

# NEIGHBORS



## Ribbon-cutting event held for Touch the Earth Natural Area

### STAFF REPORTS

A light snowfall didn't stop a private ribbon-cutting ceremony at Touch the Earth Natural Area on Jan. 27.

Supporters and volunteers of the nature preserve, located 6 miles west off State Road 46 in Columbus, unveiled a new parking area and educational kiosk last week. A \$3,000 grant from Bartholomew County REMC helped fund the project.

Among those speaking on the day were Kurt and Lisa

Weisener, who have been neighbors and caretakers for the property since 1995, and Terry Marbach, who was instrumental in the property's creation.

In 2021, Sycamore Land Trust, the nonprofit that owns and maintains the land, also has extensive plans to remove invasive species and help restore the natural habitat of the preserve. A \$20,000 grant from Cummins, among other funding, will help the effort.

Touch the Earth Natural Area was created in 1995 and

expanded in 1998 thanks to the donation of the farmland by an anonymous donor. The 98-acre preserve is one of the largest public natural areas in Bartholomew County and welcomes thousands of visitors to its beautiful, wooded forest, prairie flowers, and 1.9 mile nature trail annually.

### Plans for Tangeman Woods upgrades in place

Just north of Touch the Earth Natural Area across,

across from State Road 46, Tangeman Woods has received a \$20,000 challenge grant from long-time Sycamore Land Trust supporters Alice and Rick Johnson of Columbus to help pay to double the length of the hiking trail and build a new and larger parking area with an educational kiosk, according to Sycamore Land Trust.

TC Energy has also awarded Sycamore Land Trust a \$10,000 grant to add a 1-acre pollinator garden at Tangeman Woods. Tangeman Woods' Outdoor Lab

nature trail, created by the Bartholomew County Soil and Water Conservation District in the 1970s, is still used for school field trips, including those conducted by Sycamore's Environmental Education Program.

Sycamore Land Trust is a non-profit conservation organization founded in 1990. It protects 117 properties totaling 10,070 acres in southern Indiana, including 16 public access nature preserves in eight counties.

**From left:** Those speaking at the recent Touch the Earth Natural Area ribbon-cutting ceremony included, from left, Ann Connors, Kurt Weisner, Chris Fox, Terry Marbach, John Lawrence, and Lisa Weisner. // A drone shot shows Touch the Earth Natural Area in fall of 2020. SUBMITTED PHOTO; SUBMITTED PHOTO BY JOHN LAWRENCE