

tree tips

Natural Resources Education News



Trees For Tomorrow®
Environmental Education Center

...sustaining the world we live in through the science of nature

Summer 2026



Pictured: Exploring a world like no other: SOLE K-12 students getting a close-up look into one of the Northwoods' most fascinating ecosystems—bogs. Bogs are a living time capsule, home to carnivorous plants, specialized mosses and unique adaptations to environments that are not inherently plant-friendly. These rare wetlands are proof that some of the most extraordinary life thrives in the most unusual places.

*Timeless Roots. Modern Growth
Carrying the best of the past forward*

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from the desk of
Cheryl Todea, Executive Director



Honoring the Mully Taylor Legacy: Timeless Roots, Modern Growth

When I think about Trees For Tomorrow's (TFT) history, I think about the people who believed deeply in the power of nature to shape young lives. **Mully Taylor, our founding executive director**, was one of those people. His legacy, and the vision that helped guide TFT in its early decades, planted something lasting—a place where learning, stewardship, and connection to the outdoors could grow together.

That sense of continuity feels especially meaningful right now. In 2024, we reconnected with the Taylor family, and I am excited to welcome them back to campus this summer for Forest Fest and the Outdoor Learning Center dedication—two moments that reflect both TFT's rich history and its continued growth. At its heart, TFT has always been about helping students build understanding, confidence, and respect for the natural world. Time outside, learning by doing, forming friendships, and discovering new interests and career possibilities are just as important for students today as they were generations ago.



Mully Taylor, circa 1944, surveying a Norway Red Pine plantation.

Carrying forward the best of that legacy also means continuing to grow.

Today's world asks more of environmental education, and there is still much work to do to improve facilities, expand access, and strengthen programs so these experiences remain available and relevant for future generations.

To me, that is what "Timeless Roots, Modern Growth" means at Trees For Tomorrow: honoring the values that built this organization while continuing to improve how we live out that mission today—with the help of people who believe this work still matters. One of the best ways to honor a legacy is not to preserve everything exactly as it was, but to carry forward the very best of it with care and purpose.

This summer also brings a joyful personal milestone for me. After mentioning my engagement in a past newsletter, I'm happy to share that I will be getting married in mid-June (in the new John & Melissa Besse Outdoor Learning Center), shortly after this issue goes to print. I look forward to celebrating with my immediate family, close friends, and work family.

Thank you for being part of our important work and for continuing to be there for me through my personal journey at TFT. Your support helps me carry forward what matters most about Trees For Tomorrow while continuing to grow in ways that serve today's students and tomorrow's needs. I am deeply grateful for all that has been made possible—and mindful that important work still lies ahead.

I am grateful to be carrying the Taylor legacy forward with you.



Trees For Tomorrow, Inc. is a private 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

Equal opportunity employer.



ANNUAL REPORT OMISSIONS!

Even with reliable systems in place, technology isn't perfect. A reporting error caused us to miss recognizing the following supporters in our Annual Report, and we want to extend our heartfelt thanks and apologies.

Elizabeth Gonia

Barbara Grinnell

Rae Gutschow

Tom & Barbara Helmick

Fred & Carolyn Hoyt

Richard & Lynn Huebsch
Charitable Trust

Mark & Julie Kasper
Family Foundation

David & Donna Klinner

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Linda Lane

Mark Laurion

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Susan Merrick

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Terry & Kelly Schwaller

Connie Sprague

Glen Johnson & Cindy Thompson



Trees For Tomorrow's campus includes National Forest property under permit from the USDA Forest Service.

Private property owned by Trees For Tomorrow (TFT), the Wisconsin Newspaper Association and Tara Lila LLC are also utilized for education and outreach purposes.



from the Operations Manager
Mandy Gingerich

Expanding the SOLE Journey Beyond the Classroom



SOLE 2.0 | The Family Layer

At Trees For Tomorrow, we've always believed that the SOLE K-12 (School Outdoor Learning Experience) program doesn't start when the bus pulls onto campus, and it doesn't end when it leaves. The real impact happens in the moments before and after. It's in the conversations, the anticipation, and the connections that carry far beyond those few days in the Northwoods.

That's where SOLE 2.0 comes in.

As we continue to grow and evolve our SOLE K-12 program, we've been asking ourselves an important question: How do we bring families into the experience in a meaningful way? Because while teachers are our primary partners, families play such an important role in how students show up, engage, and take something lasting away from their time here.

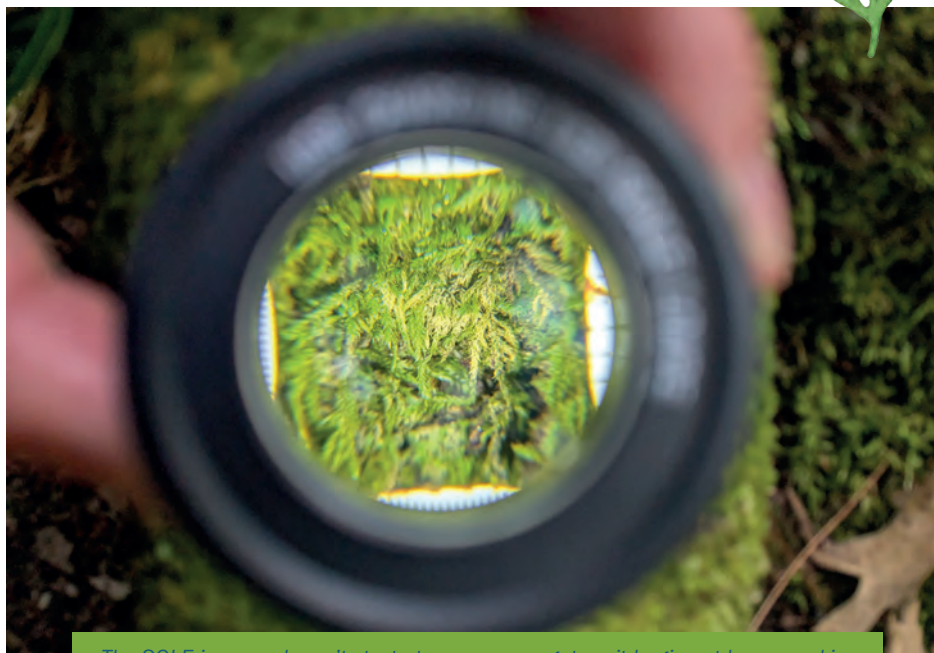
One of the ways we're doing that is by adding a new layer to the SOLE journey, and it starts at home.

Before students even arrive on campus, we're encouraging families to sit down together and walk through what we're calling our SOLE K-12 "Survival Guide." This isn't just a packing list or a set of rules. It's an invitation. An invitation to talk about what this experience will look like, what students might feel, and how they can prepare not just physically, but mentally and emotionally too.

We know that for many students, this may be their first overnight trip away from home. That comes with excitement, but it can also come with nerves for both kids and parents. The Survival Guide is designed to meet families right where they are. It helps set expectations, answer questions, and most importantly, create space for those conversations to happen before students ever step foot on campus.

Because when students arrive feeling prepared, supported, and understood, it really does change everything.

They settle in faster. They're more open to trying new things. They lean into the



The SOLE journey doesn't start at our campus gates—it begins at home and in the classroom. Both teachers and families are critical to help students focus their curiosity for ultimate success during their visit to Trees For Tomorrow.

unplugged nature of campus life and they're able to fully experience what makes Trees For Tomorrow so special.

For families, it offers something just as important, peace of mind. Knowing what their child will experience, how they'll be supported, and what to expect during their time away helps build trust and confidence. And for us, it strengthens the partnership we have with both schools and families.

SOLE K-12 isn't about changing what we do. It's about deepening it. It's about recognizing that learning doesn't just happen in a classroom or out on a trail. It happens through connection. Through shared understanding. Through bringing everyone into the journey, not just the student and the teacher, but the family too.

When everyone feels connected to the experience, the impact lasts longer. The stories come home. The conversations continue around the dinner table. And the growth doesn't stop when the trip ends.

That's the heart behind SOLE K-12 experiences. It's not just a program. It's an experience that begins at home, grows on campus, and continues long after students leave.

Seeds Planted in the Northwoods

It usually starts with an unexpected envelope in the mail—a letter from a student writing to us entirely on their own accord, months or even years after their bus pulled away from campus. They write to tell us that they still think about the trees, the lessons, and how their time here changed them. This is the real-world story of SOLE's lasting impact, told in their own words:

Thank you Trees For Tomorrow for this experience because I discovered a lot of things that I didn't know about nature and animals. I had the opportunity to see the weather and the environment in northern Wisconsin and I've seen for the first time a bog. I'm an exchange student from Hawaii and the nature is different in my country, thanks to this experience I could have seen and I could have understood better Wisconsin.

We're Social! Follow, like and share us on your favorite social media sites





from the Operations Manager
Mandy Gingerich

If there's one thing that feels certain right now, it's that the world is changing, and it's changing quickly. From shifting seasons and stronger storms to the growing conversations around sustainability and natural resources, it's hard to ignore that the environment is no longer a someday issue. It's a right now issue.

And that's exactly why environmental education matters more than ever.

At Trees For Tomorrow, we see it every day. When students step outside, put their phones away, and begin to experience the natural world firsthand, something shifts. It's not just about learning facts or identifying trees. It's about building awareness, curiosity, and a deeper understanding of how everything is connected.

We often talk about return on investment in terms of dollars and cents. But when it comes to environmental education, the return is something much bigger. It's long term, it's lasting, and it reaches far beyond the individual student.

When a student learns to appreciate the environment, they begin to care about it. When they care about it, they start making different choices. And over time, those choices add up.

That's the kind of investment that doesn't just benefit one person. It benefits communities, ecosystems, and future generations.

What makes this moment especially important is that today's students are tomorrow's decision-makers. They will be the ones leading businesses, shaping policies, raising families, and influencing the direction of our communities. The experiences they have now will help shape how they think about the world later.

And the reality is, many students today don't have regular opportunities to connect with nature in a meaningful way. Their days are full, their lives are busy, and time outside often gets replaced with screens and schedules.

That's where Trees For Tomorrow comes in.

We provide more than just a field trip. We create space for students to slow down, explore, ask questions, and experience the natural world in a way that feels real and relevant. Whether it's walking through the forest, studying a lake ecosystem, or simply sitting quietly and listening, those moments stay with them.

And sometimes, it's the smallest moments that have the biggest impact. A student noticing something they've never seen before. A question that sparks curiosity. A realization that they are part of something bigger.

Those are the moments that turn into mindset shifts.

Investing in environmental education right now isn't just about preparing students for a test or checking a box. It's about preparing them for life. It's about giving them the tools, awareness, and confidence to navigate a world that will continue to change. It's also about hope.

Because when students feel connected to the natural world, they don't just see problems, they see possibilities.

They begin to understand that their actions matter and that they can be part of something bigger than themselves.

That's why support for environmental education is so important right now. When you invest in programs like Trees For Tomorrow, you are investing in students, in their growth, and in the future, they will help shape. You are helping create experiences that spark

Why NOW Matters

A Vital Investment

curiosity, build confidence, and inspire responsibility.

At Trees For Tomorrow, we believe this work matters deeply. Not just for today's students, but for the communities and environments they will influence for years to come.

Because when we invest in students, we are investing in the future. And there has never been a more important time to do so.



If you are new to our community, welcome! Founded in 1944, Trees For Tomorrow (TFT) is an accredited outdoor learning center located in Eagle River, Wisconsin.

We deliver transformative environmental education to K-12 students, giving them the rare opportunity to step away from screens and immerse themselves in the natural world.

Our Mission in Action:

Hands-On Learning: Students study living lake ecosystems, explore Northwoods forests, and learn resource management firsthand.

Critical Thinking: We prepare tomorrow's decision-makers to navigate a changing world with tools, confidence, and balanced perspectives.

Lasting Impact: By fostering curiosity and a deep connection to nature, we turn brief campus experiences into lifelong mindsets.

When you support Trees For Tomorrow, you aren't just funding a field trip—you are investing in future leaders, healthier communities, and a sustainable tomorrow.

NEW ROOTS: A Space For Learning, Gathering and Growth

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the *John and Melissa Besse Outdoor Learning Center* should be complete. As I write, we are in the final stretch, with just painting and masonry work left to finish. After more than a year of planning, fundraising, construction updates, and steady progress, it is exciting to see this project so close to the finish line.

More importantly, it is exciting to see what this space will mean for Trees For Tomorrow.

The Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) is more than a new structure on campus. It's a modern bridge to TFT's historic camp experience, and a reflection of how our mission continues to grow. For generations, students have come here to learn by doing, build confidence outdoors, and connect more deeply with the natural world. This new space carries that tradition forward while giving us new ways to serve students, teachers, families, and community partners.

The OLC will provide a welcoming place for outdoor instruction, gatherings, special events, and facility rental, while helping us make the most of our campus in ways that are flexible, useful, and built for today's



Nearing completion, TFT's Board of Directors along with some staff, pose at the John & Melissa Besse Outdoor Learning Center that reflects both TFT's historic roots and its continued growth.

needs. In that sense, it reflects exactly what this season's theme suggests: timeless roots and modern growth.

We are especially grateful that this new space will bear the name of *the John and Melissa Besse Outdoor Learning Center* in recognition of the leadership support of the John and Melissa Besse Foundation. Their generosity, along with the support of nearly 40 donors who together contributed more than \$250,000 in gifts and more

than \$50,000 in in-kind support, made this project possible.

This milestone is worth celebrating. It is also a reminder of what can happen when people believe in TFT's future. We are deeply grateful for the support that brought this project to life—and for all the work still ahead as we continue strengthening this campus for the generations to come.

~Cheryl Todea, Executive Director



The Prairie School students (Racine, WI), rely on TFT's 72-passenger bus for their winter trip to explore the local national forest

At Trees For Tomorrow, some of the most meaningful learning happens beyond the classroom—out in forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and logging sites across the Northwoods. Those experiences are central to

TFT4ALL Transportation Fund Keeping Learning in Motion



TFT's mission, and they depend on safe, reliable transportation.

That's why we created the **TFT4ALL Transportation Fund**. Like our TFT4All Scholarship Fund, it helps remove barriers and expand access. Scholarships help students come to TFT through affordable program fees; **the Transportation Fund helps ensure they can fully experience the hands-on, off-campus learning that makes TFT so unique.**

Each year, TFT safely transports more than 1,500 participants from over 60 groups using our bus and vans. Gifts to this fund support the fuel, repairs, and long-term vehicle needs that keep programs moving in every season.

Transportation may not always be the most visible part of our work, but it is one of the most essential. Your support helps students get where learning comes to life. treesfortomorrow.com/Make-an-Impact/.

northbound

A Forum for Natural Resource Issues & Education

A Tree Tips supplement since 1984



Article by Todd Starling,
Environmental Educator

The introduction of non-native organisms to new environments is nothing new. Species are moved around the globe both by natural shifts and, more commonly, human activity. Many non-native species found in Wisconsin are vital to our economy and modern lifestyles—including agricultural crops, livestock, garden fruits and vegetables, and domestic pets. In most cases, these species cause no harm and are highly beneficial.

Every so often, however, a non-native organism escapes cultivation, flourishes, and spreads rapidly through an ecosystem. These are what we classify as invasive species. Officially, they are defined as “non-native species whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” Lacking natural predators or diseases in their new homes, these organisms out-compete native flora and fauna for vital resources.



Custom thistle shovels designed, built, and donated by the students at Blackwell Job Corps. This specialized tool efficiently severs deep roots during mechanical clearing.

Confronting Invasive Species on TFT's Campus

Understanding the Rules: Wisconsin's NR-40

Combined across land and water, there are currently over 220 invasive organisms recognized in Wisconsin. To manage this threat, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) utilizes the NR-40 Invasive Species Rule, which classifies these organisms into two primary regulatory categories:

1. Prohibited Species

These are invasive species that are not yet widely established in Wisconsin (with the exception of small, isolated pioneer stands). If they were to fully introduce, they would likely survive, spread, and cause severe harm.

Regulations: It is illegal to transport, possess, transfer, or introduce these species without a permit.

Action: Control is strictly required by law. The DNR may order or conduct eradication efforts.

2. Restricted Species

These are invasive species that are already established in the state and have demonstrated negative impacts on our environment, economy, or health.

Regulations: It is illegal to transport, transfer, or introduce them without a permit. Possession is generally allowed (with strict exceptions for certain non-native fish and crayfish).

Action: Control is highly encouraged, though not legally mandated.

The Battle on the TFT Campus

Here at Trees For Tomorrow (TFT), we practice what we preach. We are actively working to control and eradicate several invasive species across our campus to ensure a safe, healthy forest for our guests.

Because conservation relies on community, we work closely with the Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP). Founded in 2010, WHIP is a nonprofit cooperative of 16 partners dedicated to invasive species education and management across Oneida, Vilas, and Lincoln counties.

Through this vital partnership—and with the hard work of volunteers and groups like the Blackwell Job Corps—our collaborative impact has been immense. Over the last three years, we have engaged over 100 students and volunteers to log 520 total hours dedicated entirely to invasive species removal and education on our campus.

Campus Enemies: The “Big Three”

While we manage various invaders, our current top priorities are three particularly aggressive plants:

1. Buckthorn (Common & Glossy)

Buckthorn reproduces rapidly and forms dense, dark thickets. It leafs out incredibly early in the spring and holds its leaves late into autumn, effectively choking out the sunlight needed for native tree seedlings to regenerate. Worse yet, buckthorn is allelopathic—it releases chemical compounds into the soil that actively inhibit the growth of surrounding native plants.

Our Tactics: We fight buckthorn both mechanically and chemically. Small seedlings are hand-pulled. For mature trees too large to pull, we cut them down and immediately treat the remaining stumps with targeted herbicide to prevent resprouting.

2. Thistles (Marsh, Bull, and Canada)

Thistles are spiny, aggressive plants that can skyrocket up to 7 feet tall, forming impenetrable monocultures. Protected by sharp spines, they have no natural herbivores to slow them down. A single plant can develop multiple seed heads, each producing over 1,000 seeds equipped with a feathery pappus (fluff) that allows the wind to carry them over vast distances.

On campus, we deal with Marsh, Bull, and Canada thistles. Because their dense, painful patches pose a safety risk, they have become a top priority—some heavily infested areas have even had to be temporarily closed off to student groups.

Our Tactics: Management depends on the life cycle. Marsh and Bull thistles are biennials (living for two years). In their first year (the low-growing rosette stage), we dig them up, sever the root below the soil, and flip them upside down to die. In their second year, we must cut and bag the mature seed heads before they open, disposing of them safely before cutting down the remaining stem.

Canada thistle is a perennial that spreads via wind-blown seeds and an incredibly deep underground root system that can extend 15 feet horizontally and 6 feet down. Cutting Canada thistle mechanically actually triggers a distress response, causing the plant to send up even denser shoots. Therefore, we use targeted foliar (leaf) herbicide applications to kill the emerged stem and weaken the root system, a process requiring persistent annual treatment.

3. Japanese Barberry

Japanese Barberry is an ornamental shrub that arms itself with sharp spines, meaning local deer completely avoid browsing it. This gives it a massive competitive edge over native plants. It spreads both by seed and vegetatively—meaning its horizontal

branches can form brand-new roots wherever they touch the ground. Furthermore, recent ecological research indicates that the humid, dense microclimate created by Barberry thickets supports significantly higher populations of Lyme-disease-carrying deer ticks.

Our Tactics: While we thankfully have not found dense thickets on campus yet, we remain vigilant. We routinely survey our grounds to hand-pull small plants and spray isolated larger shrubs before they can establish a foothold.

What You Can Do

Early detection and education are our best weapons. Every organism has its own method of moving through an ecosystem, and humans are often the accidental chauffeur. You can make a massive difference by adopting a few simple habits:

Play, Clean, Go: Clean mud, dirt, and hidden seeds out of your hiking boot treads and vehicle tire treads before traveling to a new trail.

Clean Your Watercraft: Always inspect and wash boats, trailers, and angling gear to prevent moving aquatic hitchhikers between lakes.

Buy It Where You Burn It: Purchase local firewood. Moving firewood even a few dozen miles can inadvertently transport devastating pests like the Emerald Ash Borer to new forests.

Monitor Your Property: What happens on your land affects your neighbors and the greater community. Survey your property often. If you find an invasive species, control it immediately before the wind and local wildlife scatter its seeds across the landscape.

Tap Into Wisconsin DNR Resources

The WI DNR offers excellent, free public tools to help you defend your own backyard:

- **Identification Guides:** Use their interactive tables to accurately identify suspect plants and pests.
- **Monitoring & Reporting:** Learn how to log sightings of invasive species to assist statewide management maps.
- **Property Tools:** Access regional land-management resources directly by visiting: dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives.



Meet the Educators: Guides of the SOLE Experience

At the heart of every SOLE K-12 experience are the educators who guide students through their time at Trees For Tomorrow. They serve as mentors, role models, naturalists, and outdoor guides helping students connect with the natural world in meaningful and unforgettable ways.

Our educators are highly trained professionals with college-level education in environmental science, education, natural resources, biology, outdoor recreation, and related fields. They combine scientific knowledge with hands-on teaching experience to create programs that are engaging, age-appropriate, and aligned with educational standards.

But what truly makes the SOLE K-12 experience special is the passion our educators bring to every program. They are there every step of the way—encouraging curiosity, building confidence, and creating a safe and welcoming learning environment.

We are proud to introduce the dedicated educators who make the SOLE K-12 experience possible.



Jenny Sadak,
Education Manager

"I knew I wanted a career in conservation and natural resource management. In high school, I attended a TFT multi-high school program and still remember the night hike, a trip to Sylvia Wilderness, and learning tree ID and forest measurements. I pursued a degree in Environmental Science, and years later I applied for a part-time educator position at TFT—and 11 years later, here I am! What we do fosters environmental literacy and promotes sustainable behaviors and environmental stewardship!"



Bethany Heft, Environmental Science Educator

"I've always loved animals and the outdoors, and I knew my career needed to include both. I earned a B.S. in

Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State with plans to go into wildlife field research. A professor encouraged me to build public-speaking skills to strengthen my job prospects, so I took a position at TFT right after college to practice skills in public speaking and discovered I love teaching! I left TFT for seven years, but when my husband and I returned to Wisconsin, I knew there was nowhere else I'd rather work. I strongly believe in hands-on learning, and it's critical for kids to get outside and experience nature. How can you love and protect something you've never known?"



Todd Starling, Environmental Science Educator

"I joined Trees For Tomorrow in January 2018. From Saskatchewan, Canada, I studied natural resource technologies in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. I later studied environmental science at The University of Lethbridge, then studied environmental education at the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone, Minnesota. I enjoy working at TFT for the opportunity to share my passion with people of all ages."



McKenzie Grant, Environmental Science Educator

"I joined Trees For Tomorrow in September 2025 which marked a 'full circle' moment in my career. After attending a TFT careers workshop as a high school student, I was determined to work in natural resources and connect people to their environment. After obtaining a degree in Environmental Education and Interpretation, I worked several years in various 'park ranger' positions. As a TFT environmental educator, I facilitate opportunities where students can truly experience and learn about nature in an outdoor setting. I enjoy the 'teachable moments' and the questions that arise from students developing their environmental awareness."



Shelly Rudnick-Peterson, Environmental Science Educator

"My path to becoming an environmental educator has been a winding one! I started my professional career as a chemical engineer in the paper industry. I transitioned to teaching science at the high school level to provide a better work/life balance with my growing family, and to provide a sense of purpose. Moving to Trees for Tomorrow is a natural progression as I continue to move toward more meaningful and fulfilling work. Helping students (and adults) ignite a love and appreciation for nature is the most rewarding work I can imagine!"



Casey Sprotte, Environmental Science Educator

"I grew up being outdoors and enjoying the beauty of Wisconsin, so naturally I leapt at the opportunity to work at TFT. The ability to mentor and teach those around us about natural resources is vital to the continued growth of our world. Guests of all ages benefit from being in the unique area of the Northwoods and the instruction on vast topics that TFT provides!"



Phoebe Yetley, Environmental Science Educator

"Growing up, most of my time was spent outside digging through creeks, exploring the woods, or enrolled in outdoor learning programs very similar to Trees for Tomorrow. These experiences were pivotal in my development, helping me to foster a real connection to the natural world and develop a sense of stewardship for the land and wildlife. Eventually, these experiences led me to a career in conservation education. Now at Trees for Tomorrow, I can't wait to lead your students in experiences similar to the experiences that were so impactful to me."



COZY VIBES and the best of both worlds

One of the most memorable parts of a visit to Trees For Tomorrow (TFT) is the feeling you get when you're here. From the moment you arrive, something shifts. It's quieter, calmer, with a sense of comfort and connection that's hard to explain but easy to feel.

A big part of that experience involves our historic dorms, dining hall and Juday Hall, that were built by Civilian Conservation Corps crews back in the early 1930s. These buildings have stories in them you can feel the second you walk through their doors. The craftsmanship, the history, the character... it all adds to what makes staying on campus so special.

While they may not be "modern," that's exactly what people end up loving most. Our dorms have that true "camp feel" with bunk-style rooms that bring people together in the best way. *What really sets TFT apart is the feeling inside those spaces. Every dorm has a cozy lounge with comfortable furniture, books, games, playing cards, and a fireplace. At the end of the day, you'll find groups gathered there relaxing, unwinding, sharing stories, and making popcorn.*

We hear all the time from teachers that some of the most meaningful parts of their trip aren't scheduled. It's those in-between moments. It's students connecting, opening up, and just enjoying being present without the usual distractions.

For many students this is their first time away from home. That matters. A lot. Creating a space where students feel safe, supported, and comfortable is something we don't take lightly. We want families to have peace of mind knowing that once they arrive at TFT, their children are in

good hands in a safe environment.

Even though our campus may feel like it's tucked away in its own corner of the woods, we're right in the City of Eagle River—just blocks from both the police department and Vilas County Sheriff's Office—adding that extra layer of reassurance. At the same time, we're within walking distance of downtown. It really is the best of both worlds - you feel like you've stepped away from everything, but you're never far from what you need.

Our campus sits on 40 quiet acres, and it truly feels like your own little slice of the Northwoods. From hearing the wind in the trees to noticing the quiet, you slow down without even trying. It's peaceful, grounding, and something a lot of people don't realize they need until they're here.

Another big part of that "home away from home" feeling is the dining hall. Meals are about taking a break, refueling, and coming back together as a group. Our hospitality team puts a lot of care into preparing homemade, nutritious meals that feel comforting and familiar.

Students and teachers move through a steam table line where they're served hot, fresh food by our team. Alongside that, we have a generous salad bar with fresh vegetables and a variety of options. It's a chance for students to try something new, build curiosity around food, and make healthy choices in a supportive, low-pressure environment.

Something we're especially proud of is our Hospitality Manager, Terri, who works closely with every group to make sure dietary needs are fully supported. Vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, peanut/tree nut-

free—we've got you covered. No one is an afterthought here. Families and teachers feel confident knowing that every student will have good food available to them.

That sense of care carries through in everything we do. Our team truly cares about the students who come through our doors.

We like to say that while our educators fuel the mind, our hospitality team fuels the body and both are equally important. At the end of a full day, there's something really special about sitting down after a day of outdoor learning, enjoying a warm meal, and just being together.

We also take a lot of pride in our facilities. Clean, comfortable, and well-cared for spaces matter and we want every guest to feel that the second they walk in.

While many people experience Trees For Tomorrow through our SOLE K-12 programs, there are many reasons to stay here. We offer facility rental opportunities for groups looking for something a little different. Whether it's a retreat, workshop, or gathering, you get the full experience—historic dorms, home-style meals, quality programming, and the peace and beauty of our campus. It's a chance to step away from the noise of everyday life and reconnect with nature, with others, and maybe even with yourself.

At the end of the day, Trees For Tomorrow isn't just a place you visit, it's a place you feel. It's where history meets comfort, where nature meets community, and where learning goes far beyond the classroom. It's cozy, it's genuine, and for a lot of people, it becomes a place they can't wait to come back to.



Article by Mandy Gingerich,
Operations Manager



IMPACTS *Unseen*

That's the Whole Point!

Intro... I've been teaching at Trees For Tomorrow (TFT) for almost 7 years now. It's easy to love a job that allows you to spend time outside in the woods or on the water, but I often find myself reflecting on the bigger picture. WHY do we do this job? What impact does it really have? **I want to tell you about a few moments when I realized that what we do here really does last throughout a person's life.**

One... When I first moved back to the area I worked at a local vet clinic. On my first day at the clinic I was being trained by a young woman named Kim and before she even taught me how to use the computer to clock in to work she said "Your name is Beth? Um. Like Trees For Tomorrow Beth?" and I just stared at her for a moment and said "Yes, I worked there 7 years ago." She immediately went from quiet to animated exclaiming, "Oh my GOSH! You were my camp counselor when I was in summer programs there! You let me hold the turtle!" Kim, who was about to graduate high school and enter college with the intention of becoming a vet, told me all about how she loved her time at TFT holding the reptiles and how it really stuck with her. She also told me that she will never forget the day she met our red-tailed hawk and I taught her that he was hit by a car most likely due to littering. She still to this day spreads the word that even an apple core on the road is littering and that car strikes are a major reason birds become injured. **Our animals and our programs formed core memories for her and she is still to this day - even in vet school - sharing the lessons she learned here.**

Two... We often hear parent chaperones say "I remember when I came here as a kid! It was so much fun!" They tell us about how they've been looking forward to their child having the same opportunity and were excited to return as a chaperone. Recently, I met a TFT alumni who took it one step further. Jennifer Fisher, a middle school science teacher at Seneca School District in Seneca, WI, recently brought her students 5 hours north to our campus. During a conversation with her, I learned that the reason she worked so hard to get her school trip approved was due to one particular memory—when TFT took her to a bog 25 years ago as a senior at Appleton East High School. She told me, "The hands-on learning and introduction to a new environment stuck with me so much that I remembered it 25 years later when I became a middle school science teacher." She went on to say that her push to get her kids here was totally worth it. "I strongly believe that learning should instill the desire to continue to learn. **At TFT, I saw my students engaged, and asking questions for the sake of their own curiosity. Without the looming sense of tests and quizzes, I watched them learn.** It was so encouraging to see the students so excited" says Jennifer.

Three... When Manistique High School came to TFT recently, Liz Birr (biology, chemistry and environmental science teacher at both Manistique Middle and High School) was excited to get her kids back to the bog. She told me that TFT, and bogs in particular, have had lasting impacts on her students. Specifically, she

told me a story of a time when a post-high school student reached out to her and invited her on a trip to a local bog. Liz was elated that her students were still exploring the natural world even after graduation! Here is what Paige, the student in question, had to say, "After my time at Trees For Tomorrow, I felt the need to find another bog to go to. When I had went there, it was a transformative experience. It was the day that confirmed that I would go to school for my childhood dream. I had lost my way on achieving it and **that bog is the reason I'm now pursuing that dream to go to Michigan Tech for a degree in Applied Ecology and Environmental Sciences.**" TFT wasn't just a field trip to Paige, it was a mental reset and a return to her calling.

Conclusion... What is really amazing to me is that I just shared with you a few short stories or moments in time where I saw our lasting impact. But guess what? That's such a small fraction of what we do! Think of all the people who DON'T come back and talk to me about the love of the science of nature that we fostered. Think of all the people who just quietly (or loudly-entirely depends on the person) spread that newfound love with others throughout the course of their life. **Trees For Tomorrow might teach environmental science to hundreds of kids and adults a year, but that is just the beginning of the ripple we create here.** And THAT is why we do this job. THAT is our real impact.



Article by Bethany Heft,
Environmental Educator

TIMELESS ROOTS, LASTING TRIBUTES

Over the past five years, Trees For Tomorrow's Tribute Program has grown in meaningful ways. What began decades ago as a memorial tree tradition has taken on new life through a wider range of tribute opportunities that help families honor loved ones while also supporting TFT's mission for today and tomorrow. In many ways, it reflects this season's theme perfectly: **Timeless Roots, Modern Growth.**

Since 2021, four spaces on campus have been dedicated in memory of individuals, five tribute trees have been planted, four canoes now carry named plaques, and three picnic tables have been placed around campus as lasting tributes. Each one tells a story of remembrance, connection, and generosity. Together, they are helping shape a campus that honors the past while continuing to serve new generations of students.

What makes this program especially meaningful is that these tributes do more than mark a memory—they become part of the daily life of TFT. A tree grows. A picnic table welcomes conversation and learning. A canoe carries students onto the water. A named space becomes part of a shared campus experience. These are living tributes, woven into the work of outdoor education in ways that feel both personal and enduring.

We are deeply grateful to the families who have chosen to honor a loved one through this program. Their gifts create space for remembrance, reflection, and connection, while also helping Trees For Tomorrow continue to grow. And there is still so much opportunity ahead—for more stories to be honored, more spaces to be dedicated, and more lives to be remembered in ways that continue giving back. If you have been considering a tribute gift in honor or memory of someone special, we would be honored to help you create something lasting on campus.



Generations of Remembrance: Fifteen years after planting a sugar maple on Trees For Tomorrow's campus to honor their family member's legacy (above, 2011), that same family group gathered at Trees For Tomorrow this year to recreate the moment, dedicating a second sugar maple in loving memory of another beloved relative (below, 2026). Together, these sister trees stand as a living testament to family, enduring love, and a lasting roots-to-canopy connection on our campus.



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