Benton Harbor, Mich., in order to gain a hands-on understanding of a watershed. When they are not paddling or camping, they meet with a variety of stakeholders along the way: residents as well as representatives of businesses and non-profits. This year's eight-day trip ran from September 5 to 12 and included 17 unique visits, which I also organize.

The photo above was taken one day this summer when Lisa Zinn and I took a canoe trip through the chain of ten lakes that flow into Lake Wawasee. We were considering adding this paddle to the SLS canoe trip because it begins in Knapp Lake, which is not far from the northwest corner of the Merry Lea property.

The Wawasee Area Conservation Foundation (WACF) leads this trip along Turkey Creek and through numerous small lakes every Friday morning during the summer. The trip begins with an oral history of Lake Wawasee and a visit to one of the wetlands that feeds into the lake. WACF's goals are at least twofold: to show people the beauty

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Dr. Luke Gascho

Director's Desk Energized by Variability

by Luke Gascho

Forty years ago I began my profession in educational leadership. Little did I know in 1974 that my journey would continue in this same career path for four decades! It feels like a long and short amount of time simultaneously. I realize more clearly now than ever that this vocation has truly been a calling. My heart is filled with gratitude for the journey—and especially for the fact that the last 17 years have been at Merry Lea.

When I reflect on this greater context, I understand why it is difficult to describe a typical day for me. In reality, the variation that I experience is why I enjoy administrative work. Sometimes I wish for a bit more regularity in my schedule, but I also know that if it were too consistent, I would become restless. So my consistency is variability.

Periodically, students ask me what it means to be an executive director. At times I've sensed by the way the question is asked that they have a hard time imagining what would keep me busy all day. Other people think of me as a "lover of meetings" since

meetings often consume major parts of my days. Meetings are a major part of my work. I find them valuable as they represent the importance of relationships, sharing of ideas, planning, collaboration, and decision-making. Yet another set of folks like to imagine that all I have to do is wander the trails of Merry Lea, since after all, access to the trails is right outside my office.

I am writing this on a non-typical day, which helps me to have time to write this article. It is a day when I happen to have no meetings. As I do a 360° swivel with my office chair, I see representations of most of my ongoing tasks. Today—as an organizational process—I have laid out sets of folders on my desk and floor that contain projects that are elements of what I do:

- 1) Merry Lea team meetings,
- 2) five-year strategic planning,
- 3) Merry Lea board meetings,
- 4) Rieth Foundation meetings,
- 5) interactions with Goshen College departments,
- 6) speaking on creation care
- 7) the leadership course in the master's program,
- 8) communication with donors,
- 9) recruitment of students,
- 10) maintaining our IT network,
- 11) financial management of Merry Lea programs,
- 12) reaccreditation processes for the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department,
- 13) building projects,
- 14) professional organizations and

15) designing job descriptions. It is a quiet yet full day for me!

Finally, I have two windows—one that gives me a view of the entrance to the Learning Center building, and another that faces trees that line the edge of the property. The combination of the views illustrates the Merry Lea tagline, "Where Earth and People Meet." The mission of Merry Lea energizes and guides my approach to each task. What a privilege to have such an inspiring job in educational leadership! Ω

Hartzell and Zinn, *continued from page 1*

of the surrounding landscape and water bodies and to highlight the importance of the conservation work they do, which is funded primarily through private donations.

In the end, we decided not to include Wawasee, mainly because the SLS faculty wanted to maintain a continuous downstream journey; water from Merry Lea never passes through Wawasee. All the same, it was a good way to learn more about one of the many community organizations I interact with in my role as coordinator of undergraduate programs. Ω

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.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Janie Beck Kreider, Associate Coordinator of Public Pr.
Luke A. Gascho, Executive Director
Kerry Goodrich, Property Supervisor
Carol Good-Elliott, Environmental Science Educator
Tom Hartzell, Coordinator of Undergraduate Programs
Dale Hess, Director of Collegiate Programs
Jane Litwiller, Environmental Educator/Maintenance

Lisa Myers, Interim Pre-K to 12 Environmental Ed Coordinator
Dave Ostergren, Director of Graduate Programs
Jonathon Schramm, Assistant Professor, SEED
Jennifer Halteman Schrock, Coordinator of Public Programs
Maria Tice, Admin. Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator
Lisa Zinn, Assistant Professor, SEED
Jon Zirkle, Farm Manager

MERRY LEA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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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. Look online at www.goshen.edu/merrylea/latest for more news.

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Carol Good-Elliott Environmental Educator

“Really? You want me to write about a typical day in my work at Merry Lea? What’s that?”

This was my response when I was asked to write this article. There are so many different things I do at Merry Lea and they vary throughout the year. Each day has a different mixture of these things in addition to the other odd, random occurrences. Here are a few examples of things that you might find me doing:

One of my main tasks is working with teachers to schedule their field trips with Merry Lea. This often involves everything from setting a date to changing dates when the school calendar changes to sending out confirmation forms at the start of each programming season. I also work with Maria Tice, our volunteer coordinator, and with the faculty of the MAEE program to schedule staff, graduate students and volunteers to teach each program.

A favorite part of my job is helping to teach our school programs. One day I might be overseeing a Farmcraft program with first graders: giving an introduction, signaling when it’s time to switch learning stations, starting a fire for a hot dog roast, emptying apple mash from the cider press, driving the tractor for the straw ride, singing songs, doing a puppet show.

The next day I could be working with high school environmental science students as they canoe High Lake gathering samples for a water quality program. I might be taking preschoolers for a walk in the woods looking, listening, touching and smelling whatever we find.

Or perhaps I’ll be in a public middle school classroom for two school days helping seventh graders remember that it’s okay to be excited about the tiny animals living in the leaf litter from the woods next to their school.

Each day can also include several of the following things as well:



With Carol Good-Elliott's help, a two-year-old learns that flowers are easier to smell if you squirt them. The two met when a preschool group from Community Action of Northeast Indiana Headstart attended an Exploring Nature program at Merry Lea.

- Talking with drop-in visitors,
- Helping to train volunteers,
- Creating calendars, singing, and making food for volunteer thank-you events,
- Mentoring graduate students as they learn about teaching school groups here,
- Taking videos of grad students teaching so they can observe and evaluate their own teaching techniques,
- Communicating the school program schedule to Merry Lea’s staff and coordinating equipment, building and vehicle use related to the programs,
- Sampling the organisms in a temporary wetland,
- Tilling, planting and weeding a vegetable garden,
- Arranging pickup of hay, straw, ear corn and feed for Farmcraft programs,
- Buying and transporting piglets
- Destroying a yellow jacket nest and medicating goats that were stung,
- Chopping wood for hotdog roasts,
- Taking photos of programs in action,
- Mending equipment used during school programs,
- Sweeping floors and scrubbing bathrooms after programs,
- Sweeping up bat guano from programming spaces,
- Calling teachers as I commute to Merry Lea on a stormy morning to see if they’re still planning to come for that day’s program.

Needless to say, environmental education requires a great deal of hands-on work behind the scenes. Ω

Volunteers:

Would you be willing to write about a day you experienced as a volunteer at Merry Lea?

If so, contact jenniferhs@goshen.edu. Stories can be any length from a paragraph up to 450 words.

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Managing the bookstore is another of Maria's tasks. Merry Lea's bookstore supplies visiting teachers with quality children's books related to nature. Maria manages several offsite sales as well.

Maria Tice, continued from p. 1

student and his mother. They looked around at the various Learning Center displays and were drawn to the touch table covered with furry animal pelts.

I led the group to the graduate classroom where Dr. Jonathon Schramm was teaching Principles of Environmental Education. We sat in on the lecture for a few minutes until Jonathon could visit with the prospective student. This timing was fortunate, as I was needed to assist a community member who dropped by to check out lake monitoring equipment.

I rejoined the group, conscious that the morning was quickly passing. We had yet to visit with the second professor, Dr. Lisa Zinn, who was working in the field. Lisa was conducting bird banding that morning as part of the nation-wide research program, Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS). It was an opportunity to showcase Goshen College field research in action and a rare chance to be in close proximity to wild songbirds.

The walk to the data collection table was warm but pleasant. We were rewarded with the discovery of a

juvenile indigo bunting tangled in the black mist net. Lisa expertly extracted the bird. Once back at the data collection table, she provided a quick introduction to the process of bird banding, and the team of students and volunteers recorded the pertinent data. Then, Lisa offered our prospective student a one-of-a-kind live animal encounter: gently, she handed him the juvenile indigo bunting, and he released the bird into the woods. We thanked Lisa and her team for the demonstration and hiked back toward the vehicles. The prospective student and his family prepared to leave, and I said my goodbyes knowing that we had offered them a memorable visit to Merry Lea!

After eating lunch, my day passed quickly with more mundane responsibilities—collecting the mail from the post office, receiving a UPS delivery and answering emails about Merry Lea's homeschool programs. While I am never quite sure what the day will bring, I appreciate the variety of experiences and the challenges of working at Merry Lea. Ω

Jennifer Schrock

Coordinator of Public Programs
Assistant Professor in SEED

As coordinator of public programs at Merry Lea, I organize a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course every August. I am looking forward to this year's two-day program because it will be a nice break from all the writing and editing I have done in the past year.

WFA is an easy program for me. Since we contract with SOLO Wilderness, an organization with qualified instructors and the capacity to grant certification, most things can be left in SOLO's capable hands. My main task today will be to provide lunch and keep the coffee flowing.

Our tables look full when I stand up to introduce the program. In addition to our graduate students who are required to take Wilderness First Aid, several staff members from local camps have joined us. A backpacker who wants to take his grandkids with him, a future emergency medical technician and an adventurer coming from Europe and heading to Oregon round out the group.

We have a new instructor this year who quickly makes you feel that if you are lying under a fallen tree, he's your man. Allen takes his work very seriously. No one in his anecdotes just gets diarrhea in the woods; they break both femurs, fall off of mountains, bleed like animal sacrifices and are attacked by cougars. If that isn't bad enough, death by exposure stalks every patient until the hospital doors click shut behind him or her. I begin to wonder how I survived over forty years of camping trips without ever earning WFA certification.

While I'm slicing tomatoes from the agroecology gardens, I learn about the perilous slide from dehydration to heat exhaustion to heat stroke. After serving lunch, I tune in on a review of potential bites and stings and who is most likely to die from them. Allen tells us that the bite of a black widow spider requires a race to civilization, but the slow rot caused by the

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venom of a brown recluse spider is the greater of the two evils.

After the lunch dishes are washed, I dash up to my office to participate in a conference call with Luke Gascho, our executive director, Dale Hess, director of our Agroecology Summer Intensive and Greg Bowman, a sustainable food enthusiast from Salem, Ohio. We are in the early stages of planning a Sustainable Food and Faith Conference. This is a new public program for Merry Lea, but it has occurred other years at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Laurelville, Pa.

We ruminate about the focus of the conference. What would make this event unique when there are many other sustainable food gatherings? Certainly the faith-based angle is part of it. Luke builds on one of Greg's ideas: What if we brought together sustainable farmers and conventional farmers and worked at the rather frayed relationships between these groups? How should the Church talk about these kinds of divisions?

That sounds plenty challenging for a first try. Maybe I better make sure I am on the food crew! We end the call, knowing we have a lot more thinking to do.

When I return to the Farmstead, the place looks like a cross between a zombie conference and a Halloween house of horrors. Our WFA students are suffering from broken legs, broken arms and head injuries. They've been bandaged with whatever materials are available on a backpacking trip, which adds to the bizarre effect.

I retreat to a back room to think about a session I have with the Sustainability Leadership undergraduates who have arrived just this week. Since my course, Faith, Ethics and Ecojustice, falls later in the semester, I have just a few opportunities to get key ideas percolating early on. I imagine various ways to cram watershed discipleship, Psalm 104, definitions and examples of environmental injustice and a quick review of ethical theories into an hour.



Ming Charoenmuang, left, bandages Corinne Grossmeier's wrist injury (right) during Merry Lea's annual Wilderness First Aid course. Both are students in the Master's in Environmental Education program.

WFA is wrapping up with an outdoor disaster rotation as participants take turns being patients for each other. Here, a man slumps against the side of the barn; there, a woman clutches her bench, wheezing. Other people have collapsed in the grass. It is up to their classmates to determine whether they have asthma, diabetes, angina or merely a bad case of poison ivy.

Despite the misery all around me, I can't help noticing that great blue lobelia and swamp rose mallow are blooming at the edge of the wetland. The latter is a shell pink flower almost the size of an open hand. It has the same elongated pistil and stamens as its cousin, the hibiscus we grow in our gardens. With that moment of delight inside me, I head home.

That night, our property is attacked by a band of juveniles armed with toilet paper—an emergency not covered in the Wilderness First Aid Course. Fortunately, the mauraders announce their mischief by ringing the doorbell at 10 p.m. I race to dismantle their elegant TP job before a storm moves in and turns it into muck.

"I wonder if any brown recluse spiders are clinging to this toilet paper," I say to myself as I unfurl strips from our cherry tree. It seems unlikely, as these rare spiders prefer drier spots like woodpiles, but I can't get them out of my mind. I seem to have brought my work home with me.

Lightning dances along the horizon and thunder rumbles. Should I count the seconds between them? I weigh the odds of a lightning strike versus the inconvenience of a messy yard and quicken my pace, taking care not to sprain my ankle. Climbing a ladder in the dark seems inadvisable after today's class, so some streamers remain out of reach. I make it back inside safely, with enough toilet paper for a month of backpacking. It has been an interesting day. Ω



Jennifer Schrock

“A Day in the Life of Paul Steury” Has Moved



Merry Lea’s staff and volunteers said goodbye to Paul Steury at a gathering at the Farmstead Barn in late July. Songs, hugs and a scrapbook were part of the festivities. Above, Paul says goodbye to Lisa Zinn. Paul and Lisa worked together as graduate faculty and on the Pre-K to 12 environmental education team.

In July, fortune shifted and what seemed like a permanent fixture at Merry Lea was suddenly...elsewhere. Paul Steury—Pre-K to 12 coordinator, MAEE professor, wild edibles fan, indefatigable networker and nature pied piper—is now a seventh grade science teacher in Goshen, Ind. Merry Lea’s loss is Goshen Middle School’s gain.

Part of what made the shift appealing to Paul was the new challenge of working with the same youth over the course of a year. His own children will be among them: Paul’s son, Dylan, is in one of his classes right now. Paul also says that he won’t miss the 45-minute commute now that he has a job a mile from his house.

On a more philosophical level, Paul has had a long-term commitment to public school education. Paul was heavily involved in the parent group at Chandler Elementary—his sons’ primary school. He worked to bring a community garden and more nature-friendly play areas to the Chandler children and pushed administrators to understand the value of hands-on outdoor education.

On the job at Merry Lea, Paul met with school superintendents and political figures on issues related to public education. He championed the The No Child Left Inside legislation wherever possible and facilitated an electronic interview with Richard Louv during a volunteer training. (Louv is the author who coined the term, “nature deficit disorder.”) Paul sees his new role in a public school as a chance to ground his vision for education in the day-to-day life of a teacher.

Paul’s wife, Michelle, reports that the teaching life offers benefits to family life, too. “Right now, Paul gets his outdoor fix by spending Sundays with us at the beach at Lake Michigan,” she reports.

Paul worked at Merry Lea for 14 years. His positive spirit, creative insights, ability to connect with nearly anybody and many other gifts are missed by all. Ω

Merry Lea Graduate Student Gets a Great Job



Lisa Myers

In June 2014, Lisa Myers packed up her belongings and said her goodbyes after earning her master’s in environmental education at Merry Lea. Little did she know she’d be moving back into the Farmhouse in a few months.

Lisa has a ten-month interim position covering many of the Pre-K to 12 responsibilities that Paul Steury had handled. She will oversee the Enchanted Forest and El Bosque programs, work with the graduate students’ teaching practicum and teach Bio 340—the undergraduate May term course on outdoor learning for Goshen College’s education majors.

Before coming to Merry Lea, Lisa had a 26-year career with the National Park Service, working in five different parks. She has crisscrossed the country from Joshua Tree National Park to the Great Smoky Mountains; from the Sleeping Bear Dunes to Yosemite. Lisa’s gifts also include a charming Boston accent and a flair for storytelling. Ω

Merry Lea Offers Outdoor Refuge for Goshen College

For the past four years, Merry Lea has been the site of the annual Goshen College All Employee Retreat. While serving as hosts for their parent institution makes the day somewhat less of a retreat for Merry Lea's staff members, the gratitude of other Goshen employees tends to even the scales.

"Coming out here just renews my spirit every time," observed Spanish Professor Dean Rhodes. His comment was one of many similar ones staff received.

The 2014 retreat, held August 15, followed a tough year of budget cuts and downsizing at Goshen College. Because of this, the retreat was carefully planned as a time for healing and going forward in hope. Merry Lea's staff members contributed by leading groups to various ecosystems and offering brief reflections on three questions:

- What is unique about this site?
- What kind of change has this site encountered over the years?

- What does restoration mean for this particular site?

Small group discussion and reflection time followed.

The afternoon was more relaxed with a choice of activities. Merry Lea's staff led hikes and provided canoeing.

Other leaders offered yoga, lawn games and a first aid demonstration.

"The positive spirit we observed during the day at Merry Lea continued at faculty meetings the following week," observed Luke Gascho who helped plan the retreat. Ω



Goshen College staff and faculty relax on the Farmhouse Lawn during lunch. Retired faculty joined the group at supper for Puerto Rican food from Rolling Scones, a Goshen restaurant.



Lisa Zinn and Jon Zirkle of Merry Lea distribute "scat scarves" to Goshen College employees. The gift featured the tracks and scat of animals native to Indiana.



During one reflection period, retreat attendees were asked to find a natural object that expressed their sorrow from the past or hope for the new year. The bottle contains water from the Kesling Wetland. The sand dollar (from an Oregon beach) complemented a story told during the retreat.



Merry Lea
Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

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“Where Earth and People Meet”

Upcoming Public Programs at Merry Lea

Field Day for Youth to Explore Sustainable Agriculture **Sat., October 11, 8 to 3:30 p.m.**

This field trip for youth ages 13 to 20 includes visits to the Goshen Farmers' Market, Goshen College community gardens, the Merry Lea Sustainable Farm and a few other small farms. The event is free and includes refreshments, lunch and bus transportation. Email jjirkle@goshen.edu to sign up.

Enchanted Forest **Fri., October 24 & Sat., the 25th** **7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

Our annual Halloween alternative is geared especially for children in grades K through 3, but people of all ages enjoy it. Take a night hike by lantern light and meet talking animals who will tell you about their habits, favorite foods and fears.

Cost: \$2.50 per person

Also: Watch our website for natural history hikes, offered 3:30 to 5 p.m. on selected Mondays and Thursdays in September and October. You'll hike with Merry Lea's graduate students and a staff member.

What Happened to the Autumn Hope Conference? What About the Nature Photography Workshop?

Last year during a review following the Autumn Hope Conference, Merry Lea's staff determined that this weekend event needed to be reshaped for a more specific audience. The fact that the Sustainability Leadership Semester occupies Rieth Village during the fall also makes it difficult to host weekend events during this season. Hence, we will no longer offer the Autumn Hope Conference.

Instead, winter or spring public programs will include one or more events for people interested in working at creation care within their congregations.

Any programs at Merry Lea related to nature and the arts will also be held in the spring. If you would like to attend a nature photography workshop, email mlevents@goshen.edu and we will keep your interest in mind. Ω