



ANNUAL REPORT  
2015

A photograph of a motorboat with several passengers on the water, moving towards the viewer. The boat is creating a wake. In the background, there are large, layered rock cliffs and autumn-colored trees on the hillsides. The sky is clear and blue.

Full Speed Ahead

# Accelerating into areas for growth: Outdoor education and river networks



2015 was a year of growth and exciting changes for Missouri River Relief. We received a jolt of rejuvenation this year with three big highlights—acquiring bigger and better vehicles, expanding our Education Program, and bringing a human-powered twist to our river clean-ups (via canoe). We brought on two new staff members with a deep well of talents, worked with new partners on a variety of new projects, and deepened our relationship with many of our old friends along the Missouri River valley - from St. Louis to Omaha.

We continue to find new ways to introduce people to the Missouri River and give them an opportunity to learn more about this tremendous resource and to help clean it up.

I hope you are as inspired as I am by the community of people working together through Missouri River Relief to make the world a better place. And I hope you are motivated to take action yourself!

Thanks so much for your continued support—we could not do this without you.

*JM Barrow*

Jeff Barrow,  
Director, Missouri River Relief

## River Relief Staff



**Steve Schnarr** has been **Program Manager** for MRR since 2005. He's also secretly a fantastic cook, talented writer and calm force behind nearly all 2015 events.



**Melanie Cheney's** nickname is “Reminder in Chief” and for good reason—she is a demon with details. She has been **Assistant Program Manager** for MRR since 2008.



**Kristen Schulte** earned her master's at the Teton Science Schools; feels smartest when she's outdoors and makes a perfect addition to MRR as **Education Coordinator**.

**Jen Davis** is our new part-time **Event Coordinator** and longtime crew member. She comes with a bonus assistant, Frida the river dog and chow hound.



**John Brady** is MRR's **Fleet Manager** and poet laureate. He might bark orders and gesture crazily when the frontloaders are out, but we know he's really a teddybear.



**Racin' Dave Stevens**, MRR **Mechanic**, cares for our vehicles and boats with the attention he gives to motorcycles in his shop. A high honor indeed.



# FIRSTS

## River Heroes Gala

Our friends in Kansas City organized a celebration to recognize the Hulston Family Foundation and Tony Dickerson.

## \$91,000 EPA Grant

*Two-year grant awarded to only 35 out of 400 applicants nationwide.*



@mo\_river\_relief

Finally joined Instagram to share our special views of the Missouri River.

## NEW EDUCATION AND EVENT COORDINATORS

Kristen Schulte came on as our education coordinator. Jennifer Davis stepped in to orchestrate the Omaha, St. Charles and Katfish Katy's to Cooper's canoe clean-ups.

**Fundraising** with CoMoGives Community Foundation.

## Trash Cleanup and Beach Party

**at Mosenthein Island** on the Mississippi River inspired by a coalition of environmental groups in the St. Louis area.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Logboat Bingo & 10% Night fundraiser; Osage Paddle Sports races; Fontanelle Forest in Omaha; Mile Marker 68.3 Washington Bier Fest; Watershed Cairns; Washington Middle School; Missouri River Paddlers Rendezvous

## Canoe Cleanup

A flotilla of 20 canoes stormed Missouri River banks in October for our final cleanup of the year. The nimble watercraft moved into shallow areas that were inaccessible to our motor boats.



Crowdfunding campaign to replace our high-mileage vehicles with a bigger, safer and more efficient fleet.



Trash Clean-up and Beach Party at Mosenthein Island. LIBBY REUTER



Logboat 10% Night Custom Beer Glasses to benefit MRR. Photo courtesy of LOGBOAT BREWING COMPANY



Students haul trash for pick-up on a wing dike. BRETT DUFUR



The big red box truck is large enough to store and haul clean-up and camping gear. TINA CASAGRAND



### Summers@Mizzou takes first step toward future River Academy



Imagine exploring the Missouri River by boat to learn about ecology and river culture from experts in the field. That's what we gave 12 teenagers in a week with our "Big River Experience" annual summer camp, a part of Summers@Mizzou program hosted by MU Extension and the 4-H Center for Youth Development.

Heidi Allemann, a high-schooler, was a veteran of the MU programs. When her mother Elizabeth heard about the Big River Experience, she lit up. "Right away I was interested," she said. "I loved the idea combining Summers@Mizzou and River Relief."

The students explored the river through painting watercolors, sampling for aquatic wildlife, mist-netting birds, touring Columbia's stormwater remediation sites and visiting an urban agriculture center to learn about farming's effects downstream.

Of course, the students also did a river clean-up where they collected and sorted trash: 140 plastic bottles, 67 pieces of Styrofoam, 40 aluminum cans and much more. The week was capped off by a surprise presentation from Janet Moreland, a river expert famous for her solo expedition by kayak from the source of the Missouri River to the Gulf of Mexico.

"Heidi loved the river, she loved the activities and she seemed more confident when she returned," Elizabeth said. "It is so important for our young adults to spend time with adults of all ages."

In 2015, we conducted 13 education events with 1,209 students and 21 school groups and helped organize 34 presentations at the Big Muddy Speakers Series in three cities.

Students learn about birds with the Missouri River Bird Observatory during Summers@Mizzou "Big River Experience" Summer Camp. ASHLEY EISENBARTH Portrait: Heidi Allemann. MELANIE CHENEY

# Education Philosophy

With the revitalization of our education program, the Education Committee needed a tool for charting our path. Similar to a map and compass, our “education philosophy” gives us our bearing and points us in the directions that we want to continue to grow.

## IN SUMMARY



Missouri River Education engages participants' innate sense of wonder and natural curiosity to explore the Missouri River through place-based programs that are interdisciplinary in nature and experiential in character. Informed by our research and experience working with communities along the Missouri River, we believe this approach inspires community engagement, academic achievement and a sense of stewardship.

- **Kristen Schulte, MRR Education Coordinator**

## IN ACTION



Since our first Washington River Festival, we've wanted to get middle school students out on the river. Our first year, the administration said, "You want to do what?!" It spiraled into oblivion. We earned support for our second attempt, but the river was at flood stage and shut us down. On the third try, thanks to Washington Middle School science teacher Michael Batsie, we were able to get kids on the river for an experience they'll never forget.

- **Mike Smith, Washington High School**



Omaha: 5.5 tons

## COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS

Kansas City: 3.3 tons

Boonville: .84 tons

Alligator Cove: .9 tons

Katfish Katy's: 1.8tons

Rocheport 1.4 tons

### St. Charles volunteers removed 7.7 tons of trash

This was our 10th river clean-up in Saint Charles and it was anything but routine. Serious flooding caused MRR organizers to “roll with the changes.” Huge driftwood piles on the riverfront prevented us from pitching our crew camp on the beach and forced us to move the clean-up headquarters to Blanchette Landing, downriver from Frontier Park.



Tons of debris had floated ashore during the floods so volunteers had no problem finding piles of scrap metal and an assortment of loose, scattered trash, including an astounding 169 tires!!!

Biologists from the Missouri Department of Conservation launched their boats to help MRR’s fleet shuttle 256 hardworking volunteers to trash sites. The workers were blessed with bright blue skies as they scrambled up muddy banks, scoured the shores and searched the woods along 10 miles of the river.

Missouri River Relief doubled its impact by hiring Jen Davis as part-time Event Coordinator, and we received outstanding support from 15 generous sponsors including Ameristar Casino, Missouri American Water and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Most of the trash our volunteers pick up floats in from many locations upstream. Most common items are styrofoam and single-use plastic items of all kinds.

Top: Members of Tamil Sangum of Missouri show off their trash piles at the 2015 St. Charles Missouri River Clean-up. SASI SULIRAJ  
Portrait: Jen Davis MELANIE CHENEY



Easley: 2.4 tons

St. Charles: 7.7 tons

St.Louis Area: 11 tons

Washington: 5.9 tons

## 41 Tons of Trash

Removed from the river, including...

- 7,070 lbs of scrap metal • 485 tires • 6 refrigerators
- 312 chunks o' styrofoam • 32 propane tanks
- 150 fireworks remnants • 7 messages in a bottle
- 4 hot water heaters • 27 coolers • 13.5 chairs • 4 TVs
- 3 gas cans • 4 fishing poles • 1 "Magic 8 Ball" Toy
- 43 - 55-gal. plastic barrels • 3 mattresses
- 3 fire extinguishers • 1 Chemical Spray Tank
- 1 light-up Santa

## 1,508 Volunteers

from groups like Missouri Master Naturalists, MU Geology Club, Girl Scout Troop 4274, Mindstorm Troopers, Apple Store, Ohmkaram, Shiloh Robotics, University of Omaha, Pacific Life Insurance, Americorps, 4H Imagination Creation Club, Stratcom, AFWA, 1 Mississippi, Kayak Swarm, Brentwood High School National Honor Society, Missouri Stream Team and a bunch more!

## 91 EVENTS

CLEAN-UPS, EDUCATION, RIVER RACES, FILM FESTIVAL, BIG MUDDY SPEAKER SERIES, RIVER EXCURSIONS, RIVER FESTIVAL & MORE

## 19 Communities

Omaha, Bellevue, Council Bluffs, Kansas City,  
Sugar Creek, Orrick, Carrollton, Boonville, Rocheport,  
Columbia, Huntsdale, Cooper's Landing,  
Jefferson City, Washington, St. Charles, Riverview,  
Fenton, St. Louis, Alton

## 4,650 people

impacted in 5 states

## RIVER RACES



### Two new river races add options for paddlers

Kent Robinson not only started Osage Paddle Sports in 2015, he and his family brought two new benefit races to Missouri River Relief. In the “Spring 12” in May, 58 racers in 43 boats and two stand-up paddlers (SUPs) paddled from Mariosa to the mouth of the Osage River and back to Bonnots Mill (with a headwind in both directions!). They tripled that distance in October with the “Fall 36” – a 36-mile race from the Osage River, down the Missouri and up the Gasconade. They helped raise more than \$1,800 for the organization.



Paddle sports have become a staple in Missouri River Relief’s outreach and fundraising efforts. Since the start of the MR340 Race, canoeing and kayaking on the Missouri River has exploded. The strong community that has grown around racing has helped our organization in so many ways, from sweat equity to event planning, fundraising and networking.

In 2015, we worked on 5 river races with more than 700 paddlers competing over 459 miles of water.

## 2015 PARTNER OF THE YEAR



### Fontenelle Forest proves to be a powerful partner

In early 2015, we received a phone call from a gentleman by the name of Seth Keith who wanted to collaborate on a river clean-up on his stretch of river just downstream of Omaha.



Soon we were meeting via Skype and collaborating with the staff of Fontenelle Forest on river clean-up and education events. They made their staff and resources available, and their experience preserving the woods for the past 100 years was invaluable.

Fontenelle Forest is made up of hardwood deciduous forests, an extensive floodplain jutting out like a peninsula into the Missouri River, loess hills, and marshlands. We enjoyed learning the history and taking a tour of the place.

The events were wildly successful, and we were able to remove big debris from the peninsula that the 2011 floods had swept into this National Natural Landmark.

Best of all, it was carried forward by a special guy. Seth was 100% on board, with an obvious contagious passion for the natural world. Partnerships are key in our business, and he gave himself for the sake of the cause.



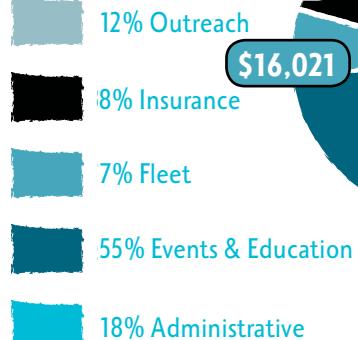
# Finance

## REVENUE



Total: \$242,492

## EXPENSE



Total: \$229,694

# Board Members

**BILL FESSLER**, *president*  
Resource Management and  
Conservation Corps Supervisor, KC  
Parks & Recreation

**MARK CHAMBERS**, *vice president*  
Master Naturalist, Social Service  
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**EMILY PHERIGO**  
Graduate Research Assistant,  
University of Missouri-Columbia

**TONY SUDEKUM**  
Medical Doctor

*Dave Stous has provided energy, expertise  
and financial support on the board of  
directors since 2006. Thanks so much for  
your decade of wonderful service, "Mr.Dave"*



# Sponsors

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Our project of cleaning up the Missouri River would be impossible without the generous donations of our many sponsors. A Big Muddy, heartfelt thanks to our sponsors.

## HULSTON FAMILY FOUNDATION



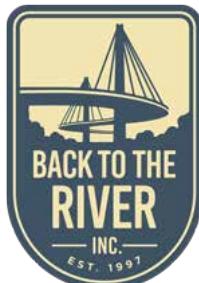
Sponsor of the Year



MISSOURI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

## THE RIO VISTA FUND

a fund of the Greater St. Louis Community Foundation



**GRAINGER**  
FOR THE ONES WHO GET IT DONE



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CASINO ★ RESORT ★ SPA

AEP River Operations  
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City of Columbia  
Stormwater  
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Janice & Clayton Schnarr  
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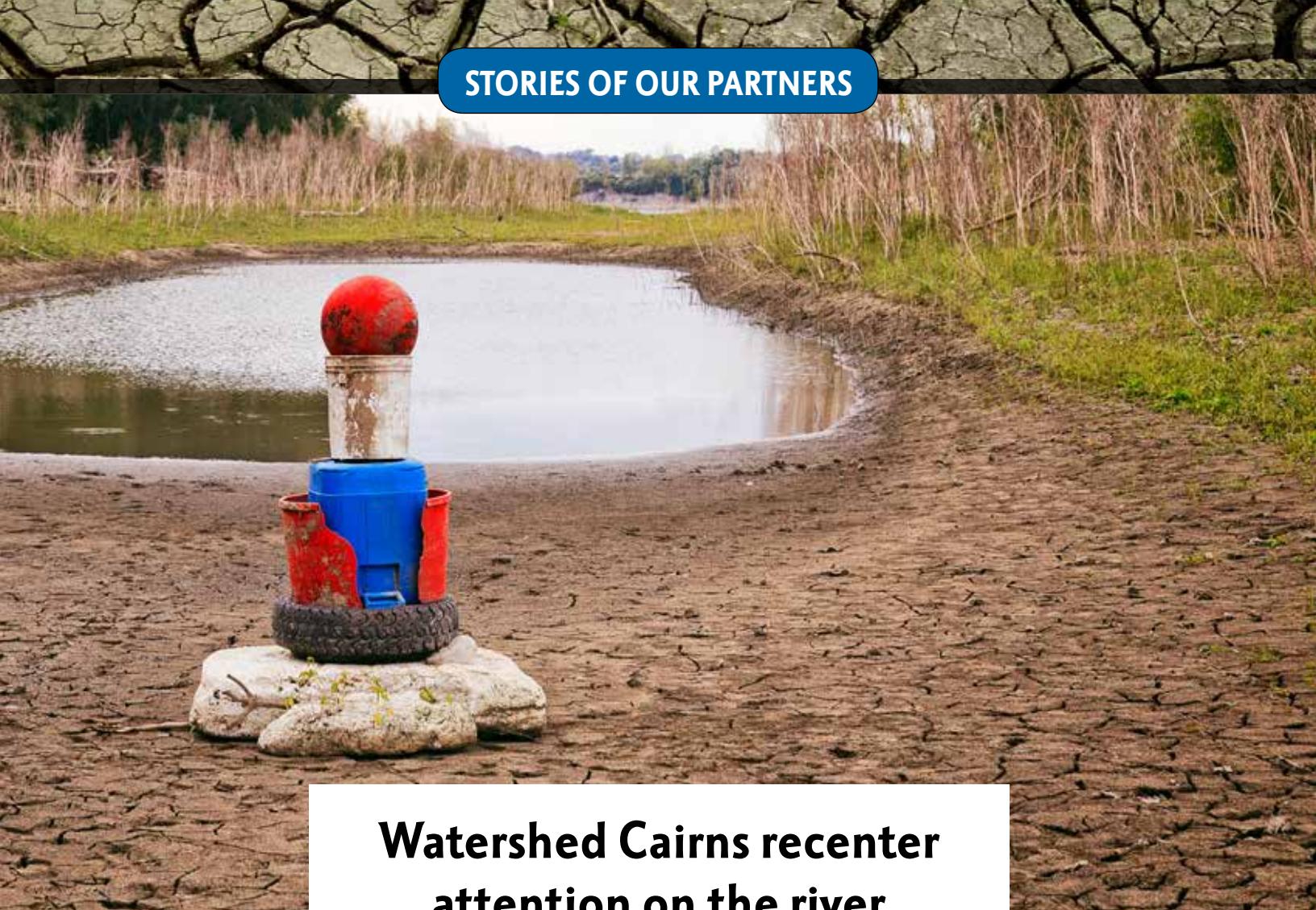
Patrick & Becky Lynn  
Race to the Dome  
Scott & Kate Mansker  
The Rio Vista Fund - a fund  
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Jackson, and and the  
Boatacious Blondes  
True/False Film Fest  
University of Missouri -  
Columbia  
Washington Rotary Club  
West Hansen  
Zac & Laura Cutler



### Watershed Cairns recenters attention on the river



Artists Libby Reuter and Josh Rowan have been developing a revolutionary art project designed to connect St. Louis citizens to the meaning, importance and history of their watersheds. Essentially an island surrounded by rivers, the St. Louis area has been shaped by and in turn has shaped its waterways.

WATERSHED  
CAIRNS

The Watershed Cairn project builds temporary artworks from found objects in locations that reveal this secret history. As part of a river clean-up and celebration on Mosenthein Island on the only non-navigable stretch of the Mississippi River, Libby and Josh built this cairn from trash recovered by Missouri River Relief volunteers. See more photos and maps of project places at [www.watershedcairns.com](http://www.watershedcairns.com)

#### ON SCREEN

[www.riverrelief.org](http://www.riverrelief.org)

Instagram: @mo\_river\_relief  
[facebook.com/missouririverrelief](https://facebook.com/missouririverrelief)



#### IN PERSON

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