Westchester Land Trust

Our Land Is Your Land

Celebrating

Vivien Malloy
Preservation Angel Award

The Zofnass Family
Lifetime Achievement Award

SAVE THE DATE
Sunnyfield Farm, Bedford
Saturday, June 18th, 2016

2016 BENEFIT
Dear Friends,

I say to protect land! The land doesn’t have a voice!” For many years, this rallying cry underpinned my personal philosophy on both conservation and charitable giving—no general operating gifts, no educational programs, no lectures. Just protect more land!

My “ah-ha” moment came years later when, on a guided hike, I found myself amongst several families with young children. As we walked, a girl no older than seven fingered next to me. While the assembled adults listened dutifully to the hike leader, the girl tugged at her mother’s hand and pointed at something down the trail. To my surprise, rather than saying, “shush, the mother crouched to meet the youngster’s eyes and whispered, “OK, Sarah, go ahead. We’ll be there in a minute.” With this blessing, Sarah trotted down the trail and, cat-like, scrambled up a wildly branched oak tree. In an instant she was fifteen feet up, laughing and dropping acorns on the approaching adults.

That encounter shifted my perspective. What purpose is served by drawing a distinction between land preservation and people? If children and adults don’t use care about the land, then efforts to preserve it will have a greater likelihood of being “undone” by future generations of policy makers. Grassing why it is crucial to protect open space is made more difficult when people perceive that humankind is separate from nature—that nature exists outside of us, and is something to be controlled, dominated, or altered. Conservation professionals talk about forests and wetlands and wildlife habitat, and not nearly enough about the relationship between the natural world and people.

Sarah represents our next generation of voters and elected officials influencing regional, national and global policy. We owe it to ourselves to teach the young Sarahs of the world now, and to instill in them a deep love of the land, respect for the fragility of our planet, and a moral obligation to protect it. It’s a short but critical conceptual leap— if experiences in nature are radically reduced, where will our future Sarahs come from and what will our world look like without them?

After nearly three decades of quietly protecting land in perpetuity, Westchester Land Trust is embarking on a bold journey that—in addition to our primary tool of holding conservation easements—will involve a greater emphasis on acquiring land outright for public access. And, we are committing greater resources to programming, and visitor experience. With your support and your most generous support, we are rising to the challenge of broadening our impact throughout the region. Our preserves are learning landscapes and restorative getaways—for you.

Sincerely,

Larry J. Enzinger, President

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Henniette Suhr’s Magnum Opus—Rocks Hills—Permanently Protected

Henriette Suhr may have started gardening as a hobby, but it ended up becoming her life’s work. A self-taught gardener, Suhr died on March 7, 2015, at the age of 98. Rocks Hills, her magnificent 135-acre property known nationally for its extensive gardens, will remain intact and out of the development stream due to a conservation easement— which restrictions development— now held by Westchester Land Trust.

Rocks Hills had just a few typical suburban plantings when Henriette and her husband, art conservator William Suhr, bought the Mount Kisco property in 1965 as a weekend retreat. Neither had any horticultural training, but together—until Mr. Suhr’s death in 1986—they created a deeply personal oasis filled with color and texture. The couple traveled extensively but always counted on being home in the spring when the garden unfolds its most vibrant layers to the delight of thousands of early season bloomers— azaleas, rhododendron, magnolia, tree peony, and countless native wildflowers.

A conservation easement will prevent further development on this secluded, wooded property and is great news for Suhr’s Chappaqua neighbors along Old Roaring Brook Road. Removing the potential for future development protects against surface water runoff due to Rocks Hills’ location in the watershed of the Chappaqua Brook and Kisco River Basin—which is part of the drinking water supply watershed of the Croton Reservoir. It is also an important habitat for numerous species of plants and animals native to the area, and serves as a scenic view shed.

Henriette felt a great responsibility to see that her land remained undeveloped. While the gardens may change over time, the spirit of her special place will endure forever.

—Susan Carpenter, Director of Land Preservation and in-House Counsel, WLT

NEW LEADERS TELL THEIR EXPERTISE AND DIPLOMA TO WLT’S BOARD

Catherine Diaz of Bronxville comes to WLT with twenty years of experience as a financial analyst, having specialized in the healthcare sector. She later transitioned into a non-profit position through the New York Teaching Fellows Program, an alternative certification teacher training program that focuses on placing teachers in low-income neighborhoods. Ms. Diaz holds a BA in Economics from Brown University, and an MA in Education from Relay Graduate School of Education as well as both a CTA and CFP certification.

Fran Goldwyn’s professional credits include the Manhattan Toy Company, Ltd., and served as both the company’s founder and president. In addition, she was the principal and CFO of the hedge fund, Chilmart 21st Century Capital. Mr. Goldwyn studied Economics at the University of California at Los Angeles and is a licensed CPA. He is currently the managing member of the executive search firm, Quorum Associates, LLC and a resident of Yorktown.

IN 2015, Westchester Land Trust completed seven conservation easement projects totaling 206.5 ACRES and two fee donations of land—Other Creek Preserve in Mamaroneck and the O’Connell Preserve in Katonah—totalling 66 ACRES. Altogether that’s 272.5 MORE ACRES of land permanently protected!

Westchester Land Trust and the Garden Conservancy are pleased to continue the legacy of Henriette Suhr with the Rocks Hills Environmental Lecture Series. On Wednesday, April 27th, acclaimed landscape designer, Edwina von Gal, shares her passion for biodiversity which ultimately led to the creation of the Perfect Earth Project, a nonprofit organization promoting toxin-free land management around the world.

SEE BACK COVER FOR DETAILS!

OPEN SPACE VICTORY IN PELHAM VILLAGE

WLT lent support to the Friends of the Highbrook Highlands (FHH) in their successful bid to dedicate 7 acres of the distinct New York Westchester and Boston Railway Line, which contains the Highbrook Avenue Bridge, as parkland. This parcel represents 22% of the open space in Pelham Village, and although the community supports the area, they are very willing partner in WLT. Following her death, Suhr’s estate acted upon her expressed wish that the conservation values of the property will continue to be protected in perpetuity.

Mrs. Suhr originally granted a conservation easement to the Garden Conservancy in 2000 to protect the property from development, intending to pass Rocks Hills to the Westchester County Department of Parks and Recreation upon her death to be maintained as a public garden and horticultural center. In 2013, Mrs. Suhr, with the mutual agreement of Westchester County and the Garden Conservancy, dissolved her agreement with the County. Thereafter, the Garden Conservancy explored new ways to protect the property and preserve it as open space—finding a very willing partner in WLT. Following her death, Suhr’s estate acted upon her expressed wishes and worked with the Garden Conservancy on a plan to assign the conservation easement to WLT. The reassignment of the easement ensures that the conservation values of the property will continue to be protected in perpetuity.

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Stewardship in Action

Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve

Westchester Land Trust (WLT) owns 29 preserves across Westchester and eastern Putnam counties and our stewardship staff spends a lot of time on the road caring for them. Until recently, that meant relying on personal vehicles. The acquisition of a pickup truck is a huge milestone for WLT. "We now have a means of transporting all the necessary gear—wheelbarrows, weed whackers, loppers, pruners, shovels, etc.—in a single trip!"

"I'm so glad we got the opportunity to partner with WLT and learn more about their work. They look after so much land and I'm thrilled that my Rivera team was able to help them transport their equipment safely."

— Mariano Rivera, New York Yankees legend and owner of Rivera Toyota

WWW/ZFP IS FULL OF LIFE!

The biological diversity of Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve has drawn the attention of renowned New York Botanical Garden's botanist, Dr. Scott Mori (pictured left), who has led an effort to inventory all of the preserve's plants and fungi. With the assistance of other experts and volunteers, Dr. Mori has recorded 260 plants and fungi at the preserve. For each species, Dr. Mori's team collected a part of the plant that makes it unique—flowers, spores, leaves, etc.—and pressed them into specimens which are now catalogued in the herbarium at the New York Botanical Garden.

Dr. Mori's efforts are critically important to WLT's continued stewardship of the Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve. The inventory can be used as a baseline against which future inventories can be measured. Such comparative studies are fundamental to understanding ecological change over time.

To see Dr. Mori's complete botanical inventory, visit: http://sweetgum.nybg.org/wlt/index.php

NEW TRUCK MAKES STEWARDSHIP A BREEZE

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Special thanks to our new friends at Rivera Toyota of Mount Kisco for their generous support of WLT—we are delighted to include Rivera Toyota to our growing list of business supporters!

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STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

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are very beneficial to wildlife—and have the potential to live for hundreds of years. We have the ability to ‘release’ understory trees such as maples, oaks, and hickories—all of which are canopy trees. To lose a long-lived white oak, sugar maple, or shagbark hickory to a short-lived black birch is a short-sighted, native tree that is very common in Westchester County. In many

stands, it suppresses understory trees that require more light and space to thrive. Stewardship

programming. It also happens to be a biological gem—everything from frogs to flying squirrels

understand ecological change over time.

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projects like this can be done in your own backyard. To get started learning how to enhance your property while saving energy and reducing maintenance costs visit our web site to get started—westchesterlandtrust.org

What Do the Leon Levy Preserve and Your Backyard Have in Common?

"When a woodland, stream bank, or field is impoverished by the loss of its native plants, landowners can help. Using basic plant identification skills to locate and remove invasives, as well as sheltering remaining natives from deer browse, you can give native plants a chance to thrive."

— Jim Nordgren, WLT conservation-easement donor and consulting naturalist

Located in the hamlet of South Salem, the 383-acre Leon Levy Preserve was protected forever thanks to generous funding from the Jerome Levy Foundation and the Dextra Baldwin Mcgonagle Foundation—which were pooled with financial support from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and the Town of Lewisboro. WLT holds a conservation easement on the property and oversees habitat-management projects with community groups like the Lewisboro Land Trust and the Town's trails committee.

Historic fieldstone walls and the foundation of the former Black Mansion are focal points within the Leon Levy Preserve. Because the mansion and its environs were at one time the most developed part of the property, invasive trees, shrubs, and vines such as Norway maple, Japanese barberry, burning bush, and Oriental bittersweet are rampant in these areas. Unwanted plants have shaded the ground, crowded out natives, impoverished the soil, and strangled trees.

Working in tandem with WLT's stewardship team, consulting naturalist, Jim Nordgren, is encouraging the return of native plants and wildlife impacted by the rampant growth of invasive plants and heavy browsing by deer. Jim is focusing his efforts, which were made possible through the continued support of the Jerome Levy Foundation, on a 20-acre project area—reclaiming and restoring one acre at a time.

With the inaugural year of a planned five-year project completed, we are already seeing results. Seeds of native wildflowers that were dormant in the soil have germinated and grown. Protected from hungry deer by wire cages (above left), native tree seedlings are growing vigorously and will soon replace the 100-plus Norway maples that were removed. Freed from strangling vines, maturing oaks, hickories, and other woodland hardwoods are recovering. Hemlocks, treated to resist the wooly adelgid—a small aphid-like insect that threatens the health of the eastern hemlock—will continue to be part of the plant community and provide nesting areas for owls and other birds.

Within the five acres restored to date, we will be looking for the return of bees, butterflies, and bird species that are a barometer of a healthy ecosystem. The restored area will be a springboard for native species ready to spread.

Projects like this can be done in your own backyard. To get started learning how to enhance your property while saving energy and reducing maintenance costs visit our web site to get started—westchesterlandtrust.org.
**What's Growing on?**

Sugar Hill Farm's half-acre is so much larger than the food we grow—it's about forging healthy relationships between people, their food, and the land from which it grows. As we head into another ambitious season, we are grateful most of all for those relationships—the vibrant network of dedicated volunteers, generous supporters, and enthusiastic eaters that make it possible to nurture this special place. Thank you!

Here’s to another year of growing—both food and community.

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**New Programs Launching This Spring!**

Westchester County is endowed with tremendous natural beauty and resources—a main attraction for its nearly one million residents. Yet many of us have little or no regular interaction with the outdoors. With a goal of enriching lives through the healing powers of nature, we are thrilled to announce two new programs in partnership with Northern Westchester Hospital (NWV).

**Our Lands Are a Health Resource for You!**

**Family Wellness Hike Promotes Healthy Choices**

Join us this April for a high-energy, family-friendly nature walk at Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zohanks Family Preserve (Pound Ridge, NY) co-led by WLT’s Director of Stewardship, Tala Bushell, and NWV’s Director of Community Health Education & Outreach, Maria Siminitelli. Along the walk, parents and young at heart will learn about the merits of diet and exercise for both physical and mental well-being as well as gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between environmental health and human health. During a short—healthy—snack break, families will have the opportunity to chat with both professionals.

**See Back Cover for Program Dates and RSVP Info!**

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**Let’s Get Growing!**

**WLT hosts public volunteer sessions at Sugar Hill Farm on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month from April – October. All are welcome—no experience necessary! See Back Cover for Details!**

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**Resilient Landscape Conservation in a Climate Resilient Landscape**

The Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) initiative, funded by the US Forest Service and co-led by WLT, is gaining ground. Launched in 2016 as a two-year project to engage private landowners in the care and protection of high priority land, H2H has grown into a collaborative force of nearly 3 dozen partners dedicated to shared farmland linking services, training and networking events, and one-on-one assistance for both farmers and landowners. WLT is now aggregating all current Farmland Match Program listings through H2H’s shared online database of available farmers and farm properties in 13 counties, including Westchester. Designed to provide applicants with a more robust resource for small farm enterprises.

**See Back Cover for Program Dates and RSVP Info!**

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**Inspiring Generation Next**

Beginning this spring, WLT’s Sugar Hill Farm will morph into an outdoor classroom demonstrating the restorative, inspiring, therapeutic and educational benefits of the natural world for middle schoolers from Atmosphere Academy—a newly launched Bronx-based charter school. Students will explore the sights and sounds of WLT’s Sugar Hill Farm during a series of field-based seminars extending from April through September.

“We identified Westchester Land Trust as a strategic partner early on,” said Colin Greene, Bedford resident and founder of Atmosphere.

“With WLT’s land as the backdrop, our students will have the opportunity to explore how protected lands of any size impact their own health and wellbeing. They will also learn first-hand what it takes to be a good steward of our natural resources.”

“Both generations can benefit from spending time at Sugar Hill Farm. This is an immersive approach to education that allows students to learn and be inspired by the natural world around them,” said Sarah Giaccio, who also serves as Atmosphere’s principal.

“We’ve been working with Atmosphere to ensure that WLT’s curriculum compliments and expands upon what students are learning in school. We want to instill a sense of wonder about the natural world with fun lessons that allow for personal reflection. Our goal is simple: inspire the next generation of conservation leaders—and WLT staff,” said WLT’s Vice President, Karla Whelan.

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**Our Story**

Since 2012, a half-acre of our Sugar Hill Farm headquarters has been turned over to a partnership with the Food Bank for Westchester. All of the produce is grown with the help of dedicated volunteers and donated to needy residents.

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**Vegchester!**

In 2016, WLT joins ten other Hudson Valley-based partners in the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network (HVFN) a consortium coordinated by the American Farmland Trust—offering shared farmland linking services, training and networking events, and one-on-one assistance for both farmers and landowners. WLT is now aggregating all current Farmland Match Program listings through HVFN’s shared online database of available farmers and farm properties in 13 counties, including Westchester. Designed to provide applicants with a more robust resource for small farm enterprises.

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**2015 Was Our Biggest Season Ever!**

WLT hosted 15 public volunteer sessions, welcomed a dozen corporate and institutional volunteer groups, and grew 1,694 pounds of vegetables. That’s 16,886 servings of fresh nutritious produce. We aimed high, and conditions mostly cooperated with our plans. But more importantly, we witnessed our amazing volunteers demonstrate day-in and day-out that a tiny farm can grow enough to improve people’s lives and foster community.

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**What’s Growing On?**

**Let’s Get Growing!**

**WLT Launches Collaborative Conservation in a Climate Resilient Landscape**

Through our Vegchester! initiative, funded by the US Forest Service and co-led by WLT, is gaining ground. Launched in 2016 as a two-year project to engage private landowners in the care and protection of high priority land, H2H has grown into a collaborative force of nearly 3 dozen partners dedicated to shared farmland linking services, training and networking events, and one-on-one assistance for both farmers and landowners. WLT is now aggregating all current Farmland Match Program listings through HVFN’s shared online database of available farmers and farm properties in 13 counties, including Westchester. Designed to provide applicants with a more robust resource for small farm enterprises.

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Celebrate Someone Special
GIVE SOMEONE YOU LOVE SOMETHING GREEN THAT WON’T NEED TO BE WATERED!

Supporting WLT reflects not only your belief in our organization but also demonstrates a commitment to both land preservation and every Westchester resident.

I would like to contribute:

- $2,500
- $1,000
- $500
- $250
- $100
- Other $________

- My gift is in honor/memory of________

- I have enclosed/will send a matching gift form from my employer.

- I wish my gift to remain anonymous.

- I have remembered the Westchester Land Trust in my will.

Name__________________________________________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________________________
City________________________________________ State________ Zip________
Phone__________________________________________________________________________
Email__________________________________________________________________________

- Enclosed is my check payable to Westchester Land Trust.
- Please charge me credit card: □ American Express □ MasterCard □ Visa

Account no.____________________ Exp.________ CSV________

Signature______________________________________________________________________

To contribute online, please visit westchesterlandtrust.org