

THOMA'S CONSERVATION LEGACY

By Sam Frost

Years ago, Hans Thoma was on his way to a job interview when he passed through a beautiful small town. Captivated by the church steeples, barns and old colonial homes scattered amongst bucolic forests and meadows, he thought to himself, "Someday I'm going to live here." Hans never forgot how he felt that day, and in 1979, he and his wife Ginna bought a stunning piece of land in the center of that town. With the help of their three children, Gretchen, Mark and Elizabeth, they built a house on the property, which they moved into in 1981. After years of perseverance, Hans had finally realized his dream: He was officially a resident of Hardwick, MA.

Hans and Ginna's life in Hardwick turned out to be just as he had imagined, and the two remained in the town for over 40 years. Though he passed away last year, Hans' legacy and imprint upon the town of Hardwick will not soon be forgotten. Thanks to Ginna's generous donation of a conservation restriction on the Thomas' 65 acres to the East Quabbin Land Trust this year, Hardwick has even more reason to be thankful for that job interview all those decades ago. Carried out in honor of Hans' commitment to conservation, the gift served as a fitting commemoration of a life devoted to protecting Hardwick's place as a model of classic New England countryside.

Following their initial move into the community, the Thomas took a vested interest in protecting the picturesque landscape of the town Hans had fallen in love with all those years ago. "Hans really wanted to preserve the look of Hardwick," Ginna says. "Though he was inspired by the area's pastoral scenery, Hans also had a general love for the outdoors that preceded his move to the town. "He was an avid hiker and fly fisherman," Ginna says. "We and the children frequently went camping, canoeing, and hiking in the White Mountains." Thus, in addition to his desire to see Hardwick stay beautiful, Hans also sought to make the area more navigable for those who shared his favorite outdoor pastimes. "Hans had a vision of a town-wide network of hiking trails," Rick Romano EQLT Founder and Board

Member says. "Hans shared these passions with Ginna, who is deeply involved with gardening and is active nationwide in exhibiting and judging horticultural and floral designs." These collective enthusiasms inspired the Thomas to take an active role in expanding Hardwick's protected land.

A focal point of their efforts was their involvement with the EQLT, which shared their goal of conserving Hardwick's pristine natural beauty. "The Thomas have been supporters from the beginning for the Land Trust, and their generosity was more than just yearly financial support," said Romano, adding that "Ginna worked every year on our annual fund-raising dinner." This close relationship eventually resulted in multiple successful conservation efforts that blessed Hardwick with hundreds of acres of protected land.

These endeavors included this year's donation of a conservation restriction, in addition to donating a 136 acre parcel in 2006, which is now EQLT's Patrill Hollow Preserve. On top of these substantial offerings, Hans also committed himself to the preservation of 180 acres of

natural landscape adjacent to Gate 43 on the Quabbin Reservoir. The combined success of these three undertakings achieved a remarkable feat: The creation of an east-west conservation corridor stretching across Hardwick from the Quabbin Reservoir towards New Braintree. Romano noted the exceptionalism of this accomplishment. "Most corridors run north-south. East-west ones are rare." Hans would undoubtedly be thrilled to know that, with this latest donation to the EQLT, his efforts have helped Hardwick reach new heights in conservation.

Though he is no longer with us in person, Hans' devotion to the town of Hardwick will live on for years to come. Whenever people witness the unspoiled beauty of Hardwick's town center, or cross-county ski through new-fallen snow on the town's secluded trails, they will know his legacy. Let us honor his memory by continuing to protect the area he loved and cared for so much. ■



Cattle grazing in the pastures along Hardwick Road, now protected from future development by a conservation restriction

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



‘Think globally, act locally’ is a phrase that I embraced at an early age. Recycling, turning off the lights and shutting off the water was the only way a kid of ten was going to make a difference, even in a small way. Knowing that I was part of a much bigger “whole” inspired me to do what I could! Now the same impulse spurs me to continue making a difference close to home through the land trust.

The work of the land trust addresses the charge to ‘think globally, act locally’:

Right now we are hearing about droughts and fires in California, one of the great food growing regions of the world. The east Quabbin area also includes many excellent soils for growing food. Once most of our landscape was cleared for pasture or crop production. A recent report “A New England Food Vision” sets the bar for producing 50% of food for all New Englanders by 2060 on our own soils (see <http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/new-england-food-vision>).

To do this, not only will we need to keep existing farms and farmers working, but we need to get more farms into production. Land prices are often listed as an impediment to new farmers. Conserving agricultural land from future development threats makes the land more affordable, keeps jobs local, saves on petroleum use for shipping, and builds the economy at home. Conservation of the Thoma and King properties are examples of keeping farms as farmland.

As trade becomes increasingly global so goes the insects, plants and animals that hop from one port to another wreaking havoc on native communities. Building resilient landscapes through corridors of conservation lands can preserve our native biodiversity. Some invasive species are so well entrenched that we cannot turn back the clock on their advances. Yet others can be controlled if gotten early or if they are threatening special natural communities. Along the Ware River at the Frohloff Farm pitch pine can be found, which is a unique species to our area. Keeping those three acres free of common buckthorn and multi-flora rose will help keep the pitch pine growing. We also are fighting invasive plants along field edges and through wetlands.

Now that there is so much turmoil – in our economy, in other countries, in our weather patterns – it is more important than ever for each one of us to take positive steps, right where we live. ‘Think globally, act locally’ has real meaning, and is really practiced at the land trust. ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

As a non-profit organization the East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

We welcome your thoughts, articles, and photographs on events in our area. For more information about the land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact us at:

East Quabbin Land Trust
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Visit our website at www.EQLT.org

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CONSERVATION EFFORTS SAVE PETERSHAM FAMILY FARM

By Sam Frost

Petersham residents Emily Anderson and Tyson Neukirch had long dreamed of having a family farm of their own. Strong proponents of independent and sustainable farming (Tyson is a teacher at The Farm School in Athol), the two sought a large piece of property that would provide the land area and natural resources needed to make their goal a reality. They didn't have to look far. Just down the road, at 62 South Street, they saw a "For Sale" sign in front of an ideal location: A house and barn sitting on 106 acres of gently sloping woodland, complete with a beautiful beaver pond. However, although the pair was deeply impressed by the land, they were pessimistic about their chances of acquiring it. "We loved the land and the house, but it was initially out of our price range," says Anderson. Little did they know that the circumstances of the property were actually strongly in their favor.

In fact, Anderson and Neukirch were precisely the type of people the owners, Gil and Linda King, were looking for to take up stewardship of the land. The Kings, along with local realtor Chuck Berube, were having problems finding suitable buyers. A few people had approached them with varying levels of interest, but none had expressed a desire to treat the land with the respect the Kings felt it deserved. For four generations, the King family had farmed and maintained the property. Now that the land was at long last being sold, the Kings wanted to ensure that the new owners would carry on and respect their family's legacy of conservation and environmentally conscious agriculture.

"We had a lot of people come to look," said Berube, "but there was no clear-cut plan presented by anyone, (The Kings) thought they were going to spoil the land." Ms. Anderson and Mr. Neukirch, with their agricultural and conservation aspirations, were a notable exception. However, price remained an immovable object standing in the way of a deal between the two parties. Outside help was needed to overcome this final barrier to a mutually beneficial purchase. Fortunately, the King's land offer had also attracted the attention of the Petersham Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee as well as the East Quabbin Land Trust, all of whom had a profound desire to see the land conserved. Their interest was rooted in the fact that not only is the property itself a pristine parcel of natural beauty located within the Swift River Watershed, but also that it abuts Petersham's Babbitt Wildlife Sanctuary. Restriction of the land would help to protect the reserve as well as allow for public access onto it. In addition, saving the land would enable the con-

nection of some of the town's many hiking trails. "A great way to build ecotourism," says Bob Clark, chairman of both the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee.

Upon becoming aware that the King property had potential buyers that were both environmentally conscious and of local origin, the Conservation Commission and the EQLT worked together to make a deal come to fruition. A remarkable fundraising effort ensued. The town of Petersham updated its Open Space and Recreation plan in an impressively short amount of time in order to, with the EQLT's help, apply for a Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (L.A.N.D.) grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that covered 64% of the total cost of the property. Another grant from the Quabbin To Cardigan Partnership covered transaction related expenses, and additional fundraising organized and facilitated by the EQLT brought the purchase to completion.



Tyson Neukirch and Emily Anderson with Charlie, Addie and Iris at the beaver pond on their farm that is now protected with a conservation restriction.

Strolling the South Street property as proud new owners, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Neukirch gaze out across lush pastures dotted with sheep, goats, and horses. The entire parcel is theirs, with 98 of the 106 acres reserved for agriculture and conservation. Content with their new surroundings, the two exude a sense of a couple on the rise. Their nine-year-old daughter Addie, one of their three children (along with Charlie, 12, and Iris, 10 months), gallops past on a pony. Mr. Neukirch optimistically discusses his plans for the farm.

"We're slowly improving the land for future use and agricultural profit," he says, "but it's all with the goal of maintaining if not improving biological diversity on the property." He then reflects back on the course of events that made this all a reality.

"I thought it was amazing to find out that this was possible," he says. After praising the efforts of the EQLT and the Conservation Commission, he expresses appreciation for the Kings' commitment to their goal of conservation. "It took a lot of trust on their part. They took their property off the market (while waiting for the grant requests to be approved), and put all of their eggs in a collective basket to try and get the property conserved."

Others share Mr. Neukirch's sense of satisfaction.

"It was enormously rewarding for me, Berube said. "This is more than making money. My grandchildren live in this town. Preservation of agricultural land is important, because we're likely to need it someday."

May there be much more of this to come. ■

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

An Interview with Marshal Bertrand, Senior at Quabbin Regional High School

By Cynthia Henshaw

Lowering his impact on the environment is a guiding principle of Marshal Bertrand's life. "My friends and I believe in the motto 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'. I don't buy as many things now, I'm less materialistic than I used to be and feel good about that." His focus is squarely on sustainability. "If everyone makes even small changes it will make a difference on the big issues, like waste, climate change and the energy crisis."

Marshal is a senior at Quabbin Regional High School. He plays in the band, is a defensive back in soccer and runs track. His passion for being sustainable is evident by working on the school garden and composting program. Also, Marshal is on the Envirothon team, which won silver for overall scores and first place for their presentation on Sustainable Agriculture last year. The Envirothon team visited EQLT's Frohloff Farm in April and spent the morning planting blueberry, raspberry and strawberry plants as part of an effort to expand the youth garden. Marshal was there, digging holes, weeding and hauling wood chips for mulch. This summer he expanded his own garden at home.

"I want to live 100% sustainably. That means raising all my own food and not using resources from other places. We are destroying some of the most important habitats, like the tropical rainforests, with our current lifestyles."

Through the Envirothon and other opportunities Marshal has learned a lot from people in the region, about how to manage land more sustainably. For instance, trees can be harvested in a way that provides wood to use as well as benefit wildlife. "I want to learn more about forestry and forest management. That's why I'm doing an internship with

EQLT focused on prescribed burning as one technique for taking care of the land. I want to know how it all works, why burning can be good for wildlife and the plants." The EQLT is using prescribed burns to manage preserves in Hardwick and Ware that will respond favorably to fire.

"Permaculture is the use of perennial plants which is better for the environment in the long-run. Deep rooted plants bring up to the surface nutrients that were deep in the soil, and practices like hugelkultre – where hardwood logs are buried – increase the nutrients available to the plants and expands the amount of fungal activity in the soil."

Marshal will be designing a permaculture garden at The Country Store in Petersham as part of his senior thesis class. There is only a little green space at The Country Store, but it's a challenging site. With direct southern exposure, the 10 feet by 20 feet area is trapped between East Street and the building. The land slopes steeply too. Incorporating one or more retaining walls might be needed to give plants enough solid footing. The final design will focus on low maintenance plants, ones that can take a lot of sun and tight spaces.



Marshal Bertrand removing invasive purple loosestrife.

"I'm planning on going to college next fall." Marshal has a long list of schools that he is considering; all of them have environmental science and forestry, plus agricultural programs, mirroring his interests fostered at Quabbin. Most of the schools are in the northeast from Maine to New York. He'll have quite a few trips around the region in the coming months.

We thank Marshal for incorporating several interesting projects with EQLT into his class schedule this year. ■

PUTTING PASSION INTO ACTION

An Interview with Chris Chabot, Senior at Quabbin Regional High School

By Cynthia Henshaw

In September 2013 we received a call from a guidance counselor at Quabbin saying that they had a student working on an internship in forestry. Would we be interested in working with the student to provide a practical application to the research? Nate Grady and I went to go meet the student, who turned out to be Chris Chabot.



Chris had broad interests - about tree growth, about soil conditions, about wildlife. After conversations that included describing Nate's various Service Learning projects it was agreed that Chris and Nate would complete an interpretive brochure for Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve in West Brookfield. The research focused on history of the property, white pine weevil, wolf trees, and beaver impacts. Even after his internship was officially over, Chris helped lead a work day last spring and later install the interpretive posts with Nate.

"Being outdoors was where I felt free, since I am the second to last kid out of eight. I grew up on a farm and we were always outside fishing or working with the animals, cleaning out stalls and feeding the pigs. Those experiences inspired me to want to learn more about the world I live in."

A couple key courses at Quabbin influenced Chris, Biology, of course, but also Environmental Systems and Society. "It was very interesting to learn more about our effect on the environment; we looked in-depth at human impacts and interactions." Surprisingly, Chris isn't an official member of the Envirothon team, though he helped with their research last year. "It's a bummer, but I play football and baseball. There is just not enough time to participate in all the things I'd like to."

Chris is a senior this year and focusing his honors research on invasive species that affect farmers and their crops, specifically those that affect animals. "At one point farmers were told to plant these species, but now we know that we really need to get rid of them." His comment brings visions of multi-flora rose and autumn olive hedge rows that were promoted as natural fencing and good for wildlife back in the 50s and 60s. Chris will be writing an essay and presenting his research at a science fair in the spring.

Right now Chris is completing an internship with the Land Trust establishing permanent monitoring points at several preserves. Chris and Shelby Braese, EQLT's Service Learning

Coordinator visited the Frohloff Farm to install photo monitoring points. With the recent tree clearing and invasive plant control in progress, it is important to keep an eye on how the vegetation is changing. The monitoring points are in areas that are part of future prescribed burns, or where animals may graze, or where herbicides are used to control the invasives. The photo monitoring will visually document changes to the land.

In addition, Chris will install permanent monitoring plots at the Prince River Preserve using a different study method. Here, each tree and shrub will be identified, tagged and measured. Chris and

Shelby will choose two different stand types so that changes in tree growth and understory plants can be monitored as the forest ages. Sections of the Prince River Preserve were harvested decades ago. Through data from the plots we will be able to see changes to the woods over time in specific locations and how our stewardship practices affect their growth.

Chris has advanced several key stewardship projects for the land trust through his academic internships. Because of Chris's example, we are looking into ways to recruit more student interns from Quabbin to provide the students with meaningful experiences while doing valuable projects for the land trust. Thank you Chris for all your hard work! ■



Chris clearing brush along the trail edges at the Fitness Trail during a recent work day.

TYING HER LOVE OF MICROBES AND ART TOGETHER

Introducing Shelby Braese, EQLT's new Service Learning Coordinator

The East Quabbin Land Trust welcomes Shelby Braese this month as our new Service Learning Coordinator. Shelby grew up in Hardwick, MA and has lived there since she was 3 years old. Currently 23, she is a recent graduate of the University of New England in Biddeford, ME with a B.S. in marine sciences and a fine art minor and hopes to pursue a master's degree in biological illustration after her service with the Land trust is finished. While at UNE, she took on many roles, including teachers assistant, outdoor recreation guide, graphic designer, and researcher. Working alongside friend and professor Dr. Stephen Zeeman, she conducted chlorophyll concentration and e.coli concentration measurements along the Saco River, starting in the White Mountains in New Hampshire going all the way to the ocean in Biddeford, ME. These measurements (along with others including temperature and mercury levels) were done on

a monthly basis and allowed consistent monitoring of the river so that changes, if any, could be detected. She is hoping that with this experience she can find a way to introduce people here in the Quabbin area to water quality and to the microscopic world that she has grown to love as well as the macroscopic one. What should and shouldn't be in the water? How much of a certain nutrient is too much or not enough? How nutrient rich runoff contributes to detrimental plankton blooms not only in small freshwater ponds, but in our ocean neighbor as well? And how does all of that effect our ecosystems? It's with hope that through service learning events this year, young of all ages will be able to learn more about the little things that account for so much in our lives.

Shelby has always had a love for adventure and nature and hopes to travel around the world for her future career. Her first international dream, a trip to the Galapagos National Park was realized just last year. This week-long adventure, filled with hiking islands, snorkeling, and living on a boat, made her realize that wherever the road may lead her in life, she knows that she always wants it to be connected to the outdoors, and even more specifically, with some connection to the ocean. For the next year, though, she is excited to come back to her hometown and work with the local community. In just her first week, a trip to various preserves and trails just around the corner has opened her eyes to what truly is around her.

Science and the arts are two things that she is passionate about and hopes she can bring them together in her Service Learning Coordinator projects as well as all future endeavors. Throughout the coming year, she looks forward to creating service learning events that not only cover much need-

ed conservation efforts such as trail maintenance at various preserves, but also through events that educate the young about nutrition, health, and local food, as well as using the arts to express ideas to inspire people. One effort will continue work on the Gilbertville Fitness Trail. Another will host more BioBlitzes at other preserves throughout the seasons to expand awareness and documentation of what plants, animals and other organisms share the land.

In her free time, she partakes in a multitude of things. Her hobbies are more diverse than should be mentally healthy but even with everything she strives to accomplish

in her life, she still manages to somehow include them all. The outdoorsy part of her loves to swim, kayak, partake in archery, and when she can, snorkel. Sampling teas, singing, playing piano, making costumes, drawing, and photography are just a snippet of the artsy part of her life. With so much to explore in the world, it's hard to choose just a few things to do!

Shelby comes to EQLT as part of the 2014-15 class of Americorps members associated with the Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow (MassLIFT) program, which is based at the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. MassLIFT is dedicated to increasing the capacity of regional land conservation initiatives in Massachusetts, and is composed of 13 member organizations, all of which focus on conserving land throughout the state. The MassLIFT service members expand the capacity of their host organizations through a wide range of projects, including training volunteers to monitor local wildlife species, garnering community interest in conserving historic lands, and empowering students to become caretakers of the natural world.

If you are the leader of a community group or are generally interested volunteering to help conserve local landscapes, and want to explore the possibility of a service learning project, please contact Shelby at servicelearning@EQLT.org. ■



Shelby painting the Gilbertville Fitness Trail during a recent work day. Look for the sky blue and sunshine yellow gate on Main Street.

FARM PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

By Caren Caljouw

We are fortunate to live in a vibrant farm community. We know when we buy from a local farmer, we are eating healthy and helping to preserve local agriculture and the rural character of the landscape.

The East Quabbin Land Trust owns and manages several working farms including Frohloff Farm in Ware, Mandell Hill in Hardwick, and Wendemuth Meadow in North Brookfield. In addition to these farms, the land trust manages portions of Deer Park and Patrill Hollow Preserves for hay. We are fortunate to partner with six dedicated and ecologically perceptive farmers in leasing and managing our agricultural lands.

The land trust also holds conservation restrictions on several picturesque and successful private farms. Visiting and monitoring these properties annually allows us to share information regarding conservation practices and agricultural resources. We look forward to these visits as they provide us an opportunity to garner knowledge from very experienced farmers, share our questions and concerns, and know the farmland we helped to conserve is productive and responsibly managed.

Preserving farmland for productive agricultural use requires an active commitment and responsibility to long-term land management. Without the incentive to plan for future generations, a short-term lease farmer may be forced to consider the highest and quickest yield without adequate attention to the health of soil, water, and other natural features. Developing a long-range farm plan guards against declining conditions and requires a strong partnership between the landowner and the farmer leasing the land, as well as a commitment to the land itself.

The land trust's goal is to ensure that the agricultural land under lease is improved not degraded or left fallow for long periods of time, sensitive resources are protected, soil and water conserved, and the farmer is given enough flexibility, independence, and security to farm sustainably.

Farming is a specialized profession that requires knowledge from soil science to equipment maintenance to marketing. It is a very rewarding but challenging profession. It is time-consuming work, so most farmers don't get to spend much time writing plans or talking with other farmers until all the crops are in, animals cared for, fences mended, fields prepped and equipment repaired.

Late fall and winter are good times for a landowner and farmer to sit down with other farm partners to summarize ongoing projects and do some long-range planning. The land trust is currently developing comprehensive farm plans

for all of our farms.

A good farm plan includes an inventory of resources, including natural, physical, human, and financial. The foundation of the plan is a farm map delineating land uses and intensity. Fields and acreage, fences, stone walls, buildings, barns, wells, streams, invasive plants, sensitive wildlife habitat, and adjoining land uses are all important features to include on the map.

Whenever possible background information on field

history, pests and invasive species, livestock numbers and rotations, irrigation, drainage, and soil health are included. Available infrastructure including trucks, farm equipment, fences and watering sources are identified and needs assessed.

Goals for the farm are based on clear values and a vision for protecting land, water, wildlife, and cultural resources, with an under-

standing of resources, relationships, and enterprises to accomplish this vision. Several key questions are asked in developing these goals. What is our desired future landscape? How can we conserve or enhance water quality, soil productivity, biodiversity, aesthetic and recreational resources? What areas may be intensely farmed and what areas require less intense management, buffers zones, or restoration to improve ecosystem function? What forms of farm production will help meet our goals and maintain a high quality of life.

This wholistic method of farming requires long-term planning, patience, adaptability, and a significant commitment of time to bring the land to full health. Once this foundation is set, the farmer is able to develop and change production and business plans as local markets change. The land management plan provides the framework for protecting the natural resources and allows the farmer to work independently within that framework. ■



David Lockesmith, owner of Landworks Farm in Petersham, inspecting his crops.

Resources to Assist with Farm Planning and Conservation

- Natural Resource Conservation Service: Administers restoration and land improvement programs, and technical advice. **Visit [NRCS.USDA.gov](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov)**
- Northeast Organic Farmers Association/Mass: Information and education workshops promoting organic farming and sustainable agriculture. **Visit [NOFAMASS.org](https://www.nofamass.org)**
- Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment: Provides info for beginning farmers, farm business management, soil health, best management practices and UMass extension resources. **Visit [Ag.UMass.edu](https://www.umass.edu/ag)**

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www.EQLT.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...

MORE CONSERVATION AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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NEW DATE! NEW TIME!

The fourteenth annual
Dinner and Silent Auction
will be held on **June 27, 2015**
Starting at **5:30 PM**

At the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill
242 Petersham Road, Hardwick

MARK YOUR CALENDARS TODAY!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 25, starting at 2:00 PM

Fitness Trail Opening - Main Street, Gilbertville – Join us as we officially open the Fitness Trail for healthy exercise and the community. Parking is on Main Street and access through the blue and yellow gate.

Sunday, October 26, starting at 8:00 AM

East Quabbin Hike - Petersham, meet at Gate 31 to carpool – This is the last of the multi-day hiking series that traverses the east coast of the Quabbin Reservoir, the defining landscape feature of our region. The hike will start at Gate 37 and make our way north to Gate 31. This hike will cover 8 miles. RSVP to Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org or 413-477-8229. Bring water, lunch and snacks.

Friday, October 31, from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM

Halloween at the Fitness Trail - Main Street, Gilbertville - Youth of all ages are encourage to start their Halloween trick-or-treating at the Fitness Trail. A volunteer will be at each station to assist participants with the activities and pass out candy! Contact Shelby at ServiceLearning@EQLT.org to volunteer or for more information.

Saturday, November 1, starting at 3:00 PM

Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve - off Wickaboag Valley Road, West Brookfield - Join us to officially open this historic property that once hosted the Old Baypath Indian Trail and first gristmill of the Quaboag Plantation in 1669. The recently completed interpretive trail will guide visitors through the human and natural history of this wonderful preserve. Parking is at the kiosk along Wickaboag Valley Road and preserve access is by a private drive south of the Mill Brook bridge.

Sunday, November 16, starting at 3:00 PM

Old Growth Tree Walk - Gaffney and New Braintree Road intersection, Oakham - Join us for a walk back in time to a grove of old growth tupelo trees, tucked away in the Oakham Wildlife Management Area. These are some of the oldest trees in Massachusetts.

Friday, December 5, from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM

Holiday Open House - 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick - Visit with family, friends and neighbors at the land trust office as the days get shorter. Hors d'oeuvres or drinks to share are welcomed, but not required. Please join the fun!