

Friends of Radnor Lake celebrate conservation victories



Kay Cheek, Friends of Radnor Lake, The Land Trust for Tennessee and the State of Tennessee celebrated the announcement that 15 acres of The Cheek family's property will be conserved as an addition to Radnor Lake State Natural Area. Pictured are Speaker Beth Harwell, Kay Cheek and Anderl Molterer. *photo by Robin Conover*

As a child in the 1930s, the late John Hancock Cheek, Jr. rode his horse in the hills and valleys around Radnor Lake, decades before Tennessee's first natural area was even a concept – but he saw it in each tree and with every sunrise. His passion for this landscape was deeply rooted and became a part of the fabric of their family – a fabric his wife Kay continues to weave.

This week, Kay Cheek joined Friends of Radnor Lake, The Land Trust for Tennessee and the State of Tennessee to celebrate a capstone collaboration that conserves forever an additional 20 acres visible from the trails of Radnor Lake, walked by over one million visitors each year.

"Working with Friends of Radnor Lake, The Land Trust of Tennessee and Radnor Lake Park Manager Steve Ward over the last 15 years has allowed me to fulfill the wishes of my husband, John Jr. and my son, John III - this precious land that they loved so much will be this way forever," says Kay Cheek, looking out over the place where she and John built their life and where their son and daughter enjoyed climbing trees and swimming with friends.

Over a period of 14 years, a total of 75 acres of land has been added to Radnor Lake because the Cheeks generously offered the land at about 20% of market value. Those 75 acres, along with the five acres that remain in private ownership conserved through a conservation agreement, are protected forever in memory of John Hancock Cheek, Jr. and John Hancock Cheek, III.

"The Cheek's steadfast com-

mitment is as awe-inspiring as the landscapes they have protected," proclaimed Jeanie Nelson, founder of The Land Trust for Tennessee. "The Cheeks are conservation heroes and in a city that is growing at a pace among the fastest in our nation."

"Their vision is transformational for Radnor, for our state," said Nan Adams, President of Friends of Radnor Lake. "Now, this vast land is protected as an urban sanctuary for wildlife and waterfowl and a place of peace and tranquility for people from all walks of life."

This is the fourth project on which the State of Tennessee, Friends of Radnor Lake and The Land Trust for Tennessee has collaborated - protecting a total of 93 acres through acquisitions and conservation agreements around Radnor Lake.

"This kind of collaboration is a strong model moving forward, but it is not unprecedented," said Bob Martineau, Commissioner of Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. "The state relies on non-profit conservation partners, friends groups and conservation-minded landowners to collaborate for the public good. We've worked with The Land Trust for Tennessee to conserve over 10,500 acres statewide. Now we add this project to our achievements – the state will ensure this sanctuary will be protected forever."

Looking forward to National Public Lands Day on Sept. 26, the assembled group discussed another great example of extraordinary collaboration for our state. In 2010, Richard Kinzalow's property covered a

large section of the upper Sequatchie Valley in southeast Tennessee, a patchwork of parcels he had been acquiring since the 1970's. He wanted a large section of his property to remain a natural area and The Land Trust had been in conversations with him since 2005. The State of Tennessee wanted to acquire parts of the property for seven miles of the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park and the Cumberland Trail Conference was eager to see this happen. The Land Trust for Tennessee coordinated the transaction among Mr. Kinzalow, the state and the Cumberland Trail Conference, resulting in the acquisition of 3,283 acres across three counties for the Cumberland Trail. As a part of the transaction, Mr. Kinzalow placed a conservation agreement on 2,100 acres of the property before the transfer to the state.

Speaker Beth Harwell was on hand when the partners gathered to look out over

Radnor Lake and pay tribute to the Cheeks. "We accomplish more together than we do alone," said the Speaker. "This conservation project - and others like it across our state - demonstrates vividly the power of leveraging resources and cultivating relationships to benefit Tennesseans for genera-

tions to come."

"I hope others will be inspired," agreed Kay Cheek. "The land is only ours for a while and I'm so happy to be here to see us all enjoy it together – just as it should be – forever."

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