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Eagle Scout helps Land Conservancy with Stella Niagara Restoration

Since purchasing the Stella Niagara Preserve from the Sisters of St. Francis two summers ago, the Western New York Land Conservancy has been hard at work enhancing public access and restoring healthy ecosystems. This past weekend, the Land Conservancy had a little help from a local Eagle Scout.

For the past several weeks, Tate Gildner, who lives in Lewiston, has been gathering tools and recruiting volunteers for his Eagle Scout project, a native plant garden at the Stella Niagara Preserve. On Sunday afternoon, in the garden surrounding the statue of St. Michael at the top of the preserve, Tate and his crew installed 150 plants of 19 different species to create a native plant garden designed by local Master Gardener, Lyn Chimera. These species will play an important role in the preserve's ecosystems, but they will also showcase the beauty of native plants to preserve visitors and encourage them to make their own yards and gardens a haven for wildlife by incorporating native plants.

Tate also built four bird houses, one for house wrens and three for bluebirds or swallows, as well as two bat boxes, and he helped mount them on trees in the wooded edges of the preserve. The Stella Niagara Preserve is part of the Niagara River globally significant Important Bird Area, so these birdhouses will make the property even more welcoming to our region's birds. Bats also play an important role in our ecosystems, as they significantly reduce the amount of pest insects by eating thousands in just one night. Bat houses provide a safe and secure place for bats to roost during the day and to raise their young.

"I wanted to help nature," said Tate. "and I really like bats!" The Land Conservancy is excited to work with the next generation of conservationists and provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn and spend time in nature. For more information about the restoration of the Stella Niagara Preserve and other Land Conservancy projects, please visit wnylc.org.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which meadows, forests, farmlands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1,700 land trusts nationwide, including 90 in New York State. Land trusts have protected 40 million acres over the last 20 years. For more information on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, or the mission of the Western New York Land Conservancy, please call (716) 687-1225 or visit www.wnylc.org.

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