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# FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

2013



## Great Barrington Becomes a CPA Community

by Shep Evans

*Friends of GB CPA: Dale Abrams, Shep Evans, Tim Geller, Christine Ward, and Rob Hoogs*

In 2011, Dale Abrams, then President of GBLC, brought to the Board of Directors a challenge. He proposed that the Board join other like-minded stakeholders to mount a campaign aimed at getting the Town of Great Barrington to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA). With approval of CPA, Great Barrington could begin to establish a much-needed pool of local and state money for land and historic preservation and affordable community housing. Passing CPA could generate up to \$600,000 annually that would stimulate exciting new projects and enhance the long-term quality of life in Great Barrington.

The Board agreed to undertake this mission. The first step was to secure a Town Meeting vote to place adoption of

CPA on the November ballot. A slide presentation by Dale Abrams at the May Town Meeting on the benefits of CPA achieved this first goal – the town voted resoundingly to put CPA on the ballot.

Under Dale's capable leadership the Friends of Great Barrington Community Preservation came together. Tim Geller, of the Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire; Christine Ward, of Great Barrington Trails and Greenways and the Lake Mansfield Alliance; Cara Davis, of Construct, Inc.; and a supporting cast of wordsmiths, graphic artists, videographers, and enthusiastic helpers mounted the campaign.

Getting voter approval involved a

series of presentations to nearly every town board, committee, community organization, and community radio audience. A video of the presentation was produced for public access television which ran daily from late October into November. Additional efforts to highlight the benefits of CPA included letters to the editor in the Berkshire Record and an oversized postcard sent to every household.

On November 6th, Dale's challenge was met. By a two thirds majority, Great Barrington invested in its future by voting YES for CPA. To see what CPA is doing for communities throughout Massachusetts, go to: <http://www.communitypreservation.org/>

*GBLC is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the community's natural resources and distinctive character. Through promotion and fund-raising endeavors, GBLC enables the dedication of open space to agricultural, recreational and scenic purposes through acquisitions, conservation easements, and agricultural preservation restrictions.*

# Greenagers Rebuild Boardwalk at Pfeiffer Arboretum

by Dale Abrams

If you're in need of a good dose of inspiration, I'd recommend spending a day with the Greenagers – local youth who spend their summer working on trails and gardens in the Great Barrington area. This summer the Land Conservancy hired a crew to assist with the repair of an aging boardwalk at the Pfeiffer Arboretum.

Under the guidance of director Will Conklin, and crew leader Joe Burke, the crew of local teenagers made quick work of rebuilding a boardwalk that leads to a small platform near the shore of Long Pond. This destination affords a unique view of the pristine lake with the undulating ridge of Tom Ball Mountain as the backdrop. The view alone is inspirational, but the work completed by these tireless youth was awe-inspiring.



Like a family of beavers, the teen crew worked efficiently, and by the middle of the second day a beautiful new boardwalk wound sinuously through a wet forest, reconnecting the lake-side viewing platform with the upland trail. Constructed of rot-resistant locust (harvested from windfall trees in the Lake Mansfield conservation forest),

this artfully crafted boardwalk will be enjoyed by arboretum visitors for many decades to come.

*Photo left: Drilling to create a strong and lasting connection for years to come. Photo top right: The Greenagers team admires the finished boardwalk trail. Photo below: Checking level on boardwalk support.*



Within hours of arriving at the site, 200 feet of deteriorating hemlock bog bridging had vanished. Reconstruction followed – a bit more slowly – as the crew measured and cut precisely so the new boardwalk would snake over rocks and around tree roots. In just a few more hours, small teams had formed to haul locust logs and planks nearly half a mile, measure and cut the lumber for use, and assemble the materials with augers and screws.



# Bringing People to the Forest: Exploring Great Barrington is easier than ever before.

by Christine Ward

What clears the mind more than a brisk walk through the forest? What strengthens friendships more than a shared excursion? Have you had the thrill of being startled by the flight of a barred owl? Whatever the season, the outdoors is there to welcome you! Not sure what to do? GB Trails can get you started.

Each year Great Barrington Trails and Greenways works to improve our trails and trail resources. This year, we developed three new trail brochures. They provide improved maps, natural history information, and use guidelines for The Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails, The Pfeiffer Arboretum at Long Pond, and Threemile Hill at Fountain Pond.

Outdoor enthusiasts can find these new brochures and a wide array of local trail resources by going to the GB Trails website. With just a few clicks, you can find a listing of fourteen special GB places to visit. Just download the maps and you're ready to go!

Want to explore places further afield? Our Partner Page has links to county-wide reserve areas. Or click on Events and sign up for a variety of seasonal guided excursions.

The Land Conservancy makes this work possible by serving as GB Trails & Greenways lead partner and fiscal agent. This year's collaborative effort was also supported by a grant from Housatonic Heritage. All these efforts are made possible through the enthusiastic collaboration of GB Trails partner organizations.

Go to [www.gbtrails.org](http://www.gbtrails.org) and find:  
Maps & Brochures  
Guided Hikes  
Volunteer Opportunities  
Contact Information





# River Walk is 25! Baton Passed from Old Guard to New

by Rachel Fletcher



River Walk volunteer Kevin Kavanah leads the 25th anniversary procession.

During 2012, the Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk celebrated its 25th anniversary with a special riverside festival. On September 8, volunteers lined the half-mile trail to pass a baton to the young people who will care for the trail in years to come. While the Land Conservancy continues to administer the trail and manage its conservation easements on behalf of the local community, the care and stewardship of the site has been contracted to Greenagers, the local organization that actively fosters the ethics of service and stewardship in area youth.

This year, under the leadership of River Walk landscape gardener Heather Cupo and Greenager director Will Conklin, the teens continued native landscape improvements to River Walk's 2.63 acres of riverfront with the control of exotic invasives and the propagation and planting of 1565 native plants. Greenagers assisted with downslope riverbank stabilization using bioengineering techniques to re-vegetate

existing sections and install 130 new feet of reinforcement. The teens renovated River Walk's Main Street entrance with new stairs, a permeable trail surface, and garden improvements. In all, 138 volunteers and students from Big Y, Berkshire Community College, Berkshire School, Bard College at Simon's Rock, Environmental Law Coalition, and Envirothon contributed 464 hours to volunteer workdays. River Walk's three Greenager apprentices: Kevin Pieropan; Sean McTeigue; and Katherine Lister contributed 510 hours.

Through its partnership with Greenagers, River Walk takes its commitment to community involvement to a whole new level, ensuring that the trail receives the care and stewardship that will sustain it for years to come. River Walk's founding director, Rachel Fletcher says, "Placing this treasured community resource in the hands of our local young people is what River Walk is all about. This is an empowering gift to give teens at this moment in our nation's history."

*River Walk's 25th anniversary riverside festival and raffle were dedicated to the memory of Bob Mills, whose name joins that of Comstock Small is on River Walk's commemorative volunteer bench.*



Greenagers Director Will Conklin passes the baton to River Walk's senior apprentice Kevin Pieropan.

Greenager Community Crew members kept personal journals as they worked on trails throughout Berkshire County. Here are some of the thoughts they shared:

*"It's nice to return to spots from my childhood and make a positive impact. . . It feels good to be put to good use, and to be performing worthwhile tasks in beautiful places, putting the human body to work in a way that may come close to maximum potential (or at least, closer than sitting on a couch might put us)." DCK*

*"The silence, combined with our steady footsteps, provides a kind of meditation. I maintain a clear, calm mind every morning before a hard day's work." MM*

*"Today I really felt a strong sense of community – something that is amazing and sometimes hard to come by." MW*

*"I'm getting to explore a lot of beautiful places. I've been getting physically stronger, and most of all, I get the satisfaction of having done a hard day's work." KW*

*"Persistence is a tool to move forward. Teamwork and the love of the trail are what make the job worthwhile." SZ*



# Smiles and Fun at 2nd Annual 5K Fundraiser

by Dale Abrams



It takes more than a little rain to dampen the spirits of Run for the Hills 5K participants. Despite a cold drizzle on September 30, more than 150 runners, walkers, and volunteers turned out to support the second running of the Land Conservancy's fundraiser.

The mood was festive and the excitement was palpable as runners and walkers milled about after registration in the sheltered lobby of the Kilpatrick Athletic Center, sharing stories and good luck wishes. Minutes before the start time, the group moved en masse to the starting area on Hurlburt Road, gathering briefly in front of a majestic oak tree and the red barns of the Leibowitz Center, before heading off into the misty rolling countryside.

By all accounts, the light rain provided the perfect dose of cooling for a fast-paced run or walk. The field was full of smiles: some for fast times; some for accomplishing a personal goal; and some for enjoying the shared act of supporting local farms, trails, and land conservation in Great Barrington. Despite the lighter turnout due to wet weather, the hardy crew and a generous group of local businesses raised nearly \$4000 for the Land Conservancy this year.

Although many participants commented that they enjoyed this year's Hurlburt Road route, the completion of road construction will enable us to return to the namesake Run for the Hills course in 2013 – a rolling loop around Round Hill, Seekonk Cross, and Seekonk Roads.

Special thanks to our wonderful hosts Dave, Rebecca, Jill, and Chris at the Simon's Rock Kilpatrick Athletic Center! Learn more at: [www.greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org/5K](http://www.greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org/5K)

## UPCOMING GBLC EVENTS

- April 20** River Walk Spring Clean Up
- April 28** Lake Mansfield Clean Up
- May 4** Pfeiffer Trail Work Day
- June 1** AT Hike/National Trails Day
- August 2** GBLC Potluck & Annual Mtg
- September 29** Run for the Hills 5K

# W.E.B. Du Bois River Park turns 10 with New Outdoor Exhibit

by Rachel Fletcher



“I was born by a golden river....”

*W.E.B. Du Bois: Advocate for Rivers Here at Home and Champion of Rivers Around the World*

To mark the 10th anniversary of the W.E.B. Du Bois River Park, organizers unveiled a great new permanent outdoor exhibit—W.E.B. Du Bois: Advocate for Rivers Here at Home and Champion of Rivers Around the World. The twelve linear feet of interpretive panels in the Du Bois River Garden park tell the story of Du Bois's environmental advocacy and his special regard for rivers. Three stations tell of Du Bois's lifelong regard for the Housatonic River, his involvement in the Niagara Movement that led to the founding of the NAACP, his investigation into racial discrimination during the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, and his publication in *The Crisis* of Langston Hughes's first poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.”



The new signage and other activities were funded by a generous grant from Housatonic Heritage, with support from the Town of Great Barrington, Katherine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane III Charitable Trust, the Berkshire Environmental Endowment of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, the Turkeybush Foundation, and the Berkshire Garden Club.

# GBLC Membership Form

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to GBLC to support efforts to preserve and enhance the community's natural resources and distinctive character.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Guardian    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Steward     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Sustaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Conserver | <input type="checkbox"/> \$___ Other       |

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: GBLC

In addition to my membership, I would also like to support my favorite projects:

\$\_\_\_ *Farmland Preservation Fund*

\$\_\_\_ *Conservancy Endowment Fund*

\$\_\_\_ *Pfeiffer Arboretum Trail*

\$\_\_\_ *Housatonic River Walk*

\$\_\_\_ *Lake Mansfield Alliance*

\$\_\_\_ *Great Barrington Trails and Greenways*

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GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

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