

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER



Westchester Land Trust

YOUTH LEADING THE WAY
**Inspiring Action
for a
Brighter Future**

Arboretum
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Westchester Land Trust (WLT) is a member of EarthShare, a nationwide network of America's most respected environmental and conservation charities. To find out how you and your employer can support WLT through an EarthShare workplace giving campaign visit earthsharenyc.org or contact Michelle Culbert at Michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org or 914.234.6992 ext. 22.

Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Number: 77308



COVER

WLT directors, staff, family and friends — and especially youth volunteers — helped make a successful growing season possible at our Sugar Hill Farm Garden.

Photo credit: WLT Staff

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

In previous newsletters, I've touched upon the important role nature has played in my family for generations. We weren't backwoods campers or alpine hikers but we've all possessed an unassuming, quiet appreciation for the land and the restorative power that the land can bring to one's everyday life.

The recent and ongoing challenges we are all facing show me just how important that restorative power is. When nearly every aspect of life was turned upside down a year ago at the start of the pandemic, everyday stresses compounded with new overwhelming pressures—worrying about the health and safety of our loved ones,

juggling remote work and remote learning, and trying to make sense of a world that seems to get more confusing and divisive with each passing day.

These struggles are compelling us to take stock of what is most important and examine how we can build a more resilient, just, and safe community for all people. Access to nature matters for our physical and mental health. And protected natural spaces are key to creating a sustainable, livable future for us all. As an organization, we're learning, growing, and evolving to help create that future.

Throughout this process, young people have emerged as champions of our work in ways we've never seen before. Younger generations have stepped up in inspiring, actionable ways to help WLT advance its mission over the past year. Young people helped us plant, grow, and harvest thousands of servings of organic produce. High school and college students, who have only ever lived in a world shaped by climate change, are undertaking important and fascinating projects to safeguard threatened species on the lands that you have helped us protect, and make WLT's 1,000 acres of preserves safer, more accessible, and more resilient. And a growing online cohort of younger supporters is spreading our message to new audiences.

Your donations, guidance, and encouragement enable these younger generations to gain valuable field experience and drive positive change in our community.

Through these pages, we invite you to learn how our community has turned to nature for its restorative power. We hope that you'll be inspired by the incredible uptick in youth support, which is made possible by your generous contributions. And we're confident that together, we can continue to shape a future that our younger generations deserve.

Thank you,

Lori Ensinger

P.S. We are proud of what we've been able to accomplish together and we're eager to continue protecting land for our community. **YOU make a difference and your support makes our work and youth volunteer opportunities possible. Check out Page 7 for more information about our volunteer programs.**

LAND UPDATES

Conserving Land that Supports Our Community

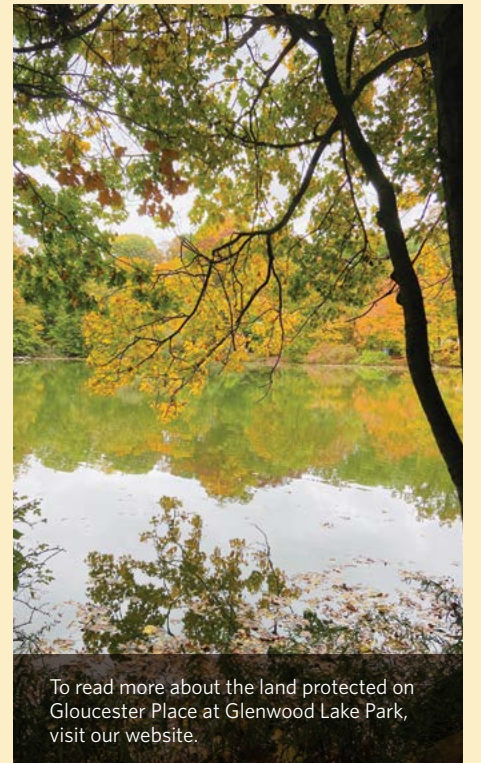
As we saw in 2020, access to safe, outdoor spaces is critically important for the health of our communities, particularly in heavily developed urban areas. Westchester Land Trust completed six land deals last year for a total of 222 acres permanently protected, including two parcels on Glenwood Lake in New Rochelle.

The Glenwood Lake land was acquired by WLT thanks to a partnership between WLT, Friends of Glenwood Lake Park (FGLP), and the City of New Rochelle, and will be permanently protected as a public nature preserve. The properties are the last remaining undeveloped parcels around the lake.

"This latest acquisition was 20 years in the making. Generations yet unborn will benefit from the expansion, preservation, and restoration of Glenwood Lake Park," said Michael Yellin, past President of the Glenwood Lake Association, and WLT Advisory Board member. "This was a complex project, and a tangible example of how multiple partners can come together to accomplish great things for the community."

Our ultimate goal is to transfer ownership of the land to the City of New Rochelle, with WLT holding a conservation easement on the property to ensure that the land remains a public nature preserve in perpetuity. The newly acquired property will be named for the Prioleau family, who were the prior landowners and longtime New Rochelleans, residing until recently at the property next door.

Project partners are currently seeking grant funds to enable the next phase of the project, which will be the cleanup of the property, removal of invasive plants, planting of native trees, and the creation of a trail linkage to the rest of Glenwood Lake Park. Interested community members can contact Brendan Murphy at brendan@westchesterlandtrust.org for more information on how to get involved.



To read more about the land protected on Gloucester Place at Glenwood Lake Park, visit our website.

PROTECTING WHAT WE LOVE

New Arboretum Opens at Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve



For Paul Zofnass and Renee Ring, getting to know the natural landscapes of Pound Ridge over the past few decades has led to a deep sense of caring about the trees, rocks, rivers, and wildlife of our region. That care

inspired the Zofnass family to help create the 127-acre Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve—and now, they've added to this incredible landscape with the opening of a new, three-acre arboretum at the preserve.

The arboretum was donated to our organization by Paul and Renee, who constructed the trails, plantings, and signage over the past 10 years.

Created to inspire curiosity and encourage people to learn about the natural world, the arboretum is now open to the public. Visitors are welcome to explore its 1/3-mile of meandering paths and carefully laid out areas that allow for easy viewing of grasses, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs.

"Renee and I are so happy to share this arboretum, our

labor of love, with the community," Paul said at a small, outdoor gathering to celebrate the arboretum's opening. **"We believe that people naturally care about what they know, and protect what they care about. We hope this land provides all in our community an opportunity to get to know new species of plants and trees and inspires more people to not only appreciate the land, but commit to protecting it in the future."**

Paul and Renee, who are Pound Ridge residents (and former and current members of WLT's Board of Directors, respectively), first conceived the idea of creating a nature preserve decades ago and worked for more than 20 years donating land, encouraging their neighbors to do the same, and creating the impressive trail system that exists today.

Both the preserve and the new arboretum represent the profound impact one person—or in this case, one family—can have on protecting land and encouraging our communities to connect with nature. It takes a village, and we hope you are inspired to help.

Visit our website for more information about the arboretum and check out our YouTube channel for a video of the opening ceremony. See Page 7 for details about the May 1 Arboretum Tour.



It's safe to say that last year was a tough one for all. But despite the challenges of 2020, WLT was able to accomplish meaningful work that helped our communities, thanks in large part to an outpouring of support from young people. As kids, teens, and young adults turned to the land to cope with the struggles of the global pandemic, academic demands, and social unrest, they also turned to WLT to volunteer their skills, time, and passion.

These young people made a difference while gaining real-world experience—they removed invasive vines threatening a wildflower meadow, grew fresh produce for our neighbors in need, cleared trails after tropical storms, built an informational kiosk, improved the sustainability of our trails, worked on restoring a floodplain forest, and surveyed locally rare plants.

Despite heat, sun, multiflora rose thorns, and the global pandemic, WLT's youth volunteers were incredibly enthusiastic, dedicated, and thoughtful. These younger generations give us hope, and challenge us to act more boldly and be unwavering in our fight for a brighter, more resilient future for all.

Volunteers Spencer and Halle pulled thousands of mile-a-minute vines at Pine Croft Meadow Preserve.

THE FACES OF Our Future

A Spiritual Connection to the Land

Chad Petschek has had a deep appreciation for the natural world since long before he volunteered at our Frederick P. Rose Preserve (Lewisboro) last summer, working on trail improvements. His love of the outdoors was formed as a child playing in the woods with his brother where they searched for bugs and caught crayfish in streams.

"It is important to spend time outside in order to feel more connected with nature and to gain a deeper appreciation for life," he said when reflecting on his volunteer work. "When I am outside, I feel more spiritual and present."

Chad and his brother have spent time surveying trails at WLT's Danner Preserve (Yorktown and Putnam Valley) and exploring the treasures that nature provides.

"It is important to preserve local ecosystems for logistical and ethical reasons alike," Chad said. "While we try to separate our species from the natural world, we are still reliant on local ecosystems for simple things like air purification, water collection, and resource recycling. Ethically, it is important to preserve and aid the natural communities from which humans have evolved."

The 86-acre Frederick P. Rose Preserve was created in 2001 as a result of donations of land to Westchester Land Trust by several generous donors, including Adam Rose. The preserve is named in memory of his father, who was a prominent real estate developer and philanthropist. WLT owns and manages the Preserve, and donated a conservation easement on it to Bedford Audubon Society in 2009.

Chad Petschek's volunteer work included adding stepping stones and waterbars to improve trails.



Giving Back to Nature

After spending countless afternoons as a child exploring Central Park—strolling through the Ramble and relaxing on the Great Lawn—**Charlie Rudge** turned to nature, running outdoors to cope with the challenges of the global pandemic.

"Running felt like my only escape, but by summer, I realized my relationship with the outdoors was fairly uneven," Charlie said. "I was using it as solace from the soul-crushing virus, but not giving back to the ecosystems I enjoyed. That is why I volunteered—to try and help ensure other people could enjoy the escape that is nature as much as I had."

Charlie's volunteer work included helping our Preserve Manager John Zeiger pull what seemed like truckloads of the highly invasive mile-a-minute vine from our preserves.

"For all of history, writers and dreamers and thinkers have found their paradise outside, and billions find the tranquility they can't find anywhere else in their regimented lives by wandering in the woods," Charlie said. "We don't all have to go full Henry David Thoreau, but we should all have the luxury of an outdoor escape. It is a necessity to preserve our humanity."



Volunteer Charlie Rudge helped build a kiosk at Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve (Pound Ridge).

Hands-On Learning Outdoors

Samantha Rubin has loved nature and been concerned about sustainability since she was a kid playing hide-and-seek and building forts outside. For her, nature has always been a source of tranquility and happiness.

"I was interested in volunteering with WLT because I think the work WLT does is really important," Samantha explained. "I really appreciated that John, WLT's Preserve Manager, helped me find volunteer work that catered to my interests and was useful to WLT."

In addition to caring about natural lands for their ecosystem services, like protecting clean air and water, Samantha also appreciates the benefits open space has for people.

"It's really important that people have access to natural areas because this increases people's well-being and appreciation of the environment," she said.

Sam Rubin volunteered to remove invasive brush at Hunter Brook Preserve (Yorktown).



"Nature is often overlooked as a healing balm for the emotional hardships in a child's life."

— Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*

Did You Know?



Volunteers helped us grow **1,687 POUNDS** of fresh veggies at WLT's Sugar Hill Farm in 2020



We've donated **70,000 SERVINGS OF PRODUCE** to local food banks since 2012



WLT has protected trails in **27 COMMUNITIES** and is committed to conserving more land, particularly in urban areas



McLain Boege and Eliza Schwartz, whose parents are both WLT Directors, harvest mustard seeds.

Finding Peace Outside

For **McLain Boege**, nature offers a much-needed refuge from the challenges of daily life.

"When I'm outdoors, I feel calm," McLain explained. "The smell of trees and dirt override my senses and I don't feel stressed about anything else in my life."

As a kid, McLain spent afternoons splashing through creeks catching frogs. Now, she brings that same passion to WLT, when volunteering at our Sugar Hill Farm garden. "I enjoy volunteering because it gives me the chance to give back," she described.

McLain's passion for environmental causes is rooted in strengthening our communities. "It's important to preserve and care for natural lands because of global warming, factories, pollution, and other things that hurt the land," she said. "By having preserved land that the whole community can take care of together, it brings the community together."

THE WESTCHESTER LAND TRUST INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Offers opportunities for students and young adults to gain valuable land conservation skills while working with our staff to build a more sustainable future. Visit the volunteer page of our website to learn about our 2021 opportunities.



Growing up at LEON LEVY

Ever since they were small children, Robyn and Ty Graygor have grown up surrounded by the trees, birds, and trails of Leon Levy Preserve in South Salem. The siblings, now in high school, credit this stunning tract of land with inspiring their love of nature and even shaping their plans for the future.



With the global pandemic disrupting life for teens in drastic ways, Robyn, Ty, and their friends have turned to the Leon Levy Preserve to cope with stress.

“It’s a nice place to go since we can’t really go anywhere else,” Ty explained. “This is like the one place you can go where you know you won’t catch [Covid] and it’s a nice place to get fresh air.”

Robyn credits her parents with fostering her love of nature and connection to the Leon Levy Preserve. She has fond memories of wandering along the snowy trails in snowshoes and climbing rocks as a kid. Thinking back on her childhood, she stressed the importance of teaching kids to observe the natural world and approach the outdoors with a sense of curiosity.

Ty’s love of nature inspired him to become a Boy Scout; he’s currently a Life Scout deciding on his Eagle Scout project. One idea he is pursuing is creating a public

compost bin at a local park that gives back compost to gardeners. He believes that anyone, even those new to hiking, can get outside and discover connections to the natural world—he recommends going out with friends and making sure to bring good shoes, a phone, map, water, and a mask.

Seeing her peers struggle with online school, college decisions, and the pandemic, Robyn and her friend Molly have spent countless hours exploring Leon Levy and finding peace in the quiet of nature.

“Just having a connection like that with someone out in nature where you can just be by yourself and be alone with the birds and hearing a creek trickle past, it’s an experience that you don’t get anywhere else,” Robyn noted. “It’s silence that you don’t get to experience at a house—you don’t have artificial light, you don’t have heaters or air conditioning going.”

For Robyn, her connection with the Leon Levy Preserve has not only inspired her artwork and school projects, but also served as the topic of her college admissions essays. She plans to major in journalism and environmental science to help people understand the responsibility we all have to protect and steward the natural world against development threats and the climate crisis.

The Leon Levy Preserve is tranquil, scenic, and brimming with fascinating features, including the ruins of the Black Mansion. In 2005, a public-private partnership led by WLT negotiated the \$8.3 million acquisition of the preserve. The land is named in memory of Leon Levy, founder of the Jerome Levy Foundation, which was the main source of funding for this project. The Town of Lewisboro owns and manages the preserve with the help of dozens of volunteers, and WLT holds a conservation easement on the land, ensuring that it will remain undeveloped forever. In 2018, WLT protected the 33-acre Mill River Preserve adjacent to the Leon Levy Preserve and is working to create a public trail linkage between the two.

Save these Dates for WLT’s 2021 Events



ANNUAL BENEFIT SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 2021 On Our Land

We invite you to join us On Our Land for WLT’s Annual Benefit as we raise crucial funds to protect and celebrate the land you love!

This year’s summer soiree will feature intimate outdoor tours and tastings at exclusive properties protected by WLT.

2021 HONOREES:

Jamie and Michael Wolff PRESERVATION ANGEL AWARD

For their leadership support of land protection projects throughout Westchester

Stephen Beckwith LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

For his inspiring leadership and dedicated service

Daniel Ricci YOUTH CONSERVATION AWARD

For his service to WLT as a Summer Intern



2021 HARVEST CELEBRATION

Live Music in the Meadow at Maple Grove Farm in Bedford!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

WLT’s events raise critical funds to protect the land we love and safeguard our community.

Please note these events will comply with New York State COVID safety guidelines on gatherings to ensure we are taking every precaution possible.

To be added to the invitation list for these events, please contact Michelle Culbert at 914-234-6992, ext. 22, michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org.

Westchester Land Trust

Connect with Nature in 2021

Our programs will be held in person if possible and transitioned online if State COVID-19 regulations prohibit in-person gatherings. Group sizes are extremely limited.

Online pre-registration is required for all programs—visit the Calendar section of our website to sign up. Please notify us of any cancellations so we can alert waiting lists. Attendees must wear face masks and practice social distancing.

Friday March 19, 2021 3 - 5 PM



Winter Tree ID Hike
Leon Levy Preserve
South Salem, NY

No leaves, no problem—become a winter dendrology pro! Join our Director of Stewardship Brendan Murphy for an easy stroll through the Leon Levy Preserve. Enjoy the wintry landscape of this beautiful preserve that WLT helped protect (and holds the conservation easement on) and learn techniques for identifying trees in winter. About 1 mile on easy-moderate terrain.

Friday March 26, 2021 6:30 - 8 PM



Amphibian Walk
Westchester Wilderness Walk /
Zofnass Family Preserve
Pound Ridge, NY

Join Westchester Land Trust staffers to explore a key amphibian habitat during what should be a very active time! Along with searching for frogs and salamanders and their eggs, we will learn how to identify different frog calls, discover what makes amphibians unique, and find the perfect vernal pool habitat on a hike after dark. Bring a flashlight and wear your flashiest and brightest springtime duds!

Saturday May 1, 2021 9 - 11:30 AM



Arboretum Tour
Westchester Wilderness Walk /
Zofnass Family Preserve
Pound Ridge, NY

Take a 1.6-mile roundtrip hike and informative tour of our new Arboretum where you will see hundreds of plant species. You will leave with ideas for species that you can plant in your own backyard. The Pollinator Pop-Up exhibit will be ready for you to explore!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Grow & Share! Farm Volunteer Days
Sugar Hill Farm

403 Harris Road, Bedford Hills
Help us grow food for our neighbors in need at our Sugar Hill Farm. All produce is donated to the Community Center of Northern Westchester. All ages are welcome.

Kick-Off Date: April 15, 2021

April Farm Days: April 20, 22, 27, 29 from 9-11:30 AM

May Farm Days: May 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, 27 from 9-11:30 AM

June Farm Days: June 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29 from 9-11:15 AM and 11:30 AM-12:15 PM

To volunteer in the garden, contact Michelle Culbert at michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org.

Stewardship Volunteer Days at various WLT locations

Join WLT’s Stewardship team on the land to help with invasive plant removal, trail care, and much more! To learn about stewardship volunteer opportunities, contact John Zeiger at johnz@westchesterlandtrust.org.

Saturday April 24, 2021 9 AM - 5 PM (Rain date: Sunday, April 25)



Earth Day Clean-Up
Glenwood Lake Park
New Rochelle, NY

Celebrate Earth Day by taking part in the annual clean-up of the beautiful Glenwood Lake Park. Activities will include invasive plant control, guided walks around the lake, and trash pick-up. Our Pollinator Pop-up will be on display all day. This event is in partnership with the Glenwood Lake Association and the City of New Rochelle.

Sunday May 2, 2021 9:30 AM - 12 PM and 1 - 3:30 PM



Invasive Species Pull
Westchester Wilderness Walk /
Zofnass Family Preserve
Pound Ridge, NY

Help us protect this beautiful preserve by joining us to pull and cut invasive plants. You will learn how to identify common invasive plants, as well as tips for how you can get started on your own backyard project. Bring gloves, wear good boots. Involves off trail walking on rugged terrain for up to 2 miles.

POLLINATOR POP-UP EVENTS



WLT’s Pollinator Pop-Up is an interactive exhibit that offers hands-on activities and a wealth of information for pollinator lovers of all ages. Stop by to learn more and delight in free packets of native wildflower seeds, instructional materials, and more!

Thursday, April 15, 2021 from 10 AM - 2 PM
Pollinator Pop-Up: Farm Season Kick-Off
Sugar Hill Farm, Bedford Hills, NY

Saturday April 24, 2021 from 9 AM - 5 PM (Rain date: Sunday, April 25)
Pollinator Pop-Up: Celebrate Earth Day at Glenwood Lake Park Clean-Up
Glenwood Lake Park, New Rochelle, NY

Thanks to Con Edison for partially funding this Westchester Land Trust program and for supporting local efforts to make our communities more pollinator friendly. For more information on pollinators, visit bit.ly/WLTbees.

Westchester Land Trust
403 Harris Road
Bedford Hills, New York 10507

914.234.6992
westchesterlandtrust.org

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WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT NOW & ALWAYS

Westchester Land Trust

Protect our environment for the *Faces of our Future*

Make a recurring monthly donation today! A small gift to you is a big deal for us—\$10 a month will make a big difference funding internships and volunteer opportunities for the next generation of land stewards.

Thinking long term?

WLT's commitment to protect and care for the land is forever. By making a planned gift, you can help create a legacy of conservation for your family and for future generations to enjoy.

For information about WLT's planned giving program please contact Kara Whelan, Vice President at 914-234-6992 ext. 12 or by checking the legacy gift box below and we will reach out to you.

▶ **Rhys Healy, a local high school student, volunteered at our Pine Croft Meadow Preserve** to improve Baltimore Checkerspot (a regionally rare butterfly) habitat by protecting white turtlehead, their host plant, from deer browse with fencing. Rhys is also collecting data on the health of the turtlehead inside and outside the fences to better understand the effect deer have on this plant.



WLT's mission has never been more important! Make your annual gift to WLT today to preserve land forever, keep trails safe and open to the public, and provide organic produce for your neighbors in need today. No gift is too small!

I would love to contribute

\$10 \$25 \$35 \$50 \$100 \$.....

One Time Monthly Bi-Monthly

For the price of one lunch a month, you can contribute \$100+ in 2021 and preserve the land that will sustain future generations.

My gift is in honor/memory of

.....

I wish my gift to remain anonymous.

I would like to learn more about leaving a legacy gift in my will to WLT.

I will submit matching gift from my employer.

.....

WLT is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Name

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Address

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**The email provided above will be added to WLT's enews list to keep you up-to-date on Westchester Land Trust's successes, programs, and events. You can unsubscribe at any time. We never share your private information.*

Checks made out to **Westchester Land Trust** can be mailed to 403 Harris Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507. Donate online by visiting WestchesterLandTrust.org and clicking the 'Donate' button.