

The American Chestnut Foundation Honors 2016 Volunteer Service Award Recipients

in Louisville, Kentucky at its 33rd Annual Meeting

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) hosted its 2016 Volunteer Service Awards Dinner on Friday, November 11, 2016 during the Foundation's 33rd Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky.

This annual celebration recognizes and honors the Foundation's most dedicated and inspiring volunteers. Recipients profoundly symbolize TACF's mission to restore the American chestnut tree to our eastern woodlands to benefit our environment, our wildlife, and our society.



2016 TACF volunteer recipients (left to right): Scott Freidhof, Dr. Joseph Nassif, John Wenderoth, and Starling Childs, accepting the award for Ellery "Woods" Sinclair.

Scott Freidhof: Southern Region

Scott Freidhof has contributed more than 1750 hours of service as a member of Kentucky Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation. He helped form the Chapter in 2001. In addition, Scott has served as president and vice president of the Chapter, as well as breeding and orchard coordinator for 13 years. In his many roles, Freidhof establishes backcross orchards throughout eastern Kentucky; locates wild pure American chestnuts and collects seeds and pollen; manages controlled pollinations and seed collections (pure Americans and backcross seeds), and provides numerous education programs about chestnuts. He is also a frequent visitor at the Foundation's Meadowview Research Farms in Virginia, helping annually with pollinations. He always brings experience, know-how, and a great attitude. He has been integral to the chapter's success.

Dr. Joseph Nassif: Mid-Atlantic Region

Dr. Joseph Nassif is an American Chestnut Foundation volunteer who combined two of his passions: the great American chestnut tree and his hometown of Rowlesburg, West Virginia. In doing this, Nassif has created The West Virginia Chestnut Festival, a unique one-day event that is both fun and educational. Nassif joined TACF in the early 2000s when he saw an ad for the Foundation in a newspaper. In 2006, he was living in Alexandria, Virginia and along with other members from the state, formed the Virginia chapter. There was not yet a West Virginia chapter, so when it was formed in 2009, Nassif's wife joined the West Virginia chapter while he stayed with the Virginia chapter. However, he keeps up with both chapters. He is also very invested in his hometown of Rowlesburg. Built on the main line of the Baltimore railroad, it was once a very important small town. As a founding member of the Rowlesburg Revitalization Committee, Nassif became interested in developing a festival to celebrate the American chestnut. With the help of many co-chairs and volunteers, Rowlesburg created a plan for successfully hosting a one-day festival of interest to both the public-at-large and the scientific community. For Nassif, one of his greatest accomplishments has been starting the great tradition of an annual chestnut festival in Rowlesburg, West Virginia.

John Wenderoth: North Central Region

John Wenderoth's passion for nature developed at an early age. After retiring in 2009, he began looking for a way to engage in something meaningful. When he read *American Chestnut: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of a Perfect Tree* by Susan Freinkel, he was inspired to join the PA/NJ chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation in 2010. At the end of 2016, Wenderoth completed his second and final year as president of the PA/NJ Chapter. Currently, he volunteers in the chestnut orchard at Tyler Arboretum and as a garden assistant at Scott Arboretum. During his first year as president, Wenderoth visited more of Pennsylvania than ever before, and he became keenly interested in learning about genetics and understanding how to promote public appreciation of the significance of the loss and restoration of the American chestnut. He brings an amazing level of dedication to the organization. He continues to pour his heart and soul into this work whether it's boot-on-the-ground labor or fundraising. He is an outstanding contributor to the overall mission. His other interests include gardening, particularly in establishing self-sustaining landscapes, and spending time with his six children and ten grandchildren.

Ellery "Woods" Sinclair: New England Region

Ellery "Woods" Sinclair has given a decade of extraordinary service to the Connecticut Chapter Board of Directors. One of his first initiatives in this role was to develop plans for a local backcross breeding orchard, leveraging relationships with the Housatonic Valley Regional High School and connections with the Great Mountain Forest Corporation to source both a suitable location and the manpower required to turn a former Christmas tree farm into one of the Chapter's premier orchard locations. He played an active role in the orchard's layout and supervised construction of a gorgeous and successful fence. He also ensured the Chapter provided financial support to maintain the orchard that had the excellent benefit of acquainting high school age students with the site and the foundation's mission. As a lifelong teacher, Sinclair knew the tremendous value of this initiative. In addition, Sinclair provided access and a connection between the community and the orchard through hosting an annual Housatonic Heritage Tour. As a great sounding board for ideas, Sinclair continues to be a trusted voice at Board Meetings and a broader voice through the authoring or articles for print and web.