



Westborough Community Land Trust

2018 Annual Report



WCLT preserves, protects, and promotes Westborough's open space.

WCLT Awards Two Scholarships

This year the Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) awarded two \$1,000 scholarships and two honorable mentions to graduating Westborough High School (WHS) seniors. Selections were made on the basis of essays written for WCLT's annual Earth Day Essay Contest.



Peter Howarth

Peter Howarth was awarded a scholarship for his essay describing his work in creating a new trail at Sawink Farm and his development of a greater commitment to improving the environment. He will study pre-sport management at the University of Connecticut.



Victoria Helle

Victoria Helle won a scholarship for her essay describing her commitment to addressing the problem of litter in town and the work she has done to reduce litter from plastic water bottles at the high school and from dog waste around town. She plans to study environmental science at the University of Rhode Island.

Katie May Howarth was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay describing her experience in persuading the town's school system to switch from Styrofoam trays to paper boats and her ongoing awareness of the environmental problem created by Styrofoam. She plans to major in graphic design at a four-year university.

Grace Roney received an honorable mention for her essay describing her experiences with the high school beekeeping club and the environmental awareness that she developed as a result. She expects to major in history in college.

"Congratulations to the students who won scholarships and who received honorable mentions, and our thanks to all the students who shared their thoughts and stories with us in their Earth Day essays," said Annie Reid, chair of the WCLT scholarship committee. "We commend all these young people for the environmental awareness that they will take with them into the future."

Read the winning essays — [Click here](#).

President's Letter



My first year as president has been a steep learning curve as I transitioned from a behind-the-scenes member of the Board of Directors (a comfortable place for an introvert like myself) to a more forward-facing role for WCLT. I have spent a bit of time understanding who does what, when, and where for WCLT; identifying challenges and solutions that our all-volunteer land trusts face (specifically for WCLT and generally); and collaborating with current Board and committee members to re-establish an anchoring vision that energizes our WCLT core volunteers and attracts new volunteers. (Stay tuned for details of the latter to be crystallized in fall 2018, when we roll out new short-term and long-term exciting initiatives).

The who, what, when, and where for WCLT all hinges on volunteers from our members, who fulfill critical functions. Volunteers are "paid" in eternal gratitude, a sense of accomplishment and community, and therapeutic outdoor time. A related aside: Did you know that much health research in the past five years shows that walking outdoors in nature can fend off depression, anxiety, and negative behaviors better than pharmaceuticals, and may improve children's scholastic performance? These results fascinate the twenty-first century biomedical scientist in me, yet I am simultaneously wondering why it has taken more than a century to prove the obvious: that walking in the woods is good for you? More eloquently captured by Henry David Thoreau, "When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: What would become of us, if we walked only in a garden or a mall?" ("Walking" The Atlantic May 1862.)

I digress. We wanted to gain insight into membership demographics and beliefs, and surveyed our membership by Survey Monkey. To sum up: We learned that members don't like on-line surveys (at least that is my assumption with a response rate of 10-15%). Of members who responded, all were more than 40 years old; the majority had been members for 5-10 years; more than 75% thought WCLT should grow (so do we), and many had excellent ideas that we will incorporate; and about half considered volunteering for a committee.

Back to volunteers: I am proud of the accomplishments of our Education and Stewardship committees, which are the most visible. These committees schedule events and projects: speakers, hikes, Earth Day clean-up, annual live animal show, work-parties, scout projects, trail building, maintenance and (sometimes) trail closures. Less visible, but equally important to WCLT are Land Preservation, Membership, Nomination, Finance, and Business Partnership committees. A challenge for myself as president, and a priority for WCLT, is to increase membership and to recruit new volunteers to serve on committees. All our committees are in critical need of more volunteers. Special skills are not necessary; only an interest in giving back to our lovely town and belief in WCLT's mission. [Click here](#) for details, or contact me at president@westboroughlandtrust.org. We need you!

Finally, many thanks to our retiring Board members: Jerry Lyle, Eric Waite, Polly Pearson, and Keith Martin, whose terms are expiring, and Neil Feldman, Tim Foley, and Bob Nolan.

Gillian Beamer, President

Committee Reports

Land Preservation Committee

The Land Preservation Committee (LPC) continues its involvement in various support activities to ensure the protection of open space throughout the town. We have worked with the Stewardship Committee on the construction of new trail projects and the maintenance of existing trails, and in support of the protection of 195 acres of property we currently own.

We are continuing our effort to protect the open land in the 123-acre Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and Haskell ballfields). We acquired 22.5 acres of property along the Assabet River. This, along with land WCLT owns at Indian Pond, will be the core of a new effort known as the Assabet River Corridor to protect the river through Westborough. The committee maintains an amicable relationship with a number of landowners who would like to see their resources protected. We also communicate with builders, developers, and property management firms in our community to evaluate or expand protection and use opportunities. Finally, we are working with various Town boards and committees to provide input on the protection of open space.

We continue to work toward finalizing the Charm Bracelet easements in order to establish a 28-mile continuous loop trail, plus a potential 40 miles of side trails, that will connect the various open space areas and neighborhoods throughout town. A specific trail effort is expanding the trail network around Sudbury Valley Trustees' Walkup & Robinson Reservation.

As always, we continue to seek the involvement of other WCLT committees in our work, and we commit to working to further the goals of WCLT and to protect the natural resources of the town for the enjoyment of all. Additionally, we welcome any thoughts or recommendations WCLT members may have to further the committee's efforts.

Don Burn, chair; Adam Last, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian, Randy Waterman

Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee maintains and manages WCLT lands. We also develop and maintain trails on other town lands, encouraging public enjoyment of our open spaces while preserving habitat for our native plants and animals.

This year we benefited from several Eagle projects, including construction of a new bridge at Veterans Freedom Park, removal of invasive species at Gilmore Pond, improvements to the Gilmore Pond entrance road, and reclamation of 17 bog bridges from the now-closed Blue Flag trail. Planned and in-progress projects include bridging work along the Malley trail, in the Libbey/Wile Conservation Area, and near Baker Way. One Girl Scout Gold award was completed on behalf of WCLT, and another is being planned. We are grateful for ongoing support from Westborough's scouting community.

The Westborough Walks Meetup group is active and has grown to over 1100 members! Join or follow the link on the [WCLT home page](#).

Back-to-back nor'easters in early March broke countless trees around town and caused a great deal of damage to the Charm Bracelet trail system. In response, we created an online trail status spreadsheet, which we have kept up to date with status reports from many of our members. Our volunteers actively targeted problem areas, and with the help of our chainsaw crews, we have successfully cleared the worst of the damage.

Our volunteers also met for several Saturday morning work sessions. We removed a large brush pile at Gilmore Pond, built a new trailhead into the Libbey Conservation Area from Adams Street, and installed six reclaimed bog bridges along the Malley trail near the Mill Road boat ramp.

Looking to the future, we plan a major multi-year renovation of the trails at Gilmore Pond, where our goal is to create an ADA-compliant All Persons loop trail. The proposed design includes extensive boardwalk sections and a wider, flatter treadway to make the trail fully accessible to wheelchairs (and, incidentally, perfect for strollers).

If you are interested in adopting a trail, would like to pitch in on occasional weekend work sessions, or have noticed a section of trail that needs attention, please send an email to stewardship@westboroughlandtrust.org.

Keith Martin, chair; Jerry Breecher, Don Burn, Peter Dunbeck, Marjorie Fisher, Mark Fox, Guido Lonardo, Brian O'Keefe, Hank Rauch, Scott Shumway, Karen Yeowell.



Keith Martin clearing a trail.

Committee Reports

Membership Committee

WCLT continues at more than 330 memberships, including over 500 individual members. Membership renewals and responses to the WCLT annual appeal are a critical source of funds. Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled over \$18,000 for the six months ending April 30, 2018.

This year we continued a strong relationship with our business partners EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, and Julio's Liquors. We thank them for their support.

Active members — individuals, families, and businesses — are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. We encourage everyone to participate in WCLT-sponsored events and to get involved in committees and stewardship projects.

Several WCLT committees have requested supplementing their present make-up with fresh members: Education, Nominating, and Membership. Any member can serve on these and other committees. Time commitment is minimal, often only one meeting and one other event per month. To get involved, contact the appropriate committee chair at westboroughlandtrust.org/contact or westboroughlandtrust.org/volunteer.

Please volunteer!

Warren Anderson, Chair

WCLT appreciates Business Partners

EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, and Julio's Liquors help us to preserve and protect more land and to offer trails and educational programs. Find out how your organization can be a WCLT business partner by contacting: bizpartners@westboroughlandtrust.org



ARTURO'S
RISTORANTE

Julio's
LIQUORS

Education Committee

The Education Committee had a successful 2017-2018. Our September Westborough History walk drew 45 people. A busy October saw a month-long WCLT Art and Photography Exhibit at the 1717 Shoppe. Our Cedar Swamp Archaeology walk drew 72 attendees, and our writing workshop and hike at Gilmore Pond drew 25. In January, 26 folks enjoyed walking to Cedar Swamp Pond over a frozen Cedar Swamp on a sunny day. Our talk on Local Pollinators by Dr. Martha Gach in February informed 57 people.

Our March live animal program featured Nature of My Back Yard. Two shows drew 292 children and adults who met a skunk, a porcupine, and other local animals. Thanks to the Cultural Council, Newcomers Club, and Knights of Columbus for their support.

April saw our annual town-wide Earth Day Clean-up and second volunteer picnic at Bay State Commons Green, organized by Bruce Tretter, Janet Anderson, Kelley Petralia, and Rachel Radin. A record 285 volunteers filled hundreds of bags with litter and enjoyed lunch in lovely weather. Thanks to all individual volunteers and those from the Westborough Civic and Rotary Clubs; all four elementary schools; Westborough Lacrosse and Youth Soccer; Explorer Post 85; CCR Wealth Management; Crossfit Prototype; E.L. Harvey; EMSEAL; and several Cub, Boy, and Girl Scout troops. Thanks to our donating businesses: Arturo's Ristorante, Dunkin' Donuts on Route 9, Tavolino Italian Gourmet, Roche Bros., both Westborough Stop & Shops, and Mugford's Flower Shoppe. Big thanks to the Westborough Department of Public Works.

In May, 15 fearless folks enjoyed a springtime walk led by Keith Martin at Gilmore Pond and Libbey/Wile Forest and were amazed at the beauty and size of this unspoiled area of Westborough. WCLT's June Annual Meeting featured Mark Richardson on Earth-Friendly Gardening. Our regular offerings continued as usual, including "Nature Notes" in the Westborough News and the Earth Day Essay Contest leading to two WCLT Scholarships. We now bid a grateful farewell to our retiring committee members Jerry Lyle and Elaine Moore.

Janet Anderson, Chair; Kris Allen, Gillian Beamer, Paula Kirk, Kathy Leblanc, Jerry Lyle, Elaine Moore, Rachel Radin, Annie Reid, Chris Sasseti, Eric Waite, Nancy Wright