Much of environmentalism’s emphasis today is shifting from preservation to sustainability. While preservation often results in conflicts with people arguing over limited resources, sustainability allows for use of natural resources in a way that ensures long-term preservation. This new emphasis on sustainability has three aspects upon which it focuses: environment, sociology, and economics. The Illinois State University Beekeeping Club was established in the spring semester of 2012 as a result of this new form of environmentalism, and has taken advantage of campus-wide sustainability efforts to build and grow the group, build up area beekeeping, and secure beekeeping resources — all of which we hope will sustain the future of beekeeping in Illinois.

The founding of the Illinois State University (ISU) Beekeeping Club was initiated after the author of this article received an October 2011 email from colleague Dr. Thomas Fuller, faculty advisor of the ISU Student Sustainability Committee. In his email, Dr. Fuller asked Dr. Wenning to consider starting a beekeeping club at ISU in order to take advantage of Student Sustainability Committee funds that recently had become available to registered student organizations. They decided to meet to discuss the possibility. Over dinner during November, Tom explained that the funds of the Student Sustainability Committee were large and growing, and that the Committee was looking for ways to spend allocations in meaningful fashion.

Carl noted that he had become a beekeeper in 1997, and had written regularly for American Bee Journal from 1999-2004, but had retired from public life as a beekeeper — now keeping bees only in his backyard apiary. He had removed his colonies from a rural apiary following devastating winter losses in 2005. Late that winter he moved his now-empty beehives into his family garage and later to his backyard when he needed room in the garage for a new manufacturing business. Later that spring he became an “unintentional beekeeper” after his daughter phoned him at work on campus to inform him that a swarm of honey bees had just populated one of the empty hives. Carl unexpectedly had returned to beekeeping after only a few month’s hiatus.