

From the community:

Brushwood Center Garden Overflows with Supporters at Smith Nature Symposium



A view from the garden: attendees converse on Brushwood's porches, in the garden, and do a bit of birding while other guests enjoy the Brushwood home and gallery. (Posted by Laura Fruhauff, Community Contributor)

Community Contributor Laura Fruhauff

RIVERWOODS, IL - Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods held their 34th Annual Smith Nature Symposium on May 20, 2017. Celebrating a break in the weather, more than 200 supporters spilled outdoors, enjoying farm-to-table

food and drink while touring Brushwood's blooming native gardens. Inside the historic Brushwood home, friends of Brushwood strolled the gallery adorned with Carol Freeman's Endangered Beauty photography exhibit. As the sun set, participants made their way to the tree-lined presentation tent to hear about Brushwood Center's new mission, celebrate the 2017 Leadership in Nature Awardee, and hear the keynote address mediated by the symposium's MC, Emmy Award-winning NBC 5 journalist and reporter, Art Norman.

Brushwood Center's Board Chair, Ellie Ranney-Mendoza, welcomed the crowd and announced the recently adopted mission, which links this long-serving art and conservation organization to wellness. She also introduced the new Interim Executive Director, Catherine Game, formerly of Chicago Wilderness, who thanked the many partners and supporters of the organization. With this new compass direction, the organization reached out to author, journalist, and editor, Florence Williams, whose writings focus on the health benefits of spending time in nature. Williams' inspired attendees during her keynote address, sharing the research behind nature's effects on human health from her latest book, *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*.

The Smith Nature Symposium also serves as a chance to honor outstanding conservation leadership in our community. This year, Brushwood Center's Award for Distinguished Leadership in Nature went to Deborah Lahey, president and chief executive officer of Chicago Academy of Sciences and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. The award recognized Ms. Lahey for her work as a leader in the promotion and protection of nature. She was presented with an original botanical painting created by Brushwood's artist-in-residence, Heeyoung Kim.

Brushwood Center is grateful to all those who made the 2017 Smith Nature Symposium a success, including the principal sponsor, Abbott, and partner, Lake County Forest Preserves, as well as Art Norman, and the many sponsors,

partners, and volunteers who supported the organization's annual event. Mr. Norman delighted the crowd and helped raise more than \$30,000 to support Brushwood Center's programming.

Located in the Ryerson family historic home among pristine woodlands, Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods promotes the importance of nature for nurturing personal and community wellbeing, cultivating creativity and inspiring learning.

To learn more about Brushwood Center, visit the art gallery, or participate in any of their numerous programs, drop in at 21850 N. Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods, IL or visit their website at [BrushwoodCenter.org](https://www.BrushwoodCenter.org).