

### Treasurer's Note

April 23, 2024

## We Can All Do Something to Make the World Better

Yesterday was Earth Day, and I have been thinking a lot about the summer before my senior year of high school. I spent it volunteering with the [Student Conservation Association](#) at [Manassas National Battlefield Park](#) in Virginia. We did a lot of trail-clearing, trail and bridge building, and cleaning of the park.

I chose to do this because it allowed me to see a new part of the country and do some good for our environment and our nation's history. It was a nice merger of two of my bigger interests at the time, American history and camping.

Two key Civil War battles took place there in 1861 and 1862, both setbacks for the good guys. Northern troops referred to it as the Battle of Bull Run, while Southern troops referred to it as the Battle of Manassas. I side with President Abraham Lincoln's officers and call it the Battle of Bull Run.

During the late 1980s, a developer had started clearing land to [build a large shopping mall](#). To protect this historically significant spot and maintain the park's integrity, the federal government eventually got involved and stopped the bulldozers. The developer pulled up and left, leaving a big scar on the side of the battlefield.

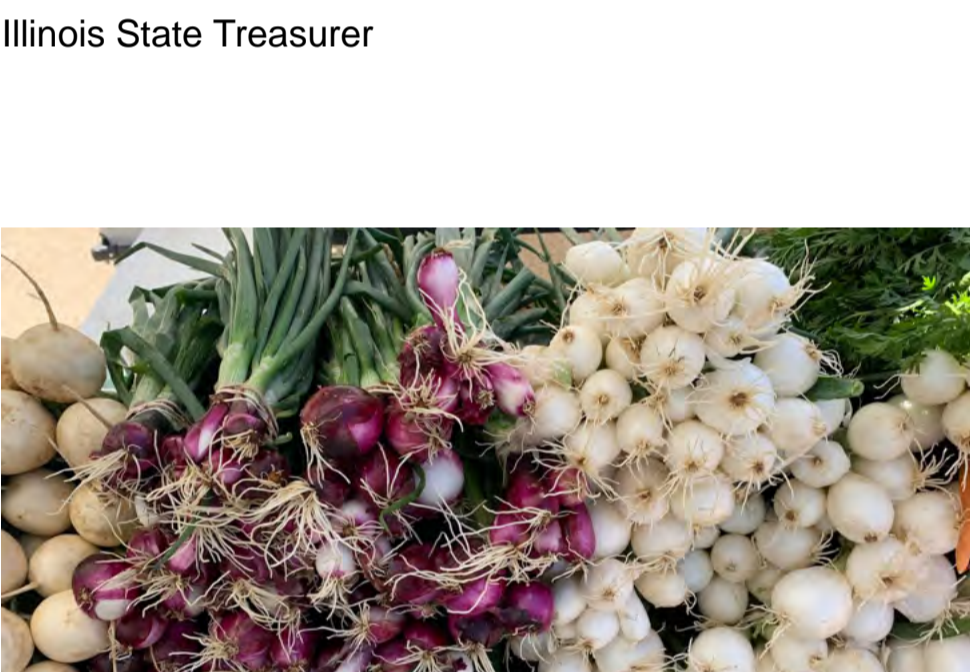
One of our small crew's main jobs was to stop the erosion of land that was washing away into Bull Creek. We built straw bale dams, planted trees and grasses, and could start to see the fruits of our labor by the time we left.

In the Treasurer's Office, we are not responsible for maintaining our state's parks and open lands. But we are mindful of the need to help the environment.

We have money to invest and great partners throughout the state. Several years ago, we [created a program](#) to help nonprofits and religious organizations that wanted to make their buildings more energy efficient.

We teamed with the nonprofit [Faith in Place](#) and a faith-based financial services firm to make available low-interest loans. The idea was that nonprofits and religious organizations could invest in themselves, lower their utility costs, and reduce emissions, all while still earning some money for the state.

Just Christ Ministries on Chicago's South Side [made good use](#) of the loan program. Pastor Anthony Wright's congregation was able to buy a building next door that they had been renting. They made environmentally friendly renovations like replacing fluorescent light fixtures, repairing the roof, installing a new door with proper sealing to keep out cold air, switching to more water efficient toilets, and sealcoating the roof to lessen sun damage.



**Here's a photo from when I met with members of Just Christ Ministries and local clergy as we announced the Nonprofit Green Lending Program.**

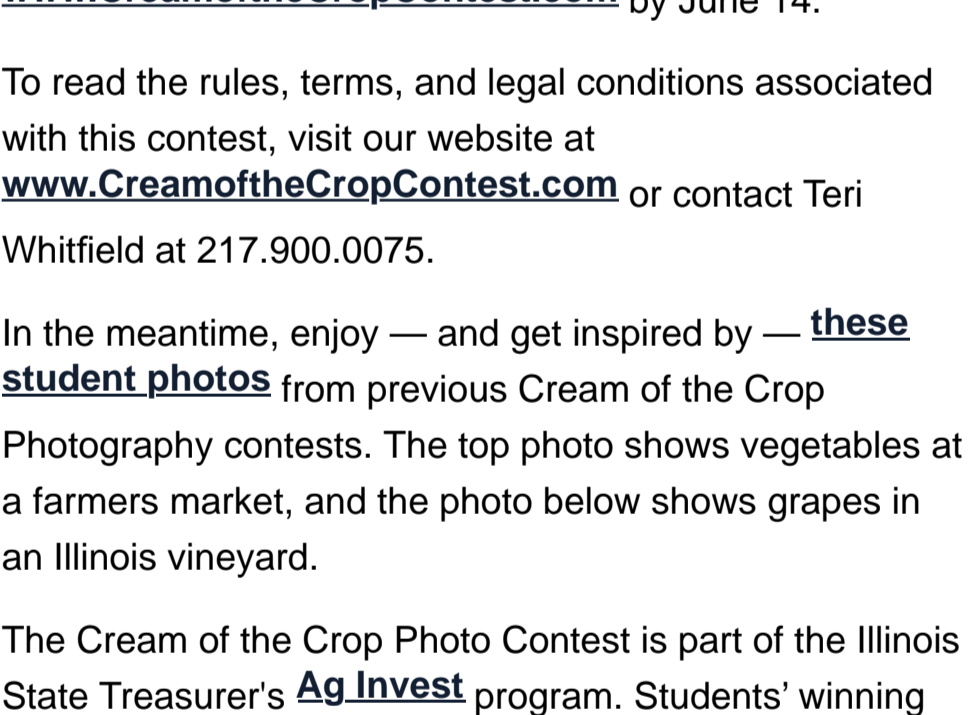
The building is a multi-purpose space, with youth programs, children's ministry, a media lab, and workforce development job training. "Our experience with the program was beyond positive," Pastor Wright told us recently. "It was an answer to our prayers."

We all want clean air and clean water for ourselves and for our children. Although we may not be able to ensure that all by ourselves, we can all do something. In light of Earth Day, give a little bit of time to thinking about what you can do to improve the air, water, and natural habitat in Illinois. And if you are a nonprofit that would like to be more energy efficient and reduce your utility costs, please [reach out to me](#).

Sincerely,

**Michael W. Frerichs**

Illinois State Treasurer



Cream of the Crop Photography Contest

## Illinois Agriculture: Not Just Corn and Beans

When you think of the word "agriculture," especially in Illinois, you might automatically picture endless fields of corn and beans. While those crops are vital, Illinois agriculture also encompasses so much more.

For example, specialty crops such as pumpkins, apples, peaches, horseradish, and grapes are all grown in Illinois' rich soil. You can find agriculture in fields, on rooftop farms, and in community gardens throughout the rural and urban areas of our state.

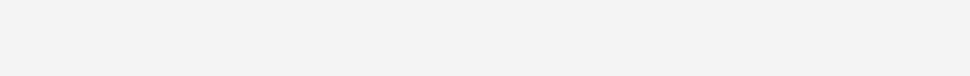
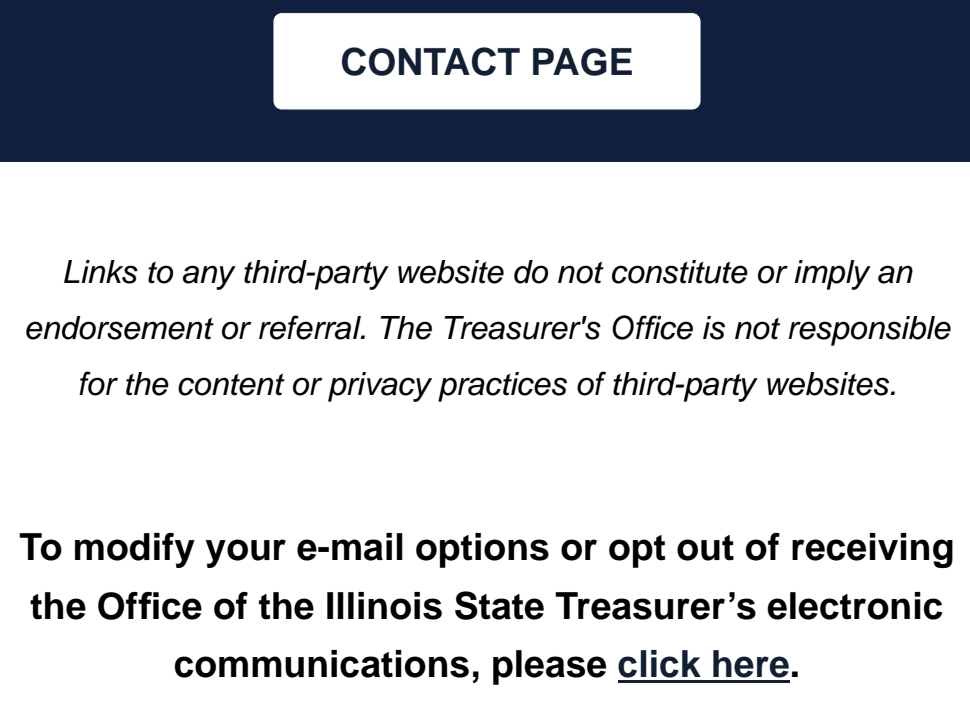
One of the ways that Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs promotes the diversity of Illinois agriculture is through the annual [Cream of the Crop Photography Contest](#). The contest, for Illinois students ages 8 to 18, runs through June 14. Top photos will be chosen in three categories: ages 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18.

Students who place first, second or third in each of the three age categories will receive Bright Start scholarships — \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third. Each participant may submit up to two entries at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](#) by June 14.

To read the rules, terms, and legal conditions associated with this contest, visit our website at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](#) or contact Teri Whitfield at 217.900.0075.

In the meantime, enjoy — and get inspired by — [these student photos](#) from previous Cream of the Crop Photography contests. The top photo shows vegetables at a farmers market, and the photo below shows grapes in an Illinois vineyard.

The Cream of the Crop Photo Contest is part of the Illinois State Treasurer's [Ag Invest](#) program. Students' winning photos will be featured in Ag Invest marketing material and next year's Cream of the Crop calendar, and they also will be displayed at the 2024 Illinois State Fair.



## Working for You: Investment Earnings for March

Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs' office made \$124.6 million in investment earnings for the state portfolio in March. Another \$91 million was earned for cities, school districts and other units of government that take part in the [Illinois Funds](#) local government investment pool.

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**Illinois State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs**  
1 East Old State Capitol Plaza  
Springfield, IL 62701

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