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ALLERTON RETREAT + REVIEW

WHY WE GIVE

Ward & Diana McDonald, Allerton Donors



We want to share with you the reasons why, in this past year, we have made a substantial bequest for the preservation of the natural areas at Allerton Park, along with an endowment specifically for trail maintenance. The first reason is obvious: Allerton needs our help. Because the State of Illinois and the University can no longer provide for Allerton's proper upkeep, the need for private giving has become urgent. Recently, Nate Beccue, who manages the trail system, told us that his annual budget of around \$2,500 had to cover trail maintenance, equipment, and part-time staff to help do the work. We were shocked, and after exchanging a meaningful look, Ward said "Well Nate, I think we can help you with that," hence our endowment now doubles the funds he will have annually. We also want to acquire tables and benches to enhance the quality of the hiking experience. The trails,

close to our hearts, are just one aspect of Allerton's maintenance needs.

Another reason we wanted to provide for Allerton's natural areas is more personal. Since graduating from the University of Illinois in the late 60's, we have lived nearly all our married lives along the Sangamon River between Mahomet and Seymour. In 1985, we acquired 200 acres of wooded upland and partially farmed bottomland, which we took out of production and put in hardwood trees: 50,000 walnuts, oaks, pecan, cypress, and ash. We built a log home on the farm and lived there with our three boys who also love the outdoors. Within a few years, we added more acreage, planted more trees, and later built the home where we now reside. All of this land, excluding our home and immediate area, we put into a permanent conservation easement containing over three miles of trails. For us it is all about bluebells blooming, mist settling, heron gliding, coyote pouncing, turkeys parading, red tails courting, fawns wobbling, bucks rutting, cotton floating, walnuts and acorns dropping, and owls hooting.

But we're not just nature lovers, and our concern for Allerton is not only its trails. On a bicycling trip through the Loire valley in France, we were impressed and inspired by the beauty of the old chateaus with their magnificent gardens. We want to see Robert Allerton's home and gardens returned to their original beauty. That restoration has begun with the new slate roof, cupolas, and chimneys. There is much more to do.

We can't always own our property, but after we are gone, we want our legacy and our devotion to nature to continue. For us, Allerton best exemplifies that vision.