

## WITNESS TREE, By Linda V. Mapes

Review by Cynthia Henshaw

Lynda Mapes is an environmental reporter for the Seattle Times. She wanted to tell a fresh story about climate change, one that dives deeper and engages us all in experiencing our changing world. “In this forest so like the woods I had loved as a girl, it came to me: you could tell the story of climate change—and more—through a single, beloved living thing: a tree. A specific, human-scaled focus for larger questions; a frame of study for contemplation. In the eighteenth century, surveyors used so-called witness trees as landmarks to lay out the metes and bounds of new landscapes. My modern-day witness tree would likewise be a living marker, from which to understand our past, interpret our perplexing present, and regard the future.”

“I first met this tree in the fall of 2013, walking these woods to study the seasonal procession of the year in the forest with John O’Keefe. The big oak was part of his tree survey—it wears a badge of science, a shiny metal disk with its ID number in the survey: BT QURU 03. O’Keefe liked to say he started his long-term survey of the timing of the seasons, revealed in the budding, leaf-out, leaf color, and drop on the trees, as a way to get outside at least one day every week, then just never stopped. Now he had compiled a valuable and unique record.”

Phenology is the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life. Back when most people farmed, phenology was a way of life. Everyone kept track of when they planted, what was in bloom as the seasons changes. Phenology fell out of favor in scientific circles, but it’s the phenological records that are helping to document the effects of climate change.

“Scientists from around the world are studying changes in the lives of these trees, as levels of carbon dioxide mount in the atmosphere, and temperatures warm.

Some trees in the forest are martyrs, the life sucked out of them by invasive woolly adelgid, tiny bugs multiplying now that winters are too warm to kill them. Yet red oak, the dominant tree in these woods, is growing faster and more efficiently than ever recorded. You could see all this in the very breadth of the trees, in the grain of their wood, in the budding and drop of their leaves. You could, I thought, as I first heard of all this, take a deep long look at even just one tree, and see so much.”

The tree, Mapes’s witness tree, was a big red oak. It was part of O’Keefe’s survey and within sight of cameras from other researchers, so there was a lot of information already known about the tree. “Sprouted from an acorn there by that wall, the oak was a cultural tree, and a historical artifact. Left, rather than cut, it was a witness to all the changes that had come over this landscape. The pastures and farm fields that used to be here, delineated by that wall.”

“A tree this big, in this spot, has seen it all, from our changing relationship with nature in our urbanized, industrialized and digitized lives, to the altered clockwork of nature. Like the witness trees surveyors used in the eighteenth century to mark metes and bounds of new landscapes, this tree could be my marker and narrator, a living timeline of cultural and ecological change.”

“So the big oak dominates its space, true. But it also supports a vast web of life and relies in turn on a menagerie of helpers, aboveground and below. With its crown in the wind and its roots in the teeming soil, the big oak connects earth and sky, and many millions of beings, and is home to each and to all. It is just one tree, and yet a whole world unto itself. How, I wondered, could I ever get to know it?”

Through that year of exploration and study Mapes does get to know this big oak. Her book *Witness Tree* is well worth the read to see how she does it! ■



## MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

*Cynthia Henshaw*



The East Quabbin Land Trust works steadily to meet the mission of conserving our farms, woods and waters, year-in and year-out. But how we do that changes—largely because our dedicated volunteers suggest improvements and then make them happen!

Does making a difference in your community sound intriguing, all while meeting fun people and spending time outdoors? Then apply your skill set and get more involved with the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Here is a smattering of what volunteers are doing right now:

- Planning for an accessible trail at the Frohloff Farm
- Database entry and preparing thank you letters
- Organizing the Station Loop Ramble
- Writing newsletter articles
- Team-members for the trestle bridge repairs
- Taking photographs to share with others, and
- Walking our Preserves and making note of potential improvements

The East Quabbin Land Trust has standing committees that focus on property stewardship and maintenance, land conservation initiatives, fundraising priorities and activities, governance and finance. All of the above mentioned activities are guided by other volunteers who serve on one or more committee.

Volunteers choose how much time and in what ways to get involved. Whether you help with one event a year, or spend five hours a week, please know that your contribution is valued and makes a real difference! Contact me if you're ready to get on the East Quabbin Land Trust team. There's more work to be done and help is needed in every area! ■

**#GivingTuesday is coming on  
November 28th.  
Help us reach our goal:  
\$10k in one day!**

## 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 farms, woods 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 and adaptable 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**  
P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road  
Hardwick, MA 01037-0005  
413-477-8229 (tel & fax)  
email: [EQLT@comcast.net](mailto:EQLT@comcast.net)

Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
or "Like" us on Facebook!

## BOARD & STAFF

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Mark Mattson.....	OAKHAM, <i>Vice-President</i>
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# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BEES:

## Christine Komenda's Buzzing Hobby

By Cynthia Henshaw

A glance from her driveway down towards the lawn brought bright purples and reds into view as the purple asters and coreopsis remain in bloom into the fall. Chris comments "It's all about the bees!"

Chris is passionate about our native pollinators and honey bees. It all started once she moved to New Braintree in the late 90s and planted a couple Linden trees around her home. "The trees were humming with native pollinators and honey bees." That initial discovery was followed by a honey bee class sponsored by the Hardwick Farmers Coop, and then onto attending Bee School at the Worcester County Beekeepers Association.

Her first bee package was doing great, they were prolific and honey bound (which is actually too much honey). But then a black bear found and destroyed the hive. That experience was a devastating loss for Chris, but she regrouped and moved the remaining bees to her mother's place in Holden. After getting a new queen, the hive is thriving again. Since then Chris has expanded to six hives, divided between New Braintree and Holden.

"The two locations react very differently. In Holden there are more flowers because of backyard gardens and suburban plantings. You'd think conditions would be better out here, but there's so many more woods and the fields are often cut limiting the amount of flowers in bloom."

"I'd encourage anyone to get a hive, but be prepared with stockade or electric fencing to keep the bears out. Raising bees is a good challenge out here; it's hard to keep them alive and prospering. There are so many things going against honey bees."

After receiving her undergraduate degree in Graphic Design and Photography, Chris did a stint in New York City getting her career in marketing started. She started out at a print broker -- basically a firm that managed all the printing needs of large American-based companies. Chris would make sure all the printing got done well and according to schedule. After living and working in New York, Chris figured she could get a job anywhere, but wanted to be in the country. Her search for a house or land began.

Luckily for us, Chris fell in love with a patch of woods in New Braintree, just across the street from her sister and brother-in-law. Several years later Chris purchased an adjoining lot to preserve as much land as she could afford. "I didn't want to see a bunch of houses built so close together, but rather wanted to create pathways for wildlife and trails for people to enjoy this beautiful area. I hope when the time comes for me to move

on, someone else will take over as steward of this small woodlot."

We can't remember exactly how Chris got involved volunteering with the East Quabbin Land Trust. Probably checking off the volunteer box when she was making a donation. However that first happened, Chris has brought her marketing skills to bear for many years. Chris got onto the Station Loop Ramble planning committee at the very beginning, six years ago. Her assistance with the race planning and promotional aspects is tremendous!

Of course, Chris has a vested interest in seeing our section of the Mass Central Rail Trail well maintained. She is a walker, bringing her mother's Himalayan sheep dog out for a trek most afternoons. Chris jokes, "She thinks she owns the trail!"

Being outside was always a priority. "My sister and I used to walk the overgrown rail trail and adjoining fields to explore the Ware River, then come back through the trails in the woods and Wildlife Management Area."

Chris also enjoys fly-fishing. "I'd fish in the little pools. Didn't catch much -- dace, sucker fish and the occasional trout. It was mostly about being outdoors and enjoying the area."

Most recently, Chris' day job was one she created at Woodmeister Master Builders. Her role evolved from managing the design department to building the Woodmeister brand. "In custom-craftsman style home building, ensuring that all employees are communicating the values of quality construction that the own-

ers will leave as a legacy is critical. Sharing that mission in a comprehensive way was critical to growing the company. It was pretty remarkable to help make that happen." Chris shared photographs of a recent event she organized at the New England Design Hall of Fame, and part of the buzz was to have your picture made into a New England Home magazine cover. That's a truly creative way to generate interest with a memorable take-home souvenir for the guests.

Chris has spent countless hours assisting the East Quabbin Land Trust with marketing. In addition to creating the promotional materials for the Station Loop Ramble, she designed beautiful invitations to our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, created our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary brochure, guided website content and talked about logos. Chris' help is invaluable and very much appreciated. Thank you, Chris! ■



# SIXTH ANNUAL STATION LOOP RAMBLE

*Eighty-five people participated in the event this year on Sunday, October 8th. The kid's ran through a heavy downpour, which let up for the the 5-Mile Classic and 5K Run/Walk. All the participants used a portion of the Mass Central Rail Trail in New Braintree and Hardwick as they started and finished at the site of the former New Braintree Trail Station. A hearty THANK YOU to all the volunteers that made this race possible, the sponsoring businesses and others that donated prizes, and to all who participated!*



***We appreciate donations from the following businesses for runner awards:***

- Barre Mill Restaurant, South Barre
- Barre Pizza, Barre
- Barre Players, Barre
- Becky's Bistro, Barre
- Big Y, Ware
- Craig's Barbershop, Barre
- Dandelions, Barre
- Driven Athletic Performance, Barre
- Kip's Christmas Tree Farm, New Braintree
- Klem's, Spencer
- Ragged Hill Orchard, West Brookfield
- Robinson's Farm, Hardwick
- Salem Cross Inn, West Brookfield
- Subway, Barre
- The Centered Place, Warren
- The Country Gourmet, Barre
- The Country Store, Petersham
- The Salon, Barre
- Webb's Heirloom Garlic, Hardwick
- Workshop 13, Ware

# THANK YOU TO OUR RACE SPONSORS!



2017 - 6<sup>th</sup> Annual

## Station Loop Ramble



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*Please support these businesses and  
thank them for underwriting the Station Loop Ramble!*

# SPONSORS & SUSTAINERS - Two Vital Types of Support

By Richard Cavanaugh

## Sponsors

The East Quabbin Land Trust partners with local businesses and organizations to help showcase their work and to highlight their support for conserving the land and preserving our heritage. Each year, sponsorship opportunities are available for the Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, which is typically held in the spring, and the Station Loop Ramble, which happens on the second Sunday of October.

As our Sponsors have come to learn, sponsoring EQLT events offer a cost-effective way to make literally thousands of connections with active and mindful individuals and families who care deeply about the region. "We're glad to support the land trust's Annual Dinner and Silent Auction each year," explains Glenn Wojcik of Pioneer Valley Environmental, LLC in Hardwick, MA. "It is a great evening with good food and friends. It also now no longer surprises me when folks I meet through work thank me for supporting EQLT. We are always gratified to know that our contribution is put to good use for the benefit of our communities."

"We enjoy sponsoring the Station Loop Ramble each year," says Joe Raskett of Hardwick Sugar Shack. "Among other things, it's great to know that our sponsorship helps keep the local section of the Mass Central Rail Trail open and available for everyone, of every age and ability. We're also proud to be associated with the good work that Cynthia [Henshaw] and others in the organization do."

Sponsors of the Annual Dinner and Silent Auction and the Station Loop Ramble receive tickets to the events as well as special recognition at the events and in EQLT's newsletters and email blasts that are sent to over 1,300 supporters at a time. Those sponsoring at higher levels receive more tickets and increased recognition in EQLT's written and electronic communications.

If you are involved with a business or other organization that would like to explore sponsorship opportunities with the East Quabbin Land Trust, please call us at (413) 477-8229 or send an email to [rcavanaugh@EQLT.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@EQLT.org). ■

## Sustainers

Sustainers are those who make automatic monthly gifts to the East Quabbin Land Trust. They use their credit cards or automatic bank payments to set up a schedule of convenient and easily budgeted contributions. Sustainers play a critical role by helping to create an ongoing revenue stream to help meet the land trust's ongoing expenses.

"My husband and I began contributing as Sustainers earlier this year," comments Amanda MacArthur of Ware. "By contributing each month, we have found it to be very manageable, and in the just several months, we're really gratified by how much we have helped."

"We realize how important unrestricted gifts are to organizations like EQLT", remarks Patrick Hughes, "We're pleased to know that our gifts go to

all the good things that EQLT does like running youth and family engagement programs, maintaining the stewardship of recreation and wildlife areas, and sustaining its conservation initiatives – all for the long term."

You can become an East Quabbin Land Trust Sustainer by simply going online to [EQLT.org](http://EQLT.org) and hit the Donate button to set up credit card payments. You can also work with your bank to schedule regularly issued checks.

Monthly payments of \$42 a month entitle an individual to become a member of EQLT's Leadership Circle. Members of the Leadership

Circle enjoy opportunities to gather together and gain detailed insights about existing plans and to share ideas about conservation in our region. Touring the area, viewing conservation initiatives and stewardship in action, and speaking with experts involved in each effort are key elements of gatherings of the Leadership Circle.

If you would like any additional information on EQLT's Sustainer program, please call us at (413) 477-8229 or send an email to [rcavanaugh@EQLT.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@EQLT.org).

But please remember, a gift at any level and by any means is meaningful, deeply appreciated, and contributes significantly towards what the East Quabbin Land Trust can do in our region. ■



*Sustainers Patrick and Amanda yucking it up in the great outdoors!*

# THE COUNTRY STORE BUILDING FUND

By Cynthia Henshaw

The East Quabbin Land Trust partnered with members of the Petersham community and others to purchase the Country Store building in 2013. After completing renovations, the store business was re-opened in 2014. Since then the business is open 7 days a week, with a wide array of groceries, gifts, and delicious breakfast and lunch offerings under the extraordinary commitment of Ari and Jeanneane Pugliese.

In these intervening years it is clear that monthly rental receipts from the Store and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor apartment can cover property taxes, insurance, and annual maintenance expenses. However, major building improvements require additional financial support. For instance, the building exterior was painted this summer! That expense was nearly \$40,000, well beyond the building's income.

Through conversations with the Steering Committee, customers, and supporters it was determined that a new funding mechanism was needed to provide for significant and long-term capital improvements. Building needs such as exterior and interior restoration, energy efficiency improvements, future painting, and re-roofing



are expected over the years to sustain the historic building for the next century and beyond.

The Greater Worcester Community Foundation has a proven track-record of professional endowment management services that benefit critical community needs. Setting up a dedicated fund at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation is crucial for the continuous viability of our historic building.

**The Country Store Building Fund** was established this summer after receiving commitments from a number of supporters.

Over time **The Country Store Building Fund** can grow through direct gifts, memorial gifts, and bequests, allowing the building to thrive for the community today and for future generations. The Steering Committee will request any future distributions for capital improvements assuring local control of the Fund.

Thank you to all supporters of The Country Store—whether as customers or contributors. It is through your commitment that a vital service and vibrant building is maintained in the heart of Petersham and open to all. ■

“The Country Store is not a relic of the past; it’s a vital heartbeat in our community, supporting local agriculture while nourishing our needs for healthy foods and friendships that enliven friends and travelers. Supporting the Building Fund supports hope for future generations to experience the strong bonds of community that are fostered at The Country Store. Basically, I’ve donated to the Building Fund out of love and gratitude. . . for this way of life, and for the generations that will lead us forth.” —Candace Anderson

“Forward looking land trusts like EQLT are committed to the working landscape, not just protecting land, and the *really* forward looking ones focus on securing the long term vitality of local communities as well. The masterfully run and perfectly located Petersham General Store is an irresistible example. It’s a pleasure to join others in supporting EQLT’s imaginative approach to sustaining the Petersham General Store through a dedicated fund at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.”

-- Jock Herron

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WITNESS &  
STATION  
LOOP  
RAMBLE



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This fall, be sure to **witness** changes in the woods.  
Did you know **streams run faster when  
the trees go dormant** for the winter?

## UPCOMING EVENTS...

**Sunday, November 5th, 2 PM**

**Nature Art at Mandell Hill, Barre Road, Hardwick:** Bring the whole family to explore the loop trail at Mandell Hill--we'll collect leaves, cones, feathers and other "finds" as we walk. Then together we'll make a group art piece that can be enjoyed by other visitors in the following weeks. You can also bring items from home, but it's not required.

**Friday, December 1st, 5 PM - 7 PM**

**Annual Holiday Open House, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick:** Join your friends and neighbors for good cheer at our holiday open house. Be part of this annual tradition and bring a snack or dessert to share.

**Monday, January 1st, Noon**

**New Year's Day Ski or Hike, Mass Central Rail Trail at West Road, New Braintree:** Start off the New Year with your family and friends exploring our local rail trail.

### SAVE THE DATE...

**Saturday, April 28th**

**Seventeenth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, at Eagle Hill School, Petersham Road, Hardwick:** This is our signature fundraising event with a silent auction that benefits more land conservation and stewardship in the East Quabbin region.

