



Connecting the Wachusett Communities with Trails and Greenways

The eConnector

December 2015

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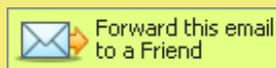
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Who's on the Mass Central Rail Trail?

Trail visitors surprise and delight us. Whether they travel around the corner or across the Commonwealth and beyond, they come in all ages to enjoy the trail in many ways. In this edition of the eConnector, a few of them share their stories with us.

We are filled with gratitude for you as 2015 -- our 20th year -- draws to a close. Many thanks for joining us in connecting our communities with trails and greenways. And we wish you a joyous, peaceful Holiday season!

This Saturday, December 12, between 9 AM and 3 PM, please come out to greet us on the Mass Central Rail Trail at the West Boylston entrance. Here's a chance to pick up a t-shirt, hat, map, or gift membership, or to renew your own membership. Come out and see us...the weather looks fine!

We hope to be with you often in 2016. Come out for a walk, run, ski, or snowshoe on the trail with us or to help out as we continue with Wachusett Greenways stewardship. You are always welcome!

Wachusett Greenways Directors

President Colleen Abrams, Christy Barnes, Steve Chanis, Dave Fitzpatrick, Troy Milliken, and Mike Peckar

Newsletter Team

Manager Vivianne Ouellette, Colleen Abrams, Grace Blydenburgh, Barbara Carlson, Ken McDonnell, Hank Ouellette, Peder Pedersen, and Amanda Sayut

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Training for Her Most Successful Half Marathon



This past November 15, Cheryl Lower Coonahan, of Sterling, completed the annual 13.1-mile [Harborside Half Marathon](#), in Newburyport, MA, in a very respectable 1 hour 56 minutes, or 8:53 per mile. Cheryl is among the growing cadre of competitive runners whose training includes the scenic, safe, off-road miles of the Mass Central Rail Trail.

Cheryl's workout often includes the 12-mile out-and-back from West Boylston to River St. to Manning St. to Rte. 31 in Holden -- six miles each way. This route

traverses by far the hilliest miles of the entire rail trail, the River St./Manning St./Rte. 31 "over-the-hill" stretch. Clearly, her dedication paid off at the Harborside.

In 2015, Cheryl marked her 30th year as a runner. She started running while a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand - besides loving it, all she needed was a pair of shoes. She has run around the world -- Romania, France, South Africa, Nepal, and India, among other places. She has run one marathon but now likes the half-marathon distance. Professionally, she is a change-management consultant, with local, national, and global clients.

"Only in the past three to four years have I become a more serious runner," Cheryl says. "The rail is the ideal place to train because it's a soft surface with no camber, and I can vary the distance to suit my schedule. Sometimes it's really quiet - like on a cold, rainy weekend morning. Sometimes it's filled with families. I pass a bench named after my son's teacher and late husband. For a while I was there at the same time on Sunday mornings and saw the same two couples biking and would joke around with them. Outside exercise feels so great that I hope readers decide to use the rail trail in their favorite ways."

She adds, "When people ask me why I run, I say, 'Because I can, because I have a choice whether or not to move.' My mother doesn't have a choice. She has been quadriplegic since 1999 and she would love to hike again. When she visits from Utah, we love going on the rail trail."

Don't be surprised to see teams of runners along the rail trail. We know of track and cross-

country teams from Wachusett High School, Assumption College, and several other schools that regularly train on the trail. To say nothing of the scores of individual runners, walkers, cyclists, x-country skiers, snowshoers, and other fitness enthusiasts you'll see out there accumulating the miles and reveling in the scenery.

Another Runner Who Loves the Rail Trail



Julie Gillis, of Lancaster, (second from left, with running pals) first discovered the MCRT in West Boylston/Oakdale about 10 years ago when her children were little. These days she enjoys going out for "fun runs" with a few friends as often as she can. She says she loves the beauty and serenity of the trail, no matter the season. "To run here, in such a clean, safe area, with plenty of parking, is so much better than running on the road, track, or treadmill!" she exclaims.

New Members, Longtime Rail Trail Enthusiasts

Barbara and Arthur Roberts may be new Wachusett Greenways members, but they have enjoyed the rail trail for years. They especially appreciate the section starting in West Boylston, with its shade and the soothing sights and sounds of the Quinapoxet River. Why have they only now become Greenways members? "No one ever asked us to sign on until now," says Barbara, quite simply.

The Holden couple are a great addition to our Greenways family. They met while both were studying at Clark University and have been married for 50 years. Arthur retired as a colonel after 30 years in the U.S. Air Force, flying missions all over the world. Barbara earned three master's degrees and has held various positions as a systems engineer. For a time she worked in Mission Planning at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD.



Retirement opened the door to new opportunities. Many retirees spend much of their newfound leisure time traveling, and the Roberts are no exception. Once their two children, Jennifer and John, were grown, Barbara and Arthur were ready to try something new. Why not learn to sail? So they took sailing lessons and then drove around North America in search of a boat. *SV Badger*, a small, ocean-going Bluewater sailboat, has been their home on the high seas for the past 18 years. Destinations have included Italy, Greece, Turkey Malta, France, Spain, the Midi Canal, and the Atlantic coast of France and England.

When they do come ashore, they enjoy their home and time in nature and the outdoors. In her spare time Barbara took up painting; their home is now adorned with beautiful framed pictures, many of places they have visited over the years.

So what does this interesting couple do when they aren't sailing, entertaining grandchildren, etc? Why, walking the Rail Trail, of course, and Wachusett Greenways is delighted to welcome them into the fold!



A Family That Cycles Together...



It's not easy to maintain an active lifestyle once young children are in the picture. Rail trail to the rescue! Says Jonathan, of Northborough, "My wife and I enjoy all things outdoors, but with two- and four-year-olds, our activity options are fairly limited at the moment. Cycling on the rail trail is one of our favorite weekend activities. From the comfort of a bike trailer, the kids can watch the scenery and spot wildlife along the trail."

On a recent ride, Jonathan came upon a Wachusett Greenways volunteer crew performing trail maintenance and was inspired to register his appreciation. "My family loves riding on the rail trail," he says. "There are plenty of rail trails around paved with asphalt, but have always found the relaxed nature of the Mass Central Rail Trail more to our liking. Many thanks to your volunteers for making a safe and accessible place for my family to enjoy being

outside together."

At Wachusett Greenways, a goal for the coming year is to coordinate regular family rides on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Want us to keep your family in the loop? Send us a message [here](#) anytime.

Twice the Fun Riding -- and Drawing -- the Rail Trail



Top: Elizabeth Cavicchi and Alva Couch; Rutland State Park, pastel
Bottom: (L) 2 crayon drawings of the rail trail; (R) Thayer Pond, Rutland, pastel

Tufts University professor Alva Couch and Elizabeth Cavicchi, his wife, began long-distance bike riding in 1979. They soon realized that the differences in their leg strength hindered their progress, so they hopped on a tandem bike and have been riding together that way ever since.

We caught up with them this fall on their first ride on the Mass Central Rail Trail, in Rutland. Alva and Elizabeth are accustomed to longer vacation rides, such as on the Northern Trail in New Hampshire and the Down East Rail Sunrise Trail in Maine. This time, though, the Couches had just a day and wanted to see autumn color, so Alva checked his [TrailLink](#) app and found the section of the trail in Rutland, just an hour or so from home in Woburn.

Riding a tandem bike turned out to be the most efficient way to cover a lot of ground and let them stop on a whim. "I bike for the exercise, and to take photographs and bird watch," says Alva, "and my wife brings along her paints and pastels to capture scenes that she admires. [See the drawings Elizabeth made of the trail.] Discovering the Charnock cut was a beautiful surprise," he says, "and we're looking forward to exploring more sections of the rail trail. "

A Bequest to Support the WG Mission for Generations to Come

Rebecca Tayler and Robert Lacouture, of Worcester, count the Mass Central Rail Trail as their favorite retreat to gain physical fitness and inner healing. Rebecca and Bob are avid cyclists who first visited the section of the trail between West Boylston and Holden a few years ago, and to their delight they recently discovered the western-most Rutland-to-Barre section. They are also loyal donors who will enrich Greenways' work through a very generous

bequest.



"The entire trail is glorious," says Rebecca. "The beauty, variety and relative seclusion we find out west is especially inviting. We're so impressed with the rail trail and Wachusett Greenways that we wanted to help keep this 'labor of love' moving forward long after we're gone. We feel a bequest is the best way we can make an enduring contribution."

"We couldn't be more grateful to Rebecca and Robert for their long-term commitment to the Greenways mission," says Colleen Abrams, Wachusett Greenways president. "Like many other donors and friends, they appreciate the extraordinary resource we are privileged to oversee. Rebecca and Robert's bequest mirrors our own goal of sustaining this resource for generations to come."

These long-time cyclists have supported rail trails locally and nationally for many years. They started cycling on the West Boylston section in 2013. "We must have ridden that part of the trail every day that summer," Rebecca recalls.

She adds that she recently underwent knee-replacement surgery, for which cycling on the rail trail has been an ideal element of her rehab and the perfect motivator for getting back in shape. Clearly, she is not willing to miss out on a season of cycling on the trails.

Rebecca and Robert encourage others to think of ways to ensure the enjoyment they get from the trails is sustained for everyone for many years to come.

Greenways welcomes bequests in support of our work. Interested parties should contact Colleen at colleen.abrams@verizon.net or 508-479-2123 to learn more.



Wachusett Greenways Events
December 2015 thru March 2016

Winter Solstice Bike Ride

Tuesday, December 22, 3-4:30 PM

Bundle up and let's get out to celebrate the days getting longer! We'll ride the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) from Holden to West Boylston, overlooking the Quinapoxet River along the way. If there's snow we'll change our starting point. Contact Troy for details at 540-560-5283 or troy.milliken@gmail.com.

Walk Off the Feast

Sunday, December 27, 1 PM

Need a good walk after holiday feasting? Join us on this loop connecting the White Oak Trail and Trout Brook Reservation in Holden. Our goal is to hike this single-wide trail through the woods, but snowshoeing may be preferable depending on conditions. There will be two loop options offered: one about 3 miles, and one of about 4 miles that includes part of the Bob Elms Trail. Trail map available at [here](#). Contact Mike Peckar at 508-835-2959 or mike@wachusettgreenways.org to sign up and get details on where to park.

New Year's Day Hike in Hardwick/New Braintree

Friday, January 1, 2016, 10 AM

Join Ed Yaglou for a fourth annual event on this special day. We'll walk (or if snow, bring skis/snowshoes) the East Quabbin Land Trust's section of the MCRT with the land trust folks. Meet at the former New Braintree Railroad Station Site, across the Ware River from the Clover Farm Store on Rt. 32 in Hardwick. Contact Ed for more information and to sign up at 978-355-2539 or egyaglou@verizon.net.

Full Moon Hike (Wolf Moon) - MCRT, Rutland

Saturday, January 23, 6 PM

Depending on snow conditions, we'll walk, snowshoe, and/or cross country ski as we watch the moon over Thayer Pond. Children welcome. Join us for treats following the hike. Contact Colleen Abrams to sign up at 508-479-2123 or colleen.abrams@verizon.net.

Eagle Lake Walk

Thursday, February 4, 10 AM-12 Noon

Snowshoe or hike on this beautiful Mass Audubon property over stone walls, through northern hardwood forest, and near the lake and stream to see signs of river otter and the land put to bed. Moderate walk, bring water and a snack. Contact Colleen to sign up at 508-479-2123 or colleen.abrams@verizon.net

Poutwater Pond

Saturday, February 20 or 27, 11 AM

This 3-mile round-trip hike will ascend 300 feet in elevation through the North Sterling Woods and then traverse open fields. We'll stop for lunch (bring your own) at the pond's Bog Walk and enjoy this pristine kettle pond, where folks rarely venture in winter. Snowshoes are available for loan. Nordic skiers are welcome, but beware the terrain is steep in sections. Contact Mike Peckar at 508-835-2959 or mike@wachusettgreenways.org to sign up, reserve snowshoes, and get details on where to park.

Hike with the Monday Hikers

Monday, February 22, 10 AM-12 Noon

Join Jackie Lynn and her "flock" for a casual walk of our local open spaces. If the weather permits, we'll walk the Holbrook Forest, property that is jointly owned by [White Oak Land Conservation Society \(WOLCS\)](#) and [Greater Worcester Land Trust \(GWLT\)](#). Parking may be limited. Carpool! Snow may postpone. Contact Christy Barnes to sign up at 508-755-6321 or

christybarnes0706@gmail.com.

Explore Kinneywoods

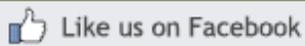
Friday, March 4, 1-3:30 PM

Come explore land preserved by GWLT and WOLCS. Follow a series of trails on the old Girl's Inc. property that take us across stone walls and past ravines with interesting signs of wildlife in Worcester. Bring walking poles if you have them. All are welcome to this cosponsored partnership event. Trail map available [here](#). Contact Christy Barnes to sign up at 508-755-6321 or christybarnes0706@gmail.com.

Hike Asnebumskit Hill

Saturday, March 12, 1-3:30 PM

We'll hike across land protected by WOLCS and GWLT on this partner event. Explore Asnebumskit Hill and view the Holden Reservoirs on the [Asnebumskit Ridge Trail](#). Stone walls and the occasional brook will cross our path, as might signs of wildlife. Bring a walking pole, water, and a snack. Welcome to all. Contact Christy at 508-755-6321 or christybarnes0706@gmail.com for details and to sign up.



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