



# The Merry Leaflet

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College

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## Staff networking:

# Merry Lea Cross-Pollinates With Other Groups

*Merry Lea employees participate in a variety of professional organizations and conferences to keep current. This is also a way to share the programs available at Merry Lea with a broader audience. In this issue, faculty report on their travels. We begin with the most exciting news: our master's in environmental education will now include an intercultural experience outside of the U.S.*

## The Bahamas

### Andros Conservancy and Trust

By Dave Ostergren  
Director of Graduate Programs

Merry Lea and the Bahamas? Those two places seem so distant that I never saw any connection between them until Luke Gascho started talking about a unique opportunity. Colleagues invited Luke and me on a trip to Andros Island to explore environmental education opportunities.

When most people think of the Bahamas, they picture Nassau—the capital city on Providence Island, famous for upscale hotels and vacationing. The 8,000 people on the more modest Andros Island make a living by fishing, crabbing, a bit of diving and tourism. A few folks guide for the famously expensive sport, bonefishing. A national park that the Andros Conservancy and Trust (ANCAT) helped establish covers half of the 2,000-square-mile island.

We spent five lovely days exploring the island and considering ideas for a collaboration between Manchester University, Manchester, Ind., a Florida private high school and Peter and Gabielle Douglas from ANCAT. On

warm days, we benefitted from sunny skies and tiffany blue water for beach walking, swimming or snorkling. Two of the days were not so lovely, as a tropical storm ripped through Andros changing tide levels, dropping rain and trying to rip palm trees out by the roots. But we still had a great time talking or driving on stormy days.

What did we accomplish in the Bahamas? We concluded that Andros Island offers a host of learning opportunities for graduate students in environmental education. We can support the island's conservation efforts as well, since the 1,000-square mile national park only has one park warden.

We are developing a graduate course that will include three weeks on Andros Island each February. It is designed as an intercultural experience that combines learning about ecological systems unfamiliar to most of our students with exposure to the conservation challenges in a developing economy. For example, the intricacies of collaboration between a government, a local non-profit and an international NGO will give students much to think about.

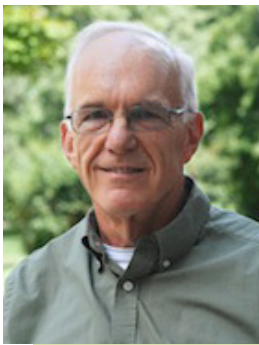
Andros Island also presents a stark view of the immediate effects of climate change. Bleaching coral reefs and flooding on historically dry roads are two powerful examples of what we are

doing to our planet by burning fossil fuels. Speaking of fossil fuels, Merry Lea plans to invest in carbon offsets and initiatives on our property that will more than equal the impact of our travel.

We anticipate taking a cohort in February 2017. We do not yet know what tasks we will undertake in the Bahamas. This will be dictated by the needs and preferences of locals, but one possibility involves collaborating with Bahamian school groups to design curriculum. Stay tuned to hear from our graduate students and see more photos of fantastic intercultural experiences. ☪



Merry Lea's Dave Ostergren visits with Steven Smith, Andros National Park Warden.



Dr. Luke Gascho

## Director's Desk.....by Dr. Luke Gascho

# Extending the Reach

## North American Association for Environmental Education

By Joel Pontius  
Director of PreK-12 Programs

In mid-October, I attended the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) Research Symposium and National Conference with Merry Lea Faculty member Lisa Zinn and Hannah Miller, an alumna of Merry Lea's master's in environmental education. The conference was held in San Diego, California, and brought together nearly 2,000 environmental educators from a wide range of both formal and informal backgrounds including PreK-12 teachers, naturalists, outdoor educators, professors, curriculum writers, researchers, and others.

At the NAAEE Research Symposium, deep thinkers and leaders in the environmental education community engaged around research pertaining to diversity and inclusion in environmental education. At the symposium, I had the opportunity to reconnect with Alan Reid, the editor of *Environmental Education Research* and professor of education at Monash University, Australia. I appreciated our enlivening conversation about spirituality as an important aspect of environmental education that should be explored by researchers. Alan seemed intrigued by the innovative programming happening at Merry Lea and the uniqueness of our place.

During the National Conference, Merry Lea exhibited at a booth in the main exhibit hall. This was an opportunity to present the high quality programs at Merry Lea to diverse environmental education professionals

Merry Lea is a marvelous place to observe the interplay between

living things and abiotic factors in ecosystems. The programs at Merry Lea are built on this concept—and the possibilities are endless. As we learn to think about complex systems, it is important not to rely on simple linear approaches to gain insights into what is going on in an ecosystem. Paying attention to the multifaceted dimensions and seeking knowledge from numerous sources strengthens our ability to do good problem solving.

Team members at Merry Lea also apply the concepts of complex systems, interactive learning and networking beyond the study of ecosystems. It also happens as we intentionally travel to professional conferences, visit other environmental education centers and interact with students and colleagues at colleges and universities. We grow and are strengthened as we engage beyond the geographic borders of Merry Lea. The people with whom we network also gain from learning about our mission and programs.

My most recent “beyond the Merry Lea borders” experience was at the National Council for Science and the Environment, an annual conference in Washington, DC. This was a gathering of 1,200 people who seek to “improve the scientific basis for environmental decision-making.” Attendees were from universities, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and

the business sector. The conference theme was “The Food-Energy-Water Nexus”—a timely and critical theme at local, regional, national and global levels.

It was impressive to experience the way the theme was addressed. Rather than just approaching the connections between food, energy and water from a scientific perspective, many sessions included people sharing insights from economic, policy and social disciplines. Some presenters approached this nexus from a regional angle, and others offered a global perspective. I found it important to weigh the issues from each of these levels in the process of looking for solutions. It was clear that linear thinking doesn't work for these kinds of problems.

I also appreciated the opportunities to share about the kind of work we do at Merry Lea. Our programs—PreK-12, undergraduate, graduate and public—frequently engage the nexus of food, energy and water. One afternoon, I was in a workshop on “Sustainability Education and the Nexus” with people from other colleges and universities. As we shared around the circle, I described our Sustainability Leadership Semester. The other participants were amazed—and a bit jealous—of our ability to offer such an interdisciplinary program. They affirmed what we are doing.

Much reciprocal learning takes place as we extend our reach beyond the borders of Merry Lea. I find it rewarding to be part of such an outstanding learning organization with my Merry Lea colleagues. We will not hide our light under a basket! 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

Luke Gascho, Executive Director  
Kerry Goodrich, Property Supervisor  
Carol Good-Elliott, Environmental Educator  
Kate Friesen, Farm Manager  
Tom Hartzell, Coordinator, Undergraduate Programs  
Jane Litwiller, Environmental Educator  
Bill F. Minter, Director of Land Management

Dave Ostergren, Director of Graduate Programs  
Joel Pontius, Director of PreK-12 Programs  
Jonathon Schramm, Assistant Professor, SEED  
Jennifer Schrock, Coordinator of Public Programs  
Maria Tice, Admin. Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator  
Doug Yoder, Building Manager  
Lisa Zinn, Assistant Professor, SEED  
Jon Zirkle, Interim Director of Agroecology

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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. See <https://www.goshen.edu/merrylea/category/recent-happening/> for more news.



and prospective graduate students. I am looking forward to introducing Merry Lea's 2016-17 master's students to the vibrant NAAEE community at next year's national conference, which will be held in Madison, Wisconsin. Ω

## Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

By Jane Litwiller  
Environmental Educator

The PreK-12 Education Team had an opportunity to attend an engaging place-based education conference earlier this fall in Grand Rapids, MI. After a very busy fall teaching school programs, the conference provided space to reconnect with why we do what we do.

Briefly, the conference was organized by the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI), which is funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. GLSI's goal is to "develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the Great Lakes through hands-on learning in the community." GLSI is composed of regional hubs around the state of Michigan with each hub trying to engage learners about issues locally relevant to those communities. Hubs exist in nine different locations around the state. Visit their websites at [www.glstewardship.org](http://www.glstewardship.org) or [www.gift.org](http://www.gift.org) for more detailed information.

Attendees seemed to be predominantly from Michigan but there were also other states represented by attendees or presenters. Having grown up in Michigan about a two-hour drive from Grand Rapids, I greatly valued learning more about initiatives within the city itself and the region. Sessions varied but included case studies from schools, green infrastructure within the city of Grand Rapids, the Grand River restoration, environmental justice in different contexts, and many more topics.

I left the conference feeling energized and ready to pursue ways in which PreK-12 programming at Merry Lea could become more place-based in approach. How can we help students and teachers who visit Merry



Hiking at the Indiana Dunes was an option during this year's meeting of the Environmental Education Association of Indiana. Left to Right: Katie Stoltzfus, MAEE student; Jane Litwiller, environmental educator; Jonathon Schramm, SEED faculty and Joel Pontius, director of PreK-12 programs.

## Environmental Education Association of Indiana

By Jonathon Schramm, SEED Faculty

The 2015 annual meeting of the Environmental Education Association of Indiana (EEAI) was held in September within the beautiful confines of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, one of our state's more surprising corners. The Indiana Dunes are the most biodiverse part of Indiana and one of the spiritual homes of the modern science of ecology. This area is also thoroughly interlaced with giant steel mills, power plants and a range of residential neighborhoods.

The proximity of Lake Michigan makes this area distinct from the rest of our otherwise landlocked state. Its uniqueness was in fact a fear for organizers of the meeting: would the teachers, naturalists and state officials who make up the bulk of the EEA membership come to this far corner of the state? Would they want to focus their attention on "Great Lakes Literacy," given that so little of the state is in the Great Lakes watershed?

The answer was a resounding YES, with attendance at or above that of a typical meeting, and the interactions at sessions and workshops remained very lively indeed. Most attendees come to this meeting to revitalize their educational practices with

new ideas and thought-provoking plenary speakers. Perhaps even more importantly, they seek the fellowship of other educators in what can often feel like a lonely profession.

Several of us on staff at Merry Lea always attend this meeting, and we bring each year's graduate students along with us. We hope that they will catch a vision for the exciting things that can happen when educators are exchanging ideas, stories and Rise n' Roll doughnuts in an open setting.

This year we didn't present work about Merry Lea in a formal setting, but we did talk a good deal with students and faculty from other colleges who are starting to build environmental education programs or at least clubs on their respective campuses. Indiana University and Purdue are two examples. In my mind, this growth of student chapters is one of the more exciting developments at EEA over the last few years. Many of these students have backgrounds in the sciences and are connecting to education simply because they are passionate about sharing their knowledge with those around them in order to change the world. Their enthusiasm is a wonderful gift to all of the EEA members, and I hope it will continue to grow in years to come. Ω

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# 2016: The Year of the Volunteer



Ryan Minter tending Merry Lea's chickens. Portable fencing enables them to graze on fresh pasture.

*We at Merry Lea deeply appreciate our many volunteers and the contributions they make to our visitors, our landscape, our facilities and our own mental health. In 2016, each issue of the Merry Leaflet will include a focus on these generous, unassuming heroes.*

**Ryan Minter**, a student at Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind., took a break from his engineering studies to volunteer at the Merry Lea Sustainable Farm from last May through November.

Merry Lea is registered as a host farm with Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, so sometimes attracts long term volunteers who live on site. Ryan enjoyed the outdoor, physical work so much he changed his major to environmental science.

One of Ryan's more dramatic accomplishments involved emergency butchering of an injured chicken. Ω

## Volunteer Opportunities at Merry Lea

by Maria Tice

### Teaching Volunteers

What makes a good teaching volunteer? A person who:

- Enjoys interacting with children
- Exhibits enthusiasm for learning
- Feels relaxed guiding groups on nature trails
- Demonstrates flexibility

Are you drawn to the art of teaching? Merry Lea has an urgent need for more teaching volunteers! Volunteers will assist Merry Lea's staff to teach interactive, educational programs for visiting school groups. Spring programs include:

- Exploring Nature (interaction of living things)
- Wonderful Wetlands (wetland life & functions)
- Rock Cycle (geology)

Some experience with children is preferred; training is provided. The next training day is **Tuesday, April 12, 2016** from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Volunteers will need to be available weekday mornings, usually 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., beginning in mid-April 2016. Spring programming runs through the end of May and fall programs take place from early September to mid-November.

### Garden Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help maintain demonstration herb, vegetable, and flowerbeds at the Farmstead. Volunteer tasks include weeding, watering, and harvesting vegetables. Days and times can be flexible if a volunteer is interested in working independently.

- Weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Ongoing opportunity beginning in April

### Farm Volunteers

Merry Lea Sustainable Farm continues to expand and additional hands are welcome. Volunteers can assist in the greenhouse mixing soil, watering plants, and trellising/suckering tomatoes. Outdoor opportunities include spreading wood mulch and compost, preparing garden beds, transplanting early plants (April only), and mowing with a push mower. Volunteers with experience in tree care are desired as well to prune trees and grapevines.

- Weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Help is especially needed on Fridays.
- Ongoing opportunity beginning immediately.

Contact Maria Tice, [mariaact@goshen.edu](mailto:mariaact@goshen.edu) or 260-799-5869.



# Julie Davidson

## Teaching Volunteer

## Bird Bander

## Greenhouse Volunteer

Julie Davidson's relationship with Merry Lea began well over ten years ago when she burst through the doors of the Learning Center with an urgent question: "How can I become a Friend of Merry Lea?" Julie's family had recently moved from North Carolina where she had been a friend of a botanical garden, and she was eager for a similar relationship in Indiana.

Since then, Julie has indeed been a friend to Merry Lea. She has taught children to spin during Farmcraft programs, nursed seedlings in the farm greenhouse, banded birds, hauled buckets of sap at the Yoder Sugar Bush and offered support in many other ways.

"Julie is one of our most dependable volunteers," observes volunteer coordinator Maria Tice. In 2012 and 2013, Julie was recognized as the volunteer who had donated the greatest number of hours to Merry Lea. Julie's husband, Barry Dupen, and teenage daughter, Elena Dupen, have also been generous volunteers.

Julie serves as a teaching volunteer because it keeps her in touch with young children. "I find developing minds fascinating," she admits. She loves sharing experiential learning, especially with primary children.

The sensory experiences that Merry Lea provides also attract Julie. Her face lights up as she describes the pungent smell of the cider press during Farmcraft programs or the intimacy of holding a live bird in her hands during bird banding. In earlier years, she loved the morning chill she would feel hiking across a muddy track to the maple trees at the Yoder Sugar Bush, followed by the warmth of the fires.

When not at Merry Lea, much of Julie's life revolves around fiber arts: she raises goats and dyes, spins and knits their wool. She is a member of two spinning guilds and helps organize several fiber festivals where she demonstrates these skills for others.

Not surprisingly, Julie's naturalist bent is directed toward the herbs, fruits and berries that can be used to dye fiber.



Top: Julie Davidson, Columbia City, Ind., with two of her goats. A small goat might provide two pounds of fiber at one sheering. A large sheep could give eight to ten pounds. "Doing chores for animals gives a rhythm to the day," Julie remarks.

Bottom: Naomi Gross, a junior from Goshen College, learns to spin. Naomi was part of Merry Lea's Sustainability Leadership Semester during the fall of 2015, and the group spent a Fun Friday session learning fiber arts with Julie.

Indigo is a favorite plant of hers because of the versatility of the dye it provides. Indigo can even be coaxed to grow this far north.

The Davidson-Dupen family has given much to Merry Lea, but they have also received a treasured gift in return. Through volunteering at the Yoder Sugar Bush, Julie and her family learned

to make their own maple syrup at home. Their farm in the Columbia City area has a small sugar bush, and when Merry Lea's former director, Larry Yoder, gave them a few spiles, they began tapping their own trees. They started with three trees and are up to fifteen now. They even have their own sap house. Ω





Geology fan Rick Bonar with his rock tumbler and a geode found near Bloomington, Ind.

## Rick Bonar: Teaching Volunteer

For Rick Bonar, Churubusco, Ind., serving as a teaching volunteer at Merry Lea is a chance to continue his lifelong work with children. It is also a chance to share a favorite hobby.

Before he retired, Rick taught math and later science at Central Noble Middle School, Albion, Ind. As a teacher, he brought students to Merry Lea on field trips and learned to know its educators. Now, he works with the same staff and programs that impressed him earlier, but doesn't have the worry and responsibility of a full time job.

"Doing something with kids feeds my old teacher spirit," Rick says of the one or two days each week he spent at Merry Lea in the fall. One part of volunteering that is a new treat for him is working with younger children.

Rock Cycle, the geology program taught on the west side of the property near the esker and gravel pit, is the gig most suited to Rick's interests. He and his wife, Karen, are rock hounds. A typical vacation for this outdoorsy couple might be hunting for Petosky stones near Lake Michigan or camping in a National Park with interesting geological features. At home later, Rick finishes rocks he collects with a rock tumbler.

Rick recalls a favorite moment by Merry Lea's gravel pit one day. He and the children were chatting about the geology of Noble County, and the kids were fascinated by the stories about individuals from Noble County's past. The idea that geology shaped the history of the area caught their attention.

"I was surprised by how much the children knew about farming," Rick says. Many were interested in the fact that onions were grown at Onion Bottom and could relate it to grandparents who were involved in something similar.

Rick is an enthusiastic champion of Merry Lea's Pre-K to 12 staff. "I sometimes think they don't understand how good they are, and how unique the place is," he comments.

Volunteering at Merry Lea can also spark or nurture friendships. Larry Yoder, a former teaching colleague and friend of Rick's, also volunteers at Merry Lea. While they aren't necessarily on duty at the same times, they enjoy sharing stories about the programs they've led while golfing. The two are considering taking a master naturalist course together in the fall. Needless to say, Merry Lea will be happy to provide them with the volunteer hours they need for certification. Ω

## Staff Networking Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

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Lea to become better equipped to investigate issues impacting them and their communities? This is something I look forward to pursuing in the coming months and years. I also found the opportunity to learn more about something from which I personally derive much of my sense of place—The Great Lakes—to be extremely valuable.

Attending the GLSI conference also led to another opportunity. While we were there, Sara Yob, an MAEE alumna, mentioned an organization called West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC). Upon further investigation, I discovered the Women and the Environment Symposium WMEAC organized that happened February 24th.

The symposium was a day-long event that explored the intersections between women, gender issues and environmental justice concerns. This year the event also focused on climate leadership in faith communities.

Not only do I work as an educator at a faith-based organization, I also graduated from Goshen College with a concentration on environmental justice and a minor in women's studies, so this seemed like too enriching an opportunity to miss. However, due to the unfortunate winter weather that occurred across the region that day, I did miss it. I look forward to participating in this event next year! Visit [wmeac.org](http://wmeac.org) for more information. Ω

## Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)

**By Lisa Zinn**  
**Director of the Sustainability  
Leadership Semester**

This year, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education was held October 25-28th in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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I attended along with Glenn Gilbert, the utilities manager and sustainability coordinator at Goshen College and Lydia Yoder, a Goshen College student.

As the director of the Sustainability Leadership Semester, I find this conference very applicable and important. This year I attended a full day special workshop on including a diversity of voices in the sustainability conversation. This was of particular importance for me, as we want to build a program that views the inclusion of minority and marginalized voices as a key to true community sustainability. I also co-presented a case study about the Sustainability Leadership Semester with Hannah Miller who is doing her doctoral research at Michigan State University on the students in this program.

Another highlight from the conference was the lunch gathering for small liberal arts institutions where we could network with other schools and share our failures and successes in incorporating sustainability into the college curriculum.

After attending a wide range of workshops, I came away with two impressions about sustainability in higher education. The first is that there has definitely been a shift toward thinking about sustainability education as interdisciplinary work. No longer is it only the task of environmental science to talk about sustainability. The field of sustainability now includes input from economics, philosophy, sociology and a host of other disciplines. This is exciting to see because neither science nor any other independent field can solve the complex issues of our time singlehandedly.

Secondly, I was excited by the growing number of very creative programs that take students out of a traditional classroom in order to interact with issues in their own communities. Much work still needs to be done, but conferences like AASHE allow for moments of inspiration as you interact with others who are building a more sustainable future through education. Ω

## Sustainability Education at Merry Lea: Outside of the Classroom

Networking, sustainability and out-of-the-classroom experiences intersected February 19 to 21 at Merry Lea's annual Sustainability Summit for undergraduates. Students from nine campuses spent the weekend at Merry Lea considering the theme, Spaces and Places. How do we build sustainable spaces? How can we develop a sense of home that leads us to care for our places the way they should be cared for?

Theologian Steven Bouma-Prediger, co-author of *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement*, was the keynote speaker. Other events covered the theology of place, sustainable landscaping, the sustainable features of Merry Lea's Rieth Village and land management practices at Merry Lea.

"The real highlight is always watching the students getting to

know each other and drawing so much energy from each other. It can be lonely, being the only student at your campus who is concerned about sustainability," says Tom Hartzell, coordinator of undergraduate programs.

A service project was a new feature this year. Students assisted at two nonprofits near Albion, Ind. Half the group went to Black Pine Animal Sanctuary and half went to Noble House Ministries, a shelter for the homeless, victims of domestic abuse and people in transitions of various kinds. While the chores performed were quite ordinary, the shared labor formed important connections. "The powerful thing that happened at Noble House Ministries was that students got to work alongside the residents and hear their stories." Tom reports. Some students came away saying they'd like to volunteer at a shelter near their campuses. Ω



Jon Zirkle, interim director of agroecology, guides students as they construct worm bins for composting kitchen scraps. Every student had the chance to construct either a worm bin or a mini-greenhouse to take home.





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“ Where Earth and People Meet ”

## Upcoming Public Programs

Please register for programs at least two days in advance. For more information, see <https://www.goshen.edu/merrylea/category/event/>. To register, email [mlevents@goshen.edu](mailto:mlevents@goshen.edu) or call 260-799-5869.

### Annual Birding Challenge

**When:** Tuesday, March 01, 6:00 AM to Tuesday, May 31, 11 PM.

**Where:** Within 100 miles of Merry Lea

**Who:** Teams of up to four adults and any number of children.

**Cost:** \$10 per team.

### Family Frog Hikes

**When:** Tuesday, April 05 and Wednesday, April 6, 1:00 - 3:00 PM

**Where:** Rieth Village Site

**Who:** Children on spring break and their adults.

**Cost:** \$5 adults; \$2 children.

### Friends of Merry Lea Dinner

**When:** Saturday, April 9, 4:00 - 8:00 PM.

**Where:** Farmstead Barn

**Who & cost:** If you are not a Friend of Merry Lea, pay \$15 per person or \$25 per couple. Free to Friends.

### Agroecology Open House

**When:** Friday, April 15, 4:00 - 9:00 PM

**Where:** Rieth Village Site

**Who:** Farming fans, potential volunteers

**Cost:** No charge but bring a potluck dish.

### Bicentennial Birding Big Day

**When:** Saturday, May 07, 6:00 AM - 9:00 PM.

**Where:** Chain O'Lakes State Park

**Who:** Birders

**Cost:** \$5 toward shelter rental.

### NatureFest 2016

**When:** Friday, May 13, 7:00 PM -

Saturday, May 14, 2:00 PM

**Where:** Farmstead Barn Site

**Who:** Children, ages 5 to 12, their favorite adults and other fans of intergenerational nature experiences.

**Cost:** \$5, children; adults \$5 to \$15 depending on length of stay.

### Merry Lea by Van

**When:** Tuesday, June 07, 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

**Where:** Meet at Goshen College Sauder Music Hall parking lot at 8 a.m. or Merry Lea's Farmstead Barn at 8:55 a.m.

**Who:** People w/ mobility challenges

**Cost:** \$20 includes a picnic lunch

### Noble County All-In Block Party

**Where:** Albion Courthouse Square

**When:** Saturday, June 25, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**Who:** A drop-in event for everyone. Look for Merry Lea's booth.