

The Merry Leaflet

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College | P.O. Box 263, Wolf Lake, IN 46796 | 260.799.5869 | merrylea@goshen.edu | goshen.edu/merrylea

Ensuring a Sustainable & Resilient Future for Merry Lea

MERRY LEA'S MISSION HAS ALWAYS consisted of three important goals: providing a natural sanctuary for Northern Indiana's plants and animals, providing environmental education for people of all ages, and providing a setting for recreating opportunities that benefit the human body and spirit while not exploiting the land or excessively disturbing its ecosystems.

In order to pursue our mission, our team is constantly striving to come up with creative ways to become more sustainable to ensure that people of all ages will get to experience Merry Lea in the future.

"Merry Lea has a lot going for it in terms of sustainability, but like any organization or person, we don't do it all perfectly," says Jonathon Schramm, Associate Professor in the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department (SEED) & Director of the Institute for Ecological Regeneration. "We balance our resources, our goals, and the specific problems at hand to try and improve the world around us, and usually that can't be done without some compromise. But I firmly believe Merry Lea is the kind of place where our learners can have their love for the world sparked or renewed, and they can catch a vision for how different the landscapes around us can look when space is intentionally left for other creatures. Our efforts to conserve energy and transition to low-carbon ways of



People of all ages canoeing in Kesling Wetland during Nature Fest.

doing business is also really valuable, even if not quite as visible to the average 3rd grader on a field trip!"

In January 2023, we officially added our first electric vehicle to our fleet, a Kia, that we call Evie. Our ChargePoint station for charging electric vehicles, which is located in the Learning Center parking lot, has helped save 8 trees and 683 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions so far. This station is available to the public for free.

Our new solar panels located on Hess Barn at Rieth Village and the Learning Center are also officially turned on. In just four weeks, Rieth Village panels have helped save 19 trees & 2,285 pounds of CO₂ emissions. We can't wait to see how much these numbers increase each month — look for updates on our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)!

Compost bins are available for students, staff, and our guests to deposit their excess food. This compost then gets distributed on garden beds at Merry Lea Teaching Farm.

Recycling bins are available throughout our property for paper, aluminum, plastic, or cardboard, as well

All of the food grown at Rieth Village is produced in ways that generate very little food waste. Much of the various

fruits, vegetables, herbs, and grains grown are distributed to seasonal residents that live on Merry Lea's property. A portion of this is also donated to the Wolf Lake food pantry.

During our annual Farm to Table event, we utilize as much food from our teaching garden and greenhouses as possible. Other events, such as our volunteer appreciation dinner, Merry Lea friends lunch, and various other programs also prioritize using food produced at Merry Lea Teaching Farm.

For the most part, we have said farewell to paper plates, paper napkins, plastic silverware, and styrofoam cups. Instead, we use ceramic plates, glass cups, metal silverware, and reusable cloth napkins.

Another way that we strive to be sustainable is by using 100% recycled paper for our printed documents, flyers, and posters. In the event that we print too many copies of a document, we reuse these pages as scrap paper.

Many members on our team carpool whenever possible. Many of our staff members live in Goshen, making it convenient for multiple people to ride together to help cut back on vehicle emissions.

see Sustainability, page 4



VIEWS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE
DR. JASON MARTIN

Looking Back to Look Ahead

If you are a regular reader of *The Merry Leaflet*, you may recall that my last “Views from the Corner Office” introduced Merry Lea’s 2023-2026 SURE (Sustainability and REsilience) Strategic Action Plan. When completed, this plan will serve as a roadmap for pursuing our mission of providing environmental education for people of all ages, a natural sanctuary for Northern Indiana’s biodiversity, and a setting for recreating opportunities that benefit the human body and spirit during the next three years.

The Merry Lea team has been working over the past several months to create this plan. We are not quite finished, but because we are so excited about the next three years, we want to share what we have done so far.

To begin, the entire team spent time reflecting on our accomplishments from the previous five years. We are not ones to toot our own horns, but WOW! I can’t begin to express how proud I am of all that the Merry Lea team has achieved since 2019. Here are a few highlights:

- Launched what is now a thriving nature preschool program.
- Became a regional leader in nature-based early childhood education (NbECE) by regularly facilitating professional development and networking opportunities for NbECE practitioners.
- Provided unique, place-based residential undergraduate and graduate learning experiences.
- Expanded undergraduate summer research opportunities by growing our Hickory/Linton Scholars program and partnering with other academic institutions.
- Diversified organizational funding by increasing grant and donor support.
- Improved our communications and marketing efforts by creating a new position dedicated to these tasks.
- Redesigned spaces in our teaching farm to facilitate immersive learning experiences.
- Adopted new technology to improve customer service and program registration.
- Aligned staff position descriptions with actual expectations.
- Created new opportunities for environmental learning through partnerships with other organizations, such as our StoryWalk with Noble County Public Libraries and our Junior/Teen Indiana Master Naturalist homeschool series and summer camp with Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site.
- Significantly reduced our carbon footprint by installing solar panels and adding an electric vehicle to our fleet.

After engaging in further self-reflection centered on identifying our organizational strengths and weaknesses, we shifted gears and listed opportunities that Merry Lea could potentially pursue over the next three years. What was originally intended to be a one-hour brainstorming session turned into a three-hour marathon of optimism and innovative spirit!

see *Looking Back*, page 2

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. Kayla Beasley is its editor and the author of articles without bylines. See the news tab at goshen.edu/merrylea for more updates.

TEAM MEMBERS

Kayla Beasley

Associate Director of Communications & Marketing

Rian Bylsma

Environmental Educator

Kaeli Evans

Farm Manager

Dinah Gilbert

Farm Hand

Kerry Goodrich

Property Supervisor

Luke Kreider

Assistant Professor, SEED

Carol Good-Elliott

Environmental Educator

Jason Martin

Executive Director

Bill Minter

Director of Land Management

John Mischler

Assistant Professor, SEED / Director of Merry Lea Teaching Farm

Ruth Mischler

Assistant Professor, SEED / Assistant Director of Merry Lea Teaching Farm

Jonathon Schramm

Associate Professor, SEED / Director of Institute for Ecological Regeneration

Jennifer Schrock

Leader of MCCN

Kaitlyn Sproles

Environmental Education Outreach Coordinator

Marcos Stoltzfus

Director of Environmental Education Outreach / Assistant Executive Director

Maria Tice

Office Manager / Volunteer Coordinator

BOARD MEMBERS

Melissa Kinsey, Chair

Andy Rieth, Vice Chair

Reena Ramos

Doug Vendrely

Greg Perigo

Ben Bontrager

Jerry Sweeten

Ex Officio: **Ann Vendrely**

Ex Officio: **Jason Martin**

While we still need to pare down on our very extensive list of opportunities into succinct goals, some themes are starting to emerge:

- Leverage our expertise in developing and delivering high impact environmental education programs to fully meet existing demand and reach new audiences.
- Continue to hone our undergraduate and graduate programs to better serve our existing students and attract more students to these programs.
- Establish Merry Lea as a regional hub for environmental research.
- Broaden utilization of our facilities by growing partnerships with other organizations in the region, such as libraries and clubs.
- Develop a master plan for property and facility management.
- More fully utilize volunteers to support programming.
- Gain a better understanding of our audiences and what programs may be of interest to them.
- Further expand and diversify funding through grants, sponsorships, and planned giving.

Our 2023-2026 SURE Strategic Action Plan will be finished later this spring in time for a July launch. Be on the lookout for more information soon! 



Rainbow over Pewamo Cottage at Rieth Village.

Thank you for your support

Thank you to the following people for donating to Merry Lea during this quarter. Your support has contributed to delivering safe environmental programming, maintaining facilities and the upkeep of hiking trails.

Carl Bauer
Vicky Benko
Mary Berghoff & Neil Meyer
in memory of Jason Farren
Malinda Berry & John Stoltzfus
Janeen Bertsche Johnson & Barry Johnson
Steven & Mindy Beyeler
Garrett & Jennifer Bishop
Arlene Bohnke
Francis Bundy
John & Deborah Byler
Lee & Patricia Casebere
J. Bart & Cinda Culver
Culver Family Foundation
Kathy Cruz
Deana Davis

John DeGood II
Fred & Joyce Driver
Barry Dupen & Julie Davidson
Eric & Heidi Dyck Hilty
Steve & Pam Etheridge
Jim & Karen Farlow
Nancy & Austin Fergusson
Brook & Barbra Frymier
Jerilyn & Junior Geiger
Mary & Glenn Gilbert
Elizabeth Gingerich
Carol & Phil Good-Elliott
Bob & Christine Guth
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Trisha Handrich & Chase Snyder
Jean Hartzler
Heather & Hamilton Harwood
Patricia & Daniel Heath
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Angie Herrmann
Jack & Mary Hostetler
Doug Kaufman
Amanda & Lane Kaufmann
Janet & Forrest Keefer
LaDene King & Gretchen Nyce
Jim & Gloria Kinnard

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Larry & Ruth Palmer
Lisa Lee & Clifford Peterson
Roger & Pam Piper-Ruth
Reena Ramos
Michele & Gavin Replogle
Fancheon & Herb Resler
Sid & Sandi Richard
Victor & Marjorie Riemenschneider
Janel Rogers
Mark & Val Rae Sadler

Andrew Schiedel & Karen Martin Schiedel
Albert & Mary Beth Schlabach
Gretel Smith
John & Joann Smith
Beth Snider
Tina Springer & Peter Kenagy
Kaitlyn & Michael Sproles
Amanda & Chuck Thomson
Amy Thut & Greg Imbur
Patrick & Ann Vendrely
Mrs. Arlan C. Haase
Vernon H. Haase Foundation
Bob & Ann Walton
Don & Marceil Yoder
Lillian Yoder
Marisa & Tim Yoder
Roberta Miller Yoder & Larry Yoder
Wayne & Roveen Yoder
John & Winnie Yordy
Evelyn & Roger zumFelde
Anonymous
in memory of Blair & Martha Rieth and Lee & Mary Jane Rieth



Materials used for our events and programs such as banners, signage, labels, ID sheets and cards are reused season after season.

If there is leftover food items from programs that take place at the Learning Center or Farmstead, those items and materials get distributed to our Nature PreK kids. These efforts help to keep things affordable for everyone that visits Merry Lea as well as cut back on waste.


Merry Lea utilizes Geothermal and air source HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems in many of our buildings. Not only will our Geothermal systems last for 20 to 25 years compared to a 10-year lifespan for typical systems,

they also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs.

Geothermal systems utilize a ground source heat pump, which works by transferring energy through a water medium to and from the conditioned area as well as a deep subsoil layer of the Earth. That subsoil remains at roughly 55 degrees Fahrenheit year-round and works as a source and sink to offload heat during the summer when the A/C is running and to bring heat in cooler months.

Ruth Mischler, Assistant Director of the Merry Lea Teaching Farm & Assistant Professor in Sustainability and Environmental Education Department

(SEED), says “Sustainability is one of those words that is used in a lot of different ways, and means a lot of different things to people. I often think of sustainability as a way for people to exist that doesn’t compromise future generations ability to exist. It’s about balancing economics, environmental care, and social well-being.”

As a team, doing all of these small but mighty tasks will help us to be able to pursue our mission for many years to come, and ensure a sustainable and resilient future for Merry Lea. 



Merry Lea Teaching Farm garden - where the majority of our food is grown at Merry Lea.



Looking for ways to make a difference?

Merry Lea relies on the generosity of people like you to provide quality environmental education programs that are accessible for all ages.

Please consider becoming a Friend of Merry Lea.

You may give online at goshen.edu/merrylea/donate or call our office at (260) 799-5869.

Can you “be-leaf” it?

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center has 17 miles of property boundary line... That is more than Chain O’ Lakes State Park, located in Albion, IN.

For more fun facts about Merry Lea, follow our social media outlets for more fun facts!

Facebook: Facebook.com/MerryLeaEnvironmentalLearningCenter

Instagram: Instagram.com/merrylea_goshen/

“New” Sustainability Semester

MERRY LEA IS FLIPPING OVER A NEW leaf in 2023! We have said farewell to our Agroecology Summer Intensive (ASI) semester and the Sustainability Leadership Semester (SLS). These have been combined into a new fall semester undergraduate program called the Sustainability Semester.


This semester combines all the best elements from both the ASI and SLS programs, including the eight-day canoe trip through the Elkhart/ St. Joe watershed that our previous SLS students went on each year.

Undergraduate students will still live and learn at Merry Lea’s Rieth Village, Indiana’s first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum set of buildings during the Sustainability Semester.

A variety of topics, such as sustainable

agriculture, freshwater ecology, food systems, and sustainability, spirituality, and ethics, will also still be taught.

Students will continue to meet with various environmental professionals from across the region on weekly field trips.

“By consolidating our immersive teaching effort into one experience, we will provide more opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration as we deliver the program and we will create more opportunities for students to take classes in our department on Goshen College’s campus,” says Jonathon Schramm, Associate Professor in the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department (SEED) & Director of the Institute for Ecological Regeneration. 

We are hiring!

We currently have the following positions open. (Application review is ongoing and will continue until the positions are filled.):

1. [Residence Life Coordinator and Environmental Educator](#)
2. [Land and Facilities Management Assistant](#)

To learn more or to apply for either position, please visit: goshen.edu/merrylea/visit-us/employment-opportunities, email merrylea@goshen.edu, or call Merry Lea at 260-799-5869. Come join a great team!

Merry Lea Team Updates

Kayla Beasley



New Associate Director of Communications & Marketing

B.S. Agricultural Communication with a minor in Sociology, Purdue University, 2021

Kayla joined the Merry Lea team in November 2022 with a background in horticulture, communications, graphic design, botany, and photography from Purdue University. Previously, she was a communications and marketing specialist for a solar company.

Originally from Syracuse, Ind., she now resides in Larwill, Ind. with her husband. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, camping, hiking, and baking/cooking.

Kayla leads and manages Merry Lea’s communications and marketing efforts through promoting stories, programs, events and other opportunities in pursuit of strengthening Merry Lea’s mission.

She also creates and edits *The Merry Leaflet*, social media, website, new releases, brochures and more. Don’t forget to read the editor’s note to learn more about her.

Anna McVay



Vacated Coordinator for Residential Collegiate Programs and Environmental Educator

B.A. Sustainability Studies, Goshen College, 2022

In Fall of 2022, Anna joined our team to support non-academic community aspects of our residential Sustainability Leadership Semester (SLS) as well as various academic roles. She served as our resident director for undergraduate students living at Rieth Village during the SLS program and oversaw

living/learning community meetings. Anna provided vital logistical support for the SLS field trips and planning for learning experiences. As an Environmental Educator, she also helped facilitate Merry Lea’s Program for Outdoor Wilderness Learning (PROWL), an after-school program.

Anna has departed Merry Lea to begin her next adventure at enFocus as an Innovation Fellow. We wish Anna nothing but the best on this next journey.

Save The Date - 2023 Special Events!



NATURE FEST

Celebrate spring during our annual Nature Fest! This free and fun-filled festival features various family and BioBlitz (science investigations) activities at Merry Lea. All ages are welcome to participate in canoeing and campfires Friday evening. On Saturday, there will be two different tracks to participate in. To learn more about this event, visit goshen.edu/merrylea/naturefest2023.

When: May 12, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. | May 13, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Cost: Free
Location: Farmstead | 2152 S 425 W | Albion, IN 46701

NATURE EXPLORERS (3 DATES)

Hikin' in your Boots: Join us on the shores of Merry Lea's aquatic ecosystems - vernal pond, wetland, and Bear Lake

Wadin' and Watercolors: Get immersed in a wetland ecosystem while learning about small animals and create your own artistic masterpiece!

Rockin' with Rocks: Explore our gravel pit, hike along a glacier-made hill, jump on our bog, and rock out with rocks during this hands-on hike!

When: June 15, July 13, & August 10 | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Cost: \$5.50/Child
Location: Learning Center | 2388 S 500 W | Albion, IN 46701



CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP SCHOOL (CLS)

Upcoming high school juniors and seniors can make Merry Lea their home for a week this summer during CLS! Camp overnight and explore a world full of natural resources and conservation. Canoe across glacial lakes, plan and run a community nature event, and get a taste of careers like botany, land management, and sustainable agriculture.

When: June 5 -9 | Apply by April 30
Cost: \$50/Student
Location: Farmstead | 2152 S 425 W | Albion, IN 46701

NATURE PLAY DAY

Don't miss this opportunity to join Merry Lea at this free, family-friendly event designed to get people outside as part of a state-wide effort by Indiana Children and Nature Network (ICAN) Nature Play Days! Dip for tadpoles, create a craft, go on a hike, work on a scavenger hunt, and more!

When: June 8 | 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Cost: Free
Location: Learning Center | 2388 S 500 W | Albion, IN 46701



ENCHANTED FOREST

Join Merry Lea for this "enchanted" night hike! Trail guides will lead groups by lantern-light to meet real "live" animals on our trails. Our costumed staff and volunteers will answer questions about life as a native Indiana animal.

When: October 20 & 21 | 7 - 8:30 p.m.
Cost: TBD
Location: TBD

To register*, visit: goshen.edu/merrylea/events *Note: Not all registrations are open at this time.

From Indiana to the Bahamas

EVERY YEAR, OUR MASTER OF ARTS in Environmental Education (MAEE) students gain intercultural experience by spending a month learning from and teaching other communities.

This year, the 2022-2023 cohort was able to visit Andros Island, Bahamas for their intercultural environmental education practicum.

Our five graduate students experienced teaching at multiple schools, taking kids on field trip excursions, lesson planning, completing two service projects, learning about sustainable tourism, batik, bush medicine, straw work and more!

During their time in the Bahamas, many of the lessons that the MAEE students taught were focused on mangrove ecosystems, beach pollution, and species identification. Grades taught ranged from preschool to twelfth grade. Each graduate student was able to teach a different grade level at each school.

“This experience made me more confident in my ability to teach environmental education in a variety of settings and how to overcome barriers,” says Eva Webb, MAEE student.

The MAEE students experienced a variety of ecosystems including coppice, pinelands, mangroves, blue holes, beaches, and reefs. The unique activities that they experienced included snorkeling, fishing tide pool walking, mangrove exploring, creek floats, and tons of swimming.

They completed two service projects; cleaning up the entrance to Rainbow Blue Hole and collecting trash along a beach.

This year, the cohort identified 251 different species while on the island ranging from various plants, marine invertebrates and terrestrial invertebrates to fish, herptiles, birds, mammals, and domestic animals.

During one of their cultural immersion days, they learned about batik, a brightly-colored hand-dyed Bahamian cotton fabric that is turned into various garments. Stamps dipped in wax are used on parts of the fabric to ensure



MAEE students & staff on Andros Island, Bahamas! From left to right: Marcos Stoltzfus (staff), Jason Martin (staff), Jeremiah Sharp, Kaitlyn Sproles (staff), Stephany Hancock, Mike Miller, Jamie McBride, & Eva Webb.

those parts don't get dyed. The wax later gets washed using boiling water. Each student also attempted to create a handwoven basket.

“Teaching in another country helped me realize I could adapt the skills I have been learning at Merry Lea to fit a new audience and a new context,” said Jamie McBride, MAEE student. “It helped me have more experience in writing lesson plans within a shorter amount of time and in a different format than what I am used to.”

It has been a busy time for our graduate students and we are so glad to have them back at Merry Lea. They are now gearing up for this upcoming field trip season as well as Spring Break Day Camp. Before we know it, it will be time for graduation! 🍀



MAEE students & staff learning to make straw baskets.



Jamie McBride (blue hat) & Stephany Hancock (yellow hat) teaching students about mangroves.



Kayla Beasley

Associate Director of Communications & Marketing

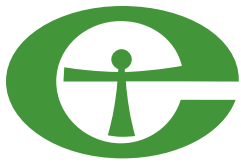
Editor's Note

Dear readers:

I am so grateful to have joined the Merry Lea team back in November of 2022. This is my first issue of *The Merry Leaflet*, and I look forward to continuing this long tradition with some new editions.

I am honored to share what happens here at Merry Lea with those who contribute and donate to our mission, and describe how you can continue to be involved.

Thank you for being part of our supportive community as a *Merry Leaflet* reader. I look forward to meeting you all soon!



Merry Lea

Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

1700 S. Main St.
Goshen, IN 46526

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Events

Learn more at: goshen.edu/merrylea

Engineering with Nature

WHERE: Merry Lea Farmstead

WHEN: Saturday, **April 15** | 9 – 11 a.m.

Build it big, then knock it down! Improve your design and see how strong you can make your structure. Join us for this STEM family workshop designed for adults and children to learn about the engineering design cycle, using all-natural materials.

Cost is \$7 per adult & \$5 per child.

Registration required by April 12 on our website.

Tales & Trails

WHERE: Various Sites around Merry Lea

WHEN: **Last Tuesday each month** | 10 – 11:30 a.m.

Hear a tale and hike a trail with your preschooler to discover the natural wonders around you together! This is a 1.5-hour monthly program designed for children ages 3-5 and their caregiver(s), led by a Merry Lea educator.

Cost is free. Registration not required.

See our website for more details.

Grafting Workshop

WHERE: Rieth Village

WHEN: Saturday, **April 15** | 1 – 3 p.m.

Join us for a hands-on workshop that demystifies the art of grafting, so that you can add variety and vigor to your fruit trees. Learn about the science of grafting, watch demonstrations, and try several techniques yourself!

Cost is \$20 per adult.

Registration required by April 12 on our website.

Junior/Teen IMN Summer Day Camp

WHERE: Merry Lea Learning Center & Gene Stratton-Porter Site

WHEN: **July 17-21** | 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The IMN program features various nature topics for local youth to discover Indiana's outdoor world through hands-on activities, outdoor investigations, volunteering and learning from local experts across different career paths, interests, and organizations.

Cost is \$125 per student. Age range: 9 - 15

Registration required on our website.