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Dear GRNA volunteers,

I'm back from my Pacific Crest Trail hike! It was stunningly beautiful, and with the exception of a few short sections of the trail being closed due to wildfires, everything went as planned. It was an absolute gift to be immersed in the wilderness, surrounded by volcanic mountains, alpine meadows, wild lupine, towering fir trees, and glacier-melt rivers for weeks on end, but I'm glad to be back, as GRNA was never far from my thoughts on the trail.

Stopping at a spring one morning to fill up on water, I was idly admiring the native orchids when I suddenly remembered with a smile that the purple-fringed orchids would be blooming in the sun-dappled openings deep in the cedar swamps along Grass River that week. One night a few weeks later, camped in a lowland forest near a snowmelt stream, I half-awoke to a pair of barred owls dueting above my tent, and I began to dream I was leading an Owl Prowl program on the Chippewa Loop. And throughout my PCT hike, beginning on the first few days when I was still skittish about being in the wilderness alone, I was comforted by the sight of the trail lined with twinflower - a circumboreal wildflower that also grows in forested wetlands in northern Michigan - making me feel like I was strolling GRNA's Fern Loop in mid-June.

Now, as we have turned the corner toward autumn in the natural area, I've been reconnecting to GRNA, to this place I love deeply and was homesick for, even while I was walking through another pristine, awe-inspiring landscape. I've been bidding the sandhill cranes good luck on their fall migration, giggling with delight as I pop the touchy seed pods of jewelweed, and reveling in seeing the Virginia creeper begin its transformation to brilliant scarlet.

In this time of transition, there's a lot going on at GRNA, including our annual Volunteer Appreciation Gathering! See below for details, and I hope to see you there.

Emily Burke  
Conservation & Education Specialist  
emily@grassriver.org

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# IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE YOU!



**YOU'RE INVITED!**

**ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION GATHERING**

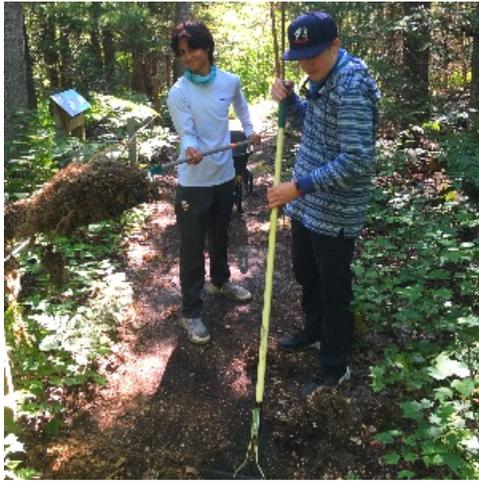
Thurs, Oct 6th  
5:00pm - 7:00 pm  
At the Grass River Center

Join us for food, drinks,  
and celebration,  
honoring you!

Please RSVP to [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org) by Oct 3rd

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**UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**



### **FALL STEWARDSHIP DAY**

**Sat, Oct 1 from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Summer will soon be ushering in autumn, which means it's almost time for cooler weather and some good ol' fall season work! Come on out and join the many stewardship activities as we prepare the buildings, trails, and grounds for winter. No experience is necessary; just a pair of work gloves and an open spirit. Pre-registration is encouraged - email Brian at [stewardship@grassriver.org](mailto:stewardship@grassriver.org).

### **AUTUMNFEST HELP**

**Sat, Oct 22 from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and during the weeks leading up to the event**

Autumnfest is GRNA's annual family-friendly celebration of all things fall. There will be kids' activities in the Center, the popular Trick or Treat Trail with "animal" encounters, refreshments from area farms, and more. Volunteer opportunities associated with this great event include joining our Events Committee to help plan Autumnfest, as well as lending a hand on the day of for set-up and clean-up. Email Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org) if you're interested in helping out.



### **WILD TURKEY TROT HELP**

**Sat, Nov 12 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm-ish**



For our Wild Turkey Trot 5k race, which starts at 11:00 am, we need volunteers to assist with snacks, timers, and course guides. We will need 1-2 volunteers stationed at the start/finish line and 3-6 course guides stationed solo or in pairs (if you want a buddy) along the route to guide runners and walkers on key turns of the course. And if you would like to bring a snack for runners and volunteers at the end of the race to enjoy around the campfire, we are looking for muffins, cookies, fruit, granola bars, etc. Please email [james@grassriver.org](mailto:james@grassriver.org) if you can help!

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## **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MINDY LEWIN**

This month, we're putting the spotlight on Mindy Lewin, GRNA's Board Treasurer. Mindy

has been volunteering with GRNA for the past 3 years, overseeing the organization's budgets and finances, helping to establish new financial policies and procedures with the Finance Committee, and helping out with the stream monitoring program. We recently caught up with Mindy to hear about her time at GRNA over the years:



**What inspires you to volunteer for GRNA?**

I love Grass River paddling and hiking. What inspires me the most is being part of maintaining this important part of our community.

**What's the neatest thing you've learned since you started volunteering with GRNA?**

How much our watershed actually impacts all of northwest Michigan and filters a ton of water going into Grand Traverse Bay (60% of the bay's surface water!)

**What do you wish more people knew about GRNA?**

Protecting the watershed is protecting your own health and wellbeing, as this is the water we drink and play in.

**When you aren't volunteering, what do you spend time doing?**

Running, yoga, traveling, and volunteering at other organizations

**Any fun facts about you that you want to tell us about?**

I just ran my first 50k trail race!



Mindy (at right) goofing around with other trail runners

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Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty-two years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation, and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come, please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

**DONATE**



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