



Wheels to Woods 2016 Annual Report



105 preschoolers from Big Rock Elementary in Chesaning visited the DeVries Nature Conservancy in Owosso on May 17

January, 2017

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Forest Products Council,

Michigan Project Learning Tree and Michigan Tree Farm Committee



Application form and other resources are at www.WheelsToWoods.org.

Background

Many teachers are passionate about outdoor education and want to take their students outside into the forest, but most schools in Michigan have limited transportation funds for field trips. If transportation funding is a barrier to getting students in the woods, then foresters, loggers, forest landowners and the forest products industry can help address this problem by paying for the bus.

Wheels to Woods provides up to \$350 per bus and \$1,000 per school to take students outside into the forest for an educational field trip. Small grants should be easy for teachers to obtain and report. Wheels to Woods promotes understanding forest ecosystems, forest management and forest products, and also allows teachers flexibility to create their own educational field trip. Any educational topic is allowed, as long as the learning takes place outside in the forest. Incorporating outdoor education curriculum like Project Learning Tree and involving natural resource professionals are strongly encouraged, but are not required for Wheels to Woods funding.

Wheels to Woods did not invent transportation funding for school forest field trips. The Oregon Forest Resources Institute provided transportation funding for schools long before Wheels to Woods started in 2016. Wheels to Woods is hosted by the Michigan Tree Farm Committee, a non-profit organization that supports the American Tree Farm System, a forest certification program for family forest landowners.



55 first graders from Beechview Elementary in Farmington visited the Heritage Park Farmington Hills Nature Center on May 5

What teachers are saying about Wheels to Woods:

"I've been worried all year about having to cancel these invaluable field trips due to lack of funding. Money for field trips is non-existent in many schools. These trips are extremely important to our students."

Russ Stolberg, 8th Grade Teacher, Olivet Middle School, Olivet

"Thank you so much for approving our request! We are so looking forward to this trip and it is nice to not have the stress and worry of coming up with the funding for transportation."

Megan Hawes, Preschool Teacher, Big Rock Elementary, Chesaning

Donors and Finances

Seventeen agencies, organizations, companies and individuals generously donated \$35,250 in support of Wheels to Woods in its first year – **thank you!** Wheels to Woods awarded \$31,433 for 179 buses and 92 trips in 2016. Actual transportation costs paid to schools were often lower than the awarded costs estimated prior to the trip. Wheels to Woods has \$3,817 in uncommitted funds at the end of 2016.

Tax deductible donations made payable to the “Michigan Tree Farm Committee” can be sent to Wheels to Woods, 110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 100, Lansing, MI 48933.

Table 1. Donors to Wheels to Woods in 2016.

Donor	Source	Amount
Michigan Tree Farm Committee	Forests for the Future	\$7,500
United States Forest Service	Youth Engagement Fund	\$7,500
Michigan Forest Stewardship Program	USFS State & Private	\$5,000
American Forest Foundation	Pierce Foundation	\$5,000
Society of American Foresters		\$2,400
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association		\$2,000
Michigan Association of Timbermen		\$1,500
Michigan Project Learning Tree		\$1,000
Michigan Forest Foundation		\$1,000
Mike Smalligan		\$500
DNR Fisheries Division		\$350
Packaging Corporation of America		\$350
Michigan Society of American Foresters		\$350
Rexx and Maria Janowiak		\$300
Grossman Forestry Company		\$200
Metcalf Forestry LLC		\$200
Cannon Forestry LLC		\$100
Total		\$35,250



10 visually impaired students went on a four day canoeing and camping trip down the Manistee River with Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind on July 12-15

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Accomplishments in 2016

Wheels to Woods funded 92 field trips to Michigan's forest in 2016 that impacted 8,279 people.

- 6,820 students experienced a forest
- 304 teachers included outdoor education in their curriculum
- 81 outdoor educators hosted field trips
- 1,074 parents chaperoned the field trips
- \$31,433 awarded – only \$4.61 per student and \$175 per bus

The Wheels to Woods application form was distributed to the Michigan Project Learning Tree network of 3,000 classroom teachers and outdoor educators in February, 2016. Wheels to Woods awarded funds to 108 of the 114 applications received in 2016, providing readily accessible funding for PreK-12 schools to take their students to the woods (16 trips are scheduled for 2017). Photos from many Wheels to Woods trips are shared on social media at www.Facebook.com/MichiganTreeFarmSystem.

Wheels to Woods does not limit the teachers and their educational purposes for a field trip. Wheels to Woods promotes forest ecosystems, forest management and forest products, yet its built-in flexibility produced some very creative field trips and dozens of additional opportunities for foresters and loggers to connect with teachers and outdoor educators.

- most field trips were urban schools visiting forests in suburban parks and nature centers
- 10 schools and 498 students in Detroit experienced a forest
- 11 Upper Peninsula schools, although any rural or urban school is welcome to apply
- 18 schools visited their own school forest
- 6 schools visited a forest on federal lands (national forest, lakeshore, wildlife refuge)
- 3 trips included 41 blind or visually impaired students exploring the forest



43 fourth graders from Floyd M Jewett Elementary in Mesick visited the Mesick School Forest to pull garlic mustard on May 24

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Host Organization and Partners

The Michigan Tree Farm Committee is the host and fiduciary partner for Wheels to Woods. Many people at Tree Farm and other partner organizations worked hard to establish Wheels to Woods. The Michigan Tree Farm Committee is a 501c3 non-profit to receive tax deductible donations and disburse small grants to schools. Karen Serfass, the treasurer, sent out dozens of payments in 2016 and included a hand-written thank-you note to the teachers. The American Forest Foundation connects the Michigan Tree Farm Committee to a network of 3,000 Project Learning Tree educators in Michigan. The Michigan Tree Farm Committee links schools with loggers and the forest products industry through the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Michigan Forest Products Council. The Michigan Tree Farm Committee connects schools to more than 140 foresters and 850 landowners who participate in the American Tree Farm System in Michigan. Wheels to Woods is a team effort to get more students outside to discover, explore and learn about Michigan's beautiful public, private and urban forests.



60 ninth graders from Communication and Media Arts High School in Detroit visited the Hawk Woods Nature Center in Auburn Hills on April 29

What teachers are saying about Wheels to Woods:

"Thank you so much! We are honored to be receiving this grant. Field trip costs are very hard for our families to cover and this will be a big relief! We are so appreciative!"

Maggie McGregor, 3rd Grade Teacher, Rose City School, West Branch

"As an educator, it was like a breath of fresh air and affirmation of all we believe and try to instill in our students to come across an organization as generous and like-minded as the Tree Farm folks. With partnerships such as this, one can certainly believe that maybe the next generations will be able to experience and appreciate the Great Outdoors, and specifically, America's Forests, through programs as effective as Wheels to Woods."

Steve Mitchell, 6th Grade Teacher, Power Upper Elementary School, Farmington Hills

Goals and Objectives for 2017

Wheels to Woods has a single goal – to remove the barrier of insufficient funds for transportation costs for schools and other youth groups to go on educational field trips to nearby public or private forests.

Wheels to Woods has ten specific objectives in 2017 to connect foresters, loggers, forest landowners and the forest products industry with schools, teachers, students, parents and outdoor educators.

1. Get urban and rural students outside into the forest to experience nature
2. Educate students about forests, forest management and forest products
3. Support teachers and schools for field trips to a forest or forest products company
4. Connect foresters and loggers with teachers and outdoor educators
5. Connect the American Tree Farm System and Project Learning Tree with a bright yellow bus
6. Promote the American Tree Farm System forest certification for family forest owners
7. Empower Tree Farmers to host a local school for a field trip to their forest
8. Promote Project Learning Tree as an outdoor education curriculum for educators
9. Inspire students to consider future employment as foresters, loggers, truckers, and sawmill workers
10. Connect schools and teachers with the Department of Natural Resources and US Forest Service



50 third graders from Montebella Elementary in Blanchard visited the Forest Hill Nature Area, a school forest owned by the Gratiot-Isabella ISD, on June 6

Wheels to Woods Team

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Thank you for supporting Wheels to Woods!



191 students from Aspen Ridge Middle School, Negaunee Middle School and North Star Academy learned about forests and forest management in Marquette's Presque Isle Park on September 23

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