

Compelled to Serve

GTRLC VOLUNTEER HELPS GTRLC MONITOR AND INVENTORY PRESERVES

Rarely does a day go by that Eddie Sullivan doesn't appreciate the Grand Traverse region's natural beauty.

Sullivan started volunteering for the Conservancy not long after he moved to the area on a full-time basis in 2015. He figured that since he loved the region so much, it made sense to join in the effort to protect the places that make it so special.

“People don't need to necessarily have any special education or skills – there's always something that needs to be done, and there's always help that can be provided.”

“I'm so fortunate to be able to live and work in this area, and I want to do everything I can to help the Conservancy with its mission,” he said. “The protection of all of these natural areas benefits everyone.”

Sullivan grew up in the Detroit suburbs, but frequently took trips to the northeastern part of the state. It was there that he first learned to appreciate the natural world.

“As a young kid, being able to go where there was tons of nature and a lot of wooded or undeveloped areas fueled my fascination and my love of nature and Northern Michigan,” he said.

It was also during his younger years that he learned that nature can disappear quickly.

“Growing up when I did, in Sterling Heights in the 70s and 80s, I saw firsthand how uncontrolled development can just gobble up natural areas. It's not that I'm against development, but when I'd see all these pockets of woods and fields and farms disappear, it really hit me that we need to be smarter about it.”

After moving to Thompsonville with his partner, Tracy Hobbs, Sullivan first became aware of

GTRLC by attending public hikes led by Conservancy volunteer preserve steward Paula Dreeszen. Before long he was volunteering on a number of important initiatives, including leading a plant inventory at the John J. Helstrom Quiet Area of the Misty Acres preserve and coordinating vegetation monitoring at the grasslands section of Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Nature Preserve. He has also helped monitor and remove invasive species.

“Eddie has been a wonderful asset to the GTRLC volunteer stewardship program,” GTRLC Senior Preserve Steward Angie Lucas said. “His knowledge and passion for nature is evident in all that he does, and we are all so grateful for his time, and that he cares so much about these wonderful protected lands.”

Sullivan is grateful for the opportunity to work with GTRLC.

“My experience has been that the Conservancy is really great at identifying how people would be good at helping out. People don't need to necessarily have any special education or skills – there's always something that needs to be done, and there's always help that can be provided.”

For more information on GTRLC's volunteer program, contact Nate Richardson at nate@grtlc.org or (231) 929-7911.

Eddie Sullivan



PHOTO BY TRACY HOBBS