

Land Learning Foundation—Keytesville C of C's April Business of the Month
By Janet Weaver

The Land Learning Foundation is Keytesville Chamber of Commerce's April Business of the Month. The former law office of retired Judge Michael Midyett is now the home of the Land Learning Foundation, located on Jackson St. (Highway 24) in Keytesville. Michael Midyett donated his former law office to the Land Learning Foundation in 2014, remodeling began in 2015 and was completed in the spring of 2016. Upon completion of the remodeling efforts, the building has a fresh, crisp look from the outside and is also handicapped accessible.

From the brochure that describes the Land Learning Foundation, one learns that the foundation is an environmental education and conservation organization. It is a 501(C)(3) entity dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of Missouri lands, along with the education and training of today's youth.

The mission of the organization is to foster stewardship through outdoor experience, youth education, and conservation; and the goals are to educate the next generation through outdoor education, preserve land through easement, and in the end, facilitate a stronger connection with the natural environment.

A schedule of the Land Learning Foundation's planned activities for 2017 are the following:

- Feb. 11—Winter Youth Rabbit Hunt with Beagles
- Apr. 2—Youth Turkey Hunting Skills Workshop (ages 8-15)
- June 10/11—River Fishing Workshop and Fish Fry (overnight camp) tentative
- July ? Float Trip with Stream Team on Locust Creek (clean up) tentative
- Aug.?—Outdoor Camping Skills tentative
- Oct.?—Youth Trapping Workshop
- Oct. 21—Youth Waterfowl Hunt
- Dec.?—Small Game Hunt

Finding qualified adults to help lead some of the programs has on occasion been challenging, but in recent months there have been several individuals that have become qualified to lead the youth in these ventures, so it seems that interest is growing in providing the necessary leadership for the programs that have been planned or are in the planning stages.

On April 2, working with Randolph and Chariton County Wild Turkey Federation Chapters and several MO Dept. of Conservation employees, a Youth Turkey Hunting Workshop was held. Twenty young people (ages 9-16) gathered at a farm just west of Clifton Hill for hands on experience and learning skills in hunting safety. Various turkey calls and calling techniques were demonstrated and, hunting skills were covered. Turkey biology was also addressed. Seeing a cannon net demonstrated was also a highlight of the day.

Another past program, the Youth Rabbit Hunt with Beagles, was deemed a success although apparently it was a better day for the rabbits than the hunters. Clay Creech and Travis Fry were the beagle wranglers, and it was a great outing for all concerned. Besides local youth who participated, some visitors representing the Hunting Heritage Foundation also came from the Kansas City area, so there was intermingling of rural and urban youth on this adventure. It is hoped that in the future some of the participants from our area may make a reciprocal visit to that area for another day in the outdoors.

Later in the summer, part of Locust Creek that has not been channelized and still has natural stretches is hoped to be the scene of a cleanup effort as well as the learning of skills needed for kayaking. In addition, participants in this event may see firsthand examples of stream management and watershed management and compare areas of channelized with the non-channelized sections.

When asked about the long term plans for the Land Learning Foundation, Secretary Bob Miller indicated that he had been to Florida and had toured the Beau Turner Youth Center there. This enterprise is a large working farm—complete with wooded areas perfect for hunting, areas where livestock are in pastures, and fields where crops are grown. He would like to see the Land Learning Foundation ultimately have something equivalent to that in Chariton County. There are many youth in Chariton County and across the state of Missouri who do not have the opportunity to learn about natural resources first hand and become educated about experiencing wildlife in its natural habitat. Although this is likely a very long term goal for the Land Learning Foundation, with recently revised tax incentives the possibility of such a thing occurring is much more favorable.