



Westborough Community Land Trust

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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

President's Letter



WCLT is not immune to the fact that COVID-19 brought uncertainty, challenges, fear, and grief. The past few months brought a new appreciation for gatherings, warmth, humor, and sharing. I am sad we canceled our June 2020 speaker event at our Annual Meeting, even though I know it was the right decision for public health. We rescheduled the speaker, nature photographer Peter Christoph, for 2021, and we plan on delaying the business portion of the meeting to fall 2020. Stay tuned for the time, date, and format, because we need you. Members are important for review and approval of the committee reports; to elect officers; to approve Board member terms; and generally to keep WCLT on the right and responsible path as an organization. We need new committee members, officers, and Board members as many of us are finishing our terms. Please contact me or go to <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/volunteer>.

My favorite part of the WCLT Annual Meeting is public recognition for outstanding service. This year, I call out **Janet Anderson** for the **WCLT Unsung Hero** (I made up that award just now). Janet is our tireless, persistent, smart, funny, humble, straightforward, and organized chair of the Education Committee. She receives the WCLT Unsung Hero award for her work with the Education Committee reorganizing our Earth Day Cleanup in April. It is usually a town-wide service and social event with a luncheon held at Bay State Commons. This year, Janet and the Education Committee successfully modified the event — canceling the luncheon and participation by groups while still promoting and encouraging families to get up, sign up, and clean up, and maintain physical distance. It lifted my spirits to see people cleaning up in the morning while I drove to work, and then full, yellow bags of trash gathered on the side of the road on my way home from work in the evening. Thank you, Janet and the Education Committee, for helping maintain this normal event safely and effectively during times of hardship. I am proud of you.

One last nudge: Please see the Westborough Master Plan <https://westboroughmasterplan.com> and submit your ideas for priorities now and in the future. I suggest keeping it green.

Gillian Beamer, President

president@westboroughlandtrust.org



Janet Anderson

Earth Day Clean-up



WCLT 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. Awards were made on the basis of essays written for WCLT's annual Earth Day Essay Contest, which we were able to hold in spite of the 2020 coronavirus-related school closures.

"Almost all the essay writers mentioned the natural world as a respite from the stress of the coronavirus pandemic. Altogether they named many natural areas in Westborough that they use and appreciate: Lake Chauncy, Gilmore Pond, Mill Pond, Bowman woods, Sawink Farm, and the Charm Bracelet trails," said Annie Reid of the Scholarship Committee. "In fact, committee members were impressed by all the essays we received. And as always, we could see how families and the Boy Scout and Girl Scout organizations provided many experiences that helped the students get to know and feel close to nature."

Audrey Didier won a scholarship for her essay describing



how she came to know the Bowman woods through the town's nature camp and Girl Scout activities, connected with nature for comfort during stressful times, and now cares for the woods on every visit by carrying a trash bag and picking up litter. Her college plans include entering the honors program at Fairfield University and a likely major

in either mathematics or economics.

Carolyn McDermott received a scholarship for



her essay about walking with her dog on Charm Bracelet and Mill Pond trails, finding solace in the woods, and making nature her artistic muse for photographing small details in the natural world. She plans to attend Fairfield

University as a nursing major.

Read the winning essays at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/pr/2020-scholarship-award>

Sarah Strosco was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay about the problem of traffic in Westborough and its contribution to air pollution and greenhouse gases, her suggestion to create bike lanes on town roads to make local bike travel safer and more appealing, and her personal efforts to bike and walk more and to drive less. In the fall she will attend Assumption College and major in elementary education in order to become a teacher.

Andrew O'Keefe received an honorable mention for his essay describing how his Eagle Scout project of rehabilitating a trailhead at Gilmore Pond deepened his understanding of the importance of access to natural areas such as Gilmore Pond for everyone, but especially for people with movement disabilities, and his ongoing work to keep trails and nature accessible to all. He plans to attend Quinnipiac University to study engineering.

Since the beginning of our scholarship program in 2006, WCLT has awarded 24 scholarships to graduating seniors in Westborough, as well as 24 honorable mentions. (See the WCLT Scholarship Hall of Fame at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/hall-of-fame#ScholarsHOF>.) The Earth Day Essay Contest and the scholarship program are ways that we encourage environmental awareness and support the environmentalists of tomorrow.

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.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic increase in foot traffic on our trails. We are thrilled that so many of Westborough's residents are discovering the escapes provided by nature in this difficult time.

(Trail maps: <http://www.westboroughcharm.org/guide/trailmaps.php>)

Social distancing has led to a reduction in coordinated trail work, but we're grateful for WCLT's army of chainsaw-wielding volunteers who have done an outstanding job keeping the trails clear of fallen trees.

This year WCLT benefited from several Boy Scout Eagle projects, including bridging and trail rework in Wile Forest, on the Fox Hill Trail, and on the Malley Trail. We also benefited from a Girl Scout Gold Award project that resulted in a fun passport activity for

children. We continue to be grateful for the incredible support we receive from Westborough's scouting community. (See WCLT's Girl Scout and Boy Scout Hall of Fame <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/hall-of-fame#GirlScoutHOF>; <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/hall-of-fame#BoyScoutHOF>)

The Stewardship Committee continues to plan a major multi-year renovation of the trails at Gilmore Pond, where our goal is to create a universal-access 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 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, Marjorie Fisher, Mark Fox, Guido Lonardo, Joe Massery, Brian O'Keefe, Hank Rauch, Scott Shumway, Karen Yeowell



PHOTO BY MARK LIPPITT

Steve Rowell and Jay Thayer after clearing a fallen 25" pine tree from the Libbey Trail

Education Committee

The Education Committee had good attendance at the 2019-2020 events that were held. Andy Koenigsberg's September walk at Hocomonco Pond drew 30 people. Our October fungus walk by mycologist Larry Millman was attended by 26. Another October walk, introducing the new Boroughs Loop Trail, was rained out. Twenty-three came to the November talk on monarch butterflies by Dan Stimson of Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT). January's Mill Pond walk brought 28 people into a sunny snowscape. In February, 33 attended a thought-provoking talk by Mass Audubon's Martha Gach, Ph.D., on how individuals can help mitigate climate change. View it at <http://71.248.188.158/vod/8600-Adapting-to-Climate-Change-9February2020-v1/vod.mp4>

Due to the coronavirus, the March live animal show, "Snakes of New England and the World," was postponed to next March. A series of April and May birding walks co-sponsored with the Forbush Bird Club, as well as the Nature Scavenger Hunt planned for May, were cancelled.

Our April Earth Day Litter Cleanup went on successfully, in a modified form, in consultation with the Westborough Board of Health and in compliance with State of Massachusetts guidelines. Participation by groups, in-person signup, and the picnic were all cancelled. Families and individuals signed up online and cleaned their chosen area over the course of a week. Despite these changes, 135 volunteers filled well over 200 trash bags and our town is much cleaner. Thank you to Rachel Radin for the online signup design, and to Chris



Larry Millman fungi walk

Payant and the DPW for the bags and pickups. Read about it here: <https://patch.com/massachusetts/westborough/westborough-earth-day-litter-cleanup-success>

Annie Reid continued writing fascinating "Nature Notes" columns, and our annual Earth Day Essay Contest awarded two WCLT scholarships to high school seniors, and two honorable mentions, again this year.

The June presentation on birds of the New England swamp by nature photographer Peter Christoph has been postponed until next year.

Janet Anderson, Chair; Kris Allen, Gillian Beamer, Paula Kirk, Kathy Leblanc, Rachel Radin, Annie Reid, Nancy Wright



PHOTO BY GARRY KESSLER

Membership Committee

From May 2019 through April 2020, WCLT collected 144 memberships and membership renewals. Responses to the WCLT membership drive and annual appeal are a critical source of funds. Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled over \$7,000 for the preceding 12 months ending April 30, 2020.

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.

We are proud to see so many people getting out to enjoy WCLT's trails while social distancing measures are in effect. Please encourage anyone you know who may have recently discovered Westborough's natural

bounty to join WCLT (<https://westboroughlandtrust.org/secure/donate?>). When our regular activities are able to resume, 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 WCLT member can serve on these committees. Time commitment is minimal, often only one meeting and one other event per month. To get involved, contact the appropriate committee chair at <http://westboroughlandtrust.org/contact>. Please volunteer!

Warren Anderson, Chair

WCLT values our business partners

We thank our business partners for helping WCLT preserve and protect more land and offer trails and educational programs: **EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, and Julio's Liquors.**

How can your organization join WCLT as a business partner? Find out by contacting bizpartners@westboroughlandtrust.org.



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Boy Scout Eagle Project sign

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 in support of the protection of the 195 acres of property we currently own and the roughly 60 miles of trails we maintain.

We worked with the landowners to put together a package which we brought to the Town to purchase 30 Belknap Street. This beautiful piece of land is a mixture of forest and meadows with Piccadilly Brook running through the property. We hope to use this property to fill one of the gaps in the Charm Bracelet Trail. The purchase is up for a vote at the Annual Town Meeting.

We are continuing our effort to protect the open land in the 123-acre Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and Haskell ballfields). The committee maintains an amicable relationship with a number of landowners who would like to see their resources protected, including builders,

developers, and property management firms in our community.

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 the town. We are concentrating on the Newton Hill area from Sudbury Valley Trustees' Walkup & Robinson Reservation to Smith Street.

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 Westborough 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



Marshmallow roast Bowman for Charm Bracelet anniversary