



Illinois Humanities | September 2020

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Three Questions: Q&A with Catherine Game, executive director, Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods



The Illinois Humanities Spotlight

Bi-monthly Illinois Humanities highlights the work of our Community Grants program partners through our “Grantee Spotlight.” It shines the light on our grantee partner’s work, offering details about the organization and the funded project, as well as a Q&A with a team member at the organization. More: ILHumanities.org/Spotlight

Project

“Talkin’ Trash: Building Youth Resilience Through Community Action”

Location

Riverwoods, IL



Organization

Founded in 1984, Brushwood Center promotes the importance of nature for nurturing personal and community wellbeing, cultivating creativity, and inspiring learning. It is designated an Illinois Nature Preserve and is located in 565 acres of woodlands in the heart of Lake County. Brushwood offers programming in the arts, humanities, and wellbeing for people of all income levels, ages, and backgrounds.

Project Funded by Illinois Humanities

“Talkin’ Trash” is a collaborative project of 14 Lake County community partners who seek to strengthen individual, cultural and environmental resilience by empowering the voices of youth in Waukegan, North Chicago, Highwood, and Round Lake.

Q1

How do you see the arts and humanities, and culture, as essential?

Catherine Game: Brushwood Center’s philosophy is rooted in the belief that the arts and humanities are essential tools to inspire care for our human and ecological communities. All the science in the world (and don’t get me wrong — we absolutely need science!) cannot move our hearts to action in the way that a touching story, shocking piece of art, or historical revelation can. The arts and humanities provide essential cultural bridges for meeting people wherever they are and amplifying critical stories. And today, there are so many stories that need to be told. Amidst the pandemic, racial uprising, and the climate crisis, cultural tools help us engage in this growing movement for change.

Q2

What is the most important thing people should know about your work?

Catherine Game: Imagine this. You're driving just 30 minutes north of Chicago, hop off the highway, and find yourself winding into a lush, vibrant woodland immersed in rare plants, century-old oaks, and migratory birds. Here, nestled in the middle of this 565-acre preserve, is Brushwood Center at Ryerson Wood. An arts and cultural center in a nature oasis, Brushwood Center is the only organization in the greater Chicago region whose mission leverages the power of the arts and nature for human and ecological wellbeing. We work with more than 200 artists and authors each year to engage youth, families, veterans, and seniors across all backgrounds.

Q3

Who makes your work possible?

Catherine Game: Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods began as a grassroots organization of volunteers in 1984 (originally "Friends of Ryerson Woods"), and we continue to thrive thanks to the time, talent, and treasure of so many people and institutions. Alongside our Board of Directors, more than 150 volunteers support our programs and site annually.

Additionally, Brushwood Center is a completely independent nonprofit (receiving no financial support from Lake County Forest Preserves) and relies on the generosity of foundations, corporations, cultural partners, and individual donors. We are especially thankful to our major funders, including The Chicago Community Trust, Illinois Humanities, Illinois Arts Council, McCormick Foundation, Oberweiler Foundation, Morrison Family Foundation, Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs, Buchanan Foundation, Abbott, The Grainger Family Foundation, ComEd, North Shore Gas, US Forest Service International Programs, Village of Riverwoods, Solberg Manufacturing, Hunter Family Foundation, and Total Insurance Services.

Q

Anything else you'd like to add?

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, nature and the arts have never been more important for our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Brushwood Center continues to serve military veterans, seniors, low-income families and children, and artists, as well as our broader community, and we invite you to join our work. Our newsletter is jam-packed with virtual events, stories, anti-racism resources for environmentalists, and volunteer opportunities. Sign up or learn more at brushwoodcenter.org.

For more

[🌐 BrushwoodCenter.org](https://brushwoodcenter.org) | [📘 @BrushwoodCenter](https://www.facebook.com/BrushwoodCenter) | [📷 @BrushwoodCenter](https://www.instagram.com/BrushwoodCenter) | [🐦 @BrushwoodCenter](https://www.twitter.com/BrushwoodCenter)

About Illinois Humanities

Illinois Humanities activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that foster reflection, spark conversation, build community, and strengthen civic engagement. Illinois Humanities is a nonprofit organization and the state's affiliate for the National Endowment for the Humanities.