

# Westborough Community Land Trust

## 2007 Annual Report



# President's Letter



*Abraham Katz, Westborough High School senior, who received the 2007 WCLT Scholarship.*

## WCLT Scholarship Awarded

The WCLT Scholarship, which recognizes a deep appreciation and concern for the environment by a graduating Westborough High School senior, was awarded to Abraham Katz. His Earth Day essay stressed the importance of public education and fostering an appreciation of nature in childhood as keys to encouraging protection of open space in the future. He plans to attend Middlebury College. He is the son of Mary Ann Secrest and Lawrence Katz of 38 Hyder Street.

Receiving honorable mention were Sean Dooley, who plans a major in computer science at either Northeastern University or the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Isaac DuPree, who will attend Marlboro College; and Christopher Robbins.

WCLT encourages young people to develop a strong connection with nature that will eventually underlie responsible, thoughtful decisions about the environment.



In its tenth year, the Westborough Community Land Trust continues to expand its land resources, community outreach, and membership. This is possible only through the commitment, unflagging spirit, hard work and expertise of WCLT members, now numbering nearly 400.

As always, partnerships prove critical. Donors of land and easements are our most valued partners in preserving open space. Currently 128 acres have been protected by their generosity and the dedication of our Acquisitions Committee, chaired by Jim Tashjian. Last fall two parcels were added to Mill Pond's North Shore trail, gifts from Ellen Gugel and Steve Munden and from Millie Coyne. An easement this spring from Prentiss Forest Homeowner's Association off Connector Road provided an important link to the Charm Bracelet trail.

This year we are pleased to have a new program partner: The Westborough Civic Club as sponsor of Gilmore Pond's restoration. The Civic Club adds not only important funding but also their hands-on energy. Our combined resources will create improved water quality, open water views, and new trails at Gilmore Pond.

The Stewardship Committee launched the Gilmore Pond restoration with a professional property enhancement plan, a Gilmore Pond biological survey, and a spirited May work party with Civic Club members and Boy Scouts. The stewards, led by Don Burn, also surveyed other property conditions, marked boundaries, and created land management plans. Thanks to WCLT stewards' energetic labor, trails of the 40-mile Charm Bracelet network are created and maintained to benefit local residents.

The Education Committee stressed environmental education for families and expanded nature badge assistance for local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. New for our anniversary, an Adventure Quest challenges families to discover natural and historical landmarks throughout the town.

Public outreach and membership reached new heights, due to our dedicated Membership Chair Maureen Johnson, who spearheaded the successful Anniversary Wine-Tasting Party. Our website, skillfully managed by Rachel Radin and Willy Dupree, attracts attention, as does Annie Reid and Garry Kessler's "Nature Notes" newspaper column on the wonders of local nature.

I am always inspired by volunteers' willingness to tackle any challenge as they blaze trails, build bog bridges, plan events, recruit new members, and negotiate complex land transactions. As you read the Committee reports, you will see that WCLT remains true to its mission to preserve open lands and safeguard Westborough's natural heritage. We invite you to join us.

Kris Allen, President



# WCLT 2007

## Committee Reports

### Acquisitions Committee

As we celebrate our tenth anniversary, we have an opportunity to examine what has been accomplished and to what extent we have met our goals of preserving our Town's remaining open space, of making it accessible to the public where appropriate through the use of trail systems, and to serve as an educational resource.

The Acquisitions Committee has done its best to research, identify, locate, and acquire, after appropriate due diligence, those parcels and trail easements which are consistent with the overall goals of the organization. This year we have received an easement from Prentiss Forest Homeowners' Association as a connection to the Charm Bracelet trail, and finalized gifts from Millie Coyne, Ellen Gugel, and Steve Munden to add to the North Shore trail at Mill Pond. That work could not have been accomplished without the fine work of the many committees through which we work.

As the intensity of development in this town continues to increase and Westborough rapidly evolves into a "built out" community, however, the opportunities for preserving our natural heritage are rapidly disappearing. Our actions in the next few years will determine the ultimate "balance" this community experiences. To that end, the Acquisitions Committees goals include: first, completing the Charm Bracelet trail system and related secondary trails; second, facilitating the preservation of certain key parcels of open space, especially those which are not "protected" by tax benefits under Chapters 61, 61A, or 61B, either by acquiring title to such parcels, or by creating development or conservation restrictions on such parcels.

In order to be effective in this endeavor, we realize the need to partner with other land trusts similar to ours, with other regional organizations having similar intents, as well as with the business and residential communities at large.

We welcome your suggestions, ideas, and participation in this process.

Don Burn, Jon Nourse, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian,  
Randy Waterman

### Education Committee

The Education Committee featured programs to educate residents about protecting their neighborhood's environment, particularly by eradicating invasive species and replacing them with native alternatives. Ashley Young, a Wheaton College senior, presented an in-depth survey of invasives at the Bowman West meadow, Gilmore Pond, Hero Property, and Headwaters Conservation Area, with recommendations of best practices for removal. Professor Scott Shumway discussed vernal pools in Westborough and how to certify vernal pools for protection. The evening Frog Hike to a vernal pool in May gave residents a chance to see and hear its inhabitants in action.

This year's town-wide Earth Day Clean-up attracted more than 40 residents to pick up litter at town recreation areas and adjacent streets. Many families were joined by their children in this early lesson in public service. In our Storm Drain Stenciling project with the Department of Public Works, volunteers marked storm drains downtown to alert the public that dumping into drains directly pollutes our water bodies.

WCLT educators aided local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in completing outdoors badges and participated at the Girl Scouts' 95th Anniversary event. Boy Scouts working toward Eagle Scout received valuable instruction from WCLT stewards in creating and repairing Charm Bracelet trails. WCLT also offered a Learn to Fish Clinic at the Rotary Club's Spring Festival. For a second year, a high school senior with the best essay on an environmental issue received a WCLT Scholarship.

Westborough Walks and Talks included an orienteering lesson and trek into Cedar Swamp, exploring the winter landscape and animal signs at Mass Wildlife Headquarters, and uncovering the history of the George Nichols Dam at Mill Pond. The annual Nature-thon engaged youngsters in a Passport trail to learn about wildlife. For our 10th Anniversary, the Nature-thon introduced on our web site an intriguing Adventure Quest for families to collect clues and solve puzzles by locating interesting historical and natural sites throughout Westborough.

Kris Allen, Chair

Susan Barnhart, Susan Bush, Joan Erler, Kathy LeBlanc,  
Leslie Leslie, Sue Lippitt, Barbara Muise, Annie Reid,  
Scott Shumway



# WCLT 2007

## Committee Reports

### Membership Committee

This year featured a successful Wine-Tasting Gala at Arturo's Ristorante to celebrate Westborough Community Land Trust's 10th Anniversary. More than 80 members attended this lively event. It also attracted 22 new members. We hope it is the first of many such member events.

WCLT currently has more than 270 memberships, including nearly 400 individual members. Membership has grown by 10% over the past year, and 31 new members have joined this year. Membership renewals, in June of each year, are a critical source of funds and human resources. We are pleased to report that members continue to provide financial support and increase their giving amounts. Special thanks to everyone who contributes throughout the year.

In addition, the 2006-07 Annual Appeal raised nearly \$13,000. We successfully reached out to a small number of corporate donors this year through the Annual Appeal as well.

Membership is open to anyone committed to protecting open space in Westborough. We welcome all residents from Westborough and surrounding towns who share a deep commitment to the preservation of Westborough's natural resources.

Active members are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. The mission of the Membership Committee is to attract and maintain WCLT members while promoting and advocating for land preservation in Westborough.

In support of that role, the committee is working to recruit new members through membership drives and public outreach. We encourage members to participate in WCLT-sponsored events, such as trail walks, and to get involved in committees to support WCLT initiatives, such as the Earth Day events and the Storm Drain Stenciling project.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. Memberships will run through June 2008. The Annual Appeal will take place again in November to coincide with year-end giving. Thanks very much to all WCLT members and friends for their continued loyal support.

Maureen Johnson, Chair

### Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee is responsible for the care of Westborough Community Land Trust properties. It also designs and maintains trails and develops infrastructure to encourage public enjoyment of local open space.

With the expanding number of properties owned by WCLT, last year the Committee started a major effort on property improvement. This effort included surveying the current conditions, adding WCLT usage signs, putting up boundary markers, and identifying major projects for the tracts. Our first major project was to bring back the grassland area at WCLT's Valley View parcel. Essentially completed, this project resulted in a beautiful open meadow.

This year we started a multi-year effort to improve Gilmore Pond at the headwaters of Jackstraw Brook. Through the wonderful support of the Civic Club in both financial and volunteer efforts we intend to turn the area into a woodland park. We have an approved plan for this area developed by Waterman Design. This year we will attack the invasive plants in the area and create new trails for access. In future years we will be improving the trails, adding native plants, and putting in benches for people's enjoyment. Long term we intend to restore trout to the pond.

We have worked in the last year to name the trails we manage. We have approved names for the trails at Bowman West, Orchard Hill, Headwaters Conservation Area, and the lands around Mill Pond and the Country Club.

To meet our growing responsibilities to maintain trails and properties we have been slowly increasing our equipment and supplies. Working with the Town of Westborough, we are improving a common storage area at the Department of Public Works to protect and allow easy access to our equipment and building materials. We hope to complete this project this year.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who continue to work on projects and maintain trails. Without their support, we could not do our work.

Don Burn, Chair

Mark Fox, Scott Henderson, Garry Kessler, Steve Rowell, Ken Slater, Sue Wells • Associate members: Kris Allen, Tim Buckalew, John Gareri, Barry Hall, Harry Newell, Ellen Bishop O'Brien, Al Sanborn, Kim Simpson