

## Kraynyk named Sewickley Herald Man of Year for conservation work

<http://triblive.com/news/neighborhoods/sewickley/10165204-74/kraynyk-sewickley-acres>



*Kristina Serafini | Tribune-Review*

Roy Kraynyk, Vice President of Land Protection & Capital Projects for Allegheny Land Trust, stands for a photo at Audubon Greenway in Sewickley Heights on Thursday, March 17, 2016. Kraynyk was named the Sewickley Herald Man of the Year for 2015 for his commitment to land conservation across the region including his work to preserve 300 acres in Sewickley Valley communities, more than half of which were acquired in the last three years.



While residents of some communities see strip malls and housing developments replacing forests, Sewickley Valley residents are surrounded by woods, green spaces and community parks.

Though some green space has given way to development, one man has spent years working to preserve and reclaim green space for generations to come.

For his commitment to land conservation across the region, including his work to preserve 300 acres in Sewickley Valley communities — more than half of which were acquired within the last three years, Roy Kraynyk has been named the Sewickley Herald Man of the Year for 2015.

His passion for land conservation grew from a hollow oak tree in Moon. That passion has blossomed to help preserve about 2,000 acres as part of his work with the Sewickley-based Allegheny Land Trust over the last two decades across Allegheny County.

The Aleppo resident has helped to preserve about 185 acres in the Sewickley Valley within the last three years, including land in Sewickley, Sewickley Hills and Bell Acres.

Thanks to municipal parks and the work of Kraynyk, the land trust nearly has connected a greenway from Ohio Township Park to the Ohio River in Edgeworth, he said.

What's made the Sewickley Valley stand out for Kraynyk, the vice president of land protection and capital projects for the nonprofit group whose mission it is to protect lands that support scenic, recreational and environmental well-being of residents?

"There's a confluence of factors," Kraynyk, 58, said. "There's a lot of land here.

"And, fortunately, there's a community around here whose members — businesses and residents — understand the value of this work. They are extremely generous in the support of our acquisition work.

"When you have people willing to open their wallets, it's pretty powerful. We're very fortunate in that respect. There's awareness about land use and quality of life and water quality. The confluence of those factors has led to our success here."

The land trust is located within the Camp Meeting Woods Biodiversity Area which covers much of the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed.

Kraynyk called the watershed one of the cleanest in the county and pointed to its health for a reason for a high concentration of protected land.

Green space, Kraynyk said, helps attract people to want to live nearby.

"The best argument is to look at communities that have good property values and are desirable to live. What do they have in common? Green space," he said. "They have trails, biking trails, hiking trails, access to nature."

Kraynyk, who began his career as a landscape architect for a planning firm, said municipal leaders in many communities have shifted toward a focus on protecting nature.

“Municipalities were falling all over themselves for development,” he said. “But at the same time, taxes were going up. They're learning that residential development does not pay for itself. Green space actually is beneficial to the municipality's fiscal health because it does not require municipal services. Green space requires very little municipal services, (and) very little police calls, infrastructure, schools.”

Kraynyk formed the Moon-based Hollow Oak Land Trust in the 1990s. The group owns more than 400 acres and has agreements with property owners for about 100 additional acres.

Kraynyk's colleague Lindsay Dill, marketing director for Allegheny Land Trust, said his ability to work with land owners and government leaders has helped to increase the acreage the group has acquired.

“(His) work has improved not only the quality of the environment in which we live, but has also markedly improved opportunities for and quality of life of local communities,” she said.

While remaining focused on suburban land acquisitions, including potential projects in Hampton and Bell Acres, Kraynyk said the Allegheny Land Trust is “trying to spread our wings a bit” by working to preserve land within the City of Pittsburgh through urban garden projects on vacant land.

“People are starting to grow food there,” he said. “But what's also happening is that these communities are becoming more undesirable by developers. Community groups are asking us if we can help protect the land forever so it doesn't turn into a used car lot down the road when development starts to occur in the community.”

The group is working in Larimer, Garfield and the city's North Side, Kraynyk said.

“It's a little bit nontraditional for a land trust to be involved with projects like that,” he said. “And it's all relative. That quarter acre on the North Side is as valuable to the people around it as the 30 acres in Bell Acres.”

While Kraynyk has been instrumental in acquiring and preserving land, it is the tract of land that helped Kraynyk find his passion that he regrets not being able to save.

When Kraynyk was 2, his father purchased six acres off Fox Wood Road in Moon.

“It was the last house on the road before the road turned to dirt,” Kraynyk said. “Back in there it was just a massive playground for us kids.”

He said the land contained old foundations, caves and plenty of trees.

“When I was 12 or so, we found this big hollow oak tree that two or three people could get inside of it and look up and see the sky.

“It was always where we went. We'd take a hike in the woods and we'd always end up at the hollow oak tree.”

The property became an apartment complex.

“It was extremely painful to see,” he said. “That is one of my most significant disappointments is not being able to protect that land. It was too early and I didn't know enough.”

Kraynyk said he works to ensure other properties don't share a similar fate.

“We're here today. If we're on this trajectory and we do nothing, we're going to be in the same place in five years, 10 years (and) 100 years,” he said. “If we make incremental adjustments to our trajectory, in five, 10 (or) 100 years, we're going to be ... in a different place altogether.

“We have to think generationally but act urgently. Take advantage of that opportunity you have today because those opportunities are usually very fleeting. They may seem incremental but they change the trajectory.”

*Bobby Cherry is a Tribune-Review staff writer.*

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## **Man, Woman & Citizen of the Year celebration**

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Join the Sewickley Herald in recognizing our Man, Woman and Citizen of the Year honorees on April 15 at the Edgeworth Club, 511 East Drive, for the annual Sewickley Herald honors celebration.

The Herald will honor Roy Kraynyk as Man of the Year, Susan Sour as Woman of the Year and the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association as Citizen of the Year.

Cost is \$35 per person. Cash bar starts at 6 p.m. and dinner begins at 7 p.m.

Reservations, including the first and last names of those in your party, are required no later than April 8 to the Sewickley Herald and can be done by calling 412-324-1406 or sending an e-mail to [honorsdinner@tribweb.com](mailto:honorsdinner@tribweb.com) (mailto:[honorsdinner@tribweb.com](mailto:honorsdinner@tribweb.com)). Payment is nonrefundable after April 8 and must be made in full prior to April 8.

Your reservation should indicate which of the honorees you are supporting.

Checks can be mailed to Sewickley Herald, Attn: Honors Dinner, 504 Beaver St., Sewickley, PA 15143. Checks should be made payable to Trib Total Media.

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