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**ANNIVERSARY OPEN HOUSE TO CELEBRATE 15 YEARS OF
CONNECTING COMMUNITY, LAND, AND WATER.**

May 1st Valley Stewardship Network event to feature art show opening and kayak raffle

VIROQUA, WI – April 17, 2015 – In celebration of its fifteenth anniversary, Valley Stewardship Network (VSN) invites the public to enjoy live music, an art exhibit, and a raffle drawing for a kayak and other prizes on May 1, from 4 – 8 PM at its new home at 110 South Main Street in Viroqua. Since its inception in 2000, the nonprofit organization has worked to build and act upon a community vision of sustainability throughout the Kickapoo watershed region. The open house event is intended to celebrate the organization’s accomplishments while giving the public an opportunity to speak with board members, staff, and supporters about its current and future programs and activities.

The May 1st open house will feature a show of watercolor paintings by Anne Tedeschi. The artist says that many of her paintings are “inspired by the dramatic light and fascinating patterns and designs in the land, water, and skies of the Driftless region,” where she has been painting since she and her family moved here, almost twenty years ago. The show of her work will be in display through June 30, 2015.

The winner of VSN’s kayak and other raffle prizes will be drawn at 6:30 PM on the evening of the open house event. Raffle tickets are still available at \$10 each or 3 for \$25 at the VSN office and until the time of the drawing. The grand prize is a Perception Prodigy 10.0 kayak with a Werner Baja paddle, donated by Three Rivers Outdoors of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The second prize is an overnight stay for two at Nature Nooks Retreat and third prize is a case of Szczytkowski Orchards local and organic applesauce. “We appreciate the way each of the raffle prizes offers connection



with the natural treasures we work to protect every day,” said VSN’s executive director, Shelly Brenneman. All proceeds from the raffle go to support the programs of Valley Stewardship Network.

Over its fifteen years, the work of Valley Stewardship Network has taken many forms, ranging from cultural celebrations to scientific research to publications and education outreach. In 2003, VSN conducted a three-month community visioning event, called *Kickapoo Conversations*, for the entire watershed population. A key outcome of this work was establishment of a plan to track water quality in the Kickapoo Valley. This work continues today, as VSN trains Water Action Volunteers and coordinates the collection of water quality data as measures to inform land use improvements. VSN also offers farmers and landowners assistance and access to the many organizations and programs available to help them protect their soil and water.

Since its inception, Valley Stewardship Network has worked to raise community awareness and action in response to mounting environmental issues in our vicinity. VSN’s tradition of agency collaboration helped to expand the reach of its messages through work with local, state and federal agencies and organizations. VSN’s river clean-ups, stewardship hikes, and education activities continued to increase local awareness of sustainability concepts.

Today, Valley Stewardship Network continues to play a central organizing role in protecting the Kickapoo’s land and water through education outreach in these key areas:

- Water Quality
- Sustainable Land Management
- Ecosystems and Biodiversity

To involve community members in these aspects of conservation, a series of family-friendly activities and workshops is currently being offered by VSN. For details, visit www.valleystewardshipnetwork.org.

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Valley Stewardship Network, currently celebrating its 15th anniversary, is a nonprofit organization that has championed stewardship of the land and waters in the Kickapoo Valley and adjacent watersheds since its formation in 2000. Best known for its water quality programs, VSN also offers outreach and education programs to help residents, farmers, landowners, and visitors to understand and support our area's fragile ecology, for the health of our communities. VSN is proud to partner with a number of conservation and education agencies and organizations that promote sustainable agriculture and land use because of our shared work in soil and water conservation. More at www.valleystewardshipnetwork.org