Ashley Bishop helped convert old farm land into prairie—now she's outstanding in her field.

Ringneck Restoration

Story By Kathy Andrews

(Photo by Ashley Bishop.)

We each have remarkable moments that stay with us a lifetime.

For the next two years, 15-year-old Ashley Bishop is living one of those moments, but in her case what she knows and experiences will have an immediate impact on youth throughout the country—and for generations to come.

Looking over a restored prairie in its full July splendor, Bishop pointed out a patch of blazing star, purple being her favorite color and *Liatris* her new-found favorite flower, and said with a mix of pride and doubt: "I did this?"

Only a few years earlier, Glenn Savage had a dream for the field south of Litchfield. Youth director for the Montgomery County Pheasants Forever (PF) chapter, Savage has been instrumental in forming one of the most active Ringneck chapters (open to youth 15 and younger) in Illinois. It was through this program that Bishop had spread prairie grass and forb seeds across the former farm ground, and was the impetus for her new-found status as one of the founding members of the PF National Youth Leadership Council.

(Photo by Glenn Savage.)

Ashley Bishop has gone from planting a prairie, observing and photographing the developing fauna—to taking a position as a national youth advisor.

Encouraged by Savage and her parents, Kim and Glenn Bishop, Ashley completed the application, submitting paragraphs describing her habitat work with Savage and how she helps her father farm, train their hunting dog and organize the annual Montgomery County PF banquet.

The brainchild of PF's youth programs coordinator Cheryl Riley, council members will provide input on magazine and Web site content, outdoor youth activities and youth-related initiatives.

Savage claims PF is unique among many of the conservation organizations with the emphasis it places on youth and education. In addition to the youth council and creating a family atmosphere at banquets, PF has developed the Leopold Education Project. A program that trains classroom educators, the curriculum is based on *A Sand County Almanac*, a book written by Aldo Leopold, claimed by many as the father of wildlife management.

"Education is key to changing attitudes of youth, and adults," Glenn Bishop said. "I'm especially proud of how involved Ashley has become with conservation projects because one day she'll own this farm, and everything she learns today will be reflected on how she manages the land."

But for two years, Bishop and her 18 counterparts from throughout the country will be sharing their experiences and providing input to the national PF office.

Then, after a truly remarkable lifetime achievement, they will retire, stepping aside to let the next team of young conservationists help guide youth programs.