



WESTERN NEW YORK
LAND CONSERVANCY

TheResource

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN NEW YORK LAND CONSERVANCY

FALL 2022

Connecting Generations at Providence Farm Collective

Dao Kamara and
his daughter Kuban



Western New York Land Conservancy
PO Box 471, East Aurora, NY 14052
(716) 687-1225 | info@wnylc.org
WNYLC.org

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Connecting Generations at Providence Farm Collective

By Kyle Semmel, *Communications Manager*

Like many Liberians, Dao Kamara was raised as a farmer. Due to bloody civil wars in his country, he fled to neighboring Ivory Coast when he was just eighteen. In 1995, he and thousands of other Liberian refugees were sent to the newly erected Nicla Refugee Camp outside Guiglo. There, he spent the next seven years of his life with no access to land, living in rickety structures and eating handouts provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As a proud farmer used to feeding his family by growing food that included rice, bananas, plantains, eggplants, and hot peppers, these were difficult years for Dao.

But this is a story of hope, not despair. It's the story of generations coming together to build something that will last, right here in Western New York.

When Dao joined the rest of his family in Buffalo in 2002, including his two-year-old daughter Kuban, he faced new obstacles: he didn't have access to land and couldn't grow his own food, and he had to start his education all over again. Perhaps the biggest challenge was adjusting to the American way of life. Still, he managed to complete his Associate's in early childhood education and his Bachelor's and Master's in social work before beginning his career. But it wasn't until the Liberian community joined Providence Farm Collective (PFC) in 2019 that Dao truly found his footing. Now, for the first time since he left Liberia in 1990, Dao again grows culturally relevant food for his family.

Even better, Dao's entire family has joined him at PFC on a 37-acre farm in Orchard Park. That includes Kuban, now twenty and a sophomore at Houghton University in Houghton, NY. Although Kuban was born in the refugee camp, she grew up in Buffalo,





© Kara Frisina

where she straddled two worlds. In one, she was an American student at Hutch Tech High School; in another, she was a Liberian immigrant. These worlds didn't always mesh with becoming a farmer—until now.

That's because, during the past year, Kuban has participated in PFC's youth program, and her experiences have stoked her interest in farming. In fact, working at PFC has brought her closer to her parents and to her Liberian heritage. Though she's in college now, she knows that whatever her future holds, it will include farming at PFC.

"PFC has shown me how cool it is to be a farmer," she said. "I've always been interested in creating things with my hands. Once you see what you've produced, what you've worked so hard for, it's really special. You leave

home where everything is clogged up and there's so much going on. You come here and it's clean and simple. Who wouldn't want to wake up every day to birds and nature all around you?"

Because of farmers like Dao and Kuban, we are teaming up with PFC so we can raise \$2.3 million by December 31st so that PFC can buy the land and add needed infrastructure, such as an office, a kitchen, and vegetable packing space. Once we reach our goal, the Land Conservancy will permanently protect the farm with a conservation easement. That way, the next generation of farmers—like Kuban and her cohort in the youth program—will always have a place to grow fresh, culturally relevant food for their families and our communities.

Plant the Future of Farming

Providence Farm Collective (PFC) is a not-for-profit organization that leases farmland in Orchard Park where nearly 300 refugee, immigrant, and Black farmers grow healthy food for their children, families, and communities.

You can help PFC farmers plant the future of farming and put down permanent roots at their farm by donating today. We need to raise \$2.3 million by December 31st. Our community has raised nearly \$1.3 million toward its goal, but we need your help to reach the finish line. Right now, we have a \$275,000 matching gift toward the joint capital campaign. We need members of the

community to donate to match the gift this year. Every dollar donated now will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$275,000.

Donate If you would like to donate, please send a check made out to "Western New York Land Conservancy" with "Providence Farm Collective" on the memo line to: Western New York Land Conservancy, P.O. Box 471, East Aurora, NY 14052.

You can also donate online at www.wnylc.org. Select "Providence Farm Collective" in the dropdown menu under "This contribution is for" on our donation page.

Save Land by Donating Today!

Want to save our farms, forests, streams, and meadows for future generations?

Become a member, renew your membership, or donate to protect Western New York's most valuable resources today. To donate, use the envelope in this newsletter or visit wnylc.org and make your payment online. Thank you!

Eastern Coyotes

By Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager

Go into any forest at night and you're likely to hear Eastern coyotes yipping and singing in the distance. Their haunting cries—like the hair-raising wail of banshees in Irish folklore—will cause you to perk your ears in awe. But did you know that these wondrous sounds also serve a unique evolutionary purpose?

"Coyotes take population density measurements when they yip at night," said Josh Balisteri, the Land Conservancy's Stewardship Director. "Their litter size will change based on how many other coyotes are nearby. So if you cull many coyotes from any given area, the females will simply have more pups. They are the only mammal known to have this ability."

This reproduction strategy serves the Eastern coyote well. Although you won't often see them, since they're most active at dusk and dawn and during the night, Eastern coyotes range the forests from Florida to Maine. This wasn't always the case. Until gray, timber, and Eastern wolves were wiped out of the eastern United States in the late 19th-century, coyotes were clustered in the southwest. Once coyote populations were free from wolf pressure, they gradually migrated eastward. By interbreeding with native Northeastern Algonquin wolves, Eastern coyotes have grown larger than their western cousins.



Eastern Coyote



Eastern Coyote Pup

Like humans, Eastern coyotes are extremely adaptable. They thrive in multiple habitats, from urban to rural areas, city parks to farm fields. And as a top hunter, they fill an important role by maintaining deer, rodent, and small mammal populations, and they do so while remaining largely invisible to people. This is an important distinction. Eastern coyotes live on the margins of human civilization, but they definitely prefer to keep to themselves. Next time you are in a forest at dusk, listen for their beautiful calls as they do their important work.

A resource to build compassion

We want to make it easier for you to find peace of mind and protect what you love. One way to do that is to write a legal will, an essential task to plan for your future and protect the people and natural landscapes that you care about. Scan the QR code to use this free will-writing tool to get started; it will take 20 minutes or less. You can also visit wnylc.org/planned-giving.



News

Mossy Point Preserve

We opened publicly accessible walking trails at the Mossy Point Preserve in August. Visitors can find the 2.1 miles of trails, which wind through the 216-acre forest and crest at the very peak overlooking the scenic Mossy Point, by heading up the Hunters Creek Park trail starting at the lower parking lot on Hunters Creek Road.

Vote YES on Prop 1

New York State lawmakers passed the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act, an historic piece of legislation that will fund critical environmental protection and restoration projects throughout the state. Now, it's up



to voters to vote yes in the general election on November 8. The Land Conservancy supports the Bond Act because it will help us protect our farms and save our forests, meadows, lakes, rivers, and other wildlife habitats. To learn more, visit VoteYesCleanWaterAndJobs.com.

The Western New York Wildway

We received a \$25,000 grant from The Nature Conservancy of New York to identify priority parcels of land that fall within the WNY Wildway. We are looking for other important places to protect, like Mossy Point, College Lodge, and the Allegany Wildlands. The grant will also help us engage directly with communities and finalize our Western New York Wildway Conservation Plan.

Providence Farm Collective

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York Blue Fund recently announced \$3.1 million in Blue Fund grants to support 16 major health-based projects across Western New York. We're thrilled to be among the projects, receiving \$300,000 to support our Providence Farm Collective campaign.



Mossy Point © Angeline Woodworth



The Western New York Wildway

Staff news

Financial specialist **Liz Birardi** retired at the end of September. We thank her for 10 years of exceptional dedication to the Land Conservancy. It's not possible to list all the things Liz did for us—and did so well—but she was the one who made sure everything functioned properly. In addition to her work at the Land Conservancy, Liz is a fantastic visual artist who will now have more time to focus on her craft. Find her at lizbirardi.art.

Earlier this year, ecologist **Priscilla Titus** retired from her position as the Stella Niagara Preserve Manager. Over the years, Priscilla collected hundreds of thousands of local provenance native seeds from across our broad eight-county region. Thanks to her care and nurturing, many of these same seeds are now the plants that bring biodiversity and beauty to our preserves. Liz and Priscilla will be sorely missed!



Fisher

2022-23 Winter Events

Winter Habitat Hike

Saturday, Jan. 21 | 10:00 a.m.-noon

Join an Earth Spirit naturalist on a winter walk through the recently opened Mossy Point Preserve to learn about the ecology of this unique location and discover what the plants and animals are up to throughout this time of the year.

To learn more about these and other upcoming events, or to register, visit www.wnyc.org



©Rachel Wigler



Saving the Farm

By Rachel Chrostowski, Farmland Protection Specialist

During the summer when I was a kid, I spent the days out at my grandmother's house in farm country while my mom was at work. Every morning, we would drive past beautiful rolling fields of corn, punctuated with big old barns. My little brother and I giggled and covered our noses as we passed the dairy farm we affectionately called "Stinky Corners." These summer days in the country are some of my fondest childhood memories. Sadly, as I grew older, old barns came down and houses appeared where the crops used to grow. Farms were disappearing. And while I never spent much time actually on a farm, these places held a special place in my heart.

The loss of farmland I witnessed unfolding on the landscape is a trend all across our region, the state, and the nation. I worked for nearly ten years in land use planning with the goal of helping our community become vibrant while supporting the protection of the farmland that remained. Luckily, I found my place here at the Land Conservancy, where I am honored to work with our farmers to permanently protect their land from development.

So how do we save a farm? It usually starts when a farmer reaches out to us. We have them fill out a survey to tell us about their farm, the land, and their plans for the future. We use this information to evaluate and rank the farms and we check to see if the farm is a good match for open grant rounds. Most of our farms are protected with funding from the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG). This program pays for all the project costs like surveys and

appraisals, but also pays the farmer for protecting their farm. This helps farmers by providing them with money to reinvest in the farm, pay off debts, save for retirement, and more. Through this grant, the farm becomes protected forever with a conservation easement, a legal agreement that limits development of the land. The easement allows farmers to live and work

on the farm, but it prevents the land from being subdivided or developed for anything other than farming. Thanks to conservation easements—and our region's farmers—future Western New Yorkers will always have access to fresh, locally grown food.

Since we first started protecting land more than 30 years ago, the Land Conservancy has conserved 45 farms (nearly 4000 acres) with conservation easements. We have 11 projects underway that will protect an additional 1,500 acres of fertile farmland. We are so thankful to the farmers who have chosen to save their land and we are delighted to be able to secure not only their land, but their legacy. There are many farms that still need saving, and we want to help. To find out if we can protect your land, please fill out our survey at wnylc.org/conserve-your-land

Are you a farmer?

Would you like more information about protecting your farm? Contact our Farmland Protection Specialist, Rachel Chrostowski, at rachelc@wnylc.org or (716) 687-1225 ext.126.



Thank you for honoring
those you care for and supporting
their love for nature.

In Honor of

CAITLIN CAREY
From Patricia Kane

KARIN JOHNSON
From Stacy Johnson

CARMELLA LINDSTROM
From Amalia Wagner

JOHN AND EILEEN SCANNELL
From Judy Weidemann

In Memory of

LAURA WARN BERRY
From Peter & Manya Warn

DONALD GRAVES
From Lynne Graves-Towers

BARBARA MALYAK
From Michael Malyak

ELEANOR KOJM
From Sheila Kojm & Louis Stuhl

EVA SAULITIS
From Craig Matkin

DR. LYNNE WHITE SCHEIDER
*From William Scheider &
Marcia Wopperer*

Thank you to our **Legacy Society** members who
have made us part of *their* legacy by including us in their planned
giving, like their will. Are you interested in joining our Legacy
Society and ensuring your favorite places are protected for
future generations? Email Kyle Semmel, Communications
Manager, at ksemmel@wnylc.org.

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Greg and Nancy Stevens
David and Janet Stout
Clarence Wigler

Planting Trees on The Riverline

By Jajeane Rose-Burney, Deputy Executive Director

If you walk around The Riverline, you will start to notice
new trees being planted, thanks to a grant from the
Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Fund Standing
Committee. Earlier this fall, we began leading a program to
plant native trees including American basswood, hackberry,

bur oak, and pin oak as
well as a disease-resistant
variety of American elm
and shrubs like American
hazelnut and serviceberry.



Hophornbeam



Serviceberry



The program is part of
our broader effort to
reintroduce native trees
and shrubs into our
neighborhoods, including
neighborhoods in
Buffalo. It is also a way to
extend ribbons of green
from The Riverline into
the communities around
The Riverline. The
neighborhoods around
The Riverline have fewer
trees than other places
in Buffalo. With the
assistance of volunteers
and community
members, we are planting
the young trees at several
locations in the Old
First Ward and at Red
Jacket Riverfront Natural
Habitat Park.

Trees in bloom are beautiful, of course, but they also
provide many other benefits. American basswood and
hackberry produce highly edible, nutritious berries that
birds love. Pollinators and other wildlife gobble up the
flowers, acorns, and leaves that these newly planted trees
offer. During hot summers, trees also offer something that's
vital to our neighborhoods: welcome shade and cooler
air. Trees cut our heating costs in the winter, and lower
our electrical bills in the summer. Trees also clean our air
and purify our water, making us healthier. They reduce
flooding, keeping our basements dry. Every community
deserves healthy trees and a beautiful place to live.



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During these last 20 years we have accomplished so much together: saving Stella Niagara, Mossy Point, College Lodge, Gallogly, Mill Road, and Owens Falls; restoring the exquisite ecology in the Niagara Gorge; protecting our working farms; and launching The Riverline and the WNY Wildway. Truly none of this would have been possible without you.

As my time as executive director winds down, I reflect on the past but I also look toward the future. **That's why my husband Tom and I have become members of the Legacy Society.** We included the Land Conservancy in our will. The work of permanently protecting land of significant conservation value will continue, and it fills us with hope and enthusiasm to know that we are making the future better for our children and grandchildren. I hope you'll consider joining us and making the Land Conservancy part of your planned giving.

Nancy Smith

Executive Director and Legacy Society member

Our Mission The Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has helped protect more than 7,000 acres of land with significant conservation value in Western New York for the benefit of future generations. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. Our clean air, clean water, and fertile soils will equitably support the health and wellbeing of future generations of every living thing. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.



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