

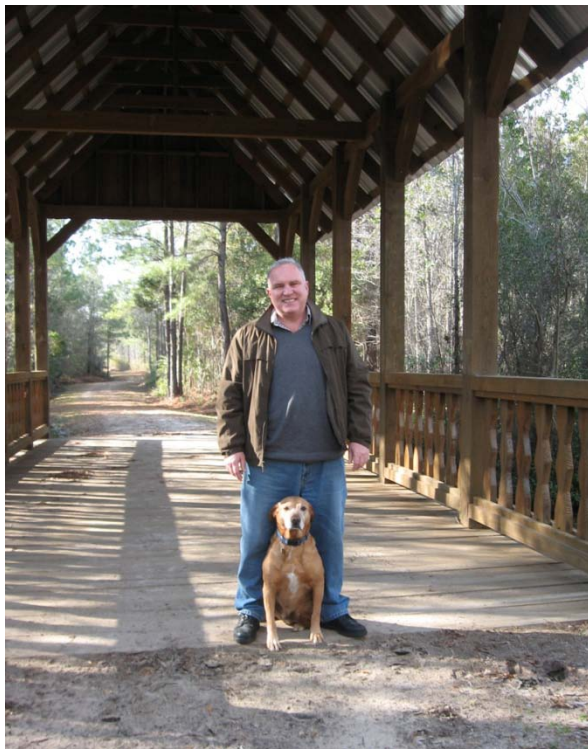
**PROFILES OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONORS
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ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH

BARRY SHEEHY

Barry Sheehy has an odd habit; he purchases land, protects it and gives it away. Sheehy, who moved to these parts from Montreal around 17 years ago, lived for a while on an island near Savannah, but several stormy seasons convinced him it might be advisable to move to higher ground. He purchased land in Effingham County in 2003.

“My wife, Chris, loves to ride horses, so we wanted to have land where we could be close to them.



Chris loves them; I clean the tack,” Sheehy says, although he does confess to enjoy riding on the property’s well-maintained trails, including one that carefully circumvents an Indian mound on the property. Period maps from around 1817 note the mound’s presence.

Shortly after the Sheehys purchased the land, Barry contacted the Georgia Land Trust and began the process of conveying a conservation easement on a portion of the roughly 280 acres he had purchased. “I just wanted to keep a significant piece of land in Effingham County from undergoing development. The area was just so stressed and I wanted to ensure there would be some greenspace.”

The land features extensive bottomlands associated with Black Creek, a tributary of the Savannah River. The hardwoods and other vegetation along the creek are protected from any future logging. This benefits water quality in an area that provide water to nearby Savannah and is vital to drainage and flood control in the area.

Barry Sheehy and Skippy

Sheehy has a great fascination with history, particularly of the American Civil War. He notes that during his 20 years serving in the Canadian Army, he developed a great interest in all history upon moving here discovered the powerful draw of the history of this area. Working with a loosely organized group of associates (they call themselves the Children’s Crusade, Sheehy noting that “we’re not young, but we’re foolish,”) The author of several books, Sheehy will soon publish the first two of a four part series on Savannah during the Civil War.

One of the books, “Brokers, Bankers and Bay Lane,” studies the economics of the slave trade is an offshoot of Sheehy’s work as an econometrician. What sounds like a purely academic pursuit is actually integral to Sheehy’s business which helps businesses assess opportunities and risks in business planning. “I wondered about the slave trade and how big it was.” The other book, “Savannah in Black, White and

Gray,” looks at surviving ante-bellum structures in the Savannah area. Sheehy notes that over 400 survive, giving Savannah the largest collection of such structures in the nation. Sheehy and his publishing partners will donate proceeds of the books toward preserving the area’s history. “You can sell anything with Civil War in the title to Savannah’s historically-oriented visitors,”

Sheehy points out other aspects of Civil War history, noting that trenches from the era of the battles are still evident. Sheehy published an article in Georgia Historical Quarterly entitled “Forgotten Battles” that details some of these encounters, such as the Battles of Monteith Swamp and Cuyler’s Plantation. He quotes a Union soldier saying of the Confederates’ capacity to dig in, “Give a Rebel a coffee cup and 10 minutes and he can disappear.”

The Sheehys’ first easement was recorded in 2004 and the second in 2006. The first property was then donated to Effingham County and discussions are under way with the Effingham County school board to donate the second property for use as an educational center. “I am extremely excited about the school board’s acquisition of this property,” says Randy Shearouse, superintendent of Effingham County schools. “As our county continues to grow, our students will have an outdoor refuge in which to engage in many worthwhile learning activities. Mr. Sheehy is so generous in giving a gift that will keep on giving back to our students in Effingham County.” The facility, when up and running, will be called the Lisnacullen Conservation Center, named in honor of the Sheehy’s farm.

Sheehy says his favorite part of owning the land is just walking on it “and not having to ask anyone’s permission.” He reports sighting all manner of wildlife around the property, including coyotes, bobcats, rattle-snakes, a flourishing deer herd and numerous owls and hawks. And he adds what might be his credo regarding his relationship with the woods, “Our first response should not be just to cut it down.”



Winter sunlight in wetland on property