



FALL 2025

P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road,  
Hardwick, MA 01037

413.477.8229 |  
EQLT.org

## Volunteers - In Their Own Words



Volunteers make the work of the East Quabbin Land Trust possible in so many ways. Caring for the Land that Sustains Us is a multi-layered, complex mission that takes many skill sets, lots of energy and dedicated people pushing towards the same vision.

Here's what a few of our volunteers shared about why they volunteer with EQLT.

"I love to see children learn about the outdoors and how to care for our land, trees and waterways."

"I love to volunteer with EQLT as I love to be outdoors and love the idea of preserving land for future generations."

"Every time I go out to the preserves or to work with the community of volunteers, I learn something new about the land and its history and the people. It's always an adventure and a joy."

"Good working conditions, usally, great co-workers. Pay could be better, no pension plan that I know of."

"What is saved and renewed is for everyone made possible by some. I try to be one of the some."

"Some people go to church, I go into the woods."

"I support its mission and enjoy working with like-minded people."

"I love seeing land and resources respected and cared for. The land, the water, the air are all a part of us and our well-being. I am delighted that there is a community of people who work together to preserve our common wealth and well-being."

"Life is full of choices. When we choose EQLT we show our character and commitment to nature."

"I volunteer with EQLT to leave things better than I found them."

Being a volunteer means that you also have the opportunity to learn more about the natural world around us, enjoy new friendships, and build positive actions for our communities. We encourage you to volunteer with EQLT, too! ■

MESSAGE FROM THE  
**Executive  
Director**

*Cynthia Henshaw*



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”  
– Margaret Mead

Arriving at Wendemuth Meadow on Saturday morning a few weeks back, there were Tom, Sandy and David working away in the community garden space. Putting the final touches on the garden clean up; getting things ready for winter. The individual gardeners had cleared their plots of wilted plants. A layer of compost was added to each bed after a final weeding. The grass and dandelions were removed from the pathways. With each motion of the shovel or rake, together these committed citizens were transforming the garden space, making things so much better. Next spring, after the soil rests, and hopefully had a blanket of nourishing snow, the gardeners will come back to grow more healthy food for themselves and others.

Folks in Ware are working to set up a community garden in partnership with Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council, Healthy Quaboag, and Trinity Church. EQLT is supporting their efforts. We know how important it can be to share knowledge and know-how while being out on the land. Growing food is challenging no matter what the scale, so pulling our resources together can bring about big changes. The Ware community garden is expected to start with six growing spaces. The hope is to expand over time to meet the growing needs of the community.

Last summer there was an edible plant walk along the Mass Central Rail Trail in Ware lead by edibles enthusiast Russ Cohen. There were 25+ plants within an easy walk that provide free food – from the berries or twigs or leaves when harvested in the right season. During this service year, Michael and Ellie (see their profiles on the next page) will work with others to start building an edible pathway for exploration of the human and wildlife palate. The edible pathway will create a loop that runs along the lower field edge with views over the Ware River. By adding some simple plantings to the existing apple trees, and regular maintenance, the edible pathway is a tangible expression of abundance and sharing with all who wish to partake.

And these are just three ways that a small group of committed citizens are getting together to bring positive change to the world. I look forward to working along side them, and on many other efforts in the coming years. ■

**THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST**  
fosters a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts.

**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  
413-477-8229  
Email: office@EQLT.org

**Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
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- Ellie Shea .....AmeriCorps Youth Education Coor.
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- Lucinda Childs.....Board Emeritus

## Meet Michael and Ellie

**MICHAEL:** Although my career path has been a meandering exploration of various interests, finding the right direction for me was easier than imagined. I always think back to this one night early in my freshman year of college. I was walking to my dorm after working a campus job when I was distracted by four Canada geese grazing on the lawn. The communication and order shown by these geese had immediately piqued my interest. I observed one goose standing tall and still, seemingly watching over the three other geese allowed to graze freely. This interaction combined with my childhood surrounded by the nature of central Massachusetts, living and studying by the city of Boston became increasingly ill-fitting as a career path.

I grew up in rural Ware, Massachusetts with an abundance of outdoor exploration. My love for all animals was strengthened during my years working at horse barns throughout high school & college. The decreased abundance of wildlife in the city was one of my major factors

in moving back home to continue college in animal sciences. This decision then led to eventually pivoting to the most fitting path which is the conservation and ecology of wildlife.

Since graduating from college I have not gotten the chance to apply my knowledge in real-world situations until now. I am a new AmeriCorps member through TerraCorps, serving at the East Quabbin Land Trust as the current Land Stewardship Coordinator. I am excited to help build the capacity of the land trust which should be accomplished using three capacity building projects. My first two projects involve plant propagation to benefit humans and wildlife, with one creating a native pollinator garden aimed to attract and host pollinators while increasing outreach to the service site and educating the public. The other project involves creating an edible pathway to help facilitate easier public access to fresh local produce while also providing attraction for wildlife. My final project is coordinating volunteers to collect environmental data at EQLT preserves to create a species list. Each of these projects furthers EQLT's goal of caring for the land that sustains us. ■



**ELLIE:** This September, I started my ten-month service position as Youth Education Coordinator at the East Quabbin Land Trust through TerraCorps. I will be here until July of 2026. TerraCorps is an AmeriCorps program that places members in 10-month service terms across a network of land-based community nonprofits in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

I'm originally from Hardwick, I grew up using EQLT trails and can vouch for the lifelong impact of getting outside into nature. Hiking, canoeing, and climbing trees has instilled

in me a permanent curiosity, and adoration of all things in nature. I attended Eckerd College in St. Petersburg Florida earning my BA, and since graduating I have been working in outdoor education. I have taught terrestrial, marine, and inter-tidal ecology at several outdoor learning centers, and have led overnight backpacking and canoe trips. I love sharing what parts of nature I can with others.

As the Youth Education Coordinator, I will be

focusing on three capacity building projects. These projects are focused on the young people in our community, and creating more programs, community service opportunities, and spaces for them in the EQLT.

My first project is adding to the Forest Play Trail at the EQLT office. I will be working with youth volunteers to add to the trail route, bringing in new sensory activities to place along the trail and I will be applying for a grant for path materials.

The second project is working on an edible plants trail with the Land Stewardship Coordinator, on a side trail at the Mass Central Rail Trail next to Frohloff Farm in Ware, MA. I will be focused on coordinating youth volunteers to remove invasive plants, extend the existing wood wall, add an arbor, and do some habitat restoration further down the trail.

My final project is developing EQLT's Seasonal Youth Education Curriculum and Programs. I am working with local libraries and youth centers to run programs, as well as applying for grants to have guest speakers for Land Trust events. The first event will be Gratitude Friday on November 28th from 1-3pm at the Land Trust Office.

My capacity-building projects will offer many ways to get involved with EQLT and our communities. Be on the lookout for more information over the coming months, and feel free to stop by EQLT's office to introduce yourself! ■

# 14th Station Loop Ramble

On October 19th, there were over 70 runners and walkers enjoying a beautiful Sunday morning on the Mass Central Rail Trail in New Braintree and Hardwick. Final race times are at:

[EQLT.org/station-loop-ramble/](http://EQLT.org/station-loop-ramble/)

Thank you to our sponsors and to Sneakerama, Big Y, TidePool Bookshop, Clover Hill Farm, Hardwick Farmers' Coop Exchange, The Centered Place, Hardwick Crossing & Country Club, Hanna's on Main, Mexicali Cantina Grill, & Subway North Brookfield. ■



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# Conserving and Caring for Farmland

By Cynthia Henshaw

Keeping farmland growing food for humans and animals is an important long-term goal. We need farms to grow the squash, blueberries, tomatoes, kale and cucumbers that we love to eat – freshly picked from the plant or cooked in our favorite dish. In central Massachusetts we have limited areas with good soils for growing crops. Usually, they'll be a mix of loam and sand. The areas free from rocks are best, but rare around here. Hayfields are often on those rockier soils, and we're grateful for the good feed they produce for the cattle, goats, and sheep that are part of our food ecosystem.

Last year the East Quabbin Land Trust and the Town of Petersham partnered to successfully conserve 22 acres of farmland on East Street with a conservation restriction that promotes farming practices and focuses residential development on the remaining acreage. The land includes prime agricultural soils that can support the row crops and berry bushes that the new owners, Cara and Michael from Free Living Farm, want to add to the land. These will be exciting times for them as they expand their current growing operation and build their own home, greenhouse(s) and related farm infrastructure in the coming years. As with most farms, there are also woods. The woods run down the slope to Moccasin Brook, which is a magical place with moss covered rocks under dense hemlock shade. The brook area is also protected from development and will continue to offer clean water, extra oxygen and solitude to the music of water babbling.

Recently, the East Quabbin Land Trust purchased 24 acres in the heart of New Braintree, known as Summit Farm. The goal is to conserve the land and find a new farmer or farm family for the property. There's a large barn, a remnant from years of the land being worked as a dairy farm. More recently portions of the barn housed chickens for a regional egg production business, and later with milk goats. There's a lot of barn space and options for how the building can be incorporated into a future farming business.

Details about this farm purchase opportunity can be found at <https://newenglandfarmlandfinder.org/property/summit-farm-239-acres-sale-house-new-braintree-ma>

Conserving farmland is one important step in assuring we have farms in the region long

into the future. Supporting farmers and their operations is another.

Currently, the East Quabbin Land Trust preserves include over 70 acres of open fields. These lands are an important part of the local economy, and EQLT makes them available to local farmers at reasonable rates for hay production, pasture or row crops. "As a Hardwick farmer, I appreciate that EQLT leases several fields to local farmers, like us, at a reasonable rate. It allows us to keep the land productive and maintain the agricultural roots that define our community." Commented Judi Korzec.

We partner with farmers to maintain soil fertility by adding lime and fertilizer, keep field edges cleared with the brush mower, and control invasive plants. Each knapweed plant can produce thousands of seeds, quickly spreading throughout the fields at Wendemuth Meadow in North Brookfield. Chemical control and regular mowing are essential to maintaining the grasses. Finding the right balance is a work in progress.

The farm micro-grant program will be back for a fourth year in 2026 with generous funding from an anonymous donor. These small grants help farmers do things like add irrigation hoses, create portable animal enclosures, and add fertility to their soils. Each application requests something that is critical for their business success. Most grants are between \$1,000 and \$5,000 dollars. While those might be small grants, the grants provide an important boost to our local farmers. The grants are a vote of appreciation for all their hard work growing food that sustains us, locally.



# AWE! Art in Wild Environs

By Mike Stoll

Question: What do you get when you combine some cast-off forest products destined for a landfill, a malt and hops beverage and some creative wildlife artistry? Answer: AWE!, or Art in Wild Environs!

And so the story began ... One sunny day in spring of 2024, two EQLT preserve stewards met for beers (Fog Dancers, if memory serves me correctly) at a frequent EQLT sponsor's establishment (Lost Towns Brewing). The discussion wandered lazily like an uphill climb at Hidden Meadow Preserve on the "Blue Trail." Soon the talk picked up pace, mimicking the frolicking East Branch of the Ware River (EBWR) at Henry's Grove Preserve.

The crux of the conversation soon turned to what the avid repurposer of abandoned materials would do with the perfectly good plywood he found being discarded. Although the plywood was of odd sizes, it was of extremely high quality...it must be good for something?! Ideas were cast about and then the artist chimed in and suggested wildlife art -- specifically animal paintings using the plywood for silhouette cutouts. The material repurposer thought perhaps they could be displayed along the trail at a preserve. And that's how Art in Wild Environs (AWE) was born!

"Teddy the Bear" made his debut at Hidden Meadow, realistically placed along a trail. Real-life black bears make the area around Hidden Meadow and Henry's Grove their home; therefore, a bear sighting wasn't particularly surprising. However, what was surprising were the positive comments noting how realistic the bear looked and requests for more AWE! And so, next came "Bobbie Bobcat" who made her AWE debut also at Hidden Meadow, but this time in the actual meadow. Several bobcats have been seen around the meadow especially since the clearing of invasive plants; therefore, this location seemed apropos. More positive comments from frequent preserve users resulted in the final AWE installment..."Miss Porcuprickle." Many porcupines make their homes in and around our preserves as attested by a certain African water dog who goes by the name of Buddy. Miss Porcuprickle has proven to be a much gentler version (and less expensive – no vet visits!) than her wild counterparts!

Look for a future article that will chronicle the travels of the AWE trio around EQLT preserves and how they contributed to the understanding of nature at East Quabbin Land Trust properties.

A very special thanks to our very own wildlife artist in residence Brenda Brownell for her very realistic paintings and animal silhouettes. ■





*Caring for the Land that Sustains Us*

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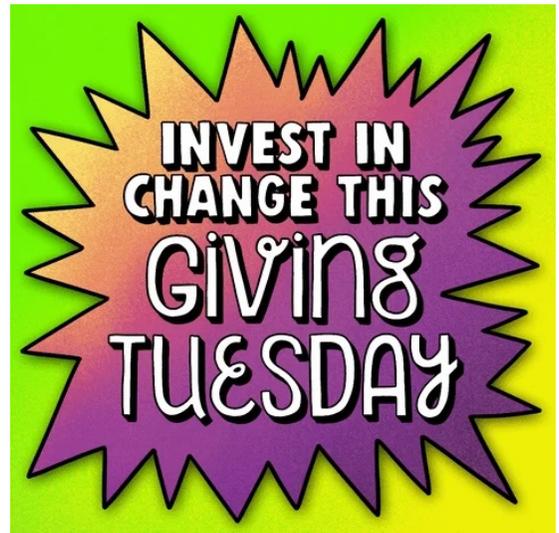
## Announcing a \$55,000 1:1 matching challenge grant!

Thanks to three generous donors for offering the matching challenge grant this fall.

Last year over 100 donors made matching gifts to exceed the challenge fundraising goal.

*We invite you to join their ranks this year.*

# #GIVING TUESDAY



**December 2, 2025**